

Oral History Interview
with
MARX LEVA

Counsel to the fiscal director of the Navy, 1946; Special Asst. to the Secretary of the Navy, 1947; Special Asst. and Gen. Counsel to the Secretary of Defense, 1947-49; and Asst. Secretary of Defense, 1949-51.

Washington, D.C.
December 9, 1969 and June 12, 1970

By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: Mr. Leva, to begin would you tell me a little about your background?

LEVA: I was born in Selma, Alabama on April 4th, 1915. I was educated in the public schools of Selma, Alabama and I attended the University of Alabama from which I graduated in 1937. I graduated there in the school of commerce and business administration, and I then attended the

Harvard Law School from which I graduated in 1940. At Harvard I was note editor of the *Harvard Law Review* and after my graduation I was law clerk to Mr. Justice Hugo Black of the Supreme Court. I went from there to a position on the legal staff of the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply, and when the Division of Civilian Supply was transferred to what was then the Office of Production Management, I transferred with the Division and became Counsel for the Division of Civilian Supply. Later, just before

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Pearl Harbor, the General Counsel of the Office of Production Management, which by that time I think had been changed to the War Production Board, the General Counsel, Mr. John Lord O'Brian, made me counsel for the Automotive Branch of the War Production Board with the result that immediately after Pearl Harbor, I was sent to Detroit to assist in "converting the automotive industry to war production."

I found Detroit a somewhat frustrating experience and renewed an application I had previously filed for a commission in the Navy. I was commissioned in the Navy four or five months after Pearl Harbor and went on active duty in the Navy in the middle of 1942. I had my naval training as an ensign at Tower Hall, Northwestern University, Chicago, and went directly from there to sea duty with the amphibious force. I was originally navigating officer of a landing ship, LST, and subsequently became executive officer of the same landing ship, LST 386. Our ship participated in landing operations in Sicily, Salerno, Anzio and Normandy and after the Normandy operation participated in transporting ammunition and other supplies across the channel for a period of months and

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at that stage the ship was given to the British under lend-lease and the crew came home.

When I came home I was assigned in December of 1944 or January 1945, to the Bureau of Ships of the Navy Department. I served out the remainder of my time in uniform in the Bureau of Ships, and, in the course of that service, I met the Counsel to the Fiscal Director of the Navy, who asked me to take his position when he left, and I then became Counsel to the Fiscal Director of the Navy, who was Wilfred McNeil, in early 1946, I believe.

HESS: What were some of your duties in that position?

LEVA: It's hard to remember very exactly. My predecessor as Counsel to the Fiscal Director was Frank Lincoln, who at a much subsequent stage was Assistant Secretary of Defense and Comptroller. My impression is that Frank Lincoln had built up a rather wide scope of duties in the position of Counsel to the Fiscal Director. Many of the duties had nothing to do with legal duties as I would know them. As a result, after a very short period, I was given the double designation of Counsel to the Fiscal Director, and t also served as Deputy Fiscal Director of the Navy. I really served more as

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Deputy Fiscal Director and as McNeil's alter ego than as counsel. In the capacity of counsel, however, I was a member of the Office of the General Counsel of the Navy which was an office that Mr. [James V.] Forrestal had set up early in the war to handle procurement matters and I, therefore, came in contact with my legal hat with all of the Navy's civilian lawyers, and with my non-legal (I hope not my illegal), hat, with the various bureau chiefs because the chiefs of the various bureaus; the Bureau of Ships, Bureau of Ordnance and so on attended a meeting which Secretary Forrestal held, as best I can recall, once each week, and the Fiscal Director of the Navy, Mr. McNeil, attended that meeting also and he took to taking me with him and then when he was away I represented him at the meeting. So I was really functioning in two different circles; the legal and the naval-administrative.

I remember particularly, and I guess here we get into '46 because I don't remember the date exactly--when the atomic energy experiment was performed at Bikini Atoll, Mr. McNeil accompanied Mr. Forrestal to Bikini and I believe that the meetings in Mr. Forrestal's absence were conducted by Under Secretary [John L.]

