

Notes 169N, Copy 2

Col. William M. Spencer

Chicago, Illinois

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Interview with Col. William M. Spencer, president of the North American Car Corporation, Chicago, at the Chicago Club, his office, the Racquet Club, and at his apartment, April 25, 1958, by F C Pogue.

(Spencer was G-2 of the 33d Division when Gen Marshall was senior instructor. They have been close friends since. Spencer, at Gen Marshall's suggestion, raised \$11,000 to pay off a mortgage on Gen Frank McCoy's home.)

General Marshall was deputy chief of staff under Gen Craig. A high French aviation official was over here. Our air force was showing him planes. He crashed in California and the matter got into the press. Got back to Roosevelt. He decided something had to be done. (Marshall told me this). Walker, Farley and 7 or 8 others were in on it. Craig was away so Marshall represented him. They stood around Roosevelt's desk. As usual a monologue by Roosevelt. He said here is what we are going to do. Everyone agreed all the way around until they got to Marshall who did not agree. Roosevelt said do I understand you to say you don't agree. Marshall said it was necessary to give publicity. Marshall said Roosevelt accepted his view. Marshall said he was at a party one night afterwards and Roosevelt was there and gave him one of the dirtiest looks he ever got. (I am dubious about the accuracy of this and about Marshall telling him the story. As a matter of fact a later memo he had on a talk with several officers indicated that he got the story from other people and when he checked with Marshall, the latter indicated that there was some confusion).

On Marshall's appointment as Chief of Staff, Spencer thought Pershing and Baruch had as much to do with it as anyone. Baruch said you had better appoint this man quick. Marshall told me this. (A document which Spencer showed we later in the evening had Gen Marshall's comments on an account which Spencer had heard and had written Marshall about. Marshall indicated that Hopkins was probably more responsible than anyone. This is in accord with what Gen Marshall told me).

Drum seemed to have the inside track for the appointment, but he was too ambitious and tried too hard.

Does not believe that Marshall was sent to Chicago to prepare him for the office of Chief of Staff. We had a very poor Guard at that time and it wouldn't have been thought of as a place to build up a man. The truth seems to be that General Keehn asked MacArthur for a good man. I am almost sure he didn't ask for Marshall by name.

Marshall took command when he got here. He was a human dynamo. Very diplomatic. The Tribune had been constantly attacking Keehn and the Guard. There was a changed attitude toward the Guard after Marshall came. Marshall was later attacked because of his association with Roosevelt. Every once in a while there was an editorial attack.

I used to play tennis with Marshall a lot. We had tough battles. He always beat me.

Just before Marshall became Chief of Staff he and McCoy and others were talking at Chevy Chase club and they were discussing capabilities of some of the officers. Marshall said looking

way down the line, there is a young man named Eisenhower, a major, who has the ability of a great soldier. If I have anything to say, I intend to have him brought to the front. (Apparently Spencer checked this with Gen Marshall and he said he didn't remember it. Spencer's stories were often faulty. He had one which indicated Devers was being considered for Chief of Staff Job. Marshall reminded him it was Drum).

Day before Marshall appointment he was at Chevy Chase Club. Telephone message came and he answered it. Then, according to McCoy, Marshall came back and said I have to go to White House. Roosevelt told him he was to be C of S but not to tell anyone. Marshall on pins and needles for two weeks. Then told Craig, who said he was very happy. (This seems to have been somewhat incorrect).

Marshall did the staff work on Meuse-Argonne. He said once in all due modesty it was perhaps the greatest staff accomplishment of World War I.

As Chief of Staff of Illinois National Guard, Marshall planned everything. He organized work and kept pushing. He was a great deal more than senior instructor. He worked mostly in Chicago headquarters. In summer encampments he engineered and planned work. He improved his staff.

Boyle was adjutant of the Division at that time. He can be helpful if he will give you an unprejudiced view.

Marshall once told me about Benning. Asked for a report. Had three colonels to make an exhaustive report. After a month's time they came up with a 90 page report. He said boil it down to three pages. They resigned. He told them to go back. They got it down to 10 pages.

The period when Marshall was here was the most constructive period for the Guard. He didn't want to come here. I know he thought it was a setback for him. Thought MacArthur had it in for him.

I got my DSC in the same formation MacArthur got his in 1st World War. Do you know about his relief? Apparently Mac was a great soldier. (I got this from Marshall). He was contemptuous of orders. He corresponded with congressmen. He went around Truman. The three secretaries were strong for his recall. Acheson was on the fence. When he said the last messages from MacArthur, which were strongly contemptuous, Acheson changed. Marshall was against it at first because of timing. When the last order was ignored, the vote was unanimous. Gen Marshall said MacArthur was supposed to be a great strategist, but he wasn't there in Korea when he divided his forces. Said we thought he must have Intelligence we didn't have and could handle better than we.

Every time during and after the war when I talked with Gen Marshall, I kept notes. I never had trouble seeing him, even when he was secretary of State. When he was Sec of State I called him once and said I wanted to pay my respects. He said don't move and I will come over to the Mayflower at 5 o'clock. Shows how humble he was that he would come to see me. In 1947 he was out here. He came over to my summer home. We had four Tom Collins and he discussed the European situation. We used to go on outings together.

He was wonderful to me. I remember once when he was Sec of State he told me to come over and he included me in a luncheon for Acheson, Douglas and others.

He told me once the war was prolonged six months because Roosevelt wouldn't push the landing craft program more.

McCoy and Heintzlemen were once considered for Chief of Staff.

Washington STAR. Of July 30, 1950 has photo of Marshall on first page.

(Col. Spencer, as one or two people said, "adores" Gen Marshall. It is clear he is a wealthy man who married the daughter of a wealthy man. Apparently the biggest thing which ever happened to him is the fact that he knows Gen Marshall. He tended to write down all sorts of things which he heated about Gen Marshall. These were frequently mixed up and must be handled with caution. He also attributed things to Marshall which obviously didn't come from him.

(Spencer, who is a great collector of papers of Napoleon and his associates, also collects autographs of presidents and papers of General Marshall. The most valuable things he showed me were several memos he dictated shortly after conversations with Gen Marshall in which he put down what he recalled of Marshall's remarks. On one occasion he put down a seven page, single spaced letter full of stories about Marshall and sent them to him for comment--this was while Marshall was Sec of State. Marshall made comments (I think we have a carbon of this)--keying them to the Spencer letter which was returned. Spencer let me read these, but would not let me copy them since he felt they would lose value as collector items if they were printed).

(Spencer talked at great length, mentioning gifts like a tape recorder and garden furniture which he had bought or helped buy for Gen Marshall. He said to ask Col George if Gen Marshall had any debt and that he would see they were paid. George said there were none.)