

LEGERDEMAIN

Advertising Department of the Shell Oil Company and Lewis was a distinguished artist whose painting "The Conqueror" from the Metropolitan Museum was at that time being displayed in an art card series on every New York Subway train. All of this was duly mentioned in the Mitchell Field Review.

Of all the Camouflage Training materials originating with the First Air Force Engineers, the most popular and effective was the booklet entitled "100 Camouflage Questions and Answers". During February 1941 and Williams proved and polished the material for publication. The work was still in progress in late March when Lt. Abel was transferred to the newly formed 70th Engineer Aviation Camouflage Detachment at Richmond.

In the last of April, Major Fox formally relinquished the post of Camouflage Officer to assume his new assignment to the Executive Section. First Lieutenant William F. Debnatel, just returned from the Field Officers' Course at the Engineers School, assumed the Camouflage position of his First projects was the completion of the "100 Camouflage Questions and Answers". Each question and answer was illustrated by the 70th Engineer artist group. The first edition appeared early in June. Since then, 4,000 copies of this publication have been distributed upon request.

The advent of Debnatel as Camouflage Officer, coinciding with the publication of Army Air Forces Training Standard 40-1, marks a significant change in policy. This Training Standard stated in part that every officer and enlisted man within the Army Air Forces would be trained in camouflage. Its provisions removed any lingering doubt in the minds of commanding officers of units who placed the whole matter squarely upon the shoulders of the First Air Force. Full use was made of the Central Camouflage School for training First Air Force commissioned officers. A heavy load was developed for quotas in the Officers' Camouflage Course at Fort Belvoir for officers of all branches of the Air Force. Headquarters Army Air Forces was taking steps to provide an additional Officers' Camouflage course elsewhere in the eastern coastal United States area. From this time on, the Camouflage Sub-section would work hand in glove with 4-1.

In May, Sergeant Matthew Warner and Technician 4th Grade Alvin F. Drake departed and obtained transfer to field duty with the new 608th Engineer Air Force Headquarters Company. A portion of the resulting gap was filled by the transfer of Private Albert Thomas from the day of classified runner and general utility man to dispatcher in the Camouflage Sub-section. The remainder of the gap was closed by a recent inductee, Private Samuel Dehart.



CAPT. HARRY E. WILLIAMS



SGT. FREDERICK A. K. SMITH

Chapter 12

"FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL"

"In a fatherly mood of my I govern each state and sect....
....From every kind of war resistance I expect...."

"The Spirit" Art II
William Somerset Maugham

Much of the content of the foregoing paper treats solely of the Office of the Engineer. It must be borne in mind, however, that that Office was never an independent agency. As a Staff Office of Headquarters, First Air Force, the Engineer worked only in service to the Commanding General. Every project of importance, every activity that was desirable in this area had passing only to the satisfaction of the needs of the Command. The very internal organization of the Engineer Section reflected the organization of the General Staff to the Headquarters. In matters of Operations and Engineer Troop Training, the duties of the Engineer were extensions of A-1 and A-3 functions. The Camouflage Section, in operating ROT schools and providing instruction teams, directly served the training needs of the Command. The earliest Engineer project, the Airport Survey, found the fullest expression of usefulness in aiding the planning of stations for the Command. The Construction Sub-Section worked in closest coordination with the A-4 of the General Staff. In fact, Construction's sole objective was the supply of facilities for the Command.

From the location of the Northwest Air District under Major General James E. Chaney, and continuing under his successors, Major Generalis Arnold S. Kraghardt, Herbert A. Dargue and William Bradley, and also more under General Chaney, through the entire growth of the First Air Force, the relationship was working. Colonel Fisher's great preoccupation with personnel during the formative days of his section was also consistently at the objective of organizing a team that would never lose sight of the needs of the General it served. His one great fear in connection with his office personnel was that some ill-considered act on the part of someone in the section might defeat a purpose of the First Air Force or reflect discredit on his Commanding General. No effort could be too great, no degree of vigilance too exacting, if it served the needs of the General.

