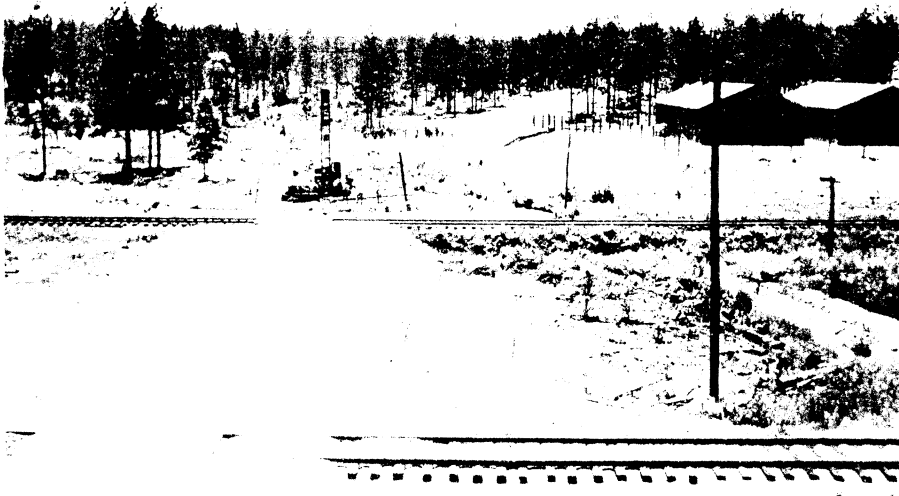


Our life in the States was no different from that of hundreds of other similar organizations. There was Basic Training with the non-coms cursing and the men sweating. Then there was Unit Training when the men saw Army Engineering devices for the first time. With amazing rapidity they learned to build the variety of bridges, make assault crossings of rivers; they learned to handle mine-fields, and they hiked, and they hiked, and they hiked. It was rough going for civilians becoming soldiers. They swore and griped, cursing the army in general and engineers in particular. Their features, meanwhile, lost the indoor pallor and acquired an outdoor tan. Bodies and minds became rugged. The battalion was certainly no place for weaklings, and such training soon weeded them out.

We were still training when we got our first real job. We received orders to build a road through a wooded area in Camp Shelby. What a triumph that was! In the short space of six days, where only trees, undergrowth and soft earth existed before, we built that first road. It was almost a mile long, there was a beautiful pile bridge, and culverts, and drainage canals. We talked about that job for days after!



THE ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECT
CAMP SHELBY, MISSISSIPPI

Now, we figured, we were really engineers. We were no longer a bunch of disorganized, removed, civilians; we were on the ball. We really threw our weight around in inhospitable Hattiesburg, Mississippi, after that. Other jobs followed: construction of a swimming pool, a firing range, more road construction and repair. Most of us felt we were ready for anything now. We had been in the army for just six months.