**English-Chinese, 8th HFS Translation Award**

**THE MISSOURI MYSTIQUE AND CHINA**

**（Excerpt）**

By Helen Snow

The Chinese often think there must be something peculiar about Kansas City and Missouri and especially the Journalism Department of the University of Missouri. “We have to be shown,” is what Edgar Snow used to explain, after making his famous exploration and evaluation of the revolution in China led by Mao Tse-tung in the far northwest in 1936.

Since 1900 there has been a special China-Missouri Relationship, which dominated the field of journalism inside China as well as to the outside world of foreigners. It may have been Mark Twain who was Mr. America to outsiders not only in his own day but even up to recently. In China it was three men who each became Mr. America in his own period for the then New China movement and revolutions. These were first, Thomas F. Millard who arrived to cover the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 for the New York Herald-Tribune, an imitator of his famous Republican boss named something like James Gordon Bennett, as I remember it. Millard supported Sun Yat-sen and his 1911 revolution and became China's advisor at the League of Nations. Millard sent to Missouri for young John B. Powell to get his new journal, “Millard’s Review,” going, which became the best foreign-language magazine in the Far East. Powell became Mr. America for the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang people, as he supported the 1925-1927 Revolution and had to pay for this by being ostracized by the old China hands.

Edgar Snow came along in 1928 and was in turn the protegee of J.B. Powell as Assistant Editor of the re-named “China Weekly Review,” soon branching out as a free-lance magazine writer, starting with the Republican New York Herald-Tribune Magazine and ending as a regular for “The Saturday Evening Post,” then the biggest and best-paid journal in the world, a kind of family Mr. and Mrs. America, with its Norman Rockwell folk covers. Snow became Mao Tze-tung’s “Mr. America,” after his classic book, “Red Star Over China” appeared in 1937 in a truncated Chinese translation and 1938 in the United States, with a 1937 edition in England, where he had been the chief Far Eastern correspondent for the Labor paper, “The London Daily Herald," from 1931, when J.B. Powell got this job for him on a string assignment. Snow died in 1972, leaving eleven books behind and a reputation as the most admired foreigner who ever lived and worked in China, or at least one of them, and certainly the most appreciated foreign journalist. It was not only his original explorative thinking and writing, but also his Missouri personality, which may seem from the All-American Eagle Boy Scout type, as he had been as a boy in Kansas City.

It would be a true responsibility for any Kansas City boys to live up to the Edgar Snow prototype, not to speak of J.B. Powell and “Tommy” Millard, as he was called. It was no accident that Xi’an became the sister-city of Kansas City, as one is ‘Mid-West’ and the other ‘North-West,’ each a center of these geographical regions with special frontier traditions. Edgar Snow pushed back the frontiers of knowledge not a trifle, and also he opened up the frontiers of American-Chinese understanding as no other individual has ever done. This is actually a fact, as he reached the global public with his writings and they were the product of authentic experience and exploration, getting at the wellsprings of revolution and change in China in the interior as Mao Tse-tung was the chief leader to manage. Like nearly all China Hands, Powell and Millard only represented the treaty-port element as persons.

It would be hard to assess just how much Edgar Snow influenced American-Chinese relations by making such a favorable impression on Mao Tse-tung, the only foreigner of whom this could be said, and this causes every Chinese to respect the Snow image, while journalists try to imitate it, not always successfully, it may be added (in small italics.) Some foreigners resident in China were mystified by the fact that Mao Tse-tung picked Edgar Snow above others who had sacrificed most of their whole lives trying to follow the Communist Party Line and all that, some being card-carrying Communists. Mao Tse-tung knew Edgar Snow was a non-Communist and he had to trust his own judgment in opening up the story of his own life for the first, and only time, as well as giving his ideas an airing to the world, including China. This shows that Mao Tse-tung was not a small, narrow, insecure person and thinker, but high above that level as one of the leaders of his century and of some forty centuries of Chinese non-revolution, some people might say.

In old age some of the long time foreign residents of China tried to downgrade Edgar Snow as a personality and also his unique individual initiative and achievement. This was part of the general trend toward trying to downgrade Mao Tse-tung’s influence. Also there may have been more sinister purposes of their own trying to improve their status at Snow’s expense. It is one of the charming things that Kansas City voted to have an “Edgar Snow Day”, which somewhat counteracted the false views being published by detractors for their political purposes and wish in old age to establish themselves above any mere non-Communist professional journalist as the young Edgar Snow. They would never have dared say such things had Madame Sun Yat-sen been alive, or Mao Tse-tung for that matter. It is up for the younger generation to make sure the objective situation is recorded in fact, not envious fancy.

(The End)