Until the arrival of Major General Ralph Payne in the Spring of 1943, the section as a whole had little personal contact with the Commanding General and their Chiefs of Staff. Personal contacts were, for the most part, limited to those of the Engineer himself with the Chief of Staff and the General, and of the Assistant Engineers with the officers of the General Staff Sections. With the coming of General Payne, there was a marked increase of direct personal contact between the section and the General. In order to

foster better acquaintance throughout the entire Headquarters, General Payne initiated a series of frequent social gatherings at which all officers of the General and Special Staff Sections met freely. Moreover, he took a keen personal interest in construction details for troop housing and recreational facilities and frequently called Engineers officers into consultation to see what and where of improving these details.

He was extremely cautious of the value of publicity in obtaining widespread public support of the needs of his Command. In these matters the Engineer Section was able to be of direct service. Captain DeWester of the Camouflage Section was instrumental in employing the Engineer Headquarters Company in camouflage demonstrations and equipment exhibitions sponsored by the General. Captain Stirling, a former newspaperman and at times to General Payne, maintained extensive close liaison with the Engineer Section during these activities.

General Payne was succeeded in command of the First Air Force by Major General Frank O'H. Hunter, the present commander. General Hunter had continued the predecessor's frequent "get-togethers" practices and strongly encouraged direct personal relations within his entire Command. Moreover, as Commanding General of the 5th Fighter Command, General Hunter had received a most favorable impression of Engineer troops. This gave him a keen personal interest in the building of aviation Engineers as long as such training received a recognition of the First Air Force.

In other regards General Hunter found himself, by force of circumstances, in very close relation to the Engineers. Long Air Force, at the end of 1943, reviews its construction policies, as was fully concerned in an earlier chapter. Thereafter, the General had personally to supervise all proposed construction. Indeed, he had to sign all papers seeking new construction. Accordingly, close consultation with the General has been a necessary preliminary to such actions since taken in the section. Under the policies which sought to curtail new construction, higher Headquarters recently encouraged the accomplishment of emergency projects by the few Engineer troops remaining to the First Air Force. These projects have required further close contact with the General and have seen the work of the Engineer more intimately than ever "for the Commanding General".



BLACK GENERAL FRANK O'DONOGHUE

BLACK GENERAL SALVO BROS



TROOPS

"Troops are always on the side of the big battalions."
 The De Jagers, letter to her daughter.

It was inevitable at the time of the formation of the Section that the Corps of Engineers would be gathered into the fold of the Air Force organization. The primary mission of the Engineers, which was to assist the other combat arms, was essential the inclusion of that arm as an integral component of the larger Air Force organization. The Engineer Section during the late spring of 1941 had, as we have seen, an effective machinery for supervision and administration of troops. In, at this time, the First Air Force was presented with the first of its Engineer Regiments. This was the 1st Engineer Regiment (Citation).

The 1st Engineers had had a long and rather checkered history dating back to World War I, as a General Service Regiment with the Ground Forces. Indeed, until the assignment of the 1st Engineer Regiment to the Army Air Forces, all Engineer units were Ground Force organizations. Throughout 1941 this Regiment had been assigned to the Air Force at Langley Field, more or less as a general utility organization for engineering tasks. On May 27, 1941, the 1st Engineer Regiment (Citation) was assigned to the First Air Force and attached to the Second Bombardment Wing for training. This transferred the unit directly to the control of the Section. The base was moved to Langley Field.

This Regiment was the first of its kind in the United States Army and would be for some months to come the parent Regiment of all future Engineer citation units. By the fall of 1941 ten battalions were trained, equipped, and sent overseas.

