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Courtesy C. C. Allard

LINCOLN'S ARMY GENERAL  
Major General Herman F. Kramer  
Commanding 66th Panther Division  
Camp Robinson, Arkansas

## Nebraskans in Command

The Marshall Islands invasion strengthens the long-standing conviction of citizens of this state that there is something in her soil and climate (or, more properly, in her pioneer heritage with its unending struggle against all the adversities conceived by man and Nature) that breeds courage, perseverance, high ideals, genius in many fields. To this unchallenged fact, the rise of two sketchily-known Nebraskans to positions of great prominence in the world's news bears witness.

From a feature story by Helen Elizabeth Lawrence last Sunday (*Lincoln Journal-Star*, 2/13/44) some arresting thoughts are gathered:

"Since time immemorial, little boys have played soldier. Legions of small square soldiers have marched down the pages of history, brandishing wooden swords and avenging oppressed and beleaguered peoples. . . .

"Empires have been built on the genius of men who were able to see beyond the glitter of military braid, beyond the adventure of a hero's life, above the dogmatic routine of a regimented existence.

"And it is of this cloth that two men, Nebraskans by birth and upbringing, were fashioned. Two men who have opened the channels for an invasion in the southwest Pacific.

"The Marine commanding officer establishing ten beach-heads on the largest Jap base in the Pacific last week was Major General Harry Schmidt of Stapleton, Nebraska. . . . He was a stalwart lad, energetic, mischievous, quick-witted. 'Harry could lick any kid in town.' . . . And the other Nebraskan who figured largely in the war news today is Major General Charles Corlett of the United States Infantry.

"Charles Corlett hails from a pioneer Nebraska family. In 1860 his grandfather, John Corlett, settled in Richardson County, where he homesteaded and patented a 120-acre farm about three miles northwest of Humboldt. And one of the five children left fatherless in 1861 was Charles M., father of our General. Charles

M., grew up, moved into Pawnee County near Burchard, and there in 1889 General Charles Harrison Corlett was born. . . .

"From the first, one of the outstanding passions of this boy's life was his devotion to ranching, and so it continues to this day. He worked on cattle ranches until his entrance into the National Preparatory Academy in 1908," which led him (via Fort Michel in Alaska and ten years as manager of a cattle company in New Mexico) across the world to those islands that bid fair to form a mountain-peak in future history.

"A lone wolf, he is known and respected throughout the service for his capable handling of his men, his military knowledge and his astute judgment. But men who have served with him maintain that he's crazy about cattle. . . . Yet he is still, first and last, an officer of the U. S. Infantry, . . . still holds a ranch in the southwestern United States, and that is what he's fighting to get home to."

And waiting for him in that home is a much loved pet with a romance and a history. Helen Mary Hayes, on the *Journal* staff, told about it in her column for St. Valentine's Day:

Constant readers of Ben Franklin's weekly were pleased to see its recent snapshot of Dorothy Thomas and G-Two, canine hero of one of her stories. . . . This Springer spaniel did actually leave an Alaskan post by plane and was delivered to Mrs. Corlett, a neighbor of Miss Thomas at Espanola, New Mexico. With that as a starter, the former Lincoln author took off into a charming story about a dog and two little boys who had faith. The story had great appeal for the soldiers who had known G-Two at many army posts, General Corlett wrote.

Those interested will be rewarded by reading in that magazine (March 6, May 1, 1943) the "attractive bit of fiction which was actually based on fact," as the General wrote in his letter published with the picture of G-Two.

*The Kearney Hub* of last May 15 (AP from Washington) brings this tribute to our other Nebraskan:

"Major General Harry Schmidt, second in command in the Marines—a tough but kind gentleman—runs the show when his commandant is away and lifts many of the administrative burdens from his shoulders. Born at Holdrege in 1886, he has had a long and interesting career. His assignments have taken him to Guam; the Philippines; Hawaii; four tours of China;

Cuba, and Nicaragua, whose president bestowed on him the Nicaraguan medal of distinction, and the medal of merit with the silver star. Here too he was awarded the Navy Cross for distinguished service as brigade intelligence officer in 1928. In addition he holds the Mexican and the Yangtse service medals, and several others. And now he has just returned from a tour of his service's training camps, expressing satisfaction over what he saw.

