

Notes 185N, Copy 2

Gen. Lawrence H. Whiting

Chicago, Illinois

April 24, 1958

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Interview with Gen Lawrence H. Whiting, President of the Furniture Mart Co and of Whiting and Co, at his club and at his home in Chicago, April 24, 1958 by Forrest C. Pogue.

(Gen Whiting knew Gen Marshall in World War I and while he was in Chicago. He has kept in touch with him since while he was acting as a consultant to various people in the Department of the Army. I gather he saw him some during World War II when Whiting was carrying on projects for Secretary Stimson.)

(Whiting is a man who likes to impress his listener with a sense of his importance. While a bit over heavy, he is impressive looking. He tended to give the impression that the General had talked confidentially to him about several things. Part of those I could check were not exactly right, so I don't know about some of them others).

Gen Whiting had just been chairman of the Mayor's committee on a cultural center for Chicago, so he talked a great deal about that and in-dictated the need of Chicago to raise its cultural sights. He spoke of foreign, negro and hillbilly elements which were dragging the city down. When I said I was a Kentuckian, he said he was reared in Somerset where his father was building railroads. One of his forefathers was an Adair of Kentucky, who came originally from North Carolina. He said he came to Chicago from New England. Played football at Univ of Chicago.

Whiting went to Plattsburg, got into army early in WW I. Went into one of the divisions (I think I got this on tape but will put some notes down here) and worked out a classification system. Gen Barry began to boast about it and Whiting was sent to Washington in the classification. He studied various systems and helped suggest the dog tag. Got ideas from Metropolitan Insurance Company on the way they kept personal records. Was put in charge of a group of psychologists who were brought here to help with this project. They invited him to live at the Cosmos Club with them. He was 28 then.

He told of the Plattsburg set-up and showed me photographs of Teddy Roosevelt, Leonard Wood and others. Said T. R. lived up there with them and spoke to them every night. Tremendously worked up over the idea.

In France, Whiting became the chief personnel officer of US forces there. After the war he was attached to the mission at the peace conference. Said he was opposite to John M. Keynes on some problems. Worked on occupation money. (Part of this is told on recording). Said there was a great scandal about money transactions. Jewish couriers would put bills in money belts and carry them back and forth. A man who later became one of the Roosevelt inner group made lots of money speculating. He told me I could make \$200 millions. (As indication of Whiting's race bias, he told the story of the Negro woman from Natchez who was invited by Mrs. Roosevelt to the White House, and then Mrs. R asked her if she was treated that well in Natchez. When she pressed the women to know why she was not treated as well in Natchez as in Washington, the woman said I guess our white folks are more quality than here).

He spoke of seeing a great deal of Pershing in Paris. Said Pershing at times would have him escort Elsie Janis home. Said Pershing careful with women in Paris; his interest in them well known here.

(Inclined to gossip a bit about Eisenhower and Summersby. Clear he had no information; just wanted to gossip.)

He showed me a letter written him by Forrestal which offered Whiting a job which was virtually the same as the present assistant secretary of defense for manpower. Said when Forrestal died he was denied burial in holy ground. Whiting says he arranged for an Episcopal bishop to conduct the services at Arlington.

He finally got to Marshall. Said he thought Marshall was a Republican. (Haffner had told me that morning he thought he was a Democrat). He said he was virtually brought up by his mother's brother, who was a strong Republican. Whiting asked me if I knew where Gen Marshall was born. He laughed when I said Uniontown and obviously thought it was Augusta where the other two Marshall children were born. I said that Who's Who and the general gave it as Uniontown. He said the record would show that. This is an indication of how he heard things and got them confused. I mention this because he asked if I had heard that Marshall and his first wife were divorced. When I questioned this, he said, well probably they were about to get one when she died. He said I know that Gen Marshall told me that he met and proposed to his second wife the day he met her.

He believed that MacArthur had blue penciled promotions and good assignments for Marshall, but not that MacArthur sent him to Chicago. He said that this all came because Keehn insisted to Roosevelt that he send Marshall and that Roosevelt ordered it done.

He then put me in the picture on Keehn. I was told by several people who didn't like Whiting that he knew Keehn very well. So he may have told part of this correctly, but he also quoted Keehn as telling him about asking for Marshall which others who knew Keehn deny.

Said Keehn came from Ligonier, Illinois. Went to Depauw. Thrown out of school for going home once without permission. Then to Univ of Indiana and to Law School at Chicago. Worked with Hearst papers. Became Hearst's representative in Chicago and Midwest. Powerful politically. As early as Baltimore convention in 1912 he managed Hearst campaign. Then shifted with Hearst to Wilson. In 1932 he managed Hearst campaign for Smith and shifted to Roosevelt at the crucial moment. Both times lost out. However, he said they owed him something. When he became commander of National Guard he wanted &F top notch man to handle training. Supposedly went to Louis Howe and demanded Marshall.

Whiting said he was a Republican but that he voted for Wilson the first time. Said Wilson got out horse traded at Paris. Great speaker. I asked for contrast with Stevenson. Said he knew Stevenson and liked him, but was too indecisive.

Praised Marshall's work with Illinois Natl Guard. Said Marshall made Haffner and Boyle. Said he knew Marshall disliked Julius Klein. Something fishy about his promotion. (Interesting to note that Haffner said Keehn changed his own records).

Said Craig was a Catholic. Perhaps Roosevelt thought Drum was one Catholic too many at that time. Thinks Drum wrote an article which offended Roosevelt. (Haffner had said something like this, but said President should have his own man).

Marshall lived frugally here. (Spencer and I gave him garden furniture last year).

Said he knew McCormick pretty well. He would entertain you one evening and let his papers knife you the next day. If you remonstrated he would say you have to be provocative to sell papers. He let his paper say that Marshall was the most despicable man ever to wear the US uniform. I want that to be expunged some of these days. I am going to talk to someone over there about it. (Whiting was going to preside over a dinner in honor of General Wood who also shares McCormick's views about Marshall. I mentioned this but he said Wood had done good work in Chicago).

Says when Eisenhower came to Chicago after the war, he predicted to McCormick's people that Eisenhower would be nominated and win. They didn't believe it. Said Eisenhower had sent him on a trip to the Middle East. Had originally met Eisenhower when he was on west coast after coming from Philippines. Stimson sent him to check on defenses of west coast in case of trouble. Told him to check on Eisenhower. Thought he was a fine person. This all happened when there was a war scare about the Japanese coming up bays on west coast. Said Eisenhower a great planner and perfect for that type of thing. He could talk with ten men in a room and come out with six of them on his side.

He said Eisenhower talked to him in Chicago at time of MacArthur removal and said if I were back there I would know how to deal with a recalcitrant general. Whiting said he thought MacArthur could give Eisenhower the deck and then taken it away from him.

Most everything else is recorded on tape.