



Davis Powell

August 6, 1921 - December 10, 2010

It is remarkable that most of the wide circle of people who knew Davis Powell considered him a friend, or, at a minimum, someone in whom they might repose trust and confidence. When he died in the early afternoon, December 10, 2010, at Autumn Care of Altavista, Davis Powell surrendered a salutary presence in the life of his family, friends and neighbors at his adopted home in Lynch Station, Virginia. He died at the age of 89 in the place and milieu of which he was always so perfect an ambassador ? a well-educated southern gentleman whose flawless manners eased whatever fevers of the moment burdened those in his orbit. Davis Powell was steadfast and tireless in his dedication to his family, his church and community, and his country. His life began not so far away in Rocky Mount, North Carolina on August 6, 1921. The eldest child of Davis and Hester Chambers Powell grew up in comfortable circumstances by the standards of a small southern town in the depression era. An early stand out for his sense of obligation and responsibility ? he would polish the family?s Sunday shoes while listening to classical music on Saturday afternoons ? Mr. Powell went from successful academic and social accomplishments in Rocky Mount to the same successes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he received his A.B. Degree in Psychology and Sociology at an accelerated graduation in 1942. The world beckoned and, like so many of his generation, Mr. Powell went as the nation did ? to war. The distinction in the case of Mr. Powell is that he never really went home. After considering an airborne assignment, including participation

in several parachute jumps from aircraft, Mr. Powell found a professional calling more suited to his talents in the newly formed Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor of what eventually became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) after the WWII. It was as a member of the OSS in London ? where, finally tiring of the repeated need to scamper to shelters during the nighttime bombings, Mr. Powell adopted a fatalistic view towards his survival and simply stayed in bed during the German air raids. Subsequently with the OSS in Normandy and elsewhere in northern France, and later in Germany?s Rhineland and central Europe Mr. Powell found a vocational match for his natural enthusiasms, desire for adventure and freedom to roam. And so it was to the exacting profession of intelligence that Mr. Powell devoted the prime of his life. After demobilization from the war time OSS in 1945, Mr. Powell continued his work in American intelligence with a successor organization in Shanghai, China from 1946 ? until the imminent victory of Mao Zedong?s Communists over the Chinese Nationalist forces in 1948 forced his and other western intelligence services to abandon mainland China. Having seen much of the world ? most of it in turmoil ? Mr. Powell returned briefly to UNC Chapel Hill to acquire a M.A. Degree and try his hand at teaching and counseling. It was not to be, although he did take the time to make the acquaintance of a young Virginia lady, Temple Tyree, from Lynch Station and Altavista. Talked into joining the new CIA by one of its legendary spymasters and, in turn, having successfully talked Temple Tyree into becoming his wife, Mr. Powell found himself launched on a career with a nascent family before the end of 1950. Over the next twenty five years punctuated by assignments in Washington, D.C., Mr. Powell crisscrossed the globe serving in positions of ever increasing responsibility in Frankfurt and elsewhere in Germany, Vienna, Austria, twice in Paris, France, with his last overseas service being a senior intelligence official based in Saigon, South Vietnam with regional responsibilities in support of the United States involvement in Southeast Asia. Noting privately that he was required to put up with much in life, but perhaps not the likes of Sen. Frank Church (D-ID) ?

whose committee's depredations to America's intelligence capabilities was then at its most destructive ? Mr. Powell retired from the CIA as a senior executive in 1975. Having successfully put most of his children through college and perhaps a little worn out from the demands of his professional life, Mr. Powell came to live at Temple Powell's ancestral home, Oak Grove, Lynch Station. He assumed the role of quiet country gentleman at leisure for only a short while. After brushing up on his earlier training as a teacher, Mr. Powell soon took up teaching in Altavista's public high school. He did so with distinction for many years until retiring in 2003. Mr. Powell continued his life long habit of social responsibility and active membership in the American Episcopal Church and the Church of England during his assignments at home or abroad. He was a mainstay of his local church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church of Altavista, serving as its Senior Warden, a Lay Leader, Delegate to the Episcopal Diocese Council, Head of the Commission on Ministry for the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia, and member of the Board of Visitors, Episcopal Retreat, Kanuga, North Carolina. Mr. Powell kept up his traveling ways after retirement finding the means and opportunity to travel to Singapore, back to China, Germany and England as well as Greece, Israel and a safari to Africa. During his time at home, Mr. Powell served as: the Executive Officer for Altavista's Chamber of Commerce; President of Altavista's Rotary Club; President, Altavista Community Improvement Project; District Chairman, Boy Scouts of America; Sponsor, Altavista Hi-Y Chapter; Commercial Chairman, Altavista Community Chest; Vice-President and charter member of the Altavista Little Theater; Member, Board of Directors of the Virginia YMCA; and Member, Board of Directors of the Altavista Sheltered Workshop. For these many and outstanding contributions to his community, Mr. Powell was chosen as "Outstanding Citizen of the Year 1985" by the Altavista Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Powell is survived by his wife of 60 years, four children: Davis Bryan Powell, wife Cynthia; Ashby Temple Powell Brown, husband Benjamin; Paul Tyree Powell, wife Billie Jo; James Douglas

Powell, wife Patsy; and eight grandchildren: Erica, Terrell, and Sarah Midkiff; Claire and Colin Brown; Matthew Powell, wife Allison; Kelly Rosina; and Haley Powell. A memorial service will be held Tuesday, December 14, 2010 at 2:00 pm at St. Peter's Episcopal Church. An interment in the family graveyard located at Oak Grove, Lynch Station. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 1010 Broad Street, Altavista, Virginia 24517.

Previous Events

Services

DEC 14.

St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Altavista