

Washington Digest

Veterans' Administration Has Capable Leader

General Bradley Has Fatherly Interest in Veterans; Actions Show His Ability to Administer This Big Job

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I have just come back from a visit with the father of 15 million. That isn't such a far-fetched figure to use in describing the tall, rangy Missourian, who is in charge of "the biggest business in the world," which is how they describe the Veterans' Administration in Washington.

To call Omar Nelson Bradley "father" of the service men and women isn't stretching it. Ernie Pyle once said: "If I could pick any two men in the world for my father except my own Dad, I would pick General Omar Bradley or General Ike Eisenhower. If I had a son, I would like him to go to Bradley or Ike for advice." Ernie was a pretty keen judge of human nature on the hoof. I thought of that when one of Bradley's co-workers in the Veterans' Administration, who is almost a decade older than the general, said "fatherly" was the way to describe the manner in which he was treated the first time they had a problem to straighten out with the boss.

And then I met the General. I found a weather-beaten, wiry, long-legged soldier, whose eyes twinkled brighter than the four stars on his collar. Fatherly, yes—and I'll have a word about that a little later. But I found out something else. I found out why he ought to be able to run one of the hardest jobs in the government. And I'll admit, right off, it sounds almost too good to be true.

We had been talking about the details of the reorganization of the agency which is now going on and with which General Bradley is minutely familiar. Then I asked him what it was, if anything, in his military training and experience that he could use in his present position.

He said that he thought it was the same with all jobs such as this. And here is the theory on which he works:

"First, build your organization on functional lines. Second, get the right man to head up each function. Third, give him full responsibility to act on his own authority."

How, I inquired, does this fit in with your military experience, having had some of that branch of adventure myself—although running a platoon isn't running an army.

"It's a good deal like the army," he answered. "You have your staff. You have say 20 sections, each with a special function, working under your chief of staff. Sometimes, of course, you group some of the functions, but the organization is along functional lines."

And how, I asked, do you choose the men to head up these various activities? His answer came back without the slightest hesitation.

"I choose a man, first for his ability, second for his loyalty—and I count heavily on the loyalty. Get loyal men of ability and you've gone a long way toward solving your problems in any organization."

That sounded pretty good to me, but what about the present situation where, after all, there is always a Congress on Capitol Hill, a Congress with constituents who have votes and some of whom want jobs. I asked the General, what about politics? He didn't seem worried. He said that he hadn't had any trouble.

"I'm not a politician," he said. "I never intend to run for office." That was all he would say, but here is a story I picked up later at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

A certain Congressman got a hot letter from a constituent who had been fired from the Veterans' Administration. No doubt with due cause. He hot-footed it up to the General and spoke, as legislators often do to officials, with considerable vigor.

"I want the man re-hired at once," the Congressman demanded. The General was polite but sorry.

He stood by his decision. "If you don't, I'll attack you on the floor."

"Go ahead," said Bradley, faintly recalling, I imagine, some of the attacks in Normandy.

"I'll block your bills," said the irate Congressman.

That was a horse of a different color.

"You will?" said the General. "All right, and if you do that, I'll go to the President with my resignation. He'll get that or find a means to stop you." (Period.)

We all knew about the General's war record—in Tunisia, on the Normandy beachhead, among the hedgerows, where he smashed a gateway at St. Lo which made Patton's lightning drive possible. But we didn't know much about the man. Most of us didn't know he was from Missouri and later some of us might have suspected that that was the reason why he was picked, although the President said it was because he wanted a World War II soldier to take care of the wants of World War II veterans. Now we have some other reasons for believing that the choice was predicated on wise advice and is going to prove itself a fortunate one.

On the horse-sense side, it is because Bradley has established a record as an administrator. He proved that in the army and had the acumen to see the chief fault in the veterans' organization and has set out to remedy it.

On the emotional side—well, Ernie Pyle was right.

The trouble with the Veterans' Administration was that it grew so rapidly that it didn't have time to delegate authority. And there was another reason for this. It was built on what seemed a very sound theory. Let's take its services to the veteran. For instance, small hospitals were scattered all over the country, many in little communities where the veteran could get to them easily. But that didn't work out. It was hard to get expert medical men, good service and the latest equipment in the smaller communities and because the regional organization was spread so thin, it was necessary to have a strong hand in Washington. The result was that the grip of that hand was so tight that the whole system was cramped.

Bradley put his finger on the situation (with the help of well-chosen counsel) and reversed the former policy. Now it's "bring the veteran to the hospital." Bring him by rail or plane in an emergency, but bring him to a well-manned, well-equipped center whose size and importance will attract the best there is in medical skill, when he needs specialized care.

Hand in hand with this regional centralization of the medical facilities, the new organization has decentralized the authority. As soon as Bradley looked over the set-up he said:

"This is like having a 150 regiments under one man. In the army that would be unthinkable. We'd break it down into corps and divisions at least."

And so that is what was done.

But first he made a sharp cleavage between the medical organization and the rest of the activities. He created a new office, "Acting Surgeon General of the Veterans' Administration." And he appointed the best man he knew, Major General Paul Ramsey Hawley, who had been chief surgeon for the European theater and did an outstanding job.

And here I wonder if there wasn't one of those important unconscious childhood impressions which helped. Bradley's middle name, Nelson, is for a well-loved family physician. And Bradley's fatherliness is attested to in his interest in the physical welfare of his men. Again and again war correspondents mentioned the fact that he planned engagements so that his troops would suffer the fewest casualties possible. He has an instinctive understanding of the afflicted.

