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VICTOR MURDOCK IN ACTUAL LIFE

Some of the Interesting Traits, Peculiarities and Characteristics of the Republican Candidate For Congress

Nearly a month previous to the Great Bend convention, Dave Leahy, who had worked under Victor Murdock on the Wichita Eagle for thirteen years, and who was all that time a close observer of his development from boyhood, and of all the phases of his unique and admirable character, wrote an article or "sketch" of Mr. Murdock that is reckoned, by men who know the candidate, to be a very life like pen portrait of the character and characteristics of the next Congressman. It is now, as it was previous to the convention, a valuable aid to the reading public in knowing the distinguished young gentleman who will, in all probability, represent the good people of the Seventh district in Congress. He says:

"The only justification a man can have for writing an article, from an expert standpoint, is that he knows his subject. I think I know mine. It is a living subject of flesh and blood and one that I have been studying day in and day out from every viewpoint for thirteen years. My subject is Victor Murdock—the next Congressman from this district—I hope.

I doubt if there is an adult person either in Kansas or Oklahoma who does not know him by reputation. A great many only know that he has red hair and is a brilliant and versatile newspaper man. Others only know him as a clever and companionable young gentleman full of animation and somewhat hostile to dress suits and shams. I take pride in the fancy that I know him better than any other living man with the exception of his father and father-in-law.

If I owned the Seventh Congressional district in fee simple, I would be willing to wager every quarter section in it against a dime that if Victor goes to Congress he will make his mark and give his district a national reputation within three years.

Kansas never enjoyed such a reputation as when the lamented Ingalls represented it in Congress. His unique mentality and prodigious intellectuality offset and balanced everything bad credited to the state. In admiration of his philippic against Democracy the whole Republican world forgot the grasshopper calamity and in their frothy indignation the whole Democratic world forgot the disasters of the prancing cyclone. How could Kansas be considered bankrupt at any time when it had such wealth of genius in one man? Kansas can return to the enjoyment of the reputation Ingalls made for it if the Seventh district convention which meets next month nominates Victor Murdock. I do not say that Victor can reach the place of Ingalls immediately, but I do know, so far as anything not provable is knowable, that he will reach it ultimately if given the opportunity. This may seem to be nothing but the ebullience of an over-zealous friend, but I record 't as my prophecy and I hope to live to see it fulfilled.

Victor knows more today than Ingalls knew at 32. If Kansas were born again he could write for the new state as good a motto as ad astra per aspera. To my mind and in my belief he would direct its course to stars as high as Ingalls ever dreamed of.

Why, then, shouldn't the Seventh district nominate him? Is it because he is a tenderfoot and doesn't know the people or their needs? Who among the other candidates has lived here longer? Who among them but he can say that he walked his first steps and bled his first words in the district? Who stands ahead of him in loyalty to the party that has the making of a Congressman? Who stands ahead of him in the work he has done for the material development of the district? Never was there a time when the people of the district had such an opportunity to find a man who can fit and adorn a vacant place.

Victor was about 15 when I first knew him. He was "rooting" for his side at a baseball game—the freckled boy I thought I ever saw. He was full of that youthful life which has never left him. He was then known over a considerable portion of the state for his popular paragraphs—better known than Ingalls was at 18. He was not more than 20 when some of the pleasant circumstances of fate made him my "boss." I do not believe that a day has passed since whether together or otherwise that I have not thought of him and never did a thought come to me of him that was not accompanied by a prophecy of a bright future of some kind for him. After working side by side with him for a few years he went to Chicago to work on the Inter-Ocean as a reporter.

Victor was scarcely two weeks in Chicago when I happened to be there also. I made quiet inquiries about him and heard his city editor say: "that young man has a future." Within a month all Chicago were reading his articles and many prominent men called at the managing editor's room to ask who was writing them. Youth generally is vain but Victor was then as he is now—absolutely ignorant of his genius. He attributed his success to industry. The year he became a voter that great Chicago paper instructed to him the reporting of the famous campaign in Ohio when McKinley, then a Presidential probability, was fighting for his political life in that state. The importance of Victor's assignment will be more readily understood when it is known that the Inter-Ocean was then the main organ of Mr. McKinley's Presidential aspirations. Victor traveled through that state with McKinley and when one remembers his age—21—the fact of him being in a state he never saw before, among a people whose habits he did not know and in politics so different from the politics of his native state, the success of his work—success that brought to him the praise and the thanks of one of

America's greatest Presidents—one must believe with me that there is something more than mere ability in Victor Murdock.

