

by Robert Bonney

You've undoubtedly heard of Gilbert McClintock, who was chairman of the board down there for a long time? When he died, they asked me if I'd come down and take the job. I was a member of the board at that time and I did everything I could to dissuade them, because I was living in Washington, which was some distance away - of course, the telephone was handy always and I could come up for the meetings that they have (it's a fairly short drive, only 250 miles, and I could go up and back the same day if necessary) but they still, for some unknown reason, wanted me to come. So come I did.

Of course, I was glad to help; I think anybody would be glad to help any organization that Gene Farley was associated with. (I would call Gene a great American myself. I've known him pretty well. I've talked to him on all subjects.) And I said I'd come for a couple of years while he was thinking about somebody else - Gilbert wasn't expected to go as quickly or the way he did. And the Board was good enough to ask me, and Gene asked me, to stay on. But, I thought there ought to be somebody from the area or close to the area if they could get a man - not someone a day's drive away - who would be available on telephone conversations and whatever else. They could get a Wilkes-Barre

man. And I suggested a man who is now there - and others of the Board down there - I guess you know him: That's Charlie Waller.

My time there was really very smooth. We had an excellent Board, still do. Perfectly, I think, splendid man running things, Gene Farley. We were just dead lucky to have him and still have him. And the present man who relieved me is still there. As to any special incidence while I was there, things went remarkably smoothly. One great thing, which of course Gene Farley is largely responsible for, we didn't get into theked at all, though we were doing a great deal - and you probably are familiar with some of that time and what we have been doing and how Wilkes has expanded. I just did it by splendid management of the Board down there; that is, I mean the school board, with Gene Farley at top. We didn't have any very unusual incidents or anything that required to call for any discord that would amount to anything. And, I thoroughly enjoyed my time working with the college. Both with the board, Dr. Farley, and everything connected with it. It think it's a great little organization.

The Chase home was the home that my brother-in-law, Fred Chase, and my sister - whom he married - left. When she died, it was willed to me

and everything there. And I wasn't coming back to Wilkes-Barre to live and I didn't want to make any money off of it. I just didn't like the thought and I was wondering how best to dispose of it and I talked that over with another brother-in-law, ^{Bt} ~~Bull~~ Mulligan; and I remarked to him - I don't know what prompted the thought but I said, "^{Bt} ~~Bully~~, you have a young college starting her; I don't know anything about them, but I'd be delighted if they wanted that house - if they'd accept it as a gift"(which I was delighted when they did. Now, that's the way that piece of property - I guess you know it - it's a lovely piece of property and ideal for what they wanted it. I think there was one other house given that same day - one of the Conyngham homes - and they were the first two that were given to Wilkes.

THESE DONATIONS BECAME THE PATTERN FOR PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS, DIDN'T THEY?

Yes, it really started the ball rolling and, of course, Wilkes has had to pay for a good many of the homes that they've taken there. Most of River Street and a good deal of South Franklin Street below Northampton, is pretty much Wilkes now, and some, of course, just couldn't afford to give them away and Wilkes *paid* a fair price in what it has bought.

The one gift we got which was of enormous value to him was what is now known as Chase Hall. The way that happened, some other people wanted the house and offered a price for it and I just didn't want to sell it and I hoped it could be disposed of in a way that would please both Fred Chase and my sister if they were living, and I said to another brother-in-law, the husband of my younger sister, I understand that there is a new college here struggling without much and I wonder if they could use it and I asked ^{Bull} Bull, who was living in Wilkes-Barre (I had just run up from Washington) if he'd find out. As a matter of fact, I said, could you phone now? So he did phone Gilbert McClintock who said they'd be delighted. And that helped the ball start rolling in that direction. A good deal; we now have, as you know, a lot of what were private homes.

.....Stark Hall. The way we got the name of Stark Hall was when we were trying to get up enough money for the buildings, such as Stark Hall is (and which was a very valuable piece of property as it now stands - placed just where we wanted it. The duPont Company had had a good deal to do, in a way, with Wilkes-Barre. With the sale of powder during the mining days when that was at a peak.)

