



# OMAR NELSON BRADLEY

16 August 1949 — 15 August 1953

**O**mar Bradley was born in the farming village of Clark, Missouri, on 12 February 1893. His parents were poor, his boyhood austere. The US Military Academy appealed to Bradley as a means to an education without financial burden for his family. He received an appointment and graduated in 1915, ranking forty-fourth out of 164. His classmates included Dwight D. Eisenhower, James A. Van Fleet, and fifty-six other future generals from “the class the stars fell on.”

During World War I Bradley served with an infantry regiment which, to his chagrin, never left the United States. Most of his interwar assignments were spent as either student or teacher at military schools. In 1941, while Commandant of the Infantry School, Bradley became the first man in his class to reach the rank of brigadier general. During 1942 to 1943, he successively commanded the 82d and 28th Infantry Divisions.

In March 1943, at General Eisenhower’s request, Major General Bradley arrived in North Africa. There he joined II Corps as Deputy Commander under Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr. Bradley took command of II Corps for the final advance to Tunis and during the thirty-eight day Sicilian campaign served as a corps commander in Patton’s Seventh Army. Based upon Bradley’s exceptional qualities as a combat leader and his gift for getting along with the allies, Eisenhower chose him to be Army Group Commander for Operation OVERLORD, the invasion of France. During June and July 1944 Lieutenant General Bradley led the US First Army as it fought through the hedgerows of Normandy. On 1 August, just after the breakout

**Omar N. Bradley**  
General of the Army



Lieutenant General Bradley, *center*, with General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Major General J. Lawton Collins in France, July 1944.

at St. Lo, he took command of the 12th Army Group. When the European war came to an end in May 1945, Bradley (now a full general) commanded forty-three divisions and 1.3 million men, the largest body of American soldiers ever to serve under a US field commander. His modest demeanor and solicitude for his troops earned him the nickname "the GI's General."

With the coming of peace, President Harry S Truman named General Bradley to be

Administrator of the Bureau of Veterans' Affairs; he began work in August 1945. Bradley returned to the Army on 7 February 1948, when he succeeded General Eisenhower as Chief of Staff. Three months later, Secretary of Defense James Forrestal asked Bradley to become his "principal military adviser." Bradley was disinclined to leave his Army post after so short a time, and the Secretary of the Army felt that he could not spare Bradley. But when Eisenhower, whom Forrestal had



Lieutenant General Bradley pauses to autograph a GI's helmet in Germany, 1945.

appointed instead, later declined the newly created position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Bradley accepted.

He became the first Chairman on 16 August 1949. During his tenure, the United States began to create a collective security strategy with its allies. After the outbreak of the Korean War, it began to rebuild its military forces, which had been rapidly reduced at the end of World War II. Bradley played a central role in these efforts.

Upon becoming Chairman, Bradley had to deal immediately with the so-called "revolt of the admirals." Navy officers, fearing their service would have no role in a major war and resenting the cancellation of plans for a supercarrier, assailed the concept of strategic bombing with nuclear weapons. The Air Force's B-36 bomber became their particular

target. General Bradley, who as Chief of Staff had been willing to reduce Army divisions in order to strengthen strategic air power, had no patience with what he saw as Navy parochialism. During congressional hearings, he delivered a much publicized call for service cooperation: "This is no time for 'fancy Dans' who won't hit the line with all they have on every play, unless they can call the signals. Each player on this team—whether he shines in the spotlight of the backfield or eats dirt in the line—must be all-American." Under new leadership, the Navy began taking a more conciliatory approach.

The Korean War dominated Bradley's tenure as Chairman. He wholeheartedly supported President Truman's decision to resist the North Korean attack and quickly became a key adviser to Truman. During the war's



President Harry S Truman promotes General Bradley to five-star rank, 22 September 1950.

first weeks, Bradley went frequently to the White House to brief the President and present the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs.

Despite the Korean War, Bradley saw the Soviet Union as the greatest threat to US security and Western Europe as the Free World's greatest asset. Consequently, he opposed

expansion of the Korean conflict to include China. Such a war, he said, would be "the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy." He opposed proposals by the US commander in the Far East, General Douglas MacArthur, for bombing and blockading China. President

Truman concurred. When General MacArthur persisted in public criticisms of this policy decision, the Joint Chiefs reluctantly agreed that the President should relieve MacArthur. Truman promptly did so and, at the recommendation of Bradley and the Chiefs, named General Matthew B. Ridgway, USA, as the new commander in the Far East.

