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Robert F. Scott of Tullahoma, a retired brigadier general, once commanded this historic "Freedom Train" that rolled along the rails of America 27 years ago.

- Photo by Betty Dement

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In This Issue:

- ★ Gen. Scott: 'Freedom Train' Commander
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- ★ Chattin One of State's Foremost Jurists

A Monthly Magazine Supplement

THE TULLAHOMA NEWS ●

● THE MANCHESTER TIMES

THE ELK VALLEY TIMES, Fayetteville ●

● THE HERALD-CHRONICLE, Winchester

● THE MOORE COUNTY NEWS ●

GEN. ROBERT F. SCOTT

He Commanded 'Freedom Train'

By DAVID PACE

America's sacred documents were seen by millions aboard the Freedom Train in 1947, and these priceless original parchments — more than 100 of them — "saw" the people of America.

The gleaming streamliner, painted red, white and blue, left Philadelphia that year for a 16-month tour, pulled by one of the first diesel electric engines ever built in the U. S.

Bearing the name, "Spirit of 1776," its beauty and purpose captured the imagination of the people.

During that tour, which included visits to 48 states, four million people filed through the three cars of the train for a fleeting glimpse of the documents that had molded them into a nation.

Thousands of Tennesseans were among those millions, for the great train stopped in Chattanooga on Jan. 3, 1947, and in Nashville on Jan. 5 as it traveled the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad.

Many persons remember standing in the cold for hours in the lines that would back along city blocks, waiting for the chance to step into the train's plush interior and to see the awesome documents.

The man who commanded the Freedom Train and who was responsible for the safety of the irreplaceable documents was a 32-year-old lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps.

Now a retired brigadier general and a resident of Tullahoma, Gen. Robert F. Scott is busy gathering information for a book about his experiences aboard the Freedom Train. When he talks about his book it is easy to tell that the Freedom Train was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for him.

"I want the book to tell the story of what the documents saw rather than what the people saw," he explains. "There were 70 million people who came to see the documents, but only about four million actually got to see them.



The commander of the Freedom Train in 1946-1947, Lt. Col. Robert F. Scott, welcomes one of the nearly four million Americans who walked through the train to view the documents of American history.

"The documents, however, saw all 70 million; they saw what they had created in America — the rich, the poor, Christians, Jews, old, young — every type of American went through that train."

Gen. Scott could not write his book at a more appropriate time, for another Freedom Train is now being planned by the American Freedom Train Foundation, a nonprofit educational organization with headquarters in New York. The second Freedom Train

is scheduled to start April 1 of next year on a proposed route that will enable it to visit every state and be accessible to more than 95 percent of the American public.

If it remains on schedule, the second Freedom Train should arrive in Philadelphia July 4, 1976, to join in the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Tullahoma's Mayor George S. Vibbert Jr. has already written the president of the foundation, Ross E. Rowland Jr., to invite the Freedom Train to visit Tullahoma on its tour through the United States.

To go along with the train, the foundation has produced an RCA recording of country musicians Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton singing the official song to mark America's 200th birthday — "Here Comes the Freedom Train."

The 25-car train will carry a panoramic view of 200 years of American life as seen through artifacts, recordings, literature and slides. The foundation is currently assembling an editorial board of educators and historians to choose the material to be

(Continued on page 3)



Compiling a scrapbook on the Freedom Train tour is the first step in Gen. Scott's research for a book on his experiences aboard the train. Here, he reminisces about the trip as he rereads newspaper clippings describing the visits of the train.

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BETTY DEMENT Editor

Gen. Scott Invited To Ride New' Train

(Continued from page 2)
included in the traveling exhibits.

And appropriately enough, the foundation has not forgotten the commander of the first Freedom Train. Mr. Rowland has written Gen. Scott inviting him to be a special guest on the train on the first leg of the trip, thus making him the first person ever to ride both Freedom Trains.

* * *

IDEAL 'GUEST'

Gen. Scott is no doubt the ideal special guest for America's second Freedom Train, for his career in the Marine Corps and his experiences throughout the world have given him a singular understanding of the meaning of freedom.

A native of Blacksburg, S. C., Gen. Scott entered the Marines in 1936 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps program at Clemson University.

After commanding the Freedom Train, he was assigned as executive officer at the Marine barracks in Washington, D. C., with additional duties as a White House aide to President Harry S. Truman.

