

MG Orville L. Tobiason - Artillery OCS Class 36-42

Major General Orville L. Tobiason, the 13th Commander of White Sands Missile Range, was born on 02 November 1920, in Alexandria, Minnesota and attended grade schools in Everett, Washington. He enlisted in the National Guard, US Army, in Seattle, Washington, in 1937. He graduated from Broadway High School in Seattle in June 1938. He attended Business College in Seattle in the fall of 1940, but interrupted his studies when he was called to active duty with the US Army in September 1940. He served as an enlisted man for two years and achieved the grade of First Sergeant with an artillery unit. He was selected to attend the Artillery Officers Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he graduated and received his commission in October 1942.

First as a Lieutenant and then as a Captain, General Tobiason served as a Battery Executive Officer and Battery Commander with the 2nd Field Artillery Battalion from December 1942 to June 1945. He was with that unit in the Caribbean, at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and in Europe. He participated in the Northern France, Rhineland, and Central Europe campaigns of World War II. Following the termination of hostilities, he commanded Headquarters Battery of the 472nd Field Artillery Group from June 1945 until November 1945, upon which he returned to the United States for separation from active duty at Fort Lewis, Washington.

General Tobiason was in the inactive Army Reserve in 1946 and 1947 and served again in the National Guard from July 1947 to September 1950. He was recalled to active duty in September 1950, and after four months at Fort Lewis, where he was promoted to the temporary rank of Major, he was assigned to attend the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Following his graduation from the C&GS College, General Tobiason served in Korea for two years, from 1951 to 1953, and was assigned to the G-3 Section of the Korean Military Advisory Group. He participated in four of the ten major campaigns of the Korean Conflict. In May of 1953, he transferred to the G-3 Section, Armed Forces Far East, in Japan, where he served until returning to Fort Sill in August 1954.

General Tobiason was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in April 1954. Assigned at Fort Sill following his return from Japan, he served on the faculty of the Artillery and Guided Missile School. In 1956, he assumed command of his former World War II unit, the 2nd Field Artillery Battalion, at Fort Sill.

In 1957 he was assigned to the 4th Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas, and served as assistant executive officer with the Division Artillery at Fort Hood and in Europe from 1957 to 1959. From 1959 to 1961 he was chief of the plans Branch, G-3, with the Seventh US Army Headquarters in Europe.

General Tobiason returned to the United States in 1961 to attend the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, where he served for three years, first as Assistant Chief of the Plans Division and then as Chief of the Plans Branch. He was promoted to Colonel in October 1963. From August 1964 to June 1965, he was assigned as a student at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, where he attended the National War College.

Upon graduation from the National War College, General Tobiason assumed command of the 52nd Artillery Group at Fort Sill. He commanded the group both at Fort Sill and in Vietnam in 1966 and 1967. Returning from Vietnam in July 1961, he was assigned with the US Army Test and Evaluation Command, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, where he was director of the Field Artillery Materiel Test Directorate.

He remained at Aberdeen for two years. From August to November of 1969 he was again on the staff of the Artillery School at Fort Sill. From November 1969 to September 1971, he again was at Fort Hood, where he served first as testing and training director, then as assistant chief of staff for operations and training, and finally as chief of staff for the Project Mobile Army Sensor Systems Test and Evaluation Review.

General Tobiason was promoted to brigadier general in August 1971, shortly before leaving Fort Hood for his second tour of duty in Korea. There from September 1971 to August 1973, he served as assistant chief of staff, G-3, with the Eighth US Army Headquarters.

He left Korea in August 1973 en route to an assignment in Turkey. There with Headquarters of Allied Land Forces in Southeastern Europe, he served as chief of staff from September 1973 to August 1975. He was promoted to major general on 1 October 1973, soon after his arrival in Turkey. He was promoted to the permanent rank of brigadier general on 28 December 1973.

In August of 1975, Major General Tobiason was selected for assignment as the 13th Commander of the US Army White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. He arrived at White Sands Missile Range on 08 September 1975 and assumed his new duties the following day.