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Sullivan and I represented McNeil, and then Forrestal and McNeil went on around the world which took longer in those days than it does now. So that I would say that my duties were quite a hodgepodge. They included the legal duty of advising the Fiscal Director on what was proper and what was not proper within the scope of his responsibilities and how to handle various matters of a fiscal and fiscal-administrative nature but they also went far outside the legal in many other spheres.

HESS: Before we get into our questions about Mr. Forrestal I would like to ask you a couple of questions about your war experiences. You mentioned the major landings, Sicily and Anzio and Normandy. Which of the landings did you find to be the roughest, the, to use a...

LEVA: Well, there's no question about which was the roughest for our ship. Salerno, which you didn't mention...

HESS: Which I didn't mention.

LEVA: ...was far rougher than any of the others. We had a relatively quiet landing in Sicily. We landed with the combat waves at a small town, Licata, on the American beaches.

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Our LST was fixed up in a very peculiar fashion for the Sicily landing. We had steel landing mat on the deck and we carried four Piper Cubs for artillery observation and they were to fly...

HESS: You were an aircraft carrier.

LEVA: We were an aircraft carrier at that point, and the Piper Cubs were to fly off and do artillery spotting and if they were lucky they could find a place to come down. As it happened, since the small boats were in first, the LCVs, and since the combat was--the combat landing went very well. The first highway inland was seized very early and all the Piper Cubs got down and all of them got down safely. I think all of the pilots were later given the Silver Star, not so much for what they ran into as for what they might have run into. Licata was--the Sicilian landing at Licata was in July of '43. We went to the Sicilian landing from Lake Bizerte which is where we were based in North Africa waiting for the landing. We had had a number of air raids before the landing because the Germans still had considerable air power available at that point in mid-forty-three. But Sicily, relatively speaking, was quieter than the landings that came later. We went

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back to Bizerte and we based on Lake Bizerte again for the landing at Salerno which was September of '43.

The announcement of the surrender of the Italian Government to the allies was made the night before the landing as we were approaching the Gulf of Salerno and I think it probably resulted in all of the crews thinking this would be a much easier landing. That may have had something to do with the difficulties at Salerno, but I think the principal difficulty at Salerno was the fact that the fighter planes that we then had could remain over the area, I think, only about ten minutes. They just didn't have the legs to fly there, fight, and go back to their bases in North Africa. And, as a result, we didn't have the air cover that we were to have in later affairs. Also the Germans apparently knew where we were coming and dumped a lot of floating mines into the Gulf of Salerno.

Also, in the Salerno operation, and in this respect it was unique in all those I participated in: The powers that be had decreed that the LSTs, which were 327 feet long, would land ahead of the small boats. So we were landing at night, in the dark, nine hundred

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miles away from our bases, and the mine sweepers were supposed to sweep to within two and a half miles of the shore so as not to give away our position by sweeping further towards land. We were making our beaching run and we were going along all right and we got about a mile and a quarter off the beach in the unswept area, our bow lookout called out there was a floating object and just about simultaneously, the floating object detonated and we blew a hole about forty-eight feet long in the side of the ship. We couldn't beach in that condition, or rather we couldn't unload equipment. We did try to beach, we went ahead and ran into the beach, partly because we didn't know whether we were going to sink or not and that seemed about the best place to go. But when we hit the beach, the water was between nine and ten feet deep at the bow and we couldn't unload anything as it developed.

When we then tried to check on the situation, one of our engines had blown out, the other seemed to be about to go out, the gyrocompass had blown up, but we could still limp off the

beach with the one engine, so we requested instructions from the flagship which told us to come out where she was in the middle of the

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gulf. It was just coming up dawn at that point and we did go back to where the flagship was and then unloaded our equipment into smaller craft, LCTs as a matter of fact. So, that was by all odds the roughest landing we were in. Anzio, relatively was quieter and Normandy was the quietest of all because by Normandy the Germans had no air power.

HESS: When did you first meet Mr. Forrestal?

LEVA: I can't pin that down accurately. I think that I first met Mr. Forrestal at one of the meetings that I have just described; that is, one of Mr. Forrestal's weekly meetings with the chiefs of the various naval bureaus at which I either accompanied Mr. McNeil or substituted for him in his absence, and I don't have any vivid recollection. But my recollection is that I did meet Mr. Forrestal for the first time at one of those meetings and then I just sort of drifted in and out of those meetings over a period of six or eight months and got to know him progressively better.

