

NOVEMBER 25, 1968ERNEST I. MILLER

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M E D O R A

A less likely spot for an industrial enterprise than the Little Missouri Badlands of western North Dakota would be hard to find. Yet it was there at a point where the Northern Pacific Railroad crosses the river that the Marquise de Mores dreamed of establishing the headquarters of an industrial empire.

The Marquise's scheme at the start was basically a simple one. He would establish a packing plant in the midst of the then free range and ship meat rather than live animals to urban markets as, in 1883, was the usual procedure.

de Mores was, of course, a Frenchman. A graduate of St. Cyr, he resigned from the army at age 25. A background of military training is not unknown among corporation executives but the Marquise had another asset even more valuable for an industrial developer. He had money. Wealthy in his own right, he had the foresight to marry Medora von Hoffman, the daughter of a New York banker. Married in February 1882 in France, the young Frenchman and his bride came to New York. Here he went to work in his father-in-law's bank.

The glories and possibilities of the American West, so the story goes, were told him at a New York dance by a cousin who had just returned from a hunting trip. True or not nine months after landing in America, de Mores arrived in Western Dakota accompanied by his secretary-valet. A tent was set up on what was to become the town site and a bottle of champagne was broken to christen the spot Medora.

Once on the ground the Frenchman moved rapidly with his plans. A month after his arrival the Northern Pacific Refrigerator Car Company was incorporated in New Jersey with a capitalization of \$200,000. Approximately 9,000 acres of land were purchased mainly from the Northern Pacific Railroad. (A promotional piece intended for investors stressed the location of the projected plant at the eastern end of a vast expanse of free range. The availability of lignite for fuel, and a ready supply of water and ice were pointed out.) Construction of a slaughter house was begun immediately. Simultaneously the town Medora was begun to house the workers and furnish them with a trading center. The slaughter house was finished by early fall in 1883 but actual slaughtering did not begin until the next year. There were many other things to be done, of course. A house of a size suitable for a Marquise and his bride was necessary and this was erected on a hill overlooking the town and the river. Icing stations for the refrigerator cars were built at Bismarck, Fargo, Minneapolis and Chicago on the Northern Pacific to the east and at Miles City, Billings and Helena to the west. An ice house with a 4,000 ton capacity was built in Medora and ice was cut in the Little Missouri. When the slaughtering began in the Spring of 1884, the first, and perhaps the basic error in the plan, became evident. There was not a sufficient supply of suitable cattle. Range cattle did not reach their peak until August and marketing was generally done in the Fall. If the Marquise was discouraged it was not apparent for he countered with larger plans. Feed yards would be built and barley planted for feed. Additional packing plants were projected for St. Paul, Miles City, Billings and the Dalles, Oregon. A larger plant was begun at Medora and completed in 1885. Its capacity was 150 cattle per day.

To supplement cattle the Marquise bought and ran on the range 12 - 15 thousand sheep but half of the herd was lost during the first winter and the remainder was slaughtered.

Marketing which had been inadequately planned, was also a major obstacle. Chicago was

an impossible market to crack and the company moved into New York and 7 consumer outlets were established. To finance an extensive system of retail outlets the National Consumers Meat Company was incorporated and capitalized at \$10,000,000 and shares were offered at \$10 per share. The stock offering failed.

The Medora plant struggled through 1885 and a portion of 1886 but then shut down never to reopen.

While in the midst of his meat packing venture, de Mores had other plans. A Medora Stage and Freight Line running from Medora to the gold mine area of the Black Hills was organized in 1884. It was capitalized at \$50,000. 150 horses were purchased, 4 Concord coaches secured and stage stations established. The route selected was not the best and when a mail contract went to a rival line operated out of Dickinson, the Medora company folded.

Minor parts of the grand plan never got off the ground. A gardener was brought in with the idea of a truck gardening project to be irrigated from the Little Missouri and 50,000 cabbage plants were to be grown. They weren't. Shortly after his arrival the Marquise bought three pure-bred stallions, a Clydesdale, a Percheron and a "Kentucky Messenger". He also purchased mares but the following year the horses were sold.

