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Part II of this biography picks up with a letter of reprimand that Commander Spruance had received from the Secretary of the Navy. His experiences as a student and two subsequent tours on the faculty of the Naval War College made him a master artisan in the profession of naval warfare. Admiral Spruance's performance as a commander in the Pacific is described as classic in the application of the art of naval warfare.

ADMIRAL RAYMOND A. SPRUANCE

AND THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

PART II—FROM STUDENT TO WARRIOR

An article prepared

by

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Conclusion. In part I of this paper Spruance had been ordered to the Naval War College as a student in 1926, and he had completed the first 6 months of the academic year. Shortly after New Year's Day, 1927, he received a letter of reprimand from the Secretary of the Navy, holding Spruance responsible for the mismanagement of the general mess of his former command, U.S.S. *Osborne*.

The Letter of Reprimand. The letter of reprimand was harsh and damning. It could have meant the end of Spruance's career. He felt it was unfair, and he decided forthwith to challenge its accusations and to defend his reputation.

The crux of the episode was that Spruance had a dishonest commissary steward who had stolen provisions and falsified records and had fled the *Osborne* shortly before Spruance had been relieved on 15 July. When it had become apparent that the steward was

an unauthorized absentee, his records were examined, revealing that the ration allowance was overexpended about \$3,900. In other words, the steward had spent \$3,900 for food which had not been consumed nor accounted for by inventory. The Secretary of the Navy blamed Spruance, charging that his lack of supervision had enabled the commissary steward to pursue his dishonest practices.

Spruance defended himself vigorously. The Board of Investigation had found no fault in Spruance's supervision of the *Osborne* commissary department. In Spruance's view, the fault lay with the commissary officer, whose job it was to supervise the commissary steward's activities. Shortly after taking command, Spruance had discovered that the commissary officer was careless in his bookkeeping. Spruance had admonished him to keep more accurate records and then assumed that this warning would be sufficient. It was not,

and the commissary officer's negligence and inattention allowed the commissary steward to embezzle the commissary funds. Spruance concluded his rebuttal by saying that he was not disclaiming his responsibility as a commanding officer, but rather was questioning whether that responsibility included his detailed supervision of a supposedly competent and experienced commissary officer.

In the case in question, I cannot but feel that I had a reasonable justification for believing that the commissary officer, who had no press of other duties and who had been specially cautioned as to the necessity for care in making up his records, would perform the elementary duty of keeping a record of the bills outstanding and paid. Had he done this, the dishonesty of the commissary steward would have been discovered when it first occurred in March, 1926.¹

Having submitted his rebuttal, he could only hope for the best. The fate of his career would be in the hands of the selection board which would consider him for promotion to captain in about 4 years. He later wrote a letter to the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation inviting attention to his letter of rebuttal, thereby inviting the attention of the selection board as well.² He was undoubtedly encouraged when he was ordered as Executive Officer of U.S.S. *Mississippi* 2 years after graduation from the War College, an excellent billet indicating the Navy had faith in him. Despite his conviction that the reprimand was unjust and that his performance of duty merited promotion to captain, he became progressively worried and disturbed as time for selection drew near. Selection boards are unpredictable, and he felt the reprimand might well deny his promotion. To Spruance's relief, the board apparently

disregarded the reprimand and, obviously impressed with the remainder of his record, selected him for promotion to captain. Once selected, he dismissed the letter from his mind and never again thought about it.³

This incident illustrates a potential risk in Spruance's command *modus operandi*. During the Pacific war he placed great faith in his subordinates. Having told them what he wanted done, he trusted them to do the job in their own way with a minimum of interference and supervision from him. Subordinates were grateful for Spruance's trust and support and responded with intense loyalty—they were inspired to use their initiative and not to fail Spruance.⁴ This system works when one has competent subordinates. It can fail if a subordinate is incompetent and violates the trust of his commander. Spruance's unhappy experience with the *Osborne* commissary officer could have made him everlastingly suspicious and distrustful of his officers. But he obviously felt that the benefits of trusting his subordinates justified the risk of an occasional betrayal of that trust.

The *Theses*. Having disposed of the letter of reprimand for the moment, he returned to his War College studies. Although the war games demanded much of his time, there were other subjects requiring his attention as well. Although Pratt had deemphasized thesis work, he still required a "Thesis on Command" and a "Thesis on Policy" from each student.⁵ This was a particularly onerous chore for Spruance, because he disliked writing and never wrote unless absolutely necessary.⁶ However, when he did write he expressed himself succinctly, clearly, and well.

In contrast to today's voluminous War College *Thesis Manual*, Spruance and his colleagues were guided by a one-page memorandum containing a suggested thesis outline and a recom-

mended bibliography.* In writing his "Thesis on Command," Spruance followed the outline without deviation and apparently referenced the standard authoritative publications of the day. The result was conventional, uninspired, and contains little to suggest the precepts by which he would later exercise command as a flag officer. Rather he did only the minimum necessary to fulfill the undemanding thesis requirements. It was read by the chief of staff and two staff officers and was returned without comment.

His "Thesis on Policy" was a study of contradictions. The War College wanted the thesis to include economic and political aspects of American foreign policy plus foreign policy in Central America and the Caribbean. The result was a conflict between Spruance's allegiance to the ideals of American democracy and his awareness that American foreign policy had violated these ideals time and again.

He wanted to believe that altruism governed American foreign policy, but he could not reconcile acquisition of the Panama Canal Zone and meddling in Latin American government affairs to any other cause other than expediency and self-interest. He understood and regretted the inevitable Latin American hostility. Another example of his idealism tempered by his pragmatism is contained in his views of the American promise of eventual Philippine independence.

No other country in the world has ever taken such an altruistic stand in connection with a territory which it has acquired by conquest or purchase. Whether this policy would stand if the Philippines were to develop into a

great rubber producing country and every American had a personal interest in their retention under the American flag, is another question.⁷

He became even more contradictory when considering the Far East. The United States professed to respect the sovereignty of China, yet he believed that foreign countries had a right to exploit China (the "Open Door" policy). He justified the use of American Armed Forces in that country because force was used "... without feelings of hostility toward the people or countries involved, and without any desire to take unfair advantage or to obtain territorial concessions." He wanted a stable, friendly, yet subservient Chinese Government; should it become anti-Western it would "... force the Powers to intervene to protect their treaty rights and the safety of their nationals."⁸

He concluded his thesis in a flurry of contradictions. The United States was taking an ever-increasing role in world affairs and would be guided by the interests of peace and justice. Unfortunately, current American foreign policies had made the United States unpopular in certain European countries. Time would soften this animosity, and the real purposes of American policy would be everywhere appreciated. Then the final contradiction. "The foundation of American foreign policies in the past has been self-interest, but the adoption of most of these policies by an unwilling and skeptical world has proved that their authors were farsighted statesmen, who were content to seek a permanent benefit rather than a temporary advantage."⁹ Finally, he quoted a 1906 statement by Secretary of State Root as the essence of American foreign policy.¹⁰ Root's statement is a classic of pious hypocrisy, and it strains one's credulity that Spruance believed it.

*The typical 1926 War College thesis was neither scholarly nor academically rigorous and would be regarded today as an informal treatise.

Spruance's "Thesis on Policy" is puzzling. He is credited with intellect, clear thinking, and sound reasoning, yet none of these are evident in the thesis. His reasons for writing as he did must remain conjectural; the thesis is an inexplicable anomaly.*

Logistics.[#] One of Pratt's greatest contributions to the Naval War College as President was the establishment of a course in logistics. Over the years the Navy had developed a grand strategy against Japan that included extended operations, long lines of communication, and the movement of an overseas expeditionary force. The means by which those forces would be logistically supported had been generally ignored.

Pratt was determined to force his students to study logistics. Shortly after he took over as President, he assigned a civil engineer, Capt. R.E. Bakenhus, the task of preparing an intensive course in logistics for the War College Class of 1927. Bakenhus had to be ready by late 1926.

After more than a year of preparation, Bakenhus presented the course to the students on 1 December 1926. Its scope was staggering. Spruance and his classmates would study logistics from raw materials in mother earth, to the manufacturer, through distribution, to the eventual consumer. They were issued a bulky jacket of pamphlets covering every conceivable aspect of logistics. Bakenhus and his staff had

*He does seem to be heavily influenced by Mahan's theory of mercantile imperialism, which advocated aggressive trade in foreign markets, and Mahan's strategic theory that the United States must dominate the entire Western Hemisphere, geographically, politically, and economically. See Vincent Davis, *The Admirals Lobby* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 106-144.