HESS: And when did you become his special assistant?

LEVA: After I had been working as Mr. McNeil's counsel and deputy for about a year I was asked by Mr. Forrestal's

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personal counsel, who was at that time John Connor, who had been a year ahead of me at Harvard Law School and who had been a good friend of mine since my law school days, I was asked by John Connor whom everyone refers to as Jack, if I could take his job as counsel to Mr. Forrestal so that he, Mr. Connor, would be free to leave the Navy and take a job that had been offered him as secretary and counsel of Merck and Company, the pharmaceutical house. And I told Jack Connor that that sounded interesting even though I had been already overdue in my intentions in practicing law, but I said, "You know it's one thing for you to offer me a job but does Mr. Forrestal want me in this?"

And he said, "Well, I wouldn't have taken it up with you if I hadn't already talked to Mr. Forrestal and this has his approval." So, I subsequently met with Mr. Forrestal; talked about the nature of the job, and I believe, became his counsel in about March of 1947.

HESS: What were your duties in that position?

LEVA: My principal duty when I took the job and my principal duty for the next six months was to work on

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the legislation that became the Unification Act. Jack Connor had begun working with Mr. Forrestal and with opposite numbers at the White House and in the War Department as it then was, and I was to continue that process working with various people.

Shortly before that time Mr. Forrestal had named Mr. Ferdinand Eberstadt, a Princeton classmate, a contemporary of Mr. Forrestal's and one of his closest friends, to make a study of the unification of the armed services. Mr. Eberstadt had completed a report which had been given to Mr. Forrestal and which had also been filed with the Armed Services Committees of the House and the Senate. President Truman was actively espousing a more complete integration of the War and Navy Departments than Mr. Eberstadt, Mr. Forrestal and the Navy favored, and I suppose the task was a dual one to work on something feasible and to hold off something too extreme to be workable in the opinion of those for whom I was working.

Now, I also had the routine duties of serving as counsel to the Secretary of the Navy which meant substantially that every paper that crossed his desk crossed mine first and that I had various comments on

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a lot of things including an awful lot of things that I didn't know very much about. But the major job at that time, perhaps clouded by the mist of twenty years, was to work on the Unification Act.

HESS: What was Mr. Forrestal's view of the unification?

LEVA: I never really thought that there was a Forrestal view as separate from a Navy view at that time. There had been a study conducted during the latter part of World War II in which some of the admirals in the Pacific had gone along with the Army's view for a really unified or integrated, or monolithic type of service. The official position of the Navy at Washington was for something less than that. I always felt that the official position of the Navy was for something less than that and the true position of the Navy was against the whole enterprise. And I suppose you might say that Forrestal's was an in between position; how to pull the reluctant naval establishment into that which the Commander in Chief wanted without undue sacrifice in the autonomy of the naval service in the process.

HESS: Why did the Navy have the opinion that they did?

LEVA: Oh. I don't know why and we can't really say or speak of the Navy having the opinion because there were

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all kinds and degrees and graduations of Navy opinion. I would assume that a lot of the people, subconsciously or otherwise, felt that their own opportunities for advancement were greater in a service of their own and the great bugaboo was one uniform and really the elimination of the expertise of the various departments.

So, I don't know, I think there was a certain element of selfishness and I think there was also a certain element of belief that in those nations which had really gone too far in putting the whole ball of wax together, naval aviation had suffered. They frequently cited the British experience before World War II and stated the unique contribution which they felt that the Navy could make, which they felt would be lost or at least reduced under this type of setup. They particularly feared the Air Force and its belief that everything could be done with air power alone. This goes way back to the Billy Mitchell days. It goes back before my time.

HESS: What was your view on the advisability of unification of the armed forces?

LEVA: I don't think I really had a view. I was a technician, a mechanic, and I was working to achieve a modus vivendi.

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I think we came up with a modus vivendi. Some of the things that we ended up with I would not have written just the way they were written, if only because I feared that they wouldn't work.