The Marquise had other ideas. One was to use his refrigerator cars for shipping Columbia River salmon. At least one shipment was made with the car attached to a crack passenger train. A projected pottery plant using local kaolin and lignite never materialized.

In December 1886 a final attempt was made to utilize the property. The Marquise de Mores Company was incorporated in New Jersey. Its objects were listed as the selling of cattle and horses, operating ranches and laying out of town sites. Any hope of maintaining an operation ended with the 1886-1887 winter. An unprecedented snow-

fall and cold spell covered the range area resulting in near total losses for most range herds. That winter marked the end, too, for the ranching activities of neighboring small operator, Teddy Roosevelt.

Although, economically a failure from the beginning, the three year period in the Badlands must have been an exciting one for de Mores and his wife. There were great plans to put in operation. Unlike their pioneer neighbors (including Roosevelt) the Marquise and his family lived in style. The 26 room chateau was staffed with 20 servants. Visitors were frequent and hunting parties were organized with Medora as a base. Both de Mores and his wife were excellent riders and crack shots. A hunting coach, a replica of the coach used by Napoleon in his Moscow campaign, was built for the couple. The back seat made up into a bed and drawers for a complete silver service were built in. A private railroad car was maintained and used to transport friends and family from the East.

Titled foreigners were welcomed in the Dakotas as visitors but probably not as neighbors. Shortly after his land purchase the Marquise fenced his property, an affront to all residents in the largely free range country. Wires were clipped, guards were mounted and a man was shot and killed by de Mores. After two mis-trials and a change of venue, the Frenchman was acquitted on the grounds of self defense. The de Mores family left the Medora house in 1886 never to return. The Marquise returned briefly in 1889 to dispose of some of the property and to arrange for a caretaker for the Chateau. Forty years later, in the 1930's, the remaining property with the Chateau still intact, was transferred by the de Mores family to the state to be operated as a state park.

The Chateau is now a museum. It is furnished with the furniture brought to the West by the Marquise and his bride. The original linens, china, glassware, books, magazines, guns, saddles, boots and even wine bottles remain.

As a town with a population of 133, Medora still exists. It exists, however, only because it is the headquarters of The Theodore Roosevelt Memorial National Park and the Chateau de Mores State Monument. St Mary's Catholic Church, a chapel built by the Marquise for his wife, is still in use. The Rough Rider Hotel, said to have provided the name for Teddy's Spanish-American War regiment, has been updated. Only the tall brick chimney remains to mark the spot of the packing plant. Estimates on the de Mores losses vary from \$300,000 to \$1,500,000. Teddy Roosevelt, too came out of the Badlands with a loss of all of his capital. But Roosevelt used his experience as the subject for books and the basis of a brief military experience. It helped him more than a little in his highly successful political career. On the other hand, the free range and free enterprise experience had an opposite effect on the Marquise. He became a social reformer and was murdered ten years later, his wife contended, by political assassins.

Ernest I. Miller

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A Day with Carl Blegen

Carl W. Blegen came up the steps of the King George Hotel in Athens on a bright, warm day last May, looking little different from the young archaeologist whom the author of this paper, then a young reporter, had known nearly 40 years ago in Cincinnati when Blegen was back fresh from excavations at Troy.

The author of this paper had been inspired to be in Greece in May by the reading of "From the Silent Earth," a book on archaeology with Blegen as its hero by, of all people, Joseph W. Alsop, the Washington political columnist. Maybe it would be more accurate to say I had been inspired by Alsop's book and by my wife. She said we'd go to Greece in 1968.

Never mind waiting for retirement.

Weren't ones' college roommates dropping off like flies, none of them with ever a glimpse of Greece? Maybe one's health was not as good as one said it was. Just get the tickets.

Perhaps no member of The Literary Club, not even an associate member, should need a book to make him think of Carl Blegen and Greece together. Maybe any good member - resident members, anyhow - would know immediately that, if he were going to Greece and if he sought to taste, if possible, of the cultural spring that fed so much joy and sense into western civilization, the one man of all men who could best point the path would be Carl.

