

ARLEIGH ALBERT BURKE
DOCUMENTS:

THE SAILOR AND THE NAVY
1945-1955

PORTRAIT OF THE SAILOR AND
COMMANDER IN HIS OWN WORDS

Commodore Burke Memorandum on Remarks made by
Brigadier General Frank A. Armstrong, Jr., of the Army
Air Forces at Princess Anne Country Club, 11 December
1946.

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Care F.P.O., New York, N.Y.

17 December 1946.

MEMORANDUM TO: Vice Admiral Blandy.

Subject: Remarks made by Brigadier General Frank A. Armstrong, Jr., of the Army Air Forces at Princess Anne Country Club, 11 December 1946.

1. The following is in essence, the report I dictated on 12 December in Admiral Robbins office.

a. Naval Personnel present.

Admiral Blandy
Admiral Davis (Amphib Force)
Commodore Oscar Smith
Admiral Cassady
Captain Reynolds
Captain Chillingworth
Admiral Forrestel
Admiral Sowell
Admiral Kirkland
Commodore Burke

b. A party was given on the night of 11 December by the Norfolk business men for members of the Armed Services. The purpose of the dinner was to acquaint the business men of Norfolk and members of the Armed Services with each other. The party was a stag affair with high balls. After dinner the chairman made a short speech of welcome and said that there would be no more speeches. However, as always happens at such a party when a public address system is available, several civilians did make short, interesting and cheerful speeches and called upon various Naval Officers present for short speeches. Admiral Blandy, Admiral Davis, Admiral Cassady and various others of the Navy contingent present made speeches. Admiral Sowell was called upon to make a speech and among other things states that one of the things Norfolk could do for the Navy was to provide suitable housing for Naval personnel, that some people in the Navy did not like Norfolk, and one of the major reasons was housing. He then discussed the Army-Navy game. He said that the Navy team did so well because it was a team which cooperated. There were no outstanding stars. The team fought as a team. On the other hand, the Army team was built around two stars and when its stars were covered, the team didn't do as well as it should have done. The speech was perfectly in order and nothing improper was said. The chairman replied that many of the people who lived in

Norfolk did not like Norfolk either but they were doing everything they could do for the Navy and that there were many hardships on civilians as well as Navy personnel. Commodore Oscar Smith then made a speech in which he stated that he personally liked Norfolk very much and he thought that a majority of the Naval personnel did, since CinCLant tried to move the ships from Norfolk and the ships all wanted to stay here.

Then General Emmons made a short innocuous speech stating that he and the rest of the Army enjoyed Norfolk and appreciated very much the opportunity of being in Norfolk.

Following this a couple of civilians spoke and one of them called upon General Armstrong to speak. General Armstrong is Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces Staff College. General Armstrong had been drinking but he was by no means under the influence of intoxicating liquor. His method of delivery was excellent and effortless. His speech, while unprepared and given impromptu, was given with so much force and fervor and he made his point so clearly that it would have been a most detrimental speech to an uninformed audience. General Armstrong made approximately the following statements, which are included in quotes and are actually the substance of his remarks rather than actual quotations.

1. “A lot of short words have been used in the speeches before and I am going to use short words too. You gentlemen had better understand that the Army Air Forces is tired of being a subordinate and is no longer going to be a subordinate outfit. It was a predominant force during the war and it is going to be a predominant force during the peace and you might as well make up your minds whether you like it or not, and we do not care whether you like it or not, that the Army Air Forces are going to run the show. You’re not going to have any land-based air and you’re not going to have anything but a couple of carriers which are ineffective anyway, and will probably be sunk in the first battle. Now as for the Marines. You know what the Marines are. A small bitched up Army talking Navy lingo. We’re going to put those Marines in the regular Army, and make efficient soldiers out of them. The Navy is going to end up supplying the requirements for Army Air and ground forces too. The Army is going to take over Norfolk. We’re here now and we’re going to stay. We know this is a Navy town and a Navy hangout but Army Air is still going to stay and we are going to take it over too.

Admiral Forrestal replied to this speech in a very sedate manner. He stated that the Navy did like Norfolk and that the mutual cooperation between the citizens and the Navy solved many mutual problems. The citizens of Norfolk helped in purely naval problems and vice versa. He stated that he did not reply to the previous speech because this was neither the time nor the place. This problem should be given very careful and serious consideration and it was not a subject to be debated at a party such as this one.

Arleigh A. Burke
Commodore, U.S. Navy

[Source: Arleigh Burke Papers—Pre-CNO Personal File, Operational Archives, NHHC]