

Oral History Interview
with
JOHN L. SULLIVAN

Assistant to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, September 1939-January 1940; Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, January 1940-November 1944; Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air, July 1945-46; Under Secretary of the Navy, 1946-47; and Secretary of the Navy, 1947-May 24, 1949.

Washington, D. C.
March 27 and April 13, 1972 by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: Mr. Sullivan, to begin, will you give me a little of your personal background? Where were you born, where were you educated, and what positions have you held both before your period of service in the Truman administration, and since that time?

SULLIVAN: I was born on June 16, 1899 in Manchester, New Hampshire. I attended the Webster Street Grammar School and the Manchester High School. I entered Dartmouth in 1917 and left the following year to join the United States Navy. At the conclusion of the war, I

returned to Dartmouth where I graduated in 1921. In 1924 I received my law degree from Harvard University.

In 1928 I ran for County Solicitor in Hillsboro County, that being the phrase that is usually known as district attorney. I was elected in 1928 and in 1930. I married Priscilla Manning in December of 1932.

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In 1934 I ran for Governor against Styles Bridges and was defeated by about 600 votes. I later ran for Governor in 1938 and was beaten more decisively.

In January of '39 I had two clients who had rather serious tax problems. I tried to refer them to a tax counsel in Boston, but they were curious clients in that they never wanted more than one law firm to know anything about their business. So they told me I had better study up on tax law.

To show you how little I understood how bureaucracy worked in Internal Revenue, I wrote the full details of both cases to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue in January of '39. Not having heard from him by the 15th of March I called him and made an appointment to see him, and I came down and we had quite a conversation.

The following week I had a telephone call from Jim Farley asking me if I didn't want to become Assistant Commissioner of Internal Revenue, and I told him that I had no desire for any position with the Federal Government. He said that I had made an impression on Guy Helvering, the Commissioner, and I said that, well, we had just had a knockdown, dragout fight, and Jim said, "Well, I guess he liked the way you fought because he wants you to put on his colors and fight from his corner."

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So I told him I wasn't interested, but I'd drop in and thank Mr. Helvering the next time I was in Washington. And Jim said, "Well, then will you come to call on me afterwards," which I did. And they both very strongly urged me to take the position. I was unable to accept the position at that time because these two tax cases were pending, and it was not until the following September when the cases had been settled that I came to Washington and was sworn in on the 3rd of September, 1939. About twenty minutes later England and France declared war on Germany, so right off the bat I was in the middle of things, handling things, which I probably wouldn't have been allowed to touch until I had had at least five year's experience. The result was I had all of World War II before we got in it, all of the war while we were in it, and all the wrap-up of the war. It was a great experience. I wouldn't give up a month of it for anything, and I wouldn't want to do another day of it for a great deal of money.

HESS: Just what were some of your duties? Now, you were Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during this period of time, is that correct?

SULLIVAN: No, I was Assistant Commissioner of Internal Revenue

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from the 3rd of September 1939 until the 17th of January, 1940. I was moved over to take the place vacated by Johnny [John W.] Hanes, who had been Under Secretary.

HESS: In the Treasury, is that right?

SULLIVAN: Yes. With the war coming on it became obvious that one of the great tasks was going to be to finance it. Dan [Daniel W.] Bell took Johnny Hanes' title as Under Secretary, and I took Johnny Hanes' responsibility, handling Internal Revenue, all the tax legislation, and procurement and several other bureaus.

HESS: What do you recall about the relationship between Henry Morgenthau, who was Secretary of the Treasury at this time, and President Roosevelt?

SULLIVAN: They were very, very close. I don't think I ever saw greater loyalty than Morgenthau displayed toward FDR.

HESS: And also, about this period of time, Secretary of War Harry Woodring was having a little difficulty with his assistant, Louis Johnson, is that correct?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: Did you get involved in that matter?

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SULLIVAN: Yes, they were both friends of mine, and they hadn't spoken to each other for a matter of months. President Roosevelt asked Secretary Morgenthau to try to get them together, and since Morgenthau knew I was a friend of both of them, he had me sit in with him in the rather curious role, almost as interpreter, because the two men wouldn't speak to each other, and I'd ask them the questions and they'd answer me.

HESS: What seemed to be the basis of their difficulty at that time, and just what did you know about Harry Woodring and Louis Johnson at that point in time?

SULLIVAN: Well, I knew Woodring when he was Governor of Kansas, and I had known Louis Johnson when he was National Commander of the American Legion the same year I was State Commander in New Hampshire. What their difference was, I can't say. I suspect that when Louie took the job as Assistant Secretary, he may have understood that he was going to move up soon as Secretary. As a matter of fact he never did become Secretary of War.

HESS: No, he was Secretary of Defense during the Truman administration. Do you think that the post of Secretary of War had been promised to him by Roosevelt?

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SULLIVAN: I don't know.

HESS: But your job mainly was as interpreter between the two silent partners, who wouldn't speak to each other?

SULLIVAN: Between the Secretary of War and his own Assistant Secretary.

HESS: Do you recall any particular incidents where you worked in this capacity, on any particular project, that might illustrate how that relationship worked or didn't work?

SULLIVAN: Well, I think Johnson had charge of industrial development, and I always suspected that he wanted to go ahead faster with rearmament than Secretary Woodring cared to go.

HESS: All right, now moving along to Mr. Truman, what are your earliest recollections of Mr. Truman?

SULLIVAN: I was trying to recall that last night. I can't really remember when I first met him. When I was with the Treasury I handled all legislation except for the bond legislation, and I knew every member of the House and every member of the Senate. I never testified before any committee on which Senator Truman sat, but I had a

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speaking acquaintance with him.

HESS: As you know, there was the Truman Committee, the Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, through which Mr. Truman's name became quite prominent during the Second World War. Do you recall anything about Mr. Truman's handling of that Committee?

SULLIVAN: Yes, it was our feeling that he did a superb job. He wasn't out to crucify anybody; he was out to correct mistakes as they were being made so they would not be repeated.

HESS: In the summer of 1944, Mr. Truman was selected to be the vice-presidential nominee for the Democratic Party. Were you surprised that Mr. Truman was selected at this time? There were several people heavily in the running: Henry Wallace, for one, who was Vice President, and wanted to remain; Jim Byrnes of South Carolina would liked to have had it. Mr. Truman seemed to be sort of a dark horse, an outside man.

SULLIVAN: Well, I think that it was a case of God being good to America. I think Jimmy Byrnes would have made a good President, but I think Harry Truman made a better one.

HESS: What's your view on Henry Wallace? Do you think he

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should have been given another chance to serve as Vice President again?

SULLIVAN: I wasn't sorry to see him leave.

HESS: You weren't sorry to see him go. What was the main attitude of most of the men who might be called political forces in their states, about Mr. Wallace?

SULLIVAN: About who?

HESS: About Henry Wallace.

SULLIVAN: I don't believe they felt he really belonged.

HESS: Why?

SULLIVAN: Fuzzy ideas.

HESS: All right. Did you go to the convention? It was held in Chicago that year.

SULLIVAN: That's right, I was there.

HESS: Do you recall anything in particular about Chicago and that convention?

SULLIVAN: I got the word about 11 o'clock in the morning from Bob Hannegan that the President had decided upon Senator Truman. Believe it or not, in those days, I

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knew at least two-thirds of the delegates from all over the country, and I promptly went to Mr. Truman's room, and I congratulated him and I said I thought it would be nice if Mrs. Truman and Margaret sat in the box at the head of the main aisle with me, and I would introduce Mrs. Truman and Margaret to as many delegates as came down that aisle; and that I did. Everybody wondered why I was stopping them and introducing them to Mrs. Truman and Margaret. About an hour later they found out.

HESS: Do you think that might have been the first time that many of the delegates had met Mr. Truman? Was he rather an unknown quantity to many of the delegates?

SULLIVAN: I wouldn't say it was the first time they had ever met Mr. Truman. It certainly was the first time they had ever met Mrs. Truman or Margaret.

HESS: So you thought it was a wise thing to bring the family in and introduce them to the delegates?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I did.

HESS: Do you recall anything about Mr. Truman's efforts during that campaign in 1944?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't.

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HESS: Mr. Roosevelt made a number of speeches in that campaign. I recall he caught a cold in New York one time when he rode in an open convertible, and they were in the rain.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Then he had a follow-up speech, I believe, to the teamsters, when he mentioned about Fala. But Mr. Truman did make a couple of campaign swings.

Mr. Roosevelt was inaugurated on the South Portico of the White House, I understand.

SULLIVAN: I was there.

HESS: What do you recall about that, was it a pretty cold day?

SULLIVAN: I hadn't seen him since the last week of the campaign, and both Mrs. Sullivan and I were frightfully shocked. There had been such a disturbing change in his appearance that we both felt that he was desperately ill.

HESS: His health had noticeably deteriorated since the campaign, is that right?

SULLIVAN: Very badly.

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HESS: And then right after that, he had a difficult job to do when he went to Yalta, just after the inauguration. Then he came back, spent a little time in Washington and then went down to Warm Springs, and on April 12, of 1945, President Roosevelt died. Where were you when you heard the news of President Roosevelt's death, and what were your thoughts and impressions?,

SULLIVAN: I had left the Treasury the last of November in 1944, because I had so many cases in New Hampshire that had been postponed and I had to clean them up. On the day of the President's death, I was in the office of Basil O'Connor, who was head of the American Red Cross as well as the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. He was trying to persuade me to relieve Harvey Gibson and run the Red Cross for Europe and UK. Basil was an old friend and I was listening, although I had no intention of undertaking that job. The phone rang and Basil said, "It's for you."

