The American 15th Infantry Regiment in China, 1912–1938: A Vignette in Social History[1]

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IN October 1932, Lieutenant William E. Carraway and his fiancee drove to Goldsboro, North Carolina, to ask her parents' consent to their wedding. The thirty-year-old West Pointer had met Mela Royall while serving as an ROTC instructor at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Now his assignment was coming to an end and the two wanted to go to his next station as a married couple. Mr. Royall was not at home so Bill explained the situation to Mela's mother. Mrs. Royall

1. The only comprehensive social history study of American forces, to include the Navy and Marines as well as the Army, is Dennis L. Noble, *The Eagle and the Dragon: The United States Military in China, 1901–1937* (Westport, Conn., 1990). Barbara W. Tuchman explored in some detail the political and military China background in her biography of Joseph W. Stilwell, who spent so much of his pre-World War II service in China as well as playing a leading role there during that war. See Part 1 in her *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45* (New York, 1970). Charles G. Finney, a novelist and a veteran who served a tour as an enlisted man in the 15th in the late Twenties, published in 1961 a delightful memoir that included anecdotes related to him as well as his own experiences—*The Old China Hands*. Greenwood Press reprinted this book in 1971 but the copy I used and footnoted accordingly was the paperback which came out in 1963. There are excellent chapters in biographies of two Army officers who served with the 15th in the mid-Twenties: Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General* (New York, 1963). In Chapter XIV, Pogue also provides the best brief description of the China troubles which most affected the 15th Infantry in the 1920s. The other biography is Leslie Anders, *Gentle Knight: The Life and Times of Major General Edwin Forrest Harding* (Kent, Ohio, 1985), Chapter 5. Supplementing the Pogue biography are the letters and photographs in the section on China (261–305) in Larry I. Bland, ed., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall,* vol. 1, *"The Soldierly Spirit," December 1880–June 1939* (Baltimore, Md., 1981).

promptly responded: "Well, if Mela wants to go, she has my consent even if you are going to China." Then, she asked where they were going and was shocked to learn that, indeed, they were going to China.[2]

Most Americans, then and later, probably shared Mrs. Royall's unawareness that there was an Army unit stationed in China. Because of the dramatic sinking of the USS *Panay* in December 1937 and, years later, the novel and movie *Sand Pebbles,* more were and are aware of the American naval presence in Chinese waters. The fact that there was an American infantry regiment based at Tientsin (Tianjin) in North China for twenty-six years, while not lost to history, is certainly one of the lesser-known facts about the American involvement in the Far East.

In 1900, American soldiers and marines participated in the international force which relieved the foreign settlements in Peking during the Boxer Rebellion. Although the Americans withdrew their troops, the U.S. government, along with the other foreign powers, retained the right to station forces in North China to maintain open communications from Peking (Beijing) to the sea. With the turmoil resulting from the revolution of 1911 and the apparent threat to this link, the American government decided to send in troops in January 1912. A battalion of the 15th sailed from Manila on 12 January and arrived at the port of Chinwangtao (Qinhuangdao) six days later. Two months later, on 9 March, a second battalion and regimental headquarters left Manila for the six-day journey to China. This force of 1,292 officers and men took up positions along the vital railroad and shared responsibility for guarding it with the troops of several other nations.[3]

As the years passed, the force's strength fluctuated, with most of the men staying in Tientsin and only a company at the city of Tongshan, eighty-five miles distant, which was the approximate midpoint on the railroad from Tientsin to Chinwangtao. The Tongshan garrison was discontinued in 1927. In 1914, two years after the 15th went to China, it numbered only 849 officers and men, although there was an upswing

2. William E. Carraway, "My Future Mother-in law's Reaction," typed MS, 22 November 1972. I am greatly indebted to my friend Brigadier General Carraway (1902-79) who responded to my questions at length and who also sent supplementary material about his service in China.

3. War Department Annual Report: The Adjutant General (hereafter WDAR: TAG), 1912, 433; WDAR:1912, III, Report of the Commanding General, Philippine Division, 119-20. In the concluding issue of the periodical published by the 15th in China—*The Sentinel,* 12 February 1938, there is a history of the regiment's involvement in China, see p. 1. To supplement the reprint of the pamphlet "Customs of the Fifteenth Infantry," Edward Sprague Jones added a short history of the regiment. This is an undated publication by C. E. Dornbusch but Jones dated his essay in 1959.

to 1,406 the next year. By the mid-1920s there were 899 (1926) and 936 (1928). In the regiment's last years in China, its strength ranged from 664 at a low point in 1936 to the 806 who left in the spring of 1938. Throughout virtually all of this era, the number of officers were in the forties. In the last years, there were also six nurses.[4]

In 1928, the commanding general of American forces in China, Brigadier General Joseph C. Castner, compared the size of his force to those of the other foreign powers' garrisons. In two years, the Army had added only 37 to their strength to make a total of 936 while the British had more than doubled their troops (1,000 to 2,622), the French had increased their 1,418 to 2,530, and the Japanese had gotten very serious indeed about their interest in North China as their force pyramided from 613 to 6,167. Meantime, the Italians had added only 96 men to bring their total force to 553. To be sure, the Americans maintained a closer balance with the Japanese than the mere figures of the 15th would indicate, since there was a large temporary reinforcement of Marines (4,502) to provide the American ambassador with a total of 4,956 Marines to cooperate with the 15th in case of trouble.[5]

During the twenty-six years the 15th spent in China, two major developments affected the regiment's situation. Although, later, the conflict between Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang and Mao Tse-tung's Communists came to dominate China, in the 1920s, the turbulence which swirled around the 15th Infantry was caused by a civil war between the armies of the warlords, Chang Tso Lin, Wu Pei Fu, and Feng Yu Hsiang. The other major development was the Japanese going to war against the Chinese in 1937.

