

Q: What would you say was the Army's biggest problem from your perception from the Infantry School at that time, besides not having money? Or I guess that would be the biggest problem.

A: I don't know. They had one—quarters were very scarce. Many officers built their own quarters out of any old lumber they could salvage or anything else. They'd build their own fireplaces and anything else. They had them scattered all over Benning. And they later established some way you could get something out of them by selling—couldn't sell the land, you could sell the house. You did own the house, and when somebody would move away he could sell his shack to somebody else. We lived in permanent quarters. We had some of those old brick quarters but there were very few of those. There were a couple of rows in one circle of brick houses which had been built, I've forgotten when. Once the appropriation of a few years before—before that the appropriation for construction of houses was to run out and they had to get them started before the fiscal year and they didn't have any plans. So somebody sent a set of plans for officers' quarters from Washington that were designed for Fort Ethan Allen, Vermont, and that was all they had and they built all those sets. There must have been a hundred of them in all built from those plans. They were hot as heck, but it was a house and it had a couple of bathrooms in it and a heating plant and so on. It was all right.

Q: Must have been well insulated to have been designed for Vermont and built in Benning.

A: They had roofs that just went right up to a point, you know.

Q: Yes, sir, I've seen some of those quarters.

A: To shed the snow.

Mississippi River Commission

Q: Now let's see—after Benning, you had a little over a year with another district assignment in Vicksburg.

A: I went down there with the Mississippi River Commission. That was the time they assigned me to write the cost manual. I was assistant to the president. And he took exception to anybody on the staff associating with some of the people in town. Well, the people in Vicksburg—it was a poor town and it still showed the ravages of the Civil War and the siege, but there were some of the nicest people there I ever knew. I made some very good friends. We had an awful time getting a place to live.

Q: There would have been no post quarters there.

A: No, there were none. There were no quarters.

Q: Was that the initial establishment of the Mississippi River Commission there at Vicksburg, sir? Were you part of the initial contingent of Engineers?

A: No. I think it started up at St. Louis and they moved down there. They had moved out on the park—national battlefield, national park there—and they had built a couple of wooden offices out there. I didn't have anything to do and I was very dissatisfied. I then actually contemplated transferring from the Engineers because I had gotten fed up with it. But about that time this president of the Mississippi River Commission [Brigadier General Thomas J. Jackson] decided I was insubordinate or so on and he would send me to Memphis to be under [Brehon B.] Somervell, who was District Engineer up there and was supposed to be a tough disciplinarian. Well, I had known Somervell pretty well as a cadet and he was a tough master.

Well, a peculiar thing happened. When the new president of the Mississippi River Commission came in, it was General [Harley B.] Ferguson; and while I was waiting to move up to Memphis, my family was all gone up to Canada for the summer, and I had this house. I couldn't rent a house in town, but I found an old house that had possibilities. It had been floated down the Mississippi River, oh, years ago on a raft and was pulled up there on top of the bluff and had been assembled. But it had fallen in disrepair and it had been raided and they had tom out the bathroom fixtures and so on, vandals and what not. But it was livable. So I offered this man, if he would fix it up—fix up the bathrooms and paper it and paint it some—I would rent it at \$100 a

month. Or, if he wasn't willing to do that, I would have this work done and charge him in rent for it and I wouldn't start paying rent until I'd used up my \$100 a month, which would have taken about a year. Well, actually I lived there and we had quite a group. When Mrs. Hoge was away I had a cook, a good cook, and a houseboy. We heated entirely by fireplaces so this houseboy came and made the fires and did that work, and the cook took care of the house. That summer, when everybody started moving around, I know they sent a class down there to go to the waterways station, what do you call that?

Q: Waterways Experiment Station.

A: They sent a class of young engineers down there. They'd been out of West Point about three or four years. They sent them down there to take the course and all these, oh, about eight of them, I think, these boys came in and they had no place to stay. So I had a partially empty house, four or five bedrooms, and I told them that I would take them, let them stay there, and they could pay their part of the meals. They wouldn't have to pay any rent or anything else. Just pay for their portion of meals and I'd appoint one of them the mess officer and he'd keep accounts and charge everybody their portion of the meals.

Memphis

And then Oliver was there, "Bugs" Oliver; he was leaving, and somebody else and General Ferguson came to town, and he had no place to stay and I offered him to come up there and stay until I had to leave. So they all did. And we had a brigadier general and a couple of colonels and these six, about six, lieutenants and myself all living in this house, splitting up the food; and everybody had his own keg of whiskey, moonshine, and we'd get out and have a happy hour in the evenings in front of the fireplace. It was a right comfortable place and they all enjoyed it. Those kids thought it was fine. They did a lot of dancing and hell-raising all night long, and they'd come in at midnight or two o'clock in the morning and go to work at the laboratory the next day. They were all over Louisiana, Mississippi, up into Arkansas. I don't know where all they went. They enjoyed it. I stayed there until I had to move to Memphis that fall, and I went up there as assistant to Somervell and we got along all right. I was his number three down the line, but I worked there on