I took the phone and this voice said, "Can you be at work at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning?"

And I said, "Who's this?"

He said, "Jim."

I said, "Jim who?"

He said, "Forrestal."

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Whenever you talked with Forrestal, he never said "hello" or "goodbye," you were right in the middle of the conversation the minute you picked up the receiver. I said, "No, I can't be at work at 8 o'clock in the morning."

He said, "Be here at 8 o'clock Monday."

I said, "Wait a minute, Jim, what about?"

He said, "Haven't you heard from the President in the last 48 hours?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Did you fill out a blank check when you left the Treasury?"

I said, "Yes, I guess I did."

He said, "Well, he's filled it in and we sent your nomination papers down to Warm Springs this morning, and they're going to suspend the rules of the Senate and you'll be confirmed tonight. Be here Monday morning."

I said, "Wait a minute, as what?"

He said, "Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air."

So I told Basil what I was in for, and left and returned to the Waldorf and couldn't find any newspapers in the newstand. I inquired why they didn't have any newspapers and they said, "Oh, stick around. There'll be another extra in a minute."

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I said, "Another extra? What's happened?"

He said, "President Roosevelt died."

Well, that freed me of any obligation and I returned to Washington and started my law firm.

Two weeks later I had a call from the White House asking me to see President Truman at 11:30. I went over there and he said he wanted to nominate me for Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air. I assumed that he was making good on a commitment that he thought his predecessor had made to me, and I tried to explain to him that he was under no obligation because the undertaking ran in the opposite direction. It was not a very satisfactory conversation for two minutes, because nobody bothered to tell Truman that Roosevelt had also nominated me for the same job.

HESS: He didn't know that?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: Had Mr. Roosevelt signed the document?

SULLIVAN: I have been told that it was the last time he ever did sign his name.

HESS: The last official document that Mr. Roosevelt signed. All right, getting on into that, what was the date that

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you became associated with the Navy?

SULLIVAN: I immediately went over to the Navy, sort of incognito. I was to relieve Artemus Gates who was Assistant Secretary of Air. He was extremely helpful. He gave me an office, which was shared by a lieutenant commander and a WAVE, and to which office he sent all of the material I needed to study up for the job I was about to assume. I was there about two months before leaving to join the Third Fleet. I decided that I wanted to have some experience with the carriers. I had never been a pilot, and I was quite determined that carrier experience was essential for a man who was to take the job I was about to assume. Forrestal wanted me to stay in Washington and be sworn in here, but I was afraid that if I did I'd be assigned some job on the Hill and would never get a chance to be with the Fleet. So out I went and I took, among others, Vice Admiral Aubrey Fitch, the hero of the battle of the Coral Sea with me. At that time, Admiral Fitch was Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics, and he had all the papers to swear me in out there. I was to have been sworn in on the 1st of July, but we got dispatches indicating that Gates was on a trip and hadn't been able to get back to be sworn in as Under Secretary, and hence he remained as Under Secretary of Air until, I

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don't know, the third or fourth of July, when I was sworn in out there with the Fleet.

HESS: What carrier were you on, do you recall?

SULLIVAN: The *Shangri-La*.

HESS: What was your impression of the carrier when you first got out there?

SULLIVAN: Tremendous.

HESS: What is your opinion of the place of aircraft carriers in our overall defense capabilities, both then and now?

SULLIVAN: I think it's irreplaceable. Before the atomic bomb, it was the strongest weapon we had. Of course, without the carriers at the time of the Suez crisis, and at the time of Korea, we would have been very much disadvantaged.

HESS: As you know, I believe I sent you xerox copies of the clippings, but in the *Post* recently there has been an exchange of letters and editorials between Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, between 1953 and '57, and an editorial writer, concerning the vulnerability and the usefulness of aircraft carriers. The *Post* equated an attack on a carrier by a torpedo as being similar to an archer shooting an armour-clad knight from his horse,

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and said, "There is a school of thought which holds that heavily and expensively defended carriers can be rendered inoperable by comparatively simple Soviet weapons." So this is a continuing argument yet today.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: The vulnerability of carriers.

On April 12, 1945, you knew Mr. Truman quite well, you probably knew him far better than most people, but what was your opinion at that time, when you heard of the death of President Roosevelt, as to what kind of a job you thought this new man would do?

SULLIVAN: Well, it had to be very different. The men had such different styles, and of course, Senator Truman was completely untested and I guess my attitude was that of most people in the Government, one of hopefulness.

HESS: I noticed in the *Who's Who* that you also served in the Navy during World War I. Correct?

SULLIVAN: That's right.,

HESS: This brings up the point that you've had a life-long association with the Navy. Would you tell me a little bit about the reasons behind your interest in the Navy?

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SULLIVAN: In World War I, I was very anxious to get into Marine or Naval aviation, but you had to be twenty-one, and I had not reached that age and I wanted to be in a service where I would be contributing something and yet from which I could transfer to Naval or Marine aviation in the event that the rule was relaxed.

HESS: We have mentioned Mr. Forrestal, and I have looked up the dates on Mr. Forrestal's service. He was Secretary of the Navy from March 19, 1944 to September 17, 1947, he was Secretary of Defense from September 17, 1947 until the date of his resignation on March 28, 1949; and the date of his death at Bethesda Naval Hospital was May 22, 1949. When did you first become acquainted with Mr. Forrestal?

SULLIVAN: My father and I had been very good friends with Frank Knox who was Forrestal's predecessor as Secretary of the Navy. One Sunday in '42 or '43 Secretary Knox phoned me and asked me to lunch with him aboard the *Sequoia*, the Navy yacht. When I arrived at the *Sequoia*,

he asked me several questions about Forrestal and told me that President Roosevelt had agreed to create the office of Under Secretary of the Navy, and wanted Secretary Knox to take a look at Forrestal. We agreed that after

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lunch Knox would pretend to take a nap for an hour and I would have a chance to talk alone with Jim. Shortly thereafter Jim arrived, we had lunch, Secretary Knox went below, and Jim and I talked for about an hour. I liked very much his style, his directness, his candor, and when Secretary Knox came above again I gave him the silent signal with a nod of the head and went below. When I came on deck an hour later Jim had been offered the job by Knox and had accepted.

HESS: As you later held the same position, Secretary of the Navy, just how would you evaluate his performance as Secretary of that service?

SULLIVAN: I think he was excellent.

HESS: How good of an administrator was he?

SULLIVAN: I think he was a good administrator because he didn't mess into it; he let other people run it.

HESS: Is that important?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: Did he have any flaws that may not be generally known, either in his administration or his handling of the Navy?

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SULLIVAN: Not that I can recall.

HESS: A good deal has been written about Mr. Forrestal's views regarding unification of the armed services, but in your opinion, what was his stand on the unification of the armed services?

SULLIVAN: He followed it with great reluctance.

HESS: Why?

SULLIVAN: He felt that it would be damaging to the morale of the individual services.

HESS: What was your view?

SULLIVAN: The same.

HESS: Did you think it was necessary to have some degree of unification, or not?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't see that unification changed anything.

HESS: Well, it did create the National Military Establishment, and then the Department of Defense, so there were administrative changes.

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes, yes.

HESS: But you think that fundamentally, the basic operational

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forces at sea and on the land and for the Air Force in the air, were not touched too much?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't think they were.

HESS: If I am correct, the Army seemed to favor unification more than the Navy.

SULLIVAN: Very much more so.

HESS: Very much more so. Now to lead into that I want to read a paragraph written by Secretary Kenneth Royall, who was Secretary of the Army. This was in the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Army for '47-48. It's on page 5:

Interdependence is the very essence of successful unification. Our new venture cannot contemplate that either the Navy or the Army or the Air Force shall have within its own organization all the means of performing its special duties. Unless each of the three Departments willingly comes to rely -- or is required to rely -- on the other Departments for a part of its needs -- unless the idea of complete Departmental self-sufficiency is abandoned, unification is doomed to failure.

Why do you think the Army had a more favorable view toward unification than perhaps the Navy did?

SULLIVAN: Because the Air Force wanted autonomy.

HESS: Because the Air Corps wanted out of the Army and wanted their own forces.

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SULLIVAN: That's correct.

HESS: Did you think the Army was opposed to that? Did they want to keep the Air Corps as part of the Army Air Corps?

SULLIVAN: No, I think they were willing to let the Air Force have its own department, if that was the price of unification.

HESS: I have read that part of Mr. Forrestal's early support for the National Military Establishment, that's what we had, of course, in '47 and '48, before the Department of Defense was established, was because he was really opposed to a Department of Defense.

SULLIVAN: I think he was.

HESS: He felt that the National Military Establishment was the lesser of two evils. Is that correct?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: If Mr. Forrestal was opposed to unification, why was he appointed to head the Department of Defense after it was created? Why was he appointed to be our first Secretary of Defense?

SULLIVAN: Jim's philosophy was that the Department of Defense should be comprised of a very small group of planners and

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thinkers. As a matter of fact, when Jim resigned, the entire Department of Defense added up to some fifty or sixty people, including secretaries, I mean, typists and messengers and chauffeurs.

HESS: That's pretty small. How many people do you think they've got over there today?