The remainder of the 1st was moved to the new air base at Hingham early in 1942 and returned to full strength. The significance of the 1st Engineers lies in the fact that it blazed the path for all future citation Engineers. The Engineer Section is learning its own role in the program played by small part in the activities of the unit itself. Because of its singularity, as the only Engineer unit in the midst of air force units, its use and training were somewhat diversified and the use and training were somewhat diversified and the use and training were somewhat diversified. There was no set method, no set method, no set method. It was to give Major Fisher in this training. He advised it to be as much a training for himself as for the unit. Careful note was taken of every action of the unit's complete assessment was made of the value of any type of citation assignment. It was these evaluations which would form the basis to be followed in all future citation Engineer training.

Approximately 2 months after the assignment of the 1st Engineers to the First Air Force the First Engineer Citation Unit was activated as such for the specific and wide purpose of serving the Army Air Forces now being formed. This was the 1st Engineer Citation (Citation) activated at Maxwell Field 4 July 1941, under Captain Frank E. Fisher, O. S. A few months earlier, arrangements had been made to activate this unit as the 1st Engineer Company (Citation). However, late in May the decision was altered, and the 1st Engineer became a Battalion. There was no opportunity during this early period for these units to receive the intensive specialized training of the kind available to later organizations which were then being given the edge of the First Air Force. There were two reasons for this. The country was not yet at war and civilian industry was not yet mobilized to assist in the training of Engineer Specialists. In addition, the Army had not yet, as stated objectives to assist them, a rather plaintive letter from Captain Fisher on 4 August 1941, eloquently stressed the training liaison between industry and the Army Air Forces.

"This report is the reason that I have, most of the officers have been fortunate enough to see this machine in operation because a few of them were belatedly in the well-known Army Engineer Index . . . Mr. Lovell of



MAJ. JOHN A. WILSON

TROOPS

The American-British Supply was here yesterday to construct a school in asphalt construction for us and Mr. Cheppell of the Portland Cement Association is here today conducting a school in soil-cement construction. . . . the equipment is coming from time to time. They have concrete mixers, and a carry-all scrapers arrived. He first plans to go to look on very busy. He are attempting to get on a 11 possible selling lists for all types of technical publications, and these have been arriving very satisfactorily.

MAJOR G. F. FORD
Captain, U. S. A.
Chief Engineer (Civilian)
Commanding.

The struggle of the 800th Engineer would lead to a vast network of Engineer schools, some within the Army, and others with supervising Engineer equipment firms which not only would train personnel but would supply, from their own ranks, selected specialists. During August and September, the Engineer Section took every effort to supply the 800th with every type of material and publication to be used for instruction in their essential mission. Almost every letter begins with the words 'transmitted herewith are the following publications', followed by a list of never fewer than 7 and in some cases as many as 10.

On September 17th, 1941, this unit was alerted for shipment overseas. A detachment of 17 which had been transferred to St. John, Newfoundland, for work on air bases, remained and they were replaced by similar personnel from a recent activation. By the first of October the unit had reached California and arrived in the Philippines in November. It was this unit that became one of the active fighting units in the campaign of Iloilo and Cebu. Those who survived are now prisoners of war of the Japanese Government. It was by this unit that Sergeant Luchini was assigned from the Engineer Section. It is also the first hostile based Engineer aviation unit.

The detachment of the 800th was returned from St. John, Newfoundland, the first of December, and became the nucleus for the next Engineer aviation organization of the First Air Force, and was designated the 800th Engineer Battalion (Civil) on the 17th of November. The cadre for the 800th also included non-commissioned officers from the 41st Engineer Regiment. The activation of this unit brought things to a standstill until after the declaration of war.

In January 1942 the Commanding General, First Air Force, received a letter from Headquarters United Command, Bolling Field.

"Forward plans for the augmentation of Engineer services with the Air Force Command General provide for the activation prior to February 1942, of the following units at stations under your control:

a. Langley Field, Virginia.