I think Forrestal's views, which I think was a sound view in retrospect, was that you started out with a slight degree of control at the center and perhaps you had an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process. I think it was a sound view in the abstract, but I think it was a factor in bringing about his death, ultimately, through trying to run an unworkable mechanism while waiting for the next step and you can always overgeneralize about those things but he certainly had to work an unconscionable amount of time, in part because of the Frankenstein monster that he and I had helped to create, I guess.

HESS: What do you recall about his support of the National Military Establishment as opposed to a Department of Defense?

LEVA: The original concept of the Eberstadt report did not go as far as the 1947 act. The 1947 act created the National Military Establishment with the Secretary of Defense at the head of it but it did not create a

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Department of Defense. Forrestal came to feel that that was too loose a structure and in his testimony before the first Hoover Commission, and in his testimony before the Congress in 1949, shortly before he left office, he recommended, and strongly supported, a Department of Defense.

I think he would have felt, even in retrospect, that you probably had to go through the National Military Establishment phase in order to get to the Department of Defense phase. And with all its pain and trauma it was better to do it that way than to do it all at one fell swoop and have all of the internal grumbling that that would have generated.

His testimony, I think, before the Senate Armed Services Committee in either late '48 or early '49 was a very frank avowal that the 1947 legislation did not go far enough and that it needed strengthening in several respects including the substitution of the Department of Defense for the National Military Establishment, together with the creation of the position of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in lieu of chiefs of each service with no chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I think that was probably the most glaring omission of all.

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By the way, that omission didn't make so much difference in the early days in '47 when Admiral [William D.] Leahy was still at the White House with President Truman because you had de facto, but not de jure, a chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Once Admiral Leahy retired, and I don't remember the date, you had, I believe, at the outset General Eisenhower as Chief of Staff of the Army, General "Toohy" [Carl] Spaatz as Chief of Staff of the new newly created Air Force, and Admiral [Louis E.] Denfeld, I believe, as Chief of Naval Operations. You just had the three of those and three independent people reporting to the Secretary of Defense as three independent bodies of opinion to choose from and no chairman to pull it together. That was one of the great defects I think.

Now that was, in turn, largely remedied at that time by the fact that General Gruenther, Alfred Gruenther, was then a two star general and director of the Joint Staff and, as he is, was, always will be, one of the most brilliant officers of the armed services. Even though he was junior to all of the three Chiefs, he was able to pull it together for Forrestal and really rendered yeoman services in that regard.

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But it isn't the same as having, as we had later, General Omar Bradley as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, speaking with authority and having the President and the Secretary of Defense having available to them one prime source of military advice, even though that prime source may say, "Now, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force feels very strongly that what I'm telling you is wrong," but at least you have one person to whom you can talk.

HESS: Why, in your opinion, in 1947 if Mr. Forrestal was opposed to unification, was he appointed to be the first Secretary of Defense?

LEVA: Well, I don't think I said he was opposed to unification in the first place. I said he was opposed...

HESS: That may have been something that I read into it.

LEVA: No. I said he was opposed to too rigid a degree of integration which I am not using in a black-white context. I think he was in favor...

HESS: The 1947 meaning of the word.

LEVA: He was in favor of unification but he was in favor of unification on his terms. As to why he was appointed Secretary of Defense, I can only give you my own best recollection, which may be quite wrong. My recollection

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of the events is along these lines: Robert Patterson was Secretary of War; he was a close friend of Secretary Forrestal. One reason that it was possible to work out an agreement which was acceptable to President Truman and the War Department, and the Navy Department, and go to the Hill with it, was the close friendship that existed between Patterson and Forrestal. I was working in this area, and to the best of my recollection, I was working with General [Lauris] Norstad representing, interestingly enough, not the Air Force but the Army. He was General Eisenhower's representative and also I suppose representing, in a sense, the Air Force though it was then the Air Corps within the Army; and Admiral Forrest Sherman representing the Navy on the uniformed level, and I was working with them and I was saying that this group did work out the details of the compromise and of the legislation.

It was certainly my understanding both from the people in that group and--you might at some point want to talk with General Norstad; Admiral Sherman is dead--that Robert Patterson was supposed to be the first Secretary of Defense and that this was certainly President Truman's plan and certainly Secretary Forrestal's

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plan, because I was supposed to practice law and I raised this issue several times with Secretary Forrestal and he said, "Let's just get this legislation through the Congress because I'm leaving and you can leave when I leave, but don't leave me in the middle."

