

Oral History Interview
with
E. W. KENWORTHY

Official in the Office of War Information, 1942-45; editorial writer for the Baltimore *Evening-Sun*, 1945-46; Information Officer, United States Information Service (London), 1946-47; on the staff of the *Reporter* magazine, 1947-49; and Executive Director of the staff of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services (Fahy Committee), 1949-50.

Washington, D.C.
January 26, 1971

by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: To begin with Mr. Kenworthy, would you give me a little of your personal background; where were you born, where were you educated, and what positions have you held?

KENWORTHY: Mr. Hess, I was born on September 23rd, 1909 in Attleboro, Massachusetts. I was educated in the local schools. I went to Oberlin College, graduating A.B. in 1931. Took my masters in English at Oberlin also in 1933. I taught in Western Reserve Academy in Hudson, Ohio, 1933-34; was the librarian at Brown University in the Biblical Literature Library in '34-35;

taught in Classical High School, Providence, Rhode Island the year of '35-36. And then went to teach at Indiana University Extension beginning in January 1937 at East Chicago, and taught in the extension service there, East Chicago, Hammond, Gary, South Bend. And I was there

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until the end of the first semester in 1942 when I came to Washington to work for the Office of War Information.

I was in the Office of War Information from about February 1943 , until early in September 1945. In the Office of War Information I did a daily FYI, "for your information," cable to U.S. ambassadors beginning first with the ambassador in London, and then gradually we expanded this service, which went through Army channels, until we did the daily cable, and a weekly cable, to about twenty-three missions overseas. When I left OWI at the end of the war I went to work as an editorial writer for the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, where I remained for a year, when the State Department asked me to go to London.

I was in London as an information officer in what was then called the United States Information Service, for the year of from about December 1946 to about December 1947, when I returned and went to work for *The Reporter* magazine which was just then going through its gestation period. And I was on *The Reporter* magazine until shortly before it began publication when there was a kind of a disagreement between the staff and the publisher about where it should be located, whether Washington or

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New York.

At that time the editor of the magazine was Wallace Carroll who had been in the Office of War Information and had been a former United Press correspondent overseas. He happened to mention to me that President Truman's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services was looking for somebody to be the executive director of the staff. I was interviewed by the President's Commission in about, I would say, February or March (I can't distinctly remember now), in 1949; was hired for the position and remained there until we turned in our final report in about July, I guess, 1950.

HESS: May.

KENWORTHY: May.

HESS: May of '50.

KEN WORTHY: But I remained, cleaning up the work of the office, until August when I went to work for the *New York Times*.

HESS: Where you have been ever since.

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KENWORTHY: Yes.

HESS: What are your earliest recollections of Mr. Truman?

KENWORTHY: Well, my earliest recollection of Mr. Truman was not a personal recollection. I think my earliest recollection is when I was working for the Office of War Information and filing this daily FYI cable.

I should explain that during World War II when there were some difficulties of transmission overseas, the American Missions abroad were rather short on -- knowledge of what was happening at home, what was happening in Washington, and the idea of having a kind of a daily letter to the ambassadors abroad originated with a man named Tom Eliot who had served in the Embassy in London as special assistant to Ambassador Winant, and he brought the idea back. Ferdinand Kuhn [Jr.] who was then a deputy to Elmer Davis, thought it was a very good idea and he started writing it himself. He obviously didn't have the time to write it on a continuing basis, and he brought me into his staff from the domestic side of OWI to do this daily letter to the ambassadors. It was called the "Kuhn-Kenworthy letter." My first recollection of Mr. Truman was writing about him really,

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when he was the chairman of the investigating committee that was looking into, you know, the performance of the...

HESS: National defense program.

KENWORTHY: ...of the National defense program, and that was my first -- that was the first time Mr. Truman ever came to my attention.

My most memorable, of course, recollection, was on that day in April, '45 when Roosevelt died and then...

HESS: Where were you at that time when you heard about Roosevelt's death?

KENWORTHY: As a matter of fact, when the word reached us that Roosevelt was dead, I was in the midst of writing the daily letter to the overseas missions. There was nothing we could do about it at that moment, just top the piece, just saying, you know, "This is a very sad town tonight."

The next day we had the problem of putting together some extended information on who Mr. Truman was, what he had done and what he was like, because obviously most of our overseas missions didn't have the slightest

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idea about the former Senator from Missouri, except that President Roosevelt had chosen him for his running mate when labor opposed another term for Henry Wallace.

I remember being sent by Ferdie Kuhn downtown to have lunch with a man who had served as the general counsel on a congressional committee that Truman had been on. This is before he was the chairman of this investigatory commission. As a matter of fact I have a dim recollection that it had something to do with a railroad commission that he had been on.

