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Guide to MS307 Terry de la Mesa Allen Papers

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Guide to

MS 307

Terry de la Mesa Allen Papers

Span Dates, 1907-1969

5 feet (linear)

Processed by Thomas Burdett

Donated by Alice, Consuelo, and Mary Frances Allen, 1982.

Citation: Terry de la Mesa Allen papers, 1907-1969, MS 307, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department. The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department
University of Texas at El Paso

Biography

Terry De La Mesa Allen was born at Fort Douglas, Utah, on April 1, 1888, the son of Samuel Edward Allen, a career army officer who had graduated from the United States Military Academy in the class of 1881, and Consuelo de la Mesa Allen, daughter of a Spanish physician who had served with the Union Forces in the Civil War and probably as a contract surgeon with the Army during the decades that followed. Terry Allen grew up on army posts: Fort Monroe, Virginia; West Point, where his father was an Assistant Instructor in the Department of Natural and Experimental Philosophy from 1892 to 1896; Fort Sheridan, Illinois; Fort Hamilton, New York; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; and Fort Snelling, Minnesota. It was during this formative period that he determined to follow in his father's footsteps.

Allen was appointed to the Military Academy in 1907, but later he was turned back a year for deficiency in mathematics, and in 1911 he was finally dismissed from the academy for falling a course in gunnery. Determined to obtain a commission in the Army, he then enrolled in the Catholic University of America, graduated in 1912, and applied for an appointment from civilian life. On November 1912, he was commissioned a second lieutenant of cavalry. He spent most of the next five years with his regiment, the 14th Cavalry, on the Mexican border.

In World War I he commanded the 3d Battalion, 358th Infantry, in the 90th Division. Early in the Meuse-Argonne offensive he received a wound (a machine gun-bullet through the jaw) that caused him dental problems for the rest of his life. He persuaded the doctors to return him quickly to duty, however, and before the war ended he had gained a reputation for audacious leadership. Following the Armistice, he served with the Army of Occupation in Germany, where he had ample opportunity to devote himself to what became his lifelong avocation—polo.

Upon returning to the United States in 1922, Allen served initially with the second division at Camp Travis, Texas, and during most of the years until World War II he alternated regimental service at various cavalry posts on the Mexican Border with attendance at the service schools in accordance with the Army’s plan for the professional education and development of its officers. It was while serving at Fort Bliss, Texas, in 1928 that he married Mary Frances Robinson, daughter of the late Mayor and Mrs. William F Robinson of El Paso. They had one son, Terry Allen, Jr.

Allen had already begun his climb up the Army’s educational ladder before the war, completing the officer’s basic course at the old Mounted Service School at Fort Riley, Kansas in 1916. He returned to Fort Riley in 1924 for the advanced course at the Cavalry School. Next came the course at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which he completed in 1926; the advanced course at the

Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1932; and finally the Army War College in 1935. In August of that year he was promoted to lieutenant colonel, having been a major ever since the war.

In the expansion of the Army that occurred in the fall of 1940 Allen was advanced to the temporary rank of brigadier general and assigned once more to Fort Riley to command the 3d Cavalry Brigade, an element of the newly organized 2d Cavalry Division. In June 1942 he was appointed major general. At about the time of this promotion he assumed command of the 1st Infantry Division, which was at Fort Benning preparing for development overseas.

Allen commanded the 1st Infantry Division in the North Africa campaign and the invasion of Sicily. On August 6, 1943, he was relieved of command, apparently as the result of faulty judgment and improper tactical dispositions that delayed the capture of Troina for a week. He was returned to the United States and in October was given command of the 104th Infantry Division at Camp Adair, Oregon.

The 104th Division arrived in France on September 7, 1944, and earned an enviable record during the next eight months, fighting with the Canadian First Army through Belgium and the Netherlands and later, under American command, through the Rhineland and deep into Germany. The 104th captured Cologne in March 1945 and Halle a month later. It made contact with the advancing Soviet forces at Pretzsch, near Torgau on the Elbe, on April 26, 1945.

In July 1945 the division was returned to the United States to prepare for redeployment to the Pacific. It was stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo, California, to be re-equipped and undergo additional training, but Japan's surrender ended all plans for redeployment. The 104th Infantry Division remained at Camp San Luis Obispo, gradually discharging its high-point veterans, and was inactivated December 20, 1945.

As a division commander, Allen had made a specialty of night attacks, which he was convinced reduced causalities. It was this concern for his men, as well as his flamboyant and casual style of command, that endeared him to his troops. Probably no other high-level commander in World War II was so popular with the rank and file or capable of obtaining so much from them. The hundred of personal letters to bereaved parents and widows in this collection are eloquent testimony of his genuine sorrow for his fallen soldiers.

