

A: I don't remember offhand what we were doing except that there was a good-sized worldwide construction program under way. There was still work going on in Morocco. There was a lot of work still going on in Korea. We had activities in the Philippines and all through the Pacific, in Okinawa and Japan, but I would have to cogitate to remember which specific projects were in the forefront during that six months in the summer of 1956.

I was also back again in the permafrost business: and snow, ice, and permafrost in my positions in OCE. I felt that I was seeing an old friend. We were trying to build a facility up at Dartmouth in Hanover to house the combined research staff. That finished up much later [1963].

Q: Since it overlapped, I thought we might discuss your involvement in the space program as a general question covering both your assignments as deputy chief and Chief. But perhaps you'd like to touch on your assignment as commander of the Engineer School at Fort Belvoir first.

A: It might be better to talk about Belvoir now, including the selection as Chief, and get it out of the way, and then we can go back.

I had completed over four years in the Chief's office as assistant chief for military construction and deputy for construction. That was a considerable period and, frankly, I was poohed out. It was a pretty drastic life, and going to Fort Belvoir from OCE was my idea of going to heaven. You weren't too far away from the action and you lived in beautiful Quarters One. It was fun going back to the academic world and supervising the Engineer School, and I looked forward to it. As far as I was concerned, that was to be my last assignment. I was going to go to Fort Belvoir, and then when the time came I was going to retire. In '61 I had 32 years' service, which was not too far from the routine retirement time. After a couple of years at Belvoir I'd be ready to retire and be real pleased with life. It was fun getting back to being with troops and with the school and trying to stir some things up, but it was a relatively simple life. The pressures were manageable, and I enjoyed it. I had a good staff.

One of the things that happened while I was there was the inauguration of President Jack Kennedy. That was a little out of the ordinary and did create some tensions. In the first place, we were instructed, about a month before the inauguration, that it was to be our responsibility to remove the heavy snow load on the inauguration parade route in D.C. if there was any at the time of the inauguration. That was reasonable, and the chief of staff, [Colonel] Harry Fisher, came in and said, "I presume in accordance with your normal instructions we'll assign this to the group." I said that if that's what he recommended it sounded fine to me. "Pass it on to the group. They'll be able to carry it out." I did not think too much about the task and it didn't look like it was going to snow.

But about three days before the inauguration Harry Fisher came in and said he just was informing me that the group was sending a lot of equipment to Washington. I wanted to know why and he reminded me of the snow mission. "But it's not going to snow," I said. He said, "General, when you came down here you told me you wanted our headquarters to assign missions to units and stand back and let them go--watch them, try to fill their requirements, and goose them a little, but it was their job. Do you want to change now?" I said, "No, Harry, you're right. I'm sorry. Leave them alone." They moved that equipment up there and the drivers returned to Belvoir.

The day before the inauguration, Secretary of the Army Brucker's farewell party was scheduled at Fort Myer.¹⁰⁷ I had known him pretty well as deputy, so Mrs. Wilson and I drove up in our car to the officers' club. Along about three-thirty or so, it started to snow. I suggested to Jeanne that we leave a little bit early so that we beat the Pentagon traffic and get down through that mixmaster on 95 and beat the traffic to Belvoir. However, the Pentagon was smarter than I and turned their workers loose early, and by the time we got to the mixmaster it was a pretty slow process. We got home about nine-thirty or ten o'clock and we'd left up there about three-thirty or quarter of four. Each time we had to stop on a hill we wondered if the car could get going again, and we

worried about the car getting overheated. Every now and then I'd look across on the northbound lanes and see a truckload of soldiers going by and I thought, "Wasn't I smart not to interfere with the group commander!" We got home pretty late and barely had gas left. I checked up and found out the group units were in D.C. and they were moving snow. The next morning at the crack of dawn I went up there and inspected downtown Washington. It was just remarkable. The troops had cleaned those streets to where there wasn't anything to get anybody's feet wet. So I drove back to Belvoir and got Jeanne and we came up to watch the inauguration in a hotel window. It just went back to the good old command system--give a man a job and leave him alone.

Well, that was one of the unusual things at Belvoir. There were not too many more that I can think of offhand. It was a real fine life. My family loved it. We had three of our kids home. The fourth one had just graduated from the military academy in June of '60. That was about where things were rocking along when suddenly I was directed to come into D.C. and be interviewed. I wondered what was going on and it didn't take long to find out. I was sent to discuss some things with Senator Kerr, and then sent to the White House to discuss some things with President Kennedy.108

Q: What did they ask you about?

A: They wanted to know what my attitudes were on various activities affecting the Corps.

Q: Do you remember what specific things they were interested in at that time? Were they the usual questions?

A: I don't know whether they were usual or not. Senator Kerr was very interested in knowing the extent to which I had been observant of the development of the Arkansas River and what I knew about it, whether I thought it was a good project and so on, whether I thought we could carry out our commitments. I was very easily able to satisfy him on that--because I did think so. I'd been working on it off and on as deputy and had fairly frequently visited the valley and inspected the