HESS: Burton K. Wheeler was the chairman of that particular committee?

KENWORTHY: Yes.

HESS: Who did you have lunch with?

KENWORTHY: Now, the man who had served is a lawyer, I think, I do not know whether he was a general counsel or not, but he had a really rather intimate knowledge of Truman, and our problem was to get some idea of the man, and the way he worked. And I remember having this long lunch and conversation with this man and then going back and writing a very long piece that day (this was

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the day after Roosevelt's death), trying...

HESS: Do you recall that gentleman's name?

KENWORTHY: I can't remember it now.

HESS: Max Lowenthal?

KENWORTHY: As a matter of fact I think it was. He had been a lawyer on one of the committees that Truman had served on.

HESS: One of the Interstate Commerce committees.

KENWORTHY: I think it was, and he gave me a marvelous lot of color about Truman and also some indication of his independence. And he said, "You know this man is not a nobody." So I came back and wrote this long piece about Truman so that our people overseas would have some information when they got questions about the President. Now that's the end of that, because it wasn't long afterwards I left OWI and went to work for the *Evening Sun* in Baltimore.

HESS: At the time that you were working for the *Evening Sun* and then later for the *New York Times*, did you attend the press conferences held weekly in the White House?

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KENWORTHY: No, because I was over in Baltimore. After I left the *Sun* and after I came back from London, where I had been with the USIS at the Embassy, and was working for *The Reporter*, I did go to the Philadelphia convention in 1948. So, I was there at the Turnip Day speech.

HESS: What are your recollections of the convention in Philadelphia that year?

KENWORTHY: Well, you may remember...

HESS: And you were there in connection with your job at the *Sun*, is that right?

KENWORTHY: Well, no, I wasn't on the *Sun* then. In '48 I had returned from London and was with *The Reporter* magazine, not the *Sun*.

HESS: Oh, yes, that's right.

KENWORTHY: And I had gone up just to get an idea of what it was like.

Several of my friends were up there -- Mac Lowry, McNeil Lowry, who is now vice president of the Ford Foundation, he was then the Washington reporter for the Cox newspapers, and he was up there. And I knew many

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of the newspapermen in town.

I went up, I mean, just really kind of as an observer and I didn't have any press credentials, we were not publishing yet. And I remember Scotty [James] Reston of the *Times*, and Mac Lowry got me a badge as an electrician's assistant that got me into the hall.

The afternoon that Truman was to come up to Philadelphia to accept the nomination, I had called my wife back in Washington who had had a sprained ankle, and said to her, "Honey, you've just got to get on a train and come up here, it's going to be a great night."

And she said, "Well, you know, how do I find anybody to take care of the children?"

But she did and she got a cab and got on the train and she got a cab in Philadelphia and I told her I'd meet her in the front of the auditorium up there. And at about 7 o'clock that night there was a tremendous cloudburst and the whole city was just drenched. She got out of the cab and I met her and you know, we started to go in the front door and it was closed. Nobody could get in, the security was so tight. And so we went around to the rear of the hall, and they had closed the doors there. There was a tremendous jam.

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People couldn't get in, and we waited and sweated it out there. And right beside us was Harry Truman's brother who couldn't get in either, and he obviously had a ticket. And so finally...

HESS: He had a little pull.

KENWORTHY: Yes, he had a little pull, but he couldn't get by the cops. And so finally they opened the doors and I said to my wife, "Look, go right for the press tables, right under the podium, sit down and pull out a notebook, pretend to start writing. Nobody will say anything to

you probably, but the only thing they can do is kick you out." And so we were there right under the podium all night long.

And the two things I remember very well -- it was very funny about that -- this was the last convention that [Henry Louis] Mencken covered, and I could remember seeing Mencken there in this steamy place -- his face was red, sweat was pouring down his face -- continually filing new leads as the evening wore on. And I would have loved to have seen his copy, because this was the last convention Mencken ever attended.

When we got out of there that night, it was 3:30

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in the morning, we didn't have a hotel reservation and we finally got a bridal suite in a hotel, which cost us I forget...well, Honey?

MRS. KENWORTHY: Eighteen dollars.

KENWORTHY: Eighteen dollars for about three hours sleep before we got the train back to Washington the next morning, because our kids had been left with a babysitter.

So, I remember that night of Truman's appearance very, very well.

I guess Mac Lowry has told you about the incident of our helping Alben Barkley out with the keynote speech, so I don't need to go through it.

HESS: No, that will be quite all right. Tell me your side of it. Why did Alben Barkley ask you and Mr. Lowry to help him in that manner?

