

## CHARLES C. FITZMORRIS

*Some 33'ers have been so busy they have never had time to retire. Hearing about Fitz's far-ranging activities and expanding universe, we have tried to put together a picture of this very successful classmate.*

Fitz's start in the business world was with A & P. From his initial positive attitude toward the job ("If I'm not president in ten years I'll look elsewhere"), one could foresee that here was a Tiger to be reckoned with. When A & P blew it, he went to work for a large advertising agency specializing in food merchandising.

The war interrupted all this and the Army took over. Fitz says that the most difficult time for him in the war was persuading the Army to change his orders from The Shower and Fumigation Quartermaster Unit to Artillery school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. There his instructors were all classmates - Henry McIntyre, Gardner Green and Marty Wood! He was in the service for five years, ending up with nearly a year of combat as a captain with the 220th Field Artillery Battalion of the 44th Infantry in Europe.

After the war Fitz married Isabel Scott, classmate Freddie Scott's sister, and they had four children, three girls and a boy. Tragically, Isabel died in a car crash in 1969.

Early in the post war years he started the Fitzmorris Advertising Agency. In order to generate business for the agency, he started Star Import, a mail order company selling cuckoo clocks. Using the ABC network, the clocks sold like hotcakes. The major problem was getting the Germans to make enough clocks. He and Isabel and the children spent a couple of summers in the Black Forest trying to stimulate the production of cuckoo clocks. The German he learned in those years was to help him later selling computer software in that part of the world.

Sometime later, classmate Ralph Bard, who had formed a venture capital firm after the war, put him in touch with a company that was for sale - Benner Tea Company - with 33 stores in Illinois and Iowa. He was able to raise the money and bought the company. In 1977, Fitz and Ralph took a trip to China (before the "doors" were opened), about which Ralph writes: "We will always remember Fitz sitting with his calculator, having a Chinese brandy after a Chinese opera, figuring

out how much who owed whom after our day at the Canton Trade Fair. He was a happy traveller and spent some of his time there trying to buy 100,000 cases of Chinese mushrooms for his Benner Tea supermarkets."

The business grew and prospered and, eventually, attracted the attention of Germany's largest grocery chain. We understand that the resulting sale of the company was a very happy event for Benner's shareholders, and Fitz remained as President of the new firm which became Aldi Stores. But his entrepreneurial energies did not mesh too well with his German bosses so he left with a handsome settlement and thoughts of promoting the development of Aldi in Japan.

In the meantime, Fitz had developed a new and very profitable company, World-Wide Chain Store Systems, a software company for warehouse management tied into purchasing, inventory control and labor scheduling, operating in many parts of the world. Today I.B.M. owns a minority interest in this company and is represented on its Board of Directors. Son, Scott, is also a Director along with classmate Ralph Bard, and William Wood Prince '38.

Fitz claims that he is responsible for the fact that Bard graduated from Princeton, since he supplied him with his history lecture notes (their major) on the (according to Fitz) frequent occasions when Ralph missed the lectures.

The grapevine reports that Charlie operates on a grand scale. He is famous for his fabulous parties at his Lake Forest estate-farm, where he raises alpacas! There have been performances by the Lipizzaner stallions and fireworks displays - all elegantly produced. Once, in Spain, we are told, his customers and Spanish friends mentioned that they had never heard a good American dance orchestra. He promptly leased a ballroom at the Ritz, called his friend orchestra leader Neal Smith in Palm Beach and arranged to fly them to Madrid two days later. They say it was a great party!

Fitz spends much time flying around the planet, having purchased some years ago a life-time first class pass on

American Airlines for \$70,000. Since then he has logged over 3,000,000 miles (equivalent to 1000 trans-continental flights, or \$70 per flight - quite a bargain). He has operations that stretch from New Zealand to Japan to Europe, although the U. S is still his largest market. He stays fit by swimming every morning that he can, playing tennis and riding herd on his alpacas. He has made a magnificent multi-million dollar gift to Princeton for the building of the new Computer Science Building.

As for the future, Fitz finds the world hungry for American expertise and knowledge and feels that there are great opportunities for American enterprise overseas. Europe (except for Switzerland) is especially anxious to have U. S. "know how". He is optimistic about the future of the United States, believes that we must and will balance the budget, and that the current recession is due to "junk bonds" and the poor management of the banks.

We are hoping that he will pause long enough to join us at our 60th in 1993.



*Fitz and friends.*