

# TME

The Military Engineer



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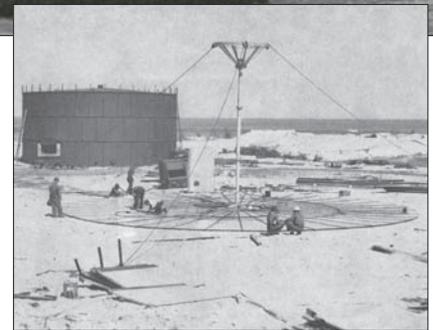
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(Above) Military engineers build a bridge during World War II. (Right) Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 support the fight in South Vietnam. PHOTOS FROM TME ARCHIVES



# Our Mission, Our History

*By Lt. Gen. Theodore G. Stroup Jr., P.E., F.SAME, USA (Ret.), as adapted from his acceptance speech at the 2014 Golden Eagle Awards Dinner. For more "Reflections" from military engineering leaders, visit [www.youtube.com/user/samewebmanager](http://www.youtube.com/user/samewebmanager).*

Since America's founding, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has held a unique role in the Armed Forces. For many civilians and probably even some in uniform, the Corps of Engineers' role brings to mind a wonderful line attributed to humorist Will Rogers when asked his advice for dealing with German U-boats during World War I.

"Bring the oceans to a boil," Rogers supposedly replied, adding, "I'm just the idea man. Get someone else to work out the details."

For the past 235 years, the Corps of Engineers has been told to "work out the details." Its missions have involved the unique challenges of moving men and ordnance across deserts, through jungles, and over rivers and mountains. Yet time and again, the Corps has proven its mettle—as have the engineers of all the uniform services, men and women who bring equal parts bravery and skill to the fight

Military engineers have played a significant role in peace and war for the life of our nation. The initial mix of General Washington's troops involved volunteer soldiers in the militia, the Continentals, civilians and individual businessmen who composed our predecessors in the ranks of military engineers. We were part of the movement west after our independence. Our duties included surveys, maps, bridges, coastal fortifications, and especially building infrastructure for the young nation to navigate its waterways.

Military engineers have always responded when America sounded the call to colors. Nowhere was our response more impressive than in the conflict that began with a single gunshot in Europe 100 years ago. By the end of World War I, more than 11,000 civilian engineers were called to duty. We fought as infantry, sappers and builders and ultimately, as rebuilders of war-torn Allied infrastructure. Our next big fight demanded a still-greater need for the military engineer. Some of the great moments of our history occurred during World War II, which saw the recognition of engineers in the emerging land, air and sea services. While most remember military engineers for the massive airfield complexes in the Pacific theater and the large engagement across the European theater in post

combat reconstruction projects, it is our achievement in the Manhattan Project that developed the atomic bomb during the war years that I believe history will record as even more remarkable. This entry into capturing the atom for war also gave the military engineer the capability for later development of atomic and nuclear power for peace in the years to come after the war.

In recent decades, it was the military engineer who used expertise and leadership to overcome some of the nation's biggest civilian challenges: from nationwide development and construction of massive regional post office service centers, to the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway construction for expanded river commerce traffic and multi-purpose dams, to the design and construction of NASA launch and recovery complexes, among so much else.

As former U.S. Army Chief of Engineers Lt. Gen. Arthur Williams, USA (Ret.), likes to say, "Military engineers have a proud heritage and legacy that we have bequeathed the nation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been an important part of that effort."

The best way to appreciate this legacy

is by viewing it through the lives of five significant, but unheralded engineers whose contributions deserve our remembrance.

**GRENVILLE DODGE (1831-1916).** Graduating from Norwich University in 1850 as a Civil Engineer, Dodge became a giant in the building of the transcontinental railroad. He answered the call to the colors in the U.S. Volunteers and rose to major general. When the war ended, he returned to engineering and became a major force in the transcontinental linkage of our nation's railroads. After the Spanish-American War, Dodge again responded to his country, heading a Presidential Commission on the war and deficiencies in its conduct. He also was the architect for Secretary of War Elihu Root's renaissance of the Army and its roots for today's magnificent force.