SULLIVAN: Nobody has ever been able to ascertain that.

HESS: Nobody knows. Do you think that his appointment as Secretary of Defense may have been because Mr. Truman realized that he was opposed to it and if they could get him involved that he might be easier to work with as Secretary of Defense?

SULLIVAN: Well, I never was quite sure about that. Jim's view was that policy decisions, should be made by the Defense Department and the implementation of those policies should be left entirely with the three services.

HESS: Let's spend just a few moments discussing some of the problems that were caused by the mobilization of the Navy after World War II. When you look back on the days just following the war, after the surrender of Japan, there was a great cry, of course, of demobilization, "Bring the boys home," reduce the Armed Forces.

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SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: But what problems did that cause you, and how did you handle them?

SULLIVAN: Well, one good thing that came out of it was the necessity of finding some way to preserve ships that had to be laid up because you didn't have crews for them. There was a

Captain H. G. Donald, who, I believe, was the inventor of the process that became known as "mothballing," and as we went ahead with that process, we found that we could put monitors below decks, between decks, that would register on the main deck the degree of humidity in each different compartment. In that way, we were able in a very inexpensive way to preserve those ships. If we were to need them again, as we did in Korea, they were there ready and waiting.

HESS: You were appointed Under Secretary of the Navy in 1946 and you served in that position until the following year, correct, '46 to '47?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: What were the principal responsibilities of your duties as Under Secretary of the Navy? When you look back on those days, what comes to mind?

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SULLIVAN: Well, on the air job, my duties were pretty clear-cut. It was just the air end of the Navy. As Under Secretary, my job was to back up Forrestal and more or less cover the whole field.

HESS: One thing of interest that took place during this period of time was the resignation of Henry Wallace in 1946. In the *Forrestal Diaries*, there is a memo that starts on page 207, from you, describing the events of a meeting held at the office of Acting Secretary of State Will Clayton. That meeting was held on September 12, 1946. That's the day of Wallace's speech in Madison Square Garden in New York City, and the meeting was attended by Clayton; Captain Robert L. Dennison, the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations; Robert Patterson, Secretary of War, came in a little later; James W. Riddleberger, Acting Head of the Division of European Affairs; and Loy Henderson, Head of the Division of Near and Middle Eastern Affairs. What do you recall about that meeting and the speech that Henry Wallace was to deliver in 1946?

SULLIVAN: Secretary Patterson and Forrestal were summoned to the State Department. In Forrestal's absence from the city, I attended. Acting Secretary Clayton was very much disturbed by a copy of an address that Wallace was to

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deliver in New York that night. I read it and concluded that if Wallace gave that speech, either he or Secretary Byrnes would resign. I phoned the White House to get the Press Secretary, Charlie Ross, and I explained to him how serious I thought this was. He agreed to try to do something about it. But at that time, New York was on daylight saving time and Washington was not; and he just didn't have the time to stop the speech, which did result in Wallace's resignation.

HESS: At the time that we met in December, did you tell me that some of the events in the *Diaries* were incorrect?

SULLIVAN: No, I was speaking about the whole idea of publishing the *Diaries*. I was very much against it, and tried to dissuade the people from publishing it, in the event I think my

judgment was vindicated, because the *Diaries* as published did not do credit to Jim's memory, or to his record.

HESS: Why do you hold that view? Do you recall offhand what you found objectionable about the *Diaries*? Any specific instances?

SULLIVAN: They were superficial. You got no feeling of Jim as a real strong man.

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HESS: We've taken a few minutes out here, and you have looked over this specific episode. Is that set down fairly accurately?

SULLIVAN: Yes, it is.

HESS: The item beginning on page 207 of the *Forrestal Diaries* is principally your memo, is that correct?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Do you recall if Charles Ross did talk to Mr. Truman?

SULLIVAN: I don't think he did.

HESS: Is this it here on page 209?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: What does it say? "Before 7 o'clock Mr. Clayton had three or four further conversations with Mr. Ross which appeared to be inconclusive to us who heard one side of the conversation. Mr. Clayton remarked that Ross was noncommittal as to whether or not he had discussed the matter with the President and we agreed that it would be unwise or useless to press Ross further on this point."

SULLIVAN: That's right.

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HESS: So, you fellows over at the State Department who were meeting in Clayton's office really didn't know if your views had gotten through to the President, is that correct?

SULLIVAN: No, we did not.

HESS: All right. Moving on, you were a member of the President's Commission on Employee Loyalty. This was a Commission organized following the issuance of Executive Order 9806 and it held its first meeting on December 5, 1946. The chairman of the Commission was A. Devitt Vanech, who was Special Assistant to the Attorney General. The main purpose of that

Commission was to establish standards for the investigation of Government employees. Do you recall anything about that?

SULLIVAN: No, I do not.

HESS: You mentioned in December that you do not recall serving on that particular Commission.

SULLIVAN: No, I do not.

HESS: Do you recall anything about the problem at that time of trying to find disloyal workers in Government? This was before (Joseph R.) McCarthy, before the McCarthy era,

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but after the war there were problems of trying to find if there were subversives in the Federal Government.

SULLIVAN: I think it was not a big problem.

HESS: You were a member of the "Little Cabinet" for awhile as Under Secretary. Were there Little Cabinet meetings held where various under secretaries would meet, State Department, Treasury Department?

SULLIVAN: I never attended one.

HESS: Would it have been helpful if such meetings were held, if you could have gotten together with people on the same level in the other departments?

SULLIVAN: I don't think so.

HESS: Sometimes this is pointed out as an administrative failure of the Truman administration, and that perhaps if such meetings had been held, better communications would have been established and would have been available. But speaking as a man who was a member of the Little Cabinet you do not think that would have been advantageous?

SULLIVAN: No, I do not.

HESS: Do you know if there was any move to start such meetings?

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SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: In his press conference on August 21, 1947, Mr. Truman announced the appointment of Kenneth C. Royall to be Secretary of the Army; Stuart Symington to be Secretary of the Air Force, and yourself to be Secretary of the Navy. In your opinion, why were you selected to succeed Mr. Forrestal in that position?

SULLIVAN: Well, I'd sort of worked up through the chairs as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air, and as Under Secretary.

HESS: What were your principal responsibilities as Secretary of the Navy? When you look back on those days what comes to mind?

SULLIVAN: Well, throughout my entire experience in the Navy, I handled most of the matters on the Hill, in all three jobs.

HESS: Congressional liaison?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: All right, two major questions: How did you handle that, and why did you receive those assignments? Were you better acquainted with people on the Hill?

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SULLIVAN: They all knew what I had been doing at the Treasury, and I had handled for five years of work with Congress, while representing the Treasury Department.

HESS: You had had five years of experience in doing the job.

SULLIVAN: Before I went over to the Navy.

HESS: Would you also say that was five years of cultivating friendships on the Hill? Did this enter in?

SULLIVAN: Of course.

HESS: Just how did you go about handling congressional liaison? That's an important subject.

SULLIVAN: The things I was working on in those days were tremendously important, so important that every member of the House and Senate in both parties was vitally interested in what I was doing, and I got to know almost all of them.

HESS: One thing that you mentioned to me when I was here in December was the difference between the way Mr. Truman handled legislative matters and the way Mr. Roosevelt handled legislative matters, and you mentioned Mr. Roosevelt's special assistance to the Navy in matters of legislation.

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SULLIVAN: Well, you see, President Roosevelt was President so long that all of the natural instincts of self preservation in the Navy atrophied. Whenever anything started to go wrong somebody would call the naval aide, who would speak to President Roosevelt, who would then call the chairman of the appropriate committee and inquire what he was trying to do with his

(meaning Roosevelt's) Navy. It wasn't the United States Navy, it was Roosevelt's Navy, and he protected them all through the years.

HESS: They didn't really have to protect themselves.

SULLIVAN: So, when I got over there there wasn't anybody who knew very much about Congress or cared that much about them.

HESS: They hadn't needed it, is that right?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: It is well known that Mr. Roosevelt had that feeling about the Navy. He was Assistant Secretary of the Navy was he not, during World War I?

SULLIVAN: He was.

HESS: And all through the years he had had a very close relationship with the Navy.

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SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Mr. Truman was in the Army during World War I. Did you have a feeling, during the time that you were in the Pentagon and with the Department of the Navy, that perhaps Mr. Truman supported the Army, had a similar feeling about the Army, as Mr. Roosevelt had had about the Navy?

SULLIVAN: No, I think he was very fair.

HESS: How would Mr. Truman and the White House go about congressional relations? Perhaps we could illustrate this by discussing a particular bill that you may have worked on.

SULLIVAN: Well, I'll tell you about one instance. It involved what became known as the Turkish-Greek Military Aid Bill.

The President called me over alone and asked me to sound out both houses of Congress on the prospects of enacting that legislation. He told me to take three days off and do nothing else. At the end of the third day I returned to him and I reported that everybody on the Hill had been very gracious, but they said the country was tired of military appropriations, and for me not to batter my head against a stone wall because I'd never get

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anywhere with it. President Truman then asked me if I personally felt such a bill was desirable. I answered in the affirmative.

If you recall, at that time, Italy and France were on the verge of going Communist and Yugoslavia was one of the brightest jewels in the Communist crown, and if we lost the east end of the Mediterranean, namely Greece and Turkey, there would be no barrier to stop communism from going over into Africa, which was very ripe for subversion at that time.