81st Eng Bn (Am.) (Reg)
817th Eng Bn (Am.) (Reg)
819th Eng Bn (Am.) (Reg)

(Balance Civil)

In their case, a round sheet of them by the end of 1942. All the units of that period were "standard" battalions, consisting of a battalion headquarters, a headquarters and service company, and 3 letter companies. The battalion is the usual field operating unit. It is a balanced organization capable of executing complete construction of an airbase, working simultaneously in all phases of construction. Each company had maintenance work moving and other heavy construction equipment. A detail which distinguished Aviation Engineers from all others is work with transportable steel landing mat. This versatile material is being used in aircraft hangars as a working surface over all kinds of sub-grade prepared with whatever substance may be at hand.

In the Engineer units were activated through the Spring of 1942, Colonel Fisher was a Major Watson served the administrative load.



LIEUT. CHARLES B. HAZEN

TROOPS

In the late spring, Major Weisberg left the Section and Colonel Fisher, always with an eye to the main chance, selected Major D. J. Hughes to organize a Troops sub-section which would supervise personnel procurement, operational training, and supply matters for the units. The completion of this sub-section was not a simple task even. The pressure of events in 1942 through the activation of Engineer battalions with 40 full complement. It was under Major Hughes that Standard Operating Procedures were set up and intensive monthly inspections made of all units. The Air Engineer, Headquarters, Army Air Force, displayed a keen interest in the development and training of all units, and he inspected many of them personally. This interest of the Air Engineer, General E. C. Haffrey, was stimulated by the activation in the summer of 1942 of the First of the Airborne Engineer Aviation Battalions. Two more others would follow within the year and more would be in active service, by year's end.

For some time the Chief of Engineers and equipment manufacturers had been working to develop designs of bulldozers, graders, and carry-all small enough to be carried in planes and gliders. Their ultimate goal was to produce heavy units capable of complete construction missions and readily transportable by air. By mid summer equipment design had passed the experimental stage. In August 12, 1942, the 1st Provisional Engineer Battalion (Detachment/Alphama) was constituted within the First Air Force, specifically at MacDowell Field, and September 1, 1942, the 27th Airborne Engineer Battalion (Det.) was activated with

Major N. G. Woodbury commanding. It was to consist of one Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Company and 3 construction companies, each with somewhat fewer men than the latter named units of "Wendell" battalions. Its mission was much the same as that of the heavier battalions within the limitations of its distinctive equipment.

The same summer saw the activation of Engineer Air Force Headquarters Companies which were in their way as revolutionary as the Airborne Battalions. The Air Force Headquarters Company is composed of a headquarters, engineering, maintenance, and camouflage platoons. It was intended that such a company would be stationed at the Headquarters of an Air Force to give immediate assistance in any basic engineering problem for necessary drafting, design, surveying, planning and production and to furnish camouflage assistance in connection with the activities of the Engineer Aviation Battalions and Engineers under the Air Force Commander.

The first of these companies within the First Air Force was the 10th, activated 10 April, 1942, at Mitchell Field, N.Y. This was followed by activation of the 20th Engineers also at Mitchell Field and the 30th 10 November 1942. The latter unit was transferred from the First Air Force 3 weeks after activation to the Third Air Force at Orlando, Fla. The 20th Engineers activated early in 1942 completed the list. These units were, because of their diverse and inclusive activities and their proximity to headquarters, invaluable to the Engineer. They conducted land surveys, produced maps, conducted soils studies, designed equipment, and were involved in the construction battalions by placing steel mat on airframes. They also became pioneers in the First Air Force, and served to extend the functions of the camouflage sub-section in the office of the Engineer. The 10th Engineers, along with the Headquarters Companies would receive an overseas assignment; the 20th and 30th would be inactivated in November 1942 and January 1943, respectively.

The camouflage battalions were activated. Neither of them would go overseas, but for their service as units they would receive materially in the camouflage totaling of the whole First Air Force.

Also born were the Engineer Fire Fighting Platoons, organized for service at airbases overseas, and the utility detachments intended for airbase maintenance work in foreign theaters.