[#]Primary source material for this section is contained in numerous War College pamphlets, lectures, memoranda, and committee reports. Individual footnotes will be sparingly used to avoid distracting the reader.

been forced to originate all the pamphlets on naval logistics because nothing else was available. An embarrassing revelation was that the Navy had published nothing on logistics in general, nor on marine transportation of troops and supplies in particular. The Army's General Service School at Fort Leavenworth, on the other hand, had for years been studying the logistics involved in overseas expeditionary operations. Bakenhus had simply reproduced the Army's written doctrine of this subject and issued it to the students. It contained such information as merchant ship cargo capacities and the use of these ships to transport military personnel and cargo. The Navy was entirely ignorant on this subject.

The Army doctrine had been based on the assumption that they would go it alone when transporting troops and supplies overseas. Pratt was appalled at the thought of the Army performing a naval task. He realized the need for developing joint Army-Navy coordination for overseas expeditions and had established liaison with the Army War College for exploratory talks on the matter.¹¹ In the meantime he told Bakenhus to develop a doctrine for joint Army-Navy action, but it was incomplete when the logistics course began.

In addition to assigned reading, the students would hear nine lectures that were informative in nature and designed to broaden their viewpoints. Broad indeed, for one lecture by a Dr. E.O. Baker was entitled "The Trend of Population and Agricultural Population Production in the United States." But Pratt would not let the students simply read and listen. They would also study logistic strategy problems and would include logistic planning in their war gaming exercises. It was clear that Pratt would force-feed them logistics, and Bakenhus was his executor. Everything that Bakenhus and his staff would teach had "... met with the approval of superior authority in the War College."¹²

The students' logistic strategy studies were generally well done, but their logistic planning for their 1927 major BLUE-ORANGE war game was pathetic. Pratt had forced them to think about the logistic requirements in a war against Japan. He demanded that their solutions include an annex containing a logistic plan that would support the contemplated operations. However, the students had neither the time nor the expertise to give logistic planning more than superficial treatment. They were to discover later that the problem would not go away as the BLUE-ORANGE war game would vividly demonstrate the need for logistic planning and support.

Spruance and his classmates would leave the War College with at least an awareness of the vital need for logistics in naval warfare. Logistics was uppermost in Spruance's mind during the Pacific war,¹³ and later as President of the War College he reestablished a course in logistics. Unfortunately, the War College ceased teaching logistics after Pratt's administration, and the Navy was woefully unprepared when World War II began.¹⁴ Pratt had been a lone voice crying in the wilderness.

The Committee System. The problem work in logistics inaugurated another Pratt innovation, the committee studies, the forerunner of the present-day War College group research projects. He eliminated the perennial strategy and tactics theses and established a committee system for the study of strategy, logistics, and the tactics of actual battles and campaigns. The students were assigned to committees which would study assigned subjects over a period of several months, followed by oral reports in May summarizing their findings and conclusions. This program worked exceedingly well. More subjects were studied in greater depth by the committee method than were possible by individual thesis efforts.¹⁵

The students were divided into six

committees for the logistics study, with subjects of profound import.¹⁶ The committee chairmen then divided their respective subjects into topics and assigned subcommittees for each topic. Spruance's committee would study "Strategic Raw Materials," and he and a lieutenant in the junior course, Raymond A. McClellan, were assigned the topic of "Strategic Raw Materials in a War against Japan and England as Allies."

The students labored over their logistics studies for many months, and the results were mixed—the reports were good, bad, and indifferent. They relied heavily on published Army data to discover just what the strategic materials were; apparently the Navy had never before given the subject much thought. The students were acutely concerned with the numerical inferiority of American cruisers, which they considered the primary weapon for either denying or protecting the movement of strategic raw materials by sea. The potential of submarine warfare against enemy commercial shipping was not considered despite the near success of German submarines in World War I.* And as the students did not regard submarines as a dangerous menace, they likewise failed to consider antisubmarine warfare. In fact, the whole problem of submarine and antisubmarine warfare was never fully appreciated at any time by the Naval War College before World War II. The Battle of the Atlantic and submarine warfare against Japanese commerce had never been played on a War College game board.¹⁷

*One of Spruance's War College classmates, Comdr. Ernest D. McWhorter, studied German World War I submarine warfare. He acknowledged that the Germans had nearly starved Great Britain but had never properly understood how to best use their submarines. He then came to the curious conclusion that submarines should be used against capital ships rather than merchantmen.

Spruance and McClellan turned to on their logistics study. It was approached with a serious attitude, and the two met often for discussion and composition of the paper. Spruance was considerate of McClellan, put him at ease, and encouraged him to express his views freely; McClellan in response became impressed with Spruance's fairness, intellect, and logic. McClellan gained the impression that Spruance was totally engrossed in his profession. As time for the May oral presentation of their report drew near, Spruance and McClellan put on the finishing touches. Spruance had asked McClellan to give the presentation, and when the first rehearsals were a minute too long, they eliminated two paragraphs. Spruance wanted to use no more and no less than the allotted 12 minutes. "A real perfectionist," concluded McClellan.¹⁸

The report was a vast improvement over his theses. It was succinct, informative, thorough, authoritative, and presented credible conclusions. It was the best report within his committee and was among the best of all the committee reports. It began by recognizing that a war against Japan and Great Britain was the worst possible case, but there was no air of pessimism. Rather it pragmatically stated what the United States would face and what it must do. It identified the essential raw materials, their sources, and the trade routes used for their transportation. Recommended covert methods to defeat blockades and trade embargoes were particularly shrewd and clever. It also advocated that the United States stockpile raw materials at home, develop new sources in the Western Hemisphere, and develop processing and manufacturing plants in the United States and the Western Hemisphere. Whereas the other reports addressed only what the United States must do to protect its trade routes, Spruance and McClellan developed strategy for carrying the war to Japan and Great Britain. As with all other

reports, however, cruiser warfare rather than submarine warfare was the accepted method for raiding enemy seaborne commerce.¹⁹

Another committee project was the study of the strategy and tactics of earlier naval wars. Spruance's committee would study the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Within the committee Spruance and Lt. P.P. Welch would study and report on the tactics used at the Battle of Tsushima.²⁰ The full committee did a first-rate job of studying the war. The tenor of their reports was that if the United States was ever to fight Japan, it would face the same strategic handicaps as did Russia. Hopefully the United States could profit from the Russian mistakes.

The war had several impressive aspects. First, the Japanese were good fighters and would be a tough enemy in any war. Second, they would start war with a sudden, surprise attack. Third, they would fight a war of attrition and would attack an enemy fleet when it was weakened and overextended. Lastly, the United States, as with Russia, would be severely handicapped by long, exposed lines of communication.²¹

The committee was given an hour for its May oral report, and Spruance and Welch were given half the period for their presentation. Spruance characteristically let Welch do the talking.* The Battle of Tsushima was analyzed, stressing the nine principles of war as was customary with most War College

*Spruance told the author in June 1963 that he disliked public speaking and avoided it whenever possible. The 1930-era War College students remember him as a dry and conventional public speaker. Invited to address the National War College in 1947, he wrote Carl Moore that "I have written a paper which is dull and cannot compete in interest or excitement with the Army Air Force's visions of the future." (Spruance to Moore, 2 January 1947).

analyses. Spruance was apparently enamored with these principles and used them again when he taught tactics at the War College 10 years later.²²

There were several features of the battle which would influence him in World War II. First was the concept of allowing subordinate commanders freedom of action and exercise of initiative in carrying out the commander's plan. This was the keystone to Spruance's success as a fleet commander. He first recognized it in 1927 when he said, "The most noteworthy feature of the Japanese tactics was the freedom of action allowed the division commanders in carrying out the plan. Each division retained freedom of movement. Rigidity of formation was subordinated to flexibility of maneuver."²³ Spruance was also impressed by Admiral Togo's coolness, patience, and great presence of mind in the stress of battle. Togo had successfully persevered in his original plan of attack and did not yield to thoughtless, impetuous actions which Spruance would have censured.²⁴ Spruance, of course, became famous for his calm behavior and clear thinking in battle and his perseverance in conforming to his original plan of action.