So, I called up an old boyhood friend of mine in the duPont Company - my older brother had also worked for duPont - and asked this man, now in the duPont Company that I said was an old friend of mine, if they could do anything toward it. I pointed out the very great value of such a building for the purpose we wanted it (entirely education). Well, to make a long story short, we got something over a million dollars and it was a great boost to the college at that time. Everybody was delighted. I would like to tell you who is largely responsible in Wilmington whom I asked to go ahead with it, but he's always asked to have his name kept out of the record. And, I would be just as anxious if you'd not mention me any more than you have to, except to say what the facts are so far as they're related to Wilkes and that building. :You know what a splendid building that is and what it meant to Wilkes; and it was the first one we had. One of its very important ways, in addition to being what it is, was the fact that it started other people thinking about what a nice thing that was to leave to Wilkes-Barre - to think of its being there when they left and set up quite an appeal and started the ball rolling really in that way of getting homes there. We had a number of homes given to us - some still promised, others of course, who just simply could not afford to give their homes away, who

have sold them to us. You've been a student there, you know what the result is so far. Still going.

Gilbert McClintock. Yes, I knew him when we were boys together. He was considerably younger than I am. Of course, as you know, the kid just scuttling along to be fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen is a real old boy to boys eleven or twelve; and I had known Gilbert McClintock when he was a kid. He was a great help to Wilkes. I left home when I was eighteen to go to the Naval Academy, and I never saw much more of Gilbert nor had any dealings with him because I haven't lived in Wilkes-Barre since.

Arnaud Marts. I guess you know who he is. Well, he's a wonderful chap and a great help to Gene and the college and his connections with it. He was on the board for years. I saw quite a little of him. Got to think the world of him. He had just been a tower of strength in making Wilkes-Barre, in his younger days, what it's grown into since. And, particularly, I think it was Arnaud - you'd have to verify this - who was responsible for suggesting Gene Farley to the people up there to get him for Wilkes if they could.

WHAT WAS THE VALLEY LIKE IN YOUR YOUTH?

Of course, then Anthracite was like so much gold. I remember my older brother, who was ten years older than I am, saying one day what Anthracite meant. He said it was better than gold because they can't duplicate it, so far as is generally known - where there is another such a lot of splendid Anthracite coal available anywhere in the world, and it looked then as though it would continue that way. Of course, you know what happened when oil came along to replace it as a fuel in many ways. But Wilkes-Barre, the whole area thrived on the mines, which had a good many thousands of men in their employ and, of course, paid pretty steady wages. It was a great anchor, and when the anchor was removed by oil taking the place in so many ways of the Anthracite coal, it was then that the valley had a problem on its hands. In a fairly short time, all the men they had there were out of work, and I think Wilkes-Barre has done a perfectly splendid job. You're probably familiar with that in the comeback and the fight and keeping its chin up the way it did to go ahead and make the area prosperous with what they did have - which was plenty of labor and a fine lot of people.

I think Wilkes meant a great deal in the comeback. It brought quite an additional lot of people there to come to Wilkes-Barre to the college, and there was no other institution of learning there in that immediate area that would approach the college over-all the way that Wilkes did. And, you know what the story is there and what it is today.....

DO YOU THINK ITS FOUNDERS INTENDED THAT WILKES SHOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY?

You mean, do I think that they realized that it would? Well, I don't know. I think very few people thought that Wilkes would grow in such a very short time to the position that it has attained. I could spell that rhythm out, and say it was answered in just one way.

AND THAT WAS THE WAY THEY GOT GENE FARLEY, and I think Arnaud Marts did that. And Gene had a great vision, still has it - and is still going ahead, and when I heard of it in connection with giving our house to it, it just sounded like a splendid place taking care of primarily our own youth in that area and, of course, it has grown, has gained character and known become/nationwide. It has accentuated its splendid position to everybody.

