



SHOW 'EM THE WAY

THE MEMOIRS OF BRIG. GEN. CHARLES HODGE



Charles Hodge

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Editor's Preface

A hand-written notation near the end of the work suggests that Charles Hodge dictated this manuscript in 1975. The document at my disposal was generally legible, and those few places where it was not will be clear to the reader. The document contains numerous hand-written fiddles to the typed text, and where those are legible, I have made those changes. I have moved some parts of the text in response to notes Hodge inserted for himself. I have also corrected minor spelling, grammatical, and naming errors. Hodge at times strays into using post-war ranks and terms for his comrades and his squadron—such as referring to Col. Samsel, a major during the war, and to the 117th Armored Cavalry. I have left those usages intact.

Photos are from the following sources:

The family of LT Albert M. Robbins
Mr. Gilles Guignard
Bruno Cavillon
Jerome Croyet
Memories de L'Ain
117th Cavalry Association

Most maps are from the official US Army histories.

Harry Yeide
September 2014

Preface

These memoirs have been written for my family and with a hope that they may cause enough attention to be published for other readers. I think a general description of the manner in which these memoirs are being written should be set out at the beginning. As for the personal short biography, that is purely to let my family know how this all came about. However, I then move into the main phases of the book, which as you know, are the military experiences; Wall Street, with a great deal to say about that; and finally, the Penn Central, which has been a factor in financial life and also in my life. I am going to try to present this as simply as possible, not with acrimony & as far as the Penn Central is concerned, but as a realization of what happened and why. And whereas I cannot help but to be severely critical of certain portions, this is not going to be a "go gettun" book.

For this reason, here is the way I would like to describe these memoirs. First, a simple review and report of what went on as far as the military was concerned. I would like deeply to portray it as coming from the eyes of a smaller unit—that is, smaller than a division—but small enough to illustrate the relationship and action as seen from an officer who lived with the fighting troops at all times. There are many of the human qualities and human happenings, heartbreaks and joys which can be portrayed in this military experience, and, as I told you, I hope as Ernie Pyle portrayed them, I want to present "the little war" of the soldier and its surrounding circumstances, and the soldier's hopes and sorrows.

Wall Street will adopt, I hope, the same type of writing characteristic, in a sense reported from a personality on the battle line of Wall Street, who has had many experiences and many observations to report on. The same technique will be used in the discussion of the Penn Central, since there are a multitude of writings and a perfect horror of misunderstandings and situations where a political opportunist not of a high standing, has tried to take advantage of the hyena type of action. (I suggest that those who do not know what "hyena" means in the-English language should look it up.) At any rate, the whole thing is simple conversation as first suggested by Dr. Peyton, and I believe that may be a most interesting type of reading, not meant as a dry historical document, nor a strategic or tactical history. [The available manuscript includes only Hodge's wartime experiences. It is unclear whether he ever wrote the postwar section he planned. Ed.]

During the last two weeks I have referred to books and documents which are available to me at my home. I would like to list these works and documents so far.

— The first document will be the "Historical Operations of

the Seventh Army", prepared by the historical division of the Seventh Army;

– Number two will be a book entitled "Command Decision", written by Lt. Gen. Lucian Truscott;

– The third reference will be "Mission Marcel Proust", written by Col. Waller Booth, OSS;

– Fourth, there will be a reference made—probably in the appendices—to the Letters of Recommendation submitted by various high-ranking officers, on the occasion of my promotion to the rank of a general officer.