And finally, he would never forget the tactics used by Togo. They would influence one of the most important decisions he would make in World War II, the decision as to how he would fight the Japanese at the Battle of the Philippine Sea. In his words,

As a matter of tactics, I think that going out after them [the Japanese fleet] and knocking their carriers out would have been much better and more satisfactory than waiting for them to attack us; but we were at the start of a very important and large amphibious operation and we could not afford to gamble and place it in jeopardy. The way Togo waited at Tsushima for the Russian fleet to

come to him has always been on my mind. We had somewhat the same basic situation, only it was modified by the long range striking power of the carriers.²⁵

By far the most ambitious use of the committee system was in solving strategic problems that would later be played as war games. Pratt had radically changed the *Estimate of the Situation with the Order Form*, and it now demanded that solutions contain detailed planning never before attempted. Individuals could not possibly solve the problems by themselves. Not only were the solutions more exacting, but the problems were also more complex. Pratt wanted an amphibious assault problem, including details on debarkation and shore fire bombardment support. The need for logistic planning in the annual BLUE-ORANGE war game, mentioned earlier, was also a new and demanding requirement. A committee organization, resembling an operational naval staff, was the only answer. If it worked, it would be continued in later years.²⁶ In retrospect, it is such an obvious way of doing things one wonders why it had not been used before. The genius of Pratt is apparent again.

The War Games Concluded.* The big war game of the year was a general war between BLUE (United States) and ORANGE (Japan). It would begin in late November and end in March. It was essentially the same problem that had been played since 1911, a period of 15 years. It had been presented annually because the War College felt it was good academic training and good preparation for the United States most probable future war. The staff hoped it would at

*The primary source material related to the war games is contained in manuscript records of the history and critiques of these games. Footnotes will be sparingly used to avoid distracting the reader.

least serve to give the students a good general understanding of the situation that some day they might be called upon to face under the actual conditions of war. The students divided into committees to develop the strategy and plans to be used by both sides, and the most appropriate solutions would be chosen to be played on the game board. Two committees took the ORANGE side, and three the BLUE.

Spruance was on an ORANGE committee, and here he got his first hard look at the problems of a future Japanese-American war. The committee's solution was analytical and thorough. It recognized the difficulties faced by BLUE: long, exposed exterior lines of communication, need for protection for supply trains and expeditionary forces, huge logistic problems, lack of intelligence, lack of bases, and ORANGE use of islands to concentrate air strength. As ORANGE, the committee decided it would adopt as its strategy a war of attrition, with the main line of defense the Bonins-Guam-Truk axis, and would concentrate on destroying the BLUE fleet. The staff chose their solution but insisted that their planning include the capture of the Philippines.

The BLUE committees developed three different solutions: (1) Reinforce the BLUE forces in the Philippines in order to advance on the Nansei Islands and eventually blockade and isolate the ORANGE home islands; (2) sacrifice the Philippines and capture Okinawa in order to isolate ORANGE; and (3) sacrifice the Philippines and island hop across the Pacific in order to eventually isolate ORANGE. The staff summarized the solutions into two categories: proceed at once to the Western Pacific, or proceed via the Mandate Islands, providing bases to the rear as BLUE advanced westward. The first plan involved great risks with great possibilities. The second was safer but allowed ORANGE ample time to consolidate his

position. The staff chose the former plan for the war game.

The war game began and Spruance was given command of the ORANGE observation forces, several divisions of cruisers and submarines. The game lasted months, and again the BLUE and ORANGE commanders were reluctant to engage in a fleet action, which would have allowed the game to transition from a chart maneuver to a board maneuver. The staff interfered repeatedly as the game progressed, because they would not "... let a commonplace war drag on to a dull, inevitable finish. Our situations must be full of interest, hairbreadth escapes movie fashion, and the Staff must not be denied the right to create or precipitate new situations."

The result of the game was that BLUE got severely trounced trying to relieve the American forces at Manila. Like the Russians at Tsushima, the BLUE fleet had arrived exhausted after a long and arduous transit. Weakened and harassed by ORANGE forces throughout, BLUE's poor material condition and total lack of logistic support made his defeat inevitable.

The students were universal in their condemnation of the BLUE strategy. The senior student, Rear Adm. George E. Marvell, summarized their sentiments. The decision to relieve Manila had been made to bolster the morale of the American public, but the cost of losing the fleet's fighting efficiency was not worth the dubious benefits. The BLUE fleet was in terrible shape when it got to Manila. The lack of logistic support was a great handicap. The BLUE strategy had ideally suited the ORANGE "war of attrition" strategy. The best BLUE strategy would have been a "steamroller" method of island hopping, gaining air and surface superiority by seeking out and destroying ORANGE forces in advance of amphibious assaults. And finally, he advocated

commerce raiding with cruisers and submarines (incidentally the only time the author found the role recommended for submarines). The island-hopping strategy, of course, is exactly what the United States used in World War II.

Certainly the defeat of BLUE forces going straight to Manila must have been predicted by many of the staff and students. Why then was this strategy chosen? The author's opinion is that Pratt chose it to dramatically illustrate to the students the need for advance bases and logistic support, although there is no hint of this reasoning in the records of the history and critique. But it is difficult to believe that Pratt chose the strategy simply because it would help the morale of the American public. Rather, Pratt was preaching logistics, and this war game was one way to make his point.

The following and final war game of the year again illustrated Pratt's vision and genius. For years Pratt had listened to naval officers talk about defeating Japan by destroying her fleet, and they would add parenthetically that some territory would have to be captured as well. But the Navy had never seriously addressed the problem of how to go about making an amphibious assault. So as a start he exposed his students to the concept of amphibious warfare through a remarkably prophetic lecture by Col. Robert H. Dunlap, USMC, in January 1927 entitled "Overseas Expeditionary Force." Captain Bakenhus' incomplete "Notes as to Joint Army and Navy Action in Overseas Expeditions" was equally prophetic.

But Pratt, as usual, demanded more of his students than their listening to a lecture or reading a pamphlet. In the spring of 1926 he initially planned to present them a war game involving an opposed landing and stressing logistics, resembling the joint Army-Navy landing exercise at Oahu the year before. However, the Army and Navy later planned to conduct a joint landing exercise on

the New England coast in the spring of 1927, so Pratt decided instead to have the students solve and play a revised war game paralleling the New England exercise. In the exercise, BLACK (Germany) would attempt to invade BLUE. Pratt's influence in the Navy Department must have been considerable, for the exercise was conducted in the Narragansett Bay area and concluded in Newport a week before graduation. The newspapers gave it full coverage, calling it the "War of 1927." While the exercise umpires and the War College students labored at comparing results and solutions, Newport society entertained the fleet personnel with a gala "Fleet Week." It culminated with the Secretary of the Navy delivering the graduation address at the War College. Pratt had certainly succeeded in winding up amphibious warfare and his presidency with a flourish!

As the study of logistics died when Pratt departed, so also would the study of amphibious warfare languish. Nothing really new on the subject would be introduced at the Naval War College other than an occasional lecture by personnel from the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico. Fortunately, the Marine Corps developed the doctrine and equipment that would be needed. As late as 1940 the Navy still planned to use cutters with guns on the how for landing troops and had no idea how to land tanks or other heavy equipment. The exciting and challenging concepts introduced by Pratt in 1927 had been relegated to limbo by his successors.²⁷

With the "War of 1927" Spruance ended his apprenticeship as a Naval War College student. It had been a turbulent year because of the innovations and the changes brought about by Rear Admiral Pratt. Captain Greenslade summarized their effect in a statement rich with metaphor. "And so it is hoped that the Members of the Class of 1927, who were forced to detour, while the road building was going on, may have gotten

as much atmosphere and scenery, despite the rough going, as will later classes rolling smoothly along on the boulevard of learning, past direction posts, billboards, and gas stations."²⁸

The War College had given Spruance the foundation for his preparation for high command. But his association with the War College was not over. During his 11 months as a student he had established a reputation as an intelligent, articulate, scholarly officer highly motivated for the study of naval warfare. These qualities impressed others as being highly desirable for a War College staff officer, and he would twice return to the Naval War College before being called to the war in the Pacific.

Officer in Charge of the Correspondence Courses Department, 1931-1933. Following graduation from the Naval War College, Spruance served for 2 years in the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, D.C. Here he pursued his quest for learning everything he could about the Japanese. He made a special effort to become friendly with all the Japanese naval officers on duty in Washington so that he could understand their character and way of thinking.²⁹ Following this duty in naval intelligence, he then served 2 years as Executive Officer, U.S.S. *Mississippi*.