I never saw him shed tears but twice—once, when McKinley was assassinated and once when he thought his father was dying. His affection for McKinley was based on the beautiful affection McKinley had for his invalid wife. He visited at the McKinley home at Canton and the love the future President bore for the helpmate made an impression on the Kansas youth that he has never forgotten. He has told me of it a hundred times if he has told me once.

Victor has more characteristics and versatility of mind than any man I have ever known. His observation is like lightning. He studies everything that claims the attention of either his mind or his eye whether it be in mechanism of a cuckoo clock in his office or the habits of his old brindie cow. And he reaches conclusions and results rapidly. Hearing a good pianist will make him dream for two days. But he does not dream often for good pianists are not very numerous according to his standard. Arthur Hochman, the great Russian musician, the one and only rival of Paderewski, told me that Victor's conversation with him on musical topics and his technical knowledge of the science of harmony was one of the most pleasant surprises of his American tour. Of books and their contents he can talk "till the cows come home." An artist now in Paris told me that Victor almost sent him crazy giving him suggestions as to how a certain picture should be painted. Shakespeare, he thinks, was the greatest poet who ever lived, Carlyle the greatest historian and Lawrence Sterne the cleverest fanciful writer. Of Montaigne he is very fond. I think I could reach a full measure of my pride in being a Kansan if I could see Victor a Congressman and hear him in conversation with the swell newspaper men and statesmen, who think they are somebody at Washington, on books and kindred subjects.

With all of these things he became acquainted while a boy—mostly before the age of sixteen when he became a hard worker.

Since coming into the estate of manhood he has been studying those things more necessary to an editorial life. During his campaign with McKinley in Ohio he mastered the tariff problem; in '96 he solved the money question from a Republican standpoint; later the trust and transportation questions became his study. During the war with Spain he applied his mind to what has developed under the name of so-called imperialism and I doubt whether there is a man in the state who foresaw more accurately the results of the Spanish-American war than he did. Irrigation is one of his hobbies and he believes the destiny of western Kansas and western Oklahoma depends upon the utilization of water on the surface of the land. He is passionately fond of studying popular movements and he can probably give you a better and more logical theory of the birth and evolution of the Farmers' Alliance than any man in the state.

He is not a bitter partisan but he is a strict Republican in politics. He begins his political in the precinct and holds that it is the exact spot at which the pulse of the nation must be felt. He believes that with no local conditions influencing it the true trend of political thought and sentiment can be arrived at by a study of the precinct. He is a hard fighter and a wise tactician in politics and his methods are always along the line of honesty and fairness towards the other side. He thinks it is political capital in the end for one to be fair with the opposition. Of recent years he has developed talent for constructive politics and if he had the disposition he could set pins and make complications which would prove him to be a dangerous rival at the head of a machine, because he is resourceful. As a matter of fact, his tastes are entirely in newspaper work. Writing is his passion.

Victor's most vicious habits are hard work and a pipe. If the world would always give him something to do a bag of tobacco and some books, he would not be dissatisfied. The other habits of modern gentlemen he has not. He has no more idea of the relative value of a blue chip and a white one than the man in the moon. He always works with his coat off. He is about fifteen degrees warmer-blooded than the average man and when summer comes around he is a sight to see in his sanctum. Coat, vest, galluses, and many times the shirt, come off and the sweat at the roots of his red hair looks like blood. Of course, with his experience, he can take any place in the shop and when somebody gets sick, he does not hesitate to add the night to the day's toll. Once he told me that it was his wish, should he happen to die, his tombstone should contain simply this: "Victor Murdock, a hard worker."

I have never known a harder worker nor have I ever known a man who could get work more cheerfully out of others. He has a wonderful influence over employees, and I have never known him to have an enemy in the office but the telephone. He considers that piece of mechanism the contrivance of an evil spirit. When a man is planning out a nice sentence and has it about copied, the telephone is sure to ring and down comes the tiny fabric of one's thought. It rings a little oftener in the Eagle office than in any other newspaper office in America.

I have never known him to discharge a man from the Eagle office but one and he came within an ace of hiring him back again the next day, although his offense was serious. If there had been a woman

and tears in the affair he would sure do it. Once, several years ago, during the panic, it became necessary to cut down the office force. Two men had to be discharged. It was up to Victor to do it. They soon appeared in the office and by way of preliminaries he started a conversation with them. He finally called me into another room and said: "I haven't the heart to do it, you frame up some gentle way of informing them of the situation." I came back to the men and for some reason they anticipated my duty and cheerfully helped me out of the unpleasant situation.

