

Colonel Paul B. Malone, 1: Tom Watson, 0

Religious bias was carried to an extreme in 1922 when Georgia Junior Senator Thomas E. Watson brought charges of misconduct against Colonel Paul B. Malone, assistant commander at Fort Benning, GA. In a hearing before a Congressional committee, the senator accused Malone of shooting a lagging soldier while commanding the Fifth Division in France during World War I.

Malone's accuser, Tom Watson, was a lawyer and newspaper publisher elected senator under Georgia's outmoded and unfair county unit system. Early on, a champion of poor farmers of both the white and black races, he utilized their support to gain political clout. By the early 1900s, Watson changed his tune, and began attacking blacks, Jews and Catholics in his newspapers. He leveled obscene and unfounded charges against Bishop Benjamin J. Keiley and the priests and sisters of the Diocese of Savannah and forced passage of Georgia's notorious "convent inspection law". Going further, Watson threatened to outlaw Catholic schools in the state. Hoping to disenfranchise Catholics, Jews and Negroes, he advocated for a Protestant White Primary. When John F. Curran was nominated as Savannah

postmaster, Senator Watson blocked his appointment on the grounds that Curran was Catholic, and, therefore, objectionable to him.

It was not surprising, then, in 1922 that Tom Watson went after Colonel Malone, a Catholic in a command position at Fort Benning.



Rita H. DeLorme

Immensely popular in the nearby Columbus community, Colonel Malone

was an author and a much sought-after speaker. The son of Irish immigrants, John and Hannah Malone, operators of a successful dairy in Middletown, New York, Paul Bernard Malone attended Saint James Parochial School and the De La Salle Institute. He won admission to West Point Military Academy through a competitive examination and later taught chemistry at the Academy. A veteran of the Spanish-American War and First World War, he had received numerous awards and commendations as a military commander. He was married and he and his wife, Gertrude, had several children.

The people of Columbus knew Paul Malone well and came to his defense. His fellow members of the local Rotary Club adopted a resolution expressing confidence in his innocence. The mayor of Columbus, J. Homer Dimon,



FDR - having lunch while visiting Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp, Co. 350, at Big Meadows, Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. L-r: General Malone, Louis Howe, Harold Ickes, Robert Fechner, FDR, Henry Wallace, Rexford Tugwell. August 12, 1933 - FDR Library Photo Collection.

offered to go to Washington to defend him if necessary. The *Columbus Enquirer-Sun*, edited by Catholic layman Thomas W. Loyless, denounced the charges against Colonel Malone and demanded his prompt vindication. The Columbus Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Club also gave him their support.

There was great joy when Colonel Malone was cleared of all charges, after appearing before a congressional panel. I.B. Henderson of Chester, South Carolina, the man who had written letters to the committee accusing Malone of the shooting, now wrote that he was ready to swear that he never saw him shoot anyone and that his earlier statement was "a mistake". Colonel Russell C. Langdon, formerly an officer in the same regiment, corroborated Henderson's denial that the shooting had occurred. By March, 1922, the *Bulletin* was triumphantly announcing Paul Malone's promotion to the rank of Brigadier General. He would later command the 23rd Infantry of the Second Division and the Philippine Division. He retired as a Major General commanding the Fourth Army.

Paul Bernard Malone, Major General, US Army, wrote many

books about his alma mater, West Point, including a series of stories for boys. Malone's son and two grandsons (and, possibly, great-grandsons) have also graduated from the Military Academy. He was 88 when he died in 1960, though he is hardly forgotten. Numerous Internet inquiries for genealogy purposes show a number of his descendants and other relations who want to know more about him and his background. A large firing range complex at Fort Benning is named in his honor.

Malone's nemesis, Thomas E. Watson, died in 1922 at age 66, two years after his election to the U.S. Senate. Ironically, Watson sent his daughter and, later, his grandchildren to Catholic schools to be educated. His daughter, Agnes, studied at Saint Joseph's Academy in Washington, Georgia, and his grandsons attended Sacred Heart Seminary, Sharon, Georgia. Both schools were run by the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

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