



AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH CUMMING HAW

I am very proud that my father and his four brothers all fought in General Lee's army in the Civil War. When he was little more than a boy, my father served in the trenches around Richmond and went south on foot when that city was evacuated by the Confederate government in 1865. Joining Wheeler's Cavalry, he rode with Jefferson Davis' escort until the Southern President was captured.

I was born in Hampton, Virginia, March 14, 1893. From my earliest teens, I and my friends sailed on, and swam in, Hampton Roads on every summer day when there was any wind, and drifted when there was none. So it was natural that the sight of United States and foreign warships often lying off Fort Monroe (Old Point Comfort) early stirred in me a great longing to enter the Naval Academy. In 1910 I spent a few months at "Bobby" Werntz's cram school in Annapolis, a weird and wonderful institution of learning if ever there was one. Living in "Miss Em's" boarding house, an ancient stone dwelling opposite the Carvel Hall Hotel, at Bobby's I met Mike Summers, who used to go out and shout insults at the Navy plebes rowing near the seawall or drilling on the parade ground of the Naval Academy. I took Congressman Jones' competitive examination for appointment to West Point just for practice, at Mike's instigation, and winning, chose West Point, a decision that I have never regretted (except perhaps at times during Beast Barracks!)

The minimum height then was 5 feet 4½ inches-- I was 5 feet 4½ ! My mother had taught school at Fort Monroe, and one of her former pupils had become The Surgeon General of the Army, so we went to Washington to see him. He made no promises, but I have always been glad we took that trip!

On 14th June, 1911, West Point snatched me to her bosom. Aloysius Harvey of Mississippi was my roommate in Beast Barracks, a true gentleman, killed at Saint Mihiel in 1918. In the hospital for a few days, I was convinced that I would be turned back to the next class, for rifles had just been issued, and how could I ever hope to learn the Manual of Arms fast enough to catch up with my classmates ?

Pushing loaded wheelbarrows to camp to join "D" Company on the last day of Beast Barracks, we found it commanded by Paddy Flint, 1912, one of the finest, bravest, toughest, most original, and truest soldiers that West Point ever produced. In World War II, Paddy put a demoralized regiment on its feet and

died of wounds in the front line. Today, just fifty years later, I can recall perfectly the sight of that hard Irish countenance as Paddy perched on a tentrail, gesturing with a cotstick in his hand, his old creased campaign hat pushed far down over his eyes, as he gave orders out of the side of his mouth. Of all the Very Important Persons that I have encountered since then, none has ever produced the awe that Paddy inspired in my naive heart that day.

My roommate in barracks in plebe year was Pettus Hamphill, the wildest man who ever came out of Texas to buck the tacs. Pettus was turned back for deficiency in discipline in our third class year. During his five years at West Point, he surely garnered more demerits and walked the area more hours, for 'slugs' as well as demerits, than any other man who ever succeeded in graduating. Yet he became the most enthusiastic alumnus I have ever met.

Pettus and I were extremely--and deservedly--unpopular with Paddy Flint and Uncle Eddy DeArmond, our tac.

I was fortunate enough to room with Charlie Busbee our last three years, and for him I have a very real affection and admiration.

The smallest man in the Corps, I found myself Number 1 in the rear rank of the first squad in "D" Company, with D'Alary Fechet as my front rank file. D'Alary proved himself a wonderful field soldier in both World Wars. Still a bachelor, he lives here in Santa Barbara now.

During each of our four years in "D" Company, at least three of the following pairs of roommates lived on the same floor of barracks in various years: Ike Miller and Joe McNarney; Leroy Watson and (one year) Otto Hooper; Babe Conklin and Tom Taylor; Chew Williams and Shorty MacDonald; Charlie Busbee and Jody Haw.

I can still remember the first 16 names on the roll called by the first sergeant (John Huff Van Vliet, 1913) in plebe camp; Gerstner, Canady, Viner, Thurman, Gaugler, Woodbury, Ingles, Milliken, Gibson, Parkinson, Doe, Jernigan, Anderson, Barton, Bertman, Brady, Busbee.

"D" Company tacs that I remember were E. Llewellyn Bull, Uncle Eddy DeArmond, and Georgie Baird. Between them, they had me walking the area for demerits all too many hours, especially in plebe year.

