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Brig. Gen. Claude M. Adams

Humboldt, Tennessee

May 10, 1957

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Interview with Brig Gen Claude M. Adams (and his wife Ruth part of the time) at his home at Humboldt, Tennessee, May 10, 1957, by Forrest C. Pogue. (General Adams was with Gen Marshall at Fort Screven. Ft Moultrie, Vancouver Barracks and before the war began in the War Dept. Then is military attaché to Brazil before his retirement for heart trouble. Adams has many letters from Gen and Mrs. Marshall as does his wife. They have many photographs and clippings of value. It is clear that Colonel Adams is a close friend and old fishing companion).

Colonel and Mrs. Adams obviously adore the General. Adams has many stories of the General's thoughtfulness and kindness. He spoke of Ft. Moultrie where the General gave noncoms the use of the Officers Club for dances. At Vancouver Barracks on Mrs. Marshall's birthday the whole post gathered back of the house. Mrs. Marshall usually had breakfast upstairs. This time Gen Marshall called her down. She came in a housecoat. The band played Happy Birthday and came through the kitchen. Gen Marshall was delighted.

At Screven we got hold of a 42-4 foot boat which authorities had taken from the rum-runners. We bought it for \$600 and officers and noncoms used it.

The Col and Mrs. Adams were present at the party in S. C. where the colored maid said "Jesus the Geraniums" except they remember it as "My God no flowers." I prefer the Marshall version.

At Ft Leavenworth at cocktail party an officer's wife talked to me about General Marshall (General Marshall always said a wife was 50 per cent of the of the officer's success). She said Marshall had no milk of human kindness. I said I was going to Washington and would ask Gen Marshall. I asked him. It seemed that this officer had been detailed to War Dept. Gen Marshall had to relieve him because of the man's wife. I met her later and started to tell her and she fled.

(In here Mrs. Adams showed me a number of photographs. One was of Dutra visiting Humboldt. Adams told me to see an officer in the photo-Col. Walters).

I first met Gen Marshall at Benning in 1930. He was Commandant (he corrected this to assistant commandant in charge of instruction when I corrected him). Gen Marshall knew he was coming to Screven. He was Lt Col then. Marshall had all officers over for dinner. I sat next to Mrs. Marshall. When they came to Screven it was about July. Gen Marshall's adjutant, Herb Wheeler, was ordered to the Philippines and I was brought in as post adjutant. (When Gen Marshall later left for Chicago he had a vacancy on his staff and he asked that I be appointed. I actually had my name on the door next to his when word came from Washington that the place called for a Lt Col and I was just a captain. Marshall never filled the place. The man who gave the order was never promoted when Marshall went to Washington. It was not as a punishment but because he didn't like a rigid mind).

At Screven, Gen Marshall in order to give noncoms pride in themselves and a sense of responsibility used them as officers of the day as well as sergeants of the guard.

At Vancouver Barracks there were no facilities for officers or men. The Post is in the middle of the town. City is a block away. Men went to dives. The General set up an enlisted men's club. He converted the gymnasium into a skating rink.

Gen Marshall has a vivid imagination. In Vancouver Barracks where I was executive officer we went on troop inspection. Down to Crater Lake afterwards. Our families came down. We had a driver by the name of Albright. After inspection in the middle of the afternoon we went to the lake. We failed to take a landing net. I was pulling and Albright was in the bow and the General in the stern. Albright got a rainbow trout. He worked it toward the back of the boat. Asked Gen Marshall to pull it in. Marshall tried to flip it in and it dropped off the hook. Albright cut loose and cussed him out. Marshall laughed and didn't say a word. Later Albright was pulling and Gen Marshall caught a fish and worked it back to me. He said for me to pull it in, but I said I didn't want a cussing. I wouldn't land it and Albright wouldn't. The General finally landed it.

