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**Cornelius Vander Starr**

1892-1968

## A Letter from the Chairman

We are proud to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Starr Companies in China and its rich culture developed over the past century.

Our founder, Cornelius Vander Starr, established the first American-owned insurance enterprise in Shanghai in 1919.

Over the next several decades Starr's business spread throughout Asia. Its operations in China were interrupted by wars and revolution, but we always found a way to return. Forced to leave China prior to World War II, Starr returned immediately upon the war's end. Starr continued to operate in China until the revolution caused him to leave again.

As China started to emerge from its global isolation, I began to travel there multiple times every year, beginning in 1975. With the help of longtime Starr associates such as Buck Freeman, Ernie Stempel, Edmund Tse and others, we built lasting relationships with many Chinese leaders in government and business. We trained our new friends about the life insurance business and introduced the agency system, which created many jobs.

In 1995, after 20 years of hard work and persistence, we became the first wholly-owned foreign life insurance company in China to be granted an operating license. Since then Starr has rebuilt its network of branch offices throughout the country.

I am proud of our history, our culture and our accomplishments over the past 100 years. We believe in the future of U.S.-China relations and look forward to another century of shared prosperity and growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. R. Greenberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Maurice R. Greenberg  
Chairman and CEO

This inscription, ching-shen pu ssu-“the spirit never dies”-  
was mentioned in the Mansfield Freeman  
eulogy to Mr. Starr (p. 52) as appearing over the  
gate of the Pi-yun-ssu temple outside of Peking (Beijing).

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 70-98952 © C.V. Starr & Co., Inc. 1970

Prepared by Writing Services Company, New York

Reprinted 2001 and 2018 by The Starr Foundation, New York, N.Y.



Toni Frissell

Some people leave an indelible mark on their colleagues and their time without planning or intending to do so. Yet so intent are they on living, working, and doing that they find neither the time nor the patience for keeping any record of what they have accomplished or how they have lived. Cornelius Vander Starr was such a person, whose great brilliance and remarkable energy were matched only by a passion for anonymity that amounted almost to shyness.

But where the mark of such a person has been left, it can be found. C.V. Starr's mark was found, not only in the enterprises he built around the world, but also in the great many people whose lives he touched. It was those people who made possible this book, which seeks to be less a memorial tribute to a man who lived in the past than an extension of Starr himself and of his qualities and attributes that still live in those who drew inspiration from him.



Staff of American Asiatic Underwriters pose for a group portrait at Wuxi, China,

where they celebrated the Fourth of July, 1924. Starr, in dark suit, is left center.

## The Gentle Laopan

When he was just 26 years old, Cornelius Vander Starr took a clerkship with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company in Yokohama, Japan. Among his major assets at the time were the job and a strong sense of his own worth. The latter proved too much for the former. His boss, who did not share Starr's notions of individual dignity, would buzz for the young clerk when he wanted to see him. Considering how small the office was, Starr felt that buzzing was a cold, imperious, and impersonal act. So he asked his boss to please not buzz him, or he would have to leave his employ. The boss, unimpressed, buzzed; Starr, unintimidated, quit.

That gesture of independence marked the beginning of one of the most singular careers in the annals of modern business. It was the career of a man who believed that good business was no more than the sum of the efforts of capable people, doing what they could do well in a way that suited them best.

His imperative was people. And surely it is no coincidence that, in building a billion-dollar, worldwide insurance enterprise, Starr saw and

ministered to some of the important needs of his fellow man. Very early in life, he was able to deem business success merely a passing grade. He required a larger sense of purpose from his work—a fulfillment of his basic sense of stewardship for those human cares and sorrows whose mitigation calls for help in practical and concrete terms.

He was a gentle *laopan*, a term usually reserved by the Chinese for their own great entrepreneurs, a Yankee whose love for Asia might have dated back to the adventurous souls who took part in the clipper trade. But it was not just Asia that his reach and mind encompassed, even though it was there that he made his first fortune and discovered some important truths about mankind. Starr found every man a frontier. There were no nationalities or races for him—only ordinary men and women of special promise. “Sometimes I find a man who has an inner fire,” he once said, “a man who is perfectly in his métier, his orbit. And when I do, I back him.” More often than not, Starr had a knack of backing the right people.

In insurance and other areas of international business, Starr achieved greatness. In his attachments to journalism, skiing, opera, and the arts, Starr was a “true amateur.” Had he more time, he would have excelled at more. He nevertheless found enough time in his life to touch others with a sense of humanity.

That ability requires no great scholarship or physical prowess; it calls for a little more than simple understanding of others, their dreams, and their taproots of strength. It was an instinct he worked at perfecting. The Chinese claimed him as one of their very own; he was awarded the Philippine Legion of Honor for helping the economy of that war-torn island commonwealth; he received an honorary doctor of laws degree from Middlebury, the small but excellent college in Vermont's snowy hills; and, he was made an honorary citizen of St. Anton, in the Austrian Tyrol. But honors, like publicity, were things he shunned, rather than sought.

The occupants of the office building at 102 Maiden Lane, in New York, offer clear testimony to Starr's belief that true ability recognizes no differences of background, color, race, or national origin. The offices almost appear to be an offshoot of the United Nations—an effect achieved neither by design nor by accident, but by the simple fact of acceptance.

Starr's career spanned half a century and circled the earth, where he found no place and no people foreign to his nature. His group of 150 owned and affiliated insurance companies and agencies, with representation in more than 100 countries, undoubtedly made up the most global insurance organization in the world. It wrote close to \$700 million in premiums each year, covering many billions of dollars in underwriting exposures. But his dedication was to serve men by helping them shore up against nature's disasters and life's calamities, including their own passing.

The sense of innovation woven through Starr's business achievement is dimmed by time. But even when he first began selling insurance in Shanghai, he defied accepted practice. He sold American protection at a time when insurance in China was largely the province of British companies, even in 1921, when the U.S. dollar was at a discount against the Chinese dollar. He hired Chinese for positions of responsibility—something unheard of among foreign companies at that time.

His business was so international that, unlike most American enterprises, its operations in the U.S. were an outgrowth of those overseas. Nonetheless, Starr envisioned a future for American business abroad at a time when most Americans were still stolidly and narrowly isolationist.

In time, the world caught up to Starr's methods and practices, but by then he had devised new ones. As John Ahlers, a German-born correspondent for *The Economist* who later became the company treasurer, explains it: "He himself would pursue the new and more original thing. He was basically convinced that whatever is now was going to be antiquated tomorrow. He would ask, 'Why can't we anticipate the antiquation just a little bit now and see whether we can do it better?' He was born American—the kind of man who wonders how to make his elephants bigger and better."

His searching and questing never ended, reflecting less dissatisfaction for what had been than his zest for what could be. Yet he knew that he could not be too far ahead of his time, and that the world had to be ready for what he had to offer. With the coming of the jet plane, greater personal mobility, and more widespread affluence, he sensed that the lifestyles of many people were changing. In countries with expanding economies, there would be a greater concern with keeping hard-won gains and more interest in safeguarding against various hazards. In the early 1960s, Starr steered American International Underwriters (AIU) toward writing accident and health insurance abroad for the first time, because he felt that growing numbers of people were ready for it. The time had come for them to think beyond the needs of the moment, and Starr offered them an easy way to cheat these common perils.



Gone Fishing  
A very young C.V. Starr with a relative in the countryside near Ft. Bragg.

### Go East, Young Man

Starr grew up amidst the restlessness of a frontier. Born in Fort Bragg, California on October 15, 1892, he was the son of a Dutchman who worked as a railroad engineer for the Union Lumber Company.

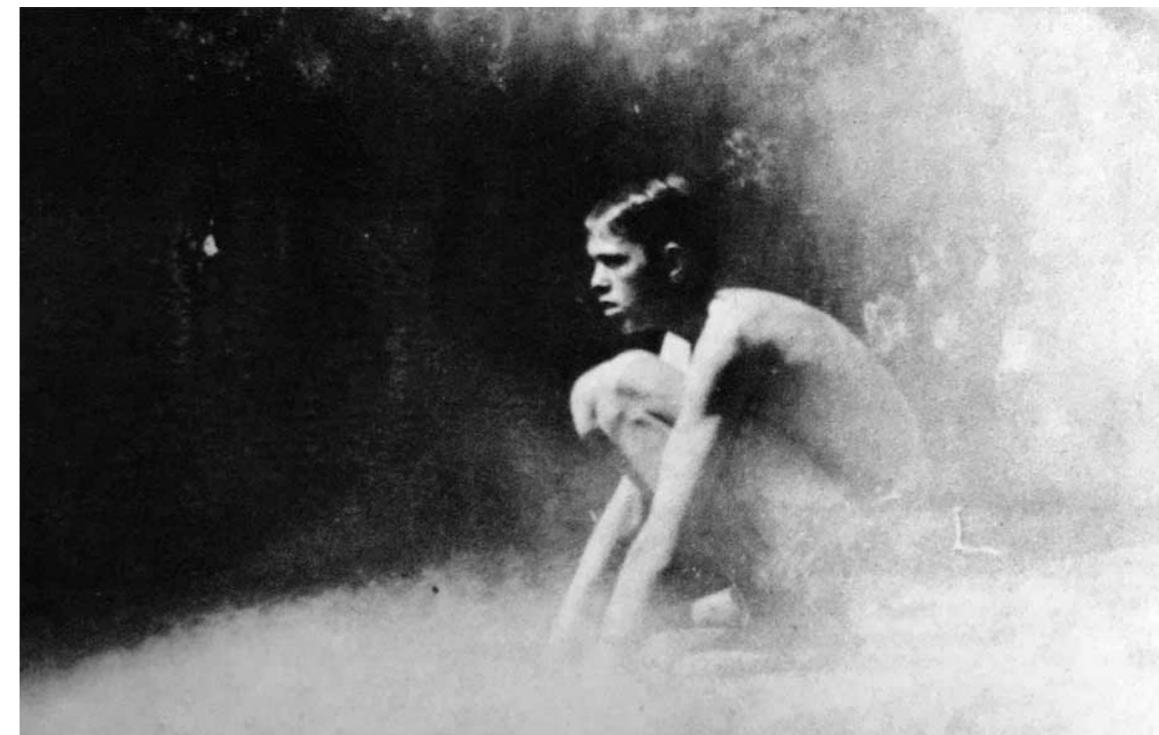
Starr's father died when he was only two years old, and his mother was forced to take in boarders. Starr went to work before he left grammar school—at once wrapping cigars, sweeping out the local Odd Fellows Hall, and serving as a janitor at the Baptist church.

In 1910, he enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley, waiting on tables to pay his way. He left after a year, telling his good friend, Clyde Ware, that he did not have time to spend four years at a university. He then returned to Ft. Bragg and opened an ice cream store with a soda fountain, the first the little town ever had, and eventually sold it off for \$1,000. With this unaccustomed prosperity, he was able to drive a Hupmobile and to be the proud owner of a billiard table.

He next went to work for the James Nelson Realty Company, where he first developed a fascination for the insurance business. Active, intelligent, and quick to learn, he would tell friends, "There's a fortune in this business!" When a new weekly newspaper started in Ft. Bragg, Starr wrote articles for it, taking a special delight in ribbing both the established weekly paper, and neighboring small town.

Skinny Dipper

Neil Starr refreshes himself at a local pond.



Starr moved to San Francisco in 1914, and was joined by Ware a month later. He got a job selling automobile insurance—on the street—for the Pacific Coast Casualty Company. He asked his friend to watch for new cars on the street, since each one was a prospect. At night he read law with a San Francisco Attorney, John T. Williams—a standard way of getting legal training at the time—and after several months passed the California bar examination. He then helped form an insurance brokerage firm, known as Shean & Deasy, running it until he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a private in March, 1918.

Army routine was hardly busy enough to keep the ambitious Starr from rising. It was summer, and there were bales of sweaty uniforms to be laundered, but local merchants charged what struck him as exorbitant prices. So he rented a delivery wagon, made a deal with an out-of-town laundry, and soon was clearing \$400 a month, more than a major's pay. It was quite a private's enterprise.

Mustered out as a sergeant a year later, Starr was somewhat miffed that he had not been sent overseas. He shared, with many a West Coast American, a pent-up yearning to ship for Asia. It was then that he journeyed to Yokohama. After a half a year and a boss who buzzed, he decided that further progress would have to be under his own steam. So Starr left Japan for Shanghai, the hub of Chinese commerce in the Far East, as well as a place then quite hospitable to Americans with a feel for adventure.

Starr arrived in China, equipped with the small savings left from the sale of the San Francisco insurance agency. Extra-territoriality—the special right granted foreigners in China to do business and incorporate under the laws of their own countries—made for a promising business climate for an enterprising young man.

But Starr's sharp eye took in a wider canvas. He saw that the major insurance firms in China were British, more inclined towards a banker's attitudes than to those of a salesman. Also he observed that the providential and family-loving Chinese would be naturally attracted to the principle of life insurance, through which they could pass on the fulfillment of their own hopes to their families. Any people who burned banknotes (actually, imitation) at the shrines of their ancestors to give them spiritual spending money in the afterworld might well have equally valid interest in providing a stake for their survivors on earth.

Starr found the office of an American named Frank Jay Raven, who spent 15 years building a banking and real estate business in Shanghai. Taking over the flagging insurance end of Raven's firm, Starr eventually came to manage general agencies for the Hartford Fire Insurance Company, the Firemen's Fund Insurance Company, and the Great American Insurance Company.



Starr's Sodas  
The young entrepreneur and his dog, Bob.

Not long after arriving in Shanghai, he began organizing his company, American Asiatic Underwriters, Inc. (AAU). AAU was willing to underwrite a wide assortment of risks, and wrote policies, at one time or another, to cover anything from a baseball team wanting to insure against rainstorms to the cargo of a Czech ship carrying refugees from Vladivostok to Europe. He hired two Chinese clerks, moved into two rooms at the corner of Nanking and Szechuan Roads and, on December 19, 1919, began an insurance enterprise that eventually was to grow into the largest insurance organization in the world.

Starr soon expanded from fire and marine business to life insurance. As Harry Luce, the China-born founder of Time Inc. and longtime friend of Starr, once put it: "Neil Starr started out in Shanghai with a very simple calculation. He figured that with the coming of modern hygiene to Asia, the life expectancy of the Chinese must inevitably go up, so he went into the life insurance business when rates, based on a life expectancy of less than 30 years, were immensely high. What could be simpler or more obvious than such a calculation? Well, most businesses are built on simple calculations."

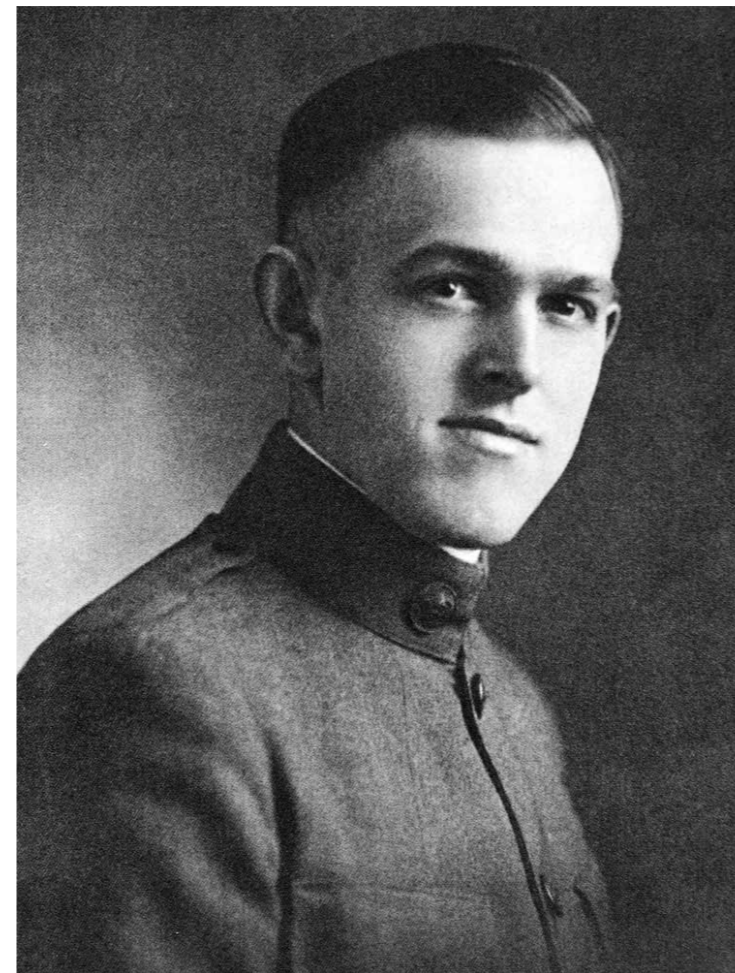
There was more to it, however, than a canny business gamble. "Never forget the little man," Starr was often heard to say. And he never let himself forget his own humble origins. He believed life insurance to be kind of self-philanthropy. As one of his associates explained, "As a great admirer of the late Sir Winston Churchill, who

described insurance as 'the magic of averages that works wonders for millions,' Starr made this vision a reality in a land of great suffering and hardship."

To do business in China, foreigners hired *compradores*, a Portuguese term used to describe a local, or Chinese operative. The *comprador* was in effect a businessman who filled a liaison role between the Chinese and the foreign managers, most of whom spoke little or no Chinese. A much respected one, Zao Pah Siu, heard that Starr was opening his office and came to him. If they worked together, Zao said, Starr would be the greatest insurance man and he would be the greatest *comprador*. And indeed he brought so many clients to Starr that the company was able to begin business without even using the line of credit that had been extended by Raven's bank. It is a tribute to Starr's winning ways that he attracted such a man, and even more so that he subsequently elevated the *comprador* system to that of real local management.

Starr not only judged people by their own moral standards, but also by his personal measuring rods of integrity, intellect, competence, and performance. On that basis, he developed a deep and genuine admiration for the Chinese, and proved it by giving deserving Chinese colleagues major executive positions in his firms. In this, decades before it became the practice elsewhere, he internationalized business. And if there were ever those who objected, Starr would have gladly accepted their resignations.

Within a few years, Asia Life was called by the people it served *yu pang*—or "friendly country." The "friendly country" spread to the other parts of China and to other countries. In the first few years, offices and agencies were opened in Tianjin (Tientsin), Wuhan (Hankow), Fuzhou (Foochow), Canton, Chongqing (Chungking), Amoy, Shenyang (Mukden), and Harbin. Offices were established in Hong Kong in 1925, Saigon, Haiphong, Djakarta and Surabaya in 1928, Singapore in 1929, then Kuala Lumpur, Malacca, and the Philippines. After an earthquake in 1923, the Japanese government had prohibited the opening of new insurance outlets until those that existed had paid for losses due to the tremors. This was effective in keeping foreign insurance companies out of Japan for a great many years. After World War II, however, Starr's people came to Japan by invitation of the American military government, to insure the property of servicemen. They remained, and eventually insured the Japanese as well.



