Interview with Joe DiNunzio, Eastman Kodak Sales Studio  

1/10/40

Mr. Di Nunzio came here in 1906 when Eastman Kodak Company bought the Joe DiNunzio Company of Boston, manufacturer of Angelo platinum paper. This was a sepia paper with cold development, different from the English platinum paper, which was treated with hot bath to obtain the same color. In Rochester Joe was made the head of the 'Joe DiNunzio Division of Eastman Kodak Company.'

When Joe signed a contract with the company Mr. Eastman's first statement was an expression of high business policy "In manufacturing always buy the very best materials you can and give the customers the very best product you can." Joe said he agreed with this policy and had followed it always.

Mr. Eastman called upon Joe in Boston and on one such visit the two men attended a salon of photography at which Dr. Dixon of Eastman Kodak Company was preparing to give lectures. Mr. Eastman and Joe listened to the rehearsal of the lecture and Mr. Eastman suggested to Dr. Dixon that a certain portion of it be altered or left out to improve the public lecture. Mr. Eastman's analytical sense and his desire for constant improvement were always operative.

An expression of Mr. Eastman's devotion to his mother was recalled by Joe on his return from a trip to London. He asked Mr. Eastman why he didn't go over there for a visit and Mr. Eastman replied "Not as long as my mother is alive." (She was getting feeble.)
Joe was with Mr. Eastman in Paris in 1909 at the first International Convention of the Cinematograph Editors and found that "early to bed" was his motto. About seventy-five members from all over Europe were at the convention which lasted one week, and Mr. Eastman had Joe arrange a banquet for them. It was held in the Palais D'Orsay Hotel and was quite a success. At eleven o'clock, however, Mr. Eastman leaned over to Joe and said "Joe, I'm tired and I'm going to bed. You keep them here as long as they like. Let them have a good time." He retired while the others remained and enjoyed the entertainment until three in the morning.

Mr. Eastman did not like to be in crowds, Joe said, and related that at the National Photographic Convention which was held in Rochester in 1909 Mr. Eastman had not attended the exhibit. When reminded of this, he asked what time it opened and being told at 9 or 9:30 A.M. he made an appointment with Joe for 8 A.M. He arrived promptly and walked about, hands behind his back, for about twenty minutes and then said shortly "Let's get out!" Joe believed he made this early appointment to avoid the crowds later. (Incidentally, 8 o'clock was the time Mr. Eastman usually got to the office, according to Joe.)

Mr. Eastman's thrift was displayed once on the boat (Kaiser Wilhelm II?) when Joe was coming back from Europe with him. Mr. Eastman thought of making a hotel reservation for himself in New York City. They went up to the wireless room and the boy after looking at the message said the charge would be $5.00. Mr. Eastman quickly took the blank and said to Joe "$5.00! When we get to Quarantine tomorrow we can send a telegram and it will cost only 25 cents."
Joe, with other boys from the office, used to go to the Powers Hotel on Sundays for what they called "Sunday School."

One time he was called to the telephone after he returned home and the voice said "This is George Eastman." Joe replied jovially "Hello, Georgie" and thought somebody was kidding him. The voice said they had an appointment for next morning at ten and the speaker wanted to see Joe at the office at 8 o'clock. "Oh, Go to Hell!" railed Joe in mock annoyance. Next morning he ran into Mr. Eastman who said "Hello, Georgie!" "You've got the password" responded Joe, "Bill Fulmer told me that once, too" continued Mr. Eastman, apparently not offended at being taken for one of the "smart" tricksters who used his name in pretense.

One time Joe was at work in the dark room when he heard the outer and then the inner doors open, lighting the room and spoiling his work. Joe said "Oh, Hell! Who the Hell is it? Shut the door." It was Mr. Eastman, who said he shouldn't have done it and he didn't know anyone was there. Joe admitted he didn't know it was Mr. Eastman or he wouldn't have used such language.

Before Mr. Eastman went to Alaska, Joe had a date with him for a Saturday morning. Joe had entertained members of a convention and they stopped for refreshments at the Powers Hotel. When he came back to the office Joe sat across from Mr. Eastman at the corner of his desk and facing sideways. Mr. Eastman asked the reason for not facing him and Joe replied "I don't want you to get anything by proxy." "Oh, forget it" said Mr. Eastman. "You've been a busy boy all week, so don't mind that."
Mr. Eastman was not above playing a prank now and then. Once he had as a visitor at his home an Englishman who was quite a teller of "tall stories". Joe brought Mr. Eastman a huge 26-ounce apple and suggested he set it on his guest's breakfast plate and tell him it was one of the smallest apples we grew in this country. Next afternoon Joe eagerly asked Mr. Eastman how the joke worked out. "Oh, fine," he chuckled, "I had a lot of fun with it."