The secret of his marvelous influence with his men is this, that he works with them on equal footing. He has never in the slightest degree abused the privilege he enjoys of being the son of the editor-in-chief and owner of the paper. He has never for a moment thought that he is anything more than an employe, working on a salary like anybody else about the place. He is addressed as "Vic" by everybody, from the "devil" up, and if anybody would call him "Mr. Murdock," a large percentage of the force would be liable to drop dead from the shock of the surprise. Some great man has said: "If a man is generally addressed by his first name he is mighty apt to be a good fellow." The statement is very true in the case under consideration.

Victor has multitudinous relations other than those with his men. His relations with the public, as managing editor of the Eagle necessarily and unnecessarily claim a large share of his time. He has to deal with the injured citizen, the complaining merchant, the man who wants things kept out of the papers, the woman who wants things in the paper, the man who thought he would just drop in to see the editor, the person with some hobby to exploit in ink, the politician and the spring poet. He has a ready if not a willing ear for all of them. He hears their claims or complaints and gets along well with them because he is candid. If poetry is bad and practically all poetry that comes to a newspaper office is bad, he will say so. He generally applies a balm of some kind to the poet's wounded heart which satisfies him. Women will never learn the logic of a newspaper.

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The late Noble Prentiss, while working for John A. Martin in the Atchison Champion, several years ago took a notion one time to save money and started a bank account. He kept putting money into the bank for nearly a year. One day he ran short of money and it is told for actual truth that he had to ask Governor Martin how to get it out. He was probably fifty years of age at the time and never had written a check. Victor isn't quite that bad. He knows how to put money into a bank and how to draw it out, but he doesn't know any more about how his account stands, so long as it is on the right side of the ledger. A robber could catch him any hour of the day or night between January and October and not be able to find more than two bits in his pocket.

Mostly everybody believes that he is a college-bred man. He isn't. All his education was gotten in a ward school in Wichita. He was a scholar at age and before he was ten years of age he was juggling with the English language and constructing paradoxes, epigrams and things. His vocabulary is almost equal to the dictionary. He gets this by inheritance, for probably no editor west of the Mississippi knows more words of the English language than his father.

Victor likes excitement. He is always at the window when a brass band or the fire department is passing. He would rather have seen Mont Pelee blow its head off than get a certificate of election to the United States Senate. He has a passion to see the forces of nature at work and has said many times that he

VANDERGRIFT ON THE CANDIDATE

Gleever Pen Picture of Victor Murdock by One of the Veteran Correspondents of the State Capital

Writing from Wichita to the Kansas City Star, Fred Vandergrift says of "The Real Victor Murdock":

"It will be agreeable news to Kansas men and women everywhere, at home and abroad, when they hear of the nomination of Victor Murdock for Congress. No other man in Kansas has so many friends and none of the new generation has so many admirers—genuine, unselfish admirers. It sometimes is the Kansas way to use the superlative carelessly, but this is one that will stay and pass unchallenged.

"In the rivalry for fame and advancement among his contemporaries, nimble and assertive men sometimes of less native ability have, by seizing the opportunity, pushed into view ahead of Victor Murdock, but he is not a man to find fault or complain. He knows what success means, and generously giving the congratulatory hand, studiously pursues his own way. He never pulls down what another builds up and the sin of ingratitude never has poisoned his character. Envy never enters his mind and a life is his abomination. He is ambitious beyond even his own admissions, but his provincial successes in his chosen profession have satisfied him, confident that a wider field would open to him sooner or later, and now the opportunity has come.

"Mr. Murdock is a genuine man, and therefore, companionable and trustworthy. The world to him is a constant revelation and will be to the end of his days, for he is wise enough to know that what he has taken nature ages to plan and form cannot be all studied out in the psalmist's span of life. He wants companions always and he finds them wherever he goes. Friend or stranger, high or low, wherever he goes, he always finds a companion, and daily adds to his store of knowledge. He is a great student of men and causes, and he has his own way of gathering information. When he goes among the people, as he has been doing the last sixty days, he studiously avoids the politicians. They are the last men to seek, he says.