As hundreds of thousands of troops maneuvered and fought in or near the areas where the relatively small foreign forces were supposed (under the agreement after the Boxer Rebellion) to hold sway, it became apparent that the foreigners were unable to enforce those treaty rights. These garrison soldiers certainly got their fill of hard field service in

4. WDAR:TAG, 1914 (144) and 1915 (173); WDAR: Surgeon General Report (hereafter, SG), 1937 (2-3) and 1939 (2-3). *The Sentinel,* 12 February 1938, 1. Typescript document accompanying the letter W. K. Naylor to TAG, 10 December 1925, #330.23, TAGO Central File, Record Group 94, National Archives (hereafter RG94 NA). A revised version of this appears as "Conditions of Service in China," *Infantry Journal* 29 (August 1926): 167-74. Brigadier General Joseph C. Castner to TAG, 30 July 1928, #319.12 in TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. In his annual report for fiscal year 1927, General Castner not only gave figures for Army but also Marine strength as of 30 June 1926 and 30 June 1928 but also that of the foreign contingents on those dates. I appreciate the assistance of Dr. Larry Bland in making available these notes that I took in the National Archives in 1960-61 when I was Dr. Forrest C. Pogue's research assistant. The original notes are now in the George C. Marshall Research Library.

5. Ibid.

those dangerous days as small outposts and patrols had to face down Chinese units which outnumbered them a hundred or more to one. Grateful Chinese civilians whose homes and perhaps lives were saved by the 15th's endeavors presented the regiment with a white marble gate in 1925. Early the next year, Major General William D. Connor, the American commanding general, spelled out the current situation in a lengthy letter to his ambassador. The planners who gave the original mission and then assigned a small force to carry it out assumed that the threat would come from unorganized mobs. By the 1920s, large, well-armed armies constituted the threat. In view of this, Connor recommended that the American forces be withdrawn.[6]

Although the 15th stayed, the American government recognized that it could not be expected to carry out its original mission. In a two-page typed memo—"MISSION AND OBJECTIVES"— which officers of the 15th received in November 1933, they learned that the State Department, as represented by the ambassador in China, in a statement dated 2 June 1928, considered the original mission in abeyance. Since it no longer was really possible for them or the other foreign powers' contingents to protect the communications lines from Peking to the sea, the basic mission of the 15th became the protection of American lives.[7]

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the crisis provoked by the warlords passed and life returned to normal for the 15th, but the increasing aggression of the Japanese, which culminated in open warfare against the Chinese in 1937, ultimately brought about the withdrawal of the regiment. Lieutenant Stephen O. Fuqua, Jr., who joined the regiment in August 1937 was impressed by the tenseness of relations with the Japanese and the resulting restrictions on the Americans, who could no longer travel as freely. By this time the Japanese had taken over the trains. In fact, they seemed to be everywhere. He recalled that every morning at reveille, Japanese planes would fly low over the American soldiers who were forming up for roll-call. If you looked up, you would see the pilot or observer peering down. The Americans, perhaps a bit nervously, joked that they must be "taking a head count." In December, Japanese bombers sank the American gunboat USS *Panay* far to the south on the Yangtze (Chang) River. The Japanese apology and the attempt by American officials to downplay the incident apparently

6. Connor to J. V. A. MacMurray, 13 January 1926, enclosed in Connor to TAG, 22 January 1926, #350.05, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. As mentioned in the first footnote, the best and most readily available brief account of the troubles at this time is in Pogue, *George C. Marshall,* Chapter XIV. Marshall either commanded or served as executive officer of the 15th from September 1924 to June 1927.

7. General Carraway permitted me to xerox the original memo, dated 27 November 1933, which he received at the Conference Troop School.

succeeded in keeping the officers in the 15th from becoming overly worried. They were interested, nevertheless, when Army Captain Frank Roberts, one of the survivors of the sinking, came and lectured to them about his experiences.[8]

In early February 1938, the State Department announced that it was withdrawing the 15th. The press release, which said the two battalions which made up the regiment would leave a month later, gave no reason for this other than the noncommittal statement: "The American Government has long been committed to the principle of effecting the withdrawal of such forces whenever and as the situation so develops as to warrant the view that withdrawals can be effected without detriment to American interests and obligations in general." On 4 March, the regiment would sail on the transport *Grant* to the States where they would take station at Fort Lewis, Washington.[9]

The I Company correspondent, in the last issue of *The Sentinel,* the weekly news magazine published by the regiment since 1919, described the reaction of the men in his unit to the news: first, "a stunned and somewhat awed silence" followed by a "bee-hive of activity as may seldom or never be equalled." E Company's correspondent reported the varying reactions ranging from enthusiasm through nonchalance to extreme regret. The "older hands" knew "that it means leaving a place where you can get everything you could want or need for a song, (whether you can sing or not). It means leaving the one place in this world where the American Soldier lives like a King." A long-time English resident of China who had been closely associated with the regiment for more than twenty years was W. V. Pennell, editor of the *Peking & Tientsin Times.* He responded to a request for comment with a lengthy message which praised the regiment and then articulated the regret that many foreign nationals probably felt: "It is not pleasant to think of the day when the 15th Infantry will no longer be with us. . . . [W]e all regret it. . . . It is a symbol of great change."[10]

For Lieutenant Fuqua it was a busy time as he had to stage an auction to sell the regiment's horses and mules and do his share of the duties involved in preparing his company for the move and in virtually dismantling their barracks as the unit wanted to leave them as they had found them twenty years before. He was also acutely aware of the sadness of the situation of those soldiers who had married or taken

8. Brigadier General Stephen O. Fuqua, Jr., interview with Captain Paul J. Jacobsmeyer (who used my questions), 11 July 1989, and my telephonic interview with General Fuqua, 13 January 1990. Tuchman, *Stilwell,* 180.