World War I  
Starr became an infantry sergeant, but never saw service overseas.

In 1926, a liaison office was opened in New York, to work more closely with the firm's American principals, and to explain Chinese business methods to Westerners. Called American International Underwriters Corporation, it was something of an oddity—a subsidiary of a U.S. company headquartered in China. In the 1930s, the U.S. headquarters took on added importance as the Starr enterprises started to buy American insurance companies. The first was the United States Life Insurance Co., which in turn acquired another small company. U.S. Life was eventually sold. The proceeds were used to buy Globe & Rutgers—in a sense a sentimental purchase, since it was the company that had given Starr his first insurance representation in China. Globe & Rutgers has since been merged into American Home.

### A Venture in Print

Like insurance, journalism in any form requires an instinct toward people. Starr had first tried his hand at it in Fort Bragg. In 1930, largely because he felt there should be an American voice in China, he bought the English-language *Shanghai Evening News* for \$2,500 and changed its name to the *Post*. Later he bought the British-owned *Mercury* for \$10,000 and hired editor Randall Gould, a Far East correspondent for *Time*, *United Press*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. *The Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* was published from 1931 until shortly after the Communist takeover of Shanghai in 1949, save for the wartime interruption by the Japanese.

"Newspaper work," says Gould, "in its purer form, hard to come by nowadays, had fascination for Neil. He was a good publisher, good editor, and good reporter." Gould, an exciting editor himself, states Starr, "would never have taken, or at any rate long held, a newspaper job for the same reason that he left Japan after discovering how meagerly his shipping office boss was paid." Buzz or no buzz.

Gould had doubts about his publisher at the start. The newspaper office was several blocks away from Starr's insurance headquarters, so they communicated frequently through "chit coolie," who maneuvered nimbly through crowded streets. When a telephone was installed, Gould hired a pert Chinese-Portuguese girl operator, called Jimmie, who gave as good over the phone as she received. One day, Starr was impatient to reach Gould, but couldn't get past Jimmie's insistence that the editor was busy. "This is Mr. Starr who wants to talk to Mr. Gould,"

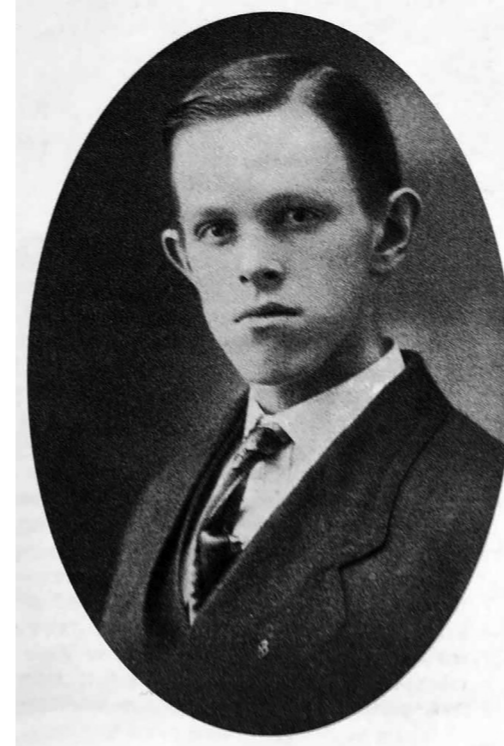
# A Family Album



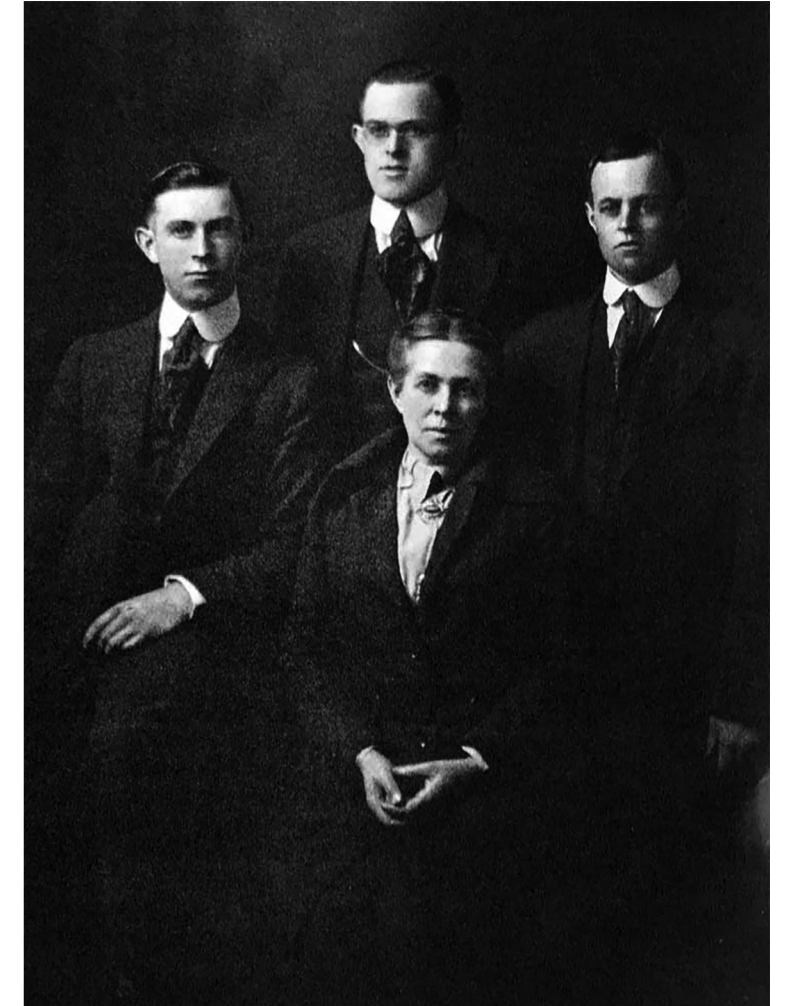
*Starr's mother, Frances Arabella, with Ben, left, and Cornelius, right*



*Grandmother and mother*



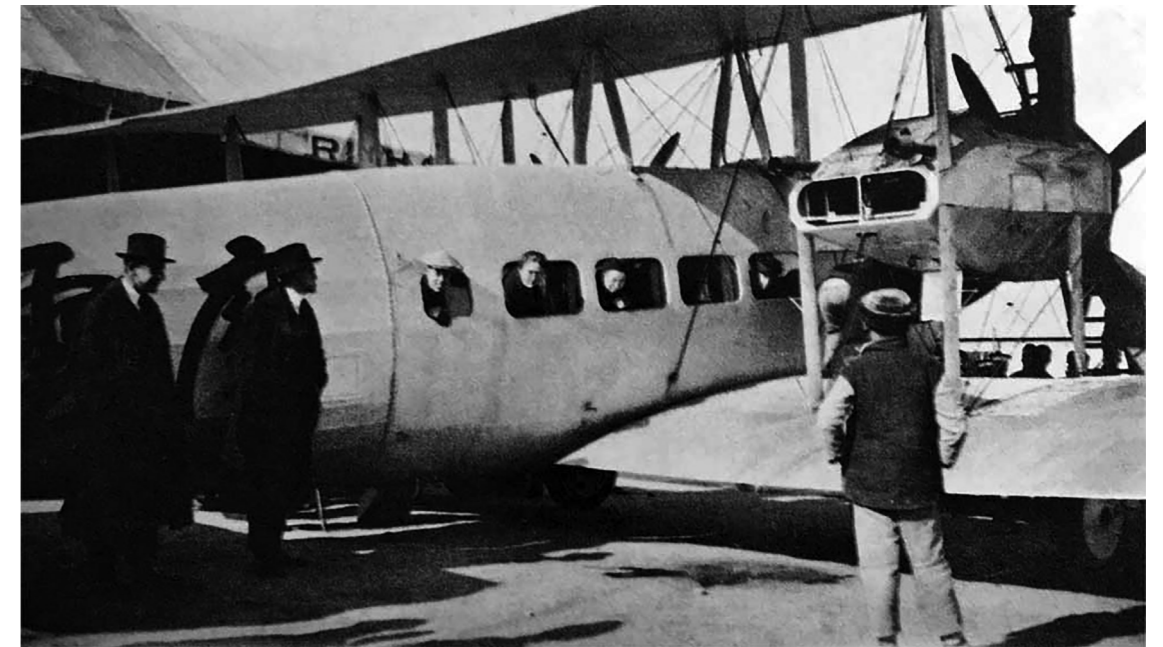
*Starr in his senior year book.*



*Mother and sons: John, left; Neil, center, and Ben, right*



*Brother Ben, Cornelius, and Brother John*



*Starr sees off Aunt Nelle (second window from left) in China.*



snapped Starr's operator. Jimmie responded, "You can just tell Mr. Starr to keep his pants on." Starr cut in, saying, "This is Mr. Starr. I have my pants on. I mean to keep them on, but I do want to talk to Mr. Gould." Just then, Gould switched in and heard Starr laughing. Says Gould, "I thought, 'Here was no stuffed shirt publisher, but a real newspaperman, the kind of man I liked to work for.'"

Starr, outspoken in his opposition to the Japanese and their Greater Southeast Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, found he had to endure more than the slings and arrows of outraged subscribers. From the early 1930s onwards, he had resisted Japan's meddling in Chinese affairs, contrary to the swell of European opinion in the Far East. "Starr's *Post*," says Gould, "did a lot of kicking, squalling, and upbraiding."

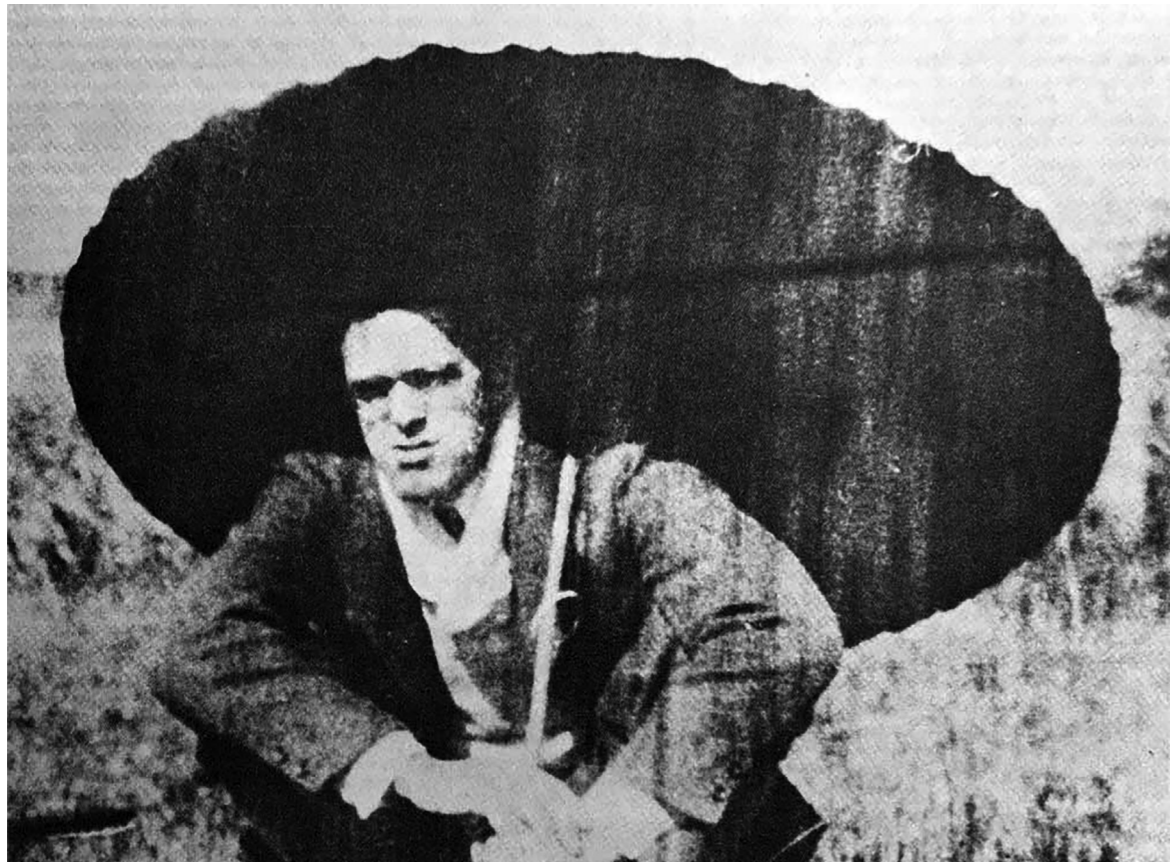
Perhaps Starr was familiar with the Chinese aphorism—"With money, a dragon; without money, a worm." He did know that strong opinions without the backing of power are best kept private. Starr tried his best. In 1939, after the Japanese occupied Shanghai, the Chinese-language edition of Starr's *Post and Mercury*, *Ta Mei Wan Pao* (meaning Great American

Evening Newspaper), reached a circulation up to 100,000, the largest in the city. But then its offices were bombed and its editor, Samuel Chang, was gunned down in a café. Starr marched grimly in the front row of pallbearers. He took to riding in a bulletproof limousine, but gave not an inch in his resistance to Japanese encroachment.

After Pearl Harbor, Starr and Gould decided to publish a New York edition to help counter the Japanese propaganda that began to appear under his paper's respected logo in Shanghai. When the war ended, Starr's management returned to Shanghai, but the coming of Communism soon introduced still more censorship. "If we can't have a free American newspaper," said Starr, "we'll just stop the newspaper." And so ended a quarter century of trying to bring the free press to China.

### Conquering New Worlds

The consideration Starr showed his employees was repaid in kind. Perhaps most remarkable of all was the loyalty of the Chinese staff.



The houseboat  
A favorite weekend pastime in Starr's early China days was cruising waters around Shanghai.

When the Japanese occupied Shanghai, Starr's staff put their own supervisor into the office to wind up the business. Starr's chief accountant, Koong-Kai Tse, with an eye toward the far future, persuaded the Japanese authorities to put the firm's files and records into storage. He then convinced them that the bank next door should take over the furniture and equipment, as well as most of the ex-employees. The day after V-J Day, K.K. (as he was affectionately known in the smartest business and social circles in the Far East) made an eleventh-hour rescue of the files from the pulping machine. He then rehired the employees, who helped him move the equipment back into the old Starr offices. Less than two weeks after the Japanese surrender, he cabled New York, "We are ready to go back into business."

Starr chartered a plane for Shanghai, bringing with him a suitcase full of greenbacks. Inflation was naturally rampant in the city, and the U.S. dollar bulwarked the enthusiasm of the employees and gave the Chinese clients a much-needed sense of security. Starr also brought along a large supply of medicines, an almost-forgotten commodity in a city that had long been sealed off from the world.

These triumphs were short-lived. A few years later, before the Communists took over Shanghai, Starr again was faced with the necessity of rescuing his employees. By this time he was well-practiced. Forty staffers and their families were airlifted 1,000 miles to Hong Kong, an operation carried off with such precision that not a working day was missed.

When WWII shut down much of the Pacific, Starr turned full throttle toward Latin America. Before 1940, Latin American insurance was dominated by Italian agencies, followed by the Germans, with the British a poor third. With Germany and Italy allied in the Axis, and with Britain under the blitz, there was a business vacuum below the border. The growth of the Latin American business was little short of spectacular, and premium income there in four years equaled all the Asian business developed in more than twenty.

The biggest volume was in Cuba, but when Fidel Castro rose to power, once more Starr's enterprise was taken over. He called in his chief executive for the region and said, "Look, what is our business? It's no more than a guarantee, a piece of paper. What it boils down to is people. And we look after our people. We tried in the Far East. We'll do the same thing for our Cubans. Anyone who wants to come out, we'll either give a job to or support until we get him a job." Some 70 families were brought out and housed in the United States.



17 The Bund  
The North China Daily News Building became AAU headquarters in 1927.

Keeping accounts  
From the start, AAU was  
staffed largely by local  
people.



### A Family of Friends

A lean six-footer with a jutting jaw, Starr lived vigorously. And although his appearance suggested aggressiveness, his actual manner was much more kindly and gentle.

He did not get married until he was 44, an age when most men of his era were settled in comfortable domesticity. His marriage in 1937 to Mary Malcom, the daughter of a Canadian missionary in China, seemed to accentuate and expand the breadth of his wide-ranging interests and his insatiable appetite for travel. After a little more than 15 years, the marriage came to an unhappy end. But it had been an active and exciting 15 years for Starr, full of new and old interests.

His concern for other people showed itself in many ways. During the bleakest days of the war with Japan, he sent one of his employees in the armed service a letter in which he named 28 different friends and colleagues, with a bit of news about each, all in a page and a half.

Without children of his own, Starr surrounded himself with promising young people whose

energy helped him feel alive. They were invited to visit his estate in Brewster, N.Y. and many were given personal scholarships to help them along in the world.

Starr used to call his form of philanthropy “corrupting.” He enjoyed overwhelming the minds and hearts of young people with opportunity. One of his protégés, Daniel Ley, from Cambodia, says, “It was such a luxurious corruption that no young individual of limited means would think of refusing.... Many other people wished they were included on his list of corrupted minds. But I feel there were occasions when his influence was resented by those who were affected.”

Another of his protégés, an Englishman named John Chancellor, thought Starr was not always discriminating about those whom he befriended, finding a great many of them on ski slopes or in English universities. Said Chancellor, “It is possible that he romanticized the products of these environments.”

Perhaps so, but he seemed equally as partial to the products of vastly different environments.

Another protégé, Wen-Shi Yu, wrote of him: “He had the strange power of drawing the hearts of people, especially Chinese people, toward him as a magnet attracts a bit of metal.” Her father had served Starr as a steward and Starr showed his gratitude for faithful service by financing her education in physics. But Starr was always a little puzzled at why she went into government research at Brookhaven National Laboratories, when she could have earned more money in private industry.

On Starr’s 74th birthday, a large group of his “corrupted” young friends sent him a silver tray. Ta Chun Hsu, first of that group, selected this inscription from Aristotle:

“They who educate children well are more honored than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well.”

Starr himself nevertheless honored those who produced children, never missing an opportunity to urge his young friends to visit or write to their parents, and seek their approval and counsel.

