



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

2 December 1969

Dear Earl:

This is the follow-up on my 12 November letter, and contains my appraisal of your chances for promotion, based on a detailed examination of your files.

Earl, in my opinion, you have all the required tickets to be considered seriously for promotion to brigadier general by any board. However, to be perfectly candid, you must recognize that the competition is very keen. There are probably three to four hundred colonels with comparable records, and in the final stretch there are only two factors that really make the difference.

The first, and foremost, is combat experience, particularly as a colonel. The second is to have a well-known individual go all out on an efficiency report and state in effect that the rated officer can walk on water. Obviously, if an officer achieves the first of these the second generally comes quite naturally.

A unique talent such as expertise in the field of cryptology or considerable experience in the comptroller field sometimes helps. At the same time, when it gets down to the last few names on the list it may well be a matter of just plain luck.

The point that I make to career oriented young officers striving for professional advancement is to go to the sound of the guns, and keep going until they make the grade. Bob Shoemaker is a fine case in point.

As I indicated in my last letter, Earl, the decision is a very personal one. The vast majority of officers will not make general officer. I believe that if an officer does not feel that he can make a significant contribution as a colonel, and find happiness in the process, then he should retire before he becomes bitter.

I would personally like to see you go for broke because I believe you have what it takes to make an outstanding general officer. However,

CVS

I can certainly understand the factors which might lead you to choose the opposite course. Whatever you decide, Earl, Barbara joins me in wishing you and yours our very best wishes for the future.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Knowles".

RICHARD T. KNOWLES
Major General, GS
Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff
for Military Operations

12 November 1969

Colonel Earl K. Buchan
Commanding Officer
3d Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mech)
Fort Carson, Colorado 80913

Dear Earl:

Many thanks for your newsy letter about events at Fort Carson. It sounds as if you are truly enjoying your period of brigade command--most understandable at such a beautiful post.

I have requested that your records be sent over from Colonel's Branch, but would like to reassure you right now that you would not be commanding a brigade at all if you were not considered to have considerable potential for the future. To be perfectly candid, Earl, the guys that command brigades in Vietnam have an edge--it's the old point about having commanded under combat conditions. After I get a chance to examine your file in greater detail, I'll try to be more specific; but even then you have been around long enough to know the unpredictable nature of general officer selection boards.

Regardless of how outstanding your record is, and I know that it is outstanding, no one can make any real promises about the possibility of selection for brigadier. The decision must remain with you--gamble on the basis of your record and continue to enjoy the military life, or decline the gamble in favor of certainty of retired income plus the income derived from the second career you mentioned.

I will write in the near future, and give you my opinion on the odds for promotion, but the decision is far more personal, and must be made in terms of what you want; the risks you might be willing to accept; and your requirements in terms of the family.

Please give my best to Dutch Umland, Hal Bourne, and Fred Ackerson, and, of course, my respects and Barbara's best wishes to Jeanne.

Most sincerely,

RICHARD T. KNOWLES
Major General, GS
Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff
for Military Operations



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 3D BRIGADE
5TH INFANTRY DIVISION (MECHANIZED), 'THE RED DEVILS'
FORT CARSON, COLORADO 80913

28 October 1969

Major General Richard T. Knowles
Office, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations
Department of The Army
Washington, D.C. 20023

Dear Longstreet:

Fort Carson is a nice post and is certainly more pleasant than the Pentagon.

I've been assigned the 3d Brigade, three Mech Battalions and one Tank Battalion. As you can imagine we have a terrific time when we all go to the field as we have enough forces to provide our own combined arms team plus our own aggressors. Last summer each of the Infantry Battalion's went to Pike National Forest to train for two weeks in a dismounted role. Flying out there on training visits and staying overnight to get some trout fishing was real sport.

Fred Ackerson, Dutch Uhland, and Hal Bourne and I were hoping you would be assigned as Commanding General of the 5th Mech. However considering your non-availability, I am sure we got the best boss available.

I know how very busy you are and hesitate to ask a favor that takes any of your precious time. What I would like to ask, (if you could possibly find time before you leave Washington) is to look at my file and give me your opinion of my chances of being selected for promotion. I believe I am at that time of my career when I need to make a decision to stay in the Army or get out.

If my chances for promotion are high I would stay in the Army indefinitely and would possibly volunteer for another tour in Vietnam, if that would help appreciably, and/or seek those assignments that I need if such could be identified. However if there is less than a good chance for promotion, then I should be getting started on a second career elsewhere. My situation may be somewhat complicated by the fact that I am 44 and my basic date of commission for promotion list service is Sep 1950. I will complete 30 years service in September 1973.

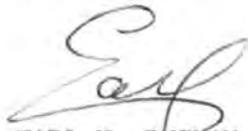
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RM

28 October 1969

I will certainly understand if your time is too tied up to review my file General Knowles, and I do appreciate your consideration.

Jeanne joins me in sending best regards to you and Barbara.

With warm personal regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Earl".

EARL K. BUCHAN
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

I Colonel Earl K. Buchan, [REDACTED], Regular Army,
request my authorized representative, MG Richard T.
Knowles be allowed to review my personnel records in
the same manner as would be permitted if I presented
myself for this purpose.



EARL K. BUCHAN
COL, INF
[REDACTED]