

Job Description

A. What I Do

I am a military historian, writing a volume at command and operational level in the U. S. IN WORLD WAR II series of the Historical Division, Department of the Army. After coming to the Historical Division in July 1946 I was given a directive by General Dwight D. Eisenhower which declared: "You are designated as the historian of SHAEF to prepare a complete and detailed account of operations of SHAEF Headquarters. This account should record accurately all aspects of the organization, administration and operations of SHAEF Headquarters." This was in furtherance of an earlier directive given me by General Walter B. Smith in Frankfurt in 1945. The outline which I am following was submitted both to Generals Smith and ~~General~~ Eisenhower and approved by them.

European Section of the

[NOTE: Date of this writing is unknown but is between 1946 and the publication of SUPREME COMMAND in 1954]

F.E. Ryan

Job Description

originally

A. What I Do

1. I am a military historian, writing official history of the United States in World War II on a command and operational level. My present assignment ~~in the historical division~~ was given me on 26 July 1946 by General Dwight D. Eisenhower who declared: "You are designated as the historian of SHAEF to prepare a complete and detailed account of operations of SHAEF Headquarters. This account should record accurately all aspects of the organization, administration and operations of SHAEF Headquarters". This was in furtherance of an earlier directive given me by General Walter B. Smith in Frankfurt in 1945. The outline of which I am following was submitted both to Generals Smith and Eisenhower and approved by them.

2. My task requires me to study the voluminous official records of Supreme Headquarters and subordinate units, Combined British and US S. Chiefs of Staff, Joint U. S. Chiefs of Staff, British Chiefs of Staff Committee, British War Cabinet, ~~the personal papers of~~ personal papers of Generals Eisenhower and Smith, personal diaries of various British officers which have been furnished me, pertinent German documents, and many other files. In addition to the study of official documents, I was directed by General Eisenhower to conduct interviews on the widest possible basis. Over the past two years I have interviewed more than 100 generals and admirals who worked with General Eisenhower, including General de Gaulle, Lords Mountbatten, Ismay, Tedder, Alanbrooke, Cunningham, Portal, Generals Eisenhower, Bradley and Smith, and Admirals Leahy and King. In carrying out my duties I also travelled extensively over battlefields in Germany, Belgium, France, Holland, and Luxembourg.

B. What the job requires

Operational

1. The writing of the history of THE SUPREME COMMAND is based on interviews and research. This preliminary phase is followed by the selection of pertinent material and by its proper evaluation. Finally, there is the task of drawing valid conclusions, of putting the story into readable form, and of making available to the army and the general public an integrated study of the Supreme Command, the story of how it functioned, the relations of the Supreme Commander with the subordinate commands, the workings of many elements of the Supreme Command, such as planning, civil affairs, military government, post-hostilities planning, strategic decisions.

C. Additional duties

1. In addition to my specific writing tasks, I am called on for many other duties. Because two-thirds of all U. S. divisions in World War II were in the European Theater of Operations, our section is called on more than any other writing section in the Historical Division for information for speeches, newspaper releases, army planners, and the like. Inasmuch as my ~~field exercise~~ book covers all the campaigns in Europe at high level, I am called on for many different types of information. Frequently I spend 40 per cent of my time on this type of research. In the past year, these services included, ~~the~~ among many others, the following:

- a. Special assignment with the General Staff for approximately two months.
- b. Extensive aid to the awards and decorations branch in regard to the performance of various units as a basis for presidential citations.

c. Aided P and O on numerous occasions to supply information needed by that section to answer questions from commands overseas, to supply the State Department with information, and to throw light on problems in the Department of the Army.

d. Furnished P and O, JCS, and the State Department, and other agencies with memoranda concerning the command organization and activities of SHAEF. In the past few weeks, I have furnished ~~xxxx~~ material to the State Department on the making of treaties in 1945, to a ~~board~~ committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the British Command organization, and to PID on the Press Relations organization in Europe.

e. Furnished PID with numerous memoranda for news releases relative to controversial questions.

2. In common with other members of the European Section, I am frequently called on to review official and unofficial histories written on various phases of the European campaign. This is in addition to ~~to~~ a number of chapters of histories which I have read in connection with the regular seminars of the Division. The accounts have been handed me by the Chief Historian or some of his assistants because of some special information I may have on the account. As an example of this type of work, I cite the following:

a. A 250 page account of the 9th Armored Division's activities in the taking of Remagen bridgehead. I was asked by Col Badger to note errors and make recommendations as to the use of this book by the Armored Command.

b. A 250 page account of the battle for Schmidt by Major Halsell. Col. Kemper asked that I check this for errors and make recommendations as to the suitability of the book for publication by the division or some other agency.

c. A 250 page account of the 28th Division's action at Schmidt. Checked for errors and made recommendations for changes.

d. A 200 page account of the battle for Mt. Altuzzo. Made recommendations regarding its publication.

e. ~~xxxxxx~~ Several lengthy interviews with the new head of the Civil Affairs section concerning the SHAEF records on his field; study of memoranda by him; attendance at special meetings dealing with the civil affairs project to be set up.

f. Checking of various chapters and furnishing of material to General Nevins for General Eisenhower's book. This done at the request of Gen Malony.

g. Checking numerous chapters in draft Air Force history.

h. Checking of chapters on ETO in Canadian official history.

i. Furnishing information to British and Canadian historians on phases of the European campaigns.

j. Checking of various semi-official documents on the war which have been submitted to the Division.

3. Because of some experience in publicity work, I have spent considerable time suggesting means of improving methods of disseminating information regarding our publications. In the past year I have submitted memoranda embodying proposals for the handling of publicity to colleges, the advertising of our books among veterans, and the handling of a press campaign. I have drafted or helped draft several newspaper handouts on books, and have been asked to outline the nature of the volumes to several ~~newsmen~~ newsmen. Recently I helped Captain Ross prepare lists of selected newspapers and magazines to receive books for review.

