Los Angeles, Calif.

Notes dictated by Mr. Charles E. Johnson, April 3, 1940

With Eastman Kodak Company 1888 to 1934.

I well remember Thursday, May 11, 1888, for that is the day I went into the office looking for Mr. Eastman and a job. A few minutes after my arrival Mr. Eastman came in and saw me, and I said I understood he wanted a boy in the Shipping Department.

Mr. Eastman was then a man about 35 years of age. He had a full beard, and very keen eyes. After talking to me a few minutes and looking at my recommendation he asked to see my hand-writing, and in a few minutes I got the job. He wanted to know when I wanted to start, and I told him I could start at any time, I was not doing anything; so he asked me what wages I wanted, and I told him I would leave that entirely with him. I started to work about 9:30 A.M.

My work at the start was not all shipping. Sometimes in the morning I had to go up and help take down the coated paper, and then sometimes go in the stockroom and examine the Eastman-Walker roll holders, and take out any dummy spools and try them out to see if they would work. At that time the roll holders were made of mahogany woodwork and could be fitted to any of the view cameras.

We had one old style telephone out in the shipping room, and after being there a few days I noticed when I went into the booth to telephone a notice in Mr. Eastman's writing, which read as follows: "A soft answer turneth away wrath. Signed George Eastman." When I read this I knew that I could not very well live up to that if I got excited over the telephone.

The business at that time was not very brisk, as the dry plate business was very nearly at a standstill. There was however some trade in the Bromide and a few other sensitized papers, also in the American film, which was a stripping film made for the different size roll holders and came in 24 and 48 exposure rolls.

I saw a lot of Mr. Eastman, as he was working very hard at that time, and had quite a nervous disposition on account of the strain. I remember one day a boy went by blowing on a whistle, which annoyed him. He called one of the office boys, gave him a dollar, and told him to go out and buy the whistle.
In the January previous they had a fire, which destroyed quite a little of the stock and coating machinery, and a lot of the salvage was in another building on State Street. We had to go down there and bring out a lot of the supplies that were saved, and get them ready for any orders that came in for shipment.

A few months passed and the No. 1 Kodak was announced and went on sale to the trade on July 1, 1888. After it had been on the market a couple of months business naturally commenced to pick up. People would send in their cameras -- they were selling then at $25.00 each -- for reloading with 100 exposures at a cost of $10.00, which included reloading and 100 finished prints.

I remember some complaints coming in on account of the delay in sending back the albumen prints. This I can readily see was caused by the cloudy days we would have, which would slow up the printing, and the orders would get a little delayed, and some people made a complaint. A few years passed, and the Sollie came out, which is a printing out paper, which was a great improvement over the albumen paper, and again business picked up.

The rush of business made it necessary for us to work a good many nights from an hour to two hours after closing time. On account of this extra work a little time book was started, in which there was a notation in Mr. Eastman's writing: "All employees working in the building after hours must register when they come in and also when they leave." This I believe was on account of the trouble he had with a man that was employed in the coating room. I understand that he copied some of the machinery, made a drawing of the coating machinery, and a short time after that left and was employed by Anthony in New York, who at that time had stopped being our trade agents in New York. The Scoville Manufacturing Company on Broom Street in New York were appointed as our trade agents.

About 1890 or 1891 we ran into some trouble. Nearly all the American film in stock and also on the dealers' shelves ran slow, and they had to destroy a lot on hand and also have the dealers' stock returned. This was quite a jolt for the Company, but the boss wanted to have things right.
Mr. Eastman at that time was very busy with Henry Reichenbach, the chemist, working on transparent film, and he would work a great many extra hours. Mr. Eastman at that time was of a very nervous, high strung temperament, and if a fellow did not toe the line, he would get a call from the boss.

In a couple of years the transparent film came out on the market. This to my recollection was a revolution in the photographic business, and business commenced to boom.

Then a little trouble started with Reichenbach and others, and the result was that Freydel was discharged, and much to my surprise on a Monday morning Mr. Eastman came in — there were then three or four men working in the shipping department — and gave me a trial for the job in charge of the shipping department. I was then about twenty-one or twenty-two years old. Am very glad to say that I must have given satisfaction, as I held the job.