When the President learned that I was very much in favor of the enactment of this legislation he said, "Well, John, you and I have taken an oath of office, and it's time we lived up to it. Are you willing to batter your head against the stone wall that they referred to?"

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "Let's get on with the drafting of the bill."

Incidentally, that afternoon he told me that the other two men he had had checking the Congress filed exactly the same report I had just given him. I never found out who the other two men were.

HESS: Of course the Greek-Turkish Aid measure came to be known as the Truman doctrine. It was signed, I believe, in March of 1947, and not too long after that came the

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Marshall plan. There is a school of thought that says that the Truman doctrine coming first laid the groundwork, was really education, not only among the members of the general public, but among the members of Congress, and if we hadn't had this first, the Marshall plan coming along later and much bigger, might not have been passed. What's your view on that?

SULLIVAN: I think the Marshall plan received a very cordial welcome from the Houses of Congress, probably because of the spade work that had been done on the Greek-Turkish Military Aid Bill.

HESS: Did you receive any pressure from Congress on contracts for naval bases?

I have a clipping that I cut out of the paper not too long ago, knowing that our interviews were coming up, in which Senator Russell Long of Louisiana was demanding a "contrite apology" both from the Navy official who accused him of exerting improper pressure on the Pentagon on behalf of a Louisiana shipyard. This is current, but did you have any similar situations back in the Truman days?

SULLIVAN: No.

We had a large number of auxiliary Navy fields all

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over the country at the end of the war. Shortly thereafter I appointed a committee of three Captains serving in the Bureau of Aeronautics, and I had them very carefully screen every field that the Navy had. I think it took them about six months to complete this work, and it was all done in complete secrecy. I then asked Chairman [Carl] Vinson of the Naval Affairs Committee

to have a meeting of his committee the following morning at 10 o'clock. I had lists of the airfields we were recommending to be abandoned, printed out, not only for all members of the Naval Affairs Committee, but also for all members of Congress. The three captains and I went up and when the meeting opened, I advised Chairman Vinson that there were some 452 Navy airfields which were going to be abandoned, and there was at least one in the district of every member of the committee.

HESS: This was going to hit home, in other words.

SULLIVAN I then had them pass out the list, and then asked to be excused because I had an 11 o'clock appointment with Chairman [David I.] Walsh of the Naval Affairs Committee of the Senate where I gave them the same list I gave the House. The 452 fields were abandoned, and no one complained. Everybody was getting it bad, getting

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hurt.

HESS: And everyone saw the necessity for cutting back after the war?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: And there were no times when anyone would come in and say, "My shipyard needs a contract. Let's build a ship down there?"

SULLIVAN: No, this was not a time when we were building new construction.

HESS: So that was taken care of.

All right. What was the nature of your relationship with the other men who came in as service chiefs at the same time that you did: Kenneth Royall and Stuart Symington? First, Mr. Royall, what was the nature of your relationship with the Secretary of the Army?

SULLIVAN: Very good.

HESS: How would you characterize him as a man? Was he efficient in the job?

SULLIVAN: Yes, he was a hard worker.

HESS: How about Mr. Symington?

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SULLIVAN: Well, I had known Stuart quite well. We had our differences of opinion, but we got along well and still do.

HESS: At this time, and before the Korean war, many of the services were being cut back. According to some of the figures that I have seen, the Air Force was cut back somewhat less,

their reductions were less than the reductions that were being imposed on the Army and the Navy. Were there reasons for that disproportionate reduction?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I think so. The Air Force was developing a new department, and technology weighed very heavily in their favor.

HESS: Mr. Symington also had a man on his staff and I do not believe you had a comparable member, he had a Publicity Director.

SULLIVAN: A what?

HESS: A Publicity Director. A man with the title of Director of Publicity. Was Mr. Symington somewhat more image conscious than perhaps you and Mr. Royall were?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't think so, but I think the Air Force people have always had a bent in that direction.

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HESS: Did you have any particular problems with the high naval officers who may have been reluctant to accept civilian authority?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: No problem?

SULLIVAN: No, none at all.

HESS: You were Secretary of the Navy all during 1948, so we want to discuss the political events that took place that year, rather an important year in the history of the Truman administration. Beginning in the summer there were movements on the part of some Democrats to see that someone other than Mr. Truman was the party standard bearer that year. Do you recall anything about those movements?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: Did you go to the convention in Philadelphia that year?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: What do you recall about the convention? When you look back on the convention, just what comes to mind?

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SULLIVAN: Howard McGrath, later Attorney General and United States Senator from Rhode Island, presided at that convention.

HESS: He was the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee that year.

SULLIVAN: That's right. The timetable didn't progress very satisfactorily, and I pleaded with him to advance the time for Vice President Barkley's talk so that President Truman could get on the air while people were still up and listening to their radios. But Howard ruled otherwise, and I have often wondered how many people did hear President Truman.

HESS: It was very late at night by the time Mr. Truman spoke.

SULLIVAN: It was very early in the morning.

HESS: What is your personal opinion, do you think that J. Howard McGrath thought that Mr. Truman could really win the election that year?

SULLIVAN: Oh, I think so.

HESS: Did you think so?

SULLIVAN: I didn't until October.

HESS: What changed your mind? What happened in October?

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SULLIVAN: Well, I had an understanding with President Truman that the Navy was nonpartisan and hence I did not make any political speeches whatever. I did travel around the country on Navy business.

At that time, there were twelve counties in the country that had been carried by the successful candidate for the Presidency ever since 1896 or 1898. Two of those counties were Coos and Strafford in my own state of New Hampshire. I visited three of those other counties and I felt very definitely that Truman had a chance and was coming along fast. As a matter of fact, he carried all twelve of those counties, and won.

HESS: Do you recall what states the other counties were in? You mentioned that two counties were in your state.

While your secretary is looking for that information, I'll continue on.

When you made your trips around as Secretary of the Navy, you were speaking as Secretary of the Navy, is that correct?

SULLIVAN: That's right, strictly on Navy affairs, and not on the political problems.

HESS: During a speech, would you ever mention Mr. Truman's name, would you make any references to the political

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situation?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: Where were you on election night, and what are your recollections of those times?

SULLIVAN: I was in Manchester, New Hampshire where my wife and I had gone to vote.

HESS: Which is your hometown, is that right?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Did you stay up that night to listen to the results?

SULLIVAN: I did.

HESS: Were you surprised when Mr. Truman won?

SULLIVAN: We didn't know that night that he had won, not until the next morning.

HESS: That's right. What seemed to be the view of the people in New Hampshire, were they a little surprised?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I think they were.

HESS: What part did Mr. James Forrestal play in the campaign?

SULLIVAN: None that I know of.

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HESS: Do you think that his lack of assistance in the campaign may have resulted in his departure in 1949?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: No cause and effect there at all?

SULLIVAN: No, Jim was very, very tired, physically and mentally. He was exhausted.

HESS: We'll get into a little more of that later.

Back on the convention just a moment. Mr. Truman had asked Justice William O. Douglas if he would run as Vice President that year, do you recall that?

SULLIVAN: I recall there was talk about it.

HESS: There was some talk. I think there was a phone call made to Justice Douglas out in Washington. But of course, Alben Barkley was chosen. How important to the eventual victory in November do you think Mr. Barkley's selection on the ticket was?

SULLIVAN: I think he made a great contribution.

HESS: All right, we have the list of the twelve counties now.

SULLIVAN: In New Hampshire, the counties were Coos and Strafford; in Pennsylvania, Fayette; West Virginia, Marion;

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Indiana, Vandenberg; Iowa, Jasper and Palo Alto; Ohio, Belmont; Wyoming, Albany and Laramie; Oregon, Crook; and in California, San Joaquin.

HESS: All right, how did you come across this list, do you recall?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I was given this list by Emil Hurja, who had been Jim Farley's statistician.

HESS: At the time that Mr. Farley was chairman of the National Committee?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: What was his name?

SULLIVAN: Emil Hurja, I think it was spelled.

HESS: And you say Mr. Truman carried all twelve counties also?

SULLIVAN: yes, he did.

HESS: Do you know this has been holding since the 1948 election?

SULLIVAN: It held until 1960, and in the 1960 election six of these counties voted for...

HESS: Nixon? It was Nixon and Kennedy that year.

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SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: Moving along to the subject of atomic submarines, on page 3 of your annual report for 1948 you have the following paragraph:

The potentialities of atomic energy and its naval application are limited only by imagination. Even rudimentary guided missiles present a difficult defense

problem which will require many new techniques. Developments in submarines have indicated that a true submersible, i.e., a vessel that can operate indefinitely while completely submerged, is not beyond the realm of practicability. With seventy percent of the earth covered by water and with the advantages of concealment and difficult detection afforded by that water, it is possible that a future conflict might involve as many battles under the sea as on the surface.

All right, did that pretty well express the view of how important atomic submarines would become to the Navy?

SULLIVAN: I think so.

HESS: At that time, do you recall any conflict between what might be called carrier admirals, battleship admirals, with this rising, emerging force of submarines?

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes, of course. There were two schools of thought. They were about equally divided. I had a meeting one afternoon with the sixty top Navy people,

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and they were about thirty for the atomic submarine and about thirty against it. I made the decision to go ahead because I felt that if the atomic submarine worked, it would be too important for us not to take advantage of it. I felt that a decision not to try to build an atomic submarine was a gamble we couldn't afford to take.