**WILLIAM PARSONS (1859-1932).** A civil engineer graduate from Columbia University in 1879, Parsons served as an engineer in the Spanish-American War and on the Panama Canal Commission. He led the 11th Engineer Regiment (Railway) in France during World War I, which was the first American unit to engage the enemy in combat. He also founded an engineering company that would eventually become Parsons Brinckerhoff, which, for more than 125 years, has made major contributions to military engineering and the development of the nation's infrastructure.

**BEN MOREELL (1892-1978).** A civil engineer graduate from Washington University in St. Louis in 1913, Ben served in the Navy during World War I and in 1937, was selected to be Chief of the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps and the Bureau of Yards and Docks. It was Ben who led the successful effort to create the Naval Construction Battalions in 1942 and is the only Civil Engineer Corps officer to attain the four-star rank of Admiral. His tireless commitment earned him the name "Father of the Seabees." SAME honors his distinguished service with the Moreell Medal.

**STUART GODFREY (1886-1945).** A 1909 West Point graduate with classmates who included George Patton, Jacob Devers and Robert Eichelberger, Godfrey began his service as an engineer with the Army Air Service. He quickly rose to become Chief Air Engineer at Army Air Force headquarters. During World War II, Godfrey served

**PRESERVING OUR FUTURE**

My fondness for SAME stretches back more than 50 years. In 1962, as a Cadet at West Point, I joined SAME right after I selected the Corps of Engineers as my "branch." SAME's support for those of us struggling, going through those grueling undergraduate days was absolutely first-rate. SAME maintained a team of mentors like Lt. Gen. Max Noah, Col. Beverly Snow, and Gen. Richard Stillwell, who was commissioned as an engineer when he graduated from West Point. These professionals gave invaluable advice for us soon-to-be lieutenants on types of units, where to serve, and the value of a full-time career in the Corps after commissioning.

Ever since, SAME's educational and professional chapter activities have been a wonderful part of my life and professional career. More importantly, SAME has achieved the goal set down over 90 years ago by then-Army Chief



of Engineers, Maj. Gen. William Black, of becoming a professional society of uniformed and civilian engineers who recognize the necessity of preserving expertise and wartime knowledge.

There are legions of wonderful, dedicated professionals who march in the ranks of SAME across the globe. We are all proud members of the total military engineer family, serving America at home and abroad.

At 94 years young, SAME is just getting started. —T.S.

as the Air Engineer in the China Burma India Theater with its vast scope of difficult terrain and climate. His leadership allowed the United States to overcome these challenges, completing successful projects that enabled projection of Allied air power in that key area. His concept for air engineer units became the precursor of Air Force Red Horse Squadrons.

**JACOB DOUMA (1912-2004).** The epitome of the professional military engineer in mufti, Jake Douma was one of the premier civilian hydrologists in peace and war. During World War II, he was dispatched to Europe to tackle the Rhine River Flood Prediction and Control for the Chief Engineer of the European Theater Operations, U.S. Army. His teams handled the critical planning elements along the Rhine River in case the enemy blew up storage dams. His work to identify crossing sites for vehicle and rail traffic had a critical effect on the Allies' successful land campaign. An Army civilian, Jake continued to serve and lead for 34 years in key hydrological projects. He impacted many current SAME members with his leadership, expertise and sage advice—and I am

proud to include myself in this group.

Each of these five military engineers achieved results in their assigned missions and contributed to the proud legacy of America's military engineers, whether in uniform, in federal service or as a contractor. To borrow from a popular Army song during the Gulf War days, "When we were needed, we were there."

All of us are part of the honored traditions embodied by these five heroes. Their efforts should make us proud of our past and inspire us to strive for continued achievement.

**TIME**

*Lt. Gen. Theodore G. "Ted" Stroup Jr., P.E., F.SAME, USA (Ret.), is a Senior Advisor at Dawson & Associates. He previously was Vice President for Education at the Association of the United States Army and also served as Executive Director of the organization's Institute of Land Warfare. Gen. Stroup retired from the Army in 1996 after serving as Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. In earlier assignments with the Corps of Engineers, he was Assistant Director, Civil Works and also Commander, USACE Fort Worth District. He received the 2014 SAME Golden Eagle Award for Contributions to National Security.*