

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
PRESS BRANCH

GENERAL MATTHEW BUNKER RIDGWAY, USA

Matthew Bunker Ridgway was born March 3, 1895, at Fort Monroe, Virginia, son of Colonel Thomas Ridgway, U. S. Army. He was graduated from the U. S. Military Academy April 20, 1917, and appointed a second lieutenant of Infantry in the Regular Army.

In June, 1917, he was assigned to the 3rd Infantry at Eagle Pass, Texas, where he served successively as a company commander, regimental adjutant and commander of the regimental headquarters company. In September, 1918, he was assigned to the U.S. Military Academy as an instructor. In September, 1921, he became executive for athletics at the Academy and in August, 1922, was appointed graduate manager of athletics.

General Ridgway joined the Company Officers course at the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, in June, 1924, and was graduated in May, 1925, and then was given command of a company of the 15th Infantry at Tientsin, China. In the summer of 1926, he was ordered to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to command Company E, 9th Infantry, later becoming Regimental Adjutant of the 9th Infantry.

From December, 1927, until February, 1929, General Ridgway was on duty with the American Electoral Commission in Nicaragua under Major General Frank R. McCloy. In February, 1929, he was stationed in Washington, D. C. on the Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation pertaining to the Bolivian-Paraguayan boundary dispute. In September, 1929, he began the Advanced Course at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, from which he was graduated in June, 1930. He then returned to Nicaragua for further duty with the American Electoral Commission

General Ridgway in December, 1930, was sent to Fort Clayton, Panama Canal Zone, for duty with the 33rd Infantry. In the spring of 1932 he was assigned as liaison officer to the Insular Government in the Philippine Islands, in which capacity he served as technical advisor to the Governor General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.,

In August, 1933, General Ridgway entered the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and was graduated in June, 1935. Two months later he was detailed to the General Staff Corps and assigned as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Sixth Corps Area, at Chicago, Illinois. From March to August, 1936 he served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, Second Army, and in August, 1936, was Deputy Chief of Staff, Second Army. The following month he entered the Army War College, and was graduated in June, 1937. He then went to the Presidio of San Francisco, for duty as Assistant Chief of Staff G-3, of the Fourth Army.

In May, 1939, he accompanied General George C. Marshall, then Chief of Staff-Designate, to Brazil on a special mission. In September, 1939, he was assigned to the War Department General Staff for duties with the War Plans Division, where he remained until January, 1942.

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General Ridgway, in March, 1942, was designated assistant commander of the 82nd Infantry Division and on June 26, 1942, became commanding general. He remained in command when, in August, 1942, it was redesignated 82nd Airborne. In April, 1943, he took the division to North Africa where he was responsible for planning and executing the first large-scale airborne assault in the history of the Army--the attack on Sicily. He led his division in its rapid conquest of the Western half of that island.

From September to November, 1943, he led the 82nd Airborne Division in the Italian Campaign. In June, 1944, he parachuted with the leading elements of his division into Normandy where he played a major role in the invasion of Western France. In August, 1944, he was selected to command the XVIII Airborne Corps in which capacity he directed operations in the Ardennes Campaign in Belgium, the crossing of the Rhine, the Ruhr Pocket, the crossing of the Elbe, and the advance to junction with Russian forces on the Baltic on May 2, 1945.

General Ridgway returned to the United States with his corps in August 1945, for redeployment to the Pacific. The same month he was flown to the Philippines in advance of the XVIII Corps to prepare for its participation in the proposed invasion of Japan. In October, 1945, he was assigned to command the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, and was appointed Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean.

Effective January 3, 1946, General Ridgway was assigned to represent General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower on the Military Staff Committee United Nations, first in London, then in New York City. As of March 1, 1946, in addition to this duty, he was designated Senior U. S. Delegate to the Inter-American Defense Board, and assumed chairmanship of the Board. On October 27, 1947, he was designated Senior U. S. Army member of the U. S. Military Staff Committee.

On June 23, 1948, General Ridgway was assigned as Commander in Chief, Caribbean Command, at Quarry Heights, Canal Zone. In August, 1949, he became Deputy Chief of Staff for Administration, U. S. Army, and in November, 1950, assumed additional duty as chairman, Inter-American Defense Board.

General Ridgway was transferred to the Far East Command December 23, 1950, and assumed command of the Eighth Army in Korea on December 26, 1950, succeeding Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, who was killed in a jeep accident December 23.