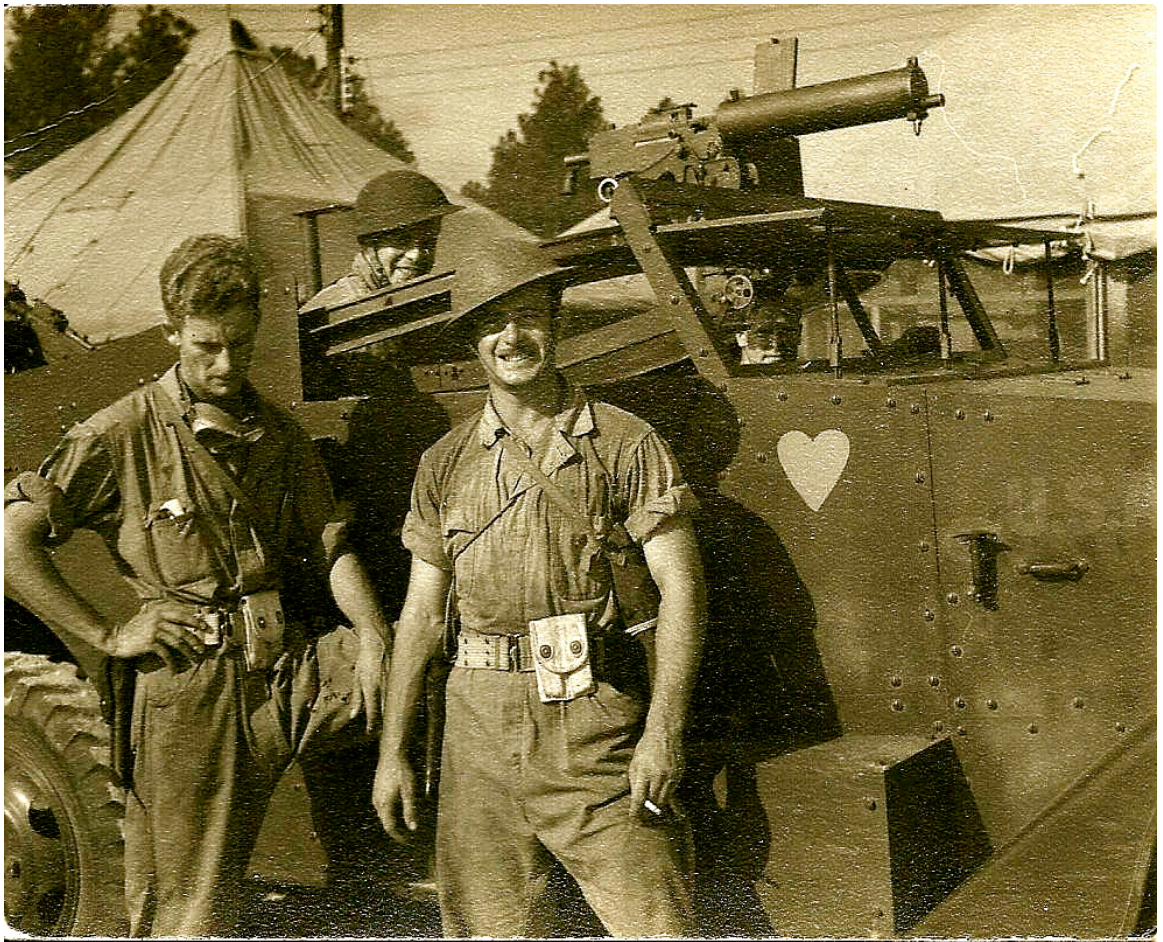
There will be other references as we go along through the book, I now realize that this will be a substantial undertaking, and I assure you that I am going to do my best to have a readable, simple story, of some very interesting periods in my, and in most cases, our lifetime.

Historical data are taken from New Basic History of the United States by Charles A. and Mary P. Beard.

Chapter 1: Military Experiences, January 6, 1941 to September 1942

Mobilization was January 6, 1941. The 102nd Cavalry Squadron mobilized into federal service on that day. At that time I was a captain in command of Troop K of the Third Squadron, 102nd Cavalry, New Jersey National Guard.

Upon the rumors of mobilization and the actuality of this important event, my wife (whom I referred to as "Mother") and I had talked over our action at considerable length. There were hardship allowances in the mobilization plans, such as dependents and children. We reasoned that the basic reason for the existence of the National Guard was the defense of the country under any and all circumstances. I had enjoyed myself, as had others in the Essex Troop, with very inexpensive polo and with a great deal of good fellowship. My wife said to me on mobilization, "Do what you think and know is right, and do not be afraid to look in the mirror when you shave in the morning."



Jock West, Joey Grancola, Joe Genero, Troop E 102nd Cavalry Regiment, at Ft Jackson, South Carolina.



The Ace of Spades on the side of this armored car signifies that this tired trooper was from D Troop of the 102nd Cavalry Regiment.

There were some who took the opportunity to leave the service at the point of mobilization. In my opinion they did not live up to their moral obligation. This type of personnel are about the same type as those people who were educated at West Point or the Naval Academy and never rejoined the services during any major war in which the U.S. was involved. This group must have an inner feeling of shame and regret for never having participated in the action for which they were trained and when their country needed them, (And while it was convenient to them at that time, it is now and has been a source of insecurity in their entire adult life.)