So, we are now talking about the summer of 1947, or the spring of '47 since I say I think I started working on this in March of '47. This law firm of which I am a partner, by the way, was started in 1946 and I was supposed to have come with them at the outset, so I was continuously trying, you see. They were friends of mine from the War Production Board days and we were going to start a firm as soon as the war was over and so they ultimately started in '46, and as it developed, I didn't get to join until '51. But I know that Forrestal said he expected to be out, and I am sure that my understanding of that was that Patterson was going to be the Secretary of Defense. The legislation was enacted and I haven't looked back at any of the records as to the speculation in the press at the time, but my own recollection is that Judge Patterson, who had been a judge of the U.S. District Court in New York, was slated to be Secretary of Defense, but Mrs.

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Patterson felt that Judge Patterson had expended most of his strength and all of his money and he ought to get back to practicing law. And so when President Truman offered him the job he declined "with thanks."

And so since this was putting the War and Navy Departments together--I suppose the politics of the situation dictated that if you didn't get the one Secretary you got the other--and, in addition, Forrestal was tremendously popular at the time, both in the nation and in the Congress. And I think that this all indicated that he should be the appointee and Mr. Truman offered him the appointment and I think, however reluctantly, he accepted it. I have a vague recollection of talking to him at that time, and I said again that I had to get out and he said, "Well, look, I've taken this. I have a clear understanding with the President and I only have to serve one year, and I want you to serve with me for one year." And so I agreed to serve with him for one year and that was what happened. He ultimately served eighteen months before his health broke and by that time he had asked me before he left to help his successor with the transition. I'm jumping way ahead. His successor

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transitioned in and out fairly fast and we were in the Korean war and one thing led to another. In any event, it was five years before I got out.

HESS: One question on the legislation setting up the unification of the armed forces. Who worked with you on the task of working on that legislation, the development of that legislation?

LEVA: I really can't remember. I'm terribly sorry. I worked at the White House, when I worked there at all, with Clark Clifford, I think to a lesser degree at that time with Charlie Murphy. I have the sort of impression that at the beginning of the period--I may have my dates wrong--Clark was still in uniform and originally came out to see us as a captain in the Navy. He was working for Admiral Leahy at the time and for the President. As I say, Norstad and the Air Force really represented General Eisenhower for the Army when there was something to be compromised. When I had to take it back to be checked out at the Navy, Admiral Sherman was my first port of call. I am sure that there must have been dozens of people but I just really don't recall.

HESS: Just how is legislation of such major importance developed? What are the steps? What are the procedures?

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LEVA: Well, let me put it this way without any independent recollection: Legislation of major significance can either come up from the bottom or down from the top. Let me take two illustrations that I have worked on because I think they illustrate the process. I am now skipping forward a year or so. One of the things that troubled Mr. Forrestal in particular, was the difference in the standards of justice, the severity of the sentences meted out by the Army on the one hand and the Navy on the other. One of the first groups I met when I was his counsel at Navy was a committee which he had created dealing with major military justice cases during World War II. He wanted every case reviewed.

There was a Professor Arthur Keefe from Cornell who was the chairman of that and a lawyer from New York by the name of [Felix] Larkin who was a vice chairman and I went over with

them, all of these cases because whether it came from Forrestal's service as a naval aviator in World War I or what, I don't know, but he had a great interest, for a non-lawyer, he had a great interest in military justice. Maybe Patterson had the same in the War Department, I don't know. But

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after Forrestal became Secretary of Defense he talked with me about the fact that we have all of these separate systems of justice. The Marine Corps has a system, the Navy has a system, the Army. We've got to have a uniform system. Who do we know that could really work on this? I don't recall the exact process and I'm not really answering your question very directly, but I may answer it indirectly. I said I had a professor in law school who, I understand, was a stormy petrel of Army military justice in World War I, that he really tried to do then for the Army what you have been trying to do for the Navy. And he said, "Gee, does he still have enough firepower, you know."

I said, "I think he does, haven't seen him, let me try."