"It is my observation," Mr. Murdock said to a correspondent of The Star last night, "that the best place to find what the people are thinking about is the country drug store. The drug store is usually the oldest established business in a town. It may change owners, but the business stays and there the men of the little town and nearby farms are in the habit of congregating after their work hours, or on holidays. And they are bright men, too, plain and homespun as they may seem. Well, when I was on these trips lately, I hid out from the 'leaders' and found my way to the drug stores. Nobody knew me, but that, perhaps, was all the better. At Medicine Lodge, for instance, I found them talking about the Isthmian canal. When I found an opening I modestly injected my boom for Congress. One man had heard of my father and introduced me to the crowd. They all shook hands with me, in the solemn and respectful fashion of rural communities, and then, without ceremony, returned to the Isthmian canal as if I had not come all the way to Medicine Lodge to show them my boom. It took my conceit down a peg.

"From the canal they drifted to Theodore Roosevelt, and so it was from Medicine Lodge to Great Bend; all over, wherever I went, the people were talking of the stupendous enterprise of the Twentieth century and of the wholesome man who has come to the head of the nation. I have not lived very long, but I have been about a bit and seen public men, and never in all my observation, or even reading, have we had an American so generally esteemed and respected by the people as Mr. Roosevelt. Old line and radical Democrats will vote against him and share in the nation's pride in him.

"It was pleasant to witness the homecoming of Victor Murdock the day after the Great Bend convention. It was a welcome of the people, of his friends, and Democrats were no less enthusiastic than Republicans. Thousands were at the station when the train arrived. It bucked in and Mr. Murdock stood modestly on the platform. It was a new experience for the young man. He who all his newspaper life has been sounding the praises of other men was now himself a hero and the subject of an ovation never before equalled in generous enthusiasm or numbers in the town of his abode. First smiles were in his eyes, then tears, and then he was seized by men and borne upon their shoulders to the sidewalk. Old men of his father's years and school time friends of his own grasped his hands, and women took him in their arms and kissed him. Newsboys and golf caddies shouted 'Hello, Victor!' the mills and factories sounded a noisy welcome, and street car bells added to the din. Finally the 'boy's' father and mother, his wife and little daughter, and other kindred were found in the crowd, and the procession, led by two bands, and the newsboys, moved to the Wichita Eagle office, where the young candidate made a speech from the window.

"The popularity of Victor Murdock in this town is something remarkable," said Mr. Haggy, editor and proprietor of the Democratic paper, today. "I have known him many years, and I never have heard man, woman or child say an ill word of him. He is my rival in business, but I am very fond of Victor Murdock. This popularity goes back to his school days. He is a product of the Wichita schools, and to this day the old companions of his youth are his warm friends. He is a bright man, too. I never have known a young man of more ability, and he is absolutely honest. His honesty and his genuine character are his charms."

And so the testimony of the young

man's worth is heard all over this town. The humbler classes are even more kind in their praises than the business and professional men. Victor Murdock knows every street car driver and motomeer in town. He always rides in front with them, and they exchange confidences. He tells them his likes and dislikes and they tell him theirs. They tell him of their families, of their hard luck and good, of their children and of their hopes and fears. It is his curious and ever-broadening mind. He wants to know what is going on at the bottom; what the people are thinking.

"This is a good world," Mr. Murdock said today. "Since I got into this race I have made up my mind that it is not half bad."

"How about the other half?"

"Oh, that is good, too. Nature does nothing wrong. We only take a wrong view of things sometimes, that's all."

"Victor Murdock is a man of high ideals and he also has idols. Sometimes he gets the two mixed. His idols are often men of borrowed ability, but all men of that class are brilliant in the use of the gift of others, and so this young man, who looks up and never down, always has a little joss house stowed away in his mind and it is full of idols.

"Some years ago there came to Wichita a young man, brilliant and well born, but improvident and dissipated, and he knew books by heart. He could turn his hand to anything, and he was especially a brilliant writer. He could imitate Thackeray or Dickens and could inject Shakespeare or all that. He was not original or creative, but his brilliant conversation and charm of manner fascinated young Murdock. While Victor worshipped, his idol never gave a word of commendation in return.

"You don't drink and you must never form the habit," he used to say between his own cups. Or "You smoke too much; let me kill myself that way, but you shall not." Or "You go home, Victor, and be fresh for work tomorrow."

Only good advice and commands; never a word of praise from the idol.

"One day while the two young men were working in Chicago, the idol was killed in a railroad collision, and in a few weeks the paper which employed them sent Victor to unveil a little monument that it had erected to the dead man's memory. At the side of the grave stood a cousin of the dead man. It was a young woman, and she took from her purse a man's visiting card. It bore the name 'Victor Murdock.'