9. Mimeographed press release, 4 February 1938, #320, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. The sailing date, name of the transport, and next station are reported in *The Sentinel,* 12 February 1938, 1.

10. The quotations are from ibid., in this order, 26, 28, and 9.

common-law wives and had children who would have to be left behind.[11]

The arrival of the 15th in the Pacific Northwest created a stir as these men and women from China aroused a great deal of curiosity. Fuqua remembered speaking at several civic clubs to answer the persistent question—what was it like in China?[12]

That question had doubtless been one of the reasons why many officers and men volunteered for the 15th over the years. A Papago Indian, James McCarthy, who had just seen combat in World War I, signed up because "I wanted to go someplace." The possibility of excitement and adventure caused Patrick J. Hayes to request transfer from the 7th Infantry in the Philippines to join the 15th in its first weeks in China in 1912. The lure of living in relative luxury in an exotic land made the 15th a prized assignment. What was it like? Where and how did the men live? What did they do? Aside from the periods of unrest, such as during the 1911 revolution when the regiment first took up station and then in the 1920s when the warlords destabilized North China, the routine of the 15th was probably much the same as that of any similar unit in the American Army, but the surroundings and the life style were drastically different.[13]

Infantry officers who were curious about China service were probably delighted to have the facts provided for them in an article in the August, 1926 issue of *Infantry Journal.* This was a somewhat revised version of the handout given to new officers in China. The regiment's commander, who said that he thought most newcomers suffered from misinformation, believed that this document, prepared by officers in the 15th, should help solve that problem. It described the three locations of the regiment, but was not frank about the climate, which could be extremely hot (106 degrees in 1933) in the summer and severely cold in the winter. Nor did it dwell on what the countryside was like. McCarthy, when he first saw it on the train ride from Chinwangtao to Tientsin, thought it looked like the Arizona desert.[14]

Tientsin was a city of 900,000, of whom 4,400 were foreigners (about half of whom were Japanese, 1,200 British, and 700 Americans). The Americans were probably surprised to find it "quite a modern city,"

11. Fuqua-Jacobsmeyer interview.

12. Ibid.

13. John G. Westover, ed., *A Papago Traveler: The Memories of James McCarthy* Tucson, Ariz., 1985), 87. Major Patrick J. Hayes, telephonic interview with author, 11 May 1974; also Fuqua-Jacobsmeyer interview.

14. "Conditions of Service in China," *Infantry Journal* 29 (August 1926): 167-74. The original typescript is attached to W. K. Naylor to TAG, 10 December 1925, #330.23 TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. Westover, *A Papago Traveler,* 90. Mrs. Reynolds J. Burt to mother, 16 July 1933, in Reynolds J. Burt Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute (hereafter USAMHI).

as an officer's wife described it a few months after the regiment arrived in 1912. Another later compared it to Washington, D.C., because of the broad avenues, parks, and public buildings. Except for an occasional liquor store and the lack of ten-cent stores, the *Journal* article said that one might forget that he or she was not in an American city.[15]

Since there were no quarters for married officers, they had to rent houses in one of the concessions where all of the foreigners and some wealthy Chinese lived. In 1925, five-to ten-room houses were available for $50 to $250 a month in local currency which was exchanged at the rate of $1.80 for each American dollar at that time. One might expect to hire five servants whose total wages were $85 in local currency ("Mex" was the term used for local currency). A number-one boy headed the staff which would consist of a cook and an *amah* to look after the children and a coolie for all work, perhaps a washerwoman, a rickshaw boy or a seamstress. Servants did all of the work but obviously there might be problems as to their efficiency, how well they got along, or their honesty. Mrs. Charles L. Bolté, in the mid-1930s, had such problems that she finally fired all of her servants except the *amah* and started all over again with a new group.[16]

When Bill Carraway listed the reasons why he considered China "the most attractive station" the Army could offer in the Thirties, he included "Lots of good things to buy and bring home." Officers and their wives went to China with shopping in view, but the *Infantry Journal* article warned them that they would have to look for good buys and offered suggestions of rugs, silver, and furs. What Tientsin did not offer, Peking, which was only eighty-three miles away, would surely have in its streets, which the foreigners had given appropriate names such as Jade, Lantern, Embroidery, and Bureau (for furniture). What they did not buy for themselves, officers and their wives might purchase for friends who sent requests and money.[17]

Single officers probably did not do as much shopping as their married friends nor did they have as much worry about housing or servants. Fuqua shared a large room in the Officers' Club with another lieutenant, Earle G. Wheeler. Each had one servant whom they paid from $5 to $8 per month. These servants would compete to see who could outdo the other in serving his master. Since Fuqua smoked, Lu

15. "Conditions," 167. Mrs. W. A. Castle to mother, 7 June 1912, W. A. Castle papers, USAMHI, and Mrs. Burt to mother, 8 October 1932, Burt Papers.