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My greatest thrill in plebe camp was when Paddy Flint gathered us plebes of "D" Company around the campfire on our hike and gave us a talk on the West Point Spirit and the Honor system. As we sang football songs, our hearts swelled with enthusiasm and we felt that at last we were really members of the Corps.

Did I go out for football? Yes, by order of Jens Doe, 1914. The smallest football shoes were at least three sizes too large, the pants came to my ankles, and the jersey cascaded to the vicinity of my knees. At the end of the day's practice, I was informed that I need not turn out again because the manager had no football clothes small enough for me. Thus because of criminal negligence in failing to furnish pint-sized uniforms, West Point lost out on a potential All-American quarterback.

The tacs could not have been a very discerning group in those days, for I, like a great many classmates, was never promoted above the grade of cadet private.

But there is not space for the countless memories of classmates and cadet life that would fill volumes.

Assigned to the Coast Artillery upon graduation, Wogan, Summers, Jones, C.R., and I reported to Fort H. G. Wright, on Fisher's Island in Long Island Sound off New London, Connecticut, in September, 1915, and Joe Teter soon joined us. Our gruff old colonel used to return our salutes, when we passed him on cold mornings, by withdrawing four fingers (but not the thumb) from his overcoat pocket and flicking them at us. When after a couple of months we requested permission to spend a Saturday night in New London, he indicated that the army had really gone to Hell at last. He granted permission, but as reluctantly as though he were a starving man giving away his last crust of bread.

The winter was bitter cold. Often ice coated the New London boat all the way to the top of the mast, and we had to wear the straps of our caps under our chins to keep them from blowing off--the caps, not the chins.

Before the beautiful, welcome summer had gotten well started, my company crossed the continent on a troop train, bound for Hawaii. Though planned months ahead as a routine transfer, the trip occurred at the same moment that the National Guard was suddenly called out and sent to the border by President Wilson, and we were cheered as we passed through towns on the way because the inhabitants thought we were going south to fight the Mexicans. My heartbreak at heading the wrong way when a real war appeared to be breaking out was enhanced by the feeling of travelling under false colors.

Joseph C. Haw, continued

In Hawaii I was stationed at Fort DeRussy on the beach at Waikiki. This was really a little Paradise then, with swimming and surfing on a board every day, the steady roar of the breakers, and the moon shining bright through the palm trees at night.

I attended Billy Cavell's wedding and was John Kahle's best man when John married Louise Clark.

But when World War I came, the Coast Artillery in Hawaii just stayed there. After all, there were German raiders in the Pacific, and as Pearl Harbor proved 24 years later, the Japs were not to be trusted too far.

Kahle, Loomis (1914) and I tried our best to get to France. We applied for transfer to the Air Corps and were turned down because by that time they would not transfer any more regular officers to that branch. I begged my influential uncle in Washington to help and he refused on the ground that I would eventually be the only support of my parents and might get killed if sent to France.

Moved to Ruger to command the mortar battery located on the floor of the Diamond Head crater, I had my Battery Commander's Station at the tip of Diamond Head, elevation 702 feet.

Then back to DeRussey as Fort Commander, and finally to the states to join a regiment slated for France. The pilot came aboard at San Francisco wearing a gauze mask and told us that the flu was killing hundreds, the streets were full of funeral processions, and every place of amusement was closed tight. I reached Washington the night of the Armistice!

From Fort Williams, Maine, I went to France in 1919. My ship, the Navy Transport "Graf Waldersee," was rammed by another ship off Fire Island and the passengers (only six, all officers) and most of the crew abandoned ship by order of the captain. My lifeboat was manned by sailors who had apparently never pulled an oar, but fortunately the sea was calm. After drifting for two hours in the fog we were picked up by another Navy transport and proceeded to France. Following a tour of the battlefields and supply establishments of the AEF, I was assigned to the Base Inspector's Office at Camp Pontenezan, Brest, France, where we investigated everything from murder to a French widow's claim for a few francs damages for a bedstead broken by an American. Our star performance was getting the last 150 temporary officers of the AEF embarked on a transport. A few had to be ferreted out and escorted by Military Police, and one sneaked ashore on tugs twice, after which he was put in the brig.

