

Q: Did Washington Barracks cease to exist then, the city took it over?

A: No, it became the National War College.

Q: Oh, I see. They forced the Engineers out—down to Humphreys.

A: But before that it had been entirely an engineering post. It was the home of the Engineers.

Fort Leavenworth, Again

Q: We got you accepted at Leavenworth. You said you kept asking Colonel Moore. Was he the branch chief or was he your assignment officer?

A: He was in charge of personnel, military personnel.

Q: For the branch?

A: Yes. He later became a major general. He was later G-4 of the Army.

Q: I'll have to look him up. I'm getting some of the names that I want to go back and maybe bring them up on later interviews.

A: I've forgotten his first name. I used to know him very well. He was always a great help when we were in France; he was attached to GHQ and he used to visit us sometimes at regimental headquarters.

Q: Oh, I see. You had known him before?

A: I had known him a little bit.

Q: Did you find that that helped, to know the people in branch throughout your early career?

A: I always do. I think the people—acquaintances—make a great deal of difference, and it's very important too.

Q: Yes, sir.

A: And find out their strong points and their deficiencies. Some of them you'd better stay away from. I've had some marvelous friends throughout my career. It's been a great help to me.

Q: You know that's one of the great things about the Army. You meet so many different people and make such strong friendships, I think, and always come back to them. That's one of the great advantages.

A: Well, I've got several that are close friends; and one of my best friends is John Leonard [John W. Leonard, US MA 1915], who retired as a lieutenant general down in San Antonio. He was a class ahead of me. We were in St. Mihiel together, and he was wounded when I was with him up on the Romagne-Cunel Line.

Q: We have a Colonel Rich Leonard from the Class of 1953 at the Military Academy. Is there any relation there?

A: Oh, no. I don't think so. He only has one son. He's a very brilliant boy. He's chief engineer for this big construction company. I don't know. They're a worldwide [company].

Q: Pomeroy?

A: No, two or three names.

Q: Pomeroy is out in California.

A: Two or three names hooked together—and he worked all over the world. He's the chief engineer, a little hunchback but he's just as bright as he can be, smart. It is Morrison-Knudsen.

Q: Well, when you went to Leavenworth, did you still only have the one son?

A: I had two sons. One was born at Belvoir, the younger one, that's George. William, Jr., was born just after I had left Leavenworth. He was born actually in Lexington, Missouri; but I was on the train going to the port of embarkation, and when I got off on the other end they notified me I had a son.

Q: Were you notified then through the Red Cross, as we are now?

A: Well, I don't know. This classmate of mine had gotten the word, but he was a good friend of my wife—[Major General Thomas D.] Finley it was—and he later became commander of the 89th Division during the Second World War.

Q: So William, Jr., was the only child you had when you went to Leavenworth.

A: Yes. No, it wasn't.

Q: Oh, that's right, George was born at Belvoir.

A: George was born at Belvoir, 1 January 1925.

Q: So you had the two.

A: He [George] almost died out there because he got pneumonia. My father-in-law, who was a doctor, actually saved his life. The medical people had neglected him. I couldn't get any service there. I called up the doctor in Leavenworth town to come out there and see him; and then the commandant at Leavenworth got word of it, and he wanted to know why I had to call someone from Leavenworth City. I said I couldn't get a doctor over at the hospital. They were all out playing golf, and this boy was dying. The old man raised hell; he was [Major General] Edward King. He's a tough old bastard. He just raised hell with the hospital after that. But my father-in-law came up and stayed with us for about a week and saved the boy's life, but he almost died.

Q: Was Leavenworth at that time a family post?

A: We all lived on the post. We lived in a converted barracks. One of the old "Beehive" was one of my barracks during the First World War, one of them. We had a battalion up there; no, we had two battalions in that line up along there.

Q: I've never been to Leavenworth, but I went to the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk. But when my wife went with her father to Leavenworth as a student, they lived in the Beehive. It's still there, I understand.

A: At that time we had converted some of the old barracks down—what's that road, it's just beyond the hospital? It's the road parallel to the one that goes by the Beehive; oh, you wouldn't know anyway. That's where we lived when we went to school.

Q: Did you have rigorous courses at that time?

A: Very; it was tough as can be. It was just one year. A little bit later they changed it to two years. It was hard. They had had a number of suicides before that. People got so overworked. I don't know if they've loosened it up any, but they took out the great competition. They stopped giving honor graduates and distinguished graduates. They just ranked you by how you graduated, and they didn't tell you particularly one way or the other. There used to be great competition being honor graduate and that was only the top, maybe, ten. And then the distinguished maybe were the next ten or twenty and the rest of it was just graduates. But they had a number of suicides after that, during that period before they decided to change it over and take the competition out. But we had a stiff course.