In that capacity, Gen. Scott introduced guests to President and Mrs. Truman at official White House functions, enabling him to meet cabinet officers, justices of the Supreme Court, governors, thousands of mayors and leaders of several foreign countries.

"President and Mrs. Truman were just wonderful to me and for no reason," he said. "I was just a colonel assigned to duty there."

Gen. Scott likes to recount the time he was invited to attend a presidential dinner as a guest rather than as a White House aide.

"One day a black limousine drove up to my house with an invitation to a dinner at the Blair House with President and Mrs. Truman and other guests," he explained.

"They could have invited thousands and thousands of people, but they chose to invite me," he said. "I picked up the telephone and called the White House secretary and told him that his office had made a mistake because I had received an invitation.

"He said, 'Colonel, my office doesn't make mistakes. You're invited to dinner.'

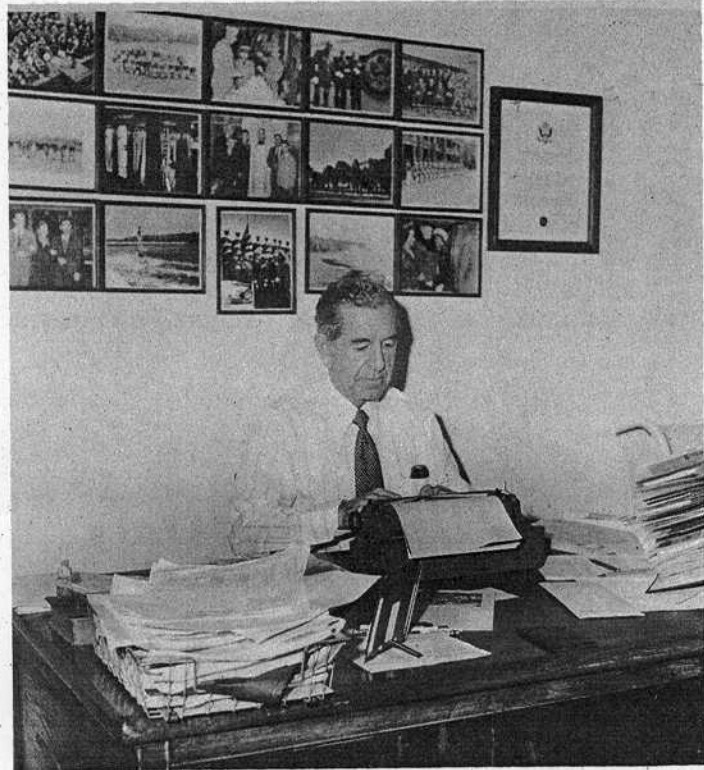
"I'll always remember that dinner," he said. "The Trumans were extremely nice to me."

As part of his duties as a White House aide, Gen. Scott was in charge of guarding the outside perimeter at Camp Shangri-la when President Truman visited there. That camp was later renamed Camp David, and it has been a favorite presidential retreat for years.

* * *

CHIANG ADVISER

He left the White House in 1951 to spend a year as commander of the Second Marines at Camp Lejeune, N. C., before going to Taiwan as a special adviser to Chiang



In researching for his book on the Freedom Train, Gen. Scott has written hundreds of letters to newspaper publishers, former marines aboard the train and others who have needed information. He writes personal letters to all those he is seeking help from.

Kai-shek for the Nationalist Chinese Marine Corps.

In 1956 he returned to Washington to the office of the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon where he remained

until he retired in 1960 as a brigadier general.

He retired to Tullahoma to spend some time with his three sons — Gregory, 17, who will enter Emory University in Atlanta next fall; Barry, a 15-year-old student at Tullahoma High School; and Robin, 14, who is in the eighth grade at East Junior High.

But despite his tour at the White House and his stay in Nationalist China, Gen. Scott considers his assignment as commander of the Freedom Train as by far the highlight of his career.

"I was called one day and told I was going to be commander of the train, and I only had two months to select a detachment of Marines to work with me," he said. "It

was a frightening experience.