KENWORTHY: He didn't. What happened, I was sitting in the office in Washington, on H Street I think it was, where *The Reporter* had a kind of a temporary office, and I had a call from Mac Lowry in mid-afternoon and he said, "You know" -- he was reporting then for the *Dayton Daily News* -- and he said, "You know, I've just been up talking

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to Alben Barkley." and he said, "you know, he is so depressed you can't believe. He's got to make the keynote address and he's getting no help from anybody, and everybody thinks the party is going to lose." And he said, "He was practically in tears."

And I said to him, "Mac, I'll come over and see you. "

So. I went over to his office and we got the idea that each one of us would do a kind of test run, a keynote speech, then we'd meld them, and Mac would take it up to Alben and see whether this would help him get over his kind of trauma about this.

So. I went back to the office and I wrote a keynote speech and Mac wrote a keynote speech, and then we did put them together, and Mac took it up there. And this somehow or other got Alben

in the mood of -- all was not lost. And he sat down and took the speech and transformed it into his own. There were a few bits and pieces of our stuff left in the actual -- in the actual...

HESS: In the delivery.

KENWORTHY: ...in the actual keynote speech that we could

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recognize.

HESS: Do you recall anything about in that year about Leslie Biffle trying to boost Mr. Barkley for the top spot?

KENWORTHY: I don't know anything about this, really. As you know, if you've talked to Mac Lowry, who knew Les Biffle very well then as Secretary of the Senate, and I didn't, but as you know, the old story about Les Biffle and his chicken truck. But I never knew anything about that.

HESS: All right, we will want to come back and cover the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, but one further word: After you went to work for the *New York Times*, you did not attend any of the press conferences of Mr. Truman's?

KENWORTHY: Well, you see, when I went to work -- I didn't go to work for the *New York Times* until August, August 1st, 1950. And when I went to work for the *New York Times* I was working up in New York in "The News of the Week in Review" and I wasn't down here.

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And when I went to work for the Fahy Committee, the situation was this, as I understood it. As you know, Mr. Truman had appointed this committee, I believe it was in August, 1948.

HESS: July the 26th was the day the Executive order was signed.

KENWORTHY: Yes.

HESS: Executive Order 9981...

KENWORTHY: Yes.

HESS: Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, July the 26th. There was also another Executive order signed on that day, 9980, on having an FEPC in the Government.

KENWORTHY: Well, as a matter of fact, when this happened I didn't even know about it. I didn't -- and obviously my own view is that there was a political motive. At the time, you know, the Democrats were really in very desperate shape and didn't have much confidence in winning the '48 election.

To my knowledge the committee -- aside from its, you

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know, initial meeting on its appointment by Mr. Truman, if there was an initial meeting -- never had a meeting until the beginning of the next year. Because what had happened was, of course, Mr. Truman won, and the committee, I suspect, not thinking he would win, had held no organizing meetings, had not named an executive director, had appointed no staff. The committee suddenly woke up after the election and they were still in being and had to do something about it. And it was then that I went and was interviewed. I think some other people were interviewed. I didn't know really anything about this whole subject when I went to be interviewed.

I was rather unhappy on *The Reporter*, things weren't going the way the staff thought they ought to, and I was looking around for somewhere to light. And I knew nothing, really nothing about the racial situation in the services, and I said quite frankly to the members of the President's committee that if I were appointed to this job, I would want certain things understood. First, that I really knew nothing about the problem -- those were very difficult times in 1950 -- and that I would want to be quite persuaded that if there were to be integration of the services that it not be at any disadvantage or detriment,

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I mean, to the armed services.

The second point I made to them was that I didn't see how anything could be done unless it were done without trying to make political capital or trying to score political points out of this whole thing. And if the issue was taken up on Capitol Hill, or if you tried to make publicity, political publicity out of this, you would defeat your own purpose.

And the third point I made to the committee was that I thought that this could only be done effectively if there were negotiation behind scenes with the military. And that unless you had a new policy embodied firmly in military orders, that nothing would ever be done. The committee apparently thought that this was a good idea and agreed to it, and I was appointed.

HESS: Did you have successful behind-the-scenes negotiations with the military, once you started on the work of the committee?

KENWORTHY: Well, let me go back and say one thing first, Mr. Hess. I have heard, but I don't know, I can't swear to this, that there was some kind of understanding really between Mr. [Charles] Fahy and this committee and the President, that, you know, no political capital would

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be tried to be made of this, that we would work with the military, and negotiate with them, and try to get this done, and that the President would say nothing in a public way about the work of the committee until it was done.