While at Camp San Luis Obispo, General Allen decided to retire while still at the height of his achievement rather than remain in the peacetime Army and probably revert to a lower rank. He retired as a major general on August 31, 1946, and returned to El Paso to make his home. There he and Mrs. Allen resided at 21 Cumberland Circle. For a number of years the general served as a representative for various insurance companies in El Paso, but the interests of the Army remained his primary concern. He

was active in civic affairs and in veteran and patriotic organizations, and he continued to play polo whenever he had the opportunity.

On October 17, 1967, Allen's only son, Lieutenant Colonel Terry Allen, Jr., was killed in action when his battalion, ironically a part of his father's old first Division, was ambushed near a place called Kai Khe in Vietnam. This tragic loss shattered General Allen's hopes that his son would have an army career that might equal or surpass his own. General Allen never really recovered from the loss, and he died after a short illness at William Beaumont General Hospital on September 12, 1969. He was buried, not far from his son, at the Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

SOURCES

Cullum, George W. *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, Since its Establishment in 1802.* Supplements 1890-1900, 1900-1910, and 1910-1920.

Jones, Philip D. "Allen, Terry de la Mesa." *Dictionary of American Military Biography*. Ed. Roger J. Spiller. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984. I, 22-24

U. S. Department of the Army. *Official Army Register, 1948-1970*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948-1970.

U. S. War Department. *Official Army Register, 1914-1947*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914-1947.

University of Texas at El Paso. The Terry de la Mesa Allen Papers. Ms 307.

West Point Alumni Foundation, Inc. *Register of Graduates and Former Cadets of the United States Military Academy, 1960-1971.* West Point, N. Y.: West Point Alumni Foundation, Inc., 1960-1971.

Description and Arrangement

The Terry de la Mesa Allen papers are arranged in four series: Series I. Correspondence, Series II. Photographs, Series III. Military Career, and Series IV. Scrapbooks.

Scope and Content Notes

The Terry de la Mesa Allen papers consist of official and personal correspondence, photographs, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, and miscellaneous documents and mementos of General Allen's life as a career army officer and member of a three

generation army family.

Official documents preserved in these papers include numerous training memoranda, both for the 1st and the 104th Infantry Divisions during World War II. Approximately 300 photographs document General Allen's entire life and include a number of old family photographs of his parents, his grandparents, and his son. They also reflect General Allen's strong interest in horsemanship and his enthusiasm for polo during the years before World War II, as do many of the older newspaper clippings.

The correspondence covers the period from 1918 through 1968 but is most voluminous for the World War I and World War II periods. There are numerous letters written by Allen to his parents while serving with the 90th Division in France in 1918 and with American Forces in Germany in 1919 and 1920. The most voluminous files are for the period from September1944 to December 1945, the period when General Allen commanded the 104th Infantry Division in combat and until its inactivation. These files contain hundreds of his letters of condolence to parents and spouses of members of the division who were killed in action and a great many letters of recommendation for officers who served under his command. The inter-war period and the post-retirement years are marked by only occasional communications except for an extensive file of letters from Paul C. Raborg, a World War I army major, written between 1947 and 1949, urging General Allen to use his influence to have horse cavalry reestablished in the United States Army. No copies of Allen's replies to Raborg are present.

Provenance

The papers of Major General Terry de la Mesa Allen (1888-1969) were donated to The University of Texas at El Paso in January 1992 by General Allen's three granddaughters, Alice, Consuelo, and Mary Frances Allen, all of El Paso.

Restrictions

Photographs of Fort Bliss may not be copied.

Literary Rights Statement

Permission to publish material from the Terry de la Mesa Allen papers, MS 307, must be obtained from the C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library. Citation should read, Terry de la Mesa Allen papers, MS 307, C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, the University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Container List

Box #	Folder #	Description	Date
1	1	Correspondence	1918
1	2	Correspondence	1919
1	3	Correspondence	1920
1	4	Correspondence	1921-1929
1	5	Correspondence	1930-1939
1	6	Correspondence	1943
1	7	Correspondence	September 1944
1	8	Correspondence	October 1944
1	9	Correspondence	November 1944
1	10	Correspondence	December 1944
1	11	Correspondence	January 1944
1	12	Correspondence	February 1945
1	13	Correspondence	March 1945
1	14	Correspondence	April 1945
1	15	Correspondence	May 1945
2	1	Correspondence	June 1945
2	2	Correspondence	July 1945
2	3	Correspondence	August 1945
2	4	Correspondence	September 1945
2	5	Correspondence (Letters of Recommendation)	September 1945
2	6	Correspondence	October 1945
2	7	Correspondence (Letters of Recommendation)	October 1945
2	8	Correspondence	November 1945
2	9	Correspondence (Letters of Recommendation)	November 1945
2	10	Correspondence	1946
2	11	Correspondence	1947
2	12	Correspondence	1948

