

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

construction. I also told him about arranging to visit the Little Rock and Tulsa Districts when I was District Engineer in St. Paul. This impressed him.

Then I went to the White House. Jack Kennedy sat down and said, "Do you mind if I keep working on a speech? I must give it in 30 minutes." I said I didn't mind. So all the time that he was talking to me, the door would open and they'd bring in another sheet of paper, and he'd scratch it up and send it back. But he was very fine to talk with and he asked me general questions. He said, "Now, I realize that in your position you will get a lot of political pressures on you." I said, "There will be pressures applied, there's no question."

Well, he said, "I want you to know that you aren't going to get any pressures from me, and if you get any pressures from people who work for me that you don't think you ought to comply with or that you think you can't defend against, I want you to call me on the phone and tell me. I don't want any political pressures applied to you. Now, I want YOU to do what you think is right, but I also want instant response when I ask for something, whether it's favorable or unfavorable." I said, "Yes, sir, that's fine." And he said, "I want you to have a phone that connects with the White House for awhile, and we'll see." At that point I was pretty certain I would be the next Chief of Engineers, so I went home and told my wife not to tell a soul and just keep right on living like we have been living. And that's what we did.

Q: It sounded like he was talking to you as if you were already the next Chief of Engineers.

A: In essence he was. As a matter of interest, there were a couple of times that I got calls on that phone. Not too often, but the phone rang a couple of times, and I'd pick up the phone with trepidation and he'd say, "This is Jack." One of his calls was about a construction contract just about to be let for construction of a missile complex in upper New York State. He didn't understand why I had to turn to the West Coast for a contractor to build a missile complex in New York State. I said, "Well, sir, we don't have to, but

we do have to take competitive bids and we are attempting to be sure that we have well-qualified contractors by screening them in advance and deciding who will be permitted to submit bids. We have procured good contractors that way. In this particular case it might interest you to know that the contractor that's the sponsor for the combine to build this job is headquartered in New York City, although some of the combine are from the West Coast." "Well," he said, "I don't know why I'm bothering you then." I said, "You're not bothering me, sir, but I would have had to tell you the same thing even if the sponsor was from San Francisco." And he said, "I can understand that. I appreciate it. Thank you very much." That ended the discussion. It was one of the complexes we had the most trouble with thereafter. The contractor himself was a little bull-headed and wouldn't take any of our suggestions, and we could not get the Air Force to modify their requirements until many dollars had gone down the drain.

Q: You said earlier in another interview that some people came to you from the Hill and industry and urged you not to be overlooked in the selection of the next Chief of Engineers.

A: They wanted to know whether they could work for my selection.

Q: Do you remember who they were?

A: At this late time I had better not try and point them out--17 years is a long time to be certain of details--but there were some people from the Hill who said I was their candidate. And there were people in industry.

Q: Why were you their candidate?

A: I suppose because I had lived in their part of the world, and they had known me and worked with me as opposed to somebody that had come from someplace else.

Q: In industry, do you mean contractors?

A: Yes. there were some contractors or people in the AE profession, people who were interested in

projects of the kind we handled. I said, "No, I'm not looking for the job and I don't want anybody trying to sell me for the job."

Q: Did they follow your wishes?

A: I don't know. As far as I know they did. I never had any indication otherwise. I knew who was running, and they were running hard. There was Joe Potter<sup>409</sup> and Bob Fleming<sup>110</sup> and Bill Carter and I don't know who else, but those in particular.

Q: And they were all from within?

A: They were all right around my time. Bill Carter was a year after me and Joe Potter and Bob Fleming a year before. They were all USMA a year either side of me. I knew Joe Potter and Bob Fleming were really stirring up things. Bob Fleming had the flood fights up in New England and made a big name for himself in that part of the world. There were a lot of senators from up there. Joe Potter had been the Mississippi River Commission chairman and in the Omaha area and had a big string of supporters. Bill Carter was well known on the Hill and in industry and was serving as governor of the Canal Zone. I thought it was a cinch that I wasn't going to get it. I sure wasn't going to run for it anyway.

Four years later I found out more about how the Chief of Engineers is selected when I sat on the Army board to select my successor, Bill Cassidy.<sup>111</sup> How much influence politics is going to have on it, I didn't know and I still don't know. I guess it depends in each case on the situation. I do know that when Speck Wheeler was first planning to retire, the Army board didn't select Lew Pick to be one of the three recommendations. President Truman sent it back to the Army and said, "Where's Pick? Put him on the list and I'll accept it." So Speck Wheeler was talked into serving another year because everyone figured that Truman would get defeated in the next election. And sure enough Truman didn't get defeated. So Wheeler went ahead and retired and Pick became Chief of Engineers. I don't know, I wasn't on the board. I guess that was a fait accompli. But I do know that the Army board that

selected three names to recommend as my successor had Bill Cassidy as number one on the list.

Is there any more on that era that we're looking for?

Q: From the selection? No, I think that's it.

A: Now, where are we now? We were going to talk about the missile program.

Q: Two major programs that were important during your term as deputy and Chief were CEBMCO [Corps of Engineers Ballistic Missile Construction Office] and the space program, including the facilities at Cape Canaveral and Houston. You have discussed these programs before, but I would be particularly interested in your evaluation of the Corps' contributions to these programs and the biggest engineering challenges that were involved, as well as anything else of significance that occurs to you.

A: Okay. Well you might say I was lucky to have been in the Mobile District when we got introduced to that business back in the 1950s era with von Braun. So I did have a start knowing something about it. First, as assistant chief for military construction I became involved again in some work we were doing in the line of missile support for both the Army and Air Force. Most of my period as deputy chief was wrapped closely around the missile program, particularly for the Air Force. And during my term as Chief, as the Air Force programs began to reach completion, our emphasis on space construction shifted to support of the NASA programs.

They were tremendous. They raised more than what YOU could call challenges. They were pretty rugged. They had the usual urgency, the necessity to get things done. There was always in the background the obvious feeling on the part of many people in the Air Force and NASA, why did they have to fool with this bunch of Engineers from the Army, why couldn't they be doing all this themselves? It's a good question, but it had been set up all along in the military that we shouldn't duplicate. We would have a strong organization and it would support both the Army and Air Force programs.