

Notes 43N, Copy 2

Chester R. Davis

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Interview with Mr. Chester R. Davis, senior vice-president, Chicago Title and Trust Co, Chicago, at his office, April 28, 1958, by F C Pogue.

(Mr. Davis was in the Chicago National Guard when General Marshall was instructor. Mr. Davis was recently assistant secretary of army).

Roy Keehn a newspaper man here; Hearst representative. Was appointed head of Illinois National Guard because he could build it up. He set up a commission to build and finance state armories. He was personable and did a good job in that line. He said Illinois should have the best National Guard it could get. Needed a good instructor. Went to see General MacArthur; said he could pay \$5000 extra for instructor to help pay additional cost here; wanted best he could get. Keehn told me MacArthur said that Marshall was the best. (Keehn had to have a good man on military side. Had no military back-ground. Besides he lost an arm. Was on visit to Hearst. Hearst driver went into ditch. Resulted in lawsuit against Hearst and Hearst severed their connection. War Dept issued waiver on the arm. THE PART ABOUT HEARST OFF THE RECORD).

Let's skip several years. I visited Gen MacArthur at the Waldorf four years ago. It was about the time Gen Whitney had written a book about the running feud between Eisenhower and MacArthur. We talked of Eisenhower being nominated. Then I talked of the rumors that he and Marshall were on the outs. I asked MacArthur if there was anything to story of feuds. He said not a bit--he had highest regard for each of the men. He said he had made it possible for Marshall to be Chief of Staff. Recalls Keehn came to him with a plum of \$5000 for such an instructor. MacArthur thought Marshall needed a tour of duty with National Guard in order to know problems of the citizen soldier. He knew the CCC; knew Infantry School. So he had picked Marshall for the post. Always had the highest regard for Marshall.

I asked if there was anything to idea that Marshall was sent here to deal with labor problem. He said he knew nothing about it. Never heard of idea that Roosevelt sent Marshall out here.

He thought Marshall welcomed the National Guard work after he got settled here. He wanted to solve the problems of the citizen army. Always favored that.

Roosevelt and the politicians in the Democratic machine here didn't know Marshall. Marshall didn't know Roosevelt. (I remember that Judge Wilson McCarthy who was one of the two minority members of the RFC under Hoover invited me to go to the Roosevelt inauguration although he knew I was a Republican. The Illinois chapter of Alpha Delta Phi (I am a member) wanted to give a badge to Roosevelt who was a member. So I went down and had a seat near the platform. I gave him the badge and got an autographed photograph for the chapter and then went to the reception. Marshall was just as much interested in hearing about Roosevelt as anybody else I talked to about it. He was in with Roosevelt).

Marshall was interested in people. He was always trying to find what they were thinking. He would ask the bootblack, anyone. He was always probing although he didn't give that impression.

The General had no use for Col McCormick of the TRIBUNE. McCormick lived at Cantigny Farm. He was a tremendous personality. He wanted to build himself up as a military authority. He was never keen about Marshall and vice versa. McCormick tried to cover up.

I asked him about General Wood. He suggested there was an old West Point grudge on Wood's part against Marshall. Wood strong on West Point. Also anti-Administration. This led Davis to Manion. Said Notre Dame glad to be rid of him. Put in to do work for the administration; spent all his time trying to build himself up; opposed administration. Since then has attacked administration.

Recalls that soon after Harvard speech, Marshall Spoke at University club. Explained thing fully under cross-questioning. No guarantee it would work he said. Was worth trying. Those that were there were for the purpose of finding what it was all about. Doesn't think the TRIBUNE sent a representative.

TRIBUNE never got over Pearl Harbor. Davis said he never knew all the facts. But he was very active in National Guard then and knows they were alerted. Thinks everyone must have been.

Marshall was stern and positive, but for the most part he was pleasant to know. He was not aloof and cold. He lived at Wayne much of the time he was here. His home was about half a mile from mine. Knew him and Mrs. Marshall and her children. He was fine to them. Devoted husband and father.

I rode horseback with him. He kept his horse at a stable near me. We used to entertain people from the company. Had the Rehearsal Club--group of lawyers who put on shows. Marshalls joined in--good fellowship, drinking and singing.

I remember ones a clay pigeon shoot. Someone as a joke gave Marshall shells filled with salt. He missed the first target and then the second. He then saw through it.

Don't remember exactly when he came to Wayne. Think he met William S. Monroe independently of me and got a place through him. Gen Marshall came while I was in the hospital (this was responsible for Mr. Davis not knowing that Gen Marshall had lived for a time in Chicago proper on Pearson Street).

The first CPX was held on the Sunday after I got out of the hospital. He asked me where I lived and he said he was coming out to Wayne. Rented a small house. Mollie was at school and I think one or both boys were away at school. When he left the boys remained on here for a time. I gave Allen a job for awhile. Allen not very stable.

Marshall made friends here. Great friend of Swede's. Vander Plew, later of Kellogg's, rode with us.

Swede Petersen was a second lieutenant in WW.I. Lived at Wayne. While I was still active in the reserve he wasn't. But as an old soldier he liked to be around. He would do anything in the

world for the General. Awfully good horseman. The day that Gen Marshall wanted to buy a new car--he had a Buick--he asked us for our advice so Swede and I went along. Started from downtown and stopped in agencies. We had a drink an agency. Toured the north side and the west side. Then to Gordon Shepherd of Packard agency.

He was impressed and gave a good trade. General Marshall bought the Packard. When he arrived at home, Pete was in the back seat asleep and I was singing old war songs. He went in to get Mrs. Marshall. She came out and took one look and said you are drunk and went back in without looking at the car.