The 102nd Cavalry was assigned to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, for their training. The regiment had reorganized into what was identified as a "horse-mechanized" regiment, where the horse troops were moved substantial distances by

horse vans. This was the last attempt to retain the Cavalry as combat troops. The armored force was the logical descendant of the cavalry, and in my opinion this would have been the most effective branch of service to inherit the armored force. It is amazing that things such as this happen, not only in this country, but also in other countries, and normally can be traced to overzealousness.

The horse squadron of the 102nd did not last too long as there really was no mission to assign them. A good many of the officers who had been assigned to the horse squadron were transferred out of our regiment. This was, consequently, a great loss to our regiment, as many of these officers were of the finest quality and were some of our best leaders.



Albert Robbins, who served as horse-mounted Essex Trooper.

When mobilized, we had one child—a daughter—but in

October 1941, along came a son. I remember the night very well. His name was Charles J., Jr. We were on extensive maneuvers in the Carolinas. My first sergeant woke me up about 3:00 A.M. and said, "Skipper, congratulations. You have a new son." Taylor had a jeep and driver to take me to the airport at Raleigh. I had only field clothes with me and did not make a very stylish appearance at the Orange Memorial Hospital early the next morning. But I was there. Of course, I could not stay and had to report back to the field immediately.



A Troop F, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, White scout car leads a group of motorcycle scouts into position during the 1941 Carolina Maneuvers. The use of motorcycles was dropped before the men entered battle. Who knew at this time, the role these troopers would play three years later in the defeat the Nazi Germany and the liberation of Europe?

Ten days after the birth of our son, I was again called to New Jersey, as my father passed away suddenly. This was indeed a sad event for all of us.

When we had been mobilized, the details of the call stated, that we would be in training for one year and that after one year, hopefully, we would be released to return to civilian life.

It was about 11:00 A.M., December 7, 1941, and I was at my desk in my tent, writing to my wife and telling her that it appeared that we really would be released in January of 1942. I had the radio on, listening to music, when the program was interrupted with the staggering news of the infamy of Japan. I sprang out immediately to call Marie Lou, as this eliminated all doubt about future release. From now on we were facing combat, and we were not ready for same.

From January to September, 1942, it was work, work, work. In addition to hard work at training, it was service school after service school: Port Riley, The Cavalry School, Fort Knox, The Armored Force School, and shorter attendances at various other schools. My poor wife was a wonderful sport, Every time we were able to secure a house for our growing family in Columbia, South Carolina, down would come my wife and two children, sure enough, I would be sent to faraway schools or on some special mission.

It is worthy of note at this point that out of the 120 enlisted members who were mobilized with me in January 1941, I had sent 86 to Officer's Training School, which will give you some idea of the caliber of the original personnel. The replacements for these men were a completely different set of personal facts. I am ashamed to say that quite a few were illiterate, fine young men, but had very little knowledge of almost anything except their local country home.

The problems that came up indeed were amazing. It was at this point that I realized the tremendous importance of the Red Cross, as this agency of mercy was outstanding in its aid to family problems and with the new inductees particularly. I am sure you can realize that a commanding officer is somewhat similar to a house mother, such as digging into why a soldier is A.W.O.L. and other matters. A good C.O. cannot apply discipline unless he knows really what action has taken place. When the C.O. digs into why, there is no limit to his amazement when the reasons are forthcoming. Example: I had a country boy from the mountain country, and every time he was given leave, he failed to return on time or until he was picked up. He was a good, clean, properly behaved soldier, but at last the only thing to do was to bring him before a Court Martial. It was my policy never to permit a man to be brought before a court, if he were in my command, unless I personally interviewed him, hoping to determine the real cause of his actions. This soldier's record stated that he was single and had no dependents. Upon interviewing him totally alone, I finally discovered that he was

really married and that his wife was pregnant and was afflicted with a heart condition. Furthermore, he would stay absent as long as he could and when brought back would prepare non-spoilable food dishes and leave them by her bedside. When he thought she had run out of food, he would again go A.W.O.L.

