

Pearson Lays Rout of 106th to Green Officers

Quotes "Military Experts" That Inexperienced Leaders Caused Debacle.

Reference was made today by Drew Pearson in his Washington Merry-Go-Round column to the 106th Infantry division, formerly stationed at Camp Atterbury, as reported to have been the first American division to cave in when the Germans opened their big counter-offensive on the Belgian front.

Pearson basing his reports on "military experts," charged that green officers contributed to the serious setback suffered by American forces.

These military experts, he said, trace the failure to have experienced colonels and lieutenant colonels as field commanders back to a ruling by the late General McNair, commander of the ground forces, that no colonel over 45 could serve in combat overseas.

"Gave Way Like Straws."

The 106th Division had just gone into the line when hit by the Nazis, according to Pearson, and "not one hostile shot had ever been fired over its head."

"This division," he declared, "gave way like straws before a tornado."

Pearson added that if a committee of Congress should ever take the trouble to look up the officers of the 106th Division, it would find that just before the division sailed all its older field officers were removed and younger, but "very green" officers, were put in their places. The columnist declared that if the division had held for only a few hours it would have all the differences in the world to the rest of the Army and to the length of the war.

Fredendall 'Goat' Earlier.

The 106th Division has not been listed by the War department as having been in action on the western front, so far as is known here, but the Germans have claimed that most of the division was destroyed in their initial attack against the Americans.

In his column, Pearson stated that military experts say something the same thing happened at Kasserine pass in North Africa and Salerno in Italy. He said these experts reported that green field commanders ignored the first rudiments of defense—namely that a halted regiment should dig in and prepare field fortifications in enemy territory.

Pearson added: "MaJ-Gen. Lloyd Fredendall was made the goat at Kasserine pass and transferred back to the U.S.A. just as MaJ. Gen. Ernest Dewey was made the goat at Salerno."

Apparently vindicated.

General Fredendall, the father-in-law of Mrs. L. R. Fredendall, Jr., of 202 Twenty-sixth street, is now a lieutenant general and commands the Second army, with headquarters at Memphis, Tenn.

If Pearson's report on General Fredendall having been made a goat of the Kasserine pass setback is true, it appears that General Fredendall has since been vindicated of responsibility for the American failure to hold against the German counter-attack.

In concluding his column, Pearson stated that Army experts say that undoubtedly some colonels and lieutenant colonels needed to be weeded out for physical or other reasons but that they believe General McNair swung too far in the other direction.

JUDGING OPENS AT CORN SHOW

Entries Are Under Last Year—Nine Growers Display Soybeans.

Judging was under way this afternoon in the annual Bartholomew county corn show, being held in Chamber of Commerce rooms. The show opened today and will close Wednesday.

Entries in the open classes were not as numerous as last year, although there were as many 4-H club entries. There were ten 4-H club 10-ear entries, five open 10-ear entries, 26 single ear corn entries and nine entries in the new soybean class, which was added to the show for the first time this year.

The show was being judged this afternoon by Ralph Bilman of Hawcreek township, former international and state corn king. The displays have been set up in the lounge in Chamber of Commerce rooms and the entries will remain there through Wednesday.

The corn show winners and medal winners in 5-acre corn contest will be guests at the meeting of Kiwanis club tonight in Chamber of Commerce rooms.

The 5-acre medal winners will receive their medals at the Kiwanis meeting, while the corn show cups will be presented show winners at the meeting of Rotary club Tuesday noon in Chamber of Commerce rooms.

KELLY TO HEAD ACADEMY FIELD

Col. Joe W. Kelly, son of Mr. and Mrs. James R. Kelly of 1712 Franklin street, who recently returned from the Western front, has been appointed commanding officer of Stewart Air field at the U. S. Military Academy, West Point, N. Y.

Colonel Kelly served as commanding officer of a Ninth Air Force B-26 Marauder group operating out of England and France. He returned to the United States two weeks ago to take his new assignment and with his wife and three children visited his parents here last week.

He and his family will leave this month for West Point, where he will take command of the air base.

PRATT ASSIGNED TO DEFENSE COMMAND

San Francisco, Jan. 1 (AP)—MaJ. Gen. Harry Conger Pratt has been given the permanent assignment as commanding general of the western defense command. He succeeds MaJ. Gen. Charles H. Bonesteel, whose post he had been

1945_01_01 Drew Pearson commentary

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