Kids Govern OPA Office in Brooklyn for a Day



Photo shows the price panel in session, when the students of Midwood High school took over the operation of the Office of Price Administration's local rationing board in Brooklyn's Flatbush section for a day. For twelve hours the enterprising youngsters ran the rationing and price control machinery, with, of course a little expert supervision by a regular aide in interpreting some of the knottier problems that arose.

Japanese Sidewalk Salesmen



Customers crowd around the sidewalk stands in the Ginza District in Tokyo, which is similar to New York's Fifth Avenue. Shopkeepers, their stores destroyed by bombs, set up their wares in the street, and carry on their business outside the wrecked buildings. In the background is the famous Jap Department Store, Takashimaya, where only two floors are now in use.

Wants to Cross Atlantic in Barrell



Because "It is inevitable that some day, someone will cross the Atlantic in a barrel," Mark Charlton, discharged Canadian army veteran, wants to do it first. He is shown with the barrel in which he plans to make the attempt.

Women's U. S. Softball Champions



The Jax Maids of New Orleans drove to the World Softball Championship to make it their third year in the last four that they have won the title. They won in 1942 and 1943. The berry of beauties hammered out a win over the Toronto Crofton Club ladies by a score of 5 to 0, as Nina Korgan of the Jax allowed but two hits. Photo shows the Jax with their trophy.

Had Kenny Treatment



Mrs. John Rybolt, at home in Los Angeles, after a year of the Kenny Treatment for Polio, is shown as she greeted her children, Brian 3, and Johnny, 6, while her husband looks on. Physicians say Mrs. Rybolt will be able to walk eventually with the aid of crutches.

Opens Trade Parley



Eric Johnston, President of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, addresses a plenary session of delegates to International Business Conference in New York recently.

NEWS BEHIND THE NEWS

By PAUL MALLON

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

ATOMIC BOMB CREATES SUPER-SPY SYSTEM NEED

WASHINGTON—Major General Wild Bill Donovan bowed out of the first real American intelligence service (OSS) with a somewhat cool-sounding response from President Truman to his idea of developing his line of effort further for peace. Mr. Truman cut up OSS, sending part to the War Department, but most to State. The Donovan notion of hiring someone like Sumner Welles, the ex-diplomat, to keep intimate and independent watch on the inner international world, was left hanging in air—somewhat foggy air.

General Donovan has never been a glamour boy. He is a rather crusty soldier-lawyer. Those who know what he did in the confidential special agent part of the war say his work in the Balkans particularly was excellent and could have been done by no one else as well. Into his organization, however, crept a number of persons who did not fit the best nature of the endeavor and gave it distaste with Congress. I think this fairly sums up OSS. It did great work, but was not popular. (I can never learn what accomplishes popularity in this era when a bank robber can possibly attain it by merely being for the 30-hour week or some such social innovation.)

In the wake of this peculiar condition, congressmen are arising to shout "There will be no American Gestapo," and I assume also they mean no OGPU or NKVD. Indeed there will not. But there is a grave danger that the first vital necessity for a secure postwar world will be ignored and shunted aside by muddleheaded political thinking about it.

If you thought Pearl Harbor a surprise and blitz warfare sudden as lightning, you are already old-fashioned and obsolete in your thinking. The next war will start like a flash—the brilliant blinding flash of the atomic bomb. If our defenses were archaic last time, they will be pitiful next time unless our officials know everything going on in this world. Advance knowledge is more essential to defense in a future world than a superior air force, an army or fleet.

Not the Fascists or the Communist nations, but the British, a democratic nation, have the best world intelligence. It was built up through generations. Their survival depended upon it, because their little islands had absolutely nothing to justify their superior position in the world, except an awareness of the facts of national existences and a superior shrewdness in using them. That is what we need—only a better one.

It cannot be an army enterprise because the army covers only one phase of world facts influencing peace and security. It cannot be navy, marine corps, or merely all three together, because diplomacy must be founded upon such information. (The British even move commercially from such realistic ground news.) It cannot be split, or you will have each department performing again the coordination they showed about Pearl Harbor—namely none.

INDEPENDENT BUREAU NEEDED

Consequently it must be an independent bureau covering at least these government elements and probably more (Justice Department and FBI.) Furthermore, the head must be a man whose character and personality guarantee full pursuit of the business to be done, and a complete disavowal of any political implications in the work. He must not be a leftist or right or even a professional Democrat or Republican. That service must lean over backwards to keep itself politically inviolable, and beyond even the faintest suspicion of political use. (The British know how to do it.)

The only limit on its appropriations should be our need of information. If we need the information—get it. If the spenders want to let Treasury money loose, here is one place where they could get something out of it. Some interested parties wish to limit the scope of activity to foreign information. It should be limited only by need. If it is found counterproductive in this country it requires action, no political softpedaling considerations should be allowed to stand in the way of getting it.

Squeezing Grapefruit

You can squeeze large grapefruit on an ordinary orange juice reamer if you cut the fruit in half lengthwise (rather than crosswise), halve again, squeeze each quarter on the reamer, pressing out side against point of juicer. Smaller grapefruit can be cut in halves like oranges, juiced on regular reamer.

Butter Substitutes

Adding salt and sugar to oleo or other butter substitutes makes it more palatable.

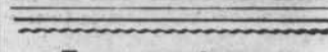
NIGHT COUGHS

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BARBS... by Baukhage

Mahomet went to the mountain. The Mikado went to MacArthur. This, it seems only fair to say, merely demonstrates the excellent judgment of all parties concerned.

As I look back over a few decades I have enjoyed on this mundane sphere, the only things I regret seem to be the things I missed.

A lot of New Yorkers who had forgotten there were such things had to use stairs during the elevator men's strike. And this did more for the calves than if they'd taken the ceiling price off of veal.

Production of rubber heels is still behind demand. But there are still more of the other kind of heels than we need.