So I phoned Harvard Law School and talked to Professor Edmund Morgan, Edmund Morris Morgan, one of the great figures in American law. And I told him what Secretary Forrestal wanted to do, and said that in reviewing various names Secretary Forrestal had learned of his outstanding role in World War I and da da da and would he come down. Well, he was very much flattered; he came down. Forrestal was much

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taken with him and he asked him to take on the task of reviewing the systems of military justice of all the services and creating the uniform code of military justice.

In the meantime I had hired as my number two lawyer, Associate General Counsel, Felix Larkin, who had been the number two man in the Navy military justice study. So we had Morgan who had done the Army twenty years before; Larkin had just done the Navy, so we gave them the job. And then we designated an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force; it happened to be Gene [Eugene M.] Zuckert who was later Secretary, and Assistant Secretary of the Navy John Kenney, and Assistant Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray. And they were to pull together their services.

Anyway, this was legislation funneling up from the bottom. We created this. There weren't any politics and I mean this is just how do you create a better system. We devised a system over a period of many months with much blood, sweat and tears.

We went before the Congress; we got it before the Senate and the House. We did something I'd never seen done before, we got permission for Felix Larkin

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to operate on the floor of the Senate so that he could help answer questions from Senators; highly technical, you know. And he did a magnificent job and I think with all its defects--and like

anything else it needs improvement now twenty years later--but with all its defects that was an example of legislation to meet a need which came up in an orderly fashion coordinating it among the services by bringing in the assistant secretaries and military advisers.

Now, the antithesis of this is the unification act. That started out with an edict from Mr. Truman that he wanted it done. So, I'm trying to answer your question, how does legislation get handled?

Mr. Truman, from his field artillery days on forward had thought that this was a lot of nonsense and a bunch of blithering idiots were screwing up the works, if your stenotypist will forgive me. And he was quite right, they were. Therefore he laid down certain edicts, and I haven't looked back to see on what date he sent over a memo saying I want you, Forrestal, to get together with you, Patterson, I don't give a damn how you do it, but do it. But I know there were documents and I know there were oral discussions.

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But this was the opposite of the process I've just described. Mr. Truman wanted the armed forces put together. The Navy was dragging its feet, the Army was very enthusiastically endorsing it. General Collins, who I've omitted earlier, was a very ardent--one of my very good friends--was a very ardent proponent. The Collins plan, named for Joe Collins, "Lightning Joe," the hero of Cherbourg. Well, he was trying to get this put together on a lightning basis but it couldn't be put together on that basis--you could take Cherbourg easier. Whether or not Truman deliberately followed a tactic of shock treatment of saying, "I want one Secretary of Defense; he's going to be the boss of the whole thing. I want one Chief of Staff and he's going to be the boss of the whole thing, I want you to work towards a common uniform, etc." I don't know. He gave them impossible goals, in a sense, which forced them to compromise on the possible.

So this legislation came down from the top. And then there were a lot of negotiations based on "Can you live with this," and "Can you live with that." There were always residual problems. I'm sure that there are plenty of residual problems now.

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I remember the day that Forrestal was sworn in. I think the statute was passed in July '47, finally, that it provided that it should take effect sixty days after it was passed or when the first Secretary of Defense shall have qualified, which we worked out to coincide with something like the middle of September, or the latter part of September '47. Forrestal had a meeting of all the secretaries and all the Chiefs of Staff immediately after he was sworn in, and I was there. I had obtained Patterson's special assistant, John Ohly, whose name I have mentioned to you before, to participate because I didn't like the excessively Navy flavor, because the Secretary of Defense under the legislation had no Under Secretary and no Assistant Secretary. But he had three Special Assistants. Capital "S," capital "A." In the Government hierarchy that's more than if you have little "s", little "a".

He had three Special Assistants really in lieu of assistant secretaries. And those three were Jack Ohly, Wilfred McNeil and Marx Leva. And Jack Ohly was serving as the secretary and the

recording secretary for this first meeting of what was then called the Armed Forces Policy Council--or the War Council actually--under the

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1947 act. We had a very extensive agenda.

If you don't have that agenda you ought to get it somewhere from the records for your files, that agenda.

But Forrestal raised with General Eisenhower--the only thing I remember about the meeting he said, "Ike, are you sure that you really want to transfer tactical aviation to the Air Force?"

