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★★ MG George Honnen

ID: 3284←→

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George Honnen

First Name: George

Last Name: Honnen

Birthplace: Philadelphia, PA, USA

Gender: Male

Branch: Army (1784 - present)

Date of Birth: 16 November 1897

Date of Death: 23 January 1974

Rank: Major General

Years Served:

Graduate, U.S. Military Academy, Class of 1922

- Engagements:
- World War II (1941 - 1945)

Biography:

George Honnen
Major General, U.S. Army

George Honnen was born on 16 November 1897 in Philadelphia, PA. He attended South Philadelphia High School where he easily mixed good marks with superior achievements in athletics, and graduated with the class of 1915. In later years, his school honored him by election to their Hall of Fame in a moving ceremony in Philadelphia.

In April 1917, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Coast Artillery as a Private and was soon on his way 'over there' in France. A kindly Captain Stockton suggested that he study, by candlelight in his dugout, when time and enemy action would permit. As a result, George became one of three men from the American Expeditionary Forces to be returned from France to attend West Point in June 1918 with the Class of 1922. A momentous turn of the wheel.

George graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1920 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry. He then reported to Fort Benning, GA, for four years: as a student, an instructor, and aide-de-camp to General Walter Gordon, and then to General Briant H. Wells. Here he met his wife-to-be, so Fort Benning became second only to West Point in his affections.

His next duty was with the 15th Infantry in Tientsin, China, followed by a stint in Walter Reed Hospital. On 12 January 1927, in San Antonio, TX, he married Helen Van Rensselaer Stillman. After a wedding trip to Mexico City came a two-year assignment to Fort Douglas, UT, during which time daughter Betty was born. Then came reassignment to the old “Can Do” regiment in China in 1929. There daughter Jessie was born.

After another tour at Fort Benning where there were many other of the DCC (Damn China Crowd, including Colonel George C. Marshall), five great years, 1932-37, began at West Point as "Tae," the Assistant Adjutant to the then-Major Eichelberger [Honoree Record ID 53], aide-de-camp to General W.D. Connor. In the period 1937-41, he attended the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, KS, and served as Professor of Military Science & Tactics at the University of Hawaii.

In 1941, he returned to West Point as Assistant Commandant of Cadets for his shortest tour, six months. (He would return in late 1943 as Commandant.) A favorite story of his was that he had lived in every type of quarters at West Point and that from being Superintendent’s aide to acting Superintendent, the only job he never held was that of barracks policeman.

From West Point in January 1942, George flew to Fort Sam Houston, TX, to be Deputy Chief of Staff to General General Alfred M. Gruenther [Honoree Record ID 239] with General Walter Krueger’s Third Army and, in August 1942, he succeeded General Gruenther as Chief of Staff. General Krueger [Honoree

Record ID 268] once said wonderingly, “George is able to say ‘no’ to my senior commanders and make them like it.”

When General MacArthur requested that General Krueger join him, the Sixth Army was born and George Honnen, George Decker [Honoree Record ID 217], Clyde Eddleman [Honoree Record ID 224] and a whole staff flew to Australia. George received the Legion of Merit from General MacArthur for his inspired leadership in organizing the Sixth Army both during its inception and its early months overseas. Unhappily, illness and a slight stroke were to force his return to the United States for hospitalization during the summer of 1943.

After a short tour with the 89th Division, Brigadier General Honnen was the Commandant of Cadets at West Point from 1943-46. While serving in that capacity in 1945, he was given the overall responsibility for planning the funeral and burial of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Hyde Park.

After West Point, George returned to Hawaii and then to Fort Benning. In May 1952, he became Chief of the Army’s Budget Division at the Pentagon. Gerald R. Ford, then a Congressman, wrote a friend in 1963 stating that George, while Army Bridget Director, “became my best military friend.”

During the grim years of the Cold War, Major General Honnen was the Commander of the American Zone in Berlin from 5 August 1954 - 9 September 1955. A year later General Gruenther, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, requested that he be transferred to the United States European Command as Chief of Staff. The two years in Paris, while very interesting and rewarding, seemed a bit quiet after Berlin.

In November 1957 at Fort MacPherson, GA, George Honnen was retired with a second Distinguished Service Medal only to continue in uniform. Good fortune, and General Mark W. Clark, brought him to The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina, as Dean of Administration, a job that well suited his talents and abilities and where he was beloved by all who knew him. He, in turn, came to love The Citadel.

A second retirement, at age sixty-five, to a beautiful old house in the historic section of Charleston took place in 1962. George was involved in many civic activities when, in 1967, he suffered a major crippling stroke. In no way did he permit it to diminish his interest or joy in life and people. He kept fit and active and delighted in visiting friends at The Citadel, taking frequent trips to West Point, the 50th reunion being a highlight of his life, and the mini-reunion thereafter. He wrote friends that he was "in training for the 55th.”

In the house he had lived in since 1970, close to the sea on Sullivan’s Island, SC, on 23 January 1974 George suffered a sudden massive coronary and died within an hour.

Among other medals, Honnen was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and the Legion of Merit.

Personal

George married Helen Van Rensselaer Stillman on 12 January 1927, and they celebrated their 47th anniversary shortly before his death in 1974. In 1981, Helen married George's former classmate from the Class of 1922 at West Point; four-star General Cortlandt Van Rensselaer Schuyler [Honoree Record ID 321]. Helen again became a widow when Cortlandt Schuyler died on 4 December 1993; she died on 20 April 1994. All three are buried in the United States Military Academy Post Cemetery at West Point.

Death and Burial

Major General George Honnen died on 23 January 1974 in Charleston, SC. He is buried at the United States Military Academy Post Cemetery at West Point, Orange County, NY.

Honoree ID: 3284

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