Joe Alsop leaves you with no doubt about the man he believes most closely attuned to the springs of culture of classical Greece.

In fact, it starts even before Alsop gets going.

The introduction of "From The Silent Earth" is by Sir Maurice Bowra, the great and usually dispassionate historian. Said Bowra: "If the book has a hero, it is Professor Blegen, the most modest and most disinterested of men, whose judicious, wise, and yet imaginative and adventurous spirit has passed into these pages."

That was enough right there to stir memories in one who thrilled 40 years ago at the adventurous spirit of so modest a man and who wrote as blithely then of archaeological intricacies as Joe Alsop does now.

After all, in those days a reporter on the Enquirer could appreciably enhance his \$40.00 a week salary with \$15.00 for a piece in our Sunday magazine and young reporters would gladly rush in where a scholar would fear to tread.

And this paper can attest that among the things that have not changed since then is the patient, tolerant good humor of Carl Blegen.

Errors must have flecked that Sunday piece

like waves on the Aegean Sea "but not a word of protest came from the young professor.

And, twitted in May of 1968 about Alsop's unrestrained acclaim, Blegen would say of his friend Alsop only: "He exaggerated a little."

But before I go back to Blegen on the steps of the King George Hotel let me corroborate my own impression, already stated, with that of Alsop. Apparently he was meeting Dr. Blegen for the first time, for he wrote:

"On the day named, I picked up the Professor at his quiet home in Athens. (Alas, Joe, how could you miss the fittingness of the home's being on Plutarch Street? Could you miss the little crinkle in the corner of Blegen's mouth when he mentioned his address?)

"He turned out to be a short, wiry man, looking much younger than his years, with a fine shock of thick gray hair. (It really isn't gray at 81, only touched with gray,) and a pleasant, humorous face (alas again, Joe, that 'humorous' is not word for the sly, deprecating humor of our member) in which the main features are bright blue, always observant eyes. Field archaeologists, like the painters who copy pictures in museums, must get used to strangers blundering in upon them. At any rate, he seemed to take me as much *fa\** granted as though I had arrived with a full complement of letters of introduction from the trustees of the University of Cincinnati where he held his appointment until he retired from teaching."

Fah upon the trustees. Alsop did not know the real touchstone. But, of course, Alsop for all his accomplishments is not a member of The Literary Club.

Mrs. Thompson had decreed: "Greece in May". The hope had sprung in Thompson's breast of a day in Greece under Blegen's guidance. Off went the letter, mentioning, of course, Literary Club membership. There was delay. Then it came. Any member of The Literary Club, it said, could not be

an imposition on Blegen in Athens. The delay was occasioned only by his being in Cincinnati and doubtless spending each Monday evening in these hallowed halls --- which only goes to show that even distant members should be here, and wide awake, on Monday evenings.

So there he came up the steps of the King George. Outside waited his ancient Plymouth with his faithful driver who must be the most un-Greek of Greeks. Greeks talk all the time. It really doesn't matter whether you and they use the same language. They talk. Dr. Blegen's driver never said a word. Maybe he was a Turk.

Our way led us past the fortress-like home of the father of modern archaeology, Heinrich Schliemann, dead, of course, long before Blegen reached Athens in 1909 but leaving behind a widow - the young Greek girl whom the archbishop had chosen, at the methodical Schliemann's request, to be Schliemann's second wife. Mr. and Mrs. Blegen were good friends of the quietly charming Frau Schliemann and often guests in his castle on the bustling street.

They were sometimes guests, too, at the royal palace but Blegen explains that Queen Sophia was exceptionally fond of Americans.

From the city we headed into the glistening hills, where the dry fields often offered a red sheen of poppies, toward Mt. Pentelicon, source of the marble that peoples all museums of statuary and dots, in the form of ruins, the landscape of Greece.

"They have been quarrying marble out of it for 3,000 years," Carl noted, "but you hardly notice any difference."

We paused at Marathon dam, notable for being faced with Pentelicon marble, apparently the only marble-faced dam in the world and done by American engineers in the 1920's.