Spruance returned to the Naval War College as Officer in Charge of the Correspondence Courses Department in June 1931. He must have been very happy with his appointment, because he very much enjoyed Newport and the atmosphere of the War College, and duty on the staff was a prestigious assignment. The President would normally negotiate directly with the Bureau of Navigation to get the officers he wanted for the War College staff. The War College was very selective in choosing its faculty—only top performers were wanted.³⁰

The Correspondence Courses Department had two basic courses: Strategy

and Tactics (S & T) and International Law. They were constantly being revised and rewritten, and the transitioning of students from an old course to a new course was always a problem. Naval officers had two motivations for taking the correspondence courses: (1) Course completion could waive the requirement for certain portions of the officers' promotion examination, and (2) course completion was a requisite for assignment to the War College resident junior course. Nevertheless, the Officer in Charge of the Correspondence Courses Department would find that his biggest problem would be to motivate students to complete their assignments within a reasonable time.³¹

The S & T course had just been revised when Spruance took over as Officer in Charge. He would not change or revise any of the curriculum during his tour, for he approved of what his predecessor, Comdr. Penn Carroll,* had developed. Approximately 600 officers were enrolled in S & T and International Law, but Spruance wanted even more participation. Consequently he sent personal letters to the executive officers of large ships, soliciting their help in telling junior officers what the Correspondence Courses Department had to offer. He would also give the course synopsis to the graduating resident students, asking them to pass the word when they returned to the fleet.³²

The new S & T course was Spruance's prime concern, and to get useful data on student participation he prepared an elaborate and detailed chart so he could determine if the course was too much for the average officer to handle.³³ He sent sympathetic letters to the students who were delinquent in their installments, encouraging them to continue and complete the course.³⁴ But his patience could finally wear thin.

*Spruance greatly admired Carroll and made a special point to have him on the War College staff when he became President.

To his closest friend, Carl Moore, who had been unsuccessfully struggling to complete the course for 2 years, Spruance wrote, "I am indeed sorry to learn that you have been working under such handicaps, and hope that they will soon be removed and you will be returned to normalcy."³⁵ Spruance then permanently disenrolled him. The depression had severely limited the size of Spruance's staff, so he personally corrected all the S & T solutions while referring the International Law solutions to a staff Army officer law specialist.³⁶

The President of the War College was Rear Adm. Harris Laning. Laning was one of the most innovative and imaginative flag officers of his day. Admiral Pratt, then Chief of Naval Operations, would often turn to Laning for advice that would help Pratt in the then current naval disarmament negotiations. Laning pushed the development of naval air warfare doctrine in the college war games and strongly advocated that battleships and cruisers then under construction be converted to aircraft carriers. In this and many other ways, Laning and the Naval War College were extremely active in studying the optimum characteristics and employment of ships and aircraft.³⁷

Spruance did not confine himself to evaluating solutions and writing letters, a necessary chore but one he would characteristically dislike. He would wander about Luce Hall and mingle with the staff and students. He was particularly close to Laning, both professionally and intellectually, for naval warfare was their mutually favorite subject. The two of them would initiate freewheeling discussions, and often a staff or student officer would use these opportunities to expound new and unique ideas. But if either reasoning or logic was faulty, Spruance would quietly, politely, and without sarcasm point out the defects of an argument or theory.³⁸

Spruance demonstrated an impressive tactical expertise; ships, aircraft, and weapons were clearly synthesized in terms of time, space, movement, and mass. He constantly urged and encouraged younger officers to test new and fascinating theories on the game board, such as "aircraft once launched cannot be stopped." His intellect was mirrored in his appearance and demeanor: physically fit, abstemious, lean, alert, cool, and restrained. He was recognized as a student of naval warfare and a strategist capable of directing broad and detailed planning. An ardent advocate of the War College, he believed that its mission was essential in preparing officers for higher command. Although his juniors affectionately nicknamed him "Old Spru," everyone at the War College held him in the highest esteem and respect. His reputation was progressively enhanced, and his association with the Naval War College was becoming increasingly closer and more firmly established.³⁹

His 1931-1933 tour at the War College was significant for another reason. He had reported aboard a commander and departed a captain. The letter of reprimand was now a dead issue.

War College Faculty, 1935-1938.

Spruance returned to the War College 2 years later as a junior captain, having served as chief of staff to Commander, Destroyers, Scouting Force. Rear Adm. Edward C. Kalbfus was War College President, and he and Spruance had worked closely together while both were War College students in 1926-1927. So from both personal knowledge and from reputation, Spruance was the kind of officer that Kalbfus wanted on his staff, and Kalbfus was undoubtedly responsible for Spruance's assignment.

Spruance's first year, 1935-1936, was served as head of the junior class that had some five lieutenant commanders and 17 lieutenants. Their greatest

Richmond K. (Kelly) Turner, 1936. War College strategy expert who would later command Spruance's amphibious forces.



Raymond A. Spruance, Naval War College, 1936

Carl Moore as Spruance's 1936 War College tactics expert. Later his chief of staff and always a close friend.



concern at the time was promotion; most would be passed over for lieutenant commander (although many were promoted in later years). Admiral Kalbfus would become particularly upset over the promotion results, and he would complain to the Navy Department that it was either sending poor material to the War College or that duty at the War College was not career enhancing. Whatever the reasons, he was unhappy, as were the students.⁴⁰

Spruance soon molded them into a studious, hard-working, and enthusiastic group of officers. They were much impressed by the serious, quiet captain and remember him well even after 35 years. "First impressions were that he was the 'cold blooded fish' type, but after we had been around awhile we found him to be a warm and human person."⁴¹ Another recalls

... his calm confidence and assurance in discussing the many facets of our problems... I had the impression that he was always most thorough and even meticulous in his analyses while in no sense presenting his ideas as the *only* solution... He was reserved but in no sense remote. He was not a "first-namer" but rather formal in a friendly and reassuring manner... [His] relationship with our group was that of a teacher in the true sense of that term.⁴²

A classmate remembers "... his almost encyclopedic knowledge of professional subjects... Subconsciously you felt it was impossible for him to make a mistake."⁴³

One student had a feeling that many of his classmates were initially apathetic and felt the War College was a waste of time. Yet he remembers that Spruance "... was a tough taskmaster and the harder we worked the more he demanded of us. He was a very great

leader and there was little doubt in anyone's mind that he would reach the top. He got to be very friendly with his class and became very proud of us."⁴⁴ Another student echoes this sentiment, remembering Spruance's

... ability to get an extraordinary amount of work from me and others... Many of the students, like myself, read, studied and wrote far into the night because Captain Spruance expected it of us... His association with us was very close. I looked forward to every session with him with zest and enthusiasm. [Indeed, Spruance was] ... very popular and deeply admired by everyone I knew.⁴⁵

These letters typify Spruance's major influence on the War College students during his 2½-year tour—he encouraged them to think, to reason, to analyze, to experiment, and to innovate. But following his first year as director of the junior class he receded into the background, and his more forceful subordinates attracted the students' attention.⁴⁶ Spruance became head of the Senior Class Tactics Department, but his close friend Carl Moore would most often direct the game board. Spruance allowed Moore free rein in devising new tactics and techniques (some rather extreme) and encouraged him to use his imagination. Spruance would occasionally drop in to see what Moore was doing, but for the most part he worked behind the scenes as an administrator and left Moore to deal with the students.⁴⁷

Spruance flected up to head of the Operations Department in the summer of 1937, but he was overshadowed by his subordinate Head of Strategy, Richmond K. Turner.⁴⁸ Kelly Turner was an aggressive, decisive, competitive, combatant naval officer who had a great ability to express himself clearly and

well. Although often tactless, abrupt, and short-tempered, he nevertheless was held in great respect by the War College staff and students because of his brilliant mind and professional competence. He initiated an impressive program of staff lectures and tried to emphasize the growing importance of carrier and amphibious warfare. He was generally conceded to be a future admiral.⁴⁹

Spruance was apparently content to let his hard-charging subordinates take center stage. As his daughter aptly observed, "As Admiral [Carl] Moore can tell you, Dad was a great one for choosing good men and letting them do all the work."⁵⁰ And her father admitted as much. "Looking at myself objectively, I think I am a good judge of men; and I know that I tend to be lazy about many things, so I do not try to do anything I can pass down the line to someone more competent than I am to do it."⁵¹

Spruance began every day at 0600 with calisthenics and a cold shower. He never worked late at the War College and was always first out the door at the 1630 bell. He walked daily and swam whenever weather permitted. He never brought work home except when he tried to rewrite Kalbfns' prolix "Sound Military Decision." With this hopeless task he would fuss and fume, undoubtedly because it denied his evening recreation of reading his books on biography and history.⁵² (One of his first official acts as War College President in 1946 was to replace "Sound Military Decision" with a permanent, Navy-wide naval operations planning manual.)