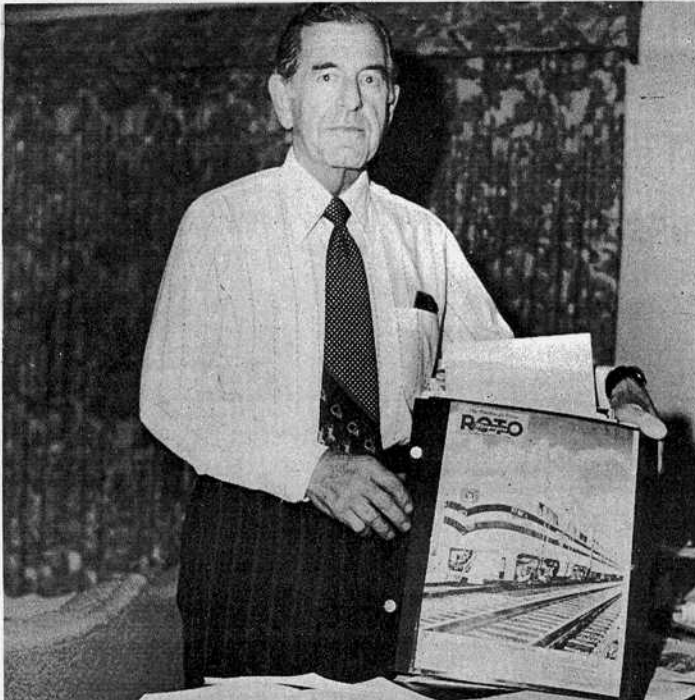
"There I was only 32 years old and I was going to be the attorney general's agent responsible for more than 100 priceless original documents."

Gen. Scott refuses to take any credit for the Freedom Train, pointing out that it was Atty. Gen. Tom Clark's idea and the American Heritage Foundation's project.

"I don't want to take any credit for the Freedom Train," he explained. "I had great cooperation from the Justice Department, railroad police and thousands of local law enforcement officials or else I couldn't have done this.

"And of course the men in the Marine detachment on the

(Continued on page 4)



Gen. Robert F. Scott displays his scrapbook on the Freedom Train tour of the United States. The scrapbook, when finished, will contain newspaper clippings of the train's visit to 324 cities during 1947 and 1948.

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Pledge Signed by Millions

(Continued from page 3)
trip were invaluable," he continued. "I call them 'my boys' because I became very close to them during the tour. I gave them a wide rein to do what ever they wanted when they were off duty, but when they were on the train on duty, they only said 'yes sir and yes ma'am' to those viewing the exhibits."

* * *

CITES PLEDGE

The part of the Freedom Train that had the most significance for Gen. Scott was the Freedom Pledge. Engraved on a scroll at the exit of the train for people to read and sign as they left the exhibit, the pledge read:

"I am an American. A free American. Free to speak — without fear, Free to worship God in my own way, Free to stand for what I think right, Free to oppose what I believe wrong, Free to choose those who govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind."

"The pledge was part of the educational program of the American Heritage Foundation," Gen. Scott explained. "We had it at the end of the train so people would have the opportunity to read it and sign it if they so desired. People who didn't get to go on the train also had a chance to read and sign the pledge."

In addition to having the pledge on the train, civic clubs and veterans organizations across the country sponsored drives to obtain signatures on it. Many newspapers ran a copy of the pledge with a space for readers to sign it and mail it to the local group collecting signatures.

The signatures were collected on rolls of paper that weighed about 20 pounds each, but Gen. Scott does not remember exactly how many roles of signatures were finally obtained. The signatures were sent to the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C., for permanent record.

"By the end of the trip there



Gen. Scott served as an aide to President Harry Truman after commanding the Freedom Train. Here, Lt. Col. Scott (in uniform) accompanies President Truman on a trip.

were about 90 million Americans who had signed that pledge," he said. "Four million of those went through the Freedom Train and another 70 million came to see the train but were unable to get aboard due to the crowds."

The Freedom Pledge and experiences on the Freedom Train will be the subject of the book for which Gen. Scott is currently gathering material, although he does not plan to write it himself.

"I want the book to tell about America," he explained. "Some author somewhere can take the material I've collected and the experiences I've stored in my head and write a book that will be of interest to all Americans, regardless of age."

* * *

SCRAPBOOK READY

As the first step in assembling the material for his book, Gen. Scott is compiling a scrapbook of clippings from newspapers in each of the 324 cities visited by the Freedom Train.

Many of these clippings he has saved for more than 26 years, but not wanting to leave

anything out, Gen. Scott has written personal letters to more than 200 newspaper publishers requesting copies of articles they ran on the Freedom Train when it visited their cities.