Sometimes Mr. Eastman's friends did pleasant little things for him which were greatly appreciated. One time in London Joe and Mr. Eastman were invited to lunch at the home of a former Rochester couple (Mr. and Mrs. John Miller) then connected with Kodak Ltd., of London. For Mr. Eastman's benefit, Mrs. Miller baked Johnny-cake, and they ate it warm, crumbling and with butter oozing over and through it. Mr. Eastman enjoyed it very much and said it was his favorite cake.

Mr. Eastman enjoyed giving pleasure to folks and sometimes enjoyed teasing them while doing so. There were two men on a visit her, a Mr. Crooks from Edinburgh and a Mr. Barnett from London. They had never been here before but Joe had met them in Europe and he showed them the plant and the city. Mr. Crooks, a lively Scot, said he wanted to meet the boss. This was arranged and two visitors, with Mr. Eastman and Joe, sat about the round dining table in Mr. Eastman's office. The butler from the house brought Mr. Eastman's and his guests lunch and served it. Wine glasses were passed but there was none for Crooks, and he grumbled aloud "Where do I come in?"

Joe responded "I don't know, I'm not the boss." Mr. Eastman smiled, with lips compressed as his habit was. The darkly then brought claret and filled the three glasses. Mr. Crooks elbowed Joe again
and asked "Why don't I get any?" Mr. Eastman laughed and said nothing. Then the butler came out with a full bottle of Dewar's whiskey, a siphon of soda, and a tall English highball glass and put them in front of Mr. Crooks. "Now I know who my friend is!" Crooks shouted lustily. "I know Mr. Dewar personally in Edinburgh and when I get back I'll tell him who my friend is over here. It's George Eastman. He knows what I like."

Joe said one couldn't find a better host than Mr. Eastman. When French and Italian notables visited Rochester, during the World War, Mr. Eastman often asked Joe to his home to make them feel at ease by conversing in their native language.

Mr. Eastman once gave Joe a useful bit of advice after a game of cards on shipboard. The two, in partnership, had lost 50 cents in the game and Joe wanted to quit because he couldn't play well enough. Mr. Eastman told him not to be silly. He said "Instead of paying attention to bridge, you think about paper or something in the factory. Now sit down and try again. Think about your cards and you'll play all right." So Joe kept his mind on his cards and played much better.

Mr. Eastman was not talkative and he usually let the other person speak first. For instance, when he criticized photographs, in company with Lew Jones or others, he asked the other person what he thought. He didn't express his own view but listened to the other person's and—if he agreed—he said so briefly.

The interviewer asked Joe what Mr. Eastman's attitude was toward persons who made mistakes. He was gentle and said "I would do this so and so--did you ever think of that?" When they replied
"No" he suggested "What don't you try it that way?"

Joe made an 8 x 10 Kodachrome of Mr. Eastman about 1920, and Mr. Eastman framed it and put it on the wall facing his desk.
A few weeks later he said to Joe "That picture bothers me. I don't like that face. If it were a pretty girl it would be all right. Take it away." Mr. Eastman smiled a little during these remarks so it is hard to conjecture what he had in mind.

Joe has a photograph of Mr. Eastman with a mustache. Mr. Eastman had the only other print and then ordered the negative destroyed. (He soon shaved off the mustache.) Joe planned a trip to Europe and, by coincidence, shaved off his mustache. Mr. Eastman said "I'll bet you're afraid to go home so you shaved it off to disguise yourself." When Joe got to Paris, and his mustache had grown again, he saw Mr. Eastman in his hotel room with his mustache growing. He said to Joe "I see you've got it back again." "Yes," replied Joe, "and you've got one too."

Mr. Eastman nearly missed out on some cooking material for an African trip through a package of dried eggs being addressed to Joe at Kodak Park rather than to Mr. Eastman. Joe opened the bundle and passed around some of the contents. A few days later there was a meeting at which Mr. Eastman was present and the subject was brought up. "Oh, you're the thief!" said Mr. Eastman. "What do you mean?" asked Joe in surprise. "I mean that package was mine" said Mr. Eastman. "Yours?" queried Joe, "It was addressed to me" Mr. Eastman responded "Even if it was, it was supposed to come to me. It was part of my cooking equipment. You know how I like to cook." So Joe ordered the rest of the packages which hadn't been used to be sent to Mr. Eastman.
Interview with Joe DiNunzio, Sales Studio

Mr. DiNunzio came here in 1906 when Eastman Kodak Company bought the Joe DiNunzio Company of Boston and he was made superintendent in the paper manufacturing department—the "Joe DiNunzio Division of the Eastman Kodak Company." Mr. Noble and Mr. Lovejoy had become acquainted with Joe and had made the suggestion that he sell his place and come with Eastman.