Obviously if you got this up on Capitol Hill, you know, with the Armed Services Committee, and the Appropriations subcommittees for the Armed Services, with all of the Southern members and their having to impress their constituencies at home, there would be trouble. But if things were done quietly, you probably could get around the problem. And whether there was this kind of an agreement or not, I don't know. All I know is that Mr. Truman -- I've always believed that there was such an agreement and Mr. Truman absolutely kept his word and never said word one.

From time to time Mr. Fahy saw him over in the White House, gave him kind of a progress report, or a non-progress report as it might be. But Mr. Truman -- Judge Fahy has told me this -- said, "Go ahead and work it out, and I'll stand behind you." Now, he absolutely kept his word on this, he never tried to make any political capital out of it at all. And it was a great help.

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Now, to go back to your other question. The problem was very difficult. I knew nothing about it. I started out by accumulating some historical knowledge, reading the historical documents down in the Historical Records Service, you know. It was a very discouraging thing you know.

I mean, here you had Eisenhower who had testified before the Gillem Board against the integration of the services. When he was Chief of Staff of the Army he had gone up before the Senate -- I believe it was the Senate Appropriations Committee for the Armed Services, it may have been the Armed Services Committee -- and testified against integration of the services. And for many weeks I was absolutely floundering, not knowing where to begin.

There was a kind of deputy there for Negro problems on the defense level, whose name was Jim Evans, who was a very fine man, a graduate of MIT, but from my point of view he was perfectly useless to the committee. He had lived for years, it seemed to me, on the problem. He had profited, in a sense, by segregation because there was always a problem, and as long as there was a problem he had a job. But he never did anything about

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it.

And so finally, somebody, I don't know who, told me about a man by the name of Roy [K] Davenport, a Negro who worked in the Army Adjutant General's office. He was a very, very intelligent man. He had an A.B. and an M.A. degree. He had grown up in the South, but he had gone to school in New England. He was an expert on manpower problems. I saw him several times, and he was very reticent, and plainly, you know, suspicious. So, finally after several meetings, he said to me one day, "If you want to deal with this problem, you have got to deal with it on the basis of education. This is the whole solution. You can solve it if you get hold of one paper."

And I said, "What is the paper?"

And he said, "It's a secret paper called the '45 report. "

And I said, "What is it?"

He said, "It's a monthly paper that gives the authorized, and the actual, strength of the Army by every military occupation specialty, but it is also broken down by race, so it gives the authorized and the actual strength for every military occupational specialty

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both white and Negro. And if you'll get that paper you will see all of the military occupational specialties for which there is no, or almost no, authorized Negro spaces. You will also see that the Army is short of its authorized strength in all kinds of military occupational specialties where it doesn't make any difference whether you have a white man or a black man, for example, carpenters, bricklayers, typists, and so on."

And so I went and asked for this report. I was told it was secret. And I said, "I am cleared for secret." I finally got it. And this was the beginning of the committee's attack on the problem of integration. It's a much more complicated story than that; it involved interminable rounds between the committee, its staff, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army and their staff advisors.

What would happen was, that the staff in the Army Chief of Staff's office would prepare a paper, and propose something which really didn't go anywhere. I would always know what they were going to propose ahead of time, because I had a source in there who was telling me what they were going to propose and we had our answer ready before we got their paper. This was the only way it

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could be done.

Also, quite frankly, I always kept the door to my office unlocked. I always kept the drawers to my desk unlocked, because I always knew if there was ever any hanky-panky going on, that there were blacks in the Department of the Army who worked the mimeograph machines, and in the message center office, and you would know eventually.

For instance, once when we had an agreement after long negotiations with Secretary of the Army [Gordon] Gray, about opening up all educational courses, Army courses, regardless of color, and he put this order out. I walked in one morning to my desk and opened the drawer and there was a message going out from the message center from the Chief of Staff's office which effectively countermanded the order of the Secretary of the Army. And this was the only time that I ever went to the press.

I went to the *Washington Post* and I told them exactly what had happened and they wrote a story, and they wrote an editorial saying that Gray was getting a run-around from the brass. But, of course, the offending general was not penalized, but a colonel -- he

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was on his way to Germany within about forty-eight hours.

There was very little trouble with the Air Force or the Navy. The Navy obviously had a lower percentage of blacks and integration had been started by [James V.] Forrestal at the very end of the war. It is true that the Navy had a lower percentage, but that was because it was relying on volunteers and was not depending upon the draft. The Air Force moved very quickly to effect integration. The Army entered objections every step of the way.

HESS: They were far more difficult to work with were they?

KENWORTHY: They were impossible! You had to cram it down their throat.

I don't know what took place between Judge Fahy and the President. All I know is that the President stood by him every step of the way through the negotiations, and it was a very tortuous, and long drawn-out procedure.

