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Know?



COL David S. Stanley Tribute

Note: This article is a near verbatim copy of the "Did You Know" published in the November 2017 ANCC Newsletter most of which can be attributed to the minutes of the January 16, 1935, ANCC Board of Governors' meeting.

Colonel Robert M. Danford, USA, was a member of the first elected Army Navy Country Club Board of Governors and its first Secretary-Treasurer. Prior to his departure from the Board of Governors in 1935, he gave a tribute to Colonel David S. Stanley, the second Chairman of the ANCC Board of Governors, who served in that position for seven years and another two years as the ANCC President. This tribute is, in this writer's opinion, the best synopsis (7 pages) of the early history of ANCC available.

Tribute to COL David S. Stanley, U.S. Army (Retired) Board of Governors Meeting, January 16, 1935

Colonel Danford: "Mr. Chairman, I have asked for and have received from the Executive Committee their unanimous consent to present the motion which I am about to offer. I have asked for this as a privilege and for several reasons, first, we are now in the last month of the tenth year of the existence of this Club; second, I am due to leave here within a few months, and I am anxious to see the acknowledgment of a debt of gratitude; third, I am at present the only Board member who was also a member of the first elected Board of Governors.

I should remark that a year or two ago I slyly suggested what I am now about to propose, to the person concerned, and he was almost outraged. I received from him the same kind of a decisive rebuff that a presumptive junior might expect to receive when he had proposed quite the wrong thing to a very austere senior. I hope however that our strategy of today will compel him to capitulate without a struggle.

As the background of the motion which I shall present, I have culled over the first minute book of the Board and have jotted down some dates and circumstances which I would now like to pass in review before this Board.

During the summer and fall of 1924 there was much discussion here in Washington as to the need for country club facilities for Army and Navy officers and their families. Effort had even been made to form some workable alliance between the Army and Navy Club and the Congressional Country Club. This, however, fell through. A group of determined service

officers, amongst whom Captain F. B. Bassett, U.S.N., and Commander Claude B. Mayo, U.S.N., pursued the matter and eventually formed themselves into a group of 10, later known as the "Organizing Committee".

This committee investigated sites, finally deciding on this present one, made estimates, and issued organizing literature to all service personnel in or around Washington. This literature called upon all those officers who were willing to support this work by joining as resident members and by advancing \$25.00 on a \$100.00 initiation fee, to return an enclosed postal card setting forth that fact. The literature further stated that if 250 favorable replies were received, the committee would be justified in proceeding with the project.

This circularization brought forth approximately 260 favorable replies and accordingly the Organizing Committee called for these pledged members to meet at the Army and Navy Club on February 5, 1925, to elect a Board of Governors. This meeting was attended by some 50 prospective members and a Board of Governors consisting of 4 Army officers, 4 Navy officers, 2 Marine Corps officers, 1 Army Reserve officer, and 1 Navy Reserve officer, total 12, was elected. Fortunately, this elected Board included the two motivating spirits of the project, viz. Bassett and Mayo. Unfortunately, it failed to include any others of the Organizing Committee.

On February 11, 1925, was held the first meeting of the elected Board of Governors. Little more was done at this meeting than to organize and to elect Bassett as chairman and myself (unquestionably because I was the junior of the Army contingent) as Secretary-Treasurer.

Five days later the Board met for the second time and at this meeting authorized the employment of Captain Francis Boyle, O.R.C., as Financial Secretary, Miss Cavanaugh as Stenographer, and the renting of a club office in the Transportation Building, 17th and H Streets, N. 9P. It was to be Captain Boyle's function to work with Commander Mayo in preparing literature for, and in launching the Life Membership campaign. It was appreciated at this time that only by selling Life Memberships at \$1,000.00 each could the necessary money be raised to assure the success of the project. At this meeting action was taken to circularize the 260 pledged members to send in their \$25.00 to be used as working capital by the Board.