16. "Conditions," 170-71; Mrs. Charles L. Bolté, interview with author, 4 August 1971, and Mrs. William P. Yarborough, interview with author, 1 May 1990.

17. Carraway questionnaire, 17 October 1972, and "Life in China with 15th Infantry—1933-36," fourteen-page typescript prepared 3 March 1973, in author's collection, 3; Mrs. Burt to mother, 24 September 1932, Burt Papers; "Conditions," 167, 172-73.

would prepare a pack of cigarettes by tearing off a corner of the top, pulling one partially out, then place a book of matches with one match stuck out for the convenience of his lieutenant.[18]

During the first five years the regiment was in Tientsin, the troops lived in makeshift quarters in the French and British concessions. Patrick J. Hayes, who arrived in the early part of 1912, remembered living in tents, then in warehouses in those concessions. Walter J. Rouse, who came four years later, recalled: "We were staying wherever we could find a place and where they could find a place for us." In 1917, the command moved into newly constructed buildings in the former German concession. A local real estate firm built three parallel lines of three-storey brick buildings which took up a square block and leased them to the Americans. These were not well constructed and lacked bathrooms so soldiers had to use a central bathhouse in the area.[19]

While not as nice as some of the modern barracks in the States, there were compensatory amenities at what came to be known as Mei-Kuo Ying-P'an—the American Compound. One soldier thought that the food served in E Company's mess hall in the late Twenties "would have graced the cuisine of a French ocean liner." Then there were the servants. E Company's Christmas Dinner menu for 1935, which featured a meal of several courses including oysters, ham, turkey, and pork loin, not only included a group photo of the company with names listed but also one of the Chinese servants and their names. The sixty-nine enlisted men had seventeen servants to do their bidding. James McCarthy, fifteen years earlier, paid the servant who shined his shoes, made up his bed, cleaned his tailored uniform and other clothes, and did "everything," the going rate of a dollar a month. He would tip servants extra if they did a particularly good job. One officer in the Thirties remembered these coolies coming onto the drill field during inspections to dust off the shoes of their masters.[20]

In 1923 there was a significant addition to the amenities when the government leased land on the beach six miles south of Chinwangtao to use as a summer camp. Four years later, the regiment had to move its camp from Nan Ta Ssu to a point nearer to Chinwangtao which not only had more space generally but also a better beach. The two battalions

18. Fuqua-Jacobsmeyer interview and Fuqua telephone interview. General Fuqua reminded me that to put the pay of the servants in perspective one should know that a pack of cigarettes cost 10 cents then. Wheeler later became a full general and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

19. Hayes interview; Captain Walter J. Rouse interview with author, 9 October 1974; Major James M. Hutchinson to Commanding General, Philippine Division, 24 February 1922, #481 TAGO Central File, RG94 NA; "Conditions," 168-69.

20. Finney, 96; xerox of original menu from Carraway Collection; Westover, *A Papago Traveler,* 91; and Charles L. Bolté Oral History, USAMHI, 42.

rotated for six weeks to two months each summer for extensive marksmanship training on the firing ranges while officers' wives and children spent the entire hot season by the seashore. In the distance one could see the mountains and the Great Wall coming down to the sea. Although all lived in tents during the first years, these had floors and were connected with walks. There was a communal dining area for the officers and their families and wooden mess halls for the soldiers who slept in cots in large pyramidal tents.[21]

All enjoyed swimming, sunning, and watching the Chinese fishermen haul in their nets. Bill Carraway remembered that it was the best seafood he had ever had, with the prawns, in particular, being beyond compare. Children revelled in their play on the beach while adults also went sightseeing. After all, what better chance to visit the Great Wall? Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall, of course, got in his regular exercise riding but he also frolicked on the beach. It was "one very delightful period," he wrote a friend in July, 1925.[22]

For officers and their families, a summer by the seashore could be a relief from the social whirl which could become all-encompassing. Lilian Stewart Burt, whose husband commanded the regiment from June 1932 to July 1935, told her mother of the press of so many dinners and parties, but added "the life out here is made up of it and otherwise we would just sit." When Major Forrest Harding was part of the community in the Twenties, his skill in writing Kipling-like verse, his wit, and his joy in his family and friends drew even such a reserved person as Colonel Marshall into his circle. While the latter did not refer specifically to his delightful evenings with the Hardings, he did write General John J. Pershing about the "very attractive" social life which included "frequent tea and dinner dances in the beautiful country club, skating parties, riding breakfasts, numerous home parties, amateur theatricals, indoor squash and tennis." In another letter he also mentioned the Race Course which he compared to Longchamp in Paris.[23]

21. Major General W. D. Connor to TAG, 24 August 1923, 25 August 1924, 24 August 1925—all in #319.12; and Brigadier General J. C. Castner, 17 November 1928, #614—all in TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. Finney, *Old China Hands,* 101-2.

22. Anders, *Gentle Knight,* 91; Pogue, *Education of a General,* 240; Finney, *Old China Hands,* 103, 120-26; Carraway letter to author, 2 October 1972; Mrs. William P. (Norma Tuttle) Yarborough, interview with author, 1 May 1990. Mrs. Yarborough also loaned me L. L. Williams, ed., *15th Infantry Annual: May 4, 1924-May 4, 1925* (Tientsin, n.d.). See 163-65 for enlisted men's experience at Nan Ta Ssu. Marshall to John C. Hughes, 18 July 1925, 281, and photos of Marshall, 288-89, in Bland, ed., *Marshall Papers,* vol. 1.

