

Shop Talk

about THE WASHINGTON POST and TIMES HERALD

VOL. 8, NO. 6

JUNE 16, 1958

THE MAN WHO BROUGHT THE WASHINGTON POST BACK

The rebirth of The Washington Post and its subsequent growth under Eugene Meyer were well publicized last week. Shop Talk devotes this issue to the pre-Post Meyer as well as to some picture highlights of his 25 years with The Post. The following sketch of Mr. Meyer before 1933 was contributed by Sidney Hyman.

Our staff members honor Eugene Meyer as the man who bought *The Washington Post* in 1933 when it was little more than a fading masthead, and changed it into a national and international organ of opinion. What most newcomers are too young to know is that his career as a newspaper owner and publisher was preceded by two other equally creative careers. In the first, he was an investment banker. In the second, he was a public official.

Born on October 31, 1875, in the frontier settlement of Los Angeles, Mr. Meyer had been trained since early youth to succeed to the place his father held as a partner in the international banking house of Lazard Freres. This was the common thread which ran through his successive moves from Los Angeles to San Francisco, to New York, to Yale College, to Europe for study and work, and back again to a clerkship in the New York offices of Lazard Freres, beginning in 1897.

But in 1901 Mr. Meyer concluded that the kind of banking work Lazard Freres was then engaged in promised no future that would hold his interest. So he bought a seat on the New York Stock Exchange and organized an investment firm of his own.

Formed in 1904 under the name of Eugene Meyer and Co., it differed from the other firms of the day in that it was organized specifically to join science with finance. His, for example, was the first investment company on Wall Street with a statistical section, and with engineers and scientists as regular staff members.

Fortified in this way, Mr. Meyer's firm could boldly yet safely finance new ventures based on population trends, new experiments underway in developmental laboratories, and on economic conditions affecting the whole nation. Mr. Meyer, personally, thereby became a major contributor to the rise of the American copper, automotive and chemical industries.

Convinced in October, 1916, that America could not remain out of World War I, he began to liquidate his invest-



Auction on the steps of the old Post Building on E Street, when the paper was sold on June 1, 1933. Identity of purchaser was not revealed until June 13.

ment firm so that he could be free to volunteer for war services. Barred from combat military service by color blindness, he volunteered his services for the industrial side of the war effort. And with this act, his second career began.

In the course of World War I, he organized the non-ferrous metals section of the War Industries Board; helped form the National War Savings Committee; investigated the aircraft industry at the request of Secretary of War Newton D. Baker; and became a director of the War Finance Corporation.

With the Armistice, Mr. Meyer stayed on to help Treasury Secretary Carter Glass with reconversion problems on condition that the Secretary back his proposal to help reconstruct the shattered channels of international trade. This took the form of support for an amendment Mr. Meyer drafted, authorizing the War Finance Corporation to make loans to finance American exports while Europe was in no position to do so.

When this amendment was enacted, Mr. Meyer was appointed Managing Director of the War Finance Corporation. This agency moved swiftly and effectively to deal with a host of post-war emergencies, including the emergencies of droughts, bank-runs, the deflation of farm values, and the range of problems created by basic changes in Europe's buying habits.

Years spent on this activity were followed in 1927 by Mr. Meyer's appoint-

ment as the Commissioner of the Farm Loan Board. His task was to renovate and revitalize the whole farm loan system, then shot through with malpractices, negligence, and political nepotism.

When the rescue operation he directed was completed in 1929, Mr. Meyer resigned from the Government. But not for long. Following the Great Crash and the onset of the Great Depression, he was appointed the Governor of the Federal Reserve Board, in which capacity he was the author of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and a vigorous fighter for the integrity of the Federal Reserve.

When the New Deal came to power in 1933, President Roosevelt asked Mr. Meyer to stay on as Governor of the Federal Reserve Board. But as the latter felt that the President was entitled to have his own appointee in the office, he left the Government service. A few weeks later he bought *The Washington Post* at an auction. It remains to be added that, while building *The Washington Post*, he responded to later requests for his services expressed by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower and served the Government in several additional capacities. Not the least of them was his service as the first President of the World Bank in 1946.

Mr. Meyer has the distinction of having been given a Government office or appointment by every U. S. President since 1916: Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower.



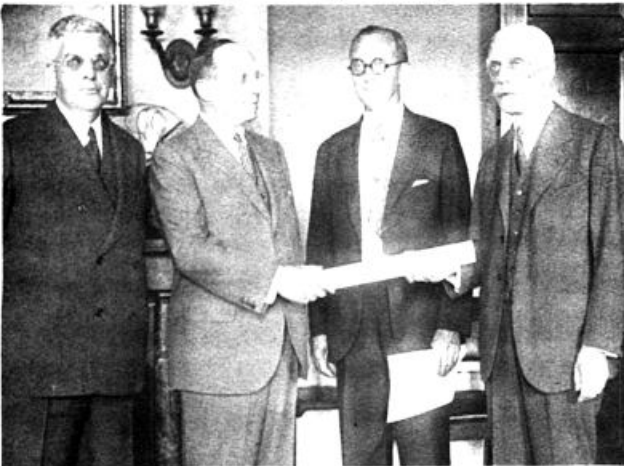
D'Artagnan or Frank Merriwell? E. Meyer at Yale with unidentified fellow-conspirator.



Boy Banker. Well, "boy" to Wall Street oldsters, to whom the young Meyer brought new ideas.



Above: Eugene Meyer as managing director of the War Finance Corporation. Below: Commissioned Governor of the Federal Reserve by Treasury Secretary Mellon.



The Family, Then and Now: In pre-Post days Ruth and Elizabeth were beamed on, but to



PAL OF PRESIDENTS Here's Mr. Meyer with four of the seven U. S. Presidents he's served.



wards 10 years apart. Above: Prizes to carriers in 1936. Below: the "Thanks for The Chapel Post" gift to Harry Deering in 1946.



ys' bill and daughters Florence, Katherine, ode grandchildren are of first importance.



E. MEYER, PROMOTER



Ladies' Man: Promoting the Celebrities' Golf Tournament with Dagmar, a Post anniversary with Molly Parker, Mary Haworth and DeVee Fisher, and the Children's Book Fair with the next generation.



25 Years in 5 Pictures: First day at The Post with Floyd Harrison in 1933. Friendly rivals—Frank Noyes of the Star, Cissie Patterson of the Times-Herald, Lowell Mellett of the News, in 1937. Dedication of new Post Building with staff members in 1950. First edition, Post and Times Herald, 1954. Silver replica of June 13, 1933, front page given on June 13, 1958.