HESS: Do you know why Judge Fahy was chosen to head the committee?

KENWORTHY: No, I don't, but I presume because of his record

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and reputation. As Solicitor General back in the New Deal days he argued almost all of the Government's cases before the Supreme Court and all of the test cases on the New Deal, and he won almost all of them, I believe. And he had a reputation, of course, of being a very generous and liberal man, which was kind of odd in itself, because he was a very rigorously moral old-fashioned man in many ways. He was a hard taskmaster, but absolutely loyal.

During the time that I worked for him I would go over to see him on Sunday mornings. He lived only a few blocks from where we did and I would go over and report to him on the week's work, or progress if there was any. Very often, you know, we would send a memo off to the Secretary of the Army or the Army Chief of Staff and it would be weeks before we would get a reply. But anyway, I would go over and report to him on Sunday morning and he would question me like a lawyer, a prosecuting lawyer, for a long time on every detail, making certain that everything I said could be backed up. And once he had become convinced that you had a case, and that what you said was exact and that it was thoroughly supported, I mean, by all of the evidence, then he never deserted you. I mean he was right with you to the end.

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HESS: One question regarding the establishment of the committee itself: As you know, in October of 1947, the Civil Rights Committee had come out with their report, *To Secure These Rights*, and then on February the 2nd of 1948 the President sent a special message to Congress, his ten point civil rights message, and then in July...

KENWORTHY: This is in '47?

HESS: That was in '47, the civil rights report, *To Secure These Rights*, and then in February 1948 the ten point message and then in July, after the convention, the two Executive orders.

There are those that say that the establishment of this commission was done so for political expediency. What would you say?

KENWORTHY: Well, I told you already. My own view of the matter is that Harry S. Truman had no more basic interest (at least to begin with), in the problems of the Negroes in this country than John Kennedy did.

I think that this was a political move on his part, or rather I should say it was probably a political move inspired by Dave [David K.] Niles, and it was a vote-getting thing. You know, I can't prove this, this is

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only...

HESS: Yes.

KENWORTHY: And how or why they should have thought that they could possibly lose much of the Negro vote, I can't imagine. I remember talking to Hugh Scott the morning after the '48 election and saying to him, "When did you think you were in trouble?"

And he said, "When the votes from Hartford came in."

And we said to him, "What was the problem?"

And he said, "We just didn't get any of the Negro vote at all." And he was running Dewey's campaign as you remember. Right?

HESS: That's right. He was the...

KENWORTHY: He was chairman of the Republican National Committee at that time.

But anyway I think that was why it was put together originally.

HESS: Now, you said that in the beginning Mr. Truman did not have any interest in Negro matters, in minority matters, do you think -- did it...

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KENWORTHY: I don't think he did. I can't prove -- I don't know who -- there was never any indication of it.

HESS: Well, I was just digging a little bit more into the words, "in the beginning."

KENWORTHY: Well, I mean before he became President.

HESS: Oh. Do you think that his interest in civil rights matters may have progressed? Did he become more genuinely interested in such matters?

KENWORTHY: I think so, probably, but you know -- I think so.

HESS: Okay. At the time that you were working with the committee did you work with the White House people who were in charge of minorities matters? Now, you've mentioned Dave Niles, did you work with Dave Niles and Philleo Nash?

KENWORTHY: No, I didn't work with Dave Niles. I didn't work with Philleo Nash, but I conferred with him. We had to touch base with the White House people. I conferred with him, but we went our own way...that was really a political operation, and we --I...

HESS: Their office was?

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KENWORTHY: Sure, it was a political operation. It was the racial adjunct of the White House and the Democratic National Committee.

HESS: Did they ever make any suggestions on what they would like to see in the final report of the Fahy Committee?

KENWORTHY: Yes, they did. Well, I don't know about Dave Niles, but Philleo Nash did.

We had taken a copy over there to him. I can only believe that it was at Niles' suggestion. They had some suggestions to make, criticisms to make, and as I remember we resisted them all. Mr. Fahy took the position that this was our report and not the report of Dave Niles or Philleo Nash.

Incidentally, you know, we resisted -- we didn't only resist the White House office, we resisted the Negro community too.

I should enter a kind of footnote here. We had a very small staff. There was myself as executive director, I had an assistant who didn't remain with us many months. He went over to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs I believe.

HESS: What was his name?

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KENWORTHY: Jack...oh, shoot, I knew him in OWI, that's why I hired him.

HESS: I have here a list of the permanent staff, and those listed are yourself, Joseph H. B. Evans, who was Associate Executive Secretary, and it says "deceased."

KENWORTHY: He died.