23. Mrs. Burt to mother, 30 March 1935; Anders, Chapter 5; Marshall to Pershing, 25 August and 26 December 1926 (the quotation is from the second letter), and to John C. Hughes, 18 July 1925 in Bland, ed., *Marshall Papers,* 1: 286,

Stephen Fuqua thought that the British ran the social life. The senior American officers urged the newcomers to join British clubs in the Thirties. Bill Carraway refused, but he had a good bass voice and loved music so he did take part in the annual Gilbert and Sullivan operetta which the British colony put on—*Pirates of Penzance* in 1934 and *Patience* the next year. He was one of just two Americans to participate in these productions.[24]

For children, it was a "good life" as Philip L. Bolté remembered from his experience as a small boy in the 1930s. His mother, Adelaide Poore Bolté, who had spent most of 1916 there as a teenager when her father was the executive officer of the regiment, thought it was better than that. "Wonderful" and "fascinating" were the adjectives she used. She loved to ride and she rode a great deal. She also played tennis, went swimming, and enjoyed the parties. Norma Tuttle Yarborough, who lived next door to the Hardings with her parents in the Twenties, well remembers the warmth and joy of those fun times. The Joseph W. Stilwells who lived nearby were more serious. Winifred Stilwell Cox recalled that her parents made the children learn the language as well as some of the arts and customs. She went to the English School while Norma Tuttle went to the American School which was close enough to walk to and it was safe enough to do so.[25]

Every American child was aware, nonetheless, that there was danger. The shots for all sorts of diseases from cholera on down impressed that on one and all. You were not supposed to drink or brush your teeth in tap water. Nor should you eat fresh food. The Harding children earned spankings, castor oil, and forfeited desserts for two days when they ate some fresh strawberries. Mrs. Bolté was particularly careful with her three children in this regard. She liked China and was enthusiastic about coming back in 1932 but an incident that occurred as she and her family prepared to debark from the transport at Chinwangtao made a strong impression. They watched a lighter pull up to the ship bearing eight coffins containing the bodies of six American adults and two children to return home.[26]

295, and 281. While in Tientsin, Harding published a small volume of his verses with one poem by Marshall. Mrs. Yarborough also kindly loaned me her copy of *Days of The Mei-Kuo Ying-P'an* (Tientsin, n.d.).

24. Fuqua-Jacobsmeyer interview; Carraway, "Life in China with the 15th Infantry—1933-1936," typescript memoir given to author, 6; xeroxes of programs for these two operas from Carraway Collection.

25. Brigadier General Philip L. Bolté questionnaire, May 1973; Mrs. Charles L. Bolté interview with author, 4 August 1971; Mrs. Yarborough interview; Winifred Stilwell Cox questionnaire, 18 March 1974.

26. Interviews, Mrs. Bolté and Mrs. Yarborough; Anders, *Gentle Knight,* 84.

The real fear of mortal illness was only part of the darker side of China. Even a routine ride on the train could expose Americans to shocking sights. In the late Twenties, Norma Tuttle's parents were taking her to Peking for a tonsillectomy when the train stopped at a village. Armed Chinese boarded their car and seized the traditionally dressed Chinese businessman who sat across the aisle. They pushed him off the train and then beheaded him on the spot. The young American girl saw nothing as her parents held her head down but she heard the scuffling and then the train continued its journey. Later, she learned what had happened and she could see from the newspapers, which occasionally ran photographs of heads on poles from executions, that this was not unusual. James McCarthy, who was in Tientsin a few years earlier, once went with a friend twelve miles outside the city to watch the police execute forty-five men. One by one, the police brought the wretches up to the edge of a mass grave and then shot them in the head. The sight appalled him but he knew other soldiers who went regularly to see this horrible spectacle.[27]

While families and soldiers might not range much farther than Peking, Tientsin, and Chinwangtao, the Army encouraged officers to travel by offering them a month's paid detached service leave to roam over the country as far south as the Yangtze—more than five hundred miles away. During his tour in the Thirties, Captain Charles L. Bolté and three other officers took two long trips. One was to visit Darien and Port Arthur to the study the Russo-Japanese War battlefields, while the other was a spectacular journey on the Yangtze through the famous gorges from Hangkow to Chungking. In 1936, Bill Carraway, by then a captain, wound up his Chinese service with a fabulous journey which lasted three months. After taking the Yangtze river trip he went to Japan, then to Siberia, which he crossed on the Trans-Siberian Railway. He spent some time in Moscow then proceeded to the United States with stops in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, France, and England.[28]

Beginning in February 1924, the Army made instruction in Chinese mandatory—five hours a week—for each officer and later for some noncommissioned officers. Everyone would pick up some words and phrases and occasionally one might become fluent. This was the case with a man in Company D in 1915. William H. Shuttlesworth accidentally met a wealthy Chinese who had lived in his hometown of San Francisco. The two became good friends and the soldier learned the language within a year so that his officers would call upon him to translate when

27. Mrs. Yarborough, interview; Westover, *A Papago Traveler,* 92-93.

28. "Conditions," 174; Bolté Oral History, 43-44; Carraway, "Trip Home from Tientsin, China, Mar. 24-June 22, 1936," twenty-one-page typescript in author's collection.