Both home and outside.

HAS DR. FARLEY BEEN ABLE TO FORESEE THE COLLEGE'S
DEVELOPMENT?

Yes, I think he did. I asked him, when he had asked me to join, what his thoughts were about the college. Where were they headed? And, he outlined pretty closely just what had been going on since he got there and what he still envisions to be done for Wilkes. I think it's a perfectly splendid institution. And, I think people who come from outside who have been there, think so. And, I think that was Gene's vision in making it what it is today, largely his vision, and he's still going ahead as fast as he can, limited largely by funds. Wilkes, as you probably know, has never done much borrowing. Gene was one of those men who are not too numerous, but he wanted to pay for what he got, get what we could afford, and keep on solid ground. We're still on that solid ground.

IS THE COLLEGE STARTING TO REACH OUTSIDE FOR ITS MONEY
NOW?

You probably know more about that than I do. It's grown in many ways and in its curriculum, and the people that it has there - and again

that comes back largely to Gene Farley. And he may have seen it right along; I know I was perfectly delighted when he outlined to me what he had in view, and which has been coming to light gradually for many years. He still isn't through.

WHEN DID HE OUTLINE THIS TO YOU?

Shortly after Gilbert McClintock died and when they talked to me about becoming chairman of the board. (1959)

IN TERMS OF EDUCATION - AND WHAT WILKES WOULD HAVE TO DO - WHAT IMPACT DID SPUTNIK HAVE ON YOU?

Gene and I used to talk that over and what he's been doing fairly well represents it. We both felt the same about going ahead; I knew his thoughts were large and he was reaching high - which I liked ever so much - and he has been getting those thoughts carried through to fruition and still is - and is still going.

WHAT KIND OF COLLEGE IS IT? SCIENCE? LIBERAL ARTS? HUMANITIES?

I would say it is all three. It's very broad in its scope, I think, don't you? There again, Gene Farley has just led all that thinking.

AFTER SPUTNIK, WAS THERE ANY PRESSURE TO ACCELERATE
THE SCIENCES?

No, I don't think so, except what we generated ourselves. And, it has got a lot of science in its course, I'd say, and that just seemed natural - a natural growth out of what was to be done, giving the students an education whereby they can go and get right ^{the} in/life of the nation; the nation most needed engineers. And they went ahead with that and, I think, still are.

CAN YOU ANALYZE DR. FARLEY'S CHARACTER FOR ME?

He's got great vision. He has another quality: He's very honest and forthright and outspoken - says what he thinks, and in my mind, and he's got a great thinking apparatus. I can remember one time - you probably don't know who Admiral Simms was, or is, but he was quite a character, extremely well known to the British and to others, and I was with him, I had command of a destroyer when he had the destroyer force and one night we were talking. He had had about a dozen of us for dinner with him at his home in Newport and he got to reminiscing about the people who fell away from him - which I knew something about and I knew the men - when the going got tough

with Congress in one place and other ways, and he stuck by his guns and never gave an inch where the right was concerned. Anyway, he got into talking about this business and his wife said to him (I wouldn't want this made public, but you can gather what I mean as far as Gene is concerned), I can hear her now, she said: "Well, don't get in that pessimistic vein; it won't do any good. I don't know whether they'd enjoy it too much, that is, the youngsters around us." (I was a youngster in those days; we were just loving what he was telling us.) He said: "All right, I'll stop." But he turned to us and pointed his finger and said, "I just want to tell you young men one thing," (he had been talking about the way people fell away from him when it did get tough - from the President down) "and that is that an honest man is the noblest work of God." You think of that; from all angles, he was honest in every way - in his thought, his conception, clean cut. Gene Farley is a good deal such a man in my books. Do you see the point I'm trying to make about him? I think he would have gone far, anyway. I've often thought, with the man's ability; and he's likable. He's got so much on the ball - looks, and in every way - that, in some ways, I was sorry that his field couldn't have been