After achieving success in business and winning the esteem and gratitude of many people, Starr sought out still other challenges. One of them was in the ephemeral world of art. Starr not only acquired art for his own use and enjoyment, but he helped select various works that were hung and placed in the offices around the world. Naturally, he accumulated Asian screens and ceramics, more as reminders of his love of the Far East than his scholarly study. He also liked oils from that flamboyant period of modern French art called *les fauves* (“the wild beasts”) for their blazing colors. In his later years he developed a deep affection for the more substantial medium of sculpture.

He was attracted to the writhing wood nymphs of Milton Hebard, the angular chanting singers of David Aronson, and the voluptuaries of Chaim Gross and Hugo Robus. All, though modern, were figurative, clearly related to human anatomy. Starr shunned abstract art, religious art, and any art that took itself instead of humanity, too seriously. As his art dealer and consultant of many years, Lee Nordness, said, “He always wanted something that was an affirmation of the joy of living. He would object to ever being called a collector, period. It was all done in that most unpretentious, personal fashion that was typical of Starr.” Nonetheless, Nordness recalled Starr devoured every art journal ever published.

Whatever Starr bought, he wanted to enjoy.



Honorary Degree  
Middlebury College conferred on Starr a Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) in  
1955.



Occidental 75th Birthday Celebration  
His Western 75th birthday was celebrated at  
Brewster in 1967.

He never collected art—or people—for the sheer sake of possession. If he could not hang a painting, he did not buy it. “His approach to sculpture wasn’t intellectual,” said Nordness, “it was quite emotional. But he was very interested in the hard facts of technique—how a work was cast in bronze and so forth. An artist’s aesthetics were all pretty much hoggogglywok to him, but if the artist didn’t have the interest to come visit and see where his work was placed, Starr stopped buying from him. Starr understood the art best through human contact.” He bald, who visited Starr whenever he could, was once sent around the world by him just to expand his horizons.

Still, Starr’s sense of the practical had its day—a field day when it came to sculpture. Rather than spot his country landscape at Brewster with outdoor bronzes, a practice that reminded him too much of a cemetery, he built them into a golf course. The skier in him hated golf, thinking it a lazy man’s sport, but he enjoyed having his friends and co-workers slice and duff through his private course, with electric carts and spare bags of the finest clubs at their disposal, along with a separate entrance to save him from their chatter, while the joyful sculptures cavorted at tee, trap, and green.

### Building on a Human Scale

Architecture was an art on a level Starr could love. Basically the scale of a building is human, designed to enclose, shelter, and impress people. Starr encouraged the construction of unusual offices for his world-wide business, putting up structures in Wilmington, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Karachi, Dacca, Penang, Bangkok, Beirut, Guyana, Hong Kong, and Singapore. For Wilmington, he chose the well-known architect, I.M. Pei, who recently had been commissioned to build the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library in Boston, and whose sense of design he admired. It was also characteristic of Starr to turn to the son of his old friend and colleague, Tsuyee Pei, a bank executive who had been on the board of Starr’s first life insurance company.

“Starr was a man of strong convictions,” recalled the younger Pei, “and knowledgeable in matters of architectural design. He was outspoken about what he considered important in my first commission for him, an office building in Wilmington, Delaware. He wanted it to be strong, easily identifiable, and simple. He eschewed stylistic fantasies.” Other architects who worked with him agreed that he was an ideal client—firm enough to know what he wanted but not dictatorial about how he got it.

Opera—an art form in which performers predominate—also appealed to Starr. He always maintained a box at the Metropolitan. For a man who appreciated Asia, it galled him to see Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* presented, as he said, as “a kind of tourist Yokohama, or half New York Chinatown.” So, in 1958, he remedied the situation by putting up the cash for a truly authentic production.

At first, his offer was not fully understood. The Met’s manager, Rudolf Bing, thought in terms of such outstanding European designers as Cecil Beaton, but Starr had other ideas. He flew to Japan and brought back his own designer and director. They removed such sour notes as mincing steps, hands tucked in sleeves (Chinese rather than Japanese), funeral gongs during a wedding scene, and fireflies that do not flicker at cherry blossom time. The costumes were all made in Japan, where the tailors could not believe the performers’ measurements were in inches, rather than centimeters. Hailed by critics, the production was given its most discriminating once-over by Starr himself, who considered it, “not only great opera and great theater, but a tribute to the Japanese people, their taste, and art.”

### Searching for New Heights

Although he always had a penchant for the outdoors, Starr amazed his friends when he took up skiing at the relatively advanced age of 46. The year was 1938, when downhill or Alpine skiing was still in its infancy—a sport pursued by the only several thousand Americans whom their countrymen viewed as mild madmen. Not only were there enough problems in schussing and twisting down, but also, as Starr shrewdly saw, it was not easy to get up the mountain in the first place. In most ski areas, people hung valiantly to machine-driven ropes that yanked them up the slopes.

Reliable chair lifts were rare. The Mt. Mansfield area, near the village of Stowe in northern Vermont, had the largest and highest chair lift

Chinese 75th Birthday Celebration  
Starr celebrated his 75th birthday, by Chinese  
count, in Hong Kong in 1966.

in the U.S. But the queue to climb aboard often seemed interminable. Starr disliked not only the wait, but also the business anarchy that splintered the lift, ski school, hotels, and land itself all into separate companies.

“Can’t something be done to straighten out things up here?” Starr asked Sepp Ruschp, the redoubtable Austrian ski school director, one day while taking a lesson in parallel christies.

“I think it can,” replied Ruschp. “I’m trying to raise money right now to build a new lift.”

On the spot, Starr offered to put up enough money to give Ruschp controlling interest if the ski instructor could raise the rest. By 1950, they had reincorporated the whole snowy shebang into the Mt. Mansfield Co., Inc., embracing lifts, ski schools, hotels, and land. Starr’s total investment amounted to \$1 million by 1952, but it created a white gold mine and the prototype in the U.S. for the modern ski resort. Even so, Starr never sought the privileges of an owner. One icy cold day, while waiting in a lift line with one of his protégés, he had a blanket rudely forced on him by the lift attendant.

“Mister, you’re supposed to take one,” growled the attendant. “Should I tell him who you are?” asked the young friend.

“No,” said Starr. “I’m just glad he told me rather than my customers telling me about him.”

His reticence struck many as unbelievable. Once, unable to get inside the crowded warming hut atop Mt. Mansfield, he refused to exploit his position to force his way in. Exhausted and cold, he skied down and took a terrific fall, breaking one of his legs. Typically, he turned misfortune into intellectual profit. By the time the cast was removed, he had thoroughly studied up on the anatomy and physiology of fractures.

After Stowe was under way, Starr turned his attentions to St. Anton am Arlberg in Austria, the site where modern skiing was virtually invented. There, too, Starr found economic shortsightedness and primitive technology; the sole access to the slopes was a small cable car that shut down for two hours at lunchtime. Der Starr, as the people of St. Anton came to call him, built two double chair lifts capable of transporting 700 people an hour to the top of a previously unexploited peak. As a result, St. Anton turned into a prosperous village. He even prevailed upon the local people to give up their distrust of corporate enterprises and invest in the company.



Toni Frissell

Starr also took his interest in skiing to Asia. In 1951, in a Tokyo ski shop, he was testing a ski for flexibility by bracing the tail against his foot and bowing the tip. The ski snapped in two. While he was still apologizing, a young Japanese named Chiharu Igaya walked in, and he and Starr began chatting. It turned out that Igaya was a national ski champion, who was slated to go to Oslo two months later to represent his country in the Olympics. When Starr learned that Igaya and his one teammate could not afford to go to Norway until a week before the event, he offered forthwith to finance a two-month stay in Europe so they could become familiar with snow conditions there. Igaya managed to win a silver medal in slalom. Starr later financed “Chick” Igaya’s college education at Dartmouth, and the young man became one of the managing directors of AIU in Japan.

### Far More Riches than Wealth

After his first heart attack, although he refused to acknowledge it as such, Starr had to give up skiing and tennis. In his Indian summer, he spent most of his time at his Brewster estate north of New York City, which he named Morefar, a pidgin English expression borrowed from his early Shanghai days. He surrounded himself with friends and colleagues, ranging from contemporaries to the young people he attracted. He would sit in a black wrought-iron chair beneath a giant copper beech, his tennis courts to his right, a crisp lawn and flower plantings of riotous color straight ahead. There, he would hold a happy court that would have made old King Cole appear a piker.

One of his protégés, who joined AIU in Australia, described a typical scene: “He would relax, legs crossed, Old-Fashioned in hand, chatting gently. ‘I hope everyone likes Lin’s new recipe for Chinese green tea ice cream...and how’s Wen Mei and the baby? The high price of gold on the market stems from some silly little man on Wall Street... Danny got an A in math last semester... Carl, cut the grass on the 3/8th setting number for green



Starr on the phone  
*A tool of long-distance affection.*

was thus and so, so it seems to me that your argument doesn't hold up.' He was remarkable in being able to do this for several fairly distinct businesses."

He remembered people as readily as he did facts. On his first post-war visit to Japan in 1949, Starr traced friends he had known 30 years before. When he left, he instructed an aide to give financial assistance to several who were clearly in need—but after he was gone, so that he would not have to face their gratitude personally.

The telephone was a tool of long-distance affection for him. He would spend up to three hours a day on the horn, from one remote part of the world to another. But he never forgot the operators whom he had put to the task. At least once, he had pearl necklaces sent to the stalwart ladies at 102 Maiden Lane who had connected him with those he wished to reach. On another occasion he had a gratuity sent down to the startled telephone operators in a Manila hotel. Nothing like this had ever happened to them before.

On the morning of Starr's 75th birthday, he called his treasurer, John Ahlers, at home at 8 a.m. Ahlers, himself 66 years old, offered good wishes. Said Starr: "I know what day it is. That's not why I'm calling. I call you with a message. One of the important things in life is to acknowledge facts. Never deny facts. You and I are getting on in life. Only a few more years and middle age will stare us right in the face."

Those who knew Starr well have connected that he was an atheist or at best agnostic. His real religion, of course, was humanism, an abiding faith and trust in his fellow man. But he liked to joke that he was a Buddhist. If a listener pursued the issue, Starr would turn to Lin and ask him to explain what the Chinese believe. "Sir," Lin would reply with a quite scrutable grin, "finish is finish, sir!"

The finish came on December 20, 1968 when, at the age of 76, Starr died suddenly in his Fifth Avenue apartment. His doctors had warned him against strenuous activity, but the day of his death he was preparing once more to journey to the Far East that he loved and served so well. He could as easily have gone in any direction and found friends whose admiration and trust ran as deep as Starr's own heart was wide.

three...the doctors say emphysema is caused by minute vascular dilations of the bronchea...now the worst theatrical setting is in Hong Kong..." And so his gentle hours would pass.

Despite his lean, spare look, Starr enjoyed fine food and understood good wines. Though he never smoked, he liked his martinis before dinner. And his staffs—at Morefar, The Lookout in Hong Kong, and his penthouse on Fifth Avenue—were trained to prepare and serve uncommon fare and delicacies from many lands, mainly from Asia.

In his last years, he entertained less, and when he did, he would retire from his guests around 9 o'clock, but not go to sleep. Lin was often seen lugging armfuls of books into his bedroom. It was then that Starr fed his unslakable thirst for knowledge. He read constantly, mostly in politics and philosophy. When he finished a book, he often gave it away, rather than have it collect dust on a shelf.

Much of what he read, he retained with almost total recall. As a quick study, explained his English butler, John Horn, "He must have been frustrating to doctors because he would tell them what was wrong with him, and he was usually right."

Starr's memory was a trap. "He had an extremely logical mind," recalled Mansfield Freeman, one of his earliest associates in China. "I never went into his office to discuss a problem without having first looked up last year's record and all the figures that had any relevance to our discussion, because he would sit back and say, 'Now, as I remember it, the profit and loss last year was thus and so, the balance sheet

## A Man for Many Seasons

Cornelius Vander Starr was a man of many parts, many places, and many seasons. Some of his friends and acquaintances knew him by only one of these, some by two or three, and some by most or all of the facets of his character and personality. But all knew him as a man who pursued his interests and lived his beliefs with zest and enthusiasm.

His was a deep well of curiosity and the spring that fed it was no less than all the world's wisdom. He sought endlessly, insatiably, with the aid of a remarkable mind, to learn and to know all that there was to learn. What he finally learned best was that the earth is one home and mankind one family, sharing a common denominator of purposefulness, dedication, loyalty, fellow feeling, and shared hopes. This is what he looked for in the people he encountered, what he tried to bring out and make visible when he could not see it, and to sharpen and intensify where it was already apparent.

To do this, Starr had to reach in two directions—deep within himself, as well as far outward toward the hearts and minds of others. His wealth was often no more than a convenience, an instrument by which he might accomplish some of the things he felt he must do. From him often came an outpouring of generosity that reflected the depth and breadth of his interests and endeavors.

Starr lived not just one successful life, but many. The only thing that might have made him a failure would have been to have given less and to have lived less thoroughly and abundantly than he did.

Some of those lives are illustrated here in pictures and in the words of his friends.



Toni Frissell

"I think there was a very close bond between Mr. Starr and me when we talked, although the exchange of words itself was not complete. This is due, I believe, to Mr. Starr having a deep understanding of the virtues and defects in the hearts of Asian people."

—Yoshio Aoyama, director of *Madama Butterfly*



"Not only did he enjoy food, he knew what was in it. He practically knew how to make it."

—John Horn, Mr. Starr's butler-steward

## Citizen of the World

Starr traveled endlessly, almost compulsively, by steamship, plane, train, riverboat, whatever means of transportation was most convenient and available. His urge was not so much to go places as to be there, and the moment he arrived he seemed ready to pick up the telephone to call the place he just came from, or some other place halfway around the world. He was less a traveler than a man who felt at home wherever he went.

"Mr. Starr got around the area quite frequently, even though there was no air transportation in those days—it was only by boat. He got seasick very easily, but he still went." —Hugh Blake, Senior Vice President, American International Underwriters Corp.

"He would generously provide special trips for these students to go back home, to have a better understanding of their own people and to observe how they lived. He believed they should help their own people and spend time with them." —Miss Wen-Shi Yu, former student helped by Starr

"C.V. Starr came to Norway and went to a hotel late in the evening. The next morning the manager of the hotel asked, 'Who is this Mr. Starr?' 'Why?' he was asked. The manager replied, 'He spends about two hours on the telephone to New York, Hong Kong, and almost



"I remember traveling with him from one place to another—Hong Kong to Shanghai to Manila to Tokyo.... He not only took a great interest in individuals in the organization from a business standpoint, but he gave the impression—and it was an honest one—that he took a tremendous interest in their personal lives and well-being."

—Gordon Tweedy, Chairman C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.

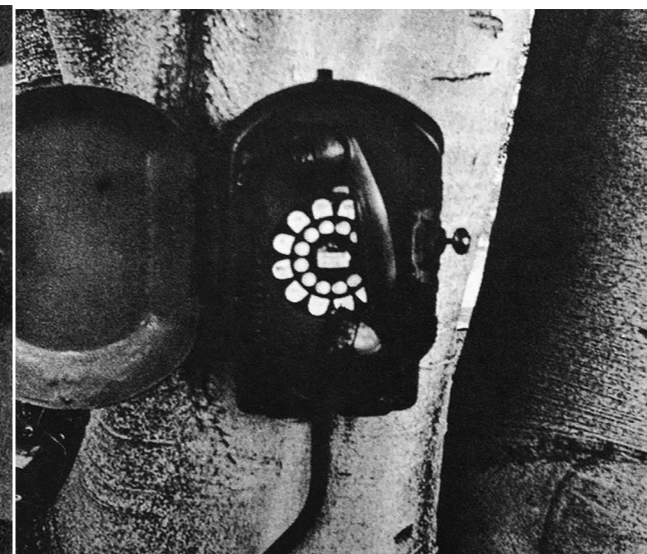
anywhere.' He had never seen anything like it." —Herman Kiaer, friend of Mr. Starr

"The reporters wanted to know why an American was making such a generous gift to members of the Japanese team, who were almost unknown to him. Mr. Starr instructed me to tell them that he wanted to see the Japanese handicap reduced by helping them out to get training on a more equal basis with other countries." —George E. Beatty, American International Underwriters KK, Tokyo

"At Brewster one day, they served caviar and I ate it without lemon. Mr. Starr also did not squeeze lemon on his, and this showed we had the same taste.... On the night preceding my departure from Japan, Mr. Starr arranged a luxurious party for me. Served with the snipe was Himalayan wild rice, which I praised. Mr. Starr promised that he would bring some of this rice to Japan on a future trip. This promise will never be fulfilled, but he will bring me so much of this delicacy in a large bag some Christmas Eve. This Santa Claus will be wearing skis and be very merry. On that night I will offer him caviar of the highest quality (without lemon)."

—Motohiro Nagasaka, stage designer for the Met's *Madama Butterfly*

Toni Frissell



The telephone on the big tree at Morefar.

"He always had to have a telephone near him, wherever he was. And if we knew he was in the office, we knew he would be making calls, so one of us would stay as late as he did, because he might want to be calling Singapore or Paris."

—Mrs. May Schavnick, retired telephone operator, 102 Maiden Lane



"Dar War es wahrscheinlich, was ihm die Berge so lieb machte, weil sie sich nur unter Gefahren bezwingen lassen.... Nur dort wo er all seine Energie und seine Kräfte einsetzen musste war er mit sich selbst zufrieden." ("It was probably this that made him love the mountains—that they can be conquered only by taking risks.... He was happy with himself only on those occasions when he had to use all his energy and all his strength.")

—Rudi Matt, Director, Schindler Seilbahnen A.G., St. Anton am Arlberg, Austria



At dinner in the Philippines with the late President Magsaysay. "He was inquisitive...always asking new questions. He spoke to the people, and got a feel for any country he visited. He was able to identify with people, recognize what their needs were."

—M.R. Greenberg, C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.



At work in his ice cream parlor

*"He told me that he used to clean spittoons in a saloon when he was a boy. He started his own ice cream store. He said he went broke a couple of times."*

**—Tom Keeping, Starr's Chauffeur**

## The World of Business

*C.V. Starr was very much at home in the world of business. This was true of other worlds, as well—skiing, architecture, books, etc.—but he carried his business thinking with him wherever he went, and applied the lessons he had learned from business to his other activities. In the sense that he never forgot business principles, he was always a businessman. But a business to him was a marvelously adaptable tool, an instrumentality, a way to get things done, not necessarily an end in itself.*

*"There was another characteristic of Neil. This was his philosophy, his feeling that success was not a limited commodity. It was a value which, when made available to a larger number of people, can grow. He wanted everybody to be a participant in the business itself."* —Mansfield Freeman, retired Vice President, C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.