Major Hughes slowly acquired his office assistants, including Captain John Wilson, and Lieutenants Adkins, Ford, Thomas, and Nelson.



MAJ. ROBERT H. WILSON

TROOPS

The early enlisted assistants included Sergeant Briswell and Corporal Parks. The initial duty was field inspection of the Engineer units. These inspections looked into the strength of a unit, the sufficiency of its supply and equipment, and the state of training. The subject of strength was not concerned solely with numbers but with physical condition, mental capabilities, and specialized qualifications of the personnel as well. Particular attention was paid to the fitness of officers for their assigned duties. Under "supply" the inspectors carefully noted what equipment and supplies were lacking, whether of Engineer supply or that of the zone and services. Corrective action was indicated to fill all shortages. Under "state of training", they reviewed every phase of prescribed training from basic military subjects to advanced technical specialist training. As the units passed from basic to operational training, the report was enlarged to dwell on these new phases. The jobs assigned to units for this training were in general Engineering projects needed by the First Air Force.

Most of the unit training was conducted at Hestover and Bradley Fields, and at Richmond Air Base. To a lesser extent the bases at Denver, Boise, and Langley Field, entered the picture. Frequently officers went in pairs on scheduled inspection trips to these places. The close personal contacts established in these periods often stimulated a continuing interest in the units long after their departures. Further attention of interest was derived from personal acquaintance of the entire Engineer Section with its former members who were transferred from time to time into the units. The Engineer Section received such knowledge from units overseas searching for sections of men of Hestover, Bradley, Richmond, or Boise. The news brought into the section early in 1945 by Lt. Col. Trumble from the First Air Force of the deaths of two First World War aviators at Hill-Dale or Boise was like a letter from an old and trusted friend.

Inspections were only a single phase of operations and supply. The Engineer had long been charged with expediting the flow of Engineer property organically assigned to units under the First Air Force, both Air Force and zone and services. Now, with the ending of Engineer units, there would be need for a flow of Engineer items, and a steady flow of property from other branches to Engineer organizations. It fell to Captain Brown, whose duties in connection with aircrafts were added to a flow, to manage this phase of Major Trumble's activities. He also administered funds, help for the section and the field units. These funds were welfare, maintenance funds, mess/canteen funds, housing funds. However, the Supply group was traditionally charged with the management of the Section's office building, and the accountability for the property it contains. Working

along with the help of Sergeant Conway and Inspector Battaglia, Captain Brown had an officer assistant until the advent of Lt. Ralph Maxwell at the end of 1944. The unit estimation program was in full flood at this time. There was still Major and Major. The arrival of Lt. Maxwell allowed time for either Captain Vernon or Maxwell to be present on the inspection trips. As these were concerned with supply to a great degree, the presence of a Supply assistant permitted the operations inspector to devote increased attention to unit training problems. Supply personnel derived from the trips added appreciation of the problems of the units. When Captain Vernon withdrew from the section in November 1945, Lieutenant Conway had already entered the section as an additional assistant, and was "learning the business". Lieutenant Maxwell who succeeded to Captain Vernon's position, with Conway as his right hand man, Sergeant Villars, another enlisted assistant in Supply, has the longest record of service in that group of any enlisted assistant. In fact, Sergeant Villars rejected the opportunity of honorable discharge from the Army offered to him over 10 years of age in order to remain. In connection with the Intelligence function of the Supply Section, Brown, Conway, and Squintin, kept records and Intelligence reports, R's, W's, and all other military publications in the reference library with attention care. Since November, Maxwell has been particularly busy with the classification of equipment for deactivated units, and the additional supply of the new installations recently activated for training.



