

JEFFERSON
THE
EAST

The first time I saw General Walter Krueger was on Luzon, where he was the Sixth Army commander. The morning after we had made a night attack and seized a long bridge intact at Aringay, he visited my regiment, the 130th Infantry. We walked around a churchyard where my mobile command post was located, and he asked questions about the operation. As we talked, it was obvious to me that he was taking everything in, sizing everything up — vehicles, wire, weapon positions, the condition of the men and the equipment.

He headed for a mortar position and asked a few of the questions that, I was soon to learn, he asked all soldiers — when they last had had a hot meal, how often they were resupplied with clean fatigues, and other ones that showed him whether their commanders were taking proper care of them. Finally, he asked one of the crewmen, “How can you tell whether you hit anything when you fire that mortar?”

The soldier looked directly at General Krueger. Pointing to a hill, he said, “General, we have an observer up there, and when he calls ‘em, we hit ‘em.”

The General reached over, patted the young man on the shoulder, and in that quiet and reassuring voice he always used when he talked with enlisted men, said, “Son, you’re all right.”

I saw General Krueger several times after that, and he impressed me always as the finest general around. I was hardly alone in my admiration and respect for him. He was, for many of us, the ideal of a soldier and a leader. The enlisted men, in particular, had a special affection for him.

By the time he retired after 48 years of service in the United States Army, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, the Filipino Insurrection, and the two world wars, he had commanded every kind of unit from a squad to a field army made up of three corps, ten divisions, and 250,000 men. In addition, he had performed a wide variety of duties during his remarkable career — corps G3 in the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, chief of staff of the AEF Tank Corps, instructor at the Naval War College, and Chief of the War Plans Division of the War Department General Staff.

General Douglas MacArthur once said of Krueger, “No army in military history ever had a greater leader.” Yet for some reason Krueger has failed to receive the public recognition and acclaim due him. He deserves better treatment.

Walter Krueger was born on 25 January 1881, in Flatow, West Prussia — now Zlotow, Poland. His father, a prominent landowner who served as a captain in the Prussian Army during the Franco-Prussian War, died when Walter was about four years old. His widowed mother, the daughter of a physician, brought him to the United States several years later and settled in St. Louis, where her uncle owned a brewery. Soon afterward, she married a Lutheran minister who had also come from Germany.

The family moved to Illinois and later lived in Madi-

son, Indiana. Walter received intensive tutoring from his stern and demanding stepfather and developed from it an unusually broad background in mathematics, languages, and the classics. From his mother, an accomplished pianist who gave music lessons to help support the family, he learned to play the piano. Throughout his life, intimate friends who heard him play considered him a very able pianist.

He attended public schools and graduated from high school, after which he spent two more years at the Cincinnati Technical High School to prepare himself for college and a degree in engineering. He left school when the Spanish-American War broke out and enlisted in the volunteers for overseas duty.

MILITARY SERVICE

In 1898, Krueger served as a noncommissioned officer in Cuba with the 2d U.S. Volunteer Infantry. Mustered out in February 1899, he joined the Regular Army four months later. He soldiered in the Philippines and participated in numerous engagements as a private, corporal, and sergeant with the 12th Infantry.

His efficiency reports were good — he was thorough, strove for perfection, maintained high standards of duty and discipline, and was concerned for the welfare of his men. In fact, his record was so good that in June 1901 he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the 30th Infantry.