bigger. But yet, it was a field there that he was more or less creating in Wilkes-Barre and he got so wrapped up in doing what he wanted to do that he was just willing to fight it out on the lines he was on and to continue with him and make Wilkes a perfectly splendid institution of learning. And, I think he has succeeded beyond what most people would dream possible - from what he started with. Do you know what he had when he got there? Very little; a couple of rooms and just a few instructors. You can ask him. (I wouldn't want this quoted; it's just my remembering, more or less.) He was going ahead as fast as he could, but his character and everything about him have been built into the making of Wilkes. I think he's done a splendid job, and it has been a great thing for Wilkes. You wonder sometimes where River Street and Franklin Street would be today if it hadn't been for Wilkes; it may have all turned-a good deal of it - to boardinghouses: People were going to the suburbs in those days.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN TO WILKES, ONCE DR.
FARLEY RETIRES?

I've often talked about it with Gene. I hope it will go on and that

he will have surrounded himself (as I know he's trying to do) with an organization and an understanding that he wanted it to have and which is coming more and more. I hope he has another ten years there. It's pretty well established.

WOULD YOU SAY IT'S TRUE THAT THE PEOPLE WHO GAVE HOMES TO THE COLLEGE FELT THAT THEY OWED A DEBT TO THE COMMUNITY BECAUSE OF THE COAL THEY HAD TAKEN?

Well, some of them charged; we paid for a lot of the homes, you know. The Conyngham home was a free gift; mine was completely free. I didn't think of it in that way. I had something; it was a lovely home - you know where it is and what it is - and it had been left to me (I had lived there of course, for quite a few years, when I had a day off or on a weekend maybe) and it had been left to me. And, my idea in giving them that home was that I liked Wilkes-Barre... loved the old town. It was my home town; I was proud of it - like most kids are, where they are reared - and I thought that if I could make that of any use to the community, I would like to give it to them. That was the only objective that I had and that it would be a nice thing to do with that home. I could have used the money, of course, but I didn't need it.

I just wanted to give it to Wilkes-Barre because I was giving Wilkes-Barre something and I wanted to put that house in a place where I thought it would be well used for Wilkes-Barre. I didn't want to make any money out of it at all. And, of course, I didn't.

WHEN YOU WERE ASKED TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
WHAT DID YOU THINK YOU COULD DO FOR THE COLLEGE?

I didn't think about much what I could do, except that I could give what service I was capable of giving on the board and I would be glad to help in any way I could. The house, of course, came ^{earlier} later... that was part of that same feeling.

WHAT WERE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE
BOARD, AND LATER, AS ITS CHAIRMAN?

It was yard duty - schemes that people would present for the problems of the college (which are much diversified and wide) and, of course, your wanting it to succeed - and when I got to know Gene Farley, I wanted still more for it to succeed and they asked me to join and I told them that I hadn't had any work like that. "Well," they said, "we'd like ^{have} to/you," and I said, "Well, I'll do the best I can, to be of any use I can." I didn't think of it

specifically in any other way. Same way with the house: I didn't want to make a penny out of it, and I thought if I could put it where it would be a satisfaction, every time that I went by, to think of my sister and her fine husband - whom I was very fond of - that they would be glad to see it and its use (which it is).

And that was a perfect answer, and I asked my ^{Ned}brother-in-law, I told you (that was Ned Mulligan, who's down in the Miners Bank building now) and right there in the office, he called up Gilbert, whom he knew well, and Gilbert said yes, he'd love to have it; so I said, "All right, it's theirs." It was that easy.

IF YOU HAD THE POWER, WOULD YOU CHANGE ANYTHING AT THE COLLEGE?