LIEUT. RALPH W. MAXWELL

TROOPS

The 21, 22 and 24 duties of the Troops, Operations and Supply having been covered, the 23 aspect of the job-section remains to be discussed. Personnel in and large in the duties of the section. Working in close coordination with the Personnel Section of Headquarters First Air Force and with the office of the Air Engineer, the Division handled the needs of the field units. Schools were sought for specialized training of Engineer troops - (1) homecoming schools for bases and bases; Ordnance schools for security personnel; Medical schools for unit gas officers and cooks; Motor schools for truck-drivers; general and specialized schools for officer personnel. Just as every type of school available to the Engineer soldier, military or non-military, with the strict exception of those where were obtained and processed by Operations. In one case some officers and enlisted men in the airborne units desired parachute training. Through division contact a quota was obtained from the Infantry Paratroop School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The school itself had not however been contacted from Engineer aviation units to share their training, nevertheless the school was brought to such a successful conclusion that long after the school had closed the Infantry School kept quotas open. The "GI" duty in Operations fell mainly to Captain John A. Wilson after his arrival in the summer of 1942. The burden of these duties was transferred to Lt. Sumner upon Wilson's departure in early spring of 1943.

The processing of Officer Candidates to Fort Belvoir was also a portion of the job-section's work. All applications came through channels to the section and a final board within the section reviewed the papers to select candidates. The section also cooperated with the First Air Force Boards for other GI schools in recommending personnel fit to attend.

Along with these duties came something new: the special induction program. The special list nature of Engineer aviation duties furnished the impetus, logically, if a specialist was needed for a certain type of duty and certain numbers of specialists in that particular type of work were about to be depleted, there seemed to be no reason why the Engineer Section shouldn't need them from the line and have them in directly. Numerous institutions were approached and requested to recommend men facing induction whose qualifications would fit them for assignment in some phase of Engineer aviation duty. In this manner, colleges, trade schools, corporations, labor unions, etc., as we have seen, even art colleges, furthered the effort to obtain qualified personnel. A letter to the Adjutant General's Department, requesting the assignment of the recommended individual, completed each transaction. The program was a favored success of Colonel Finzer, began while Lieutenant Dallas was in charge of school quotas and personnel. Early in 1943, the schools and special induction program were taken over by Lieutenant Farrell, and under his capable hand flourished in the summer. In September, after Lieut-



CAPT. ROBERT J. TIMMON

LIEUT. ROBERT F. FARRELL



TROOPS

When Smith had exchanged views with Lieutenant Williams, the program was carried rapidly to the ratings of the highest quality. Smith's experience qualified in any weekly specialty must have been typical conditions. The program would be limited to those possessing "white powder in the bag" air power. This was not only being to Engineer units - maintenance special location would be only for those having experience concentrated on airplanes and support facilities. The program was simple. It is supposed, the need for specialists was met, the program has fulfilled its purpose.

Lieutenant Phillip Douglas from the Operations Sub-Section in May - taking with him Lieutenant Brinkley, then a joint leader of the section. Sergeant Farnsworth to Brinkley's post, serving Farnsworth as a pilot or two. Lt. Jones had reported, during his flight to the lower side of Smith's section, under the direction of Lieutenant Wilson. Their "status of training" reports, given place not only on the walls of the section itself, but also on the walls of the Chief of Staff and the Chief of the First Air Force. Lieutenant Wilson was removed from his position because he had failed on Operations to succeed Lieutenant Douglas. This assignment continued until the first of September 1941, when Lt. Farnsworth was made Executive, and Major Farnsworth control of Operations. The latter's work in this position had hardly begun before he received orders for an overseas assignment, and he departed on 12 November, leaving Farnsworth, now a Captain, in charge. Douglas, himself, reported shortly thereafter. Scheduled to fill this gap, Lieutenant Douglas was assigned from the 10th. The Sub-

Section, from the 10th of December until 1st January, when Lieutenant Colonel Farnsworth arrived, was being operating with one Lt. Lieutenant (Wilson) and two 2nd Lieutenants (Williams and Douglas). During this period, Douglas, now Lieutenant Colonel, kept a weather eye on all transactions from his Executive position.

