



Myron DeGeer (left) and Ray Broyles (right) briefed Southwestern Division General Parfett on Tulsa District projects in the early 1970s.

SHORT MOUNTAIN TRIP SELLS WATERWAY IDEA

It was sometime around 1951 that a dignitary-loaded barge struck out from Fort Smith, churning upstream on the Arkansas and Poteau Rivers.

Aboard were Oklahoma Sen. Bob Kerr, Rep. Ed Edmondson, and a crusading Fort Smith newspaper editor whom some would later call the father of Arkansas River navigation: C.F. Byrns. Among others on board was Corps' Engineer Webster Boland. "For weeks, or possibly months, Mr. Byrns had been bombarding Washington to send officials to see what the river was doing to the rich land in the Moffett Bottoms," Boland said. "Finally his persistence paid off. And

the things the officials saw that day were shocking. Huge hunks of rich soil were falling into the river, disintegrating into mud and mingling with other topsoil that raced down-river to the Mississippi and on out to sea."

The river was threatening to demolish U.S. Highway 64, the major route into Fort Smith from the west.

It was only a barge trip. But the view from the deck showed first-hand the problems and possibilities of the Arkansas River. That view was pivotal, in Boland's recollection, to bringing the waterway dream to reality.⁷