Joseph C. Haw, continued

In 1920 I became assistant editor of the Coast Artillery Journal at Fort Monroe. At that time it looked as though the Coast Artillery had a brilliant future. In France, Coast Artillerymen had manned the anti-aircraft artillery, the railway artillery (except for a 14-inch naval battery) and heavy tractor-drawn artillery. With these missions added to the coast defense missions of serving fixed guns of various calibers and planting and serving shore-controlled submarine mines, and Coast Artillerymen doing more foreign service than officers of any other branch, the Coast Artillery offered the most varied service of all the arms and branches. There was also a great spurt in the science of gunnery and in technique and tactics, and my contacts with the Coast Artillery Board, at that time boasting some of the ablest officers in the army, combined with the novel and absorbing work on the Journal, made my tour one of fascinating interest.

On May 18, 1921, I married Miriam Northcott of Portland, Maine.

That August I reported for duty as an instructor in P. Holt's Department of English and History at West Point. General MacArthur instituted intra-mural athletics, one of the greatest advances in the history of the Academy, and I coached a company soccer team. The presence of about fifteen classmates added to the pleasure of this West Point tour. One of the toughest assignments of my career was trying to teach an appreciation of poetry to the goats, as I had never been interested in this form of literature and knew nothing about it. The Engineer instructor of our day who remarked that he "had never seen any light in the eyes of a goat" expressed my feelings exactly. Colonel Holt's policy was to break in new instructors in plebe English, a course that ended in March, when we found ourselves teaching surveying for three months. The next year I taught yearling History (of Europe). But before I could build up a real background of knowledge in this subject, all the instructors in Economics departed when the Manchu Law was reinstated, and in my third year I taught that subject, which none of us had ever studied. In June, 1924, the Manchu Law caught up with me too. Teaching four subjects in three years made an interesting variety but it was frustrating to feel that I could offer the cadets very little outside of their own texts.

The winter of 1924-1925 found me in the Field Officers' Course at Fort Monroe. In 1925-1926, with about fourteen classmates and two hundred others, I took the course at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The War Department had that year sent Major General Edward ("Uncle Eddy") King to humanize the place after two suicides in the preceding class,

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JOSEPH C. HAW CONTINUED

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just a few beaver-board partitions away from our apartment, and  
wonderful neighbors they were.

Then I joined the 62d Coast Artillery (Anti-aircraft)  
at Fort Totten, Bayside, Long Island, New York. The 62d  
immediately went on a month-long maneuver at Camp Upton on Long  
Island to test the latest doctrines in anti-aircraft tactics.  
Owing to lack of funds and the small size and scattered locations of  
the army of those days, our regiment was alone--the divisions,  
corps, and field armies involved in our problems existed only on  
paper. This was followed by target practice on the south shore of  
Long Island. The same schedule was repeated each summer. One year  
I took a mixed battalion of guns and machine guns to Aberdeen  
Proving Ground, Maryland, where for a month we fired all the new  
anti-aircraft weapons that were under development by the Ordnance  
Department. Altogether, my time with the 62d was by far my most  
interesting peace-time service with troops.

The period 1929-1934 I spent as instructor of Or-  
ganized Reserves in Schenectady, New York. Living like a civilian  
in a civilian community for the first time since entering West Point  
was quite a jolt for a while. But this tour gave me a new and use-  
ful insight into the problems and psychology of the men who come  
from civil life to fight all our wars--and wonderful material they  
are, too.

In May, 1933, during the famous "First Hundred Days"  
of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, I was rushed to Fort  
Dix, New Jersey, for "two weeks temporary duty." I left Dix with  
the first contingent of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) for  
the West, and my two weeks of temporary duty became four months in  
command of a CCC company of under-privileged young men who built fire  
access roads in a national forest in Idaho. Our camp was a couple  
of miles from Tamarack, a community of four houses 125 miles north  
of Boise. Though a few of the CCC camps had serious troubles, my  
group were good hombres, and with a fine Reserve lieutenant, four  
good enlisted men, and Ellis Snow, a wonderful person, as the ci-  
vilian in charge of the roadbuilding, we made out all right.

On the Atlantic side in Panama in 1934-1936, I had the  
privilege of serving for a year as adjutant for Major General Lytle  
Brown, the wisest and one of the ablest officers under whose immedi-  
ate command I have ever served.

My next five years were spent in charge of the Coast Artillery unit which had just been organized at the University of Maine, supplementing the Infantry unit that had long existed there. At that time the University had probably the most homogeneous Anglo-Saxon student body of any college in the country, men of fine old Maine stock, and that's hard to beat.