necessary. Brigadier General William D. Connor instituted the mandatory course and it soon paid off handsomely during the clashes of the warlord armies later in 1924. American officers were the only foreign officers who could make themselves understood in the language as they dealt with the difficult situations as the armies swept down to Tientsin. George Marshall was a particularly avid student who within six months caught up with the class that had started seven months before. He wrote General Pershing: "If anyone had told me . . . that I would soon be able to grunt and whine intelligible Chinese I would have ridiculed the idea."[29]

When they looked back on their service in China, Carraway, Fuqua, and Sergeant Jack Bradley, Jr., considered learning the language one of the highlights. Lieutenant Fuqua, who was among the last to take this course, remembered his Chinese instructor fondly and also the rigor of the examination. The examining board consisted of officers who were particularly good in the language, together with some of the instructors. They would call a coolie off the street and see if the student could understand this man and, in turn, make himself understood. There were no reading or writing requirements but this oral test might run to two hours. Those who passed could then wear a patch on their lower sleeve to indicate their proficiency.[30]

In December 1936, Frank Bozoski joined the regiment. A veteran of nine years service, he was impressed by the prerequisites the 15th demanded. Before he transferred, he was told that a soldier had to have six years service, be an expert rifleman, and be good in at least two sports. Once en route, the weeding out continued, as he and his companions discovered during a two week lay-over in the Philippines. If anyone got into any trouble, he was not permitted to go on to China. The final test came on the train from Chinwangtao to Tientsin. The sergeant in charge of the replacements warned them not to drink too much beer as it was very strong. Four of the men ignored him and got drunk only to find themselves on the return ship. Despite the prior service, all replacements had to undergo ten days of training to determine just how skilled they were in military matters, as well as to show them

29. Brigadier General W. D. Connor to TAG, 28 February 1924, #350.03, and 25 August 1924, #319.12, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA; Major General Eli A. Helmick to Chief of Staff, 22 October 1925, #333.1, Inspector General's Reports, RG159 NA; Robert F. Smith Memoir, China Expedition, 15th Infantry, World War I Survey, USAMHI; Marshall to Pershing, 17 March 1925, in Bland, ed., *Marshall Papers,* 1:275.

30. Carraway questionnaire, 17 October 1972; Captain Bradley questionnaire, 4 February 1974; and Fuqua-Jacobsmeyer interview. The green and red insignia of a circle with an arrow through it was, according to General Fuqua, the ancient ideograph for China.

the location of guard posts and of the part of the city which they should avoid. The NCOs also made it clear that they had better act like ambassadors toward the Chinese or they would not stay very long. After settling into the routine in Company K, Bozoski came to realize that this regiment was "a damn good outfit, every soldier knew what he was doing." He had seen service in three other infantry regiments, in Hawaii, Panama, and the States, so he knew what he was talking about.[31]

Although requirements changed from time to time, these were picked officers and men. Such officers as Marshall, Stilwell, Wheeler, Bolté, and Matthew B. Ridgway, as well as numerous others who later wore varying numbers of stars, indicated the caliber of the officers. The War Department also tried to screen the soldiers in order to maintain the high reputation of the unit. In 1926, Marshall commented: "This particular regiment has the most remarkably efficient personnel I have ever seen gathered in one group." He added that one could find NCOs who had been captains in the war and privates who had been sergeant majors. Their records as well as photographs appear in the yearbook which Lieutenant L. L. Williams prepared the previous year. The 103 men in Service Company, an amateur statistician computed, had a total of 1,063 years service with five Spanish-American War veterans leading the pack. Because of the specializations required, this was not a typical company but it does indicate what was behind the first line in a regimental poet's offering "15th Infantryman" which began with the line: "He's a 14 karat soldier from his bald spot to his heels."[32]

Charles G. Finney who served in the late Twenties remembered: "the regiment preened, polished, and paraded." Walter J. Rouse, who was first sergeant of A Company during World War I, agreed: "We were really a spit & polish outfit." This was necessary, he explained, because they were in competition with the other foreign contingents. Reynolds J. Burt who commanded the regiment in the Thirties put it this way in a letter to his sister: "Much snappy drill to keep in shape for appearances before various other nationals—British, French, Italians, Japanese, and Chinese." Soldiers had to buy a parade uniform and wear white gloves. They also had highly polished rifle stocks just for ceremonial purposes. Officers and first sergeants carried swords when on duty. Discipline was such that, as one veteran recalled, when an officer spoke: "you stood straight as a pole. When they said jump you jumped." And, as former

31. Bozoski questionnaire, 16 August 1974. His scrapbook is in the Archives at the U.S. Military Academy Library.

32. When the quality of replacements fell in 1923, the War Department acted to improve the selection process, according to Brigadier General W. D. Connor to TAG, 24 August 1923, #319.12, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. Marshall to Brigadier General William H. Cocke, 26 December 1926, in Bland, ed., *Marshall Papers,* 1:299. *Annual,* 3, 21-31.

First Sergeant Rouse pointed out, "the first sergeant was God." They made an impressive appearance as the Inspector General, Major General Eli A. Helmick, among others, testified.[33]

Other than the necessity to make a particularly good showing, the training routine of the regiment, just as the power of the first sergeant, probably differed little from what one would find in other infantry units with the exception of field training. Any incoming officer or soldier would find the morning round of drill and classes familiar but, in the mid-Twenties, no other American unit had to carry out the demanding duty that the 15th had to perform during the period when the warlord armies were so active. Except for the summers on the beach, however, there were virtually no opportunities for extensive field training in the vicinity of Tientsin during normal times. At one point in the early Thirties, there was even a lengthy discussion as to whether or not it was medically safe for the regiment to attempt field training in the environs of Tientsin.