With the arrival of Lieutenant Colonel Farnsworth, the period of adjustment of Engineer units, began once like before, and in full swing. Farnsworth began to be more busy at giving orders. While on the staff of Lieutenant Colonel were equally willing to complete administrative processes by having one or two detached parties. Only Officer Douglas himself remained popular, and as this period with it passed, things of starting, the units themselves cooperated heartily. The charts on the walls began to decrease in size and in number, starting, if reports were not sufficiently were of it, the details of an one. Inspection reports revealed by management and even the First Air Force Section Staff Training Center - the 4th Section of First Air Force Engineering, was to become a replacement post.

Lieutenant Colonel Brinkley departed to assume the post of Commanding Officer of the 10th and then to Navy, and the Operations Section reverted to Wilson, Williams, and Douglas again. The Supply Section remained as it had been when Captain Farnsworth had left, with Maxwell and Gentry still holding the fort. Farnsworth had gone overseas in January, Brinkley had been selected for high-level Officer Candidate School in April. Farnsworth Douglas assumed his duties.



1/SGT. PHILIP N. JAMES

The image shows the front cover of a spiral-bound notebook. The cover is a light cream or off-white color. On the left side, there is a dark red spiral binding. In the lower right quadrant, there is a large, rounded rectangular graphic element. This element consists of a blue background with a black, torn-edge rectangular shape in the center. The words "The Engineers" are written in a white, elegant cursive script across the black shape. The word "The" is on the top line, and "Engineers" is on the bottom line, both starting from the left side of the black shape.

*The
Engineers*



Colonel Harry E. Fisher

Colonel Harry E. Fisher, U.S., the original Engineer of the First Air Force, is a native of Martinsburg, Pa. After taking a degree in Architectural Engineering at Pennsylvania State College, he started his military career. He was graduated from the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York in 1908. His first duty assignment as a 2nd Lieutenant of Engineers was as a student officer at The Engineer School, Fort Belvoir, Va. Troop duty saw him with the 21st, 1st and 2nd Engineer Regiments. Scheduled in between these assignments was a scholastic assignment to Pennsylvania Polytechnic Institute where he received the degree of Civil Engineer. An expert rifleman, Lieutenant Fisher participated on The Engineer Rifle Team in the National Rifle Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio in 1922. Next year he was a member of the 21st Engineer Rifle Team which won the championship of the 1st Division. Thereafter he served successively as Secretary-Treasurer of the Alaska Road Commission, 2nd Instructor of the 11th Engineer Regiment (Idaho, N.C.), and Secretary of the Ohio River Board in the office of The U.S. District Engineer at Pittsburgh. In 1924, then a Captain, he was called to Washington, D.C. for rivers and harbors duty in the office of The Chief of Engineers. The following year, Captain Fisher assisted in the organization of a new Engineer District of Mineral Wells, Texas. Another tour of troop duty found Captain Fisher at Fort Logan, Colorado, first with The 2nd Engineer Regiment and later with The 12th. In addition to regular troop duties with these organizations, he was also The Post Adjutant at Fort Logan. In September 1940, at that time a Major, he was ordered to Mitchell Field, New York as Air Base Engineer. When the First Air Force was organized a few months later, Major Fisher was designated as Engineer on the Headquarters Staff. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in November 1941 and to Colonel in May 1942. In August 1942 Colonel Fisher was again ordered to Washington, D.C. where he succeeded Brigadier General Deussen as Chief of the Buildings and Grounds Section, Headquarters Army Air Forces.



