

## **NOTE: GENERALS IN POLITICS**

The subject can be viewed from four perspectives:

1. Military careerists who nurtured political relationships so as to hasten promotions.
2. Active duty generals who attempted to influence public policy (as extreme examples, Edwin Walker and John Singlaub).
  - a. Subtopic: The perennial question concerning JCS influence on Presidential policy—a public position on unquestioning endorsement or public opposition when Presidential political decisions do not coincide with the military establishment's self-interest.
3. Retired generals who participated in politics and in efforts to mold public opinion. One can find numerous examples. Albert Wedemeyer, Lyman Lemnitzer, and William Westmoreland come to mind, as well as Hugh Drum. Possibly resentful of being passed over as Chief of Staff when Malin Craig retired in 1938, Drum, after himself retiring in 1943, became Gov Thomas Dewey's military advisor, working for the defeat of FDR. See:  
Johnson, Elliot L. "The Military Experiences of General Hugh A. Drum from 1898-1918."  
PhD dss, U WI-Madison, 1975. pp. iii-iv. U53D7J6.
4. Politicians who in wartime pursued military careers (e.g., Civil War Generals Butler, Banks and Sickles and Patrick Hurley in World War II).

Perspectives 3 & 4 are not considered in the list below.

Four preliminary observations:

- a. The careers of the generals listed below reveal the commingling of perspectives 1 & 2.
- b. Blood relationships and relationships established by marriage were potent political aids to promotion.
- c. Most biographers make efforts to show that their protagonists achieved high rank because of military ability, rather than through political family ties or political machinations. Thus, one cannot easily evaluate the effects of politics on careers. An example of a hagiographical biography that disguises more than it reveals is Virginia Johnson's study of Miles cited below.

d. A quick survey of the literature uncovered two scholars who point out historical instances when Army officers believed in political action. Concerning Perspective 2: Samuel P. Huntington in The Soldier and the State (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1972; UA11.5H86) mentions that the prevailing opinion of officers expressed in an 1836 Army & Navy Chronicle (pp. 207-8) favored military participation in politics, "(T)he Founding Fathers had set the proper example. Every officer in the Revolutionary Army, it was argued, was also a politician." Concerning Perspective 1: Allan Millett in The General: Robert L. Bullard and Officership in the United States Army, 1881-1925 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975; U53B78M54) speaks of the extreme politicization of the promotion process under McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and Taft. Millett's description on pages 227-30 is informative. Other scholarly studies could be found that reinforce Huntington on using rank to establish policy and that reinforce Millett on using politicians to win stars.

The list:

Charles Lee and Horatio Gates - generals who used their influence in the Continental Congress. Their champion was Thomas Mifflin. They were associated with the Conway Cabal against Washington. See:

Alden, John R. General Charles Lee, Traitor or Patriot? Baton Rouge: LSU, 1951. E207L47A5.

Patterson, Samuel W. Horatio Gates, Defender of American Liberties. NY: Columbia, 1941. E207G3P3.

Winfield Scott. Scott's name must figure prominently when discussing the relationship of politics and generalship. In fact, he campaigned for the Presidency in 1852 while still serving on active duty as Commanding General. Needless to say, his later association with the victorious Franklin Pierce was strained. Although continuing as Commanding General of the Army, he moved his office to New York. A by-pass of Scott was built by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis and Adjutant General Samuel Cooper. This fete was duplicated in 1898, when President McKinley and Adjutant General Henry Corbin laid in a by-pass around the irascible Commanding General Nelson Miles.

See, for example, p. 102, Robert F. Stohlman, "The Powerless Position: The Commanding General of the Army of the United States, 1864-1903," (Mil Affairs, 1975; UB200S76). Cooper, Corbin and Fred Ainsworth are examples of Adjutant Generals who had great political leverage.

Elliott, Charles W. Winfield Scott, The Soldier and the Man. NY: Macmillan, 1937. E403.1S4E6.

Hughes, J. Patrick. "The Adjutant General's Office, 1821-1861." PhD dss, OH State, Columbus, 1977. pp. 263-66. UA23.6H8.

John C. Fremont married the daughter of the leading expansionist senator, Thomas Hart Benton. Benton's care and handling of Fremont's military career reminds one of Senator Warren's construction of the Pershing career (see below).