Carl Moore summed up Spruance's third War College tour.

Spruance took his duties at the War College in his quiet, serene way. He never seemed under pressure of any sort and never seemed to exert himself to accomplish any particular task or to make changes in the curriculum. He

enjoyed his outdoor activities, he accomplished much in repairing and refurbishing furniture, and he liked the informal kinds of social activities. His tour of duty was a pleasant relaxation.⁵³

Spruance the Warrior. Spruance left the War College in early 1938 to take command of U.S.S. *Mississippi*, and while in this assignment he was selected for rear admiral. He was commanding Cruiser Division 5 in the Pacific when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. It is appropriate to consider how the War College prepared him for the war that followed.

The 11 months that he spent as a student, 1926-1927, was the greatest influence. It shaped his way of thinking; taught him the basic principles of strategy, tactics, and command; focused his attention on Japan as his future enemy; and it exposed him to the prophecy and philosophy of William V. Pratt. The curriculum had changed very little during the 1930's when he returned as a staff officer, and there is no evidence that he tried to change it. His knowledge obtained as a staff officer was a continuation and refinement of what he had learned and believed as a student.

The most important benefit Spruance gained was the experience and training in solving military problems and making decisions. During his years at the War College he had become thoroughly imbued with the methodology of the Estimate of the Situation and had evaluated hundreds of solutions of correspondence course students and resident students. His faculty for analyzing and solving problems and making appropriate decisions become instinctive. He would cope with new tactics and new problems after the war began, but his superbly trained mind was more than ready to deal with them. Thus, when confronted with the crises and complexities of the Pacific war, he

could resolve them systematically and effectively.

Another War College legacy was his study and knowledge of strategy. He knew the strategic strengths and weaknesses of Japan and of the United States. He knew the Pacific Ocean and the strategic importance of every island in it. He could view the struggle with Japan in its entirety, and he knew what would have to be done to defeat the Japanese.

His ability to plan and command the operations of an entire fleet evolved from his participation in war games. He was accustomed to deploying and maneuvering fleets on a game board and successfully translated this skill to the realities of commanding a fleet at war. For reasons sparked by intraservice rivalry, there were many people who wanted Spruance to be relieved by an aviation flag officer. Yet the author wonders if there was any aviator who had the breadth of understanding of the total effort needed to win a naval campaign. What aviator admiral would have had the patience and the wisdom to pursue such vexatious yet vital considerations as logistics and the peculiar needs of an amphibious landing force? Spruance was perhaps not an expert in carrier warfare tactics, but he knew how to use carriers to help him win an amphibious campaign.

Spruance was not an innovator at the War College. The curriculum during the 1930's stressed surface warfare with the destruction of the enemy fleet as the main objective. The college did not aggressively develop or teach advanced doctrine for carrier warfare, amphibious warfare, submarine warfare, and logistics. The only true aviation advocate on the staff as late as 1939 was a lone lieutenant commander aviator, amphibious operations were briefly touched upon in 2 or 3 days by visiting Marines, submarines were used as adjuncts to the

main body, and logistics was simply ignored. The War College teaching led to but one end: the clash of battleships in the decisive main engagement.⁵⁴ Spruance could have changed the curriculum or at least its emphasis to incorporate these developing areas of naval warfare, but he did not. One concludes that his concept of naval warfare coincided with what the War College was teaching before World War II.

How then did Spruance adapt to these new naval warfare realities after the Pearl Harbor disaster? The answer lies in his flexibility and adaptability. In his words, "Those in high command must keep an open mind and be ready to make desirable and necessary changes in strategy as a war proceeds. They must also be ready and itching to fight, as King, Nimitz, and Bill Halsey were with us."⁵⁵ Itching to fight they were, but Spruance and his fellow admirals had many lessons to learn in a very short time. To use a contemporary idiom, "It was a whole new ball game."

When Spruance took command of his cruiser division he had had minimal experience with carriers. His ships, however, were to operate extensively with Halsey's carrier task group, and Spruance would become more familiar with carrier operations. The destruction at Pearl Harbor provided Spruance a stark and sobering introduction to the awesome power of naval air warfare. The battleship and 40 years of War College doctrine for its use were suddenly obsolete. Clearly the American carriers were the only effective naval force remaining and available, and Spruance knew he would have to drastically revise his concept of naval warfare—he would have to learn how to use carriers. Midway was his first lesson.

Spruance's concept on how to use the carriers was the biggest bone of contention between him and the emerging aviation flag officers, led by

Vice Admiral Towers.* Spruance considered carriers as his primary weapon for gaining air and surface superiority during an amphibious operation. And here the aviators objected, because Spruance often tied down their carriers near the amphibious objectives, leaving them exposed and vulnerable. The carriers' mobility and power were being misused, they felt, and Spruance was told that Towers had "... remarked that I wanted a sledge hammer to drive a tack."^{5 6}

The argument boiled down to a matter of mission, so thoroughly instilled in Spruance as a War College student. Spruance, the classic and deliberate tactician, looked upon the carrier as one of his many weapons to be used in his mission—which was to defeat Japan by progressively capturing islands until Japan was surrounded. The aviators wanted to use the carriers to seek out and destroy the Japanese Fleet—this was how they conceived their mission—and by destroying the fleet they felt that victory against Japan was assured. Spruance was aware that Towers wanted his job so that the aviators' strategy would prevail.^{5 7} He later said, "If you were not an admirer of Towers and did not play on his team, your path was not made smooth if he could help it. . . . Towers was a very ambitious man."^{5 8}

The next lesson Spruance had to learn was the art of amphibious warfare. He accepted the War College strategy of driving across the Pacific by capturing strategic islands, he knew which islands were important, and he was reasonably familiar with their topography. But the tactics involved in capturing an island were a different matter.

*See Clark G. Reynolds, *The Fast Carriers, The Forging of an Air Navy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968); and Edwin P. Hoyt, *How They Won the War in the Pacific* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970).

He had a year to learn about tactics by serving as Nimitz' chief of staff and watching Halsey's forces in their struggle for Guadalcanal and Tulagi. He saw that the battle was almost lost because the Americans did not have air and surface supremacy. He saw what equipment was needed to conduct and support amphibious assaults. And he also saw that Kelly Turner, commanding Halsey's amphibious forces, knew what he was doing and was the best man available to command a large-scale amphibious operation.

Spruance used that year to absorb the lessons of the South Pacific and to direct the planning for the proposed drive across the Central Pacific. When Nimitz told him that he would command the Central Pacific forces, Spruance was ready. He got the best men he could find for his staff and principal commanders, such as his close War College associates, Kelly Turner and Carl Moore. His plans and preparations were thorough and complete. The actual assaults were well executed and characterized by overwhelming force. Spruance would plan for months so he could capture his objective in days.

Mistakes were made, but as the war progressed Spruance's forces became stronger and wiser. He would later reflect,

I think any war operation should be examined as to what you expect to gain from it and what you may expect it to cost you. If the cost is much greater than the gain, do not take it on if you can help it. Iwo Jima was an example of an operation that was much more costly than we first thought it would be, but its subsequent value turned out to be worth more than we paid for it. I think the same thing holds for Tarawa. . . . The Gilberts had been a necessary, but expensive, opera-

tion* . . . I think the Marshalls was the most satisfactory, in so far as obtaining important results at a very low cost and in a short time was concerned.⁵⁹

Logistics, also, had to be learned from scratch after the war started. The War College had taught that logistics would be an essential element of a war against Japan, but its magnitude and complexity had never been addressed. The realities of war demanded a solution, especially when more and more men and ships operated farther and farther away from repair facilities and sources of supply. Spruance later said,

In the last analysis it was our fleet strength which enabled us to move across the Pacific, to isolate the Japanese island positions we had selected for capture, to furnish the gunfire and air support for the landings, and to ensure the security of communications to the rear. As we approached closer and closer to Japan, continuous fleet support in the advanced areas became more and more a necessity. The foundation of our operations was logistics. Through the agency of our mobile service squadrons, built up from small beginnings, we were able to give our fleet the logistic support it needed when and where it was required, whether at sea or at advanced bases which moved across the Pacific as the fleet itself moved.⁶⁰

He did not neglect to acknowledge the contribution of the submarine,

whose role was never envisaged by the War College. Said Spruance,

Had it not been for the magnificent job done by our submarines, there is no doubt in my mind that the war in Japan would still be going on . . . The Japanese empire was built on the use of the sea. When they lost the shipping needed to bring in the raw materials to Japan and to send out the men, weapons and supplies needed by their outlying areas, the empire began to crack . . . her economic framework was stripped bare and she had to capitulate.⁶¹

The greatest contribution that the Naval War College gave to Spruance and his comrades as a whole was an aura of professionalism and unity of thought—they viewed the world through the same eyes and spoke a common language. They knew each other. They knew what had to be done to defeat Japan, although they sometimes disagreed how best to do it. The Naval War College had persevered with surface warfare; it took Pearl Harbor to cause its graduates to change their tactics but not their strategy. And to the everlasting credit of the War College, it taught its students the foundations and fundamentals of naval warfare. It taught them to think as future naval commanders and that, if war with Japan were to come, ultimate victory would depend on them.