Its marble facing was not noticeably

superior, aesthetically, to concrete. Maybe it was the charm of the terrace under the olive trees above the dam where we had Greek coffee that drew our party here. Maybe it was an unlikely pride in American work of a man long expatriated. Maybe he thought we needed to tell people at home about the only marble dam in the world. Maybe it was only a convenient stop on the way to the plain of Marathon.

Anyhow he told an interesting little story about it: The German army was withdrawing from Greece in latter years of World War II. Its orders were to destroy everything of use, including Marathon Dam, main source of water for Athens. Up stepped a young lieutenant, who was an archaeologist on the side, to persuade the general that this would be a useless affront to history. The dam was spared.

A few miles farther up the hills the road came out on a ledge and there below us lay the plain of Marathon where Greek hoplites in 490 B.C. slew 6,400 Persians, saved their city, and sent off a messenger with the news whose run, incidentally, gave rise to the annual race in Boston.

Then came our destination. We would through dusty villages of the plain, dodged overloaded donkeys, skirted irrigation ditches and finally were there --- a wall, a gate, and over it the sign, "Very Nice." Americans had plainly been there before. The proprietor was Albanian, a member of one of those strange hegiras that took place so regularly a half century ago in the eastern Mediterranean.

They were old friends of the Blegens, this family. Indeed they must have been friends also of much of the diplomatic and journalistic corps of Athens. In the wine rooms attached to the sprawling house we later saw huge casks labeled Embassie de France, Embassy of The United States, USSR, the Netherlands, then one scrawled with the joint name, New York Times-Reuters.

Representatives of the signatories often had contributed more than consumption of the contents to win such recognition.

The time of wine-making was a festival at "Very Nice", especially in earlier more relaxed times, and some distinguished diplomats are said to have peeled off shoes and socks and trampled grapes with the best Albanians. His memories amused Dr. Blegen.

"I once saw a small boy, who was tramping the grapes, slip and fall out of the vat," he said. "He landed on the ground, rose all covered with dust and dirt and climbed right back in the vat. It did not seem to affect the taste of the wine at all."

Dr. Blegen's return was a great event at "Very Nice." The family must have spent a good day at preparations. Now the deluge of food and wine descended upon us, strange and delicious hors d'oeuvres whose Greek names an American could barely remember for 15 minutes, much less now, then the main dishes of fish and fowl and of all the exotic vegetables the plain could boast. Wine too was copious and Dr. Blegen converted some of us to the Greek retzina, scorned usually by visiting palates but cherished by Greeks and those long in Greece.

We ate at a long table under the trees in the swept-sand yard, Dr. Blegen at the head of the table, of course, and the proprietor always at his elbow with something hot and new from the kitchen inside.

We dozed, you may be sure, on the way back to Athens.

Our day was not yet complete, however.

We paused at 9 Plutarch Street for coffee in late afternoon. The big old house has not known for years now the hand of its mistress - the Vassar girl who married her young teacher at the American School of Classical Studies and happily

collaborated with him at digging and writing until her death in 1966. There are the pillows with their distinctive patterns to remind one, each of its own Greek island. There was the ancient amphora with which a peasant had come, knocking on the door in dead of night because sale of such was forbidden, and which is bound now, like the house, as legacy to the school. In the garden weeks grew where her flowers were.

Dr. Blegen is at work, the slow work of another book on Pylos, the Nestor's Palace discovery that crowned this greatest career among modern archaeologists.

He bears lightly the dozen honorary degrees from major universities in as many countries and the gold medals of British and American archaeological societies.

When my wife pressed him as to how he decided where to dig at Pylos he explained that the nature of the terrain and potsheds on the surface had led him to believe that it covered remains of importance. Then he added:

"The farmer there was harvesting his wheat. We did not want to disturb the part that hadn't been cut. So we chose this space that was clear. Our first trench was a success. We were lucky."

Lucky indeed. Under their spades there came into view the great palace of one of Homer's heroes, buried there for 3,000 years, and a whole new view of the time, the culture and the extent of Mycenaean civilization.