D. Type of training required

1. It is essential that anyone carrying on the task of a historian have advanced training in research and scholarly historical writing. The European Section has been made up since its establishment of personnel with training in the field of history and who have had at least a year's training as combat historians in the European Theater of Operations. We have personally seen many of the areas described; have met many of the individuals; know the conditions under which the battle was carried on; know the conditions under which records were kept; and have first hand accounts of the battles. Wherever possible, the military historian should have this experience, since it enables him to get through the mountain of records and prepares him for the proper evaluation of the documents. It is very difficult for a scholar, who is lacking in combat knowledge, to deal with records which are filled with technical terms.

E. Help provided by guides

1. Very few guides exist for us. We have all studied the official histories of World War I, and have learned something of the technique used in those. For the most part, however, since our volumes differ in numerous details from those written in World War I, each author has developed his narrative in accordance with his own experience and his knowledge of the documents. By frequent consultation with various members of the section and by the comparison of ideas, we are able to establish a standard for various volumes. Inasmuch as the combat volumes, the logistics volume, and my command volume are different in nature, each of us has had to depend to a great extent on his personal interpretation of the task.

F. Nature of supervision.

1. This part of the question is difficult to answer because research work does not conform to the view that the head of a section or of the Division supervises in the sense of assigning daily tasks and of checking frequently on progress made. The head of a section is also a writer. The historians of our section are all Ph.Ds, were all former college professors, and were all combat historians. To a great extent, their work is one of collaboration. Each member of the section reads the work of every other member, indicates possible changes and ways to improve the work, and suggests new materials to be added.

2. The head of the European section is Dr. Hugh M. Cole. My project was actually assigned me before I began working with the European section, ~~but it~~ was ~~not~~ originally included as a part of the ETO series. It was agreed that for proper coordination of my volume with the European series, I should work with the European section. While I still work in accordance with the directive and outline given me by Generals Eisenhower and Smith, I frequently consult Doctor Cole for his opinion and guidance. Because of his former position

and have made changes in my outline at his suggestion

as deputy theater historian of the European Theater, and as a professor of military history at the University of Chicago, he has a fund of information regarding the writing of military history which is drawn on by all members of this section and of the Division as well. His methods is to let us develop our work more or less as ~~xxx~~ we think best. From time to time when we meet problems, he suggests possible changes. Our questions deal not so much with method as it does to specialized information which he possesses. Thus we are likely to consult him frequently, while retaining considerable independence in our work. This is not to overlook the important work of coordination which he performs nor the fact that final responsibility for the work of the section is assumed by him.

3. Doctor Cole normally looks at a chapter early in the development of the project, and examines the outline, making general suggestions in regard to it. Other than that he usually examines the manuscripts on request, or asks every two weeks if we have ~~xxxx~~ any progress to report which we may want him to mention in his report to the Chief Historian. Changes in our work is never made as an arbitrary act on the part of the supervisor. Because our work is in the nature of collaboration, Doctor Cole suggests possible changes in manuscripts, but does not insist on them if the author feels that they should remain and can show cause to uphold his viewpoint. In some cases where differences have developed, the matter has been submitted to all writers of the section and the writer agreed to abide by the decision of the group.

G. New Techniques and procedures

1. Inasmuch as our particular type of official history writing has not been attempted before, it is essential constantly to devise new procedures and techniques. It is believed that these will be of value to us in writing additional volumes and to others who may undertake similar projects in the future. Several of us have actually been at work under the direction of the Chief Historian in working out a new army field manual and regulations for coverage of combat history and for writing of official history in the future. I believe it is most unusual that some 10 or 12 people should have given them the task of setting up completely new procedures to be used by the army in the future. This task not only requires writing of new regulations, but of establishing new means of preserving records, and the establishment of a new staff section. ~~This~~ The new manual is based entirely on the combat experience and the writing experience which we have gained on this project. I have contributed numerous suggestions regarding the part of the field manual and regulations dealing with combat history.

H. Contact with other people

1. My task requires daily contact with other people. One of my chief jobs is interviewing individuals who ~~took~~ made important decisions during the war. To that end during the past two years I have travelled extensively in the United States and abroad to get interviews, personal papers, diaries, and copies of foreign documents. As I have noted above, I have interviewed more than 100 high ranking British, French, and American officers. In addition it is essential for me to deal with custodians of various collections of documents, with archivists, librarians, and many other people who can furnish information.

2. Interviews with commanders at high levels require a great deal of preparation and an infinite amount of tact. Great powers of persuasion are

frequently required in order to get information. For nearly any interview, it is essential to outline a course of questioning, to arrange pieces of information which may be tossed into the conversation in order to make clear that the interviewer knows what he is talking about, and to assure the person being interviewed that his interrogator is discreet.

I. Review of My Work

1. Basically the decisions I make relative to the evaluation of my material, the manner of writing, and the judgments I make are not reviewed except in the general way mentioned earlier (all members of the section read the work before it is submitted to the editors). The final copy is, of course, carefully checked by Dr. Cole for the European Section and submitted to ~~Colonel~~ Colonel Hartman for editing and final review. The Intelligence Division reviews parts of the manuscript for security and for downgrading of documents, many of which are secret; U. S. and British naval, air and army historians check for accuracy of statements where their activities are concerned; individuals discussed in the book may be asked for an opinion; and the Chief Historian may review it on grounds of general historical merit or on the grounds of Army policy. In the review carried on by the Chief Historian a special editorial panel may be used or he may ask for opinions from the historians who make up ~~one~~ the Historical Division's advisory board. On questions of Army policy, he may seek the advice of PID.