On April 11, 1951, General Ridgway was appointed Commander of the United Nations Command in the Far East, Commander-in-Chief of the Far East Command and Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan. President Truman nominated him for promotion to the rank of General May 9, 1951; his nomination was confirmed by the Senate the following day, and he was appointed a General May 11, 1951.

In May, 1952, General Ridgway was named Supreme Commander, Allied Powers, Europe, with headquarters at Paris France.

On August 1, 1952, he assumed additional duty as commander in chief of the newly-established U. S. European Command, with headquarters at Paris, France, and Frankfurt, Germany.

General and Mrs. Ridgway have one child, Matthew B., Jr., born April 27, 1949.

During World War II, General Ridgway received the following awards:

Distinguished Service Cross, September 11, 1943, for extraordinary heroism in action during the invasion of Sicily as commander of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Oak Leaf Cluster to Distinguished Service Cross, July 19, 1944, for extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy in France from June 5, 1944 to June 9, 1944, in the D-Day parachute landing assault of his Airborne Division on the Contentin Peninsula.

Distinguished Service Medal for exceptionally meritorious service from August 15, 1942 to August 27, 1942 as Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division, in directing and planning, training and operation of the first major night airborne operation ever attempted by any army, the invasion of Sicily.

Silver Star Medal, March 13, 1945 for gallantry in action in the vicinity of Eindhoven, Holland, during the period September 17-19, 1944, with the assault echelons of the airborne invasion of Holland.

Oak Leaf Cluster to Silver Star Medal, June 7, 1945, for gallantry in action Germany on April 30, 1945 at the Elbe River.

Legion of Merit, October 1943, for exceptionally meritorious conduct from August 1942 to October 1943 as Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division in training his troops for the landing operations against Sicily and the mainland of Italy.

Oak Leaf Cluster to Legion of Merit September 10, 1945 for exceptionally meritorious conduct as Commanding General, XVIII Corps (Airborne) from December 18, 1944 to February 5, 1945 in blocking the German Ardennes attempt to capture Liege from the south and subsequently breaching the Siegfried Line.

Bronze Star Medal, February 9, 1945 for heroic achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy as Commanding General, XVIII Corps (Airborne), United States Army, from December 18, 1944 to January 8, 1945 in Belgium.

Oak Leaf Cluster to Bronze Star Medal, January 17, 1946 for heroic achievement as the Commanding General, XVIII Corps (Airborne) on March 25, 1945 in the Wesel-Hamminkeln area, Germany, where he was wounded by a German hand grenade.

Oak Leaf Cluster to Distinguished Service Medal, June 29, 1947, for exceptionally meritorious service from December 18, 1944 to May 8, 1945 as Commanding General, XVIII Corps (Airborne) in blocking the German Ardennes attempt to break through to the North and the subsequent breaching of the Siegfried Line.

In addition, General Ridgway has received the following decorations: Purple Heart, Presidential Unit Citation, Spearhead for Combat Jump in Normandy Victory Medal, World War II; Second Nicaraguan Campaign (Navy), American Defense Medal (1 star), American Theater Medal, European-African-Middle East Theater Medal (1 spearhead, 8 stars), Pacific Theater of Operations Medal, Victory Medal, World War II; Army of Occupation Medal, World War II; Inter-American Defense Board Ribbon, Order of Southern Cross, Grade of Officer (Brazil) Legion of Honor, Grade of Officer (France), Croix de Guerre with Palm (France), Commander of the Bath (England), Order of the Red Banner (Russia), Order of Counts Maurice and Lazarus Grand Cordon (Italy), Belgian Commander of the Order of Leopold with Palm, Fourragere (France-World War II), Croix de Guerre with Palm, (Belgium), Military Order of Savoy, Grand Cross, (Italy), Medalla Militar de la Primera Clase (Chile), Cruz de Merito Militar, 2a Clase (Guatemala), Military Order of Ayacucho, Grade of Grand Order of Military Merit, First Class (Mexico).

PROMOTIONS

He was promoted to first lieutenant May 15, 1917; to captain (temporary) August 5, 1917; to captain (permanent) July 18, 1919; to major October 1, 1932; to lieutenant colonel July 1, 1940; to colonel (temporary) December 11, 1941; to brigadier general (temporary) January 15, 1942; to major general (temporary) August 6, 1942; to lieutenant general (temporary) June 4, 1945; to brigadier general of the line (permanent) November 1, 1945; to major general (permanent) with date of rank from April 5, 1942 to general (temporary) May 11, 1951.

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Up to date as of 1 May, 1953