Q: It's still quite rigorous, but I don't think it would be that rigorous anymore.

A: Well, I studied hard. I never worked as hard in my life as I did at MIT because I had been out of school, you see, since my graduation. I hadn't been to school until I went to MIT in 1921. I guess for five years I

hadn't opened a book. And to go there and make up all that back time. We had a little more than a year. We went in the summer earlier, and we went to summer school until the regular term opened; then we took the regular course at civil engineering. In those days we only took civil engineering. I don't know whether later they expanded that or not. I'm sure some of them take it because I've got a grandson-in-law who took an electrical engineering course.

Q: We have a lot of nuclear engineers graduated from MIT now.

A: That's the toughest course I've ever had; and I worked harder at it but I took Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning off. I had to start working then right after dinner on Sunday, and I worked every night until 12 o'clock. I couldn't add. We had in the first period these earthwork and railroad construction problems, and you had to make a lot of calculations and add up figures; you'd get columns that would be 50 series of numbers in figuring out this earthwork. Why you'd have to add those up, I couldn't ever add the same thing twice. Just worked like hell all the time.

Q: They still have the tremendous amount of calculations, but they are teaching all the Engineer students to use computers. You mentioned that the competition had gotten so keen that they cut it out for a while when you were at Leavenworth?

A: Oh, that particular competition was still there. Everybody wanted to graduate high; but there was no rating and it didn't go on your record at Leavenworth, and that took out some of the urge for competition.

Q: Did they have academic reports at that time which made your records?

A: When you graduated you had a class standing in the class. You were listed in order, but they didn't give you any particular designation for it.

Q: So, probably the competition was still there but it was not as strong?

A: It wasn't as strong.

Q: Well, you mentioned that General Eisenhower graduated as the distinguished graduate.

A: No, he was the honor graduate. He was number one, if I remember correctly.

Q: And you mentioned having known him before—of course, you knew him at West Point—and you didn't think of him as that distinguished a student. Was he just a hard worker?

A: I don't know how he did it. Eisenhower's great forte was getting along with people. Now, why he would do so well—I never thought he was as good a soldier as some of the rest of them—particularly Bradley. I thought Bradley was the best of our active soldiers—other than Marshall. But Eisenhower's great forte was his ability to manage people and to compromise and to get along with all those different nations. So that was his forte and his strength, and he did it very well.

Q: A great diplomat?

A: Yes, he could be tough, but he did have the ability to make people like it.

Q: I'd like to discuss him some more, too, a little later on, and some of the other generals or other men that you have known. On Leavenworth again. When the Army school system comes up, one of the things that many people think is an important aspect of the Army system, in addition to what you learn and the people you meet, is an opportunity for those people who gain entry into the schools from hard work a chance to relax and reflect a little bit. Did you ever have any thought on that philosophy?

A: We didn't have much reflection on this. We had a committee which we'd formed. They were voluntary entirely when I was a student there. We had one or two infantrymen, an Air Corps man, and an artilleryman, and somebody else we had. We had one from all the branches and I was the Engineer. We got together once a week and discussed whatever we thought was coming up on the next marked problem. We would discuss the principles that that branch taught and try to get further in it. I didn't think the instruction was particularly good at Leavenworth except it was

hard and you had to make these written-no, they weren't written either—they were exercises, but there was the association there with these other people. For instance, in our committee, one of them was Westover [Oscar Westover, USMA 1906]. He was Air Force or the Air Corps representative. He was with us and I got to know him very well. There were several others; Fenton [Chauncey L. Fenton, USMA 1904] was later head of the Chemistry Department at West Point. He was my next door neighbor when I lived in the same building. Those were good people. "Petey" Uhl [Frederick Elwood Uhl, USMA 1911] later became a corps commander. He had been a TAC when I was a cadet. He had one of the corps area commands [Service Commands during World War II]. That was the type of people that we became acquainted with, and we would learn something about their branch relations. I thought the instruction at Benning was far superior to the instruction at Leavenworth.

Fort Benning

Q: Did you go to the Infantry course, the Advance Course, at Benning?

A: No, but I taught there.

Q: Right, you've taught there.

A: But I thought their instruction was the best of any place in the Army. They had a wonderful group of instructors and they all became successful. General [George C.] Marshall was the main motive for that. He was assistant commandant of the Infantry School in those days, and he made the Infantry School. And he had all these wonderful people with him. He inspired, he inspired everybody. You did your best to work had.

Q: That was your assignment immediately after Leavenworth. You went to the Infantry School.

A: Yes, I didn't want to go, I wanted to do something else. I'd gotten tired of teaching school. I enjoyed it down there. It was all right, and I made some very good friends there while at Benning.