On this trip we passed a place named Chemult, named for Pierre Chemult. Gen Marshall asked if we knew about the man. He said he was a Canadian hunter and trapper. Told us of the routes he followed. When he finished a detailed and fascinating account, he said that the only thing that he hadn't made up was the name.

One of his favorite books was Little Lord Fauntleroy and another THE KENTUCKY CARDINAL. (Ask him about the Opera House at Uniontown).

Shoeshine boy at Savannah, Georgia, fell in love with Marshall and asked if he could come to the post. He stayed with the Marshalls some. 'Here they went for a long time he would show up. Think he showed up at Vancouver.

(Adams was Pro and T in Florida. Detailed to Univ of Florida for three years while Gen M in Chicago. Then to Vancouver Barracks in summer of 1937).

(Hossfeld. was commandant of post at Vancouver Barracks when Marshall arrived. Mrs. Hossfeld angry because husband was superseded. She gave trouble. Didn't answer an RSVP invitation. Marshall sent for Hossfeld and asked him if she intended to come. Didn't care one way, or another, but wanted to know. Got answer).

The fleet always came to west coast during the year. Always sent a destroyer to Vancouver Barracks and rest of ships to Portland. Nothing done for destroyer; always something big for fleet. I found that the executive officer of the destroyer one year was from Humboldt, Tennessee. I talked to Gen Marshall and he went to Chamber of Commerce. Had 7th Inf band and turned out the dignitaries. Had a bigger affair than Portland did for the fleet. British ship visited us later.

I stayed at Vancouver until 1939 and then went to Leavenworth and came back with the General in 1140. In 1941 I had a severe heart attack. The General, after I came back, said find some place. I went to Staunton Mil Academy for a year. After Pearl Harbor I went to see the General. He sent me to General Strong. Strong suggested an attaché job in Mexico City. Marshall said no. The altitude is no good for you. I went back and Strong said Rio. So I took that.

Adams said Gen Marshall liked to tease friends. Told of time in Vancouver Barracks when they were having an awards day in post theater. Called Adams forward and began to say wonderful

things. Gave him a watch. I was choked up. When I went back, Mrs. Marshall leaned over and said before you get too excited over the watch he gave you, look at it. It was Adams' watch which Gen Marshall had gotten hold of and had put in a fine box.

Adams speaks of MacArthur letter to Marshall to effect that he had sent Marshall to Illinois for the purpose of handling labor troubles which were expected in the Middle West with Chicago to be the center).

(See Lt Gen E. H. Brooks, Lt Vernon Street, Concord, New Hampshire--who was legislative liaison man under Marshall).

Thinks that Gen Marshall wanted to be Secretary of Defense; did not want China Mission and State Dept job. (Mrs. Marshall opposed to postwar appointments and trip to Oslo to get Nobel Prize).

The China Mission crucified him.

Adams told of getting even with Gen Marshall once on a fishing trip in Tennessee. Gen Marshall caught a sucker. Adams told him it was a white trout--very fine to eat. Persuaded the hotel man to go along with the gag. Gen Marshall insisted on having it cooked. Hotel man later told Adams he almost had to fire his cook to get him to cook it. Adams had to help eat it.

Marshall changed mind on Caffery (Adams worked under Caffery in Brazil). Didn't like him at first. After he became Secy of State, Gen Marshall said Caffery made some of the best reports he received.

Adams was on Separation Board. Served one day and then went to Gen Marshall and said I may as well retire. I can do more farming than I can here. Retired in 1944. Later headed Civil Defense in Tennessee.

Once in Washington Gen Marshall said he couldn't find his wife's grave in Arlington. Adams finally found it.

(See Bill Sexton).

Gen Marshall went regularly early in the war to see Pershing. We hated to see him go because he was always tougher after he had seen him (Pershing was getting senile). Gen Marshall could get tough without raising his voice.

Good story on Gen Marshall hunting (I think in Pennsylvania). Had a fine day and killed his limit of ducks. They were all wood ducks (about \$500 fine a piece if he had been caught. He didn't know that's what they were).