It will only be Alsop, however, not Blegen, who will tell you how great is the work of this, perhaps, our most modest member.

Glenn Thompson

Mrs. Krofield is tall and thin, hut stooped, as people sometimes are at seventy when they have worked hard all their lives. Her sombre wash dresses do nothing to compliment her bony figure or her awkward countrywoman stance. Her face might look less ordinary if one could see the clear gray eyes behind the reflections in her glasses, or if her wispy gray hair were arranged and tinted by a really clever hairdresser instead of being always so untidy.

Furthermore, platitudes of one-syllable words delivered in a monotone do not encourage bright conversation. So, it is not surprising that, altogether, Mrs. Krofield gives a very blank first impression; she is the kind of person who is easily overlooked in most any sort of gathering.

Yet, colorless and plain as she may seem, Mrs. Krofield happens to have more good friends than most people around Pleasant Hill, because her practicing specialty is loving children.

Over a hundred years before Pleasant Hill became a fashionable residential community, Mrs. Krofield's ancestors settled there as farmers. In the nineteen-thirties descendents of the family sold off the farms for almost nothing, and in the nineteen-forties other people made money as the fields and woods were divided into neat little parcels soon to be known as suburbia.

Mrs. Krofield and her husband, who sorted letters in the Village post office, hung onto their unpretentious frame cottage set on an acre of carefully tended lawn and garden. When Mr. Krofield died in 1950, the married daughter, far away in San Diego, begged Mrs. Krofield to come west with her. But Mrs. Krofield, in her solemn stolid way, decided to stay on Pleasant Hill, where she had been born, and where her ancestors laid buried.

Since then, social security and a minuscule annuity have provided Mrs. Krofield's livelihood. For a few modest extras, and for direction to her life, she offered her services to the new neighbors as a baby-sitter.

In the sense that Pleasant Hill was changing into a young progressive suburban community, so did the new neighbors turn out to be attractive young couples whose many ambitions and accomplishments included, fortunately for Mrs. Krofield, lots of babies. She was, therefore, in great demand, because in the daytime, when the husbands were in the city, the wives were obliged to gather together, on various pretexts, in order to keep themselves mutually informed on current topics. In the evenings there were social or other obligations, important for status, or for business of one sort or another. Mrs. Krofield was on duty in someone's house almost every day or night.

Her phenomenal popularity with the parents was partly due to modest fees, and partly to availability. She would stay until any hour and set no regular hourly rate; in fact she seemed embarrassed to take any money at all. But no parent ever took advantage of her in this respect strangely enough. Equally and understandably great was her popularity among the progeny, with whom she was always firm, loving, and endlessly patient.

The mothers chatted frequently with each other, as mothers do, about domestic matters. The most glowing words from their vocabulary of superlatives were chosen to describe their dream-world baby-sitter: "She's a treasure, she's utterly fabulous - she got Tommy bathed and bedded by 8 o'clock without the temper tantrums." "She's simply divine -no complaints even though it was almost daylight when we finally drove in." "She's a sweet lamb - our girls simply adore her."

The children, less vocal but more demonstrative, met "Mrs. Kro" with bear hugs around her skinny knees, and with moist smeary kisses when she bent down to greet them. They knew her as the only one who could tell Indian stories sufficiently interesting to justify lowering the volume of the television, as the only one who would always listen to their problems and offer sympathy if not solutions.

They knew her as the dependable grown-up who was always fair. Six year old Joey Harris will

not forget his deliverance from a sound parental paddy-whacking, after he innocently shouted "Good night, pleasant dreams, Old Crow!" Mr. Harris, astonished at the rudeness of the nickname, was reaching for a ping pong paddle, his favorite weapon. But Mrs. Krofield, unexpectedly articulate, explained that far from taking offense, she had not discouraged the use of the nickname, and therefore assumed responsibility for any apparent disrespect. "To tell the truth," she added tonelessly, "I don't mind being called <sup>1</sup> Old Crow", it's made a lot of people happy in my time.