"'The Marine Corps' famous esprit is the result of deliberate indoctrination,' he explained. 'In training, the men are taught the glorious history of the corps and what is expected of them to live up to it. We have a lot to be proud of. The draftees are working out very well.'

"The General was educated at Kearney State Teachers College before completing the officers' course at the Marine Corps school in Virginia; he graduated from the Army Command and General Staff school at Fort Leavenworth. His domestic posts include the Marine Corps schools, where he was an instructor; the Department of the Pacific, where he held various offices. . . . He and Mrs. Schmidt reside at the Marine barracks. Their son is now a major in the Marine Corps; their daughter is the wife of Major Wendt, also of the Corps. . . . His hobby is fishing."

In the *Holdrege Daily Citizen*, issues of May 15 and 17, we find this:

"Old-timers in Holdrege today, with shamefaced expressions, admitted they had almost forgotten the community's most famous man, Major General Harry Schmidt. . . . Even though memory has been clouded by time, . . . and by the appearance of two more recent Schmidt families, the announcement from Washington that the second in command of the U. S. Marine Corps was a former resident of Holdrege and born in this community made citizens swell with pride. . . .

"Further investigation definitely establishes the fact that the General was a son of William Schmidt, who ran a bakery on West Avenue. . . . 'Shorty' Anderson is not surprised that Harry has risen to the heights in the Marines. He recalls the days when he owned a very vicious horse named 'Joe'—a veritable outlaw. One day he looked out the window and saw that young

Harry had lifted Joe's hind leg and was calmly inspecting the hoof. 'I was so scared I didn't dare breathe, much less say anything,' he remarked. Finally, the inspection completed to his satisfaction, the lad walked nonchalantly away. 'Then,' says Shorty, 'I lit into him as soon as I could catch my breath. . . .' A kid who could do that with old Joe just naturally had what it takes to get to the top, in Anderson's opinion."

Returning now to Miss Lawrence:

"This past week, pictures of the rows of white crosses in a grove of palms have been shown to the public throughout the country. Paying honor to their buddies, the somewhat ragged rows of marines stood with bowed heads and slightly stooped shoulders — One of them frankly weeping.

"These boys have seen war at its sweaty, bloody worst. They have lived with death and terror and horror. But they come back with the same clear, dauntless look in their eyes, the same unswerving determination paraphrased in that well-known gibe: 'The Marines have landed. The situation is well in hand.'

"And commanding these amphibious forces, sharing the daily hell of their lives as Marine Corps officers are noted for doing, is that 'Peck's Bad Boy' of Holdrege, Major General Harry Schmidt."

For sake of the record, we are proud to add to above story (already in type) the fact that on April 26th General Schmidt, in company with a number of other Marines, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet.

These generals belong to Nebraska. But Lincoln has one of her own. Not one on the fighting front, it is true, but giving indispensable and highly skilled training to the boys who do go to the front. One of whom her citizens will be very proud now that he has been discovered (after years of quiet work in army camps) as commanding general of the 66th Panther Division down at Camp Robinson in Arkansas. He is General Herman F. Kramer, born and educated here, confirmed and married here, starting his business here, yet for twenty-five years lost to the Lincoln picture save in the memory of his friends.

The reasons for this seclusion are two: The modesty of the General himself, and of his family. He prefers it so.

"We don't talk much about the war when Herman comes home, for all of us read that. Instead, we like to talk of family matters and try to get back into the current of the old life." Thus his brother Harry, florist on Van Dorn Street, explained the situation.

Down in Arkansas, however, our General is known for what he is. A character study of especial interest, by C. C. Allard, formed a two-page illustrated feature in the *Arkansas Democrat Magazine* of March 5th last. It is captioned, "Around the Clock with a Major General At War." It was given us by a boyhood friend of the general, Dr. Herman Gartner, and from it we quote freely.