At the third meeting of the Board held February 27, 1925, Mayo's superb enthusiasm found expression in his estimate that 3000 Life Membership invitations could be sent out and that they would unquestionably yield a 10% return, or 300 life members with \$300,000 for the treasury! In the light of the subsequent history of our efforts this stands as an amusing item in the minutes of this meeting. Unfortunately, however, Mayo's enthusiasm was not contagious so far as many other members of the Board were concerned and that body began very rapidly to disintegrate. By early in March 50% of our first elected Board had disappeared and the six remaining ones of us were eagerly in search of replacements. I personally saw and begged two of the Army members of the Organization Committee to come on the Board, but they merely laughed at me. They thoroughly understood the magnitude of the effort ahead and did not have the time for it. One morning on entering our office in the Transportation Building, Captain Boyle said to me, "I have discovered that there is one of our members interested in this project. He has already been in several times to see how it is progressing. On any eager inquiry as to who he was, Captain Boyle replied, 'Colonel David S. Stanley Retired'. This incident occasioned the prompt drafting of

Colonel Stanley as a member of the Board of Governors, and he was seated as such at the meeting, held March 16, 1925--and ever since that date he has carried the lion's share of the load in pushing this club to an actuality.

The next three months were days of gradually increasing discouragement. The first life member was secured approximately one month after the campaign was launched. By the 11th meeting of the Board of Governors, held June 12, 1925, the situation had become desperate. Fifty-eight members of the original 260 were delinquent in that they had not sent in their \$25.00 as pledged and this in spite of the fact that they had been circularized several times and had been visited in person by our membership committee. Our Life Membership campaign had petered out with only 15 acquired. We had suffered the loss of Mayo, with his energy and enthusiasm, from our Membership Committee. Ten different officers had come onto the Board and had resigned from it. Renewal of options, costing \$1,000.00, faced us, and we were just \$178 ahead of the sheriff. At this meeting some members of the Board thought we should 'rock along' about as we had, in the hope that the membership campaign would probably improve. To this the Secretary-Treasurer responded with some feeling that such a course would precipitate at once his resignation. He would not permit so changing a Board to involve him in contracting obligations beyond the money in sight, thus putting him in the position of personally 'holding the bag' on a bankrupt project. The Secretary-Treasurer's stand on this matter was strongly supported by Captain Bassett and Colonel Stanley, both of whom declared that we had now come to a parting of the ways, and that either the project must be abandoned, or it was time to reverse the decision of the original Organizing Committee and employ a professional promoter. Accordingly, the action of the Board was to appoint a committee consisting of Bassett, Stanley and Danford (Secretary/Treasurer) to find a promoter and negotiate with him a proposed contract.

This action ultimately resulted in the unanimous adoption at a General Meeting of the club held June 26, 1925, of a contract with Mr. Robert G. Evans, the man who had promoted the Congressional Country Club. Under the terms of Evan's contract, he was to receive \$250.00 for each life member secured, but he was to bear the entire cost of the campaign, including all literature, invitations, printing, stationery, postage, etc., and was to take over our office and office force and relieve us entirely of all further expense. Evan's contract was to be effective July 15, 1925. At this meeting there was elected an "Executive Committee" consisting of Bassett, Stanley, and Danford, empowered to conduct the business of the club for the Board of Governors. Thereafter from the date of Evan's contract until May 23, 1927, or almost two years, here were only three meetings of the Board, its work being done entirely by the Executive Committee.

Evan's sole request, upon adoption of his contract, was that the Club elect at once the highest ranking and best known Army or Navy officer as its president, so that the latter's signature could be used in the personal letters to accompany the engraved invitations for Life Members . Accordingly, Colonel Stanley at once appealed to General Pershing, who however, by reason of the fact that he was out of Washington so much, declined. Next, he went to Admiral Hilary Jones and together they appealed to Admiral William S. Benson, who willingly and enthusiastically accepted, and who thereafter until his death, worked untiringly and unceasingly for the Club.

Evan's campaign for Life Members had as its objective our cherished 300 in number. It was launched in September 1925, and during the next 20 months a total of over 50,000 letters went out over Admiral Benson's signature. Admiral Benson carefully passed upon the first few letters and then charged that all others be similar. Thereafter his signature was successfully copied by Evan's clerical personnel on the thousands of letters that were mailed out.

From the start of the Life Membership campaign, it gave every promise of success. Acceptances accompanied by checks started coming in at the rate of 3 or 4 a week. Many amusing incidents occurred. I have time to mention only one. Through error, a letter and invitation went to Mr. Childs--of the Childs Restaurant chain--both at his residence and at his business address. In due time back came a check for \$1,000 .00 from each address. I can assure you it was with great reluctance that we returned one of these checks, but we did.