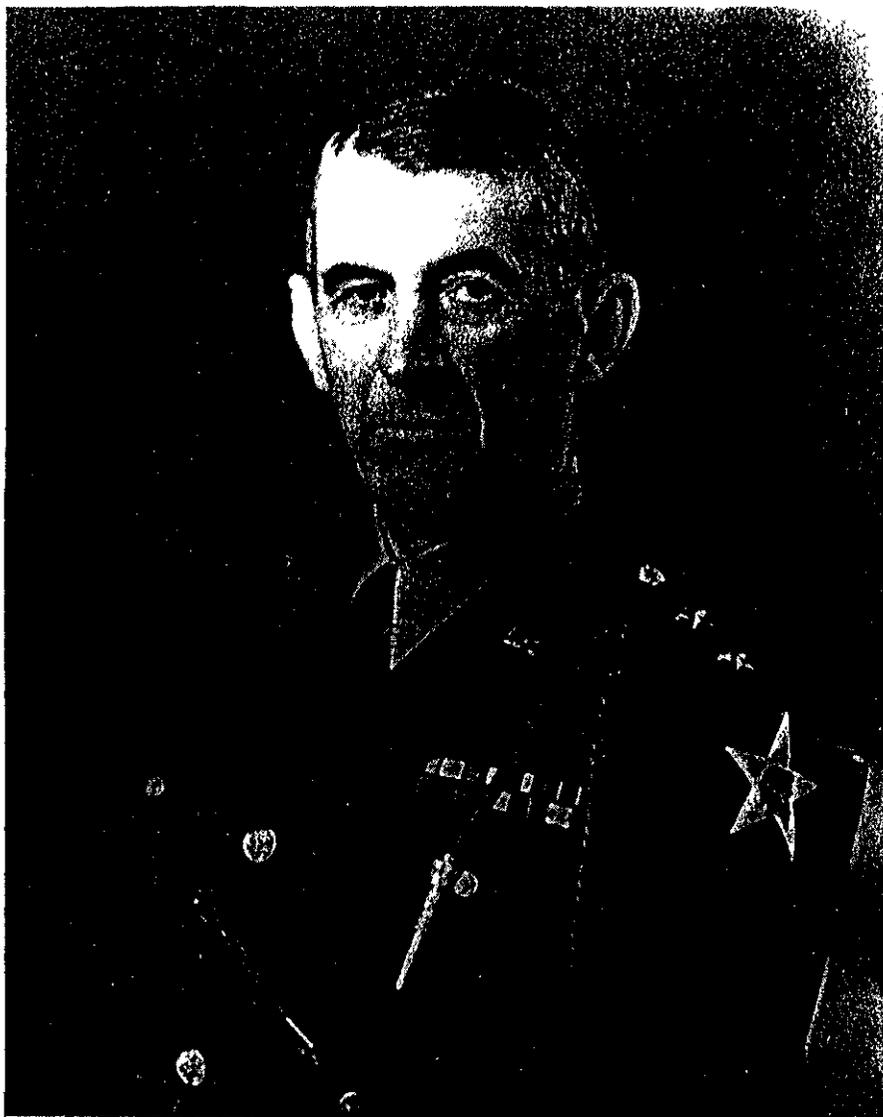
Returning to the United States in 1903, he attended the Infantry and Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth, completing the course as a distinguished graduate in 1906. This started him up through the Army’s schools to the highest level. As a matter of fact, when he was 46 years old, he attended the Air Corps Primary Flying School.

Always an avid reader, Krueger was interested in the fields of science, literature, and philosophy. His primary interest was military history and strategy, and he became known in the Army not only as an expert on discipline and training but also as a historian and scholar of military affairs. In fact, he translated and published several classic German texts on tactics and operations.

He was fluent in French, Spanish, and German. The German came naturally, of course, because of his early years in Germany and living in a German-speaking household, but he never spoke English with an accent. He was quietly proud of this achievement.

As a field commander, Krueger never had a plan, as such, drawn up. Rather, when his staff submitted a field order to him for approval, he considered the plan. And when he signed it, it became the order. This process saved much staff work, but it was a method of operation rarely understood at General MacArthur’s headquarters.

Krueger’s superb memory was legendary. In 1933, when Lieutenant Oren Hurlbut, a newly commissioned officer, reported to the 6th Infantry at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, Krueger was in command. Soon after,



Major General Walter Krueger, Commander, 2d Infantry Division, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, 1939.

Hurlbut hurt his knee in a pickup football game. Krueger appointed a line of duty board on the accident, but his main concern was that the young lieutenant was going to miss a great deal of training.

Twelve years later, in February 1945, Hurlbut, by then a colonel, was outside Sixth Army headquarters in San Fernando in the Philippines when Krueger approached. After they exchanged salutes, Hurlbut was surprised to hear Krueger ask, "How's your knee? Does it give you any trouble?" Hurlbut could only reply, "No, sir, it's fine."

Under Krueger's careful supervision, nearly a million men trained for war. He stressed the practical fundamentals of good soldiering and insisted on good leadership at all echelons of command. Famous throughout the Third Army was his Junior Officers Training Center at Camp Bullis, Texas. Here, young officers received six weeks of the most intensive training. They removed their insignia of rank, donned fatigues, and performed all the tasks normally done by enlisted men.

To one of the camp's graduating classes, Krueger said:

Gentlemen, you have ended today six weeks of very

hard work. I know that it is hard, because I have made it my business to see that it was just that way. If it had been humanly possible, I would have made it even harder . . . Take pleasure in a hard job well done; there is no greater satisfaction.

During the Louisiana maneuvers of 1941, he drew "national attention by his bold and aggressive leadership in seizing the initiative" as his Third Army overran the opposing forces in a daring offensive.

General Krueger was still commanding the Third Army in January 1943 when General MacArthur asked General George C. Marshall, the Army's Chief of Staff, to move Krueger and the Third Army staff to MacArthur's theater, the Southwest Pacific Area. Krueger later said that the opportunity was "most welcome, but wholly unexpected." He went on to say, "I had about concluded that being practically sixty-two I would be thought too old for active overseas service." Although the transfer of the Third Army headquarters was disapproved, Krueger was sent anyway with orders to activate Sixth Army headquarters.

