

THE OFFER FROM MAJOR GENERAL ROGERS I TURNED DOWN

It was the summer of 1971. As a full Colonel I was Chief of Staff of both the 4th Mechanized Infantry Division and of Fort Carson and its myriad units. A position which Maj Gen Rogers, the Commanding General of both had elevated me to from my having been the G-3 Plans and Operations Officer even while I was not yet promoted to full Colonel from Lt Col - though I was on the promotion list

That was a pretty high accolade, for he picked me over all the other 10 Colonels, and about 30 Lt Colonels on the 28,000 soldier Post. Four of them were commanders of 4,000 man Brigades and the Division Artillery. Gen's Rogers (Commanding General) and Dewitt Smith (Deputy Commanding General), with my help had been working for 18 months on turning the Fort Carson drafted-soldier command into an Army that would be attractive enough - both in the appeal of the trained fighting units and Army life on the Post - to fill up the first 'All Volunteer Army' since before WWII. I had been, nominally responsible for the Training and Combat Readiness Plans as G-3, had developed advanced but challenging 'Adventure Training' to turn soldiers who had spent combat tours in Vietnam and were familiar with fighting insurgents in the jungle and via heliborne operations - to turn them into all-Mechanized Army units fit to face Soviet Armored Divisions on the plains of Europe.

Fort Carson and Gen Rogers had pioneered and succeeded so brilliantly, even in the face of Army wide anti-Vietnam anti-Draft, and Racially tenseness, that both active and retired senior Army officers and civilian secretaries, Congressmen, experienced

military news reporters and columnists, and even high foreign European Defense Civilian officials, visited Fort Carson to see how we did it. Even the son of George Patton, a Major General, visited, and I managed to scare him when I drove him over the steepest slopes at Carson in an M113 Armored Personal Carrier that even one of his cherished heavy Tanks couldn't negotiate.

I knew that Rogers, who had arrived in 1969 as a newly appointed Major General, would be in great demand on his next assignment after the word of Fort Carson's VOLAR success spread. It came quicker than even I thought. He was put on orders to go to the Pentagon and head up the Army's Legislative Liason staff - which was there to education and advise Congress on what the needs of the Army were - to support a new all-Volunteer Army.

To my surprise Rogers offered me the opportunity to join him in Washington at the Pentagon. He would get me ordered there.

I had two considerations to weigh. First of all, young son David was enrolled in costly Fountain Valley School - a superior Prep school. We were able to afford it because he lived on Post with us, and commuted there daily as a day student. If we moved to the Washington DC area, no way could I, on a Colonel's pay afford it if he a resident student. He already had been bounced around while I was assigned to West Point as an instructor, and in Graduate School in New Jersey. He had only a year and

a half to reach graduation in good academic shape to enter a wide variety of good colleges.

And wife Patsy would be faced by yet-another major move with our three kids to the Washington DC area.

The second significant consideration was that I was already in line to Command a full three or four Mech Infantry Battalion Brigade at Fort Carson 4-5,000 men if I stayed. A major step up in my career that might end up with a general's star on my collar, and fit to command a Division.

So I declined the offer, even knowing Rogers was headed for the top of the Army. Indeed he was. After his Army Liason position as a 2 star general, he was rapidly promoted to three stars and then made the Four Star Chief of Staff of the Army. Following that he was moved to Europe and made the 4 Star Supreme Commander of multinational NATO.

Had I stayed on Bernie Rogers team, he would have put one or two stars on my shoulder before he and I retired after 30 or more years service.

Tempting, but I think I made the right decision - both for my family especially David's future. And I was given command of the 2 Brigade - with three Mech Infantry Battalions, and one tank Battalion, at Carson, a year later. A big step up for me.

Postscript

Several years later neither Generals Bernie Rogers nor Dewitt Smith - who had pressed to make me Chief of Staff for Rogers - faulted me for my decision not to follow Gen Rogers as he rose to the top. In fact both of them heartily endorsed the nomination LTGen Jack Cushman, under whom I never served, gave me in 2001 for me to be named as a Distinguished Graduate of West Point. Which honor I received in 2004.