Mr. Eastman was a great Republican. I well remember when McKinley was elected it pleased the boss very much, and a few days after the election a big parade was planned in Rochester. The Company then was growing very fast and the number of employees was increasing rapidly. Kodak Park had just been started. Mr. Eastman was so pleased about the election that he asked to have an Eastman parade, and over 90% of all the employees turned out, men and women, and marched, and it turned out to be a great success.

I realized as time went by what a wonderful man Mr. Eastman was, and he would always stand for an employee that would tell the truth and look him in the eye, and I was very glad that I got along so well.

Mr. Eastman was out of town quite a lot, and still was persevering with the improvement of the photographic business.

He was a great man for outdoor life, hunting and fishing, and I remember one of his first vacation trips was up in Wyoming. He went up there for about three or four weeks with a party. They took horses and mule packs for a real vacation with hunting and fishing. He told me that one of the things that he enjoyed on these camping trips was to cook the flap-jacks.

He was a great lover of music, art and paintings,
and whenever the heads of the departments went to his house for dinner, he would always enjoy having them sing the old songs together, and he would join in the singing himself.

In those days he was very modest, hated to appear publicly in any way, and was not much of a public speaker, and usually would be out of town when something that he donated to the colleges or to the public was being dedicated.

I well remember when the Company, which was then known as the Eastman Dry Plate & Film Company, was sold to an English syndicate, Kodak Limited of London, which must have netted him quite a large amount. After the turnover he gave all the employees a certain part of the profits that he made. I in particular was very lucky because I received $105.

I remember the prospectus that was issued, the price of the pound share was $8.06; and after about a year it was turned back to the Eastman Company, and the price of the pound share had gone up to $12.12, just double in value.

As the years rolled on business was still increasing and eventually developed into a wonderful industry.

On one of his trips to Africa he had a lot of packing cases made, and he brought them down to me in the shipping room and I had to tin line most of them, and Mr. Eastman and I would put the numbers on each individual case. He took all his hunting equipment with him, in addition to his photographic supplies. I still treasure my book of Mr. Eastman's letters to Miss Whitney describing his travels, which he had printed up in book form. This included photographs of his hunting trip and travels in South Africa.

If I ever got in any trouble, I would go up to the boss and explain my case, and if he thought I was O.K. he would stand back of me.

After about twenty years the Company got so big that they needed a Traffic Manager. I was appointed to that job and had a staff of about 250 employed in the shipping and traffic departments.
1910:

Up to about 1910, Mr. Eastman was the Treasurer of the Company in addition to his other duties. Therefore, as I had to make my reports to the Treasurer of the Company, I made them directly to him.

At this time I want to express my appreciation to Mr. Eastman and all the other officials of the Company for my long years of service and the loyalty shown me during my employment. As a result of my years of service and my association with Mr. Eastman, it is my opinion that he was a wonderful man and very generous to all his employees.
re: George Eastman
by: Mr. Charles Johnson

Early Associations with Mr. Eastman

Mr. Johnson was employed by Mr. Eastman on May 11, 1888, to work in the Shipping Room, after Mr. Eastman had examined a sample of Mr. Johnson's handwriting.

Mr. Eastman's Home

At that time (1888) Mr. Eastman was living on Ambrose Street in a ten-room frame house where his father had lived before him.

A short time afterwards he moved to Arnold Park. At that time he purchased a span of horses. Later he bought a beautiful coach so that his mother could also enjoy the outdoors. From Arnold Park, Mr. Eastman moved to his permanent residence at East Avenue and increased his stables and added a regular coachman and other assistants. At this point Mr. Johnson stated that Mr. Eastman's greatest ambition was to see that his mother had everything she wanted.