Mr. Eastman was up there too before Joe came here and from that period Joe remembers one of his earliest impressions of George Eastman. There was a salon of photography being held in Boston at the time and Dr. Dixon of the company was giving lectures there. Mr. Eastman and Joe listened to the talk and afterwards Mr. Eastman suggested to the lecturer that a certain portion of it be altered or deleted to improve the talk. Mr. Eastman's analytical sense and his desire for constant improvement were always operative.

Joe later went to London to start manufacturing platinum paper. He got sepia color with one gold bath which was a simpler process than the English were using at that time. Quite a number of the prize winning pictures being shown at the annual National Photographic Conventions were made on his paper.

An expression of Mr. Eastman's devotion to his mother was recalled by Joe who was in London and in corresponding he asked Mr. Eastman why he didn't come over there any more. To which Mr. Eastman replied "Not so long as my mother is alive. (She was getting feeble.) If anything should happen to her I might.
Joe saw Mr. Eastman in Paris in 1911 at the first Convention of the Motion Picture Manufacturers and found that "early to bed" was his motto. They had about seventy-five persons at the convention which met for one week. Mr. Eastman had Joe arrange a banquet for them at the Palais D'Orsay and it was enjoyed by all. About 11 o'clock, however, Mr. Eastman leaned over to Joe who was beside him and said "Joe, I'm tired and I'm going to bed. You stay here as long as you want." And he retired while the others remained until three in the morning.

Mr. Eastman did not like to be with crowds, Joe said, and related how at a convention in 1915 Mr. Eastman had not attended its exhibit. When reminded of this he asked what time it opened and being told at 9 or 9:30 A.M. he made an appointment with Joe for 8 A.M. He arrived promptly and walked perfunctorily about, hands behind his back, for about twenty minutes and then said laconically "Let's get out!" Joe believes he made this early appointment to avoid being with the later crowds. (Incidentally, 8 o'clock was the time that Mr. Eastman usually got to work, according to Joe.)

Joe states that one couldn't find a better host than Mr. Eastman. (And one could not find a better assistant to a host than Joe). During the war period when French and Italian notables were visiting Rochester Mr. Eastman would ask Joe over to the house to make a little fun for them.

Mr. Eastman's customary thrift was displayed once on the boat (Kaiser Wilhelm II?) when Joe was coming back from Europe with him. Mr. Eastman thought of making a hotel reservation for himself
in New York City. They went up to the wireless room and the boy after looking at the message said the charge would be $5.00. Mr. Eastman quickly took back the blank from the lad and said to Joe "When we get to Quarantine tomorrow we can send a telegram and it will cost only 25 cents."

When Joe signed a contract with the company Mr. Eastman's first statement was an expression of high business policy "In manufacturing always buy the very best materials you can and give the customers the very best product you can." Joe replied that he agreed with this policy and had followed it all his life.

Joe, with other boys from the plant, used to drink a little at the Powers Hotel on Sundays. One time he was called to the phone while there and the voice said "This is George Eastman." In jovial mood Joe replied "Hello, Georgie" and thought that someone was kidding him. The voice persisted, saying that they had an appointment for next morning at ten. "Oh, go to Hell!" yelled Joe in mock annoyance. Next morning he ran into Mr. Eastman and said "Hello, Georgie". "You've got the password" responded Mr. Eastman indicating to Joe that it had really been he on the 'phone the previous day. "Bill Palmer told me that once, too" continued Mr. Eastman, apparently not at all offended at being taken for one of the "smart" tricksters who used his name in pretense.

One time Joe was working in the dark room when he heard the outer and then the inner doors open, lighting the room and spoiling his work. Said he just before the inner door opened "Oh, Hell! Who the Hell is it? Shut the door". It happened to be
Mr. Eastman who expressed his regret, saying that he shouldn’t have done that and that he didn’t know anyone was in there. Joe admitted he didn’t know it was Mr. Eastman entering or he wouldn’t have used such language.