HESS: Were there people advising you strenuously not to go ahead with the atomic submarine?

SULLIVAN: In general discussion, yes. Oh, yes. There were very forcefully expressed opinions against it.

HESS: What do you recall about Hyman Rickover during this period of time?

SULLIVAN: I beg your pardon?

HESS: Admiral Rickover. What do you recall about Admiral Rickover, who I believe was a captain at this time, is that right?

SULLIVAN: He was a captain, and he was the fellow who was responsible for this idea and he kept pushing it.

HESS: He was the main advocate, wasn't he?

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SULLIVAN: Yes, he was.

HESS: Just what is your general opinion of Admiral Rickover's value to the Navy and to the Nation?

SULLIVAN: I think that he made a tremendous contribution. I have no doubt that we would have eventually gotten an atomic submarine without Admiral Rickover, but I think with him pushing for it, we probably produced it at least ten years earlier than we would have if he had not been on the scene.

HESS: One thing that is usually brought up about Admiral Rickover is the fact, of course, that he is Jewish. Do you think he suffered through anti-Semitic actions on the part of the Navy? Was there an anti-Semitic feeling towards the Admiral at this time?

SULLIVAN: I think there was at the Naval Academy when he was a midshipman.

HESS: But not so much in later years?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't think so.

HESS: As the Secretary of the Navy, you were one of the original members of the National Security Council.

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SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: The Security Council was created by passage of the National Security Act of 1947. As an original member, how do you think the concept of the National Security Council has worked out?

SULLIVAN: I think it got a very good start in those meetings, in the so-called State, War and Navy Committee, SWNCC. Dean Acheson presided; Bob Patterson and I were the other two members, and I think that that was the real initial push to correlate foreign and military policy.

HESS: The State, War and Naval Coordinating Committee was something other than the National Security Council, was it not?

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes.

HESS: Did you find that you worked more with the State, War and Navy Coordinating Committee than you did the National Security Council?

SULLIVAN: Oh yes, very much so.

HESS: In Mr. Truman's *Memoirs* he mentions that at the time of the creation of the National Security Council that many of the advisers tended to bring too many people

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to the meetings. Do you recall anything about that? It's a very minor detail.

SULLIVAN: At the SWNCC meetings?

HESS: No, at the National Security Council meetings.

SULLIVAN: Well, I always felt the National Security Council had members from departments who really didn't belong there. I think the membership has spread very, very widely.

HESS: Now at the State, War and Navy Coordinating Committee, do you recall any particular incidents, any particular matters that you worked on with the State, War and Navy Coordinating Committee that might illustrate how you worked with the organization, and what that organization did?

SULLIVAN: There were a great variety of problems that came before that Committee, and all of them were worked out to the satisfaction of all three departments.

HESS: Do you remember anything in particular?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't.

HESS: An important topic following World War II, still very

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much with us today, is that of racial problems in the services. You mentioned when we met in December that there was a Commander Donald Nelson who worked with you on these matters, is that correct?

SULLIVAN: No, he came in to say goodbye to me. He was a lieutenant at that time, and he said that he was the last commissioned Negro to be in the Navy, and he had been invited to go home.

HESS: He had been invited to leave.

SULLIVAN: I promptly got in touch with the bureau of personnel and ordered his retention, and he stayed on and just recently left the Navy as a Lieutenant Commander.

HESS: I have heard there was a man in the Department of Defense by the name of James Evans, who was a Negro gentleman, who was an adviser to the Secretary of Defense on civil rights matters from '47 to '49. Did you know Mr. Evans?

SULLIVAN: No, I did not.

HESS: What is your general view of racial matters in the Navy? Did you feel that things should have gone along

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faster, should integration have taken place faster in the Navy?

SULLIVAN: I doubt it. I think we made tremendous progress, and I think they've been making further progress ever since; but in these racial matters, if your gains are going to be lasting, they can't be rushed.

HESS: Dealing with the White House staff, did you have occasion to work with or request the assistance of the military and naval personnel on Mr. Truman's White House staff? The head man there, of course, was Fleet Admiral William Leahy, who was Chief of Staff for the President from April 12, 1945 until his retirement on March 29 of 1948. Did you work with, or speak with, or request the assistance of Admiral Leahy at any time?

SULLIVAN: No, we were well acquainted. I had great admiration for Admiral Leahy. He was a tower of strength, and we always got along very well, but I never had to call on him for anything.

HESS: What about the Naval Aides. There were Commodore Vardaman and then Clark Clifford was there for a little while, then Rear Admiral Foskett, and then Admiral Dennison. What about the Naval Aides, did you work with them?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: Can you tell me about an incident when you may have worked with some of the various men? Did you work with Vardaman?

SULLIVAN: Very little, very little.

HESS: He was there from '45 to '46. Clark Clifford was there as full Naval Aide for just a very short time. Do you recall anything about Mr. Clifford as Naval Aide?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: Admiral Foskett was there from '46 to '48. Did you work closely with Admiral Foskett?

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: Then Rear Admiral Dennison from January of '48 until January of '53. Of course, we've mentioned once this morning about Admiral Dennison accompanying you to Will Clayton's office at the State Department.

SULLIVAN: I recommended Dennison for the job as Naval Aide to President Truman.

HESS: How did that come about, and why did you pick Admiral Dennison, who I believe was Captain Dennison at that

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time?

SULLIVAN: He was. He was a first-class fellow in every way. On that job, it's very important that the wife of the Naval Aide be simpatico with the President's wife. Mrs. Sullivan invited Mrs. Truman, and maybe eight or ten other women, to tea one afternoon, and Mrs. Dennison was one of the invitees and didn't know why she was there. She was there for Mrs. Truman to look her over, and Mrs. Truman liked what she saw and Bob got the job.

HESS: At this time, I believe that Admiral Dennison was Captain of the Battleship *Missouri*.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: And when Mr. Truman went to Rio de Janeiro to sign the Rio Pact, he took the *Missouri* back to the United States.

Did you have any occasion to work with the Military Aide? General Vaughan was the Military Aide through the entire Truman administration.

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: And General Robert B. Landry was Air Aide during the

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time you were Secretary of the Navy.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Did you have anything to do with General Landry?

SULLIVAN: I knew them all very well. We got along very well.

HESS: Did you have anything in particular to do with some of the other staff members: Charles Murphy, Matthew Connelly?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I knew them both very well.

HESS: Were there times that you called on them for assistance?

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes, sure.

HESS: Were they easy to work with?

SULLIVAN: Yes, very.

HESS: Do you recall anything in particular, any measures that you may have called for their assistance on?

SULLIVAN: This was something that happened two or three times every week, I mean, there were a great variety of things.

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HESS: This is something that came up many times.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: About Mr. Forrestal. I mentioned a while ago, there are some people who say that Mr. Forrestal's departure from the administration was in some way connected with a lack of support for Mr. Truman in 1948. You say that had nothing to do with it whatsoever.

SULLIVAN: No.

HESS: What do you recall about the departure of James Forrestal from the Pentagon and the reasons therefore?

SULLIVAN: Well, Jim was exhausted, and the deterioration was extremely noticeable for the last six months he was on the job.

HESS: Did you notice any signs of the unfortunate mental breakdown that overtook him?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: What signs did you notice?

SULLIVAN: Contradictory orders.

HESS: Contradictory orders. When did you first notice something of that nature? He left in March, he left in

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the last part of March of '49, and the day of his suicide at Bethesda Naval Hospital was May 22, 1949. When did you first notice something going wrong?

SULLIVAN: In the previous June he was not in good shape, but he made a comeback, and in September was more like his old self. Very early in October he began issuing me contradictory orders, and from then on he went downhill, and very fast.

HESS: The date of his resignation was supposed to be on March 31, and it was really on March 28. It had been moved up, the date of his resignation had been moved up two or three days. Do you recall anything about the reasons for moving the date of his resignation forward about two or three days?

SULLIVAN: No, I do not.

HESS: He went down to Hobe Sound, I believe, is that right?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Do you recall anything about who recommended that he take a rest down at Hobe Sound or anything about his last few days?

SULLIVAN: I think he had been down there before on vacation.

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HESS: Then he was brought back to Bethesda Naval Hospital, and instead of placing him on a lower floor they placed him on a high floor. Do you know whose idea that was to put him up too high in the building?

SULLIVAN: I think most of the VIPs stayed up there.

HESS: He was replaced by Louis Johnson. Why was Louis Johnson selected to be Secretary of Defense?

SULLIVAN: Well, as you know, he had been Assistant Secretary of War, and he was very, very keen to have it.

HESS: He had also been Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Democratic National Committee through the 1948 election and helped raise some money. Do you think that that had something to do with the position that he received?

SULLIVAN: I think it very well may have.

HESS: I have heard, this is nothing definite, but I have heard that he may have had a commitment from Mr. Truman that he could select the Cabinet post he wanted. Have you ever heard that?

SULLIVAN: No, and I do not believe it.

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HESS: You knew Mr. Johnson (we discussed this), you knew him when he was in the American Legion, when he was National Commander.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: And you knew him when he was having some difficulty with Mr. Woodring when they were both at the War Department.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: So we probably have pretty well discussed the background of what you knew about Mr. Johnson up until the time that he took over. But what changes did he seek to make when he took over?

SULLIVAN: Why don't we go into that a little later?

HESS: All right, because we're almost down to the end of this reel.

