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Mr. H. Merrill Pasco

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Interview with H. Merrill Pasco, attorney, former deputy SGS, War Dept, at his Richmond, Va., office, Feb 28, 1958, by F. C. Pogue.

Pasco a VMI man behind McCarthy. Pasco came up here through Withers Burress who had been commandant. Frank later brought Pasco into Marshall's office. Became deputy SGS. Went with General when Frank couldn't make it. Went to two Quebec conferences.

Pasco had job of presenting certain staff papers regularly to Mr. Stimson for signature. Became familiar with his assistants. Unusually fine staff. Bundy (member of Choate, Hall and Stewart, 30 State Street, Boston), McCloy, Lovett, Harrison, Lovett, Patterson. Type of people Stimson brought there was unusually high. Impressive and bright. Brought Gen Marshall into contact with type of legal mind he had had little chance to meet.

Secy Stimson and Gen. Marshall had the same regard, absolute sense of integrity. The General was the only person in Washington who Mr. Roosevelt didn't call by his first name. Always General. Gen M. had no close personal friends. There were no friends he saw often. He always saw Dawes when he turned up. Baruch would come often. He was stimulated by Baruch and would visit his place. General Frank McCoy was pretty close. Gen M. helped handle the arrangements when Dawes and some friends raised money to pay for Gen McCoy's house. His widow lives in the place in Washington.

(See Gen C. D. Herron, Bethesda. Knew Marshall on his first tour. I got to know Herron because he knew an uncle of mine who was killed in the Ph. Is.)

Do you know the story of the trip Gen M and Wedemeyer made to England? Stopped in Bermuda. He read lesson in church. Verses with unfamiliar names; stumbled along until he came to Philadelphia and he came out loud and clear on that. Someone said I can see you came from Philadelphia from enthusiastic way in which you said it. Said no, was the only one I could pronounce.

Told Wedemeyer to get a gift for people in England. Something they couldn't get readily. He turned up with Brussel sprouts.

Quebec conference. Stayed at Chateau Frontenac. Had a corner room. 12th floor. Gen Groves would show up from time to time. We didn't know what it was about. A message came in late one night for the General. (I don't know whether it was first or second Quebec; must have been first because Vandenberg was a major or Lt. Col). Martinis were 15 cents apiece and I had one too many because I was soon in bed sleeping more soundly than I usually slept. I awakened to find Gen Marshall shaking me. He said get up and sign for this message. The man won't give it to me; he said Gen Groves said give it to you only. For God's sake wake up. He didn't fuss at me. He was satisfied with the security.

It was mostly work at Québec conferences. General would walk some or would sometimes ride carriage to the Citadel or read green papers. On the second conference, he wanted to go on the Saguenay. Max Taylor was negotiating, so he had to stay at the hotel most of the time to give instructions.

Plane trip up to Quebec was short and not eventful. Lots of telephoning ahead. Took a lot of the staff with us.

We could order each meal at the Chateau. General couldn't eat strawberries. Didn't want sea food. Liked steaks. Stopped smoking. Drank sparingly. Rarely drank on inspection trips. Bourbon and a little water. Didn't like to be the guest of people. Stayed at officer's club usually and then slipped away in the morning. (On drinks, Mrs. Marshall would sometimes make weak mint juleps in a short glass).

I remember one devastating experience. Jimmy Winn, Mrs. Marshall's grandson, was here for the weekend. Gen M. said get your boy (was about the same age, not too sure of time, but he was just beyond the age of wetting his bottom) and we will go to the circus. It was Barnum and Bailey. We had trouble when we started because my boy got in the back seat and didn't want to move. When we got to the circus, all the clowns came up to the General. They gave the kids a lot of junk. When the circus was over, we had our hands full. Went out and there was no car. Sgt. Dumcke (he was dumb) had gone to the wrong place. Crowd recognized the General and came up to ask for autographs. He didn't like this and wouldn't tolerate it normally. Apparently he realized this was unusual and didn't fuss at me. But I was shaking).

When we went to the Waldorf we went to the basement entrance. We got to be good friends at the Waldorf and they handled it to suit him. Some people at other hotels tried to play up the visit. He wanted his arrival and departure handled quietly and expected us to do it. He wanted no flag on his car, no escort, no sirens. Yet he was in a hurry. It was a big job to get him through all this. We would send word ahead not to have a flag on the car and there it would be and he would say get it off. He realized we had problems and was fair.

He was very considerate of one's personal life. Very warm. He would give us background on some man coming to see him, so we would be prepared. But he could be tough. I was at Ft Jackson with him when he relieved a corps commander and two division commanders in an afternoon.