As the money for these life memberships came in, it was deposited in a savings bank and when a sufficient amount had accumulated, we withdrew it and took up one of our real estate options. It was during this period of taking up the options that Captain Bassett was ordered away, thus leaving Colonel Stanley and the Secretary/Treasurer as the functioning Executive Committee. Thereafter, for over a year and a quarter, the Army-Navy and Marine Corps Country Club was under Colonel Stanley's hat - nowhere else.

By March 4, 1926 Evans had secured 75 Life Memberships and we had taken title to all property except that of Edith Heiner. Beginning in the fall of 1925, when the Life Membership campaign gave promise of success for the project, Colonel Stanley and Curtis Walker began pushing negotiations for the Heiner property. These negotiations lasted over a period of about six months and many times threatened the collapse of the Club. This property divided the northern part of our property from the southern part of it and was absolutely essential to link the two parts together. Miss Heiner was clever enough to know this, hence the difficulty of dealing with her at a reasonable figure. Eventually we paid her per acre almost three times what the better property lying to the south of her had cost us. Colonel Stanley and Curtis Walker deserved not only a Medal of Honor for bringing her to terms below her previous unreasonable demands, but also a D. S. C. Her property was finally secured in April 1926.

In the spring and early summer of 1926 there occurred a fairly sizeable break in the stock market and accession to our Life Membership list stopped almost entirely. We had then taken up all our real estate, but this had left us with a treasury that was absolutely empty, hence no development work could be undertaken. We again were up against a stone wall, with defeat staring us in the face. On July 2, 1926 Colonel Stanley called a meeting of the whole Board to consider and discuss a change of site. For a time, it seemed possible that our site could be exchanged for one at Bradley's Farm near the Congressional Club, with perhaps sufficient funds left over to start development. This matter was given a long and exhaustive study by the Executive Committee but was finally abandoned for lack of terms sufficiently advantageous.

In the meantime, Evans began to think it might be possible to launch another Life Membership campaign in the fall. At least his fall campaign in 1925 suggested a possible advantage for a similar one in 1926. Accordingly, the balance of the summer was spent in preparation for this new drive in September. It was still with the dream of reaching 300 life members that Evans put

all his energies into this September campaign, but it threatened failure from the very start. Whereas the campaign of the year before brought in 3 or 4 life members a week, this one yielded maybe an average of one a month and Evans soon began to realize that he was whipped.

Baffled here, Colonel Stanley again turned to another idea. Why should there not be a merger with the Army and Navy Club in the city? This club had credit which could be used to establish facilities at the Country Club, and the two could supplement each other rather than compete with each other.

Negotiations with this idea in view dragged through the fall and winter of 1926-27 and finally collapsed in the spring. The city club felt that the risk was too great. In the meantime, by the late spring or early summer, Evans committed suicide, thus terminating with great suddenness our Life Membership contract with him. From Evan's own statement to me I know that his work for us over a period of almost two years represented to him a serious financial loss. Instead of reaching his expected goal of 300, he actually procured only about 99. His expenditures were thus on the basis of 300 but his receipts were on the basis of 113, and so left him rather heavily involved.

Again, failure stared us in the face. During the preceding two years futile efforts from time to time had been made to increase our resident membership. But residents would not join us "because there were no facilities", and we could provide no facilities because no one would join us and so make money available. Many, many times Colonel Stanley and I talked over the liquidation that seemed inevitable. Neither of us relished the idea of putting out bankruptcy literature over our signatures. If the truth were known, I would have to disclose that many times I regretted ever having been drawn into the project. The difference, I might say, between Colonel Stanley and me was that many times I would have liked to quit but having 'a dead cat' (the treasurer's accounts) on my hands, I couldn't whereas Colonel Stanley many times could have quit, but wouldn't.

In the late spring I was out of the city on an inspection trip that took me to Fort Riley. Here I encountered an old friend, Major R. D. Newman. I had known Newman for years. He was one of the Army's expert golfers; he was always drafted, wherever stationed, to take charge of the maintenance and improvement of the post golf course; and he was in reality an expert golf architect. The post commander at Fort Riley proudly displayed for my inspection the Fort Riley golf course, theretofore believed impossible to maintain because of soil and climate. He stated that Newman had planned and built this course at a total cost of \$700.00. I quickly found Newman and told him of our situation. From my prior acquaintance with him, I knew that discouragements never baffled him, and that obstacles never stopped him. I knew that he could build our course on a 'shoestring' if anyone in the country could. After telling him of our desperate situation, I asked him if he would tackle the job if in some way we could get authority to put him on it. He replied, as I expected, that he would.

