

was a tough old devil—swearing. He had a wild group, too, that were there but he disciplined them, handled them. The old man would walk down the aisle in the morning and give us all hell. But he was very thorough. He wrote a lot of books on the entrance examinations that had been passed and we studied. There's where I really learned all I knew when I went to West Point.

Q: So you found that it was not only worthwhile but essential?

A: Well, I would never have gotten in without it.

Q: I believe you received a congressional appointment?

A: I had one from a senator from Missouri. Got that myself through friends who were lawyers and doctors and bankers around Lexington. They got it for me. I didn't meet Senator Reed until after I had been graduated from West Point. In St. Louis I met him when I was, I believe, a major or a captain—I guess a major at that time—but my appointment was entirely through friends.

West Point

Q: When did you decide that you wanted to go to West Point?

A: Well, I knew it all the time, plus the influence of Wentworth. One of the most influential men [on me] I had there at school. Of course, I had a brother [Benjamin F. Hoge] who went to West Point, and he was captain of the football team in 1914. No, he graduated in 1914, but he was captain in 1913. That was one reason, but I would have gone anyway. But it was a colonel, well, he wasn't a colonel at that time, I think he was a lieutenant or captain of cavalry in the Army, who was detailed at Wentworth as the PMS&T [professor of military science and tactics] and he also acted as commandant. He was the greatest man with boys I ever knew, and he took me under his wing. He gave me his dog, he let me ride his horses, and he was just the greatest chap I ever knew. We used to go hunting with him and everything. He was much older than I was—he was a graduate of VMI but he had been in the Army since about 1901 or 1902; I don't know when he entered. He was a great person, and

I think he had more influence on my desire for the Army than anybody else.

Q: What was his name?

A: Edwin A. Hickman.

Q: H-i-c-k-m-a-n, Edwin A. Hickman. I'm sure a lot of the people they put in the schools now as PMS&T would like to have that background, because you know we have a big push now to get a better quality officer, a very motivated officer, into the colleges and universities.

A: I know they tried to. They need something. I see they got an appointment for a girl to go to West Point. I saw that in the paper.

Q: Yes, sir, that's right.

A: A week or so ago.

Q: Air Force Academy and West Point, sent one to each.

A: Well, that's not going to help the football team.

Q: Well, it may, sir; it couldn't hurt it right now.

A: That was awful.

Q: Sure was a bad year. I'm sure your mother was in favor of your going.

A: Oh, yes, she was.

Q: Let's see, you had the one older brother and I believe—

A: I had a younger brother [Kenneth G. Hoge], Class of 1920, who died two years ago [27 December 1972]. He was retired, too. Both of them were colonels and both of them had been in the Cavalry. One of them retired from the Cavalry. The other later transferred to the Adjutant General's Department and he retired from the Army, but then went with [some] association.

Q: The Retired Officers' Association?

A: No. It was taking care of all soldiers. What is that thing that benefits them? It's some name. It's like the Army [Emergency] Relief except it's much bigger [Army Mutual Aid Association]. The Army [Emergency] Relief used to be very small, but then during the war they started this other one which became quite large—took in the entire Army. He was executive officer of that until he retired. He died in 1972.

Q: You entered the Military Academy in 1912?

A: 1912.

Q: Your brother was still there?

A: Yes, my brother was there for two years while I was there.

Q: And he was on the football team.

A: He was on it. I was kind of a scrub. I did win my letter. I got to play a little bit in one Navy game, but I wasn't as prominent as he was.

Q: Well, you had quite a few prominent people on the football team back in that time frame.

A: Oh, yes. We had [Vernon E.] Prichard and [Elmer Q.] Oliphant and [Alexander M.] Weyand—he was a classmate of mine—and [Louis A., Jr.] Merillat, who was a great All-American. There were several All-Americans up there at that time. There was [Leland S.] Devore in the

Class of 1913. Merillat was in Class of 1913, too. No, he wasn't. Merillat was 1915. I don't know whether Babe Weyand was All-American. I don't think Babe ever made it, but he was captain of the team my senior year.

Q: Let's see, you graduated the year following General Eisenhower. He was in the Class of 1915.

A: Eisenhower was there. He was in the class ahead of me.

Q: He was the manager of the football team?

A: No, he played football the first year I was there and then he got hurt. He hurt his knee, and he didn't play anymore. He coached Cullum Hall. In those days Cullum Hall was, I guess you'd call it the—we were not on the football squad—whatever you call them now. I don't know whether they have it anymore. We played high schools and small colleges and things like that. I played on Cullum Hall one year.

Q: That's the B Squad, and I think they kept the Cullum Squad name for a number of years.

A: Eisenhower helped coach that one or two years. I've forgotten.

Q: Did you ever know General MacArthur?

A: He was 1903. I knew General MacArthur—served with him several times later.

Q: I wanted to get into that. Particularly the experiences in the Philippines with General MacArthur.

A: A very interesting period.

Q: Philippine Corps of Engineers. What are some of the reminiscences you have of West Point? I'm sure you and your class, just like everybody else, got into mischief and—

A: Oh, yes. We didn't all get put on the area or anything like that. We missed that one. We didn't silence a TAC, but a couple of years before that they had silenced one of the TACs. He was still a TAC when I was there. It nearly ruined his life.

