

CHAPTER 11 QUOTABLE QUOTES

The Military-Civil Mission

“During the time when I was old enough to have an overall understanding of the Corps, I know that the Corps considered its principal functions to be: (1) a part of the combat team with the infantry and artillery; and (2) a construction agency capable by training and experience to handle major construction work needed in time of war and in preparation for war. Personally, I have always looked on the work on rivers and harbors, on the one hand, as an opportunity seized by the Federal government to make full use of a capable and honest body of engineers free from political influence; and, on the other hand, as a fortunate means for the Corps to learn how to handle large forces of labor, great amounts of construction materials, and big sums of money. A military engineer must have broad engineering experience between wars.”

Major General Julian L. Schley, Chief of Engineers 1937 - 1941

Lenore Fine

Source: Letter, Schley to Historical Division, 5 Sep 53.

A Healthy Sense of Curiosity

Speaking to an Officers Candidate School graduating class at Fort Belvoir in the fall of 1942, Major General Eugene Reybold, the Chief of Engineers, offered this advice:

One of the best ways for an Army officer to keep on his toes is to cultivate a healthy sense of curiosity—an inquiring mind. Any good Engineer Officer must wonder about the problems of the

German Engineers in the assault on Stalingrad, and about the problems of the Russian Engineers in repelling that assault. Any good Engineer will never pass a bridge but what he gives a thought as to how that particular piece of terrain might best be organized for defense, or as to how it might best be attacked if it were organized by the enemy. I commend heartily to you the practice of setting up in your own minds hypothetical military situations suggested by things you encounter in everyday life.

Lenore Fine

Source: Address by General Reybold at Graduation Exercises, 15th Officers' Candidate School, Ft. Belvoir, 28 October 1942.

A Toast to the Eagle That Looks Like a Duck

Among the relics and trophies displayed in the Castle Room of Mackenzie Hall at Fort Belvoir is an old plaque bearing the crest of the Corps coat-of-arms. Crudely carved, the crest's eagle, wreath, and "Essayons" motto are the work of a long-ago enlisted man in the carpentry shop at Willets Point, New York. For years the crest hung over the entrance to the Engineer Mess at Willets Point, and it accompanied the Engineer School when it moved to Washington Barracks in 1901 and to Fort Humphreys (now Fort Belvoir) in 1919.

At Willets Point in the 1890's, the young officers attending the School irreverently dubbed the bird "the eagle that looks like a duck," and they pledged many a cup to the grand old fowl. Among the tipplers was Lieutenant Sherwood Cheney, who later became a distinguished general. One of "Sherrie's" toasts has come down to us and, in script too small to decipher, is affixed to the plaque in Mackenzie Hall. It is still worth drinking to:

Here's a health to the Army'
And here's a health to our Corps'
And here's to the Flag flying up on the hill
And the bird flying over our door'
Stand by, with your glasses all brimming,
Here's health, and here's how, and here's luck'
And here's to the Castles of Silver we wear,
And the Eagle that looks like a Duck'

Lenore Fine

Source: (1) *The Military Engineer*, 17 (July - August 1925), 359. (2) Information supplied by The Engineer Museum, Fort Belvoir.

The Importance of Civil Works for Military Engineers

Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Jr.'s views (1952) as to the importance of Civil Works for military engineers:

The proved benefits in World War II of the individual engineer officer-training afforded by participation in large-scale civil works programs were not limited to the superiority of our military engineering effort but were also evidenced by the dominant part which officers trained in this system played in the almost miraculous logistic support afforded our Armies around the globe. Almost all key positions in this logistical organization—which in magnitude has no parallel in the world's history—were held by officers who had been developed largely by their training in the peacetime civil works organization of the Army Corps of Engineers and other positions of great responsibility to which they were called because of the capacities which their previous training in this field had generated. That they would have been able in such numbers and to such a high degree to develop such capacities through any "detail system" or through any agency other than one organic to the Corps itself is highly questionable.

Karl C. Dod

Source: Historical Division, OCE, Quotable Quotes.

The Military - Civil Mission

The importance of the Military - Civil Mission as seen by Secretary of War Dwight F. Davis in 1927:

The record of . . . the Army Engineers in the civil work of the government is a matter of great pride to me . . . there has been developed in the Corps of Engineers a capacity for team work which I do not believe is equalled, and which certainly is not surpassed, in any private or governmental organization. . . . The valuable services of Engineer Officers on civil works can really be regarded as a by-product of national defense. From this standpoint they may be said to have been obtained with little additional cost to the government. A Corps of Engineers . . . must be maintained irrespective of whatever other duties their members perform. . . . Civil work is an exceedingly valuable but inexpensive by-product of military duties, and, at the same time, officers of the Corps of Engineers are getting valuable war training without added expense to the country. . . . It would be economically absurd to fail to use this experienced, trained force, educated largely at public ex-

pense, for duties which they and their predecessors have performed with conspicuous success for over a century. . . . The best interests of our waterways demand that the engineering data on which success or failure depends be obtained by men who are absolutely free from political or local influences. The Army engineer . . . unaffected by political changes of administration . . . has always given this bit of unbiased service.

Karl C. Dod

Source: Historical Division, OCE, Quotable Quotes.

Washington's Devout Wish

One of George Washington's life-long dreams was a well-developed system of navigable waterways, promoting commerce and binding the country together. Both before and after the Revolution, he was a leading advocate of river and harbor improvements and an active promotor of plans for building canals.

Returning in the fall of 1783 from a tour of the Mohawk Valley, he wrote to a friend concerning the nation's natural waterways:

Prompted by these actual observations, I could not help taking a more extensive view of the vast inland navigation of these United States and could not but be struck by the immense extent and importance of it, and with the goodness of that Providence, which has dealt its favors to us with so profuse a hand. Would to God we had wisdom enough to improve them.

Lenore Fine

Source: Ltr to the Chevalier de Castellux, 12 Oct 1783.

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