

Douglas MacArthur and the 42d Division.

Before the US entered into WW1 Douglas MacArthur was a Major serving at the War Department in DC. His job was the head of the Bureau of Information. He was the department's first "press secretary". When the US declared war on Germany on April 6 1917 the limited regular army was committed. It was obvious that the reserve forces, the state National Guard divisions, would have to be activated for service. Because of his position in the information bureau MacArthur was aware of complaints by some of the states. To avoid the appearance of favoritism while the state units were being called he presented a plan to the Secretary of war Newton Baker and the head of the National Guard Bureau (NGB), MG William Mann. His plan was to form a new division at the NGB with units from a number of the states. The War Department approved this plan and the new division was formed with MG Mann as the first Commanding General. The existing Guard Divisions were numbered starting with 26 in New England on the east coast and continued until the last to be numbered on the west coast at the state of Washington, number 41. Therefore the new Division would be numbered 42. MG Mann requested that the War Department promote Major MacArthur to full Colonel, skipping Lt Colonel, and assign him as Chief of Staff. The Division was formed in August 1917 at Camp Mills in Long Island NY. It is not clear who said "it stretches across the country like a rainbow" but most feel it was MacArthur. The "RAINBOW" was adopted for the division and the shoulder patch was a full rainbow. The patch would be changed to a half rainbow at the end of the war to signify that half of the division was killed or wounded in combat.

As soon as the Division arrived in France the 63 year old CG, MG Mann became ill and was replaced by MG Charles Menoher. The Division went on the line in February 1918. Colonel MacArthur did not want to function in the normal role of Chief of Staff so with the permission of the CG he served with units on the front line in the trenches. He distinguished himself winning a number of awards for bravery and leadership. He was the first American to be awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Because of his performance he was promoted to Brigadier General, the youngest in the US Army, and on July 29 1918 became the commanding officer of the Divisions 84th Infantry Brigade. On November 10, the day before the armistice he became the Commanding General of the Division, but 12 days later he was replaced by MG Clement Flagler and returned to commanding the 84th. After a short period of occupation duty the Division returned to the US. In May 1919 the units were returned to their states and the Division colors were placed in the NGB.

MacArthur was assigned as the Superintendent of the USMA which allowed him to retain his BG rank. Later he became the Chief of Staff of the Army receiving his second star. He retired in 1936 but was recalled for WW2 and Korea. Promoted to 5 star General of the Army he was on active duty until he passed away on April 5 1964. His relationship to the 42d Division was renewed on April 7 1964 when he was laid in state at the Division's Second Brigade Headquarters at the 7th Regimental Armory, Park Ave. NYC.

Edited research from Wikipedia and SGM Assn. by CSM(Ret) Robert F. Mariani