In June, 1941, I assumed command of the 52d Coast Artillery (Railway), the last railway artillery regiment in the army, at Fort Hancock, New Jersey (8-inch guns.) Immediately after Pearl Harbor we sent a battalion to the West Coast and a battery to Cape Henlopen, Delaware, later another battalion to Cape Charles, Virginia. The remaining guns were emplaced at Fort Hancock for the defense of New York Harbor and remained immobilized. I wore another hat as Post Commander under Phil Gage (1909), the Harbor Defense Commander, one of the best. When the regimental organization for railway artillery was abolished, I commanded the 245th Coast Artillery. A pessimist would certainly have lost some sleep from fear that one of our shore-controlled mines in the Ambrose Channel might be fired by accident, at a moment when the Queen Elizabeth, leaving New York Harbor with 15,000 troops aboard, was right over it. Of course, none was ever fired accidentally.

As I was 48 years old at the time of Pearl Harbor, and 45 was the maximum age for regimental commanders overseas, there seemed little chance of my getting an overseas assignment. At last I wrote to Ike Eisenhower, and thanks to Bradley's willingness to take me, flew to France in September, 1944, where I did odd jobs on Bradley's staff until assigned as Assistant Adjutant General for Postal Affairs at Headquarters, Communications Zone, European Theater of Operations. This job consisted primarily in helping the army postal service to get what it needed in the way of transportation and co-operation from the other branches. Although the mail service at times had naturally been the target of some griping, there was less complaint from the combat divisions than from the Service of Supply troops.

In fact, only one who saw the picture from the inside can realize what a splendid job was actually performed by the army postal service under the greatest imaginable difficulties, and the officers and men of that service from the top down deserve the highest commendation.

In the spring of 1945 Aurand wished on me the job of arranging a class reunion. Thanks to Ike, who attended, we held it at Cannes, France, June 2d-5th, with 30 present, and everyone had a grand time.



In 1945-1947 I commanded a recruiting district with headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the latter year, I accompanied Ike Eisenhower on a memorable fishing trip on the famous Brule River in Wisconsin.

Flying to France again in November, 1947, I was on the staff of Headquarters, European Command, in charge of the Dependents' Schools established the year before for children of American officers, soldiers, and civilian employees of the army and air force in the American Zone of Germany. This was another most interesting job. My predecessor, Major Virgil Walker, formerly a high school principal, had done great work in setting up the schools and had then reverted to civilian status as executive in my office. We had high standards and were successful in recruiting above-average teachers from the American public school system. When our pupils returned to the States, they had no difficulty fitting into the schools without losing a grade.

When I left in 1950 we had nearly 6000 pupils and 250 teachers. We laid a good foundation for a system that now embraces all of Europe with 60,000 American children as pupils.

Reporting to the Pentagon in 1950, I was assigned to the Career Records Analysis Section of The Adjutant General's Office, and became Chief of the section about a year later, heading quite a flock of colonels who were doing work entirely unsuitable to their grade, abilities and experience. Upon becoming Chief I made history by immediately recommending that my colonels should be replaced by people much junior to that grade, but it was nearly two years before this was done.

In this section I read thousands of efficiency reports of officers of every grade and branch of the service. Those of my classmates were fascinating reading for me, of course--and needless to say, made me prouder than ever to be a member of the class of 1915.

On March 31, 1960 I retired for age (60) as a colonel. I settled in Santa Barbara, California, where I found two of my classmates--Buck Finley and John Smylie.

\* \* \* \* \*

My son Joseph Northcott Haw, born June 12, 1922, married Carol Jean Caswell in 1953, has three children--Stuart Bryan Haw, born 1954, Nadine Carol Haw, born 1956, and Laura Jean Haw, born 1959--and is in business in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My son Hugh Cumming Haw, born September 12, 1957, remained a bachelor until June 1963, when he married Vera Miller and lives in Los Angeles, California.

Joseph C. Haw, continued

Both sons served in the armed forces, but chose civilian careers.

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I have the usual service ribbons for World Wars I and II, with stars for the Ardennes and Rhineland campaigns in World War II. I was awarded the Legion of Merit in the latter conflict.

My permanent address is 1549 Hillcrest Road, Santa Barbara, California.

My late wife Miriam Northcott Haw died on January 4th, 1963.

I married Rilla Amelia Hokanson on November 16th, 1963.

I have gotten a great deal of enjoyment from my efforts as an amateur painter, and with Ria as a partner I find duplicate bridge absorbing.

The end

Last three sentences added in February, 1964.