Before Mr. Eastman went to Alaska Joe had a date with him one Sunday morning. At Mr. Eastman’s request he had been entertaining members of a convention here and they had stopped for drinks at the Powers Hotel. When he came back to the office Joe sat across from Mr. Eastman at the corner of the desk and facing sideways. Mr. Eastman asked the reason for not facing him and Joe replied “I don’t want you to get anything by proxy.”

“Oh, forget it,” said Mr. Eastman. “You’ve been a busy boy all week, so don’t mind that.”

Mr. Eastman was not above playing a little prank himself now and then. Once he had as a visitor an Englishman who was quite a raconteur, and either by confusion or from a desire to tell a “tall story” some of his tales seemed incredible. So Joe brought in an exceptionally huge apple that had been given him with the suggestion that Mr. Eastman show it to the story teller the next time and tell him it was one of the smallest apples that grew in this country. Next afternoon Joe eagerly asked Mr. Eastman how the joke worked out. “Oh, fine,” chuckled Mr. Eastman, “I had a lot of fun with it.”

Sometimes Mr. Eastman’s friends would do pleasant little things for him which were greatly appreciated. Once time in London Joe and Mr. Eastman were invited to lunch at the home of a former Rochester couple. For Mr. Eastman’s special benefit the women had cooked
johnny-cake, knowing that he liked it, and they ate warm, crumbling hunks of it with butter oozing over and through it. Mr. Eastman was never a gourmand and his lunches were usually very light. Joe remembers seeing Mr. Eastman in a Boston hotel order only one lamb chop and nothing else but coffee.

One very pleasant little story indicates Mr. Eastman’s thoughtfulness of details in pleasing someone, and--incidentally--his enjoyment of some fun on the side. There were two men visiting from abroad, a Mr. Crooks from Edinburgh and a Mr. Barnett from London. They had never been here before but Joe had met them in Europe and he showed them the plant and the city. Mr. Crooks, a lively Scot, said that he wanted to meet the boss. This was arranged and the two visitors with Mr. Eastman and Joe sat about the round dining table in Mr. Eastman’s office. The darkey from the house who brought Mr. Eastman’s lunch from home served it. Wine glasses were passed but there was none for Crooks. The latter was not a particularly repressed person and he grumbled to Joe loudly enough for Mr. Eastman to hear “Where do I come in?”

Joe responded “I don’t know, I’m not the boss”. Mr. Eastman smiled, with lips compressed as his habit was. The darkey then brought claret and filled the three glasses. Mr. Crooks elbowed Joe again and said “Why don’t I get any”. Mr. Eastman just laughed and said nothing. Then the darkey came out again with a full bottle of Dewar’s whiskey, a siphon of soda, and a tall English highball glass.
"Now I know who's my friend" Crooks shouted lustily. "I know Mr. Dewar personally in Edinburgh and when I get back I'll tell him who is my friend over here. It's George Eastman. He knows what I like."

Mr. Eastman gave a very useful piece of advice to Joe once which rose from a card game. On shipboard Mr. Eastman and Joe would walk about the deck an hour or more before lunch and afterwards Mr. Eastman, Joe and his wife, and a casual partner would play bridge for stakes of a nickel or a dime a hand. Once in partnership with Mr. Eastman, Joe lost 50 cents. Joe wanted to quit because he couldn't play well enough. Mr. Eastman told him not to be silly. He said "Instead of paying attention to bridge you think about paper or something in the factory. Now sit down and try again. Think about your cards and you'll play all right." So Joe kept his mind on his cards and he played much better.

Mr. Eastman was a taciturn person and let the other person speak first usually. For instance, in criticizing pictures with Lou Jones or someone he would ask them what they thought. He wouldn't express his own view but would let them do so and then—if he agreed—he would say so briefly.

We asked Joe what Mr. Eastman's attitude was towards persons who made mistakes. In later years at any rate he was gentle. He would merely say "I would do this so and so. Did you ever think of that?" Then when they replied "No" he would suggest "Why don't you try it that way?"
Joe made an 8 x 10 photo of Mr. Eastman in colors, had it framed and gave it to Mr. Eastman who thanked him and had it placed facing his desk. A few weeks later he said to Joe "That picture bothers me. I don't like that face. If it were a pretty girl it would be all right. Take it away." Mr. Eastman smiled a little during these remarks so it is hard to conjecture what he had in mind.

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When Joe got to Paris some time later after his mustache had grown again he saw Mr. Eastman in his hotel room and the latter still had his mustache. Said he to Joe "I see you've got it back again." "Yes", replied Joe, "and you've got one too."

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up the packages that hadn't been used and gave Mr. Eastman back what remained of his cooking supplies.