

March 3, 1955

Internal Memorandum

Sidelights on A. C. Miller

Anecdote by Walter Stewart

Dr. Stewart says that when he first came to Washington, Dr. Miller, then a member of the Federal Reserve Board, was familiarly known among the younger members of the staff as "that S.O.B." He made it his business to change at least the designation and succeeded in blotting the phrase out of common usage. He said that for all Miller's faults the 1923 report which was Stewart's great early achievement at the Board could not have been written without his support, whereas Mr. Hamlin's activities in the Board were frequently limited to a motion as follows, "I move that we say that the communication or the suggestion has been noted on the record."

Interview with Mrs. Harlan Stone

Having been told by Mrs. Wesley Mitchell that the surviving friends of the Millers were three, the William Hards, the William Phillips and Mrs. Harlan Stone, I took occasion to ask Mrs. Stone if I might come to see her. She is the widow of the late Chief Justice who was Dean of the Law School of Columbia University before he went to Washington. He died several years ago. She then moved from the house which they had built in Washington to 2029 Connecticut Avenue, one of the big old apartment houses in which she has an enormous front apartment. It is obviously much more space than one elderly woman needs, but she said it was the smallest one they could find which would hold all the things which had been in the house. Mrs. Stone is a dignified little old lady who has moments when she warms up. While she talked of the Millers, it was only sternness that was visible most of the time. Although she ranks as one of their friends, her attitude was consistently critical. She pictured Adolph Miller as a stern, insensitive autocrat who was always quite sure that his judgement was right. He married his wife when she was only 17. She

had been a spoiled, volatile and temperamental girl, who did exactly as she pleased and who assumed that the world would love her for it. As a person, she was much more sensitive than her husband, but no more considerate.

She said that Mr. Miller's attitude toward property was, "What's yours is mine, and what's mine is my own." Thus, the very good pictures which were in the house were said by Mrs. Miller to have belonged to her family, but Mr. Miller gave them to the National Gallery without any mention of his wife's name. The Millers and the Stones used to spend their holidays, their summer holidays, at Pecketts in the White Mountains. Judge Stone and Mr. Miller liked each other because each had a good brain which the other respected. The wives were ostensibly friends, and so much so that even now when Mrs. Miller is in very poor health, it is to Mrs. Stone that appeals are made for decisions at difficult moments.

I tried very hard to get some picture of Mr. Miller other than that resembling the one which his sister-in-law had given me, but I got the same Germanic image, autocratic, dictatorial, a man so confident of the rightness of his own opinion that it would have seemed almost impossible to argue with him. Certainly, no lesser mind could have broken through that wall of self-confidence. As Mrs. Stone went on talking, the wonder grew that two such diverse and difficult people could have lived together all the years of their married life or that they could ever have had friends in common, or even that they could have been bearable at social gatherings. The Millers used to entertain a great deal. Mr. Miller was very much a social climber. His taste was good, in so far as the conventional things went, good pictures, good rugs, a well designed house, good food well served. All this became part of his stock in trade as ^aGovernor of the Federal Reserve Board.

Mrs. Stone says that in addition to the Hard and Phillips families the Millers also were friends of Horace Albright. (Mr. Albright was at one time National Park Superintendent if I am not mistaken).

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P. S. Mrs. Stone was called at the time of Mr. Miller's death, and she was with Mrs. Miller immediately afterward. Her statement is that the body was taken to the funeral parlor and almost immediately to a crematory. This was at the order of Mrs. Miller who said that this was what Mr. Miller had wanted. No funeral service was held in Washington and no memorial service was held. Given the high position which Dr. Miller had occupied, this must have seemed very strange to his friends and associates in Washington. It would be worthwhile looking at the newspapers of the period to see whether or not there was any notice taken publicly of so unconventional a wish.

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