Did not show emotion. Stimson would fuss and complain. (See Bundy).

I see by looking through my files that he saw Ben McKelway a good deal. Also Eugene Meyer. Morgenthau nearly the only cabinet member who came over to see him.

(Saw Arthur Page, 195 Broadway).

(Sgt James Powder could tell you a lot).

Never said anything about his brother. Stuart looked like a caricature of the Gen.

Sexton was the most intellectual of that early SGS group.

Another friend was Harvey De Butts of Southern R. P. Used his car a lot.

Rozier Dulany a friend. General played bridge a good bit until war stopped him. Went to Dulany place to play.

Had air of restraint and superiority toward old MacArthur.
Never let anyone know his feelings. Dealt with him personally.

(Gen James A Anderson, Lexington, Va., was on Marshall's staff as G-3 of corps in France).

(Most important to see Jerry Persons. Worked closely together).

In passage of selective service, General dealt through Persons. Persons only Regular Army officer who was kept on in Washington during whole war.

I had to review plans periodically for Gen Pershing's burial. I got Pershing on two occasions and brought him to lunch with General for lunch. Only time liquor was brought into Pentagon. I don't think Gen Pershing gave much advice.

I went with General to Kessler Field and to Randolph Field. Eden, Dill and bars hall along.

He was not particularly rank conscious.

(See photograph of us at circus in Nat'l Geographic in 1943 or 44. It is really 1946—FCP).

Had, close friendly relationship with Gen. Arnold. Arnold in his office, three or four times a week.

Most of us had lunch in Sec War mess. Marshall went home. Filipino chef. Liked to have lunch there. Was quick and then a quick nap. Doesn't think he was dependent on it.

He loved western movies. Liked early supper and movie at Ft Myer.

He talked a great deal about his stay at Benning. Always anxious to see people who had been there. Reminisced about Benning and Philippines in plane. Didn't like to read in plane. Would call you back and talk.

His overriding demand was not to waste time. You could tell when he was in the office. Everybody on his toes. We fixed a light so it would go on when he came in. If you opened the door he would say come in and state your business.

Great interest in the appointment of Luther Miller as chaplain.

He was not particularly religious man, that is Marshall, not Miller.

He took great pains to arrange for Ike's return here.

(See Mc.Narney. I always assumed he was a narrow army officer, but he must have had some breadth to hold present job. Cold-blooded. Apparently inflexible).

Somervell was mean and nice.

Gen Clay was close to Somervell. Not close to Marshall. Came in a number of times for Somervell. Marshall dealt with Somervell. Didn't always go through Somervell. Would sometimes check directly with people. Would call up Quartermaster and ask what the hell about some equipment. Took interest in training, equipment, personnel. Took interest in training films. (Had Darryl Zanuck there in charge of films.

In Pentagon every morning about 8. Shortly afterwards wanted briefing. Special briefing. Group included John Cabell, Richmond family, lived in Georgia. Henry Reed of Newport News; Gilbert Johnston, Birmingham; Goolrick on LIFE;

By 1144 all regulars gone.

McCarthy was military secretary. No aide. Frank wrote fine letters for general. Very capable on official matters. Wrote much of staff studies.

Gen M didn't want to dissipate strength. Not secretive, but wanted no waste of time. Efficiency and time saving imp considerations.

Could be very thoughtful. At San Antonio once, he told me there are a lot of retired officers here. I want to give a little dinner. So we got a list of 15-20 and he gave them drinks and dinner. Some elderly. Very thoughtful. Marshall not cold blooded. Feeling of consideration.

You will find a long correspondence with Mme. Jouatte.

He was angry over Roosevelt's order to commission Boettiger. I went in to see the President. He said you will tell them to commission Boettiger as a major and assign him to Italy.

On the whole his relations with Roosevelt were wholesome. Impersonal. Went when sent for. He didn't care for Pa Watson, but recognized his position. There was no court jester around the General. Occasionally the General would do something for publicity value, like having someone who had been wounded in combat assigned to his staff.

No guard at his outer door. Miss Thomas was out there.

The move from the Munitions Bldg was a horrible thing. Present president of C and P Tel Co, Rhodes Mitchell, installed system. General raised Cain. Don't think he was unreasonable. He decided he had to raise hell to get it done right or it would be wrong for days.

General met Navy more than halfway on things. Set dates to suit them. Gave every reason for them to go along. Very cooperative.

JCS--didn't have chairman at first. Then Leahy. He would send copies of things for discussion. We would brief General. Bedell Smith was secretary. Julius Holmes was assistant. We got papers and processed them through a separate work room.

(Said come back--hate to go to meeting).