The war in Korea and the fear of further communist aggression triggered a major rearmament effort. Between June 1950 and December 1952 the armed forces grew from 1.45 to 3.51 million men. General Bradley refereed an interservice debate over the nature of this expansion. Working closely with Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett, Bradley won JCS approval of a plan that emphasized Air Force expansion.

To deter aggression in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) set

about creating an integrated military structure. General Bradley played a key role in establishing this structure. He spent much time negotiating with his British and French counterparts over the organization of NATO's Atlantic and Mediterranean commands.

Omar Bradley was promoted to the rank of General of the Army on 22 September 1950. He was the only Chairman to attain five-star rank. His tenure as Chairman ended on 15 August 1953, three weeks after the Korean armistice. As a five-star general, however, he did not retire.

After leaving the chairmanship, Bradley joined the Bulova Watch Company, subsequently becoming chairman of the board. In March 1968 he was one of the "wise men" who reviewed Vietnam policy for President Lyndon B. Johnson. Bradley died in New York on 8 April 1981.

# Omar Nelson Bradley

## General of the Army

<b>Promotions</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
	Temporary	Permanent
2LT . . . . .		12 Jun 15
1LT . . . . .		13 Oct 16
CPT. . . . .		22 Aug 17
MAJ. . . . .	27 Jul 18. . . . .	19 Nov 20
CPT (postwar reduction) . . . . .		04 Nov 22
MAJ . . . . .		27 Jun 24
LTC. . . . .		22 Jul 36
COL . . . . .		13 Nov 43
BG . . . . .	24 Feb 41 . . . . .	31 May 44
MG . . . . .	18 Feb 42 . . . . .	16 Sep 44
LTG. . . . .	09 Jun 43	
GEN . . . . .	29 Mar 45. . . . .	31 Jan 49
Gen of the Army . . . . .		22 Sep 50

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
	From	To
Troop duty with 14th Infantry Regiment in the West (incl Mexican border) . . . . .	1915 . . . . .	1919
Professor, ROTC, South Dakota State College . . . . .	1919 . . . . .	1920
Instructor, US Military Academy, West Point, NY . . . . .	1920 . . . . .	1924
Student, Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA. . . . .	1924 . . . . .	1925
Infantry Unit Commander, 19th and 27th Infantry Regiments, HI. . . . .	1925 . . . . .	1927
National Guard and Reserve Affairs, Hawaiian Department . . . . .	1927 . . . . .	1928
Student, Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, KS . . . . .	1928 . . . . .	1929
Instructor, Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA . . . . .	1929 . . . . .	1933
Student, Army War College, Washington, DC . . . . .	1933 . . . . .	1934
Instructor, Plans and Training Office, US Military Academy, West Point, NY. . . . .	1934 . . . . .	1938
War Department General Staff: Chief, Operations Branch, G-1, and Assistant Secretary, General Staff, Washington, DC . . . . .	1938 . . . . .	1941
Commandant, Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA . . . . .	1941 . . . . .	1942

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
	From	To
Commanding General, 82d Infantry Division, Camp Claiborne, LA . . . . .	1942 . . . . .	1942
Commanding General, 28th Infantry Division, Camp Livingston, LA, and Camp Gordon Johnson, FL . . . . .	1942 . . . . .	1943
Commanding General, II Corps, North Africa and Sicily . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1943
Commanding General, Field Forces, European Theater of Operations . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1943
Commanding General, First US Army and First US Army Group, later Commanding General, Twelfth Army Group, European Theater of Operations . . . . .	1944 . . . . .	1945
Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, Veterans Administration, Washington, DC. . . . .	1945 . . . . .	1947
Chief of Staff, US Army, Washington, DC . . . . .	1948 . . . . .	1949
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC. . .	1949 . . . . .	1953

### **Principal US Military Decorations**

- Army Distinguished Service Medal (with 3 oak leaf clusters)
- Navy Distinguished Service Medal
- Silver Star
- Legion of Merit (with oak leaf cluster)
- Bronze Star