On my return to Washington I gave this idea to Colonel Stanley, who at once went to the Chief of Staff, General Summerall, and put our critical situation before him. General Summerall was not only entirely sympathetic, but he himself shouldered in great measure the 'responsibility which we owe to the estimable gentlemen who have contributed their \$1,000.00 each to give us

recreational facilities for service families. He ordered Major Newman at once to Fort Myer and put him on special duty with no official responsibilities other than constructing facilities for the Club. He also assembled all Chiefs of Arms and Services and directed their active support in pushing the Country Club project to success. His enthusiasm and support were soon shared by the Chief of Naval Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. About this same time a new pillar of strength appeared in the form of Captain D. C. Bingham of the Navy. With Bingham and Newman now standing shoulder to shoulder with Stanley, our project for the first time became assured of success.

Newman arrived for duty about July 26, 1927, and plans had already been prepared for a 'club opening' on August 5th, at which the Chief of Staff, General Summerall, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Ederle, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General LeJeune all officiated in "breaking ground" for development.

A jump in resident members now occurred to such extent that their initiation fees together with the balance from those who had already contributed their \$25.00 put approximately \$25,000.00 in sight with which to start building our golf course. It should here be stated that the best bid we had been able to get on an 18-hole golf course had been \$95,000.00; hence it can be seen at once how Newman started work on a shoestring. His indefatigable persuasiveness with the Chief of Ordnance, the Quartermaster General, and post and station commanders secured for him the loan of teams, tractors, tools, and machinery, also salvaged lumber and building equipment, pipe, etc., from Walter Reed Hospital and the Soldiers' Home, and sand and cinders from Quantico and the Washington Navy Yard. It is hard to see how the golf course could ever have been built had it not been for Newman, for it is doubtful that any other man could have been found who would have 'hustled' and 'rustled' tools and materials to save us so much in money. The Club and the Club membership in years to come will never know nor appreciate what they owe to Newman.

In this brief talk I have dwelt at length on the organizational history of the Club because I knew it best and because it is so little known. Colonel Stanley and I are almost the only ones who really know what it was. The development history of the Club dating from August 5, 1927, is better known. Stanley, Bingham, and Newman carried the load through the many difficult and trying problems of the development period.

As I look back on the early history of the Club, these three men stand out conspicuously. Many other individuals have given the Club loyal, efficient and valuable service that all should deeply appreciate, but they came, did their bit, and went away again, surrendering their tasks to others. Though comparisons amongst the three named might be considered odious, I feel that Stanley, who in point of time out served the others, is the conspicuous figure. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that this Club would have died 'aborning' had it not been for Colonel Stanley. Colonel Stanley might dispute this, but it is true, nevertheless. Perhaps others could have done as well but they couldn't be found or were not available. Captain Bassett of the Navy would have pushed the project to success as did Stanley, but duty called him elsewhere. Many retired officers other than Stanley were brought onto the Board but in every instance, they soon withdrew and Stanley alone stuck it through.

Not only through the organizational period, but also through the development period Colonel Stanley's outstanding characteristics that saved the Club innumerable times were his sound common sense, his patience, his dogged determination, his suavity, his diplomacy, and his unusual skill in soothing ruffled tempers. In very truth it is he, Colonel David S. Stanley, who is the father of the Army Navy Country Club.

Feeling that this fact must never be forgotten, and that the Club would be remiss if it failed to acknowledge the debt of gratitude it owes him, I have the honor and pleasure to present the following motion:

‘Moved: That as a token of appreciation and gratitude for the incalculably outstanding and valuable services rendered the Army Navy Country Club by its President, Colonel David S. Stanley, U. S. Army, Retired, over its initial ten year period of existence, during the second to ninth years, inclusive of which time the said Colonel Stanley was Chairman of the Board of Governors and Chairman of the Executive Committee, and as such was the dominating personality in overcoming the almost insuperable obstacles which attended the organization and early development of the Club, he, the said Colonel David S. Stanley, U. S. Army, Retired, be made, as of this date, an Honorary Life Member of the Club and awarded during the period of his natural life or that of Mrs. Stanley, whichever shall survive, all the rights and privileges of Founder Life Member.’”