Did the Naval War College fulfill its original mission in striving to prepare the future World War II naval leaders? Mahan had expounded its reason for existence when it was created.⁶² Mahan said that its aim was to promote knowledge of how to best use ships and weapons in the conduct of war. It missed this aim by a wide margin. Mahan also said that the War College was to concentrate on strategy, tactics, and logistics. In fact, it was superb in strategy, tardy in tactics, and lacking in

*Necessary because in his words “. . . it established, basically, the organization and the pattern that were to be used thereafter as a basis for future operations in the Central Pacific.” Quoted from his lecture before the Royal United Service Institution.

logistics. Mahan further stated that its mission was to study and develop the art of naval warfare and principles which do not change although weapons and tactics may change. The attainment of this mission reached its zenith in the Staff Presentations of 1937-1938, initiated by Turner and approved by Spruance.

The Staff Presentations were developed and delivered by naval officers of the War College staff. The presentations (lectures) were scholarly, profound, and philosophical. They affirmed that naval officers were the masters of their profession. The titles of the lectures are representative of their nature. For example, under the general heading of *Theory and Forms of Naval Warfare*, six lectures were entitled "Policy and Naval Warfare," "The Nature of Naval Warfare," "The Influence of Geography on Naval Warfare," "Operations for Securing Command at Sea Areas," "Operations in Sea Areas under Command," and "Operations in Sea Areas Not under Command."

The most striking feature of the prewar Naval War College was that naval officers were supreme in the study and development of the art of naval warfare. They were the experts! The naval officer enjoyed a prominence and exerted an influence that culminated in World War II, both of which then eroded in the postwar era. The teachers, the lecturers, and the subjects taught at the Naval War College today offer a revealing comparison to the changing character of the War College since the 1920's and 1930's.

Spruance—The Final Analysis. A military commander is judged by his results, specifically, whether he won the battles that he fought. Spruance won all his battles, and for this alone he deserves recognition as one of our greatest naval leaders. But Spruance was a very complex man, and it is not enough to cite the more apparent attributes which

contributed to his success. A far more intriguing and difficult venture is to analyze his motivations that allowed him to bear the crushing responsibilities of high command.

Spruance enjoyed the trust and confidence of his two immediate superiors, Nimitz and King. They knew he would win for them, and they had no reason to even consider replacing him despite the persistent criticism voiced by the carrier aviation advocates. Having to contend with self-serving, ambitious, jealous, publicity-conscious flag and general officers, Nimitz and King must have been quietly thankful for Spruance who "... envied no one, rivaled no man, won the respect of almost everyone with whom he came in contact, and went ahead in his quiet way, winning victories for his country."⁶³

Spruance was without ambition in the sense of actively seeking the prestigious Pacific commands. Rather, he was good, and his superiors knew it, and they came to him. His description of getting command of the Central Pacific Force illustrates his attitude.

He was serving as Nimitz' chief of staff, and the Joint Chiefs had just approved operations against the Gilberts and the strategy of closing Japan through the Central Pacific. One morning while Nimitz and Spruance were walking from their quarters to their offices, Nimitz suddenly said,

"There are going to be some changes in high command of the Fleet. I would like to let you go, but unfortunately for you I need you more here." I replied, "Well, the war is an important thing. I personally would like to have another crack at the Japs, but if you need me more here, this is where I should be." And I thought no more of it until the next morning when, again coming down from our quarters, Admiral Nimitz told me, "I have been thinking this

over during the night. Spruance, you are lucky. I decided that I am going to let you go, after all." This was how he announced to me that I would be in command of our whole Central Pacific Force.⁶⁴

In his personal letters written before 1945, he most often described the war as "interesting" and once as "enjoyable."⁶⁵ But as his forces closed Japan the fighting got fiercer, the casualties soared, and his attitude changed. The Okinawa campaign was particularly savage. The Army progress was agonizingly slow, and his fleet in support was taking a terrible pounding from the kamikazes. To Spruance, "The way all this looked, it seemed like a bloody, hellish prelude to the forthcoming invasion of Japan . . . It would have been a terribly bloody, unnecessary proposition."⁶⁶

The ordeal of the Okinawa campaign had levied a terrific strain on the principal commanders and their staffs, and Nimitz decided to have Halsey relieve Spruance so the latter could rest and plan for the invasion of Japan. During the relieving, Halsey's staff was impressed by Spruance's calmness and composure contrasted to his worn and weary staff. After the war he confessed that "No one knew of the butterflies in my stomach."⁶⁷ It follows that if Okinawa gave him butterflies, perhaps all was not entirely tranquil inside during Midway and the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

His self-control was an enigma because he was innately shy and very sensitive as well as high strung and impatient. He masked his feelings and became silent when he was deeply disturbed or emotionally moved. To those about him he was always visibly serene and unworried. In effect, he was a stoic and a fatalist.⁶⁸

After the war he was appalled by the Japanese treatment of American

prisoners. He blamed the Japanese militarists. "I think those responsible for the treatment of our POWs will get what is coming to them," and he felt incidentally that this meting out of justice would eliminate the militarists, thus helping MacArthur to pacify Japan.⁶⁹

Spruance's unfortunate use of the word "enjoyable" does not mean that he enjoyed the killing and the destruction of war. On the contrary, it was his way of saying that he was satisfied and content in what he was doing, as were thousands of other Americans who wanted to be where the action was, in a responsible position. Perhaps also he felt so deeply about the war that he typically hid his true feelings by an apparent impersonal attitude. Spruance expressed his duty and mission in one succinct sentence: "Winning this war in the shortest possible time is the thing that matters, and our personal desires have to take a secondary place."⁷⁰

Although he condemned the Japanese militarists, he understood them. And in understanding them he also expressed one of his two greatest personal motivations—to fight honorably and well.

There are always enough brutes in any population and enough of the brute in each individual to make [cruelty and brutality] easy. The difficult thing in war is for the high command to restrain the brutal instincts which fighting tends to rouse in many individuals, while at the same time conducting relentlessly the operations which the war required. For my own part I never found that I had to develop in myself a hatred of the Japanese as a race, in order to make what I hoped would be a good war against them.⁷¹

Spruance, furthermore, had a clear conception of his kind of war. In his mind it was "... that ancient and

honorable art."⁷² Later, expanding on this theme, he said

I may say that during World War II I was old fashioned enough to be opposed to unlimited destruction of the civilian population and of non-military targets, and I wanted to confine our attacks to military targets. Even with these, the civilian population suffered enough to make them lose what appetite they might have had for the war.

I am still opposed to the idea of war being conducted by mass destruction of civilian targets by lone range missiles armed with nuclear warheads. I recognize that, if our enemy has them, we must be prepared to counter an attack and probably to retaliate in kind. I hope that the responsible governments of the world will be successful in their negotiations to prevent such a situation from ever coming to pass.⁷³

The author is convinced that Spruance's other great motivation was a compelling sense of duty to his country, which was apparent when he interviewed the admiral in 1963. Adm. George W. Anderson had been criticized for accepting the post of Ambassador to Portugal after having just been replaced as Chief of Naval Operations. The author asked Spruance if he felt the criticism was justified. Spruance replied that Anderson had been absolutely correct. When the President asked you to do something, you did it without question. An American's first duty was to his country and the President. The author was both moved and impressed by Spruance's intensity and conviction on this subject.

The author's opinion is reinforced by Spruance's reaction to the acclaim he received for his World War II victories.