Needless to say, he was not Court Martialed, but the Red Cross had his wife evacuated to a hospital within daily reach of Fort Jackson. This soldier went on to attain a sergeant's rank with no Court Martial on his record. He was most grateful to the Red Cross and to myself. I could literally go on for many minutes about cases such as this, but I cite this one as a perfect example of how one could gravely err when moving to apply blind discipline or in some cases prosecute when condemning without known and proven cause.

The above example cited, carried to a Court Martial, not only would have damaged this man's life irreparably, but also would have been against the basic elements of military justice and would have been traitorous to the code of this country. (I am aware that there are some cheap politicians in this country who have as part of their routine the undesirable, uncouth procedure of grabbing cheap publicity and disregarding their sworn oaths of justice, thereby mocking their very oaths.)

We had been training diligently, but Pearl Harbor put an entirely different attitude not only on the training per se, but also put the feeling within one that we were preparing for not just a maneuver, but a real crunchy situation, where there were going to be a lot of people hurt, and especially in units such as ours.

Military discipline is somewhat misunderstood by those who have not served under such discipline. It is not unduly harsh, but of necessity it must be exacting and, above all, administered with absolute, fairness and understanding.

The whole purpose of military discipline is, to have that immediate reaction when in combat to obey the commands issued. Sometimes there are difficult missions to be carried out, but at that point there is not room for debate. This characteristic of a well-disciplined unit becomes more obvious as one begins to know the unit. In a well-disciplined unit, one will find appearance of troops excellent, including the personal cleanliness of its personnel. One also will find the weapons of that type of unit in a clean and functional condition, and will not be endangered by misfires and malfunction because of lack of weapon care. The same type of high-grade maintenance of their motor equipment is evident in this type of unit. On the contrary, those units, which give evidence of a lackadaisical command, will be the first ones to give way when the

going gets rough. Believe me, the men know the character of their C.O. and want no part of a namby-pamby or of a C.O. who is anything but just and demanding of pride in the unit.

One of the reasons I have dwelled on the above is that this exacting training is essential from the word "go." It is directed from the outset toward victory and survival. It must not be forgotten that even though wars are degrading to the human race, they are nevertheless an expression of human emotions, and I am certainly not ready to rely on foreign nations to be good boys or to think that any of them are complete with a love of all mankind. Those who are lulled into this type of thought undoubtedly will be the first to cry for help.

When we left Fort Jackson in September 1942, we staged at Fort Dix, New Jersey. An incident comes to my mind when detraining at Fort Dix and marching to our barracks awaiting embarkation. My theory was that in training and in day-to-day routine in an encampment, the serious accidents with weapons occurred with supposedly empty weapons. I had installed a policy that provided all weapons, except automatic weapons and tank weapons, should be loaded at all times. This was born by the observation that most accidents were caused by "unloaded weapons." This, in my opinion, was the result of careless command. The result was that we never had an accident from a so-called "unloaded weapon." Every soldier, when handling his personal weapons while cleaning, or rifle practice, pistol practice or general conduct around weapons, knew that the guns were loaded and treated [them] with respect. When we were marching to our barracks at Fort Dix, a staff officer tushed to me and asked if I had signed a certificate to the effect that we had no ammunition. My reply was that, while I had seen the certificate, I had refused to sign it for the reasons given above. I further asked him to look at our troops marching in, and commented that every weapon carried by every soldier, with the exception of the automatic weapons, was loaded with prescribed amount of ammunition. This officer, who, obviously, had undergone inadequate training, actually turned white and remarked that I would hear more about this. I never heard another word.

Remember, we were embarking for overseas to engage in combat, and realism was our order of the day. We were nowhere prepared for combat. We had received about 500 replacements who were not well-trained, and believe me when I say that an untrained soldier has a lesser chance of survival, and also adds more danger and lessens the efficiency of any fighting unit. My hope at that point, as was the hope of any serious commander, was that we would have the opportunity to train hard at our overseas station.

Our destination turned out to be England. An amusing incident as we pulled away from the dock at Hoboken, New Jersey, was that while we were operating in secrecy, as were all troop movements, we were a well-known unit because we were from New Jersey, but we thought that no one knew what units were aboard the Dutch ship *Dempo*. As the tugs let go of us in midstream, the crews of both tugs lined up on their decks and shouted to us, who were deep in thought as to the future, "Bless you, Essex Troop," and "Good Luck, Essex Troop!"

We arrived at Liverpool, England that latter part of September 1942, after a more or less routine crossing, except for engine breakdowns and the normal alerts for German submarines.