HESS: And Beatrice Williams Dillard.

KENWORTHY: She was my secretary.

HESS: And Vivian S. Bullock.

KENWORTHY: And she was a secretary. They were Negro girls.

HESS: All right, the temporary staff: Charles [J.S.] Durham.

KENWORTHY: Yes, Jack Durham. Jack Durham was a guy that had worked in -- a former newspaperman who worked in OWI during the war. I brought him on and, you know, I don't know as he was terribly interested, and he got a chance to go to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and I said, "Jack, go." I wanted to keep the staff absolutely small. Obviously the Negro community saw a chance, you know, of jobs. And I resisted this.

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HESS: Who from the Negro community came in to see you, to deliver what pressure came from the Negro community?

KENWORTHY: Well, there wasn't, you know, overt pressure, but obviously when you had [John H.] Sengstacke, who was the editor of the *Chicago Defender*, or the owner.

HESS: He was on the committee itself.

KENWORTHY: Yes, and he didn't really pressure, but you know, he had a majordomo; Charlie [Charles P.] Browning, who was his right-hand man, and brain.

HESS: I see. And he is listed as a consultant to the committee.

KENWORTHY: Yes, that was just to get his name in.

HESS: I see.

KENWORTHY: You know, they didn't really put pressure on me, but they would have liked to have more Negroes hired.

HESS: On the committee.

KENWORTHY: On the staff.

HESS: On the staff of the committee.

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KENWORTHY: But you know, there was nothing to do except to prepare proposals by the committee and then negotiate. In the first place, John Sengstacke and Charlie Browning, and I think other Negroes would have liked to have a big book that would have gone all the way back to Crispus Attucks, you know. I saw no point in this. This problem was not going to be solved

by rehashing history, but by getting equal opportunity written into Army and Navy and Air Force regulations, and to hell with the past.

I mean, this thing could only be done by opening up the education courses. Once you trained the Negroes, you had to put them somewhere. There was no place for them in Negro units which didn't require those MOS. You had to put them where the MOS were called for. You had to put them in a white unit. Once all courses were opened up to blacks segregation had to collapse.

And Charlie Fahy and the committee agreed, let's not have a great big three hundred page book. Jack Durham left, I let one of the Negro secretaries go. I sent out Joe Evans on a trip to keep him busy while I wrote the report. He died soon after he returned.

HESS: Did you think that he would just be in the way when it came time to write the report?

KENWORTHY: Yes, because he would have had all kinds of suggestions, and I wanted -- and the committee wanted -- the report to be as brief and as spare as possible.

HESS: Did you think that he and the others would try to get you to put more pressure on the military than you thought would be expedient?

KENWORTHY: No. No, no. Our whole problem with the military was simply that they -- I mean, when I say the military, aside from the Secretary of Defense.

HESS: Louis Johnson.

KENWORTHY: Aside from that first proposal he made, which was a phony, our whole problem was with the Army, and the problem was that, you know, they would pretend that their proposals would do something, but they really wouldn't do anything. And on all of this I had the advice of Ray Davenport, because he knew so intimately the manpower problems of the Army. Well, as an example, the Army wanted a quota system, and the committee was about to buy a quota system one morning in a meeting -- Saturday morning -- in a meeting with the Secretary of the Army, Gray. And I finally said, "Well, may I say something Judge Fahy?"

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And I said, "Mr. Secretary, I'm opposed to a quota system." I said, "I don't think it makes any difference whether you have ten percent negroes in the Army or one half of one percent as long as those who are there are meeting the same qualifications as anybody else."

And Gray turned and was quite angry, and he said, "Does Mr. Kenworthy speak for the President's commission?"

And Fahy said, "No, but we're going to hear him."

So, Gray said, "Would you accept a half of one percent?"

I said, "I didn't say anything about accepting one half of one percent as a quota."

I said it didn't make any difference whether there were fourteen percent or ten percent or one half of a percent. So long as the Negroes had to meet the same standards as everybody else, because that's the only way you're going to preserve the efficiency of the Army, and have self-respect for the Negroes. And well, this was the kind of thing we went through all the time, back and forth, with interminable messages back and forth.

HESS: Did you feel that perhaps part of the reason that you had more trouble with the Army than you did with the Navy or the Air Force, was because they had higher concentrations of colored people in their ranks at this time?

KENWORTHY: Sure, that was their argument.

HESS: Yes. And I think you've mentioned that in your article, I have a xerox copy of it here, "Taps for Jim Crow in the Services," and you subhead it, "Navy and Air Force take the lead in effecting a quiet revolution within the armed forces," the *New York Times Magazine*, June 11, 1950.

KENWORTHY: That's a piece I did at the end as I was getting out you know.