Q: Now that's a new one, sir—the Corps of Cadets silencing a tactical officer?

A: Yes. And I have forgotten what it was for because it was before I entered there. But they silenced him. When he came to the mess hall as the officer-in-charge everybody stopped eating—just quit. And he took that I think once or twice. Then he stood the whole Corps up and marched them out without dinner, and they all went back to the barracks and couldn't get their dinner. They followed that up for several days after that, but they finally broke it. I don't know whether they put anybody on the area or not. That was before my time.

Q: I never heard of that being done—silencing a tactical officer. Of course, they silenced cadets for breaking the Honor Code, but I hadn't heard of TACs being silenced.

A: I think he was a battalion TAC.

Q: I'm sure the football teams back then, well, they were stronger than last year's team, but Army was sort of growing as a national power at that time, wasn't it?

A: I saw the first Notre Dame game; that's when Notre Dame came up. We saw two really great games up there. In those days we played pretty good games. We played Yale and several of the big schools. We had a much simpler schedule, too. We didn't have two or three big games, but we did play Yale and Harvard once in a while. We had Charlie Daly [Charles D. Daly, USMA 1905] as our coach. He was a great coach and a great little man. He had been an All-American at Harvard, and then he

came to West Point and became an All-American the second time. Then he resigned from the Army and went back to Boston and coached at Harvard. I've forgotten how, but at some period in there—whether he got in bad with politicians—he was also a fire commissioner [1910-12] or something that was supplementing his salary. But he got dissatisfied, and he came back to West Point and got recommissioned in the Army by a special Act of Congress [1919]. I think he'd been out five, six years, or more than that. But he coached all the time I was at West Point. Not all of it, "Pop" Graves was coach the last year I was there. But we played pretty good football. I saw the first Notre Dame game. That really was something because that revolutionized all of football. That was the first time the East knew anything about the forward pass. And then the pair-Rockne was an end and Duryea was the quarterback—they put on an exhibition you couldn't beat. They beat us by] about 20, well, I don't know whether it was 25 or 30. Maybe we made a score, I don't know.

Q: I don't think so.

A: But I did play one year against Notre Dame. I think it was the next year when we beat them. That's one of the few times we beat them. But Rockne and Duryea had gone. I think I played the whole game. We didn't have an offensive and a defensive team in those days. Sometimes we'd play the four quarters straight through.

Q: In both directions.

A: Played all the game. I think I played the entire game of that one. That was the biggest, that was the highlight—except that we beat the Navy during those years, three times. We lost when I was a plebe, the only time we saw an Army defeat [to Navy]. But we won the next three years that I was a cadet, which was a great thing.

Q: Do you put the same importance on the athletic program at West Point as General MacArthur's words over the gym reflect: "The fields of friendly strife?"

A: Well, I don't know whether that's true. We had very little time to do anything else because the corps was very small in those days. At one

time, they were down to, I think, 450. We got to about 600; that's all we had in the corps.

Q: I think there were about 182 in your class?

A: Oh no, we only had 125. We had many turn-backs in my class. The big class was the Class of 1915 that was ahead of us. They were too big, so they began to 'find' ["found" to be deficient in either academics or discipline] them and turn them back. We got maybe as many as 20 turn-backs from the Class of 1915.

Q: That turned out to be a mighty big class as far as the success of the members of that class.

A: Oh, it was a wonderful class. That and the Class of 1917 did extremely well. My class didn't do very well and I don't know why, except, well, there is a thing in there about classes, too, because of opportunity. You don't get it unless you get an opportunity, and some of them were off on training camps and doing some other duty. I remember Eisenhower was out at Leavenworth when we were out there organizing the 7th Engineers. And there were several of 1915 in my regiment at that time; we had four 1915ers. Now that doesn't bear me out on 1915 and the better chance, but they got promoted a little early and they all had to stay back in the States. We weren't promoted until we got to France. You see, I was a captain before I had been in the service a year.

Q: Right at the start of World War I?

A: World War I, and I was a major when I was, well, in 1918. I'd only been out two years; later I was a major three times.

Q: I noticed that in your promotion list.

A: Back-and-forth temporaries. We had little time for football or anything else. We went to school until four o'clock in the afternoon. We never got off for afternoon practice except after school. I don't think we got excused from parades. They didn't have a parade every evening in those

days. We weren't excused from inspection, Saturday inspection; except those on the football squad had a separate inspection earlier so they could get dressed for the game. We didn't have but an hour or so a day except on Saturdays or times like that. There wasn't much athletics in those days. We had an indoor meet and outdoor meet. We had a basketball team and a baseball team.

Q: You played baseball too, I believe.

A: No, I didn't play baseball.

Q: You didn't play baseball?

A: No, I did not. I won my numerals in the indoor meet, and I also won one in the outdoor meet my last year when we had an outdoor meet.

Q: Had you already decided to go into the Corps of Engineers early in your time at West Point?