*"When I joined the Accounting Department in May 1927...AAU's accounts were lagging far behind. Because Mr. Starr was anxious to bring the accounts up to date before moving to 17 The Bund in October, he offered a cash prize to the staff members if they could bring the accounts up to date before the removal. When we succeeded, Mr. Starr voluntarily doubled the cash prize."* —K.K. Tse, President, American International Underwriters, Far East, Inc.

*"His profound moral and material honesty won him an untold number of friends, and was perhaps the biggest single factor in his success. He never offered or paid a bribe in any form.... The whole of the organization was permeated*

*with this spirit of punctilious honesty."*  
—A.W. Joukowsky, retired Senior Vice President, C.V. Starr & Company, Inc.

*"At Stowe, Sepp Ruschp was trying to get a T-Bar built, and Starr came along to give him some help. He found there were all kinds of conflicting interests—in lodge, lift, slopes, inn, etc. Starr brought them all together by the simple expedient of buying them out."*  
—Gordon Tweedy

*"We met on a boat—the Empress of Asia, I think, a coast-wise boat running between Hong Kong and Shanghai, in 1920. I believe it was then he decided that American firms did a good deal of trade with China, and that the American companies should not have to insure through British insurance firms. He came back to the United States and somehow influenced a number of insurance companies to organize on a pool basis to underwrite general insurance for the Far East."* —Tsuyee Pei, former Governor, Central Bank of China.

*"I called Starr on a proposition, describing it in some detail. Starr waited a moment, then asked, 'Now if I had dropped dead, what would you do?' I told him. Then he said 'If you already know what to do, why do you call me?' I reminded him that he once told me he owned more stock in the company than I was ever likely to. At which Starr said, 'Get lost!'"* —John Ahlers, retired Vice President and Treasurer, C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.

*"He was always looking for the right man for the job, trying to give opportunity to people. He would open the door, but you would have to walk through it yourself."* —John Roberts, President, American International Underwriters Corp.

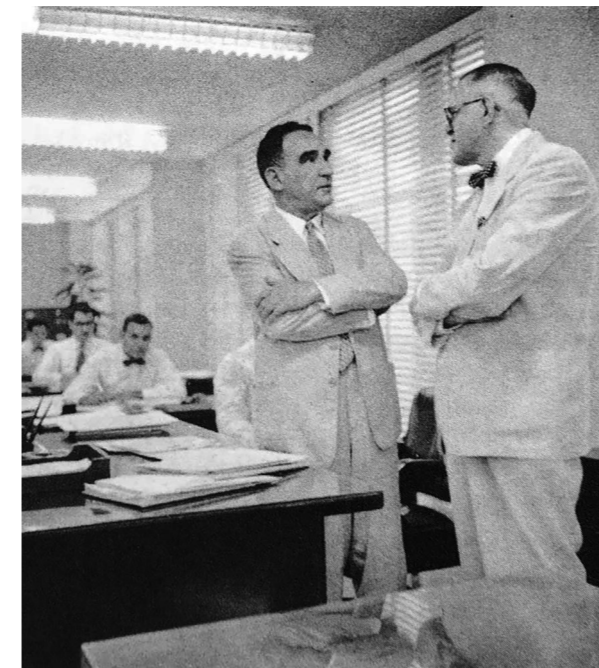
*"Three or four years before he died, he said, 'We recognized after the war, it was time to put young people in again.' He was looking 20 years ahead. He revitalized the company."*  
—Clayton Seitz, Senior Vice President, American International Underwriters Corp.

*"I was saying something about painters being very creative people. Mr. Starr listened, then said, perhaps more to himself than to me, that what he did in business all the time was really painting a picture, painting what he could visualize, a touch here and a touch there. 'Wouldn't you say this is also creative?' he asked."* —Ta Chun Hsu, President, The Starr Foundation



*"I was used to the European style, where the manager was rather a remote individual, whereas Mr. Starr was just one of the boys. He always listened to your viewpoints.... He would have several people in to climb all over a problem, which is a very good way of doing things."*

**—E.A.G. Manton, Chairman, American International Underwriters Corp.**



*"He felt insurance, particularly life insurance, was a trust, that we were the custodians of other people's savings and that, as such, we must be 'good trustees,' a phrase he used often."*

**—E.E. Stempel, President, American International Reinsurance Company, Inc.**

*"He was just a genius. He was very far-seeing and very courageous, and he could analyze things much more astutely than most people. He could see the possibilities and he would take chances on things that most people would shy away from."*

**—Clement J. Smith, retired President, American International Underwriters, Inc., San Francisco**



Accounting office, 17 The Bund, Shanghai

*"He was—and will always be—my idea of a great business man. When I followed him around I observed that he could put more people to work in a short time than anyone I knew."*

**—Guttorm Berge, Norway, former student helped by Starr**



# The Opera

*Starr would have been the first to admit that he was no great lover of opera, but he was aware that it represented a real and respected art form—indeed one that was kind of a wedding of many arts. If he were to contribute towards its support, however, it had to be in the same way that he contributed to anything else, that is, in a manner that he could himself understand. So when he underwrote a new production of Puccini's Madama Butterfly, he insisted that it depict more of the real Japan that he knew and less of the mythical Japan that the opera had helped promulgate. That eventually turned out to be a more meaningful contribution than just his financial support.*

*"Alice Damrosch Kiaer said to me, 'I think that Mr. Starr would be very much interested in mounting a new Butterfly for the Metropolitan Opera.' Mr. Bing was very eager on his terms, but...I don't think he'd ever bumped into anyone quite like Mr. Starr. Mr. Starr, after discussing the subject with Mr. Bing, went back to Japan, and,*

*as time went on and on and on, Mr. Bing got more and more restless. Mr. Starr wasn't the easiest person to vary from a schedule—and Mr. Bing is accustomed to having the schedule for a new production entirely under his own control, which indeed it has to be.... After *sturm und drang*, Mr. Starr arrived from Japan with at least two complete productions of *Butterfly* in sketches, and swatches of wonderful material.... I don't believe that had ever happened before, perhaps never to any impresario, because that just isn't the way it is done.... The fact of the matter was that one of the sketches was so exquisite—so clearly right and wonderful—that there was no question. Had Mr. Bing been faced with a much easier mark than Mr. Starr, he might have pressed his way through.... That wasn't the way things happened in Mr. Starr's life, and when the smoke did clear away after a number of meetings, we had a new production.... The utter echt quality, the absolute simplicity of the Nagasaka sets overwhelmed you."*

*—Reginald Allen, former assistant to Rudolf Bing, General Manager, Metropolitan Opera*

*"It was quite a feat to have all the sets, props, costumes, and accessories made to order shipped in time. Sixty-five costumes had to be made.... Especially large Japanese slippers and socks had to be made to order, as the makers did not manufacture any big enough."*

*—George E. Beatty*

*"I was very much surprised to have been chosen from among the various able people... including some who had even recommended themselves.... Later, Miss Suzuki explained, 'You have never boosted yourself and willingly offered to do all you could help. Mr. Starr believes that this type of person is really reliable.' Such a way of thinking is very close to that of the Japanese."*

*—Yoshio Aoyama*

*"After the performance he invited Madame Stella and all of the staff to a wonderful party. He put on 'Haori and Hakama' (Japanese formal costume) and was obviously delighted at the success of the premiere."*

*—Motohiro Nagasaka*

*"He always maintained a box at the Opera, but the box always had guests—an office girl sitting right beside an Italian prince or something."*

*—Lee Nordness, New York art dealer*



*"Mr. Starr said that it would have to be an authentic production, not the prettied-up versions that had been presented in the United States up to that time."*

**—Miss Toshi Suzuki, interior decorator**



*"I worked for his production with a completely Japanese mind, not being influenced by the fact that the audience would consist mostly of foreigners. This way of thinking pleased Mr. Starr."*

**—Motohiro Nagasaka**

Mary Lou Xelowski



Nagasaka, Starr, Mrs. Bing, Rudolf Bing, Aoyama

*"Two days later Mr. Freeman received an overseas phone call from Mr. Starr saying that Mr. Rudolf Bing wanted to present the new Madama Butterfly...and we were to send Mr. Yoshio Aoyama and Mr. Motohiro Nagasaka (the director and designer Mr. Starr considered the best) to New York as soon as possible."*

**—George E. Beatty**

# Fine Art

Mme M. Rousso, a Parisian art dealer, said she was quickly able to spot C.V. Starr as one who could, without much background or expertise, see true quality in a painting. This was not really true of all the works of art he collected, some of which failed by a wide margin to live up to the quality of his best items. But even some of the best were not widely recognized as such when he first bought them, many of these to be hung in various buildings and offices. There they appreciated in value quietly and sometimes spectacularly.

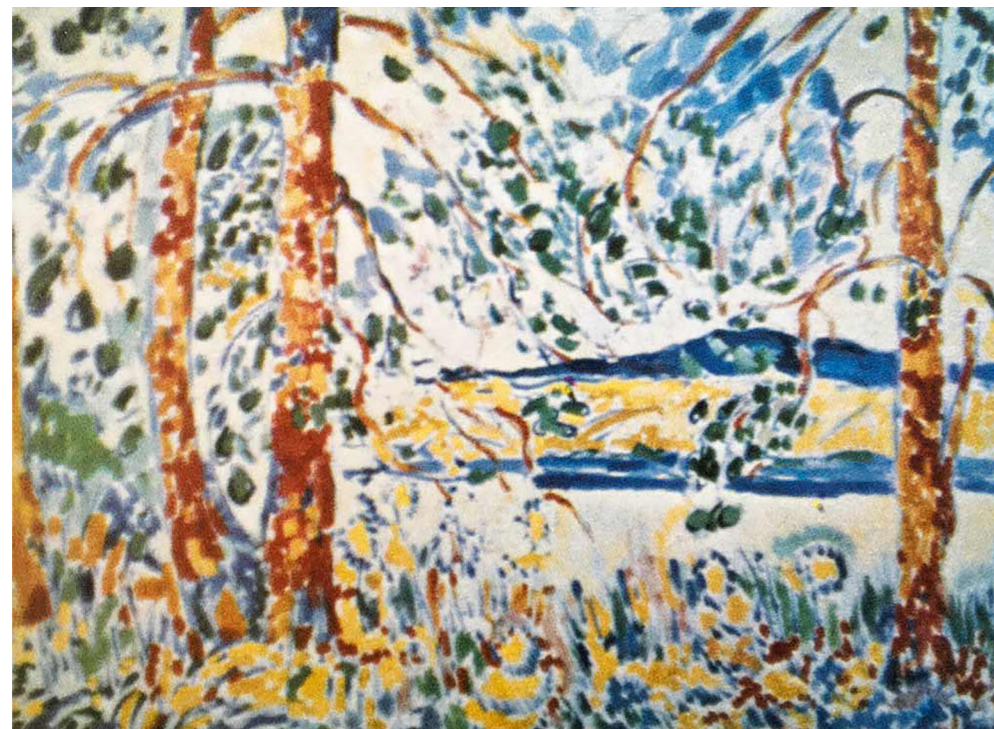
"He never bought art objects because others were buying them, or for investment. He bought what he liked, or he sometimes bought to help out artists and art dealers." —Miss Toshi Suzuki

"I met Mr. Starr for the first time in 1962.... We spoke of many things that day, and I left with the feeling that here was a man vitally interested in the creation of art, but primarily interested in its relationship in the scale of human values. I felt an immediate kinship with this man." —Milton Hebald, sculptor



"Song" by Hugo Robus  
 "Starr's own tastes in all the arts were growing and developing.... His interest in plastic art was just as great as his interest in architecture."  
 —I.M. Pei, architect, I.M. Pei & Partners, New York

Toni Frissell

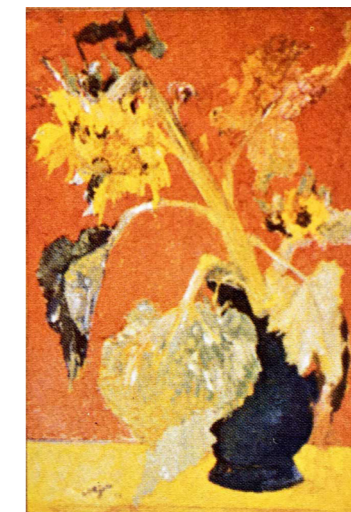


Vlaminck's "Bords de Rivière"  
 "Lorsqu'il vint la première fois à ma galerie, il y a je crois 20 ans, je savais tout de suite que je me trouvais en présence d'un "véritable amateur."" ("The first time he came to my gallery, some 20 years ago, I knew immediately that I was in the presence of a 'genuine devotee.'")

—Mme M. Rousso

Lorjou's "Fleurs sur un Fond Rouge dans un Pot Bleu." His only real love was the Fauve Period. He loved color."

—Lee Nordness



Toni Frissell

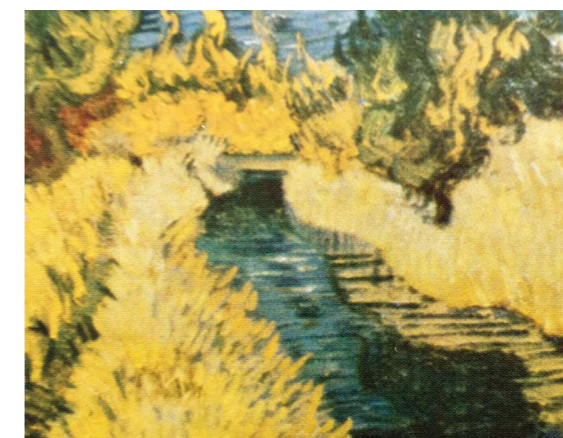
"In Tokyo, Mr. Starr once visited the shop of a noted art dealer who specialized in 'ukiyo-e', the famous Japanese woodblock prints. The dealer, an expert, proudly showed an ukiyo-e masterpiece and said it was by a certain artist. Mr. Starr said he thought it was by another. The dealer looked at the work again and then gave Mr. Starr a startled look, saying he was correct. He turned and asked me just who this foreigner was." —George E. Beatty

"He never bought more paintings than he could hang." —Lee Nordness

"Je l'ai revu plusieurs fois au fil des années. Malgré ses multiples occupations, lorsqu'il venait à Paris, et que je lui signalais quelque chose d'intéressant, il trouvait toujours quelque instants pour passer à la galerie." ("I saw him again a number of times over the years. Despite his many responsibilities, whenever he came to Paris and I pointed out something interesting, he always found some time to spend at the gallery.") —Mme M. Rousso, art dealer, Paris

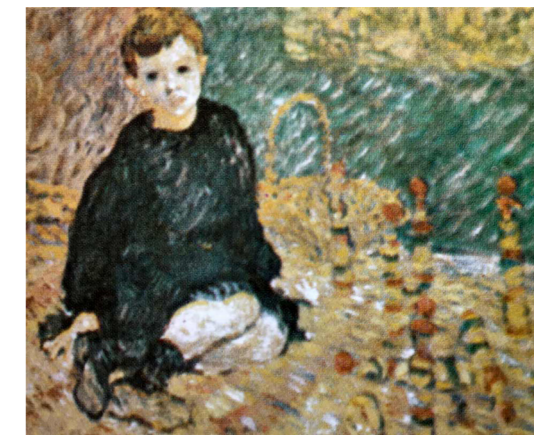
"Everywhere that Neil went, he spent some of his time studying...the local art.... At his golf course you will see some unusual bronzes. These are not flamboyant at all. They're beautifully done, and they don't mar the landscape in the slightest degree. They add to the scene." —Lowell Thomas, broadcaster

"It was characteristic of him to pause before one of my pieces, and with an expression of almost...Asian inscrutability, study the work for several moments in absolute silence." —Milton Hebald



Van Gogh's "The Stream at St. Remy"  
 "I just don't understand abstraction or pop art, so I just leave it alone," Starr would say."

—Lee Nordness



Toni Frissell

Valtat's "L'enfant aux Quilles"  
 "...an oil painting of a little boy that he was particularly fond of. You might consider that...as almost the child that Starr didn't have."

—Mrs. Mary Tweedy

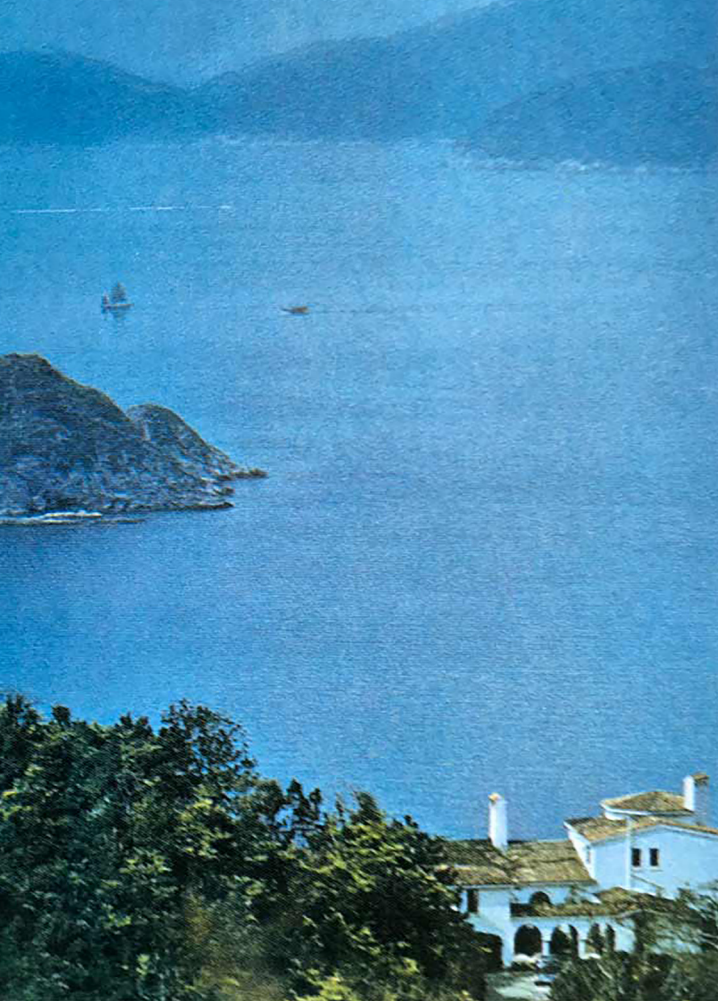


Ted Vardi

Jade, crystal, and china  
 "Mr. Starr had a fine eye for Oriental art objects as well as Occidental ones."