The nucleus of Krueger's Sixth Army staff, though,

did come from Third Army headquarters in San Antonio, Texas. That the officers were good was proved by the later careers of many of them. George Decker, the chief of staff, later became Chief of Staff of the Army. Eddleman, the G3, later rose to be Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. Sturgis, the engineer, was later the Army's Chief of Engineers. Kiefer, the artillery officer, became a division commander. Reichelderfer, the signal officer, later, as a major general, commanded the huge training center at Camp Roberts, California, during the Korean War. There were many others, too, especially among the younger group, who went on to enjoy successful military careers, men such as Weyrauch, Tolson, Gray, Turnage, Ely, and West.

THE MEN

Throughout his career, one of Krueger's prime concerns was the treatment of the men in the field. During the war, he invariably checked messes to ascertain the quality of the food that was being served to the soldiers. One morning at a division headquarters he had fresh eggs

for breakfast. While visiting units in the forward area later in the day, he asked the men whether they had had any fresh eggs lately. The soldiers laughed and thought that was a great joke. But it was no joke for the division commander, because General Krueger let him know that fresh eggs were to go to the people doing the fighting, not to those at division headquarters.

While visiting one of my battalions in the rugged mountains just north of Baguio, Krueger asked how recently the men had had a hot meal. The battalion commander told him that the troops had had a hot breakfast and led him across the road and around an embankment to a place where several kitchen ranges were dug in. There, small groups of soldiers, protected from enemy fire, could come to fill marmite cans with hot food to take back to the forward positions. The look of approval on the army commander's face was all the reward any commander needed.

I knew, too, that General Krueger was greatly concerned with conserving what resources we had. After all, we were at the end of a long supply line that had to operate over vast distances.



Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, Commander, Third Army, 1941, with his Chief of Staff, Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower.



General Joseph W. Stilwell (right) visits General Walter Krueger, 1945.

During another of his visits to my regiment, he was looking around in his usual fashion when suddenly the cannon company started firing in the distance. He asked me what the company was firing at, and I replied that I didn't know. As each successive round was fired, he asked the same question. Finally, I decided it was time for a different reply. I told him I didn't know what the company was shooting at, but if it was firing, it had a suitable target. I also told him I knew the company was not wasting ammunition, because it was too hard to get.

This satisfied him, and he stopped checking each round. But as we continued to visit different elements in the area, he gave me a lesson in resource conservation. He told me how many artillery tubes there were in the Sixth Army; how many rounds would be fired if all the artillery pieces were fired once, five times, or ten times a day; how much tonnage each rate of fire added up to; and how many ships would have to ply the Pacific to get that amount of ammunition to all the different places where Sixth Army troops were fighting. It was a graphic presentation of the tremendous effort needed to keep my cannon company and the supporting artillery firing.

I was happy when the cannon company stopped firing, but I never forgot General Krueger's lesson in conservation. Because of it, more than twenty years later when I arrived in Vietnam and observed the waste of artillery ammunition on unobserved harassing and interdiction firing, I would not allow it by the units under my command.

OBJECTIONS

Although Krueger was quiet and unassuming, he was anything but a yes man. He often disagreed with MacArthur, in fact. The first big operation conducted by the

Sixth Army involved attacks on western New Britain, Arawe, and Saidor, starting in December 1943. MacArthur wanted a radar and communications element landed on a small island near Saidor just before the attack was due to get under way. Krueger was averse to attracting the enemy's attention to that area before the Saidor landing took place, and he registered an objection. MacArthur overruled him.

The planned attack on the Admiralties in February 1944 was another time when Krueger protested. The attack was moved up because air reconnaissance reported no signs of enemy activity on Los Negros. MacArthur's headquarters directed an immediate reconnaissance in force on the island. The Sixth Army's Alamo Scouts made a ground reconnaissance the day before the attack and reported that the place was "lousy" with Japanese troops.

General MacArthur had arrived that day in the jump-off area on the cruiser *Phoenix*, and Krueger decided that this meant MacArthur intended to go ashore. Going aboard the cruiser, Krueger went directly to MacArthur's cabin and told him of his concern about the operation. He noted the difference between the intelligence estimates and urged MacArthur not to land.

Of that incident, Krueger later wrote:

He had expressly forbidden me to accompany our assault landings and yet now proposed to do so himself. I argued that it was unnecessary and unwise to expose himself in this fashion and that it would be a calamity if anything happened to him. He listened to me attentively and thanked me, but added, "I have to go." He had made up his mind on the subject and that was that.

