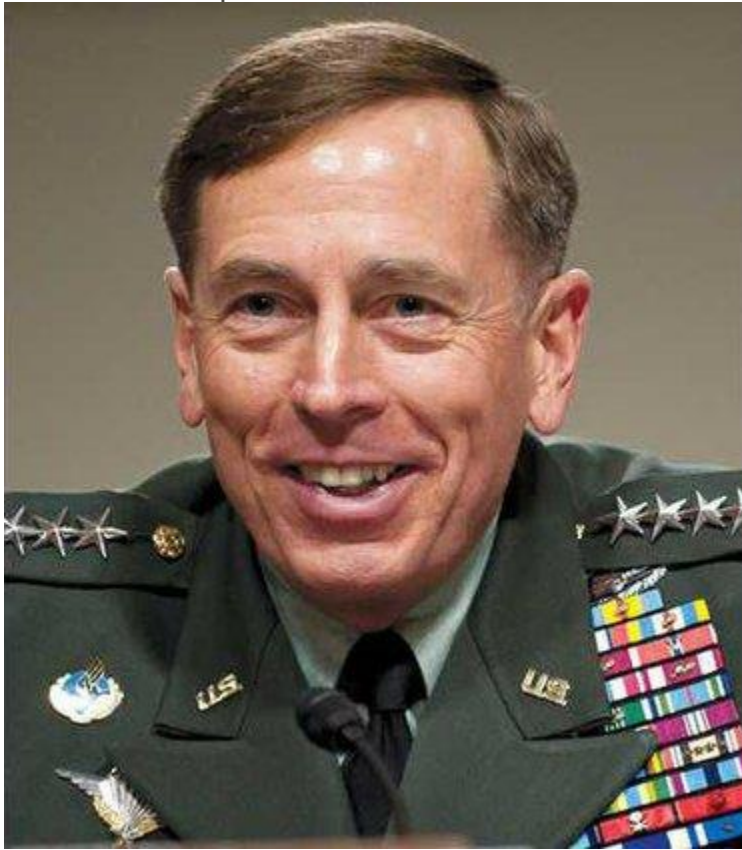


Former Gen. Petraeus to serve on Camp Toccoa board



David H. Petraeus

Jeff Gill

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David H. Petraeus, the former four-star U.S. Army general who commanded coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, has agreed to serve on the Camp Toccoa at Currahee Board of Trustees.

“It is quite an honor,” said Robin Sink McClelland, the group’s president, on Monday. “We are going to put him to use the best we can.”

McClelland’s father was Col. Robert F. Sink, who commanded the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, one of four that trained at Camp Toccoa.

McClelland announced Petraeus’ addition to the board in a memo to board members Monday.

Petraeus, 60, became CIA director in September 2011, after a long career in the military, including his much-vaunted leadership of the surge of U.S. forces in Iraq in 2008.

He resigned in November and apologized for an extramarital affair with his biographer, Paula Broadwell, which was uncovered in an FBI investigation.

Since then, he also has agreed to teach part time at the University of Southern California and help mentor students who are veterans.

McClelland, who lives near Seattle, said in her announcement to board members that when she asked Petraeus to serve, “he responded with an enthusiastic ‘Yes!’”

She also quoted the general as saying he was “delighted to have been invited to support the effort to remember and honor the members of the four great airborne regiments that trained at Camp Toccoa during World War II.”

He added: “As one of those who was privileged to serve with members of several of those regiments in subsequent decades — and then to lead others during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — I feel very fortunate to be able to lend a hand to the initiative to preserve the historic Camp Toccoa site and the area around it.”

McClelland said she “expressed delight when Petraeus accepted.”

“As a paratrooper and commander of airborne troops, (Petraeus) knows what it took for those young soldiers at Toccoa to prepare for war,” she said. “He brings valuable resources to our board.”

Petraeus also said he grasps “the imperative to preserve the legacy of Camp Toccoa on behalf of World War II veterans who survived the rigorous training,” McClelland’s announcement states.

“It is my hope that, as a result of this undertaking, future generations will be able to enjoy doing ‘three miles up, three miles down’ on Currahee Mountain as much as the paratroopers (did).”

Of the four regiments, two parachuted into Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion.

The best-known group of soldiers is Easy Company, 2nd Battalion of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division.

Its exploits, including intense training at Camp Toccoa, were depicted in the 2001 HBO miniseries “Band of Brothers.”

Glen Kyle, director of the Northeast Georgia History Center, said in a previous interview that Sink wanted to break a marching record held by the Japanese military by having his troops march from Toccoa to Atlanta.

That march, which traveled through Gainesville, took place Dec. 1-3, 1942, and featured an entire battalion, including Easy Company.

The camp was dismantled after the war.

Two of the regiments are on active duty today — the 506th Airborne Infantry, which is assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, and the 501st Airborne Infantry Regiment, which is assigned to the 25th Infantry Division.

In 2012, members of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment Association gathered in Toccoa to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the activation of its units.

Members of the 511th and 517th will gather on June 1 to commemorate their 70th anniversaries.

In 2012, a steering committee unveiled the master plan for Camp Toccoa at Currahee. The first phase calls for restoring the last remaining structure and rebuilding barracks from the early training days on 6 acres of land donated by Pacolet Milliken Enterprises.