—George E. Beatty





Toni Frissell

The Lookout, Hong Kong

*"I am just about to leave Lookout—but my heart is remaining. Never have I had a better time, been treated more like a queen, or been in a more beautiful place."*

—Mrs. Thomas J. Watson, Jr.



Ted Vardi

The Penthouse, New York City

*"His Fifth Avenue penthouse was very much more than just a pied à terre to him. He delighted in the roof garden and, in its way, it was just as much home to him as Brewster was his country retreat."*

—Miss Marion Breen, Starr's secretary and cousin



Morefar, Brewster

*"I always felt that, of all the places he loved, Mr. Starr had a special fondness for Morefar, but I was not really sure until one day we talked about his homes around the world—The Lookout in Hong Kong, Bancho House, Tokyo, all lovely places. Then he said, after a pause, 'But Brewster is seductive.'"*

—Ta Chun Hsu

## Places He Loved

*Cornelius V. Starr was not impelled to his wandering because he wanted to get away from where he was. On the contrary, he loved so many places so well—and was so fond of the people he knew and dealt with in those places—that he did not like to stay away from any of them too long.*

*"Looking out across the uninterrupted vista of the green wooded countryside, Starr said, 'It reminds me of China, and that is why I have named my estate Morefar...'"*

—Roger Stephens, Australia, former student helped by Starr

*"In his New York penthouse at 930 Fifth Avenue he had a Van Gogh, Modigliani, and two Vlaminck paintings which he obtained many years ago, when prices were a small fraction of what they are now."* —George E. Beatty

*"Lorsque je me rendis à New York en 1966, il m'invita à séjourner dans sa merveilleuse maison de campagne. C'est là, chez lui, au milieu des ses grands arbres, que j'ai pu pleinement apprécier en même temps que son hospitalité, son extraordinaire sens artistique." ("When I visited New York in 1966, he invited me to stay at his marvelous country home. It was there, among the great trees, that I was able to appreciate fully both his hospitality and his extraordinary artistic sense.")* —Mme M. Rouso

*"There was a big tree in Brewster, under which he loved to sit in his last years."* —Gordon Tweedy

*"Starr also wanted to build a Japanese house. This would require bringing native designers, artists, and materials from abroad, and maintenance costs would be very high in this climate. I gave him an estimate that was very high. Afterward he told me, with his dry wit, he was unable to sleep nights thinking of the high costs of homebuilding. He had already selected a hilltop site at Brewster, and it was a place that he loved so well that his body may eventually be taken there."* —Miss Toshi Suzuki

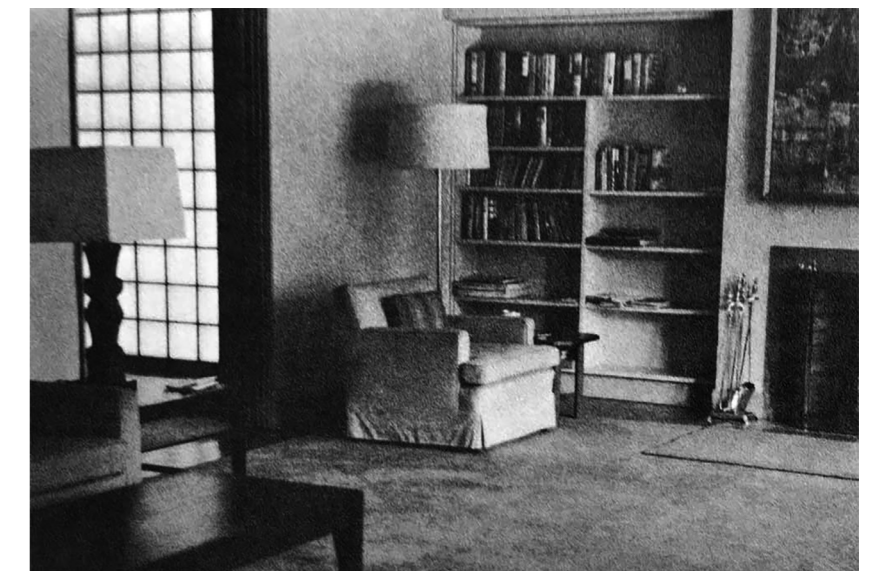
*"The many wonderful hours and days I spent with him on the ski slopes and in the world of mountains and glaciers made me forget that I was in the company of a man immeasurably superior to myself. Out here we were just friends, and only as friends has it been possible to make these mountain tours and have these very fine times."* —Rudi Matt



Broadway Mansions, Shanghai

*"Every time I would go off on a trip, and Neil heard I was going, he would say, 'Well, Lowell, when you get to Shanghai, by all means take over my place, won't you?' And if I was going to Karachi, he would say, 'I've got a place in Karachi.' in Beirut, or whatever it happened to be."*

—Lowell Thomas



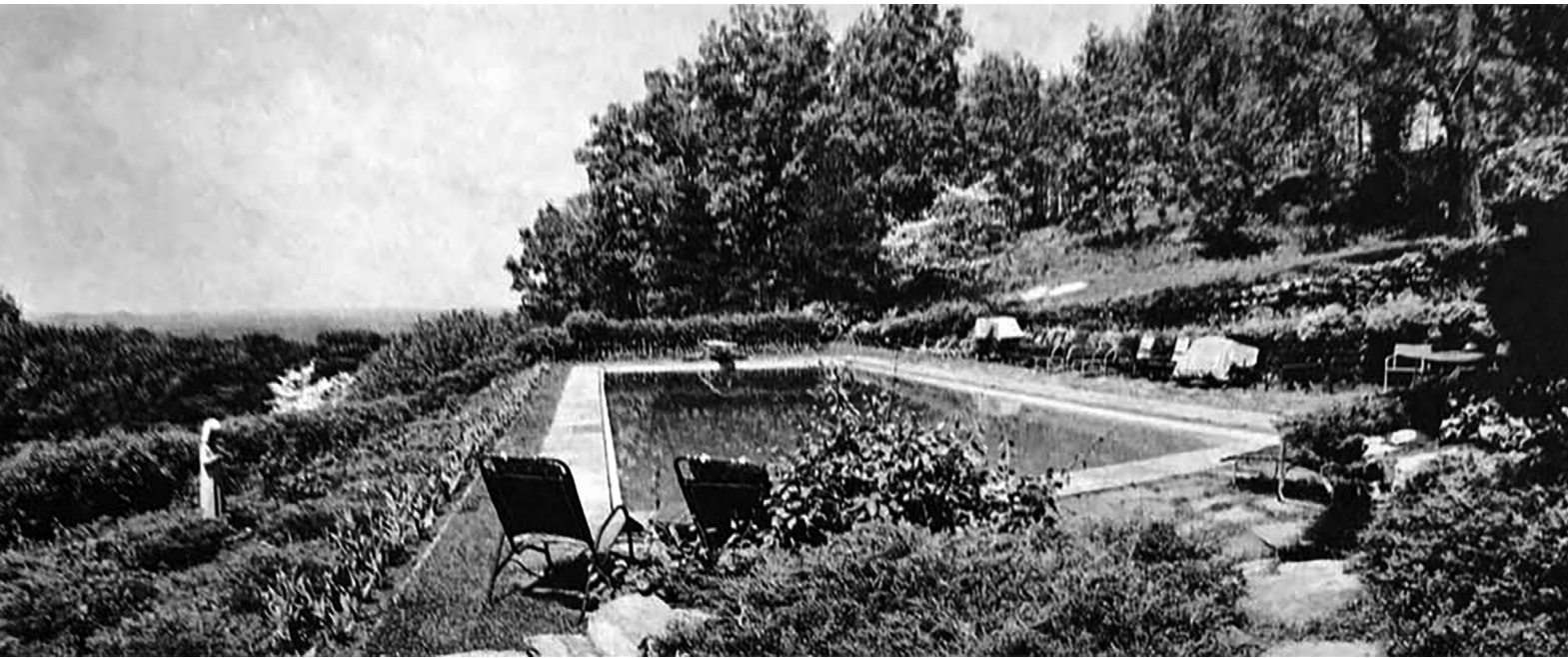
Bancho House, Tokyo

*"I had worked with a Japanese architect to help design my father's house. Mr. Starr thought it was an excellent design, and he suggested to me that I come to the United States to study interior design."*

—Miss Toshi Suzuki

# Places He Loved—A Visit to Morefar

Toni Frissell



Morefar at Brewster, N.Y.  
*"To him, Brewster was the most beautiful place in the world, in the spring when all the blossoms were out. He really loved it. At that time of the year, no matter where he was, he always tried to get there."*

—Tom Keeping

Toni Frissell



Lucchesi's *The Boy and Kite*, on the ninth fairway at Morefar.  
*"The art had to not take itself too seriously.... He wanted life-size work and bigger."*

—Lee Nordness

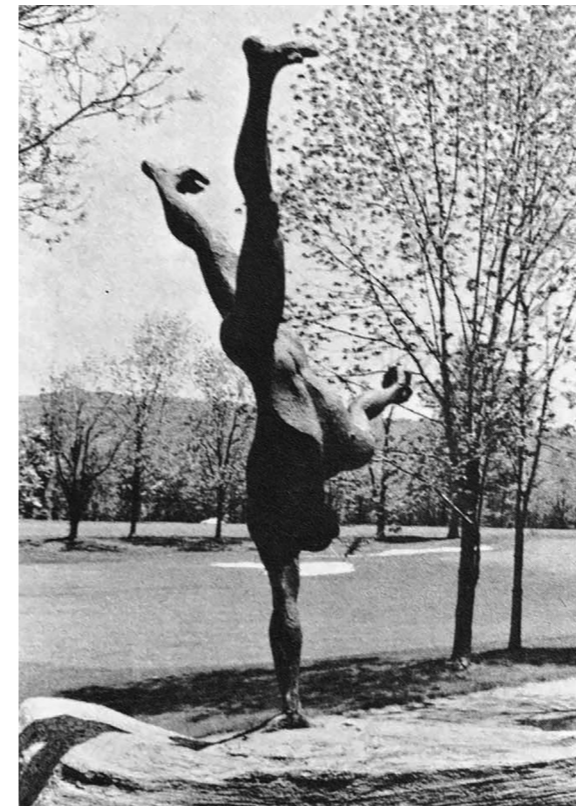
Toni Frissell



*"All who have seen Brewster...will agree that he had great talent.... It was the joy of turning fields and woods into a park with vistas and planting and sculpture and creating an area of beauty which others could enjoy that filled him with pleasure. He was vastly amused when someone accused him of building the golf course so that he could have fun decorating it."*

—Mrs. Helen Graham Park, retired architect, C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.

Toni Frissell



Hebard's *"Handstand"* (or, by Starr's name, *"Dangle Dingle"*)

*"Of all the collectors that I have dealt with Mr. Starr is perhaps the one I respected the most. He made me feel (as he did with everyone who worked with him) that my efforts were not only rewarded but reciprocated with much more than one would expect."*

—Milton Hebard

Toni Frissell



Hebard's *"Five Foot Two"*

*"When you come into the ninth green and have finished the longest hole on the course, and usually you come in frustrated, standing there on the edge of the green is a bronze nude of a woman, and she's leering at you, as if to say, 'What fools you fellows are to be wasting your time with this silly sport.'"*

—Lowell Thomas

# A Sense of Common Humanity

*There is a brand of internationalism that deals in treaties, charters, and understandings among nations. There is another, older brand of internationalism that deals with humankind and the things that billions of people have in common. It was this latter sense of human unity that was the starting premise for C.V. Starr, almost from the moment he began to create an international enterprise.*

“Starr left us great heritage, in one important sense: we operate abroad through people who are native to the countries. If they’ve got the ability, they get the job. If we have an excellent Chinese or Japanese or Italian, we’ll move him to a greater opportunity, whether in the United States or Europe or Asia.” —*M.R. Greenberg*

“There was a loyal American behind most principles, although he never shied from criticizing any nation (including his own) which appeared to be in the wrong.” —*Roger Stephens*

“He helped just about every nationality. But the Far East was really where his heart was.” —*Hugh M. Blake*

“He was very interested in pouring money back and helping young people from... Asia. He

asked me to do a show of Saito, the Japanese printmaker, within the first two years of my knowing him.... One of the reasons his business was so successful was that people sensed and knew he wasn’t just there to exploit them.” —*Lee Nordness*

“He could bring together a tremendous diversity of people. Mansfield Freeman is a Rock of Gibraltar type, a New Englander, a philosopher. Hank Greenberg is a driver, a tremendous insurance man. Jimmy Manton is very English and reserved. George Moszkowski, was at one point one of our very key people, was a kind of crazy ex-Polish-Russian who today couldn’t live in our environment, but who at that time was essential to it.” —*E.E. Stempel*

“It was a peculiar family relationship we all had. We worked for him and he worked for us.” —*John Horn*

“He was a real friend, a genuine friend of China and the Chinese people. There was no difference in his eyes between the rich and poor, official and ordinary persons, and he would treat them on the same basis—‘if you’re my friend, you’re my friend.’ As far as he was concerned, human beings were human beings.” —*Tsuyee Pei*

*“He could be absolutely the most charming person in the world, and he usually was. He was first-class company all the time. He had a bright, active mind, and a great zest for life.”*

—**Herman Kiaer**



*“Now, first of all, he had absolutely no racial, national, or class prejudices. People were people and he was interested in them as people.”*

—**Mansfield Freeman**



*“Long before international business was a popular theory, CVS possessed the vision to realize that in our generation the countries of the world were becoming tied together and that it was possible to construct a cohesive organization from highly diverse elements. He stressed the need for finding trustworthy and capable indigenous staff...in an era before this was popular.”*

—**E.E. Stempel**



A small business deal  
*“Wherever he went, Starr talked to people of that country. He didn’t confine himself to the American Ambassador.”*

—**John Ahlers**



*“He would make it a point to have a brief conversation, regardless of how busy he was with all his many guests. He made you feel you were really wanted at his house.”*

—**Miss Wen-Shi Yu**

# Architecture

*Architecture is the art form in which people most frequently build monuments to themselves. Starr was too self-effacing a man to harbor such notions, and yet he had a sense of the monumentality and power of buildings, their ability to blend into and become an element of the urban community, along with their potential to enhance its beauty. His monuments were erected to a business organization and to the large human community it served.*

“Those who were privileged to work with him share the conviction that he might have had an equally brilliant career in corporate law or banking. He might also have become an accomplished architect.” —*Herbert L. Beckwith, architect, Anderson, Beckwith & Haible, Boston*

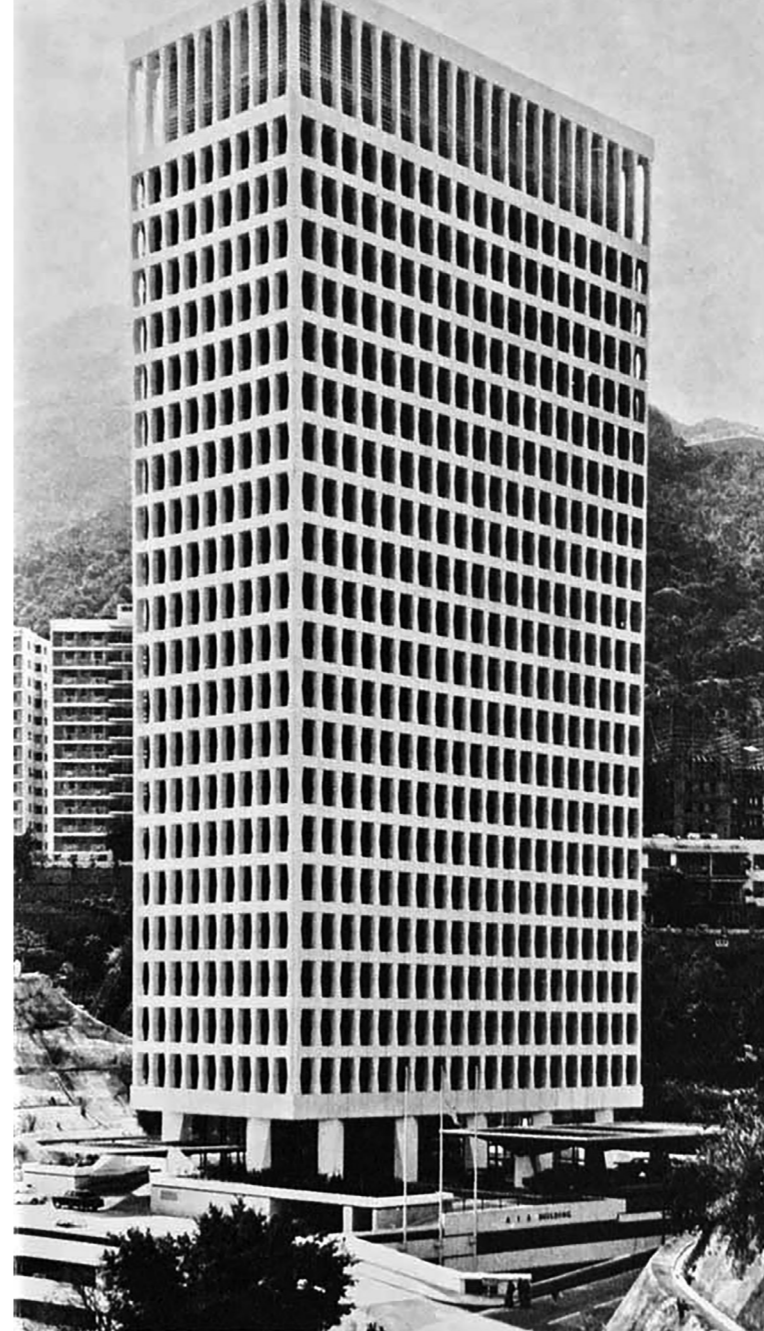
“He often said that he felt like a frustrated architect....” —*Mrs. Helen Graham Park*