MacArthur was fortunate, though. Enemy resistance

was light. He walked all about the Momote air strip with a strong enemy force only a few hundred yards away. For some reason, it held off attacking until evening. Had the force attacked in the afternoon instead, MacArthur might well have been killed or captured.

Krueger had another difference of opinion with MacArthur after the landings in Lingayen Gulf. When MacArthur wanted to rush headlong to Manila, Krueger told him that he (Krueger) had only one supply base and was not going to jeopardize his troops by making it possible for the Japanese to sweep out of the hills overlooking the landing area and destroy the base. Several times MacArthur put pressure on him to move on Manila, but Krueger, ever mindful of his responsibility for the safety of his troops, did not budge until he considered it safe to do so.

But never in these disagreements with MacArthur, or with any other senior commander, did Krueger talk about the matter or display his feelings to his staff. After fighting it out with his superior, if he did not win, "that was that." He neither impugned the decision nor implied that there was anything improper about it. Petty bickering was no part of his character.

With respect to his subordinate commanders, Krueger never hesitated to let them know when their tactics or other aspects of their military operations were below par. On several occasions during the Luzon campaign, Krueger was dissatisfied with corps operations and visited the area to get a first-hand look. If he felt that the commander was part of the problem, he took him aside and spoke to him privately, but he never criticized anyone in front of others.

On one such occasion, returning to his jeep after a private consultation with a corps commander, Krueger was obviously unhappy. He said to his aide and his G3, "In over forty years of service I have never raised my voice to an enlisted man, but a corps commander should know better."

He expected officers at all levels to set the standards and to guide their subordinates, and the higher the rank, the more he expected. Frequently Krueger stopped his jeep when soldiers, especially sentries, were performing some duty improperly. He always asked for the senior NCO or whoever was in charge, took him aside and, without raising his voice, explained what the soldiers were doing wrong and why. He was much sterner with his senior officers.

One of the reasons Krueger has never received appropriate attention may be that he was not particularly concerned with public relations. He was never interested in fame or the public eye. With MacArthur as the theater commander, perhaps there was little he could have done in any case. For MacArthur's communiques were, with few exceptions, all about MacArthur. As General Robert Eichelberger explained in a letter to his wife, MacArthur wanted to be known not only as a great theater commander but also as "a great front-line fighting leader," which "would be very difficult to put over if any

of his particular leaders were publicized." So MacArthur gave the impression for the people back home that "he has been the one who has been doing the front-line fighting."

Krueger himself never gave any evidence that lack of personal recognition bothered him. But he was irked when his troops did not get credit for their accomplishments. Probably the most notable of these occasions was the invasion of Leyte and the return to the Philippines. All the world knew about MacArthur, but it took some time for word to get out that the Sixth Army under Krueger had made the invasion.

Although some observers have said that MacArthur regarded Krueger as unenterprising and even timid, the opposite is true. MacArthur had a very high regard for him. Once, speaking of Krueger in his grand manner, MacArthur said, "The mantle of Stonewall Jackson rests upon his shoulders." Krueger, in turn, had great admiration for MacArthur and normally referred to him in conferences as the Command-in-Chief.

REQUEST

Krueger was scheduled to retire at the age of 64 on 31 January 1945, but he was kept on active duty at MacArthur's request. That day turned into a memorable occasion. He met General Griswold, the XIV Corps commander, at Fort Stotsenberg and there participated in the ceremony of raising the American flag again over the installation. He then visited the 1st Cavalry Division's headquarters to go over the final plan for the dash to Manila, scheduled for the next day.

That afternoon he went to San Juan de Guimba, where he had been commissioned a second lieutenant. He recognized the buildings where his company had been billeted, where he had lived as an NCO, and where he had stayed as a company officer. As he was recalling these experiences from his younger days, American prisoners rescued from Cabanatuan by the 6th Ranger Battalion arrived. When the trucks carrying the prisoners came to a stop, the Sixth Army information officer yelled, "Men, this is General Krueger." A great cheer went up from those who had suffered so long. That cheer probably meant more to him than any accolades from the public would have.

Walter Krueger had a selfless sense of dedication to duty. He was a thoroughly professional soldier who served his country well. He made an enormous contribution to our victory in World War II.

As a matter of fact, the Army could use a good many more Walter Kruegers today. And any time.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ARTHUR S. COLLINS, JR., U.S. Army, Retired, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1938. He served throughout World War II with the 130th Infantry, participating in combat operations as a battalion commander in New Guinea and as commander of the regiment on Morotai, on Luzon, and in the occupation of Japan after the war. Later, he commanded the 5th Infantry Division in Germany and the 4th Infantry Division in Vietnam. His last assignment before retiring in 1974 was as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of USAREUR and Seventh Army.