A: No, I wanted to go into Artillery, Field Artillery; that's what I had hoped for. I was going into the Cavalry anyway. I knew I could make that all right. The reason I went to the Engineers was all on the spur of the moment. When we signed up for branch choices—you know how you do that. I don't know whether you do it now. Stand in column in order of class standing.

Q: The way we do it now is just stand up when your name is called.

A: We all went over and signed up our three choices. Well, the man ahead of me was Bob Neyland [Robert R. Neyland, USMA 1916]. He was a great pitcher and a very good football player; and Bob Neyland ranked me one file, and Bob signed up for the Engineers. While I was standing there watching him, I suddenly thought, "Why that so-and-so, if he can do that, I'll do it too." That was my first thought. Then I asked for Engineers, Artillery, and Cavalry. I didn't have much hope because they hadn't taken in the years before more than four or five officers in the Corps of Engineers. But that year they took, well, I don't know, I was 29, and I

know there were two Engineers below me. But that was a big expansion. They were just beginning the Mexican Border affair and for some reason they expanded the Engineers. I was on graduation leave when I got word that I had been commissioned a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. Well, I went to my future wife and spilled it to her that I thought I had to resign, that I couldn't stand that. I saw Colonel Hickman, who was still at Wentworth in those days, and I said something to him about it. He said by all means take it, go on and do it. So I did and I stuck with it. But I was very much worried at that time that I couldn't possibly stay in the Corps of Engineers. I didn't think I had the brains.

Q: Well, evidently you did.

A: I didn't have the brains. I did stay with it, and I'm very happy that I did. I think I got more experience in the Engineers than anybody in my class in other branches, and I had, well, we had several good Engineers in the class but we had—I think it must have been around 15 or 16. I know Tom Finley later became a general. He was a great, very close friend of mine in the Engineers but he decided to transfer. His father had been a cavalryman, his grandfather had been a cavalryman, and he wanted to be a cavalryman. We went through the First World War; he was sent off to school to teach when we got to France. Tom came out very much disgusted, and he said he'd be damned if he was going to be a desk soldier all his life and he was going someplace he'd get service. So, he transferred to the Infantry. He ranked about five in the class. He later did very well, but he didn't get the experience that I got staying in the Engineers.

I had more experience than anyone, various experiences, and I wouldn't change it because the time came after the First World War when they had all those people in camps and what not. A lot of the people had to go do that. They fiddled around, and they didn't have any soldiers. There was nothing to do on the post. I had a very active life as an Engineer in those times. I was busy all the time. Teaching school was something else, but I did get a chance after I'd gone to school at MIT. I came out and had a year at district work, which was very poor. Then I went to teach at Belvoir for three years, and then I got orders to Leavenworth in the Class of 1928. So, those years were busy years, and after that I went to the Infantry School as an instructor and spent three years there. Then I went

over to the Mississippi River Commission, and I was very fortunate in that, with people I ran into. I was dissatisfied with my first year there because I had nothing to do. They were trying to make me write a book on cost accounting and so on—you know, that cost manual.

Q: This is while you were at Vicksburg.

A: I had no idea of anything on that.

Q: Well, you had a previous duty assignment at Rock Island. Is that the one you didn't like?

A: Yes, I didn't like that.

Q: That was your first experience in district engineer work.

A: Well, I'd been a short time, when was that?

Q: Oh, Kansas City in September—

A: When I came back from World War I, I spent about three months in Kansas City and then I went to VMI as the assistant PMS&T. And I spent, I don't know, two or three years there. Two years, I guess, and then I went to MIT. But as I say, my life in those years was always very active. You see, I didn't have any time. But those people who were in the other branches of the service besides Engineers just stood around and did garrison duty. They had no soldiers, everything was going downhill. They were sent off to these camps; what did they call those camps?

Q: Were they training camps?

A: No, they took all those boys away from the cities and so on. Put these camps all over the United States.

Q: Oh, the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]?

A: CCC. A great many officers had to do that. Well, that wasn't too bad except they were off by themselves in woods and so on. But during that period I had this district work and then I got the assignment to the Philippines.

Q: Let's go back. We've gotten into your career some after you graduated from the Military Academy and how you decided to accept your commission in the Corps of Engineers. I found that a very interesting story because branch selection is normally a very long, thought-out process.

A: Well, I thought it out too, but I never thought about the Corps of Engineers.

Fort Brown, Texas, and Washington Barracks

Q: An awful lot of them do that. My roommate at the Military Academy made a spot decision to go to the Air Force after having planned on going to the Corps of Engineers, if he were high enough. It turned out he was high enough, but he decided to go into the Air Force. That was a spur-of-the-moment decision also. Just after commissioning you went to the 1st Engineer Regiment in Fort Brown, Texas, but you only stayed there about four months. Was that a basic training unit?

A: Oh, no, it was troop duty. We stayed there until the war was declared, the First World War. I was assigned to a regiment. I was a company officer and we built and maintained roads around, made reconnaissances and surveys, all up and down the border.

Q: Working out of Fort Brown?

A: Out of Fort Brown.

Q: You were a platoon leader then?

A: I was a platoon leader.