Although General Connor consistently rated the regiment high in the field training he observed, his successor, Brigadier General Joseph C. Castner, was much less impressed. Hiking was this tough, squarely built infantryman's forte and he drove the regiment hard. In December 1924, Connor had seen the regiment march twelve miles and been pleased. Not long after he arrived, Castner took out half of the regiment and led them on a forced march of nineteen miles, followed by another twenty-three the next day. Then he took out the others and pushed them to new highs of twenty-two and twenty-five miles on successive days. This was the new general's method of getting rid of the over-age and overweight soldiers. As he wrote the Chief of Staff in 1927 after he had pursued his campaign for some time: "Not hundreds, but thousands of pounds of fat have been removed from these men to their great benefit in health and increased efficiency." Even after he left, the regiment continued an annual speed march competition but the distance was markedly less—five miles.[34]

33. Finney, *Old China Hands,* 73, 93. *Sentinel,* 4 April 1931, 4. Jack Campbell questionnaire, China Expedition, World War I Survey, USAMHI. Rouse also discussed the uniforms in his letter to the author, 2 November 1972, and remarked about the power of the first sergeant in his interview on 9 October 1974. Burt to sister, 25 February 1934, Burt Papers, USAMHI. Brigadier General W. D. Connor discussed the uniforms in his report to the TAG, 24 August 1923, #319.12, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. General Helmick made a glowing report on the regiment to the Chief of Staff, 22 October 1925, #333.1, IG Reports, RG159 NA.

34. Monroe C. Kerth to John M. Palmer, 12 December 1914, Palmer Papers, Library of Congress. Bolté Oral History, 35, 46. Fuqua-Jocobsmeyer interview. Brigadier General W. D. Connor to TAG, 5 January 1925, #333.3, and Castner to

Depending on one's point of view, there were two serpents in this Eden—alcoholism and venereal disease. Despite the ready availability of drugs, virtually none of the American soldiers used them but they did take advantage of what Colonel Marshall called "cheap liquor and cheaper women." In the Thirties, a bottle of Scotch was seventy-five or eighty cents and a quart of beer seven cents while a woman was ten cents. General Connor noted, in 1923: "All forms of vice and evil exist, practically uncontrolled, on every side." A veteran responding to a questionnaire years later wrote: "We drank beer in China and visited the women." To the question "Was there much consorting with local women?"—he rather testily responded: "Why not?" For some of the newcomers, time dragged slowly and there were bouts of homesickness and temptations must have been overwhelming. Few probably had the self-discipline of the Papago, James McCarthy, who saved twenty-five of the thirty dollars a month that he received. At that, he never spent all of the five dollars he had left for spending money.[35]

In the eleven years, 1928 through 1938, the regiment led the Army in alcoholism nine times and tied for that distinction in one other year. Not surprisingly, during the years of prohibition, the hearty and obviously very steady drinkers of the 15th led in admissions per thousand for medical care by a great margin. In 1928, for example, the regiment's rate was 43.8 as compared to the rate of 7.8 for the Army as a whole. While the rate did go down over the succeeding years, in their last two months they were in China, the men of the 15th raised their average from 9.8 the year before to 14.5, with the Army's rate being 3.5 for both 1937 and 1938. After all, it was their last chance to take advantage of that very cheap liquor.[36]

The cheaper women were more of a health problem. During the regiment's first year in China, their venereal disease rate was less than

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the Chief of Staff, 20 April 1927, #201.6 TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. Finney supplies a vivid description of Castner's marches and their impact on the regiment in Chapter 5.

35. Both Patrick Hayes and Walter Rouse commented on drug abstinence in their interviews. Drugs were not a problem then. The Surgeon General reported only fourteen admissions for drugs for the entire Army during 1935 with none in China. The next year there were twenty-three and eleven respectively but evidently that was unusual as in 1938, there were only seven cases of drug addiction in the Army. SGO Reports, WDAR: 1936 (44); 1937 (60); 1939 (55). Marshall to Pershing, 30 January 1925, in Bland, ed., *Marshall Papers,* 1:273. Bolté Oral History,41. Bozoski questionnaire. Brigadier General W. D. Connor to TAG, 24 August 1923, #319.12, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA. Jack Campbell questionnaire (quoted) and Robert F. Smith Memoir, China Expedition, World War I Survey, USAMHI. Westover, *A Papago Traveler,* 91.

