

By Clair R. Price

The dormitory of Chevy Chase School for Girls was in an unwanted state of confusion. Girls were dashing from room to room, trying on eachothers' hats, shoes, dresses, coats, furs; in fact, anything wearable. The cause of it all? We were going to have tea with General Pershing! --all seventy of us.

The way the invitation came was, itself, so extraordinary that we, even now, could hardly believe it had happened. It was on one of our routine sight-seeing expeditions, this time to Mount Vernon. We got off the boat and, as we strolled leisurely toward the house, we became aware that the rest of the sight-seers were craning their necks to look at a party of men just landed and also headed up the path. In a moment there could be no doubt that it was General Pershing! He appeared to be escorting a group of Franch officers on a tour of the George Washington Estate.

This was only a few years after World War I and many can still remember how well this remarkable man filled the part of an American hero. Tall and good-looking, with a fine military bearing, he looked the part in post war years as he had performed it during the war itself. His social charm and warm personality endeared him to those who came in contact with him.

As he and his party approached the crowd of sight-seers which included the Chevy Chase girls and our inevitable chaperone, other people gathered closer for a better look and one man, more bold than the rest, asked if he might take a picture. The general **smiled** and, looking toward the group of ^{STUDENTS,} surprised everyone by replying,

"Certainly, if you will let me stand between two of those attractive young ladies."

We were tense with excitement! Whom would he choose? He stepped forward and held out one arm, O Heavenly Days!, to me-- and the other to my companion. There we stood while cameras clicked all around us and we floated on clouds of glory.

When it was over, he turned and asked us what school we were from. There were at that time over a hundred girls' boarding school in and around Washington.

Of course we said Chevy Chase and then we were air-borne again when he said,

"But I live in Chevy Chase, too. We are neighbors. Will you come and have tea with me sometime, all of you?"

Our concerted acceptance must have sounded like a chorus from a light opera. Had we really heard him? He told us he would get in touch with our head master very soon, and then, bowing to the whole company, he and his guests walked on toward the house, leaving behind a new fan club of seventy members.

The rest of the trip was completely lost on us, we were so anxious to get back and relate it all to our Dr. Farrington, the head of the school. This head master of Chevy Chase was the kind of individual sometimes described as "growing on one". He almost succeeded in concealing beneath a New England abruptness a very lovable character. New girls were always afraid of him until he had occasion to help with some personal problem and then they realized how interested he was in each one. During a long residence in Europe he had adopted a foreign looking goatee which, coupled with a clipped Harvard accent, made him seem rather austere. One of the things he was always telling us was that some day we would look at pictures of ourselves in the clothes and especially the hats of that period and roar with laughter as they were completely against nature.

When we got back we gushed into his office with our big news. As usual he was calm, skeptical but interested. He begged us not to set our hearts on the tea party. He saw it all as a friendly overture on the part of General Pershing to give the impression that he was not annoyed by the request to be photographed. We, of course, would not have it so. He had invited us to tea and we had certainly accepted.

Several days later we were called into chapel at an unusual hour to face a rather sheepish Dr. Farrington, holding in his hand a real written

invitation from General Pershing requesting the honor of the company of the students of Chevy Chase School for tea! A secretary had called to say that the general was sending his two cars to carry as many as possible. The rest, said our head master, would go in taxis.

Well, the great day arrived and we set out in all of our borrowed finery because for some reason your room mate's hat always looked better than your own and the girl across the hall had a little navy blue pocket book that just exactly matched that you had planned to wear. We thought we were ravishing but I now have no doubt that every one of us would have looked better had we worn our own clothes so carefully chosen a few weeks earlier by doting mothers before we set out for boarding school.

The party, however, was all that we had dreamed it would be. The general had invited the wife of his Chief of Staff and the wife of his Aide de Camp to act as hostesses for him as he had long been a widower, but he, himself, was the height of charm and graciousness as he moved from group to group identifying himself in some intimate way with each part of the country that the girls came from. He remembered something about every town or city that we mentioned. He laughed heartily when my room mate from Nashville, Tennessee told him she was saving an evening slipper that he had stepped on at a fund-raising dance there during the war. The New York girls had seen him in the Victory parade and he assured them that he had waved to them personally. He had his famous horses brought out for us to see. The one given him by the French Government caused the biggest stir as we had heard so much about it. We petted them and admired them, but to this day I have no idea what we really had for tea.

Years ago my children stopped me from telling tis story by groaning, "Here we go on the Pershing Tea Party.", so I finally might not have believed it myself if it were not for the ~~picture~~ picture.

Days after we met General Pershing at Mount Vernon, a negative came addressed to Chevy Chase School, sent by one of the amateur photographers.

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He said, in a note, that he had no idea who the girls were who were standing by the general but he had heard them say where they were inschool and he was sure they would like to have copies of the picture.

And so it survives and I confess that as I look at us with our hats pulled down over our ears after the fashion of the ninetee^y-twenties I can scarcely see how we could have been thought attractive and I remember vividly what Dr. Farrington said about the clothes of that period. But I feel better to have written it down at last because it is an intimate glance at a great man.