

US Army Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame Nomination

NOMINEE DATA

NOMINEE'S NAME: Henry A. Rasmussen
RANK/GRADE: Major General
TITLE AT RETIREMENT: Major General
DATE/PLACE OF BIRTH: October 17, 1915 / Siren, Wisconsin
DATE RETIRED: November 30, 1972
DATE DECEASED: N/A
E-MAIL: N/A
LAST DUTY POSITION: Commander, U.S. Army Weapons Command Rock Island Arsenal,
Illinois

SIGNIFICANT AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

Distinguished Service Medal	May 1969
Legion of Merit	6 April 1966
National Order, Fifth Class (Republic of Vietnam)	5 March 1969
Order of Military Merit, Chung Mu (Republic of Korea)	2 March 1969

BADGES:

Army General Staff	10 June 1949
Joint Chiefs of Staff	9 September 1969

Promotions:

<i>Temporary</i>	<i>Regular</i>	
16 Jun 39		Second Lieutenant
1 Feb 1942		First Lieutenant
22 Mar 43	1 Jul 48	Captain
24 Jul 44	28 May 53	Major
22 Jul 52	17 Oct 60	Lieutenant Colonel
29 Aug 61	17 Oct 65	Colonel
1 Aug 66	27 Nov 67	Brigadier General
1 Aug 68		Major General

SIGNIFICANT ASSIGNMENTS/POSITIONS:

	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Company Commander, 486 th Ord Co., Canal Zone	Dec 41	Feb 42
Company Commander, 1056 th Ord Co., Canal Zone	Feb 42	Feb 43
Base Ordnance Officer, France Field, Canal Zone	Feb 43	Jul 43
Ordnance Officer, 44 th Air Service Group, Louisiana	Oct 43	Nov 43
Ordnance Officer, 315 th Air Service Group, Italy and China, Burma, India Theatre	Feb 44	Jun 45
Assistant Ordnance Officer, XIV Air Force Service Command, China	Jun 45	Aug 45
Operations Officer and Executive Officer, Mount Ranier Ordnance Depot, Tacoma, Washington	Mar 47	Aug 47
Student, Command & General Staff College	Aug 47	May 48
Staff Officer, Procurement Group, Logistics Division GSUSA, Washington, D.C.	May 48	Nov 48
Control Officer, Procurement Division, OAC/S G-4, Washington, D.C.	Nov 48	May 50
Assistant to chief, Procurement Division, OAC/S G-4 Washington, D.C.	May 50	May 53
Executive Officer, Ordnance Procurement Center, Europe	Jul 53	Jul 56
Project Officer, The Ordnance Board, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland	Aug 56	Aug 58
Student, The Industrial College of the Armed Forces	Aug 58	Jun 59
Assistant to Director of Procurement ODCS Log, Washington, D.C.	Jul 59	Jul 61
Staff Officer, Office of Special Assistant for Military Assistance Affairs, Office of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C.	Jul 61	May 63
Commanding Officer, U.S. Army Ordnance Depot, Korea	Jul 63	Dec 63
Director of Maintenance, Eighth U.S. Army Depot, Korea	Dec 63	Jun 64
Assistant Deputy Director, Contract Administration Services, Defense Supply Agency, Alexandria, Virginia	Aug 64	Apr 66
Director of Material Readiness Logistics Division, Headquarters U.S. Army Europe	May 66	Dec 66
Special Assistant for Ammunition, Office Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C.	Dec 66	Sep 67
Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics J-4 U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam	Sep 67	Mar 69
Commanding General, U.S. Army Weapons Command, Rock Island Arsenal (Ill.)	Apr 69	Nov 72

EDUCATION:**Civilian**

Webster High School, 1933
University of Minnesota - B.M.E., 1942
George Washington University – M.B.A., 1962

Military

The Command and General Staff College – Ft. Leavenworth, 1948
The Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1959

SPECIAL STUDIES:

WECOM Arsenal Utilization Study. October 1970.

LIST OF POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFO ABOUT NOMINEE:

JMC Historian, Keri Pleasant, (COMM) 309-782-0392, DSN 793-0392, keri.pleasant@us.army.mil

Mission Organization & Functions, HQs and Installation Support Activity, WECOM. Command 10-1. 1971.

U.S. Army Weapons Command Annual Command Histories FY1969-1973. (JMC Archives, Rock Island, IL).

U.S. Army Weapons Command Lessons Learned Brochure. (JMC Archives, Rock Island, IL). 1969.

WECOM Arsenal Utilization Study. October 1970.

ORDNANCE CORPS HALL OF FAME NOMINATION:

Major General (Retired) Henry A. Rasmussen served 31 years in the military, dedicating his service to working in logistics and the ordnance field. His dedication to the military is encompassed by this nomination. MG Rasmussen has exemplified the duty, honor, knowledge, and selfless service required to participate in three major wars and command a major Army command. Before entering into the military he studied mechanical engineering at the University of Minnesota from 1935 to 1940. In June 1939 MG Rasmussen received a ROTC commission at the university.