Well, off hand, without thinking too much about it (it's a problem I often asked myself when I was on the board - particularly when I was head of it) there weren't any great changes; but the way we were going and facing the future and framing for the future the policies involved with the board and the whole college. But there was nothing radical; I didn't have any idea of changing anything there. I think it has developed well and, from what I've seen - quotations from the press from the different sections of the country - it's become widely known. My feeling is that any place that Gene Farley had

much to do with for very long would succeed and become known just because of him: that they see him in action anywhere. . . . speaks well, he's completely frank, he explains fully how he feels. We've spent an awful lot of time on that, but we always were together before we finished. We never wound up with any differences and it was a very happy job for me.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT DR. FARLEY HAD THE KIND OF
MAGNETISM THAT WOULD CARRY THE TRUSTEES WITH HIM?

He was a natural.

I would say so. It was one of the things I liked about him./ I think

Gene would have succeeded anywhere. I think he would have made a great naval officer, for example - or army officer - and I think if he had gone into politics with his complete fearlessness and his absolute honesty and his ability to express himself right, and the innate good judgment that he has, that Gene, I think, would have gone anywhere, no matter what he tackled. So, you see I am a great admirer of Gene. If I hadn't been, I wouldn't have gone down there. I think Gene has made the college. People wanted to help Gene Farley, at least plenty of them have to give for that reason.

YOU
WHAT SORT OF MAN WOULD LIKE TO SEE AS HIS SUCCESSOR?

A duplicate.

WHERE WOULD YOU GO LOOKING FOR THAT KIND OF MAN?

Well, I don't know; you know my life has been spent in dealing with thousands of people in governments in all countries in one way or another and they're likely to come from anywhere - just like you look over your boyhood days and say that fellow may have come from anywhere in the country. Under any circumstances, he's just got it. Of course, he had to be well educated and well fathered and mothered to become what he has. He had a fine independent, thinking, leadership mind; It was natural to him. I feel that way and on the board, generally speaking I think that I could speak for all of them - or any of them really - as far as talking with them about Gene is concerned, but those who have ever discussed him just say how wonderfully lucky we are to have a man like Gene Farley. I think Wilkes-Barre is very lucky to have him; he saved the old section of Wilkes-Barre: No telling what it might have become if he hadn't been there. Because people are not, generally speaking, getting out not only of the town of Wilkes-Barre but similar towns and going to the country, the suburbs. Washington is another example.

ELEANOR FARLEY?

I think she was a wonderful woman. I'm glad you asked me.

I think they were an ideal ^{pair} power. She had a splendid mind and there was nothing small or vindictive in any way about Eleanor Farley. She was big in every way and a fine representative of the community. Gene and I have sat hour, maybe for ~~an~~ hour and a half, two hours sometimes - she was usually there; he'd told her to stay. She was maybe crocheting or knitting or whatnot, but she seldom, if ever, volunteered anything; but when we asked her, she was right on the ball. A fine vision. And, we often asked her if there was anything she liked - I did - to bring up and she was always interesting. She was a splendid woman, Eleanor was. I liked her. I never heard anybody express anything different from what I have just expressed, maybe not just that way.

SHE CONTRIBUTED, THEN, TO WHAT DR. FARLEY HAS BEEN
ABLE TO DO?

I say she was a great mate.

I think any woman of the type she was would contribute. You read anything over that he had done and comment on it - or anything of that sort

as we have done - and she was an excellent partner.

WHAT DID YOU CONTRIBUTE TO WILKES?

I was grateful that I could do something - I never thought of it until it was mentioned and I was asked, but I was grateful for the opportunity (again it comes back to Gene Farley after I got to know him, but not too well, it was in the early days) but grateful that I had the opportunity because I enjoyed the people he had selected. A splendid lot of people around him to advise him and he had great presentation of anything.

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD HIM AT A MEETING?

The head of the whole shebang used to come on first and then turned to Gene and said, "Go ahead, Gene, anything you want." Of course, we had usually thrashed out every bit that he had on his mind to take up at the meeting before we got there; we usually went over it pretty thoroughly. I think he had a very, very fine mind and just excellent judgment. I have been dealing with men, and big men - from Presidents down - ever since I grew up, and when I got a little older; and I put Gene down as one of the big men I've known.

END OF INTERVIEW