“On design decisions, Mr. Starr was never in

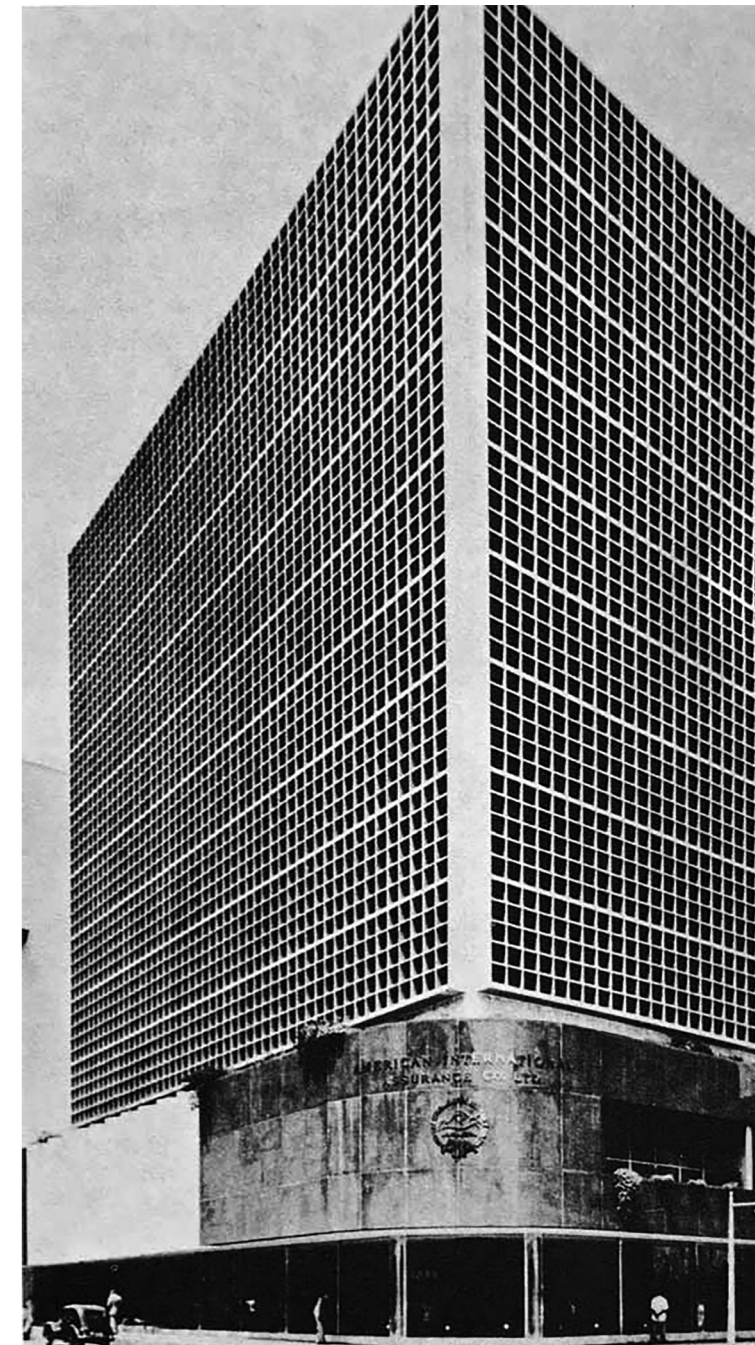
a hurry. He would analyze and question each problem and then, like a schoolmaster who already knows the answer, ask others for their opinion. Prodding, questioning, examining, he would seek for the ultimate answer.” —*J.H. Kinoshita, architect, Palmer & Turner, Hong Kong*

“Architects are prone to construct an elaborate rationale in support of their ideas...he apparently had quiet pleasure in unmasking it. On the occasion of the presentation of our final report to him...he interrupted me halfway through with the remark, ‘In other words, you like it this way.’ I am grateful, in terms of timing that apparently he did also.” —*Herbert L. Beckwith*

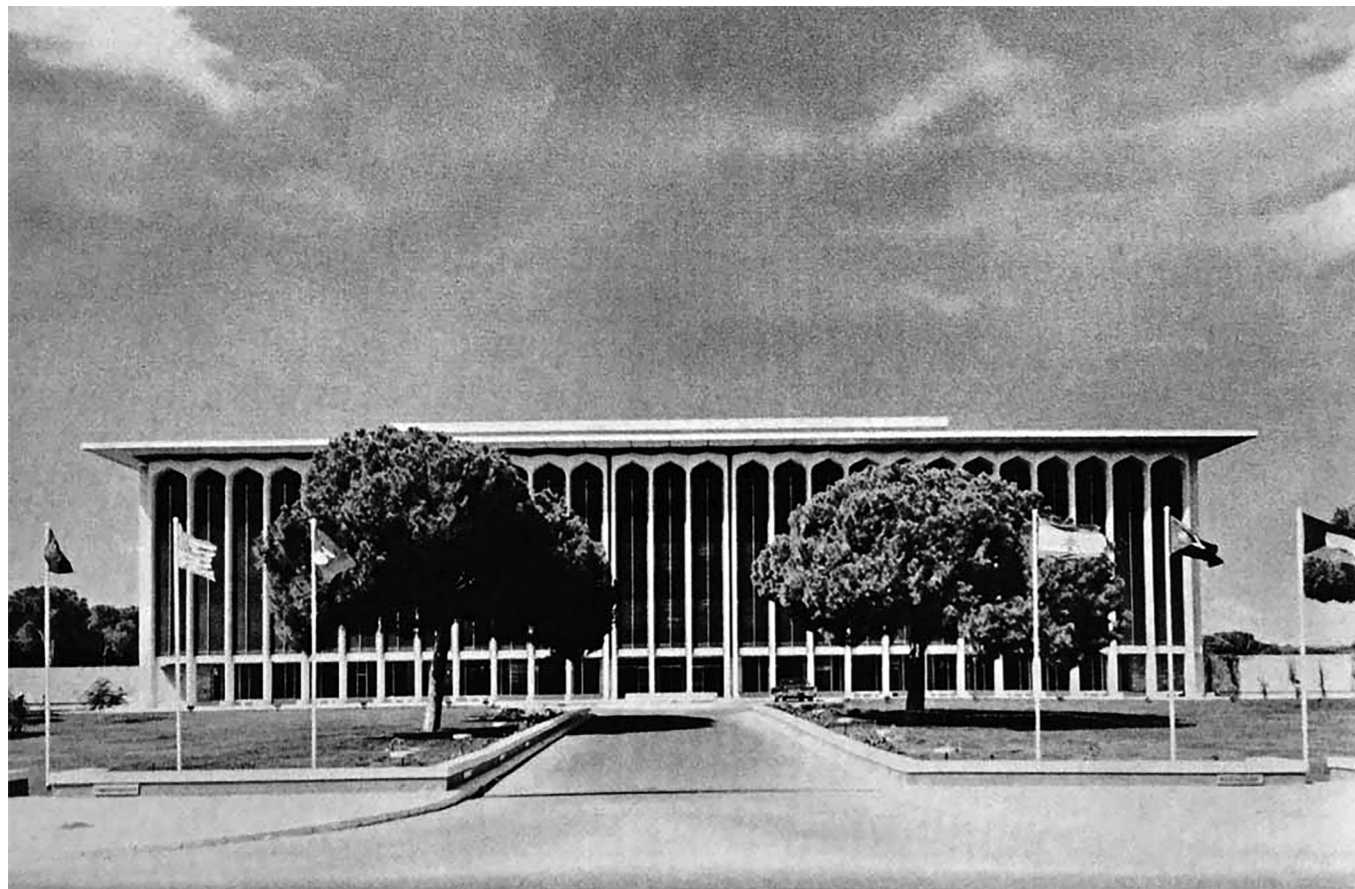
“He was a perfectionist. He wanted both utility and beauty. He came close to being an ideal client.... His buildings all look advanced, not hidebound, and they represent a progressive approach....” —*I.M. Pei*



Hong Kong  
 “This is a building which speaks with many voices—some joyous, some sad...sad in that the man who dreamed of it and who devoted to it so much imagination and driving intelligence did not live to fulfill his last and most cherished wish to see it in its final living form.”  
 —*Gordon Tweedy*



“The first large building was built in Singapore.... The fact that this beautiful building could not be properly seen from a distance was a source of frustration to him.”  
 —*Mrs. Helen Graham Park*

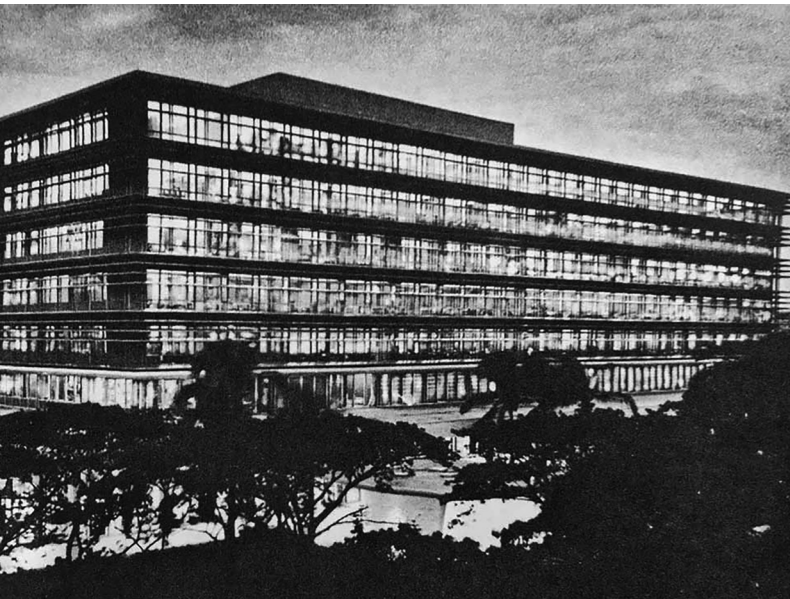


“He insisted that all his buildings...must look as though they belonged to the culture. This was particularly true in Beirut, where he envisioned a horizontal building recalling the columnar repetition of Baalbek. He was very fortunate in finding a local architect of great talent.... It is the showpiece of the Middle East and a deeply gratifying solution.”

—*Mrs. Helen Graham Park*

Philippine American Life Building, Manila  
*"Starr said, 'We have to have a building. It's gonna be four square walls, and you have to have offices. Why not have a beautiful building? Why can't we have a building that will advertise our products and sell more life insurance and also have something that is a thing of beauty?'"*

—E.E. Stempel

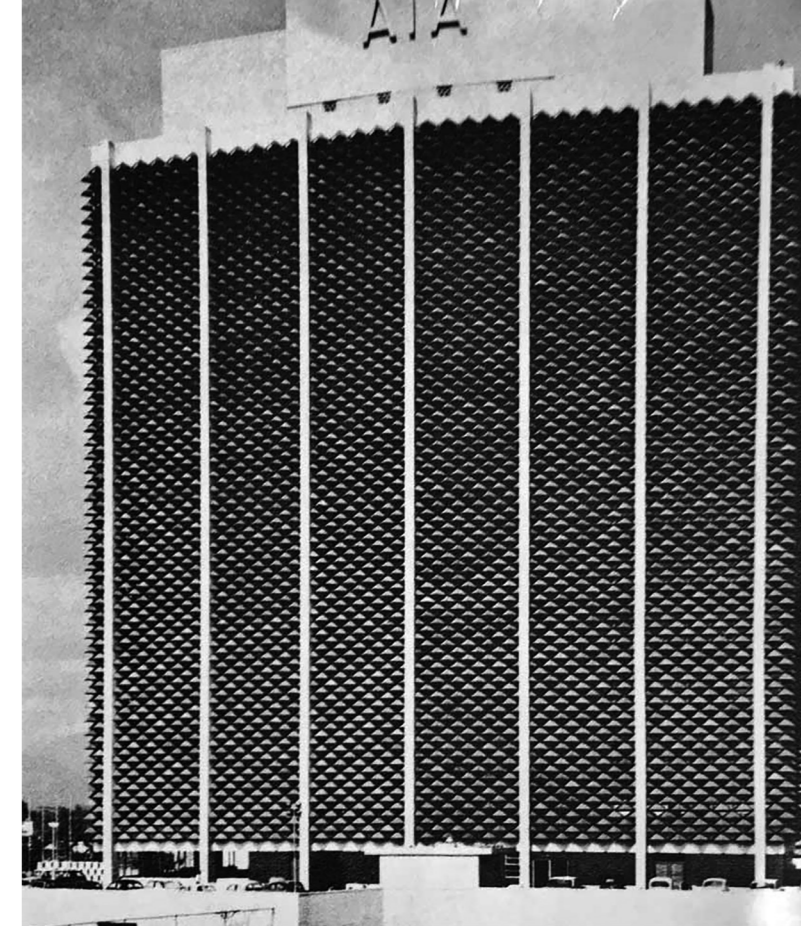


AIA Building, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
*"When it was decided to build Malaya, Mr. Starr went to Kuala Lumpur and personally...selected the largest and most open plot available. He was criticized at the time for building more than could be rented. Now another office block of the same size could be easily rented."*

—Mrs. Helen Graham Park

Wilmington, Delaware building under construction.  
*"He wanted this building to be...a strong building; he wanted it to be easily identifiable.... He did stress the importance of simplicity. He would like to see design that is not so fashionable, but that had enduring values."*

—I.M. Pei



Havana, Cuba  
*"'Oh,' Starr said, 'We can do it. You just have to have courage and you have to go ahead.' Like putting up these buildings, for instance. Many of them were way over our heads at the time but, by gosh! we did it."*

—Clement J. Smith

Karachi, Pakistan  
*"In Karachi, it delighted him to be able to use his sculptor's eye to visualize the finished building. In fact, he got so involved with the sculptural possibilities of this building that he ordered a spiral stairway off the lobby."*

—Mrs. Helen Graham Park



Robert Perron



Bangkok, Thailand  
*"During all the planning stages he gave a great deal of time and attention to the sunscreens.... The Bangkok building was shaded with aluminum louvers above eye level which allowed an unimpeded view from the interior and that solved his problem."*

—Mrs. Helen Graham Park



*"The spectrum of his interests was tremendously wide; indeed he did try to take in all knowledge as his province, and would have been an ideal man of the Renaissance..."*

—Mrs. Mei Li Peir, student helped by Starr

## Thirst for Knowledge

*There is a breed of individuals who are suffused with a need to learn all they can about everything they can. This very special hunger, this craving for knowledge comes very early in life, and it rarely leaves before the last breath is drawn. It knows few limits, either in breadth of subject matter or in depth of exploration. And it is complete in itself, requiring no other motivations than a sheer love of learning and knowing. C.V. Starr knew his hunger and pursued its satisfaction with a tenacity that was extraordinary even for this special breed.*

"An interesting story of Neil as 'a man in a hurry' is how he tackled the study of law. Attending the University of California at Berkeley, he noted how many years it would take him to become a lawyer. He is said to have taken a job in a law office, taken law books home with him, studied

them from 4:30 to 8 o'clock each morning before going to work, and getting a special tutor to guide him in this study course. This went on for 4 ½ months, after which time he is said to have stood the bar examinations in California and passed second highest in the State. As nearly as I have been able to determine, this is just about what actually happened." —Galen Litchfield, retired President, American International Reinsurance Company, Inc.

"An American and British book company there had a couple of bookstores. He got all the books and magazines that he could and took every newspaper on the stands; he read everything. He could read very fast, and he had a retentive memory too." —Clement J. Smith

"Among his favorite reading subjects were history and politics. Toward the end of his life, he was reading many books a week, and he embarrassed his colleagues who were unable to keep up with this voracious appetite."

—Gordon Tweedy

"Mr. Starr knew of my interest in art and books, and...he often invited me to his Tokyo home to spend evenings to converse on a multitude of subjects.... As for me, I learned a lot..."

—George E. Beatty

"Because he was a lawyer, he refused to accept a legal obstacle at face value. If he was told he couldn't do something, he wanted to know why...and very often he'd find he could do it." —Francis J. Mulderig, Vice President, C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.

"Mr. Starr war nicht mehr granz jung und sein skiläuferisches Können entsprach etwa einam Durchschnittsläufer. In Wenigen Wochen war-

en seine Fortschritte durch seinen Fleiss und seine Baharrlichkeit weit über einen Durchschnittsläufer Hinausgewachsen. Besonders auffallend war sein Interesse für den Bewegungsablauf und die physikalischen Gesetze de Skilaufes." ("Mr. Starr was no longer very young, and his skiing ability was average. Within a few weeks, however, he had made such progress through his diligence and persistence that he got far ahead of the average skier. I was particularly impressed by his interest in the technicality of movement and the physical laws of skiing.")

—Rudi Matt

"He never gave up a sort of investigation into the sense of life. He thought life must make sense, only he had been unable to discover it.... He had tremendous patience in listening to people. He would listen to all sorts of people—a servant, the elevator man. He subscribed to the saying by Galileo that 'I never met a man so ignorant that I could not learn from him.'"