Nevins, Allan. Fremont, Pathmarker of the West. 2 vols. NY: Frederick Ungar, 1961, E415.9F8N4.

William Tecumseh Sherman. No US general ever had better political ties than Sherman, except George Washington. The man who raised him was a prominent senator, Thomas Ewing, whose daughter Sherman later married. In addition, Sherman's brother John was a leading congressman and senator of the Whig/Republican party. The extent to which Sherman used these ties to further his career is another question.

Lewis, Lloyd. Sherman, Fighting Prophet. NY: Harcourt, Brace, 1932. E467.1S55L4.

George Custer. The Politicians used Custer more effectively than he used them. He campaigned with President Andrew Johnson in late summer of 1866. See:

Monaghan, Jay. Custer. Lincoln, NE: U NE, 1971. pp. 266-79. E467.1C99M652.

Nelson Miles was married to the niece of John and William T. Sherman. She was not bashful about writing letters to politicians in order to further his career. Miles also had close ties with the influential Cameron family and did not disavow interest in Presidential nominations when his name was mentioned by the press, especially after his heroic victory at Wounded Knee. See:

Johnson, Virginia W. The Unregimented General: A Biography of Nelson A. Miles. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962. pp. 192-93, 257, 275. E181M53J6.

Leonard Wood. And so begins a long parade of Theodore Roosevelt's favored friends. Wood was a surgeon when he met TR in 1897. A close friendship developed. Wood used the eager and willing TR to get the line command Wood sought, i.e., the 1st Vol Cav or "Rough Riders." With Roosevelt's support, he eventually rose to be Chief of Staff (1910-1914). See:

Lane, Jack C. Armed Progressive, General Leonard Wood. San Rafael, CA: Presidio, 1978. E181W854.

John J. Pershing. Machinations by father-in-law Senator Francis E. Warren on behalf of the 44 year-old captain led to a brigadier generalship, leaping over 909 senior (but very small?) officers. It is superfluous to say TR was his friend. See:

Vandiver, Frank E. Black Jack. Vol. I. College Station: TX A&M U, 1977. pp. 373-91. E181P575v1.

S.B.M. Young. Another Chief of Staff (1903-1904) whose career was aided by a close friendship with TR. See letters to Young in Vols. 3 & 4 of:

Roosevelt, Theodore. The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt. [Ed by Elting E. Morison] Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1951. E757A4- 1951.

Henry T. Allen. As an example, typical of the period, of having an influential civilian friend plead one's promotion cause with the executive authorities, see pp. 134-135 of Twitchell, who tells how Captain Allen, a temporary Brigadier General, sought appointment as a Major General. Allen's career was also aided by - you guessed it, but to prove it check page 84. See:

Twitchell, Heath, Jr. Allen: The Biography of an Army Officer, 1859-1930.  
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1974. U53A44T94.

J. Franklin Bell, whose service as Chief of Staff (1906-1910) overlapped the Roosevelt and Taft Administrations. Taft had become Bell's fast (at his weight?) friend a few years earlier in the Philippines and the wives were also very close. Arthur MacArthur (and his subordinates), who resented Taft's civilian interference in their island duchy, boycotted the Tafts socially. The Bells' future was assured when they disavowed the maneuver. Later, Taft was TR's Secretary of War. Bell, then commandant at Leavenworth, took advantage of the friendship by trying to effect reforms. See:

Raines, Edgar F. "Major General J. Franklin Bell and Military Reform." PhD dss, U WI-Madison, 1976. pp. 11-14. U55B45R3v1.

Hugh Scott. Chief of Staff, 1914-1917, was a friend of Woodrow Wilson. Scott's brother had been Wilson's colleague at Princeton and had "stuck by him during hectic troubles," according to Vandiver. See:

Lane, Jack C. Armed Progressive...., cited above, p. 179.  
Vandiver, Black Jack, cited above, p. 588.

Douglas MacArthur. His use of friendships may have been subtle, although his mother was very forward in her efforts on his behalf. As a young officer, he was befriended by Chief of Staff Wood and Secretary of War Newton Baker. See:

James, D. Clayton. The Years of MacArthur. Vol. I. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970.  
pp. 110-35. E745M3J3v1.