"I am the last living person who spoke to our friend," she said to Victor. "Fifteen minutes before he was killed he gave me this card, saying: 'There, my cousin, is the name of the brightest man I ever knew.'"

"At last the idol had spoken and given his friend one word of praise, but it was from the grave.

"Still Victor is true to his idol and idealizes him, although during all the years of their friendship Murdock was coming into fame and broadening in mind, while the other was idling in borrowed plumage. Victor Murdock is a man who never loses faith.

"Ah, Victor, his grandfather observed one day, 'what a tragedy when you mature and find out the sham of this world!'

"That was a good many years ago, but the old man is in his grave now, but I have not found the world so very bad," said Mr. Murdock last night.

"The race of Murdock is a bit hard-headed when they think they are getting the 'worst of it,' and sometimes they assert their independence even in their family. They never stoop to a contention, but they set up in business for themselves, and that is what young Victor did once upon a time. He was only 30 years old, but he was married, and his wife shared in his spirit of independence. He had been working on the Wichita Eagle since his graduation from the Wichita High School, and one day he went to his father for a 'raise.' He was getting \$9 a week, and he wanted \$12.

"That would not be fair, Victor, to the other boys," Colonel Murdock said. "I can't promote you over older and more useful men."

"The spirit of fair play is also in the Murdock blood.

"I am worth as much as the book-keeper," the young man protested.

"No, Victor, we could not replace the bookkeeper, but we could you. Be patient and wait awhile. Live along with your mother and me until you learn to fly."

"But the boy wanted to get out and be doing better. He went to his mother.

"Pull out and go to a bigger town," she said.

"The wife agreed with the mother. She was only 18 years old then, and had married when she was 15, but she possessed the courage of womanhood and knew that Victor Murdock would succeed.

"So the head of the Wichita house of Murdock was astonished the next morning to receive a note informing him that his son Victor had resigned and would try his fortune in Chicago. It was a desperate chance the boy was taking, but the courage of it all pleased the 'old man,' and so Victor transferred his allegiance from the Wichita Eagle to the Chicago Inter-Ocean. He began at \$2 a week and he thought it was a fortune. He worked two weeks without drawing his pay. One day in the third week the city editor called him to his desk. 'You are wanted in the business office,' he said.

"That is their way of firing me here," the new reporter thought.

"Is your name Murdock?" the business manager asked.

"Yes, sir."

(Continued on Second Page)



VICTOR MURDOCK

They will bring all kinds of clippings to have them reprinted and can't understand why the Youth's Companion will publish them and the Eagle won't. With them Victor has a fierce foe. He will argue with them until one would think they were at the point of exchanging blows and when he has argued enough he generally yields and then the woman goes away doubly happy in the belief that she scored a double victory in getting the piece printed and in what is more to her, getting the best of the argument.

Human sympathy is a wonderful thing. Probably there is no metropolitan paper in America which prints obituaries for everybody, free, but the Eagle, Victor holds that birth and death are the biggest events in the chain of a human career. It is his policy, and he holds to it strictly with a "must," that a bereaved family must have the right to express their sorrows and their hopes through the Eagle. It makes no difference who the people are. The humblest negro woman in town, if her husband dies, can use the columns of the Eagle to tell the public his goodness in life. The sorrows of a negro woman or of any other person in humble life are held by him to be as genuine as the sorrows of those in exalted social standing. The "card of thanks" always gets in and the baby notice is sure to be there.

As a story teller, mostly personal experiences, Victor is at home. He has a wonderful memory of events although it is not as strong as to names and faces, as a good politician ought to have. He can tell a story better than he can write it and that is an unusual trait in a newspaper man of his ability; and it is certainly a compliment to his story-telling powers. I have known him to sit on a stool in the print shop on Sunday morning after the paper had gone to press and entertain fifteen or twenty men as high as four hours at a sitting. I don't know that I have ever heard him tell the same story twice. He is poetic in his fancies, although he has never written a verse unless he has done it in secret, which he probably did in his youth.

He is considerably inclined to venerate institutions and to cling to custom. Although he has no denominational prefer-

ence, so far as I know, he is a staunch believer in the influence of religion and will argue to the last ditch with one who opposes it. He would fight to maintain around hog day, the Fourth of July, All Fools Day and Christmas. At Christmas time he will forever be a boy, whether he goes to Congress or the President's chair. He usually gets a great many Christmas presents and gives more than he can afford, but he has a holy horror of giving or receiving anything that is useful. He would rather get a fifty-cent chromo than a \$300 overcoat.

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