—John Ahlers

*"I can see him now seated beneath the giant copper beech at Morefar.... His was the seat immediately to the right of the swinging divan. It was a black wrought iron chair like all the others, and he would relax on its precarious fulcrum, legs crossed, chatting gently. Here, as in most situations, Mr. Starr was infinitely at home."*

—Roger Stephens



Toni Frissell

## An Interest in People

*C.V. Starr had an irresistible affinity for people, and an inexplicable instinct for knowing when they were troubled, some sense of the nature of their problems, and a few ideas on how they might be solved. It was the source of a great reservoir of loyalty to him. But loyalty was not what he sought. The key to his motivation was simple and direct: an interest in people, and a powerful desire to help them improve their lot.*

*"One time I went up to Brewster late in the afternoon, and he told me to bring my wife and son along with me. Then he suggested we spend the night. Then another night, and another night. This went on for about a week." —Tom Keeping*

*"He supplemented my income...as a naval lieutenant, until I had to ask him to stop it.... I think he did this with...everybody who was in the service." —Hugh M. Blake*

*"I had a friend who was smashed up in a ski accident in the West. He was in really very serious shape...I wanted him brought East to be operated on by a great orthopedic surgeon. I told Neil about this thing and he said, 'Well, I'll send a plane out for him.' And he did." —Lowell Thomas*

*"He was generous to a most unusual degree, even to the extent of not using his best judgment. He would give tips that were so unusual as to disregard local customs. But he did not do it to splash; he just rewarded good service." —Herman Kiaer*

*"He would just overdo his generosity to individuals...I found you had to keep a tight hold on yourself, being in the house; otherwise you couldn't help but criticize him." —John Horn*

*"During my senior year at Middlebury...I informed him that I was seriously involved with a girl in her junior year.... He became concerned for me, feeling that my involvement might affect my studies.... He told me of another Asian boy who had gone through the same thing with an Austrian girl...accepted Mr. Starr's advice to wait and is now happily married to a girl of his own country.... I respected his advice, but I also had my own convictions.... When I married Betsy a year and a half later, he gave me his blessings and even advised me when I should start having children!" —Daniel Ley, Cambodia, former student helped by Starr*

*"By the power of his character and personality, Mr. Starr helped many of us to become better men—not just better businessmen, but better persons." —G.M. Hughes, Chairman of American International Assurance Company*

*"If all was going well one rarely seemed to see him." —Roger Stephens*

*"He was forever considerate of others. No matter how busy or involved he became in something, he never forgot to ask, for instance, whether the chauffeurs had had their lunch—or if someone had means to return home. It was always a humbling experience." —David Pearson, Public Relations Director, C.V. Starr & Co., Inc.*

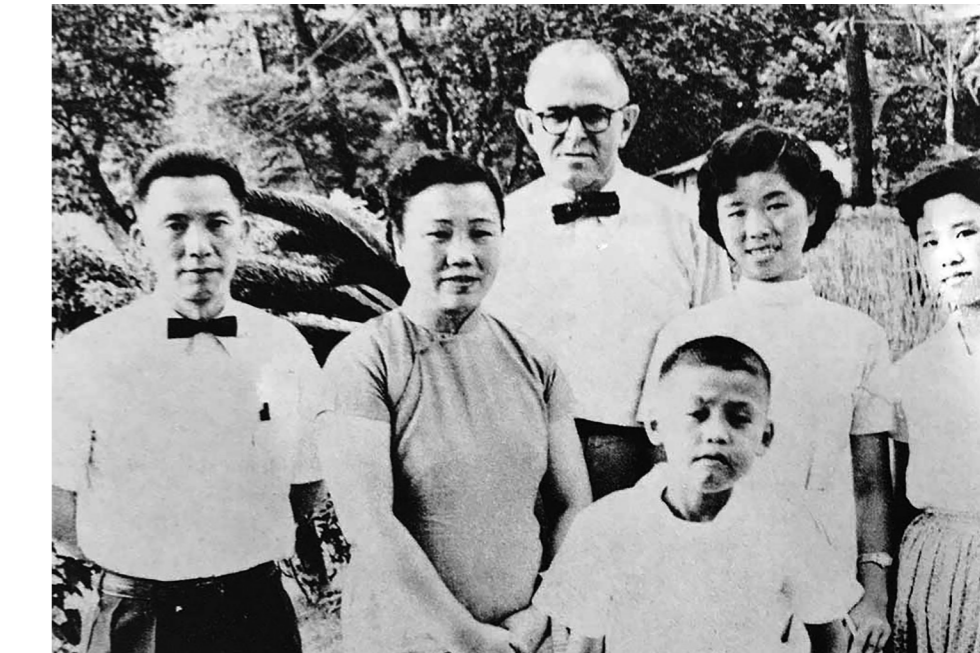
*"A talk with Mr. Starr was always inspiring whatever the subject. People left him feeling as if little wings would take them over any obstacle. He made his interlocutor feel as if all his time was at his disposal." —A.W. Joukowsky*

*"It was from seeing his protégés make their own way successfully that he got self-satisfaction."  
—Raymond Bonham Carter, Great Britain, former student helped by Starr*

*"Starr used the phone to make arrangements for people everywhere—for their travel, their accommodations."  
—Herman Kiaer*



Toni Frissell



*"He had the strange power of drawing the hearts of people, especially Chinese people, towards him as a magnet attracts a bit of metal...."*

—Miss Wen-Shi Yu



*"He liked to keep in touch with as many people as he could, instilling in everybody a feeling not only of cooperation but one of 'belonging.' The word 'employee' was never used, and the entire staff feeling was one of association. There was practically no turnover of staff in the Far East."*

—A. W. Joukowsky

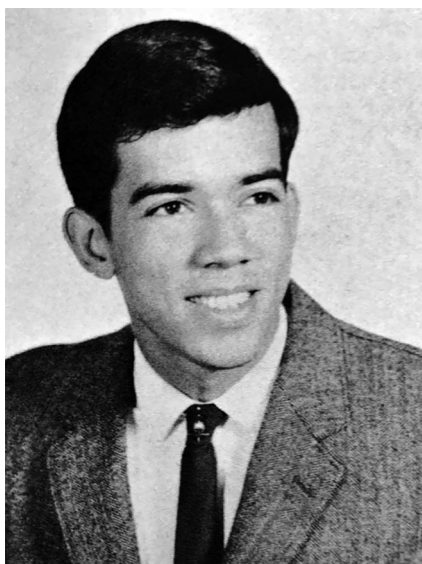
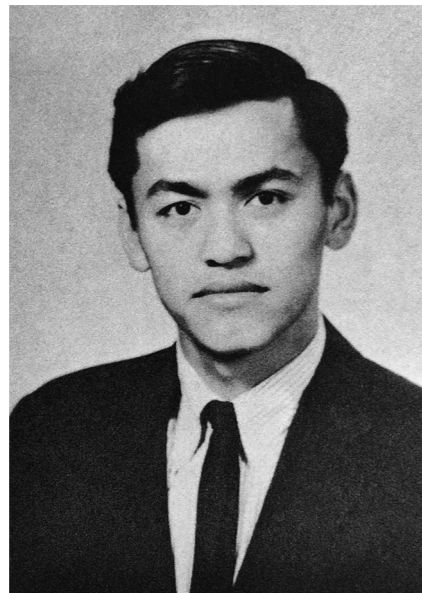


"I valued his personal advice the most. He used to tell me that he enjoyed 'picking my brain to see where it would tick the most.' He helped make my brain tick louder."

—Daniel Ley

"After I was admitted to Claremont Men's College...he made a special trip to visit the college to see whether it met his approval. With all his personal interest...I felt an obligation to succeed in my education."

—James Yu, student helped by Starr



"I think Mr. Starr felt great responsibility to others. He prided himself not on his own achievements, but rather on the people whose lives were enriched by his generosity."

—John S. Galinato, Philippines, former student helped by Starr

## Education

Starr believed deeply in the value of knowledge and, even though his own career of formal study was an erratic and impatient one, he made a point of encouraging young people in acquiring educational credentials. It was not enough for him merely to supply the wherewithal for needy students; he would make regular personal checks on their progress. Not only did he and the college both act in loco parentis for his scholars, but he usually insisted that they remain in close touch and counsel with their own parents on their education and careers.

"He was so willing to give anyone an opportunity to reach his height, the full range of his ability." —M.R. Greenberg

"Starr was always interested in picking up bright young kids and giving them an education..." —Clayton Seitz

"It is, of course, dangerous to make generalizations about this complex man. He was not always, I think, very discriminating in his choice of young people whom he befriended... By Mr. Starr's terms, I was a failure... I could never ski and, more disappointing still, I made no money for him or for myself. Nevertheless, I was very fond of this kind, lonely, and brilliant man." —John Chancellor, Great Britain, former student helped by Starr

"Without knowing much of my background or qualifications, Mr. Starr offered me a scholarship. That was the true Mr. Starr. He took an individual as he saw him, always, anxious to encourage ambition." —John S. Galinato

"Starr suggested that he...enable me to complete the second year of the MBA degree course, which I would otherwise have been unable to afford. I thus became one of many whom he helped with their education. What I owe to him for that alone is not easy for me to measure." —Raymond Bonham Carter

"Mr. Starr... advised us on our problems. He explained things in crystal-clear terms—often much better than our professors." —Guttorm Berge

"I remember questioning him about Vietnam.... He gave me what he considered the best book on the subject, and gave a critical resumé of many other theories. It put many history lectures to shame." —Roger Stephens

"Mr. Starr was very much against giving away money as an outright gift. He preferred to invest, instead, in people's ability and in the development of their skills. He liked to see his money at work in this way." —Miss Toshi Suzuki



"The ski team members wished very much to make a sauna.... I asked Mr. Starr if he would give the college the donation for this bath. His answer was, 'No, but I'll match every dollar you yourself can raise for your 'hot air bath'.' This project was financed and built within three months."

—Guttorm Berge



"Now I am at Boston University, where I am majoring in mathematics. I have learned much already, but there is so much more to be learned; I hope that Mr. Starr would be proud of me."

—Mrs. Mei Li Peir

"I have been a teacher, really, all my life,' Mr. Starr once said to me. He had been, and a very patient one, too. I remember his spending hours explaining to his associates some of the finer points of his business. I remember seeing him, pencil in hand, correcting some of the grammatical errors found in the letters his foreign students had written him. And of course I remember him saying to me soon after I moved East from San Francisco: 'I will also teach you how one should live in New York'."

—Ta Chun Hsu

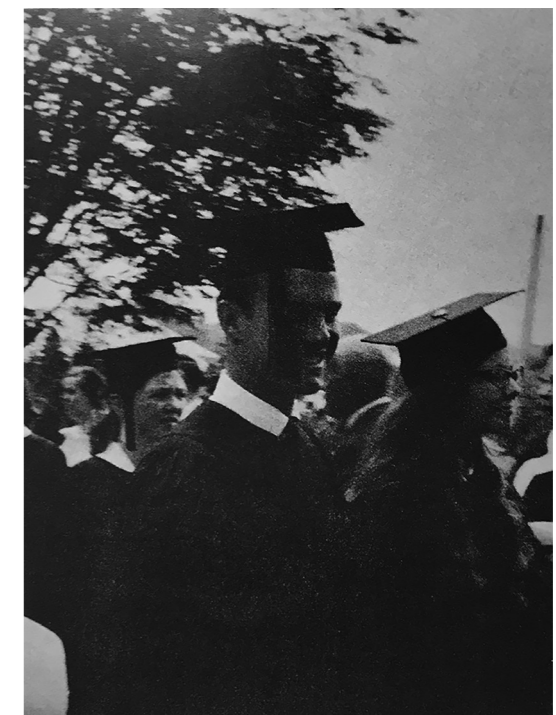


"I first met Mr. Starr at Taipei in 1956, when I was looking for possible graduate study in the United States.... At that time, Taiwan did not have a graduate school in science or engineering. The next thing I knew I was...on my way to Pratt Institute to study chemical engineering."

—Miss Wen-Shi Yu

"I arrived in New York with serious academic difficulties.... His support and confidence in me at the depth of my depression still stand out vividly in my mind.... I limped through the first year and the following semester came within one point of failing.... I expected him to be pretty mad. How completely wrong I was! He talked as one man to another of responsibilities and aims in life.... One year later I was planning on honors.... Well, I got my honors and Mr. Starr was present in person to witness the finale...."

—Roger Stephens





# Publishing

It was all but inevitable that anyone with so vital an interest in the world around him would one day take to the business of publishing. For Starr, that day came very early in his career. His high school classmates recognized in him a certain facility with the written word. And in Shanghai he bought and combined two newspapers, then published a Chinese-language edition. Although it became a sound business enterprise—as Starr would certainly have insisted that it be—it was clear that his own interest in it transcended that of simple business profits.

“To demonstrate that Neil had every element of an intelligent, cool, deep-digging reporter, I need only refer to his whole career.... In fact, he reported better for his insurance interest than he did for us, naturally enough, in view of his...zeal for the task.” —Randall Gould, former editor of the Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury

“I think Starr was attracted to publishing by the thought that he would have made a good writer if he had tried, and that his good friend, China-born Henry Luce, was successful in publishing. Starr thought he could do with his left hand what Luce could do with both. He could not, of course.” —John Ahlers

“Neil was ready to question anything that I or anyone else wrote, and, if necessary, to propose changes.... His taste was impeccable...and his intelligence was incisive.” —Randall Gould

“His most important publication in China was a Chinese-language newspaper called *Ta Mei Wan Pao*, meaning Great American Evening Newspaper. *Ta Mei Wan Pao* was not a Chinese-language version of the *Post and Mercury*, but an originally written paper, written and edited by the Chinese.” —John Ahlers

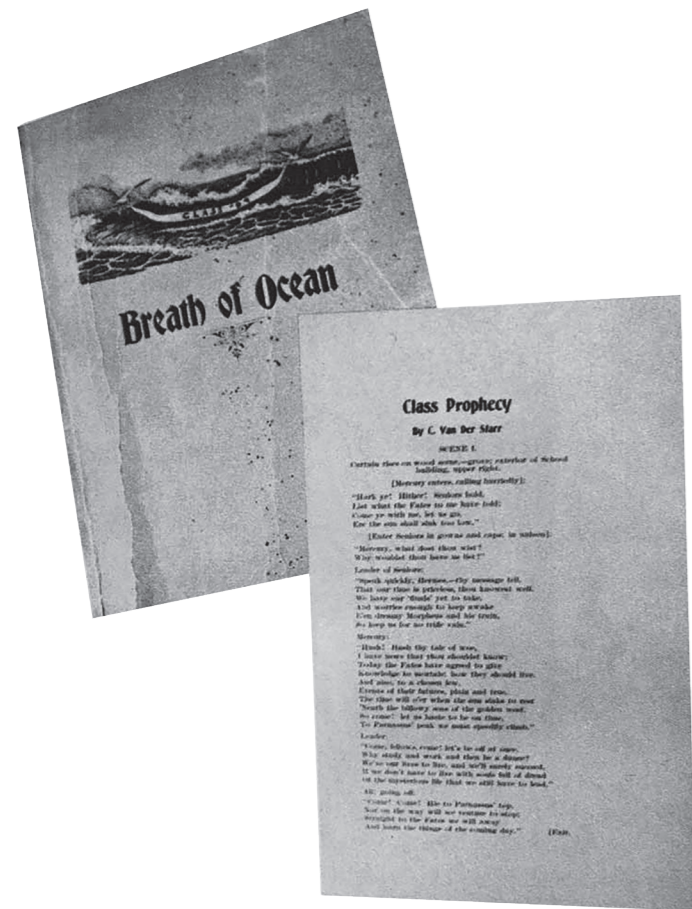
“As a newspaper owner, during my period there, from 1930-1935, he was content not to be a publisher. One would consider him the ideal owner to work with. He might interfere, but never domineer; he was open to discussion, and he allowed great latitude. He had that rare ability that you hear so much about rather than see, of coupling responsibility with authority.” —Ted Thackrey

“When the Japanese attacked the Chinese in Shanghai, the British and French and practically all the Americans were all very much in favor of the Japanese teaching the Chinese a lesson. Starr stood out like a sore thumb in this group, said the Japanese would swallow them all. The paper carried an editorial to that affect.” —John Ahlers

“In a front page editorial...the *Post* headlined, ‘To Those Who Have Abused a Trust-Get Out!’ The Japanese declined to take this cordial invitation, but even in American official circles there were whispered speculations as to whether some way couldn’t be found to get us out.... One of the Japanese embassy men remarked to me regretfully. ‘Your paper is very hard on us, but it is fair.’ Neil demanded that things be that way.” —Randall Gould

“I came to Shanghai in 1931 as Reuters’ man there. Starr then owned *The Shanghai Evening Post*, the only American-owned newspaper in China. From the moment I met him, I realized this was a brilliant and exceptional man.”

—Sir Christopher Chancellor, retired Chairman, Bowater Paper Company



High school yearbook

“I first met Neil when I was a freshman in high school.... Although he was a year younger, he was...a very outstanding student. We became friends right away in a very close friendship that lasted for many years.... He did...take a keen interest and delight in writing articles....”

—Clyde R. Ware, boyhood friend

“In the operation of *East*, I never recall receiving a single order from Starr—suggestions, yes, but always in the mildest tone. He was eager not to interfere with what he felt was a satisfactory operation, and not to second-guess those who ran it.”

—Ted Thackrey, former Editor, *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury*



“Starr could have succeeded in almost any area of development of enterprises. He used to have the magazine *Norte*,...a feature magazine, with great illustrated articles.”

—John Ahlers





With Buddy Werner

"Through skiing he met many people and made many friends. The name of C.V. Starr became well known in international skiing circles."

—Chiharu Igaya, Managing Director, American International Underwriters KK, Tokyo

## The Outdoors

As a young man, Starr was much too busy—and, as one friend observed "a man in a hurry"—to devote much time to exercise and athletics. But when, in later years, he discovered sports that he liked, he made up for lost time in the application of energy, enthusiasm, and mind, in an effort to understand the sport thoroughly.

"After 49 years of association with Mr. Starr I can say that we had many, many experiences together, both business and personal. We both started to ski for the first time in Sun Valley, Idaho in the winter of 1939-40. We also played tennis together many times in various parts of the world." —Clement J. Smith

"I used to ski with Neil. We were approximately the same age. He was an ardent skier, and delightful companion.... His expression was nearly always deadpan. He didn't show his emotions externally, but he was a magnificent entertainer." —Lowell Thomas

"Perhaps his favorite school was Middlebury College, Vermont.... Strongly enough, Starr's contributions to the college remained largely in the sporting field, especially skiing.... The Middlebury College Snowbowl with shelter and tows stand as a monument to his generosity and wish to share his joys with others." —Roger Stephens

"Neil and I skied together...on the most demanding runs, such as the famous racing trails, the Nose Dive, the National and the International, which later became the well-known Starr trail." —Sepp Ruschp, President, Mt. Mansfield Company

He had us up to Stowe just a month before he died... and decided to give a Thanksgiving party, mainly for youngsters. He introduced my oldest boy to skiing, and made him a ski enthusiast of the first order." —Francis J. Mulderig



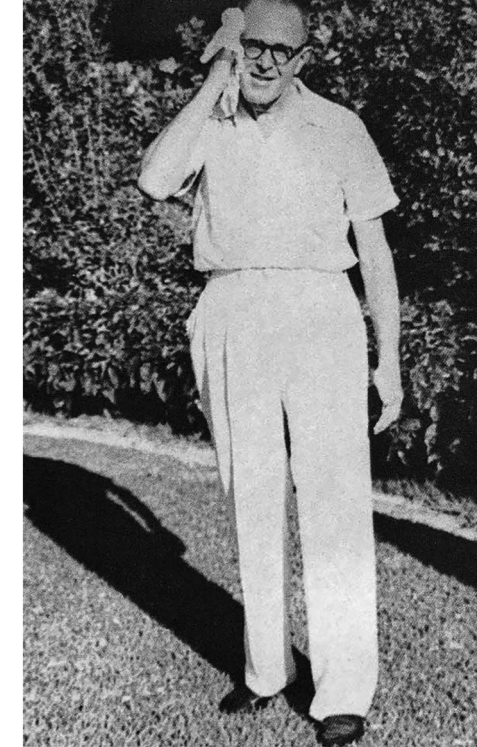
"I really enjoyed playing tennis with Mr. Starr because he was such a competitor. I remember the gleam in his eye when he returned a hard shot and his determined look when he missed."

—John S. Galinato



"Starr took up skiing in the late 1930s. Some years later, someone saw him make a turn and observed, 'That must have cost you quite a bit of money to learn that.' 'Yes,' he said, 'several thousand dollars.'"