Colonel Manuel J. Asensio

Colonel Manuel J. Asensio, successor to Colonel R. E. Fisher as Engineer of the First Air Force, was born in Highland Falls New York, of Spanish ancestry. Born into a military family, (his father taught Spanish at West Point), he attended the United States Military Academy and graduated in 1917, at the age of 23. Two years later he married Miss Ruth Sullivan of Paterson, New Jersey. They now have two children. Col. J. Asensio, known to his close friends as "Bowie" was originally commissioned in the Cavalry and served in that branch until 1925, when he transferred to the Corps of Engineers. He was subsequently sent to the University of California (1925-1931) where he studied Civil Engineering. This was followed by a tour of duty at the Company Officers Course at Fort Belvoir, (1931-1932). In 1932 he was sent to Hawaii, his first overseas assignment, where he served with the 1st Engineers. Returning to the states in 1933, now as a 1st Lt., he was assigned, after a short period at Fort DePue, to the Galveston Engineer District where he was engaged in flood control work. He became a Captain in June, 1939. In 1940 he returned to Ft. Belvoir as instructor at the Engineer School. In February 1941 he became a Major, AGC, and a year later was promoted to rank of Lt. Colonel, AGC. In March 1942, following a course at the Command and General Staff School, he was sent to Brazil to supervise the construction of United States Army Air Bases in what was then a critical defense area. Here his intimate knowledge of Spanish facilitated the establishment of cordial relations with the Brazilian authorities. He was subsequently awarded the Legion of Merit for his outstanding work on this project. In quote from the War Department citation, "Practically single-handed, Colonel Asensio planned the various projects and carried on all other details of administration, supply, and supervision that would normally be distributed to a staff and accomplished the timely completion of a station of importance to the war effort."

In November 1942, he was detailed as Military Attaché at Bogota, Colombia, where he represented the War Department in activities concerning the Columbia government. Upon returning to the States, he was assigned as Engineer, First Air Force, and assumed his new duties on 18 August 1943. In early December 1943, he was reassigned as Commanding Officer of the 1st Airborne Engineer Station Fort Training Center, and was promoted to grade of Colonel, AGC, shortly thereafter.

In February 1944, Colonel Asensio was selected for an important overseas post for which he departed on 3 March 1944.



Lt. Col. Robert B. Balle

Lt. Colonel Robert B. Balle, present Engineer of the First Air Force, was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1906. He comes from an old-line Virginia family whose members have fought in America's wars since the revolution.

Having an early inclination toward college military, he entered a military school at 17, transferred the following year to Virginia Military Institute, graduating in 1928 with a B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering. Subsequently, he received a 2nd Lt. C.A. (1937).

Shortly thereafter he took a position with the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company. He was an engineer with this organization until entering an extended active duty in the Army in February, 1942.

Always an ardent horseman, he transferred to the Cavalry in 1939, and had a brief tour of active duty with the 3rd Cavalry at Fort Rucker that year. In June, 1939, he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant of Cavalry. During the years 1939-1941, he continued to have brief periods of active duty at Fort Rucker. The summer of 1941 he attended the Cavalry School, Fort Belvoir, Kansas. The following summer, then a Captain, he was detailed as a troop commander with the 10th Cavalry. In 1942 he went on temporary duty with the Cavalry, and again in 1943, was on active duty for a brief period.

He married Miss Frances Desmond of Norfolk, Virginia, in 1936; they now have two children.

In December, 1940, he was notified that he was scheduled to report for scheduled active duty as a member of the Cavalry School Staff, however his transfer to the Corps of Engineers was then pending and he was able to have the orders to Cavalry duty deferred. Shortly thereafter he received orders directing him to Langley Field as Assistant Air Force Engineer. In May, 1942, he joined the War Relocation Authority at Mineral Field, where he organized and directed the Construction Sub-section. At this time he received promotion to the grade of Major with rank effective 2 February 1942. A year later, he was promoted to rank of Lt. Colonel.

On 4 December 1942, he was appointed Engineer of the First Air Force, succeeding Colonel Edward J. Bennett.

Although the Corps of Engineers is his first love, he has never completely forgotten the Cavalry service; on a Sunday at Mineral Field, he can still be seen out for a pallo on his horse, "Firecracker". This horse, as the Colonel says, is a very extraordinary animal, being a direct blood descendant of Sam-a-Rat.