2	13	Correspondence	1949
2	14	Correspondence	1950
2	15	Correspondence	1951
2	16	Correspondence	1952
2	17	Correspondence	1953
2	18	Correspondence	1955
2	19	Correspondence	1956
2	20	Correspondence	1957
2	21	Correspondence	1960-1968
3	1	Photographs, Parents (Samuel Edward Allen, Consuelo de la Mesa Allen) and their Forebears.	
3	2	Photographs, wife (Mary Frances Robinson Allen) and her forebears.	
3	3	Photographs, son (Terry de la Mesa Allen, Jr.)	
3	4	Photographs, Childhood	
3	5	Photographs, West Point	1907-1911
3	6	Photographs	1912-1917
3	7	Photographs, World War	1917-1918
3	8	Photographs, Army of Occupation, Germany	1919-1922
3	9	Photographs	1922-1935
3	10	Photographs	1922-1935
3	11	Photographs	1936-1940
3	12	Photographs, early World War II	1941-1942
3	13	Photographs, 1st Infantry Division, North Africa and Sicily	1942-1943
3	14	Photographs, 104th Infantry Division, Camp Adair, Oregon	1943-1944
3	15	Photographs, 104th Infantry Division, Europe	1944-1945
3	16	Photographs, 104th Infantry Division, Camp San Luis Obispo, California	1945
3	17	Photographs, retirement	1946-1969
3	18	Photographs negatives	
3	19	Fort Bliss Museum Duplicates	
4	1	Various personal documents	

4	2	Efficiency reports	
4	3	Cavalry memoranda	
4	4	7th cavalry, Fort Bliss, Texas	1939-1940
4	5	World War I experiences	
4	6	Gasoline rationing certificates	
4	7	“A Summary of the El Guettar Offensive (20 March-6 April 1943)”	
4	8	“Factual Data—Concerning Falsehood Perpetrated by Col. Bedell Smith (Aide to General Eisenhower) in North Africa”	
4	9	1st Infantry Division Mementos	
4	10	1st Infantry Division, “Report on Combat Experiences and Battle Lessons for Training Purposes”	
4	11	Fifth Army Training Memorandum No. 76, 25 December 1943, “Relief of Front Line Units”	
4	12	Training memoranda, 104th Infantry Division	
4	13	Directive for Reconnaissance, 104th Infantry Division (?)	
4	14	Operations of the 104th (Timberwolf) Division in Europe”	
4	15	Citations of the 104th infantry Division, WWII	
4	16	Rosters of Officers, 104th Infantry Division	
5	1	Citations for Decorations Awarded in World War II	
5	2	Citations for Decorations Awarded in World War II	
5	3	Citations for Decorations Awarded in World War II	
5	4	“A Summary of Personal and Unit Citations and Memos Referring to the 1st Infantry Division and the 104th Division”	
5	5	Compilations of Citations and Commendations awarded to 1st infantry Division and 104th Infantry Division during World War II	
5	6	Conference on Combat Leadership, Fort Bliss, Texas, 22 June 1962	June 1962

5	7	Data concerning the 1st infantry Division Submitted	3 December 1965
5	8	Address to officers of the 1st Infantry Division	27 April 1963 and 30 April 1967
5	9	Twenty-second Annual Reunion, National Timberwolf Association	2-4 September 1967
5	10	Mementos	
5	11	Addresses	
5	12	Newspaper articles, miscellaneous dates	
5	13	Newspaper articles, 1920s	1920s
5	14	Newspaper articles, 1940s	1940s
5	15	Newspaper articles, 1960s	1960s
5	16	Photocopies of biographical articles and obituaries	
6		Sixteen packets of newspaper articles about Major General Terry Allen dating from World War II, all in the original envelopes of Burrelle's Press Clipping Bureau, Inc., New York, N. Y.	
7	Scrapbook 1	Annotated photograph album kept by Sgt. Charles Price, mostly concerning his service with the 1st infantry Division in North Africa and Sicily.	
7	Scrapbook 2	Scrapbook pages of various captioned photographs clipped from magazines and newspapers during World War II by Terry Allen, Jr.	