Said he, "I was doing my duty and something I was trained to do."⁷⁴

Spruance avoided personal publicity for reasons that went far beyond his own modesty and shyness. Publicity might influence his decisions as a commander, and this he wanted to avoid

Personal publicity in a war can be a drawback because it may affect a man's thinking. A commander may not have sought it; it may have been forced upon him by zealous subordinates or imaginative war correspondents. Once started, however, it is hard to keep in check . . . Thus his reputation snow-balls, and soon, probably against his will, he has become a colorful figure, credited with fabulous characteristics over and above the competence in war command for which he has been conditioning all his life.

His fame may not have gone to his head, but there is nevertheless danger in this. Should he get to identifying himself with the figure as publicized, he may subconsciously start thinking in terms of what his reputation calls for, rather than how best to meet the

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Lt. Comdr. Thomas B. Buell, U.S. Navy, is a 1958 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School in 1964 with the degree of bachelor of science in electrical engineering. He has served four operational tours in destroyers, most recently as Executive Officer, U.S.S. *John King* (DDG 3). Lieutenant Commander Buell is currently a student at the Naval War College, School of Naval Command and Staff, and chose to write a biography of Admiral Spruance through the college's Independent Study Program.

actual problem confronting him. A man's judgment is best when he can forget himself and any reputation he may have acquired, and can concentrate wholly on making the right decisions. Hence, if he seems to give interviewers and publicity men the brush-off, it is not through ungraciousness, but rather to keep his thinking impersonal and realistic.⁷⁵

Spruance had many characteristics which portray him as a warm and appealing person. He adored his family with a deep affection. He had a delightful sense of humor.⁷⁶ He was always considerate of others and had the highest sense of integrity and honesty. For example, he once returned a dollar bill which he had found adrift in a New York subway to the cashier's window.⁷⁷ While President of the War College, he went walking one evening in a snowstorm and he came upon a sailor whose car was stuck. He helped the sailor free the car and went on his way. Not until the sailor saw his anonymous savior in admiral's uniform several days later did he realize who had helped him.⁷⁸

Spruance could also be surprisingly unpretentious. He once told his War College chief of staff, "Some people believe that when I am quiet, that I am thinking some deep and important thoughts, when the fact is that I am thinking of nothing at all; my mind is blank."⁷⁹

Spruance knew he had done a superb job, and this gave him satisfaction. He had always had confidence in himself and his staff.⁸⁰ He apparently was concerned about his place in history, but he left it in the hands of historians. His letters indicate a sensitivity to judgments about his conduct at the Battle of the Philippine Sea, and he bristled when told that Admiral Ozawa said that Spruance was a cautious man.⁸¹ He did not like to be considered as a tactician only

but wanted recognition in the fields of strategy and international relations as well.⁸²

He was meticulous when writing to anyone who might quote him. He would first write a draft in pencil on any available piece of paper, to assure himself it said exactly what he wanted. Then he would transcribe the draft in pen to a sheet of stationery, retaining the penciled copy for his files. This procedure was remarkable for a man who hated to write, but it was his method of keeping the record straight. He knew he was writing for history whenever he wrote a letter to a historian, writer, or academician.

He did not like personal magazine articles about him because they were usually misleading and inaccurate, and he hoped in 1946 that official histories would tell the true story.⁸³ He apparently reviewed many historical manuscripts submitted to him, and he was as helpful as possible to anyone requesting information, always keeping a penciled copy of his reply. The Director of Naval History had a hard time convincing Spruance that he should have a biography written, but once Spruance consented he cooperated fully. He told "Savvy" Forrestel, who authored his biography, "I shall be proud and happy to have any future generations know me by what you have written."⁸⁴

Several years before his death he summed up his thoughts on how he felt history had treated him. Writing to Professor E.B. Potter of the Naval Academy, he said, "I have always been very grateful that I was privileged to play the part that I did in the Pacific during the war; and it makes me very happy that, when historians such as Sam Morison and you prepare the record of the war, you seem to approve of what I had a hand in doing."⁸⁵

This author, for another, very much approves of what Raymond A. Spruance had a hand in doing.

FOOTNOTES

1. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to the Secretary of the Navy, 8 February 1927, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I. Supply officers are now directly responsible to the Naval Supply Systems Command for the financial management of general messes afloat, relieving commanding officers of the responsibility of auditing financial statements.

2. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to the Chief of Bureau of Navigation, 3 October 1929, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

3. Letter from Mrs. Raymond A. Spruance to the author 31 October 1970.

4. Interview with Rear Adm. Charles J. Moore, USN (Ret.) by Dr. John T. Mason, Jr., Washington, D.C.: 28 November 1966, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University. Moore was Spruance's close friend and wartime chief of staff.

5. Spruance's theses are on file in the Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I. Spruance must have placed some value on the command thesis, for he retained his copy in his personal papers given to the War College after his death.

6. Interview with Raymond A. Spruance by the author, Pebble Beach, Calif.: June 1963.

7. Raymond A. Spruance, "Thesis on Policy," Unpublished Thesis, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 1926.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. "We wish for no victories but those of peace; for no territory except our own; for no sovereignty except the sovereignty over ourselves. We deem the independence and equal rights of the smallest and weakest member of the family of nations equal to as much respect as those of the greatest empire, and deem the observance of that respect the chief guarantee of the weak against the oppression of the strong. We neither claim nor desire any rights, or privileges, or powers that we do not freely concede to every other American republic. We wish to increase our prosperity, to expand our trade, to grow in wealth, in wisdom, and in spirit, but our conception of the true way to accomplish this is not to pull down others and profit by their ruin, but to help all friends to a common prosperity and a common growth, that we may all become greater and stronger together." Secretary of State Elihu Root before the Third International American Conference at Rio de Janeiro, 31 July 1906.

11. William V. Pratt, "The Naval War College," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, September 1927, p. 944.

12. R.E. Bakenhus, "Lecture as to the Course in Logistics," Lecture, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 1 December 1926.

13. Spruance's views on logistics are best described in the following references. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to E.B. Potter, Professor of History, U.S. Naval Academy, 3 January 1959; Interview with Raymond A. Spruance by Philippe de Bausset, *Paris Match*, July 1965, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.; Lecture by Raymond A. Spruance before the Royal United Service Institution, London, 30 October 1946; Address by Raymond A. Spruance before the alumni of Brown University, 17 June 1946.

14. Elmer B. Potter, ed., *Sea Power—a Naval History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960), p. 639-645.

15. Pratt; Bakenhus.

16. The subjects included "Logistics in a United States-Japanese War," "Caribbean-Panama Area Logistics in a United States-German War," "Strategic Raw Materials: National and Naval Logistics Planning in Peace and War," "Logistics of Mobilization for a United States-Japanese War," and "Importation of Manganese During the First Year of a United States-Japanese War."

17. The Naval War College strategy against Japan called for her economic isolation, but not by submarine warfare. War games used submarines as scouts or pickets to assist the main body during a surface engagement, but not as commerce raiders. Rear Adm. Henry E. Eccles, USN (Ret.), who served in submarines in the late 1920's, told the author that many naval officers of that period were either contemptuous of the submarine service or else considered them so vulnerable that they should not be permitted to exercise near capital ships during maneuvers. In his oral history, Adm. Richard L. Conolly relates that during the naval disarmament talks in the early 1930's, the Navy seriously considered advocating the outlawing of all submarines. Potter, p. 809, states that the Navy did not approve the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare until after the Pearl Harbor attack.