Rasmussen was called to active duty in 1941 to serve in World War II and was assigned as 2nd Lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps in February 1941. At the time he had gained employment at Pioneer Engineering Works of Minneapolis as an Engineer in the private sector. He left his first career to answer his call to service. His first duty assignment brought him to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland for a two month training course. His first OCONUS duty location was in the Panama Canal Zone where he served with several ordnance units before returning to the United States in 1943. Before being called overseas again he served as an Ordnance Officer at the 44th Air Service Group in Louisiana.

In October 1943 he accepted his mission to serve as an Ordnance Officer of the 315th Air Service Group where he performed missions in Italy, China, Burma and the India theaters of operation. In March 1944 his unit was withdrawn from Italy and after brief stints in Egypt and India, MG Rasmussen was stationed in China in support of the 14th and 20th Air Forces. In his last segment of his deployment in China he served as Assistant Ordnance Officer of the XIV Air Force Service Command. The air service command in a theater provided logistical framework for the Army air force. Its functions comprised activities of procurement, supply, repair, reclamation, construction, transportation, salvage, and other services required by the tactical units of the air force. The air service command provided all repair, and maintenance of equipment beyond the responsibility of first and second echelons of maintenance. All Army air force

organizations and installations were under air service commander control. These organizations and installations include air quartermaster, ordnance, signal, chemical, medical, and engineer depots, and service centers.¹

After WWII, MG Rasmussen decided to return to civilian employment, however, by 1947 he chose to be reintegrated into the Regular Army. Upon his return to active duty he became the Operations and Executive Officer at Mount Rainier Ordnance Depot in Tacoma Washington until August. Mount Rainier Ordnance Depot served the United States Army between 1942 and 1963 as its primary facility for the repair, salvage, and mobilization of the tremendous number of vehicles and arms employed throughout the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and the Pacific Theater. The facility served as an important hub for deployment, repair, and salvage activities. His assignment to the installation lasted only a few months, but he gained valuable experience in CONUS depot operations.

MG Rasmussen spent his next year at the Command and General Staff College before becoming a Staff Officer for the Procurement Division of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4 in Washington, D.C. He ended up spending five years in that division, being promoted throughout that time. Upon promotion to LTC he was reassigned and became the Executive Officer of the Ordnance Procurement Center in Mannheim Germany. After his tour in Germany, Rasmussen returned to the States to serve on the Ordnance Board in Aberdeen, MD as a Project Officer. MG Rasmussen was designated as Logistician by the DA on 22 March 1961.

MG Rasmussen served in the Vietnam War as Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics J-4, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam from 1967-1969. By the beginning of 1968, III Marine Amphibious Forces (MAF) hoped that its major logistical problems were over. The unexpected problems with the new M16 rifles during the past year not only delayed the conversion from the older M14 rifles, but also required the modification of all of the M16s. Compounding the difficulties for III MAF logisticians were the grounding of the Chinook Helicopters-46s, personnel shortages, combat losses, accidents, and continuous threat of enemy rocket and artillery bombardment of Marine supply and ammunition points.

Colonel Rex O. Dillow, the III Marine Amphibious Forces G-4, praised the efforts of Brigadier General Henry A. Rasmussen, USA, the USMACV and Brigadier General George H. McBride, USA, the Commanding General, U.S. Army Support Command, Da Nang in assisting the Marine logisticians to cope with a difficult situation. According to Dillow, "here we had the largest field force ever commanded by a Marine Corps headquarters, with multi-division Army and Marine Corps forces depending upon support from U.S. Air Force, Navy, Marine and Army units. Despite the rapid buildup, difficulties from long and tenuous lines of communication and adverse weather, logistic support was steady throughout," Dillow commented. In letters of appreciation to the two Army generals, General Cushman, the III MAF commander, recognized their efforts. He credited Rasmussen with providing "guidance and impetus" to logistic planning which made it "possible to promptly deploy support forces and commence operations in support

¹ Army Air Force regulation 65-1.

of much larger reinforcements than had been expected, but which were moved to Northern I Corps on very short notice and committed to action immediately upon arrival."²

Mr. Rasmussen's final assignment was at the U.S. Army Weapons Command (WECOM) from 1969 to 1972. WECOM had responsibility of managing the arsenals developing and producing weapons systems. WECOM had been developed to centralize operations at Rock Island and Watervliet Arsenals under a single command concept and MG Rasmussen served as WECOM's third Commanding General

MG Rasmussen was responsible for oversight of many operating pieces of the Army weapons program to include research, development, testing and engineering; procurement, production, quality assurance, fielding, maintenance, all aspects of supply, addressing urgent wartime requirements, and orchestrating all command logistical and life cycle activities. MG Rasmussen directed the work of 600 engineers and scientists and a total workforce of over 7,600 employees at Rock Island HQ and manufacturing facilities and 4,000 at the Watervliet Arsenal in New York. The scientists he directed and guided improved current weapons and created new ones that were more reliable, mobile, lighter, less costly to produce, or to counter new enemy armament and tactics. One of the largest missions of WECOM was the supply and maintenance for major items and spare parts. His technical expertise and leadership was invaluable during the Vietnam war and his vast experience in theater provided him insight into the link between logistics supply and operations in the field.