—Gordon Tweedy

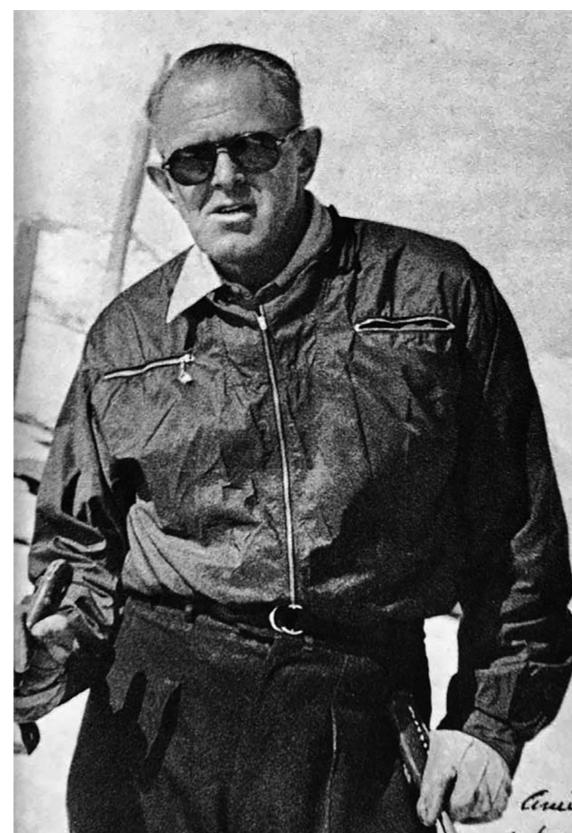


"When Starr played tennis, for example, the ball was a challenge and he faced an enemy. He studied the sport, learned the fine points of its science. Whatever he did, he put all of himself into it."

—John Ahlers

"Neil Starr's first visit to Stowe...comes to me as clearly as if it were only yesterday, although it was almost 25 years ago. His inquiry to me at that time was, 'Can one become a good skier at somewhat over 50 years of age, if he is not the best coordinated athlete?' He has the energy and determination to accomplish the almost unbelievable. He became not only an excellent skier but also a skiing mountaineer."

—Sepp Ruschp



"Starr started a corporation to build a double chair lift into two sections, which he wanted the people of St. Anton to own by buying shares in it. They had never heard of a corporation before. Starr was named an honorary citizen of St. Anton."

—Herman Kiaer

# Portrait of a Man

*The dimensions of a man are too many to measure, and Starr had more than most. Thus he represented many different things to the many people he met, knew, and dealt with. The images he left with them are sometimes contradictory—stiff, yet warm; demanding, yet tolerant; gregarious, yet withdrawn; sure-handed, yet different. But they are almost all sharp images of a man one is not likely soon to forget.*

“It was important to know him ‘warts and all’. He was self-made in the truest and best sense and the possessor to an unusual degree of a fertile imagination matched by the ability to turn its ideas to practical success. Behind a deceptively gentle manner lay pride, even arrogance and ruthlessness. His spirit was resilient, his energy unquenchable, and his generosity, though it might seem indulgent, was more often disinterested. Above all he was positive. He is not someone I shall easily forget.”  
—Raymond Bonham Carter

“He was critical of employees, ideas or concepts which didn’t conform to the high standard of his own aspirations. And yet in the four years that I knew him, I can never once remember him raising his voice. His style was

one of gentle rebuke, or even somber silence....”  
—Roger Stephens

“If he believed in somebody, the chap had an awfully long rope.” —M.R. Greenberg

“He was one of the most extraordinarily intuitive people I’ve ever met about people, what they were thinking, what their problems were.”  
—Mansfield Freeman

“The whole world doesn’t run on our morality.... Mr. Starr understood, in some peculiar way, that the world wasn’t really alike, and that you have to judge everybody by his own standards.”  
—E.E. Stempel

“He was punctilious in detail, and yet he never lost sight of the broader canvas. He looked at things in a sort of two-lensed way—one lens narrowing in on the mosaic of details that were entailed in any project or opportunity and the other giving him the long range overview.”  
—John Roberts

“I was asked by Mr. Starr to be the marine manager. I replied that I couldn’t because I had never done any marine business. I said I had read

only one book on marine business, to which Mr. Starr replied, ‘Then you’re definitely the man for it, because nobody had read a book on marine.’”  
—A.W. Joukowsky

“He would frequently telephone us from Tokyo saying, ‘How are you kids getting along?’ and asking if we needed anything. And, strangest habit of all, he would end the conversation without saying good-bye.” —Milton Hebard

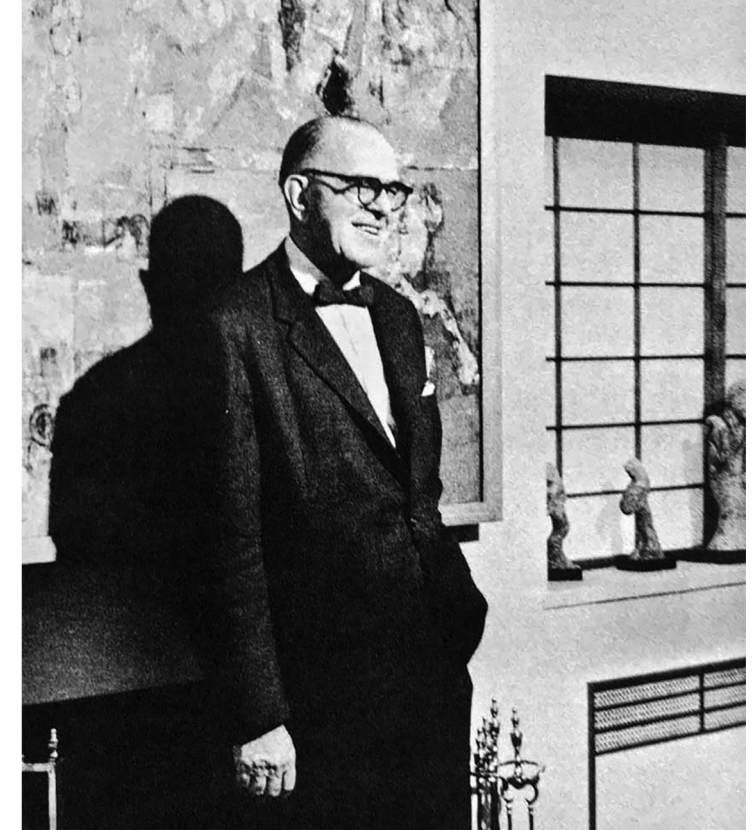
“We made an appointment to see Starr, and we walked into his office, which was a memorable sight—a relatively small office at No. 17 The Bund. Starr had been there before the war and came back and rented far more space than he needed, characteristically, on the speculation that there would be a shortage... Here Neil, sitting behind his walnut desk were seven pads of paper, graduated from larger to smaller, with not a word written on any of them, and beside the pad were six pencils, all sharpened and of equal length, and a telephone. His office was really in his head.” —Mrs. Mary Tweedy

“Mr. Starr’s memory was uncanny. One day I was sounding off loudly on some project I had become enthusiastic about. Neil listened patiently and when I had finished he said quietly: ‘That is not what you told me three years ago.’”  
—Galen Litchfield

“He had no false pride in his own opinions, no hesitation in changing his view when he saw that it was not the best one. Neither did he have any hesitation in admitting when he was wrong, particularly if he had overruled any of his partners.” —A.W. Joukowsky

“I met him for the first time through friends. He needed some money and we decided to make him a pretty substantial loan. He never forgot it. He had tremendous loyalty toward people who had done something for him.... Later...he always made sure that we got a substantial portion of his business.” —Gerald Beal, retired Chairman, J. Henry Schroder Banking Corporation

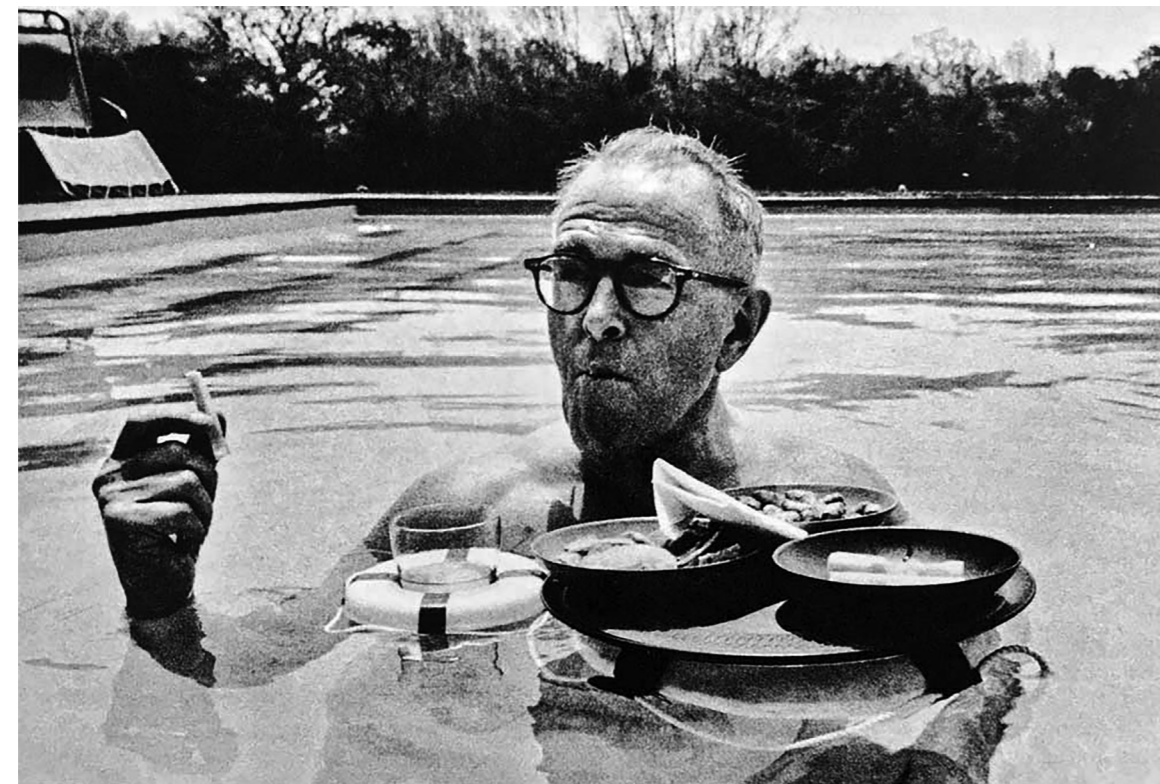
“He could pick up everything that had taken place years before, with complete recall—everybody’s name, all of their activities and interests, both business and personal. This was part of the secret of his ability to put together a diverse organization, and create a feeling that he was interested in individuals, and this resulted in a feeling of intense loyalty to him.”  
—Gordon Tweedy



“Starr started a corporation to build a double chair lift into two sections, which he wanted the people of St. Anton to own by buying shares in it. They had never heard of a corporation before. Starr was named an honorary citizen of St. Anton.”  
—Herman Kiaer

“He was no impersonal benefactor.... He set out to be a counsellor and friend...always ready to take infinite pains over the smallest details of life.”

—Raymond Bonham Carter



Toni Frissell

“He liked to make money. One of his sayings was, ‘Well, you have to have worries, but you’d be better off having them in a Cadillac than a rickshaw.’”  
—John Ahlers



Toni Frissell

# The Human Touch

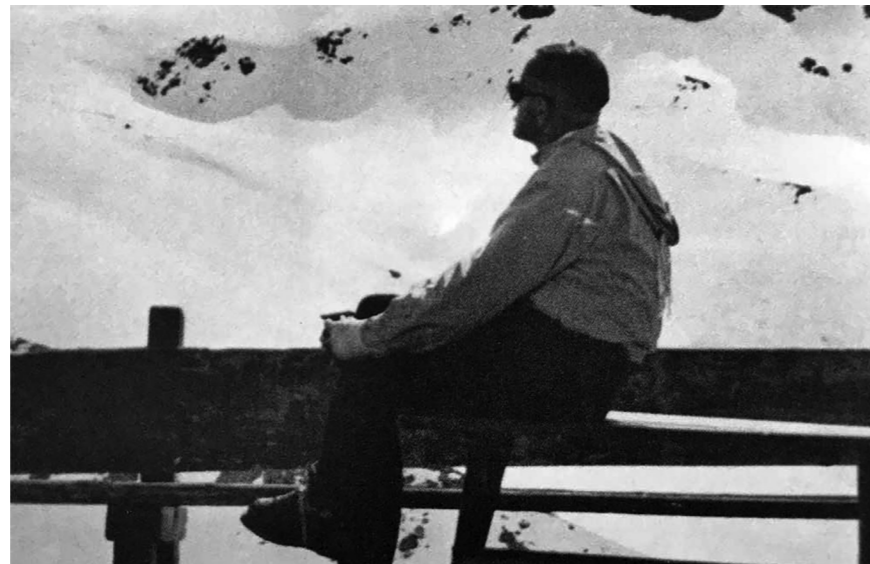


"There was a strong streak of compassion in him, which is a wonderful trait to balance the hard-nosed businessman."

—M.R. Greenberg

"He seemed to be a lonely figure who found it difficult to have many real friends among his contemporaries."

—Raymond Bonham Carter



*People differ in a great many ways, but are the same in a great many more. The essence of being human lies in this shared heritage—the fellow feeling for others, the need for company or for solitude, the sense of special solicitude people feel for the very young and the very old. And although Neil Starr was usually reluctant to display his deepest feelings, the essential humanity in him was always so near the surface that it could never remain hidden.*

"He never failed to thank you. He even once called me from Hong Kong to thank me for some little thing." —John Horn

"He could understand the frailties of people and make allowances for them far more than any human being I've ever met.... He would be disappointed in someone and yet understand." —M.R. Greenberg

"He was a very decent, warm, unstuffy fellow, who still lived an interior life. Though he participated with others in a great many activities, he was introspective and shy." —Ted Thackrey

"By his example, we learned to be more considerate, generous, thoughtful, and sympathetic. Upon those who knew him well he exerted a strong influence for good. This I believe, is a kind of immortality." —G.M. Hughes

"Mr. Starr made time to send me a cable to thank me for minor work I had done...and a few days later I received a letter in his handwriting. His consideration and appreciation of the work of even the junior members of his staff gained him their affection and loyalty." —George E. Beatty

"I was made manager of this office, without any business experience or any knowledge of business. The office was located sort of next door to...the place where they collected their night soil—and when the wind was just right it was unpleasant in the office. Mr. Starr had said, 'Come over to the hotel tonight and have dinner with me.' And I said, 'I wish before then you could come over to the office and we could sit in the garden there and discuss things before dinner.' I had to insist.... Fortunately, the wind was right. Then he insisted that another place would have to be found.... Here was a company that has no money, which he was trying to build up on just faith and hope and the loyalty of its employees. And yet he authorized me to...get quarters elsewhere." —Mansfield Freeman

"I felt an immediate kinship with this man, who evidently shared my point of view on the perennial character of people." —Milton Hebard

"I shall always remember a...remark Mr. Starr made on one of our walks around Morefar. He said, 'It is harder to spend money wisely than it is to earn it.'" —John S. Galinato

"I was with him all the time in his last five or six years. He was not my employer—he was my closest friend. And right up to the time of his death, he continued to think of other people." —Lin Chaun Yu, Starr's personal attendant

"Mr. Starr adored his mother and did everything he could for her the moment his finances improved early in his career, and she was comfortably settled before he did anything for himself. He had none of the objectionable traits of the nouveau riche, no ostentation, and he had a profound dislike for flattery." —A.W. Joukowski

"From Sligo I wrote to tell him I had found the grave of my paternal grandfather and grandmother, my seeing the Isle of Inisfree... made famous by William Butler Yeats.... Mr. Starr phoned me after I returned to Japan and said he had enjoyed my letters, but he liked the one from Ireland the best because 'your heart was in that one.' He was embarrassed when people became sentimental, and so tried not to show this emotion himself...." —George E. Beatty

"When, in his later years, I would come to spend some time at his place in Brewster, and would have to dine alone because he was too unwell to leave his bed, he would send word apologizing for not joining me." —Miss Toshi Suzuki



"He had learned that if life was to have any meaning it was through belief in the dignity and frailty of his fellow man."

—Lee Nordness

# Some Last Words

**From the eulogy of Jack Y.H. Yuen, Vice President, American International Underwriters Far East, December 23, 1968, St. John's Cathedral, Hong Kong.**

We...pay respect to the memory of a man who can best be described as a missionary. If he were alive today, he would most probably raise his eyebrows at my classifying him as a missionary. He did not preach the gospel as we understand it, but he devoted over 50 years of his life preaching the benefits of insurance. He did not see...only the monetary return but also the good that it does for people, the lifting of financial burdens, the easing of heartaches....

Mr. Starr was a great humanitarian.... His humanity showed through in small personal things that he did for many of us.... The visits he made when we were ill in hospital or at home, although many times he was far from well himself... these are things we do not forget.

Greatness in a man is measured by his leadership and achievements. Applying this yardstick, Mr. Starr was certainly a great man. Notwithstanding a world war, civil wars, and political upheavals in countries in which he had business interests during the past 50 years, this spark of leadership was never extinguished. His achievements require no enumeration. However, greatness in a man must also be measured by the respect, devotion, and loyalty of those who work with him. In this respect, Mr. Starr had no peer. To all of us he was "The Boss," but he was also our friend.

He will be missed by many people of many nationalities in many countries, but nowhere will he be missed more than by those who called him *Laopan*.

**From the eulogy of Mansfield Freeman, Retired Vice President C.V. Starr & Co., Inc., December 23, 1968, New York City**

What can one say on an occasion such as this to pay tribute and homage to a man we all held in such genuine esteem...? He had an extraordinary understanding of human nature, a tolerance for men's foibles or weakness, and an intuitive feeling about people, their longings and ambitions, how they would respond in any situation.... I can remember wandering with him through the countryside around Shanghai or traveling on his houseboat through the maze of small rivers and creeks surrounding the city. He spoke very little Chinese, whereas I had made some formal study of that language. But he could comprehend the patois of the country folk far better than I. Intuitively he grasped their thoughts and feelings from a word, a gesture, or a facial expression, and was immediately in tune with them....

I do not think Neil always chose for associates those who were the brightest or most clever. I am quite sure I was not the most competent person he could have selected.... But somehow he has been able to infuse in each one chosen the desire and determination to develop to the utmost whatever potential he had....

Mr. Starr...has left as a legacy a worldwide organization of considerable financial strength and momentum. His great legacy, however, the monument to his life and work he would most treasure, is a group of devoted friends and associates loyal to his memory and to his vision. Over the gate of the Pi-yun-ssu, a temple in the western hills outside Peking, there used to be inscribed...ching-shen pu ssu—"The spirit never dies." May Neil Starr's spirit live on...as the memory of his vibrant personality and the warmth of his friendship live on in our hearts.

Memorial site at Morefar

Edith Bartley