36. Surgeon General's Report in WDAR:1939, 55.

that of troops in the Philippines. This soon changed, as the next year, 1913, their admissions rate per thousand at 226.15 was considerably higher than their comrades in the islands (149.45) and far more than the rate (85.3) for the entire Army. By the Twenties, commanders were very concerned about what they recognized as a severe problem. In 1925, General Connor noted that courts-martial, talks, and "keeping the library open longer hours" had contributed toward improving the VD rate. Down the chain of command, other officers were encouraging athletics, putting on home-talent shows, developing recreational facilities and even, in some cases, providing free rickshaw rides home from the bars for soldiers in order to control VD.[37]

While he did not make the connection that athletics might be another tool in his fight against venereal disease, General Connor did point out to the Adjutant General that "Great stress is laid on athletics." and went into some detail as to the various sports and the amount of success the 15th's teams had enjoyed in 1925. Unquestionably sports were important as a perusal of any issue of *The Sentinel* indicates. The *Annual* for 1925 is even more explicit as each soldier's participation in teams appears by his individual photo, and photos of the various company and regimental teams and their records abound. Officers and men played together on the basketball, football, rugby, and hockey teams, while only officers played polo and evidently only soldiers played baseball or boxed. Depending on the sport, their opponents included the Japanese, American sailors, local American civilians, French, and British. The most hard fought and longest rivalry of all in several sports, however, was with the Marines at Peking. It had to have been a bitter blow in early February 1938 when teams went to Peking for a final weekend of games and the Marines swept them all in basketball, hockey, and bowling.[38]

In the last years the troops were in China, the rate of venereal disease dropped. By 1937, the admission rate per thousand was down to 67.3—less than that in the Philippines (87.3) but still more than double the Army's rate (33.8). During the last two months in China, the rate dropped to 29 which was actually less than the Army rate (30.6). Brothels were still prevalent and at least one in this New Deal era tried to keep up with the times—as its sign advertised—"NRA - we do our part"—but the great efforts to control VD had begun to take effect.

37. Surgeon General's Report, WDAR:1913, 653, 646 and 1914, 385; Pogue, *Education of a General,* 240; Anders, *Gentle Knight,* 103; Connor to TAG, 24 August 1925, #319.12, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA.

38. Ibid.; *Annual,* see 199-235 in particular. The home talent theatricals and the production "Goofus Feathers II," which featured officers and their wives as well as the soldiers, are covered on 191-96. *Sentinel,* 12 February 1938, 14.

Many of the men kept women in homes away from the barracks. One company commander estimated that 80 percent of his men were "shacked up" and that it probably did hold down the disease rate. Commanders also held NCOs accountable. They had to inspect the genitals of the men in their squads or sections every day and had to send any soldier who had indications of rash or sores to the medics. They then signed a statement indicating that they had either found no problems or made a list of the soldier or soldiers whom they had discovered. If one of their men did show up with the disease and they had not reported him earlier, they then lost their stripes. This encouraged very close supervision indeed.[39]

One of the regimental commanders in the Thirties even took the extreme step of group punishment in an all-out effort to bring the VD rate down. If a company reported one case, all of its personnel would have to be in the barracks by 11 P.M. for the entire following month. Two cases and curfew was 9 P.M. Three or more and none of the men in the miscreants' company would be permitted to leave the compound for a month. One of the soldiers put a stop to this by writing the Inspector General, who investigated and ordered this illegal punishment canceled.[40] When the regiment left China in 1938, alcoholism and venereal disease did not disappear but certainly those who suffered from one or both found it more difficult and a great deal more expensive to pursue their bad habits.

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In the early 1970s, when General Charles L. Bolté summed up his experiences in China, the artificiality of the situation impressed him the most. The regiment had gotten so far away from "the realities of military life" that it seemed to him that it led a "fairy tale" existence. In the intervening years, he had played prominent roles in World War II and the Korean War while his two sons had fought in the Korean War and the Vietnam War, which was going on as he reminisced. Those experiences and the demise of the British empire, as well as colonialism generally, certainly put the 15th Infantry in China in perspective.[41]

39. Surgeon General's Report, WDAR:1938, 42, and 1939, 40. Bolté Oral history, 45, and Bolté interview with author, 4 August 1971; Brigadier General William E. Carraway, "A Case of Military Justice in China," 26 October 1972 (a three-page typescript which General Carraway sent to me). His one page of comments on Finney's *Old China Hands,* which he wrote on 22 November 1972, was also helpful.

40. Carraway, "Military Justice."

41. Bolté Oral history, 43.

An incident recalled by Captain W. A. Castle, who served in Tientsin during the first months the regiment was there in 1912, might well be symbolic of the basic situation of this small unit put down in the midst of the tens of millions of Chinese. As he went the round of checking sentinels one night, one soldier responded to his question—what were his special orders—that he was supposed to blow three short blasts on his whistle in case of fire and one short blast in case of riot. When Castle asked to see his whistle, the guard replied: "Sir, I have no whistle." This essentially was the point that General Connor made in 1926 when he asked that the regiment be withdrawn. In the days when colonial empires were the vogue, small numbers of Europeans could govern hundreds of thousands, even millions. Small bodies of troops then might well carry weight far beyond their numbers in the chaotic situation in China. But where there had been mobs there were, by the 1920s, armies, and Connor realized that the day of white "moral ascendancy" was at an end and the use of bluff could not long continue.[42]

For a quarter of a century this token force did carry out its mission, certainly as well as any similar foreign contingent. Even the artificiality of the extreme "spit and polish" ceremonies and the bluff of the show of force, when cast against the exotic background of China and those times, evidently served their purpose of impressing the Chinese at least enough to keep them from repeating the depredations of the Boxer Rebellion. In the end, however, it was not the Chinese but the rise of an aggressive Japan that forced the regiment out of China. In 1938, it was time to go.

42. W. A. Castle, untitled page-and-a-half typescript, in Castle Papers, USAMHI. Major General Connor to J. V. A. MacMurray, 13 January 1926, enclosed in his letter to the TAG, 22 January 1926, #350.05, TAGO Central File, RG94 NA.