"Arm-chair generals went out with Pearl Harbor, believe it or not, . . . and it would seem that some of the 'brass hats,' as general officers are called with or without affection by their men, threw away the clock at the same time.

" 'Sure my men cuss me,' grinned the general. 'Give me a soldier who doesn't crab and growl once in a while and I'll show you a man who hasn't the guts to be a soldier.'

"But the general is as likely to be found in a fox hole as elsewhere. . . . He'll sit down and chin with a sergeant over the field problem and tell him just where and why his squad would have been dead men if they had carried out the advance as they did in the simulated warfare. So his men like him.

" 'Here comes papa,' said one as he approached.

"The general, close enough to hear, smiled and said, 'You know, as long as the boys are calling me papa they aren't going outside the dictionary to call me worse names.' . . .

Herman F. Kramer was born in 1892 to Franz and Sophie Kramer, then living near Seventh and Plum streets. They were German immigrants of the sturdy self-reliant forward-looking stock that has contributed so much to the building of this sound state. His father was a contractor and hoped that Herman would join him—as indeed the boy did for a short time after his graduation from the College of Engineering. But already he had risen from buck private to colonel of cadets of the University and the uniform, and what it stood for, appealed to him

most. Again he started at the foot of the ladder as buck private and won his promotion step by step, until he was commissioned and then selected to attend the German War College.

"Officers selected for this must be outstanding, with perfect records, undisputable loyalty, and exceptional military diplomats who will make friends with enemies, if necessary, for they must not only win the confidence of their own superiors and hold it, but they must win the confidence of those who even then were considered potential enemies of this country.

"Thus it was that he witnessed the raping of Poland and the Battle of Warsaw. He was on a hill above the city the day after it fell. This sight he remembers well, for he knew the details of every German implement of war used in this blitz. Most of them (excepting the latest innovations) he had been permitted to study. Thus he could fully appreciate the deadliness of them at that time; and he has some knowledge of the latest and improved weapons of today which his own 66th Division may some day face. For he is one of the three officers of the U. S. Army who has graduated from the German War College. . . .

"In their field training, under as closely imitated battle conditions as are possible short of the presence of death, the soldiers of the Panther Division have been making preparations for their day which is to come. In this, General Kramer has been one of them. He has lived in the field with his men. When it rains he makes the rounds, seeing that all pup tents are properly drained before night falls, and that all are as comfortable as they should be under field conditions. Then he crawls into his own tent. . . . Although he has comfortable quarters at the post, he prefers to sleep on a cot on the porch. . . . And through training, the 66th has become one of the toughest fighting organizations of the several at their training stage.

"Here again the square jaw that can support a smile or a frown, the keen military brain that can temper gravity with humor, is reflected throughout the division. . . . But for all his tenacity there is another softer, gentler side to this man who was told to 'whip the best damned division in the Army into shape in the shortest possible time.' For relaxation he likes to fiddle around in a flower garden, and when in quarters he likes to do his own cooking.



"Despite the ruggedness of the 66th, the combat training given the Panthers has not produced rowdyism. The percentage of delinquencies among members has been less than in any other unit at Camp Robinson, according to the headquarters report. . . .

"General Kramer's family is composed of his wife and daughter and a brother, Frank, who is a sergeant with long overseas service. All are a part of his daily life. He wonders if Frank, who is interested in a military career, will lift himself by the bootstraps. He wonders how Betty and Jim are getting along. . . .

"When he has the time, which hasn't been much, he likes golfing, fishing and hunting. But at the moment he is wrapped up with his staff in preparing for the 'big hunt' of his life, and he feels keenly the responsibility which has been placed upon him."

So ends the story written out of the heart of C. C. Allard, Military Editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, to whom the General is "more than a friend: he is a 'buddy.' You would have to know him to appreciate him. He is a fighter, the finest man who ever lived, and an exceptionally 'good fellow' with it all."

The Pioneers are almost gone;  
Now, in their stead,  
Sons of those Prophet-Pioneers  
Stand at the head.

— A. E. Sheldon.