18. Letter from Comdr. Raymond A. McClellan, USN (Ret.) to the author, 23 October 1970.

19. Raymond A. Spruance and Raymond A. McClellan, "Class of 1927, the Strategic Raw Materials, Sources, Trade Routes, and Their Protection in Time of War, BLUE versus RED-ORANGE," Unpublished Report, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: May 1927.
20. Three committees were assigned to study, respectively, "British and German Major Naval Operations in World War I," "Naval Operations in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05," and "Nelson's Campaign Leading up to and Including Trafalgar."
21. W.R. Van Auken, "Class of 1927, the Strategic Planning of Japanese Naval Operations," Unpublished Report, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: 21 April 1927.
22. See part I of this article in the March 1971 *Review* which covered these principles in detail. The War College stopped teaching them when college President Kalbfus introduced his "Sound Military Decision" in early 1937.
23. R.A. Spruance and P.P. Welch, "Supplementary Report, Subject: the Tactics of the Japanese Involved in the Battle of Tsushima," Unpublished Report, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.: April 1927, p. 14.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
25. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to Samuel E. Morison, 20 January 1952, Naval History Division, Washington, D.C.
26. Extracted from the verbatim critique of Operations Problem II-27, conducted in March 1927 by Capt. J.W. Greenslade, USN, of the War College staff.
27. Interview with Rear Adm. Charles J. Moore, USN (Ret.), by the author, Chevy Chase, Md., 6 November 1970. Moore is especially well qualified on this subject, having served at the War College for 3 years in the mid-1930's, in the Navy Department War Plans Section in the early 1940's, and as Spruance's chief of staff during World War II. The author's view is also supported by a 20 October 1970 letter to the author from Rear Adm. Thomas H. Robbins, Jr., USN (Ret.), who was very closely associated with the War College in the late 1930's and later served as President.
28. Greenslade.
29. Letter from Capt. Gerald S. Bogart, USN (Ret.), to the author, 29 November 1970. Captain Bogart is Spruance's son-in-law. Spruance never forgot a close Japanese friend from his ONI days, Vice Adm. Tsueno Sakano, and on 9 December 1946 sent him a particularly warm and sympathetic letter reaffirming the friendship between the Spruances and the Sakanos.
30. Letter, Robbins to author, 20 October 1970. The prestige associated with a War College staff billet was also evident in the memoirs of several former staff officers such as Harris Laning, Richard L. Conolly, John L. Hall, Jr., and Alan G. Kirk.
31. *History of Correspondence Courses together with Names of Personnel in Charge of, and Periods of Duty*. This is a looseleaf log recording the significant events in the Correspondence School for the period 1914-1964. It was last maintained by Mr. Bradford W. Langley who served in the school as administrative assistant for 40 years until his retirement several years ago.
32. Director, Correspondence School, Annual Report to President, Naval War College, Newport, R.I., 6 June 1932.
33. *History of Correspondence Courses*, p. 9.
34. Letter, Moore to author, 20 October 1970.
35. *The Reminiscences of Charles J. Moore*, (New York: Columbia University, Oral History Research Office, 1966), p. 484.
36. Telephone conversation with Mr. Langley, 16 October 1970.
37. *The Reminiscences of Admiral Richard L. Conolly*, (New York: Columbia University, Oral History Research Office, 1960), p. 69-75. Admiral Conolly was on the War College staff in the early 1930's and served as President in the early 1950's. For Laning's personal feelings on the War College, see his unpublished autobiography, "An Admiral's Yarn," on file in the War College's Historical Collection. His credentials as a strategist sometimes suffered, however, especially in his proposed strategy against Japan. See Ernest J. King and Walter M. Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King, a Naval Record* (New York: Norton, 1952), p. 238-242.
38. Letter from Adm. James L. Holloway, Jr., USN (Ret.), to the author, 15 October 1970. Admiral Holloway served as Laning's flag lieutenant during his presidency.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Letter from Rear Adm. Harvey T. Walsh, USN (Ret.), to the author, 9 November 1970. The Navy was facing a "hump" caused by the retention of World War I Reserve officers.
41. Letter from Comdr. Richard P. McDonough, USN (Ret.), to the author, 6 November 1970.
42. Letter, Walsh to author.
43. Letter from Rear Adm. Horatio Ridout, USN (Ret.), to the author, 20 November 1970.

44. Letter from Vice Adm. Robert Goldthwaite, USN (Ret.), to the author, 12 November 1970.
45. Letter from Capt. Clarence V. Lee, USN (Ret.), to the author, 9 November 1970.
46. The letters from former students in the War College classes of 1937 and 1938 contain the same high opinion of Spruance but indicate that he was a more distant figure, in contrast to his intimacy with the junior class his first year.
47. Letter, Moore to author.
48. Students' letters for this period contain vivid memories of Turner. He and Spruance were considered the "brains" of the War College, yet Turner would predominate in the daily direction of the students' activities.
49. Letter from Vice Adm. B.H. Bieri, USN (Ret.), to Vice Adm. George C. Dyer, USN (Ret.), 22 May 1960.
50. Letter from Mrs. Gerald A. Bogart to the author, 29 November 1970. Carl Moore told the author in the 6 November 1970 interview that Spruance would select subordinates who could do things well in areas that Spruance disliked, such as the detailed work required for planning and order writing.
51. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to Rear Adm. E.M. Eller, USN (Ret.), 22 July 1966. For a splendid personal discourse on how he led the men he chose, see his 11 June 1948 Commencement Address delivered at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.
52. Letter, Mrs. Bogart to author. His passion for walking and swimming was legend during the war. Carl Moore relates that Spruance did this to regulate his health and as a self-discipline in exercising command. He would rarely work in the evening, even at sea, except in an emergency. He wanted a regular daily routine, and this included 8 hours of sleep each night. In this way his mind would be absolutely clear for decisionmaking. (Moore-Mason interview.)
53. Letter, Moore to author.
54. This is the author's opinion, based on his study of the War College curriculum of the 1930's, his 6 November 1970 interview with Rear Admiral Moore, correspondence with Rear Admiral Robbins, and the author's study of authoritative books such as E.B. Potter's *Sea Power* and Vincent Davis, *The Admiral's Lobby* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967). The efforts of forward-looking officers such as Pratt, Laning, and Turner could not overcome the predominant War College fixation on surface warfare.
55. Letter, Spruance to Morison, 19 May 1963.
56. *Ibid.* Towers had opposed Spruance's plan to strike north from the Ellice Islands to capture the Gilberts, and Spruance recalled the circumstances 22 years later. "There had been opposing theories about it. Once, for instance, I was told . . . that a roomful of experts in Pearl Harbor who did not know much about the conditions in the area, who hadn't even studied them properly and who, above all, weren't even going to have to do it themselves, had said of my plan that 'I wanted a sledge hammer to drive a tack.' They didn't say that any more after we took Tarawa." Quoted from Paris *Match* interview.
57. Memorandum of 4 November 1965 conversation between Raymond A. Spruance and Rear Adm. Henry E. Eccles, USN (Ret.), dated 12 November 1965.
58. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to Vice Adm. E.P. Forrestel, USN (Ret.), 6 February 1963.
59. Letter, Spruance to Morison, 19 May 1963.
60. Royal United Service Institution lecture. This lecture could be used as a textbook for the strategy and tactics of the war in the Pacific as seen by Spruance and merits separate publication.
61. Brown University address.
62. Letter, Spruance to Potter, 3 January 1959.
63. Samuel E. Morison, *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II, New Guinea and the Marianas March 1944-August 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), v. VIII, p. 235-236.
64. Paris *Match* interview.
65. For example, he wrote to a fellow admiral that ". . . we really have a most interesting war going on in the Pacific, and I know you would enjoy it." Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to Rear Adm. W.W. Smith, USN, 29 August 1944, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.
66. Paris *Match* interview.
67. Letter from Mrs. Raymond A. Spruance to the author, 13 January 1971.
68. *Ibid.*
69. Letter, Spruance to Moore, 5 October 1945, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

70. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to Rear Adm. A.C. Davis, USN, 24 May 1944, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I. This letter was written when Davis was his prospective chief of staff.
71. Letter, Spruance to Sakano.
72. Worcester Polytechnic Institute address.
73. Letter from Raymond A. Spruance to Vincent Davis, 15 April 1960, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I. Professor Davis is the current occupant of the Chester W. Nimitz Chair of Social and Political Science at the Naval War College.
74. Letter, Mrs. Spruance to author, 13 January 1971.
75. E.P. Forrestel, *Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, USN, a Study in Command* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1966), p. 62. Carl Moore also cited this reasoning in his 28 November 1966 interview with Dr. Mason.
76. Letter, Mrs. Spruance to author, 13 January 1971.
77. Letter, Mrs. Bogart to author.
78. Langley telephone conversation.
79. Letter from Vice Adm. A.E. Smith, USN (Ret.), to the author, 29 November 1970.
80. Letter, Mrs. Spruance to author, 13 January 1971.
81. Letter, Spruance to Potter, 3 January 1959.
82. Letter, Spruance to Potter, 4 February 1959.
83. Letter, Spruance to Moore, 17 September 1946, Naval Historical Collection, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.
84. Letter, Spruance to Forrestel, 17 April 1964.
85. Letter, Spruance to Potter, 2 February 1965.



The Admiral must have the ability to see things whole, to appraise the present in terms of the future, and to see the problems of both the present and the future in all their numerous ramifications. To understand strategy is easy, to determine upon a strategic policy is not. To determine upon a wise policy and stick to it through innumerable distractions and conflicting political demands requires something approaching genius.

Bernard Brodie, A Guide to Naval Strategy, p. 264