(Somewhere in here I asked if he knew Eisenhower while he was on the Louisiana maneuvers. He said no).

Next turned to General Keehn. Said Keehn a Phi Psi at Indiana. Reported for CHICAGO AMERICAN. Always active in Phi Psi. Duke Dunne (now judge) and Harold Moore were also active in this. (Jerome K. Dunne, captain of football and basketball at Univ of Michigan; later coached. His father was a circuit judge, mayor of Chicago and later governor of Illinois. Practiced law here; then on municipal court, probate court. Dunne an enlisted man in WWI. Then into Guard. He and Moore were on Keehn's staff. Organized a Quartermaster regiment. Moore was commander and Duke Dunne the executive officer).

We had staff meetings during the week. Keehn used every possible occasion to have a lunch on or dinner. Affairs on Defense and Arm' days. Called on Marshall and others to speak. Keehn had nice estate at Lake Forest.

Smykal took over quartermaster outfit after a time. Attended various service schools. Marshall knew him and sent him to CBI. He was G\_4, to Stilwell.

I was a lieutenant colonel in the Guard. Acted at various times as G-3, G-4, Finance Officer. Marshall not satisfied with 132d Inf commander; wanted me for that spot. I couldn't give the time to it. Later resigned. When war came on I was going to Washington with Laird Bell to see Taft about some business. I called Marshall and he said come over. Told him I would like to get in. He said the parade had passed me by. Would take too long to educate me. He said he could commission me as a major and send me to Leavenworth or that I could organize the Illinois Reserve Militia to take the place of the National Guard. So I did this and came back here and commanded the Chicago Brigade (three rgts--two white and one colored). Did some National Guard duty. Good experience but not what I thought I should do. So I had another talk with him. This was when I hoped he would command in Europe and I said I would like to go with him. I know that this was what he wanted. I think he agreed that I could go with him. On this occasion I saw Dill and others; saw battle maps and got a set. He had an impressive set-up.

I know the only reason he went on the other jobs after he was Chief of Staff was because he felt it was his duty. He was a patriot. He had done his job as Chief of Staff. When everybody was shouting for economy, Louis Johnson tried to cut costs. Then we got caught in Korea. Truman picked Marshall to do the job. Truman, no matter what you think of him, was an old soldier.

He adored Marshall. So he picked him. He would defer to him on matters. Thinks Marshall would have rather said no to this and the other jobs than to take them. Thinks the same thing is true of Eisenhower for second term.

(Note on human side of Marshall. There used to be a Jew named Klein who was a former boxing referee who ran a Jewish restaurant adjoining Chicago and Elgin station on L Street. We used to stop in for a drink and sandwich. Marshall no heavy drinker, but like a drink. He liked smoked sturgeon and would get it there. For years afterwards Marshall would ask me about Klein. Klein was always proud he had known Marshall and would send him smoked sturgeon).

Lawrence Whiting--in first war, former football player, fine looking, fine personality. Came here and made big impression. Was character Ferber used in SO BIG. Active in business. Then took another man's wife away from him. She had money and he got into various things because of her money. When she died her children demanded an accounting. I helped him out here; made estimates of what he was due for handling estate. He is not much force. Is kept on at Furniture Mart Co as a front. He is there on a salary. Probably got the mayor to set up a committee to put him on. If some Army person comes out he gets himself invited to the head table. Tried to speak for the Army here because he has one of the cards which show him to be a consultant to the Secretary. Doesn't help the Army for people to regard him as their representative. Elbows way in.

Spencer--has some money; his wife has more. Has a pretty good company. He was head of Chicago Planning Commission until recently, but wasn't much force. Was eased out of the job. No great figure in the Guard although was chief of staff for awhile. Great admirer of Marshall. (Wife's father close to Insull. They are cousins of Mike Pearson of Canada. Spencer ineffective. Haffner--he is a different proposition. In banking business with General Dawes. Then in Guard. Married R. H. Donnelley's daughter. Had a division. Marshall liked him. Did well here. Relieved overseas--ill health I think. Kenneth Knowlton--father a banker in Freeport. I got him to come to College of Law. He was in Guard. Went on maneuvers at Ft Custer (Battle Creek). Marshall commanded Blue forces and Michigan forces were Red there. Knowlton acted as an aide. Later I was chairman of a commission liquidating farms for bond-holders. Knowlton was running the farms. He was ordered into the reserve as a captain. He was put in charge of a YMCA camp. I wrote Marshall how he was being wasted. In a week Knowlton was in charge of Headquarters detachment of 6th Army.

Eisenhower came here in 1945 before he became Chief of Staff. He said he wanted to rest for a year and that he didn't want to be Chief of Staff. Said Bradley was better for the place. But he did want to get the reorganization bill and UMT. He spoke here to the Legion convention; talked to a meeting of past commanders.

I asked Eisenhower what his politics was. He said he guessed he was a Republican. Said that's what his brothers were. Had voted Republican once. I asked him about his religion. Said he didn't belong to a church, but thought he was a Christian. Said he had prayed more than once during the war. Said he thought he would join a church. Said he believed in Christian principles. He said he had no knowledge of finance; one of his brothers knew that. He didn't

know about diplomacy; Milton knew about that. I urged him to think about the presidency. When he was leaving town he said he had thought over what I said and would run if we wanted him to.

He wanted me to take the Veterans Administration. I was interested in the Legion, but I said no. They are not interested in economy and they push people around who want economy. Salstonstall gave way to them. I wanted to consolidate some of the hospitals, but no one would help.

Eisenhower didn't want to run the second time; he was a good soldier. He has a fine personality. Good with people. He has a sincere approach to others.