HESS: That's right.

KENWORTHY: A better piece is a piece I did for the *Annals*. Have you ever seen that?

HESS: I don't think so.

KENWORTHY: I've got one, if you'll return it. I think I've only got one copy.

HESS: All right.

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KENWORTHY: Or I can xerox it.

HESS: I can have it xeroxed and return the original to you, if that will be all right.

KENWORTHY: Yes.

HESS: Fine. Thank you very much.

KENWORTHY: That was when it looked like the whole thing wasn't going very fast.

HESS: Did you ever hear President Truman say what his view was of the committee, or what the committee had done? The value of having such a committee and of having such a report?

KENWORTHY: The only time that I ever remember being with the President, if I recall -- aside from the end when we turned in the report, was when we turned in an interim report. I haven't

got the faintest idea, or remember anything that he said. He must have been a harried man, I mean in 1950. I haven't the least recollection of what he said to us, and we weren't with him but a few minutes.

I really haven't even any idea, you know, what he thinks about this whole thing. I mean after it was all

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over, I don't mean now, he's an old man. I mean what he thought at the time, whether he regarded this as one of the achievements of his administration. I only know what Charlie Fahy thinks. You know I...

HESS: And what does he think?

KENWORTHY: I think from the things he said to me, that Charlie Fahy -- he said to me this once I think when I went down to see him in his chambers and we had lunch together years later -- that of all the things that he had been associated with and all the work that he did as Solicitor General in the '30s, and all the cases that he won, this probably gave him more satisfaction than almost anything he ever did in his public life. He's a deeply religious man, you know.

HESS: What is your personal opinion of the effectiveness of this committee and of the effect of the committee?

KENWORTHY: You mean now?

HESS: Now and since that date. Since 1950 until now.

KENWORTHY: Well, you know, this goes forward on more than one level. I remember when the White House press went

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down to Georgia after the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. This was the first time that I had had any chance to look at the thing since I had been on the commission. I remember we flew with Kennedy down to Georgia. The Army had brought over an armored division from Texas which they were going to load on boats at Savannah and take down to Cuba if they had to invade.

And we got down there this morning and they had all this damn division -- all integrated -- drawn up on the parade grounds and they were all spit and polish.

And I was absolutely astounded, you know, they not only had the armored division there, they had a Marine Battalion, or a couple of them, and there had been no Negro Marines in 1950. My God, you know, there was just Marine black sergeant after another there.

Well, you know, that was '62. But there are some troubles now. I just got back from Lejeune [Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, United States Marine Corps] where they had the big troubles eighteen, nineteen months ago you remember, I had gone to Lejeune then. There had been a man

killed in a fracas and several injured and so on. But it's much better down there now. The problem is a reflection of the civilian environment. When the Marines

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came back from Vietnam to Lejeune you know, they are then sent out for the rest of the tour in the Caribbean, or the Mediterranean. They were all serving together in Vietnam, and they come back, you know, and then in this Southern town everything is back where it was in racial relations.

For instance, I spent four hours two weeks ago down there in a kind of special class where Negro and white buck sergeants were acting out a problem set by their major.

The problem was that there had been a racial disturbance in Durham, the Governor of the State had asked for troops. Within the base five Negroes on a garbage detail of fifteen had refused to carry out orders because the mess sergeant had said to them, "Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty, because it won't show." And then they spent four hours acting this whole thing out on the appeal from level to level to level, with Negro sergeants taking the part of whites and whites taking the parts of Negroes. And some of the whites taking the parts of the Negroes were Southern whites.

And they chewed this thing over for four hours.

Well, I don't know, the committee achieved what it started out to do, which was to see that blacks had a

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chance to go to school, and get promoted. And so far as the problems in the services now are a reflection of the problems in civilian life, you know, I don't know what the answer is.

HESS: Just a couple of questions about some of the other people who served on the committee; Lester B. Granger was one.

KENWORTHY: Lester Granger was the head of the Urban League, one of the nicest and sweetest gentlemen that ever lived. He was a very strong right arm for me. He was firm, but he sure wasn't radical, but he was firm and he backed me up. And I had the backing of the judge, Lester Granger, Bill [William E.] Stevenson, who was the president of Oberlin. I always felt, you know, this is just a personal feeling, I always felt that John and...

HESS: Sengstacke.

KENWORTHY: Sengstacke and [Dwight R. G.] Palmer wanted more of a splash you know.

HESS: Dwight R. G. Palmer.

KENWORTHY: Dwight Palmer was the head of what? General Cable,

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or was it...

HESS: They wanted more publicity, did they?