WECOM exercised integrated commodity management of assigned materiel as defined by DA and HQ Army Materiel Command. As the Commanding General, MG Rasmussen managed research projects, centrally managed specific weapons systems and items and directed subordinate installations and activities. MG Rasmussen held responsibility for the execution of a \$1.2B dollar budget. MG Rasmussen managed 59 weapon commodities to include aircraft armament, automatic guns and grenade launchers; fire control; and selected artillery, mortars, and recoilless rifles. Several items were considered critical and were given high priority attention at all levels of the Army. In 1969, 27 critical items were reduced to 12 by the end of the FY due to his intensive management, production and procurement solutions. He was responsible for management of the Sheridan Weapon System, the first U.S. Army item with dual capability of firing guided missiles and conventional rounds from the same cannon. The system provided greater firepower, mobility, radius of operation, and versatility to troops and increased lethality against armored and hard targets. By the end of 1969, Sheridan deployment to Vietnam had been accomplished, equipment training teams fielded, and spare parts and ammunition fill had been achieved. In February 1969 the first unit was

² Contributions to III MAF by BG Rasmussen; COL Rex O. Dillow comments in his letter to General McBride. *US Marines in Vietnam: 1968 The Defining Year*. Accessed at: <http://ehistory.osu.edu/osu/books/1968/index.cfm?page=0002>, p. 580-589.

committed to combat. The successful deployment and use of the weapon in the Vietnam is in part due to MG Rasmussen's contributions and oversight to the program. The weapon system remained one of the highest priorities throughout the course of Vietnam. During his command the Army deployed the XM21 Sniper rifle providing the Army with the highly accurate rifle with telescope ranging capability.

During his command the WECOM National Inventory Control Point for weapons and spare parts handled 50,000 requests of which 15,000 were urgent requiring special delivery of vital equipment. It's hard to imagine the scope of management and responsibility required of this critical mission for the Army. The technical expertise and knowledge required of him was at his fingertips, as all his experience culminated to this point.

MG Rasmussen was involved in several studies. He was in charge of studying in-house manufacturing and preparing for peacetime. To address the problem of balancing workload, resources, and manpower, a solution was needed to address issues like the declining workforce level. The study examined declining workload versus cost and overhead rates that had rose sharply making the arsenals less competitive with other producers. Watervliet and Rock Island Arsenals represented huge investments in facilities and industrial production equipment which were essential for an effective response during periods of emergency or mobilization. The study recommended that strict levels of employment be adhered to despite peacetime or war conditions and as a minimum economical level to permit reasonable response times to mobilization requirements. It also suggested that the command emphasize generating non-mission work to sustain levels during peacetime periods. This study is representative of the industrial base challenge that has faced all leaders managing portions of the defense industrial base since WWII. What is the correct base size, how do we maintain government infrastructure with underutilized capacity, and how do we remain ready should a contingency erupt without proper lead time for mobilization. MG Rasmussen's solution to the problem of a declining workload and posturing his industrial sector in a ready state after Vietnam is contained in the pages of this study.

SYNOPSIS OF SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS:

MG Rasmussen provided significant contributions to ordnance over the course of three wars: World War II, Korean War and the Vietnam War. His sacrifice and duty are shown by his return to military service prior to the Korean War. From 1940 to 1972, he worked ordnance issues in and out of contingency operations. As an Army Logistician he mastered the life cycle management process of major Army commodities.

MG Rasmussen's distinguished military career lasted 32 years. During WWII he served in several theaters of war as part of the Ordnance Corps. Ending his WWII tour in China in 1945, he was assigned to the Mount Rainier Ordnance Depot where his experience in logistics, depot storage and maintenance missions blossomed into a life long career. His following assignments included ordnance positions at all levels of the Army at the Pentagon, U.S. Army Headquarters in Europe, and he was involved in

establishing the office of the Special Assistant for Munitions. During the Korean War era he also served two years with the Ordnance Board at Aberdeen, MD. After finishing education at the Industrial College of Armed Forces, he was designated a logistician in 1961. He expanded his leadership in the depot system and maintenance missions by accepting tours as Commander, U.S. Army Ordnance Depot, Korea and then as Director of Maintenance, Eighth U.S. Army Depot, Korea. He later served in the Vietnam War as the Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics J-4, Vietnam before returning to the Rock Island Arsenal to command the Weapons Command.

PHOTOGRAPH:

