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## TWO I KNEW: THE BROTHERS FIELDING

*By Max S. Lale*

Both were Princeton graduates. Both were redlegs I knew at the field artillery school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Both are now deceased. One died while earning the Distinguished Service Cross in the Pacific Theater. The other worked for me while I was plans and training officer in the 261<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Battalion in Texas. Later, he died while enjoying life in his villa on Majorca after earning an international reputation with annual editions of his books on travel in Europe.

Their names were Temple and Dodge Fielding. Temple, the older, was a captain, and Dodge was a first lieutenant. Temple was married, Dodge was unmarried. Temple was a published writer of whom I was a bit in awe. Dodge was a brilliant intellect with an engaging manner.

I first knew both brothers (Temple also later) while I was an instructor in gunnery at the school. My late wife Georgiana also knew Nancy, Temple's wife, who also was his literary agent.

Both Temple and Nancy occasionally had dinner at the hotel in Lawton, then a much smaller city than now. We also had dinner from time to time at the same hotel, though never, as I recall, at the same time.

It added an element of intrigue to an otherwise inelegant dining room that a rumor had it the owner was a former cook for General John Pershing while both served on the Mexican border in 1916. Georgiana recounted that occasionally she encountered Nancy, a New Yorker with a flair for head scarves and other up-scale east coast attire, while shopping in the Lawton stores.

My vivid memory of Dodge Fielding arises from a classroom incident at the old Snow Hall at Fort Sill, not the new, modern teaching and museum facility on the post. The old Snow Hall was a venerable red brick building located on the east end of what used to be a parade ground. Now there is only a plinth to mark its location. It had, in addition to the school headquarters and classrooms, a barbershop and a small library where I first read an obscure French officer's text on mobile warfare. This was a future prime minister named Charles de Gaulle.

While I was teaching gunnery to officer candidates in the hasty cantonment area of the post built to accommodate expanding activities soon after World War II began, an instructor in the basic officer course at Snow Hall became ill. I was detailed to take his place. The courses were quite similar, so this posed no immediate problems.

Prepared with my lesson plan and a roster of the students, I presented myself on a Monday morning, prepared to enjoy the permanent accommodations. These included an office I shared with another instructor instead of the bullpen to which I was accustomed. What followed was an embarrassment to

both Lieutenant Fielding and me.

In the time-honored Army academic custom, I began my new duties by lecturing briefly, then sending the class to chalk boards for a problem I then announced. As the students indicated they had written their answers by turning once again to face the instructor, I glanced at my roster to choose a name. I knew nothing of the students, of course, and when I chose Lieutenant Fielding a bolt of electricity seemed to fill the room.

To discover what had happened, I swept the faces before me and found one struggling to speak. I did not know that Lieutenant Fielding stuttered, particularly under pressure, though every officer in the class knew this. The electricity in the air was for Lieutenant Fielding, who by ill luck had been chosen randomly, and I like to think also for me as the instigator of his embarrassment.

In the three-and-one-half weeks remaining in the gunnery cycle before I handed off the class to another cycle of instruction, I came to know this student well. I discovered that his answers were almost always correct. His logic was impeccable. At ease, his stutter was hardly detectable.

After my experience with this class, I never saw Dodge Fielding again. His brother Temple told me of his death while fighting in the Pacific. This is the story told to me. As the survey officer in his battalion, Dodge was given a daunting assignment. His task was to establish a baseline for triangulating date to use in calculating unobserved firing data.

The only possibility for doing this involved transiting small islands in a small boat. It was during this operation that Dodge was killed, whether by artillery or rifle fire, or by Japanese fighter plane or submarine, I do not know. I hope artilleryman Temple gave me correct information about the death of his artilleryman brother.

Although I have known several Medal of Honor winners and their stories, none ever was more sympathetic to me than Dodge Fielding's. His award of the Distinguished Service Cross, next junior to the Medal of Honor, seemed equally personal and appropriate.

I knew Temple much longer and personally. As my assistant at Camp Swift, near Austin, we shared an office and worked on the same exigencies together in 1943 as well as non-duty recreations. However, I would never have guessed that he was destined to enter Yugoslavia as a partisan commander's aide or that Georgiana and I would use his annual guides to Europe as our own assistant after the war. I should note that in a bank lobby years later I discovered a photo spread in *Life* magazine detailing Temple's life on Majorca.

Truth to tell, I thought Temple was a little flaky, though I did respect the fact he had been published in *Readers' Digest* before I knew him. This accounted for his absence one afternoon when I needed him and could not find him. It turned out that he had slipped away to visit a K-9 unit in preparation for another magazine story.

Unlike his brother Dodge's stutter, perhaps my own most vivid memory of Temple arises from a non-duty experience. A New Yorker with a touch of

dandy about him, Temple planned a battalion officers' party at the Driskill Hotel in Austin. It was summertime, and naturally Temple turned out for the party in a summer-weight white uniform any dandy would have chosen. Unfortunately, his white underpants were decorated with large purple polka dots which showed through perfectly.

Had Nancy been with him at Camp Swift, perhaps she would have interceded.

The circumstances of Temple's leaving the 261<sup>st</sup> I have forgotten, if I ever knew. It may have been that he had asked for a transfer to a less technically oriented service than the field artillery. It may have been that he was detailed. It may have been that he had asked earlier for a transfer based on the glamour of a secret assignment.

In any case, I learned later that he had been transferred to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), parent of the Central Intelligence Agency, as we know the function today. As with so many associates during wartime, I lost touch with him, only to find the connection reestablished after the war ended.

Certainly I had no reason to suppose until afterward that he would end his OSS service in Yugoslavia, assigned to assist the losing faction in a triangular war against the Germans. There was an official war by the government, such as it was, and there also was a war between rival partisans ostensibly fighting the same war as the official war.<sup>1</sup>

All of this I learned piecemeal from correspondence with Temple and from historical publications which recorded events in this murky conflict. When he mailed me an autographed copy of his first *Fielding Guide to Europe*, he also included a letter, half in apology, half in pride. "I hope you will find I am a better author than I was an artilleryman," he wrote.<sup>2</sup>

I learned also that the circumstances of his wartime experience meant he could not or would not, prudently or in fear, allow him to reenter Yugoslavia as he and Nancy did the other countries they visited for their annual updating of their guide to Europe.

As far as I know, Temple never set foot within Yugoslavia during the rest of his lifetime.

The general climate which prevailed in this outpost of World War II has been described in a military journal. "While the OSS invested substantial effort in supporting the two rival factions fighting the Germans in Yugoslavia, very little operational activity took place there.

"The Yugoslav resistance consisted of partisans, led by Josip Broz Tito's adherents, and the Chetniks under Dragoljub-Draza-Mihailovic." Temple Fielding had been detailed to the latter, the eventual loser in that strange version of the war against Germany.

A much more detailed version of Fielding's experience appears in a Texas A&M University Press book by Kirk Ford, Jr.<sup>4</sup> In more than three pages, Ford writes of "Perhaps the most bizarre case arising from Partisan

efforts to restrict the movement of American officers in Yugoslavia – and a well-documented one – involved Capt. Temple Fielding with the Huntington mission, to which he was assigned as morale operations officer.”

The “bizarre” experience to which Ford alluded involved individual deriding-do on Fielding’s part in thwarting an assassination attempt against his life in Split. Fortunately, Fielding survived the attempt, writing in his journal that “As far as Yugoslavia and I are concerned, I have had it. I am of no good or value to anyone here, and it might mean my life, as it nearly did last night, if I stayed.”

And that, no doubt, is the reason he and Nancy never again set foot in the country. The complete story is almost as if the CIA had removed a curtain from one of its secret files.

And that, plain to see, is why I consider Temple and Dodge Fielding to be two of the most interesting people I have ever known.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Perhaps the best exposition of the strange war in Yugoslavia appears in a recent issue of *World War II*, October 2004, “Two Views of Civil War in the Balkans,” for which two partisan soldiers who fought on opposite sides were interviewed.

<sup>2</sup>In the author’s possession.

<sup>3</sup>*World War II*, January 2003, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>Kirk Ford, Jr., *OSS and the Yugoslav Resistance, 1943-1945*, (College Station, 1992).