

## Meet Four Generals

Before the new headquarters building was finished at Camp Dodge, the "top brass" occupied offices in an old brick house at the south end of the Cantonment. Here I was welcomed, that first day, by Major General E. H. Plummer, the camp commander, a kindly, white-haired officer, who gave me many helpful tips for exclusive news stories during his stay.

He was a genial, cooperative friend to the reporters, who always found the door to his office open to them. We did not have quite the presumption of a brash recruit who sauntered into the General's anteroom one day and said to the orderly, "What-d'you say I bust in for a little chat with the General?"

The General was kindly, but formal, as an army executive must be. One morning as we were discussing camp affairs, he asked if I had encountered any unpleasant experiences as I went about my newspaper business in this masculine city.

"If any of these men ever annoy you, let me know. I want all women to feel safe at Camp Dodge."

I was happy to tell him every fellow had behaved with utmost respect. I probably was young



and naive and would not have recognized a leer if I saw one. Anyway, my daily stint was accomplished pleasantly.

An army man for 30 years, and a graduate of West Point in 1887, General Plummer came to Camp Dodge from the Panama Canal Zone. Associated with him in command of the camp were Brigadier General R. N. Getty, commander of the 163rd Depot Brigade; Brigadier General W. D. Beach, commander of the 176th Infantry Brigade; and Brigadier General S. M. Foote, who headed the 163rd Field Artillery. Each of these men succeeded General Plummer as ranking officer at the Cantonment, and General Beach, in addition, was in charge of the 88th Division when it went overseas in August of 1918.

An attractive house was provided for General Plummer at Camp Dodge and it was there I met and chatted with his daughter, Miss Harriet, who had been with her father in Panama. Later, Mrs. Plummer and another daughter, Miss Bessie, arrived in Des Moines and found a pleasant suburban home for the family. Over a cup of tea, in the new house, Mrs. Plummer paid tribute to the National Army: "There has never been a more democratizing influence than these camps," she declared. "This experience will make men of some of our recruits who have never known responsibility or the meaning of democracy."

When General Plummer chose to ride at camp,



his orderly, Sergeant W. R. Hill, might bring Patsy or Billie around for a morning canter. These were General Plummer's horses, which Sergeant Hill had chaperoned in a freight car from New York to Iowa. Sergeant Hill had served for many years with the General, and although he could have had a commission at the outset of the war, he preferred to follow his long-time friend to Camp Dodge.

Brigadier General Getty was an expert horseman and frequently was seen riding Pickles or Casey, his favorite mounts. Pickles would smile if offered an apple. Casey was a prize-winning jumper. General Getty was indeed an impressive figure as he rode one of his mounts in military reviews and patriotic processions.

General Plummer, with commanding officers from other cantonments, was sent to France in November of 1917 to visit battlefields and study the war picture. But after his return to the United States in February he was bitterly disappointed to learn that he was not to take the 88th Division to the front. In line with War Department policy to send to France "only those general officers who are prepared to withstand the hardships which a command on the battle line entails," he was relieved of his Camp Dodge command and transferred to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

City and military friends were saddened by the departure of this valorous officer who had made a



deep imprint upon the Midwest community, and who was revered by the men in his command.

Camp Dodge religious workers paid tribute to him in a farewell message, signed by Chaplain H. B. Boyd; the Reverend Patrick McDermott, Knights of Columbus Post chaplain; Fred Hansen, general secretary of the Y.M.C.A.; and Miles Kleven, representing the Lutheran Brotherhood. There were tears in the General's eyes as the tribute was read to him.

General Plummer's farewell to his troops included these affectionate lines: "The members of the command have won my personal love by their loyalty and by their efforts to carry out to the fullest my personal orders, with evident feeling of personal regard for me."

Brigadier General Getty replaced General Plummer at Camp Dodge for a time. When he was transferred to Camp Gordon, Georgia, Brigadier General Beach took command and had the glory of taking the 88th Division to France.

When he reported for duty at American General Headquarters in Chaumont, France, General Beach found that the reputation of his Division had preceded him. I talked to General Beach when he returned from overseas and he told me:

When I got to GHQ in France they asked me where I was from. I told them I was with the 88th Division, and every officer there had heard of the outfit.

You see, Camp Dodge sent 80,000 men to France be-



fore the 88th got overseas. Three months after the first draft contingent arrived at Camp Dodge we were sending men to every port of embarkation. There were Camp Dodge soldiers in every engagement in which Americans participated.

Brigadier General Beach was in command of the Division until Major General William Weigel took over and brought the troops back to Camp Dodge for demobilization.

With the homecoming soldiers also was Brigadier General S. M. Foote, in command of the 163rd Field Artillery Brigade. For a time he was the ranking officer at Camp Dodge until he was transferred to Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio, for duty. General Foote concluded his farewell to his men with these words:

It was my good fortune to greet you upon the formation of the brigade. It is now my melancholy pleasure to bid you an affectionate farewell upon its demobilization. I can offer you no better wish than that you may display in civil life the same patriotic zeal you have demonstrated in your military careers.