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Second Oral History Interview with John L. Sullivan, Washington, D.C., April 13, 1972. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: To begin today's interview, sir, what changes did Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson seek to make when he took over as Secretary of Defense?

SULLIVAN: He was determined to centralize all the activity of the three service departments in the Department of Defense, and whereas there had only been some fifty odd bodies in the whole department when Forrestal was Secretary, he immediately appointed a lot of committees, draining off the best officers of the Army, Navy and Air Force to serve under him, and before he left it was estimated that the Defense Department had over 20,000 employees. Of course, as authority ran to the Department of Defense, the power and authority of the individual service departments diminished.

HESS: Shortly after he came in he made a decision to cancel the construction of an aircraft carrier, correct?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Tell me about that.

SULLIVAN: We had laid the keel and I talked to him on a Wednesday afternoon and he asked me if I were to start

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all over again would I bother to build the ship, and I replied that I most definitely would, that it had been approved by Congress twice and by the President twice, and I saw no reason not to go ahead. I said, "Now I'm leaving for Corpus Christi on Friday. I'm addressing a Reserve officers' convention down there on Saturday, and do I have your word that nothing will be done about this until I have a further opportunity to talk with you?"

He said, "You have my word."

I was notified Saturday morning just as I entered the convention that he had cancelled the building of the carrier. Immediately after I had finished my speech I got on the phone to talk with [Admiral Louis] Denfeld and I said, "Louie, the Secretary of Defense must have given you a bad time this week."

He said, "I haven't even seen him." He said, "I got a request at half past ten last night to furnish him a memorandum on the usefulness of the big carrier, and when I took it in at half past eleven, everybody in the outside office laughed at me, saying that they had already got out the publicity release that the carrier was cancelled."

He had done this on the basis of two memoranda: One of them from General Omar Bradley, and the other

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from General Hoyt Vandenberg, who were the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and the Air Force, neither of whom had ever set foot on an aircraft carrier, until I took them on the joint maneuvers in the Caribbean the previous January.

HESS: Just what was the general nature of their memoranda, that the aircraft carrier was no longer necessary?

SULLIVAN: No, Secretary Johnson was a very active, unannounced candidate for the Presidency, and he was going to run on the platform of austerity, and, of course, the cancellation of the carrier would take several hundred million dollars out of the Navy budget.

HESS: You say he was an "unannounced candidate." Did you ever hear him make any comments on whether or not he would like to run for the Presidency?

SULLIVAN: Everybody around him knew that he was going to run.

HESS: He made no secret of the matter?

SULLIVAN: No. Do you recall the films that were made of Harry Truman that were shown in the little towns around the country and which were so effective? Well, I guess

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you're too young to have known about that.

HESS: Was this for the '48 campaign?

SULLIVAN: Yes. Secretary Johnson had similar films made and they were already in the cans ready to be distributed.

HESS: Now, a couple of questions on the U.S.S. *United States*, the aircraft carrier that was cancelled. The keel was laid on April 18, as I understand.

SULLIVAN: I think it was a week or ten days before it was cancelled, and I don't recall the exact dates.

HESS: Would it have been possible to have had the aircraft carrier further along? This was in 1949. Should work have started on it earlier, where it would have been past cancellation, past possible cancellation?

SULLIVAN: I don't think so, it's not my recollection. I know I kept pressing it as hard as I could all the time.

HESS: Do you know why he singled out this particular item, why he singled out this carrier?

SULLIVAN: I think it was the largest single item in the budget.

HESS: All right, now, there is a disagreement, as you probably know, as to how strenuous Louis Johnson was

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toward cutting back the Armed Forces, whether he was just following orders from Mr. Truman and the Bureau of the Budget, or whether he was really carrying them out with the zeal that indicated he thought the Armed Forces should be cut back too? What's your opinion of that?

SULLIVAN: I think it was his personal view.

HESS: His personal view. Did you ever discuss the cancellation of the carrier with Mr. Truman? What was his view?

SULLIVAN: When I got back from Texas on Sunday, I immediately went to the office and wrote a letter of resignation which I addressed to President Truman. He spent three days trying to persuade me to remain as Secretary of the Navy, but I explained to him that I couldn't possibly serve under Secretary Johnson, that he had appointed Johnson Secretary of Defense within the last four or five weeks, and he couldn't possibly fire him, and there was nothing left for me to do but to leave.

On the third day, which was a Wednesday, Charlie Ross, President Truman's public relations officer, came to my office and said, "Are you determined to resign?"

I said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "Would you be willing to change your letter

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of resignation and have it addressed to Secretary of Defense Johnson rather than President Truman?" He added that President Truman didn't want the record to show that he had ever been in disagreement with me.

Accordingly I rewrote the letter and sent it to Secretary Johnson, a letter of resignation.

HESS: You sent letters to both gentlemen, correct? [See Appendix.]

SULLIVAN: Yes. The substantive resignation went to the Secretary of Defense and a courtesy formal resignation to the President.

HESS: But the letter that you sent to Secretary Johnson, the one that you're looking at there now, had you first intended on sending a letter of that nature to the President, explicitly setting out why you were resigning?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: In your letter to Secretary Johnson, you do specifically state, you set out quite clearly why you are resigning.

One question about Admiral Denfeld. We have mentioned him, and as you know, Admiral Denfeld died the day after we held our first interview. What do you recall about Admiral Denfeld and his support for carriers in the Navy?

SULLIVAN: He supported it.

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HESS: Just one thing on that. I want to read a little bit that was in Admiral Denfeld's obituary in the *Evening Star* on March 30, 1972:

The United States is essentially an island. It can only be attacked from overseas. The best place to stop an attack is overseas. The best practicable method of stopping an attack nearer its starting point than its target is the modern Navy's fast aircraft task force.

While we're discussing Admiral Denfeld, shortly after you left he also ran into some difficulties, correct, the following summer?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: Do you recall that?

SULLIVAN: Yes. The then Secretary of the Navy [Francis P.] Matthews, disliked some testimony he gave on the Hill, and asked the President to relieve Denfeld, which he did. I have always regretted that Denfeld didn't resign at the same time and for the same reason that I did. I think it would have increased the impact of my resignation.

HESS: Did you discuss that with him at the time?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I did.

HESS: What were his views?

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SULLIVAN: He thought he would help the Navy better by staying.

HESS: One other thing on Mr. Louis Johnson: Dean Acheson in his book, *Present at the Creation*, states that Mr. Johnson's actions were heavily influenced by the early stages of the brain tumor that was discovered later. Would you agree with that?

SULLIVAN: There were many things that Louie Johnson did that were very difficult to explain, and perhaps there may be something to Dean Acheson's explanation.

HESS: Can you give me an illustration, something he did that was difficult to explain, other than the carrier matter that we have discussed?

SULLIVAN: No, Secretary Johnson is dead and I prefer not to go into that.

HESS: All right. When Mr. Johnson came in as Secretary of Defense he brought several people with him. Just what do you recall about those people, and what were their duties? Stephen Early was Under Secretary of Defense.

SULLIVAN: Steve Early was a great man. I can't recall the others around him, except there was a fellow named

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Paul Griffith who had also been National Commander of the Legion.

HESS: Yes, Paul Griffith came in and he was Assistant to the Secretary, and also Colonel Louis Renfrow held that title.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: About Mr. Early, now Mr. Early had been, of course, Press Secretary to President Roosevelt through most of the Roosevelt administration.

SULLIVAN: That's correct.

HESS: Just what seemed to be his principal duties in the Pentagon?

SULLIVAN: Do you mean Early?

HESS: Yes, Steve Early.

SULLIVAN: I think Steve was pretty largely used as liaison with Congress.

HESS: Do you recall anything about the duties of Paul Griffith and Colonel Louis Renfrow?

SULLIVAN: I think they took on the odd assignments.

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HESS: There were three gentlemen who served under Forrestal who were retained: Marx Leva, who was Special Assistant for Legal Affairs; Wilfred J. McNeil, Special Assistant for Financial Affairs, and John Ohly, Special Assistant for Planning and Inter-Governmental Affairs.

SULLIVAN: That's correct.

HESS: Did you have any dealings with those three men?

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes, yes.

HESS: Were they helpful? How would you characterize them?

SULLIVAN: Oh, I think the Assistant Secretary for Finance was one of the ablest men I've ever met in Government, Wilfred J. McNeil. He had done the same work for the Navy Department previously.

HESS: On the general subject of the budget for the various departments, since we have discussed the funding of the military just a little bit, Mr. Truman has the following on page 34 of the second volume of his *Memoirs*.

It was inevitable many pressures were brought to get me to approve larger appropriations. This was particularly true of the military. The military frequently brought pressure to force me to alter the budget which had been carefully worked out to achieve balance with the other needs of the government and our economy as a whole.

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If, for example, the three departments of the military establishment were allocated a total of nine billion dollars, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy would usually ask for an equal three billion no matter what their actual needs might be. Such an arbitrary distribution obviously did not make sense. I therefore insisted that each service justify its demands and prove why it was entitled to an equal division. The services were unable to do this and soon began to break away from the old practice that everything had to be divided into three equal parts. I compelled the three branches to be specific and exact about the requirements they considered essential. Every single item in the military budget had to be justified to me and to the Secretary of the Treasury.

All of them made excessive demands, but the Navy was the worst offender.

Do you think that the Navy was the worst offender in that matter?

SULLIVAN: Not while I was there. Does this relate to '49, '50, '51 and '52?