KENWORTHY: I think they wanted to make more of a splash. The last thing I wanted to do was to make a splash. I knew if this got on Capitol Hill we were dead, because you know, what the hell, what is Dick [Richard B.] Russell going to do? He's going to get up and make a speech. But if we didn't make any splash, he and the other Southerners would probably not make a fuss.

HESS: At the time you were working on the committee, did you have any dealings , any working relationships with some of the other people who were in the White House, on the White House staff, Clark Clifford, Charles Murphy for instance?

KENWORTHY: Absolutely none.

HESS: All right.

What do you see as Mr. Truman's place in history?

KENWORTHY: Well, I don't know, he made some horrible mistakes. The cutting off of foreign aid immediately after the war showed no judgment whatsoever. I always have had real doubts about dropping the bomb on Hiroshima without dropping it first on some atoll to demonstrate its power.

But, then, he had the statesmanship to initiate and carry through the Marshall Plan.

There is an interesting sidelight, if I can give you this. I don't know whether you can make use of this in some other way or not. On the day that Dean Acheson came down to Mississippi to give that speech...

HESS: Cleveland, Mississippi.

KENWORTHY: Down to Cleveland, Mississippi to give that trial balloon on it. I was in London in the Embassy. And that particular day I had been working on all kinds of office detail. And we had been doing a kind of reverse of the wartime Kuhn-Kenworthy letter after I had got over there. We sent a morning letter back home to the State Department telling what the mood of London was, the mood of Parliament and the mood of Government and so on. In this letter, we had been saying to the State Department that the London papers had been talking of the need for a large fund to restore Western Europe. On this day just before going home to Moor Park, out near Rickmansworth, I was sitting at my desk combing over the

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stuff that had come in from Washington, and saw that we had issued about four paragraphs of a speech that Acheson was to give that night in Cleveland, Mississippi.

I had an assistant named Joe Polakoff. And I called him in and I said, "Joe, for God's sake, where the hell is the whole of this speech?"

He said, "I don't know, this is all that came in from Washington."

At that time our communications were through Army channels in Frankfurt. I said, "Don't bother with Army communications, go overhead [by commercial channel] and get a message to Washington right away that we want the full text of that Acheson speech right away, just as fast as they can get it over here."

And then I got on the phone and I called up Johnny Miller, who was going to be the Washington correspondent in Washington, and was in London for consultations. I said, "John, have you seen our stuff this morning?"

And he said, "No."

And I said, "Well, look it up, and there are four or five paragraphs of a speech that Dean Acheson is going to give down in a place called Cleveland, Mississippi, which I never heard of." And I said, "Read it and call

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me back."

And he called back in about a half an hour, and said, "Oh, my God, where's the rest of his speech? We've just called a special meeting of the editorial staff," and he said, "we're leading the editorial page with it, but where the hell is the whole speech?"

I said, "Johnny, I had to send for it. I just discovered it. I haven't looked at the output for today." And I said, "I'll get it to you as soon as it comes."

And so in about forty-five minutes it began to roll in from Washington. And we whipped it off the machine, we didn't mimeograph it, we sent it by motorcycle messenger to the *Times*, we didn't give it to any of the rest of the papers, we didn't have time. We got it over to the London *Times* and they expanded their leader into a column and a half and led the news columns with the speech. They just wrote a one paragraph lead saying, "Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson said in a speech in Cleveland, Mississippi tonight:" and then ran the full text of the whole goddamn thing.

Meanwhile...

HESS: They saw the importance of it.

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KENWORTHY: Damn right: Meanwhile -- to show how hamhanded the State Department is -- meanwhile the *New York Times* was running [I saw it later] a little UPI story from Cleveland, Mississippi.

And so two days later, Harry Truman had a press conference and Scotty [James B. Reston] had gotten wind, you know, of what the hell was happening in London, and he got up and he said, "Mr. President, Dean Acheson has made a speech and it has had tremendous impact on London, is this the policy of the United States Government?"

And Truman said, "It is," just like that.

Now, imagine Dean Acheson sending up this trial balloon without having the sense to make preparations to have it covered, and have it sent abroad.

HESS: And that wasn't done?

KENWORTHY: Not only that, but the people, I mean in USIS didn't even have sense enough to send the whole damn speech.

HESS: Maybe they hadn't been clued in to the importance of it.

KENWORTHY: Well, good God, I mean they could use their eyes

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and their heads!

HESS: It wasn't necessary for somebody to tell them, they should have been able to see it themselves.

KENWORTHY: Sure.

HESS: All right sir, do you have anything to add on the Fahy Committee?

KENWORTHY: No.

HESS: Well, thank you very much for your time sir.

KENWORTHY: Well, thank you Mr. Hess.

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