

We first solicited the assistance of the U.S. Corps of Engineers in 1955 and at that time advised them of the serious situation causing the flooding of practically all of our primary ditches, particularly those West and South of the Blytheville Air Force Base and City of Blytheville. Since that time many reports have been made to the Corps of Engineers and other agencies by our own engineers as well as other engineering firms such as Horner & Shifrin, Consulting Engineers of St. Louis, Missouri, and all of these reports show the necessity of an enlargement of this district's structures and all of these reports take into consideration the damage caused to the City of Blytheville and the Blytheville Air Force Base. During the rainy season, water backs up into the streets of Blytheville, and into the city's sewer system and the city's sewerage disposal plant becomes submerged and inoperative.

In 1959 the property owners of some 20,000 acres of highly developed agricultural lands in our district who were affected by this additional runoff from the base and the attendant growth of Blytheville, organized and created a sub-district within our district in an attempt to secure some measure of relief, and this sub-district floated a bond issue of \$489,000.00 to be repaid by annual taxes levied against the land. The money derived from this bond issue was used to build a 375 cfs (168,750 gallon per minute) lift station. This lift station was designed to discharge this much water from the land into a leveed floodway. This helped the drainage situation somewhat but was not sufficient and is not designed to alleviate the flooding in the City of Blytheville. Approximately 5% of the bonds floated for this sub-district are now retired and the cost in taxes is \$2.16 per acre annually and this annual tax will continue until 1984 and at that time, although the bond issue will be retired, there will still be a maintenance tax of approximately one-half this amount.

In 1963 \$312,000.00 was spent on excavation work in Little River by our district and this work started at the terminus of Ditch No. 27 which is now included in the Engineer's Review Report. Thirty-two miles of this ditch was excavated.

Within the past few years our district has contributed \$801,000.00 for flood protection and drainage in the area under consideration and this work would be included in the Engineer's Review Report had it not been performed by our district. At today's prices, this work which we have already done could add another \$1,200,000.00 to the estimated cost of the project under consideration.

I believe that the Memphis Corps of Engineers will tell you, if requested, that Drainage District No. 17 will go all out to solve their problems in the maintenance of their structures even though the expense to the landowners in annual taxation is very costly.

Our annual principal and interest payments are \$33,250.00. Our bonds will not be retired until 1984. In addition to this approximately \$72,000.00 must be expended each year maintaining our structures. We have 235 miles of ditches in our district varying in width of 40 feet to 150 feet and we also have 41 miles of levees that we maintain. These levees protect the lands in this district from flood waters which originate in Missouri.

The Corps of Engineer's Review Report on this project under consideration shows that they have taken into account the accelerated run-off from the Blytheville Air Force Base and they have provided drainage outlets to satisfy the present and future needs of the air force base and to provide an adequate outlet for the City of Blytheville and to provide protection in agricultural areas against flooding. The plan as recommended by the Mississippi River Commission states that this proposed flood control improvement is economically justified and provides the needed flood protection comparable to that provided by other similar Federal projects in the St. Francis Basin.

We believe we have come a long way even though it has taken 13 years for this project to get the recognition it has at this time. The welfare of the citizens residing within the boundaries of our drainage district depends largely on the action taken from this time forward.

The officials of Drainage District No. 17 heartily endorse this project.

If there are any questions or any matters that need clarification, we will appreciate the opportunity to explain or perhaps submit additional information.

Mr. JOHNSON. Do you have any further comment, Mr. Gathings?

Mr. GATHINGS. I would just like to say this, Mr. Chairman, that back in the early 1940's the Blytheville Air Force Base was constructed on the highest ground in that particular area. Now, they put