HESS: As far as I can tell, it's just a general statement. Do you think he may be mentioning times other than when you were there?

SULLIVAN: I would infer that he is.

HESS: Did you try to go along with what he wanted done there, and give him specific, itemized requirements that you thought were essential for the budget?

SULLIVAN: Of course. In fact, I can cite an exact instance.

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HESS: Fine.

SULLIVAN: In the fall of 1947, my petroleum people told me that it was likely that we were going to have a very severe winter in the Middle West and along the Atlantic seaboard. President Truman had ordered a ten percent cut against all budget items, and accordingly the Navy had lost thirty million dollars for the purchasing of petroleum products. I called in the heads of the big oil companies and they disputed the fact that there was any possibility of a shortage of oil in the Chicago area or on the northeast coast. My petroleum people were very sure there was going to be trouble, and I went to the President and put the question to him. He suggested that I call in the heads of the big oil companies, and I replied that I had already done that. I assured him that if he would restore the thirty million dollars taken out of our appropriation for petroleum products, I would top off every oil tank along the Atlantic seaboard; and if we did have a very bad winter, as our people were predicting, we would be able to mitigate the distress throughout that area.

By the middle of January, the following year, it was quite apparent that the Navy prediction had been correct; and I called in several of the New England

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governors, and my Under Secretary, John Kenney, worked out a contract with them whereby the Navy would lend the state agencies oil, which was to be returned in amount and kind by the middle of June. Of course, the Navy couldn't sell them that oil because if we did the proceeds would go into the general funds of the Treasury.

When the word got around that we were taking care of the New England states, the governors of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and South Carolina, all came in and executed similar contracts. This oil, of course, was used to heat hospitals and state institutions, and if we had not had that oil, it would have been a very rough winter indeed.

Incidentally, by the 15th of June, all but one state had returned the same amount and kind of oil, and the last one made good before the 1st of July.

HESS: All right, at the time of your resignation, Mr. Truman was asked at a press conference:

Mr. President, there seems to be considerable apprehension in the Navy over, one, losing all the Navy air to the Air Force and, two, transfer of all Marine Corps air activity to the Air Force. Can you straighten us out --

Then the President goes on to say:

I don't think there is any foundation in fact in either one of those -- what is it you call those things? -- the columnists do, when they

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prognosticate?

The reporter said:

Mr. President, that wasn't a columnist's prognostication, that was Secretary Sullivan's letter.

The President said:

I didn't read Secretary Sullivan's letter to the Secretary of Defense. I only read the letter he wrote to me, and I replied to that.

Did you think that there was a danger of the Navy losing its air activity to the Air Force, and the Marine Corps to probably the Army?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I think that's what Secretary Johnson planned to do.

HESS: Did he ever say anything about that to you, did you discuss that?

SULLIVAN: No, but he discussed it with others. I think he had informally allocated all the Navy and Marine flying personnel and all the aircraft, dividing it between the Navy and the Air Force, and abolishing Marine aviation as a trial balloon for abolishing the Marine Corps itself.

HESS: Did you hear of his ideas on those matters while you were still Secretary of the Navy? Was this something

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you heard about while you were still in office?

SULLIVAN: I read about this just before I wrote my letter of resignation.

HESS: Did you try to speak to him about those matters?

SULLIVAN: I had no opportunity to speak to him.

HESS: This took place in the period of time before you wrote your letter of resignation?

SULLIVAN: When I came back from Corpus Christi he was out of town.

HESS: What's your opinion of Mr. Truman's handling of the events at the time of your resignation?

SULLIVAN: Oh, he was especially considerate of me. As you noticed in your letter, he said, as to the date of my actual retirement, he would be glad to do that at my convenience.

HESS: As you say, he tried to persuade you to stay.

SULLIVAN: Yes, he did, for three days.

HESS: All right. You were replaced by Francis Matthews. In your opinion, why was Mr. Matthews selected as your

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replacement? What was in his background that would indicate that he would make a good Secretary of the Navy?

SULLIVAN: I have been told that Secretary Johnson phoned around to his old American Legion friends and specifically requested that they recommend a prominent Catholic to take my place. The inference of that, of course, was that he was planning to run for President and he didn't want to offend the Catholic voters.

HESS: Political reasons.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: The Republic of Korea was invaded, quite some time after you left, in June of 1950. Do you think our military and naval services should have been better prepared to meet the situation than they were? And if they were not prepared who was at fault?

SULLIVAN: You're never prepared for a surprise attack. I would point out, however, that if it hadn't been for the carriers we would have had even a more difficult time in Korea.

HESS: Before we leave Mr. Johnson, just what is your general evaluation of his handling of the position of Secretary of Defense?

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SULLIVAN: I think he centralized it too much, and expanded it too far and too fast.

HESS: All right. What is your opinion of the degree of Mr. Truman's involvement and understanding of the issues that arose within the armed services during his administration?

SULLIVAN: I think he understood them very clearly.

HESS: Could you give me an illustration, something that might help illustrate the degree of Mr. Truman's understanding?

SULLIVAN: Well, he followed things very, very closely indeed.

HESS: Didn't he support the cancellation of the carrier?

SULLIVAN: No, he was supporting an action that Johnson took. He had himself twice approved the building of that carrier, and I suppose he felt that within a month of Johnson's appointment he couldn't very well cross him on a very important action.

President Truman was a great student of the military and military history. I recall that when General Vandegrift announced to me that he was resigning as Commandant of the Marine Corps, the President asked me to name a

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successor, and I told him that in my opinion the choice was between General Clifton Cates and General Lemuel Shepherd, and he told me to take my pick. I advised him that he, as President, could not possibly appoint a Commandant of the Marine Corps he'd never met, and I suggested that I send over their two records, which I said were very identical, then bring the two men over and have him meet them and let him make the decision. The President agreed and I sent the records over about 4 o'clock one afternoon, and there were very voluminous records on each man.

The next morning, President Truman called me about half past nine and asked me to come over. He said that I was quite right in the fact that these two men had nearly identical records, and he had read every document in their records that night and early the next morning. That's an illustration of how closely he followed things.

In the event the appointment as Commandant went to General Cates, and President Truman, in announcing this in the presence of myself and both the candidates, told General Shepherd that if he was still President when the four years of Cates' term was up he would appoint Shepherd, and he did.

HESS: We discussed atomic submarines last time, but what were Mr. Truman's views on the subject of the value of

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atomic submarines? That we did not mention.

SULLIVAN: I think he was hopeful. None of us could be anything more than hopeful until it proved itself.

HESS: Did you discuss the matter with him?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: Speaking of the Department of the Navy and military matters, naval matters, how did Mr. Truman seek to strengthen his administrative control?

SULLIVAN: Through the three secretaries.

HESS: By his appointments.

SULLIVAN: Yes.

HESS: All right, on November 11, 1949, sometime after you left the Department of the Navy Mr. Truman spoke at the Mayflower Hotel at the luncheon for the National Conference of Christians and Jews. What do you recall about that function?

SULLIVAN: When I left the Navy, I was importuned to take on all kinds of assignments, and while talking with the President a few weeks after I had left the Navy, I told him that I was being urged to accept the national chairmanship

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of the National Conference for Christians and Jews, whereon President Truman immediately urged me to accept the appointment, stressing the fact that this organization had never had a Catholic president. In fact, he pressed me so hard that I finally made a deal with him that if I took it he would address the opening dinner, which I was to move from New York to Washington to take advantage of the greater publicity the organization would get here in Washington than it ever got in the New York newspapers.

He agreed to, and when I moved the dinner from New York to Washington, he accepted, and brought with him Mrs. Truman, most of the Cabinet, and the majority of the Supreme Court.

HESS: Do you recall Mr. Truman's involvement in the New Hampshire primary election in 1952?

SULLIVAN: I do.

HESS: What do you recall?

SULLIVAN: I recall he refused to announce that he was going to be a candidate for the Presidency, which gave Senator Estes Kefauver a great opportunity to impress the American people and the New Hampshire people with his determination

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to become a candidate, in contrast to Truman's refusal to agree to be a candidate.

Senator Kefauver and his most attractive wife, immediately went to New Hampshire in January of that year and stumped the state, seven days and seven nights a week. As a result of that, Kefauver beat the unannounced candidacy of President Truman by a very small majority.

HESS: That, I believe, was the only primary that Mr. Truman entered that year, or his name was on the ballot that year, if I remember correctly. Did you advise him to enter that primary?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I did.

HESS: Could you tell me about that, what arguments you may have used, and what his views were at the time you discussed this with him?

SULLIVAN: I thought that it was very important that he remain President for another four years, and I saw no other Democrat could be elected at that time. He never told me that he was going to become a candidate, and he never told me he was not going to become a candidate. I felt it was very important in the New Hampshire primary, the first to be held in the country, that his name be on

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the ballot. He neither approved or disapproved of the action I took in New Hampshire that year.

HESS: What did he say to you when you were discussing this matter, do you recall?

SULLIVAN: He was very non-committal.

HESS: It was later in the same month, I believe on March 29, when he made his announcement at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner at the National Guard Armory, that he was not going to run.

SULLIVAN: I was there; I heard the announcement.

HESS: What do you recall about that night?

SULLIVAN: Everybody was stunned. This was a very well-kept secret. Nobody had a clue.

HESS: When Mr. Truman removed himself, who did you think was the best man that the Democrats could put up after Mr. Truman had said that he did not want to run?