Over the years, newly arrived fathers and mothers were always astounded to discover how such a homely plain old woman could be so dearly loved by a whole community. Mrs. Krofield, at the same time, gave thanks in her prayers that the little ones were there for her to love, and that the broods were frequently replenished.

After an evening of baby-sitting, Mrs. Krofield was most frequently driven home by the father of the family. Upon reaching her front walk, the driver usually turned his car off the road in such a way that the walk and front steps were illuminated by the auto headlights. It was the custom to see Mrs. Krofield safely up the steps and through the front door.

What happened on Mrs. Krofield's last night of baby-sitting in Pleasant Hill was not the fault of Mr. Harris, for whose children she had been caring. But Mr. Harris still blames himself, because he did not wait to see Mrs. Krofield go through her front door after she had unlocked it. The hour was late and it was raining hard. Mrs. Krofield climbed the front steps, then, standing at her doorway, she closed her umbrella and waved. Mr. Harris drove off.

On her way up the steps Mrs. Krofield had seen a little kitten scurry under the porch. It was not hers, but it must be wet, hungry, and lonely, she thought. She switched the porch light back on and started down the steps to find the kitten. The steps were very slippery in the pouring

rain, and Mrs. Krofield's foot slid on the second step down. She fell sideways and hard onto the stone walk below. There was an unraistakeable dull crack which was both a noise and a feeling. Then there followed weakness and nausea rather than pain; simultaneously she realized that her hipbone was badly broken. There was no time for fear because swiftly the weakness became unconsciousness.

Much later the pain finally came, bringing her to full consciousness with its intensity. The rain had stopped, but she was soaking wet, shivering with cold and shock. She lay on one side, barely breathing for fear of increasing the excruciating pain; to move at all was unthinkable. Just to exist was all she could manage.

It was in this state that Mrs. Krofield was found by a village patrol car which stopped just before dawn. The policeman had noticed the front porch light on, a not unusual circumstance at Mrs. Krofield's house, but, fortunately, he also could see that the front door had blown wide open in the wind.

For many weeks Mrs. Krofield lay in a hospital bed recovering. Nurses pinned get-well cards and letters on a screen beside her bed which was soon covered completely. Flowers, candies and sundry gifts were shared with other patients. There were long days when no visitors were allowed except Mrs. Krofield's daughter who had flown from California. During this time, after much serious thought, Mrs. Krofield made the painful decision to relinquish her independent life in Pleasant Hill, and to move west to her daughter's. In such circumstances some persons would turn bitter against the ones they love the most.

Mrs. Krofield was allowed to have her first visitors on Thanksgiving Day. Pale and more gaunt than ever, she sat partly up in bed, her shoulders covered by a faded pink hand-knitted shawl, a relic of another generation. The first visitors were Mr. Harris and his son Joey, who, at six, was considered old enough to go along. Joey had been begging for weeks to visit his "Old Crow."

He had lain awake most of Thanksgiving eve in anticipation.

Mr. Harris had prepared words of cheer and comfort with deep concentration, because he could not shed a sense of partial guilt for the accident. In spite of assurances from family and friends, he could not justify to himself the matter of driving off so quickly from Mrs. Krofield's house.

As the father and young son confronted Mrs. Krofield, they wondered at how much smaller she looked, propped up as she was in bed. Otherwise she looked the same, so remarkably plain and uncomplicated, and so familiar in spite of the strange antiseptic surroundings. All of a sudden Mr. Harris' carefully planned message became quite superfluous. In its place, Joey's words, as they burst out spontaneously, could not have been more felicitous. The little boy ran to Mrs. Krofield's bed, clasped her arm, and looked up into her gentle face. "Oh, Mrs. 'Kro', you are so beautiful! You are the most beautiful lady in the World!"

Mrs. Krofield looked at the boy and was about to assure him, fondly and a little sorrowfully, that no one in the World had ever called her "beautiful" before. But she paused; because with her customary discernment of children's thoughts and feelings, she realized, without conceit, that to Joey she must actually be very beautiful at this moment. So her reply was brief and commonplace, as usual. It was simply, "Thank you, Joey."

Louis M. Prince

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