Gardens

Mr. Eastman's beautiful gardens at his residence on East Avenue were a source of real enjoyment and satisfaction to him. Mr. Johnson recalled two or three different occasions when the heads of the departments were invited by Mr. Eastman to his home where they were entertained at dinner. Mr. Johnson recalled how much Mr. Eastman enjoyed seeing his employees together on occasions like this.
Attitude Toward Employees

Mr. Eastman took a personal interest in his employees and helped them whenever he could. He was especially interested in his younger employees. All he demanded of them was that they be straightforward in their manner and tell the truth, no matter what had happened.

Vacation Trips

Mr. Eastman loved outdoor life. His idea of a perfect vacation was to take a camping trip into the wilds of some country with his own party, horse-back riding, fishing, and cooking their meals out-of-doors.

A Typical Day

Mr. Johnson recalled that Mr. Eastman would often come to work at 7:30 in the morning and stay at night until ten o'clock. In those days the regular working day started at 7 in the morning until 6 at night, including Saturdays. There was, however, no limit to Mr. Eastman's hours.

A Pet Dislike

Mr. Eastman had a pet phobia against whistling. On one occasion when he was particularly annoyed by a boy whistling outside the office building, he called in the office boy, and handed him a dollar with instructions to go and buy the boy's whistle. The boy of course sold the offending whistle and both parties were happy.
The Baseball Game

At one of the department's outings it was decided to have a baseball game. Mr. Johnson recalled that unfortunately he was chosen to play opposite Mr. Eastman. Mr. Crouch was pitching. When Mr. Eastman came to bat he was thrown out on first by Mr. Johnson. This happened twice. At this stage of the game Mr. Johnson suggested to Mr. Crouch that he had better purposely fumble the ball the next time Mr. Eastman came up to bat. Mr. Crouch, however, did not approve. Mr. Eastman came up to bat for the third time, and without a word or nod in Mr. Johnson's direction, he stood up to the plate and batted left-handed. Mr. Eastman was making sure that the ball would not go in Mr. Johnson's direction again.

Dinner Parties

After the office in front of the two-story building was completed, Mr. Eastman had a dining room and kitchen installed. Here he would entertain a few close friends at dinner. On one of these occasions he entertained in honor of Colonel and Mrs. Strong who had just returned from Honolulu. His mother, of course, was present. The perfect touch on this occasion was the lei of flowers worn by Mrs. Eastman and Mrs. Strong.

Bishop McQuade

One of Mr. Eastman's old acquaintances was Bishop Bernard J. McQuade, whose residence was on Frank Street adjoining the Kodak Office. They were great friends, enjoying many pleasant talks together, and when the Bishop came to the office, Mr. Eastman
paid him every attention, even going so far as to meet him at the door.

Kodak Limited

Mr. Eastman's first gift to his employees was at the time he sold the Eastman Dry Plate and Film Company to Kodak Limited. He gave to each employee a certain amount of money from the profits according to the length of time they had worked and also the total salary they had been receiving. Note: This date is 1899. G.E. returned from England having made an underwriting profit of about one million dollars. He had made his first million. He went direct to his mother and announced enthusiastically that he had made his first million. She replied unconcerned, "That's nice, George." Within the year he had given half of it away -- substantially to his employees (as stated above) and to the Mechanics Institute.

Donations

Whenever Mr. Eastman gave any donations to the city, it was noted that on each of these numerous occasions, when the story was published in the newspaper, he would be out of town.
re: George Eastman
by: Mr. Charles Johnson (retired employee of Kodak)

5/15/39

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JUN. 3 1940

Mr. O. M. Salbert,

Eastman Kodak Co.,
Rochester

Dear Mr. Salbert,

Regarding recent letter of Mr. Eastman as requested.

I called at the Los Angeles Branch and met Mr. Frank and was most friendly and arranged for a typegrapher who did my work.

I am enclosing hereewith the contract and hope they will prove beneficial to you. If you want further service please let me know. Please pardon my delay in answering. As we have had a business in the family also have had company from the East which has kept me quite busy.

I am feeling quite well at present and enjoying the climate a little too much.

With kind regards to all,

Yours very truly,

Charles Johnson

May 18, 1940
re: George Eastman
by: Mr. Charles Johnson

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