SULLIVAN: I was not hopeful that any candidate could win other than Mr. Truman.

HESS: Adlai Stevenson had been approached before that time by Mr. Truman, Mr. Truman had tried to get him to accept

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his assistance toward seeking the nomination.

SULLIVAN: That I did not know.

HESS: Of course, in the convention held in Chicago that year, Mr. Stevenson did receive the nomination.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: What was your opinion of Mr. Stevenson as a candidate?

SULLIVAN: I worked very hard for Mr. Stevenson. He had been an assistant to Secretary Knox and I had known him in that capacity. Until about half way through the campaign, I thought he had a chance, but in the latter half of that campaign, he demonstrated an indecisiveness, which was one of the worst attributes a President can have, and my ardor for him cooled, and I did not vote for his election four years later when he was again nominated.

HESS: Back to the matter of the New Hampshire primary. After Mr. Kefauver did draw more votes than Mr. Truman in New Hampshire, did you speak about that matter with President Truman?

SULLIVAN: Oh, yes, we did.

HESS: What did he have to say? Any particular reasons why he thought he was out-pollled by Kefauver, or perhaps ideas

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on what he should have done to prevent him from out-polling, any views that he may have on Kefauver's out-polling him in New Hampshire?

SULLIVAN: No, we didn't go into that. It was all over and done with.

HESS: He had nothing at all to say about New Hampshire?

SULLIVAN: No, there were one or two unfortunate remarks that were made while the primary was still being conducted in New Hampshire, that he had a very low opinion of presidential primary races anyway, which didn't help at all.

HESS: New Hampshire has always been proud of the fact that they have the first presidential primary.

SULLIVAN: That's correct.

HESS: Speaking as a citizen, as you are, of New Hampshire.

SULLIVAN: That's right. They also think all these references that New Hampshire being an untypical state are quite unfair due to the fact that two of the six counties have always been right on presidential elections throughout the century are New Hampshire counties.

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HESS: What are those counties, do you recall their names?

SULLIVAN: Strafford and Coos.

HESS: Frank McKinney was Chairman of the Democratic National Committee at that time. Do you recall what Mr. McKinney's views were on Mr. Truman running in New Hampshire that year?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't think he ever expressed them.

HESS: Of course, he was later replaced by Stephen A. Mitchell, who was Mr. Stevenson's choice.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: Just a general question: In a book that's been published this year by Mr. Richard Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism*, Mr. Freeland sets forth the theory that the United States Government was purposely trying to frighten the American people by invoking visions of Communist world conquest to try to develop support for our foreign policy and aid in Europe (this deals mainly with the time of the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan and things of that nature), and that the reasons why our Government wanted to restore Europe was only to restore our pre-war market for our products. In

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other words, if Europe failed, our markets failed, would dry up, and unemployment and depression would result. What's your opinion of that general line of thinking?

SULLIVAN: Well, I think that completely overlooks the most altruistic action any nation has ever taken. I think that the country wanted to save Europe for Europe's sake itself.

HESS: What do you see as President Truman's greatest domestic achievements?

SULLIVAN: On the domestic front he was very, very successful in avoiding labor trouble that appeared to be exceedingly dangerous. I refer specifically to the threatened railroad strike, which he handled in a masterful fashion.

HESS: When the Government took over the railroad.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

HESS: What do you see as his greatest achievement in the foreign field?

SULLIVAN: The Marshall plan, Greek-Turkish Military Aid, the decision to drop the bomb, the decision to fight in Korea.

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HESS: Were you in favor of dropping the bomb?

SULLIVAN: I knew nothing about it. However, they started to tell me about the atomic bomb when I was in the Navy, but it was all surrounded with such safeguards that I inquired if the knowledge of the atomic bomb, or whatever weapon it was, was essential to me in my performance of my duty as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air. When I was given a negative answer to that question, and I requested that I not be told any thing about this highly secret device.

HESS: Looking back, with the benefit of hindsight now, do you think that it was necessary that we drop the bomb?

SULLIVAN: I think that we could have starved Japan without dropping the bomb on the basis of what we've learned since the end of the war. We did not have that knowledge when the decision was made to drop the bomb, and the military estimates for the invasion of Japan were 500,000 casualties, killed and wounded.

HESS: We have discussed Mr. Truman's domestic achievements, what do you see as his failing?

SULLIVAN: None readily comes to mind.

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HESS: How would you rate Mr. Truman's administrative ability?

SULLIVAN: I think his administrative ability was most clearly shown by the way he backed up the men to whom he had assigned the responsibility of running the various departments.

HESS: Just how often did you meet with President Truman, or see President Truman during the time that you were with the Navy?

SULLIVAN: That would vary, sometimes two or three times a week, sometimes only once a month.

HESS: All right, looking back, what is your favorite memory of Mr. Truman? When you think about Mr. Truman and think about a favorite memory, what comes to mind?

SULLIVAN: The night of the dinner of the National Conference of Christians and Jews on November 11, at which I presided, we had place cards for everybody at the head table. I was notified that Cap [Julius A.] Krug, former Secretary of the Interior, was not coming, he having announced his resignation to the press, without sending a letter of resignation to President Truman, that day.

Steve Early brought along Mr. [Oscar L.] Chapman

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and informed me that Mr. Chapman was to succeed Secretary Krug. I then asked the President, since I had assigned Secretary Krug's seat to the new Secretary Chapman, if I should announce that the President was to appoint Secretary Chapman to take Secretary Krug's place the next day. After some thought, President Truman said, "No, John, I don't want this announced tonight. Secretary Krug is going to have long enough to regret the discourtesy he showed to me, and I don't want to rub it in by appointing a successor the same day."

HESS: All right, do you have anything else to add on Mr. Truman, or on your days in the Navy?

SULLIVAN: I think not.

HESS: Thank you very much, sir.

SULLIVAN: Right.

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APPENDIX

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26 April 1949

My dear Mr. Secretary:

On Saturday, April 23, without discussion with the Chief of Naval Operations, without consultation with the Secretary of the Navy, you directed the discontinuance of the construction of the USS UNITED STATES, the construction of which had twice been approved by the President.

This carrier has been the subject of intensive study in the Navy Department since it was first proposed early in 1945 by the late Admiral Marc A. Mitscher whose combat experience had convinced him of its necessity. In a hearing with the Director of the Budget on 16 December 1947, with the approval of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of the Bureau of Ships, I volunteered to surrender 307 million dollars which was the cost to complete the approved construction of other vessels, to insure that funds would be available for the USS UNITED STATES. Its construction was explicitly approved by the reports of the Armed Services Committees of the Senate and House on 2 June 1948 and 9 June 1948, respectively. In the Naval Appropriation Act for the fiscal year 1949 the appropriation for the first year of construction of the USS UNITED STATES was approved by the Congress. Again on 17 December 1948 in a conference with the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, with the approval of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of the Bureau of Ships, I abandoned construction of other vessels in the amount of 57 million dollars to insure the continuance of the carrier and other vessels. Additional funds for the continuing construction of this vessel in the fiscal year 1950 were included in the budget message which the President sent to the Congress on 3 January, 1949, and were included in the National Military Establishment Appropriation Bill passed by the House on 13 April 1949.

Professional Naval men, charged with the task of planning for a Navy adequate to the defense of America believe that the construction of the USS UNITED STATES is so indispensable to the continuing development of American sea power that they have twice sacrificed other substantial construction because of the carrier's highest naval priority.

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On Monday, April 18, while discussing a variety of subjects with you, the question of the continuance of work on the USS UNITED STATES was raised, and my opinion was asked. I started to give my opinion, but before I had talked more than a minute you advised me that you had another appointment and would discuss this matter with me at a later date. The following day I sent you a very brief memorandum touching on only one phase of the justification of this carrier. In this memorandum I referred to my desire to resume the discussions that had been interrupted the previous day.

I heard nothing about this again until Saturday, April 23rd, when in Corpus Christi, Texas I was advised by long distance telephone that you had sent me a memorandum directing the discontinuance of construction.

I am, of course, very deeply disturbed by your action which so far as I know represents the first attempt ever made in this country to prevent the development of a powerful weapon. The conviction that this will result in a renewed effort to abolish the Marine Corps and to transfer all Naval and Marine Aviation elsewhere adds to my anxiety.

However, even of greater significance is the unprecedented action on the part of a Secretary of Defense in so drastically and arbitrarily changing and restricting the operational plans of an Armed Service without consultation with that Service. The consequences of such a procedure are far-reaching and can be tragic.

In view of the foregoing I am sure you will agree with me that no useful purpose can now be served by my remaining as Secretary of the Navy. I have accordingly submitted my resignation to the President.

I deeply regret the circumstances that lead to my departure from the National Military Establishment at such an interesting and crucial period of its development.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ John L. Sullivan

Honorable Louis Johnson
The Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C.

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THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Washington

26 April 1949

My dear Mr. President:

It is with profound regret that I submit to you my resignation as Secretary of the Navy effective at the earliest date convenient to you.

It is almost four years since you called me back into Federal Service. For the three appointments you have conferred upon me and, even more, for the day to day consideration, kindness, and friendliness you have manifested toward me, I shall always be grateful.

I send you my very best wishes for your continuing good health and the success of your administration. More deeply than words can express, I regret the circumstances that prevent me from continuing in my present post to help you in your magnificent efforts.

Very sincerely yours,

/s/ John L. Sullivan

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

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