"The response from newspaper publishers has been overwhelming so far," he said. "The news media deserves a lot of credit for promoting the Freedom Train, and they have been most helpful to me in gathering information for my book."

Newspapers are not the only source of information he has utilized in gathering material. He has also written letters to all the Marines he has been able to locate that were aboard the Freedom Train. "I want to find as many of those boys as I can, because I would like to start a Marine Corps Freedom Train Association," Gen. Scott said. "There were four officers and 45 enlisted men who were part of the detachment at various times during the trip."

"When I started working on this I didn't know where any of them were, but I have now found 19 of them, and I have found that four more have died. I also have some pretty good leads on a few more."

"Some of those I've located have written letters back to me that have brought tears to my eyes," he added. "After all these years, they still have fond memories of those days on the train."

He recently located the "right" John A. Brown, he said, after having written "just about every John A. Brown in the country."

"I finally found him in Alamo, California," he said with a smile of satisfaction.

In his search for missing people and information for his book, Gen. Scott often displays the zeal of an experienced detective, as is evident in his

(Continued on page 5)

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Newspaper Clippings Aid 'Detective' Work

(Continued from page 4)

efforts to locate his Marine detachment of 25 years ago.

Another detective-type job he has undertaken is the task of locating seven specific persons out of the 3.5 million who walked through the Freedom Train in 1947. Starting with just a name and a newspaper clipping in most cases, he is attempting to find every 500,000th person who viewed the exhibits.

"I've found the two millionth person to walk through the train," he said proudly. "She wrote me a letter saying she would be happy to participate in my book in any way she could."

"I know the names and am on the track of the other six," he continued. "I want these people to help me in my book. I want them to tell me what the Freedom Train and our way of life have meant to them."

"It's going to really be interesting to locate some of these people."

SEEKS ESSAYISTS

Another project along the same line is his effort to find the authors of essays that were written by students in various cities where newspapers sponsored essay contests in conjunction with the visit of the Freedom Train.

So far he has located only one author, but he faces a particularly difficult problem in that he does not know even the names of most of the authors because the essays were published after the train left town.

In addition to all his other research, Gen. Scott also has received permission from the acting assistant archivist for educational programs at the National Archives in Washington to use that facility and its resources while working on material for his book.

"I saw the Freedom Train and how much good it did for America, and I want to tell about that in the book," he explained. "I have set spring as the deadline for completing the research, and I want to be there in an advisory capacity when the book is written."

If he keeps to that schedule, he will have a year to get his book written before being a guest aboard the second train when it departs in April of 1975.

Gen. Scott is openly enthusiastic about the idea of a second train, but emphasizes that he is not helping plan the event and has only limited information about it.

"I think a freedom train is needed, however," he said. "It is an appropriate time for it," he explained. "About 17 countries have become enslaved by other countries since the last Freedom Train, and they would love to have our democracy."

ACCEPTS INVITATION

Gen. Scott has written an open letter to Mr. Rowland accepting his invitation to be a special guest aboard the second Freedom Train. In that letter, he said that "the possibilities of your exhibit is limited only by one's imagination."

He also describes the educational programs of the first train:

"The American Heritage Foundation that sponsored the first Freedom Train had a great educational program from the national level to the local level that was tied in with the train's exhibit in each city."

"The American response was so great that we were forever turning thousands and thousands away each day because of the time limit of our exhibit."

The letter also contains a little advice about what such an exhibit should be:

"In your program or on your train, inform each person in all walks of life that freedom is everybody's job. Remind Americans of their great heritage, for if they are reminded, have faith in themselves and exercise eternal vigilance, then no nation nor combination of nations can destroy our way of life."

LONGEST TOUR

Gen. Scott can proudly reminisce about his train and the records it set while he awaits the unfolding of another freedom train generation next year.

"The 37,106-mile tour by my train was the longest tour in railroad history," he said. "It traveled on more railroads than any other train in history and it was the most photographed train in history."

"And to me," he continued, "it carried the most priceless cargo in history. My train had the original documents, and the programs and activities in each town were centered around them."

"But although it's not necessary to take that number of documents out on a long trip again," he said, "I feel it absolutely essential that a very limited few should go."

"Also, they have 200 years of history and art and literature to draw from in preparing their exhibits."

"I wish Mr. Ross the best and I hope he breaks all the records set by the first train."

And no doubt, the first Freedom Train commander himself will be aboard when those records are broken.



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