
The Round Table

Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)

Thursday, 8 October 2015

29:02 Volume 29 Number 2

Published by WW II History Round Table

Edited by Dr. Connie Harris

www.mn-ww2roundtable.org

Welcome to the first October meeting of the Dr. Harold C. Deutsch World War II History Round Table. Tonight's speaker is Jonathan Jordan, author of *American Warlords* who will discuss the Washington based strategic leadership during World War II. He will be joined by veterans who will reflect on their memories of the decisions that affected their lives.

A liberal Democrat, a Conservative Republican, an admiral, and a general....., sounds like the beginning of a present day joke, but during World War II these very different gentlemen would lead the United States to victory. They were, respectively, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Admiral Ernest King, and General George Marshall.

Roosevelt led the United States through its two great crisis' of the twentieth century, the Great Depression and World War II, and while he did not live to see the conclusion of the latter, he put men place to bring about victory. Often seen by the Republican opposition as the devil incarnate, (an image that persists to the present day) FDR often circumvented US neutrality laws to aid the Allied efforts and when war came used whatever means necessary to achieve victory.

FDR might have been able to maneuver around or "sweet talk" Capitol Hill, Cabinet members, and newspaper reporters, there was one man who would have none of it, General George Catlett Marshall. Taking the oath as Army Chief of Staff on September 1, 1939, Marshall juggled the whims of a mercurial president, a stingy and isolationist Congress, and an Army in serious need of an across the board upgrade. Marshall proved that he was not afraid to tell the President unpleasant facts about the state of the Army even while the President blithely promised Great Britain guns, ammunition, and even airplanes that the US could not afford to part with. Keeping his post as Army Chief of Staff throughout the war, even sacrificing his desire to command the invasion of Europe, and abstaining

from party politics Marshall became one of the most respected man of the twentieth century.

Frustrated with the isolationist Democrat Harry Woodring, his Secretary of War, who either dawdled or refused to comply with efforts to circumvent Congress and supply Great Britain with war materiel, FDR looked to the internationalist wing of the Republican Party for a replacement, and found two of his Cousin Theodore's protégés. Henry L. Stimson seemed like the perfect candidate for Secretary of War. Stimson was much like the elder Roosevelt with a calling toward public service and the strenuous life. Involved in public service from 1906 when Theodore appointed him a US Attorney, he had enlisted as an infantryman, at age fifty, to fight in the Great War and mustered out with the rank of Colonel of artillery. A former Governor General of the Philippines, he served as Secretary of State during the Hoover Administration. Like FDR, he recognized the dangers of the Nazi Reich and the Japanese Empire. He accepted FDR's offer of the position of Secretary of War and served until September of 1945.

The other Republican FDR tapped to join his cabinet, though not one of Jordan's "warlords," was Secretary of the Navy William "Frank" Knox, who, like Stimson, idolized President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1898, Knox signed up to be a Rough Rider, and took part in the charge up San Juan Hill (Kettle Hill actually). During the Great War, Knox volunteered again and mustered out as a Major (Colonel?) of Artillery. He was the Republican vice-presidential nominee in 1936. FDR had courted Knox before, but it was only with the imminent possibility of war that Knox finally conceded to join the cabinet. Knox had no training in naval matters, but that did not concern FDR in the least, since he fancied himself an expert in naval matters and planned for Knox to be a figure head. Knox and King were a fine pair to match Stimson and Marshall.

Finally there was Admiral Ernest King, who was appointed Commander-in-Chief, US Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations in the Spring of 1942. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, King was not surprised, as a carrier commander in 1938, he had successfully destroyed Pearl in a 1938 war game

If you are a veteran, or know a veteran, of one of these campaigns – contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

exercise. King knew the Navy and the nation needed him, and was willing to serve wherever he was sent, and ultimately, that was in Washington. Much like Marshall, King had to maneuver between the various Washington political forces, including FDR, whom he called “the meddler-in-chief.”

The essence of democratic government is compromise. During World War II, compromise became American policy between every facet of American society: Army and Navy; business and unions; Republicans and Democrats; and even American generals and admirals with their British counterparts. All this was done with an eye on the ultimate goal to defeat the Axis. By adding Republicans to his cabinet and supporting apolitical military leaders, FDR bypassed the mistakes that plagued Wilson Administration at the end of World War I, with its token Republicans, and succeeded in not only winning the Second World War, but also formed the foundation for the bi-partisan foreign policy of the early Cold War.

Further Readings:

- Jonathan Jordan, *American Warlords* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2015).
- Nigel Hamilton, *The Mantle of Command* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt Publishing Company, 2015).
- David Kaiser, *No End Save Victory* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).
- Joseph Persico, *Roosevelt’s Centurions* (New York: Random House, 2013).
- David Brinkley, *Washington Goes to War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988).
- Stephen Taaffe, *Marshall and His Generals* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2011).
- Eric Larabee, *Commander-in-Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988)

Announcements:

- Twin Cities Civil War Round Table - Oct. 20, 2015 – *Murder of “Bull” Nelson* - www.tc-cwrt.com - info@tcwrt.com
- St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table - Oct. 26, 2015 – Thaddeus Lowe & Aeronauts - 715-386-1268 – rossandhaines@comcast.net
- Rochester WWII History Round Table – 507-280-9970; www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org
- Minnesota Military Museum, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>
- Honor Flight - Jerry Kyser - crazyjerry45@hotmail.com - 651-338-2717
- CAF - Commemorative Air Force - www.cafm-n.org 651-455-6942
- Minnesota Air Guard Museum - www.mnangmuseum.org 612-713-2523
- Friends of Ft. Snelling, www.fortsnelling.org

See our programs on YouTube at <http://youtube.com/ww2hrt>

- Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, MN, 320-564-6644, <http://www.fagenfighterswwiimuseum.org>.
- World Without Genocide, 651-695-7621, <http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/>
- Airshow - Eden Prairie - July 16-17, 2016 www.wotn.org 952-746-6100
- Civil War Symposium, Ft. Snelling, Apr. 2, 2016
- Military History Book Club, Har Mar Barnes & Noble: 28 Oct. Wawro, *Mad Catastrophe* - sdaubenspeck52@gmail.com

We need volunteers to drive our veterans to and from meetings. Please contact Don Patton at cell 612-867-5144 or coldpatton@yahoo.com

Round Table Schedule 2015-2016

2015

- 22 Oct. Seals of WWII
- 12 Nov. War Crimes Trials
- 10 Dec. Carrier Operations in Pacific

2016

- 14 Jan. German-Russians Operations
- 11 Feb. Liberation of Concentration Camps
- 10 Mar. Mobilization for War
- 24 Mar. Birth of New Age of War
- 14 Apr. Operation Dragoon/Anvil
- 12 May Start of Cold War



Gen. Marshall, Sec War Stimson, 1942



Adm. King, Sec Navy Knox on USS Augusta, 1941



Fala and FDR