You know that was really like waving a red flag to a bull. Stuart Symington who was the Secretary of the Air Force said, "I'm not going to sit here and talk about anything like that. We've already made those deals." And so the subject was dropped for the time being; Forrestal kept coming back to it.

But there were hot issues and this is in part the answer to your question about the compromise that involved leaving naval aviation with the Navy but transferring ultimately transport, the naval air transport command, or the naval air transport service, to what we ultimately set up as the military air transport command, of which General Lawrence Kuter was the first head. It was a whole series, a rolling series of compromises I suppose. But that's how

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that legislation evolved and more importantly how the implementation of the legislation evolved; which is something that you can't really separate from legislation itself.

HESS: During the period of time when you were Special Assistant and General Counsel to the Secretary of Defense which we have been discussing, '47 to '49, what other major duties or events come to mind?

LEVA: I sponsored a program of pulling together a unified legislative program for all of the armed forces. At the outset of unification it seemed to me that there were two things that you had to pull together very quickly: One was the unified budget and the other was the unified legislative program.

Each service had been going to the Hill with its own legislative program, each service had been going with its own budget. McNeil's job as one of the three Special Assistants was to deal with the budget. My job, one of my jobs, was to deal with the legislation.

So. I guess it was too late in September '47 to do anything about that session of Congress but before the session that began in January of '48 we had each service submit proposed legislative programs in

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a number of categories. The urgent ones, the necessary ones, the ones it would be nice to have if they could get, and then we had a series of meetings much like those I've described for the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and we put the results together in one black folder--a unified legislative program for the Department of Defense--and we tried to go to Capitol Hill in an orderly, instead of a disorderly fashion. This was one of my major projects at that particular time.

HESS: How did that work out?

LEVA: I think it worked out extremely well. We tried to do it not in the framework of our office going forward with it. For example: We worked on a unified program but once it was prepared, and this is an approved item and this is a disapproved item, the services were designated to carry it out.

The Air Force was then very strongly urging a long-range guided missile proving ground which turned out to be Cape Kennedy, then Cape Canaveral, to the south. And we got the authorizing legislation through Congress I think in '48 for what became that entire complex. But once it was an approved part of the program, the Air Force was given the job of testifying

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for it on the Hill. We tried at that time very hard to avoid over-centralization in the office of the Secretary of Defense.

I mentioned what McNeil did, I mentioned what I did, I should also mention that Ohly was Forrestal's special assistant for the National Security Council, for the National Security Resources Board, for Civil Defense planning which was then very active, for Universal Military Training which was then--it was sort of a catchall job but in many respects the most important of the three, especially in the view of its National Security Council implications.

HESS: During the time that you were working on congressional liaison and developing a program to take to the Hill, would you coordinate that with anyone on the White House staff...coordinate your efforts?

LEVA: Yes. I really think I coordinated it with the Bureau of the Budget for the White House, rather than with the White House staff. My impression at the earliest stage is that I talked to Frank Pace, or Jim Webb, whoever was the Director of the Budget at the time, and said, "Who on your staff should I talk to for you and for the White House," and that I did go

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forward with the Bureau of the Budget as an arm of the White House.

HESS: Do you recall who they advised that you work with?

LEVA: I think I worked with a large number. I really can't recall who, I don't.

HESS: In Mr. Truman's letter accepting your resignation in April 1951, this is one of the points that he mentioned and according to the *New York Times* he praised you for having developed the single legislative program.

LEVA: Well, we put an awful lot of effort into it and I would say this had both affirmative and negative implications. Affirmatively our chances of getting through the legislation we needed were better if we had a specific program. Negatively, the chances of keeping the Marine Corps from lobbying through their bill which was not approved, or the Corps of Engineers, though you can never really stop that, from lobbying through their bill. It was better if we had a program and could say, "This was not part of it," so I think that the President did feel that this was a step forward.

HESS: Did any one particular service--which particular service gave you the most trouble and did not want to go along with the unification program would you say?

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LEVA: I would say really two services: The Air Force and the Navy. The Army, at the outset, made the strongest effort to cooperate. It had been the strongest proponent after all of having unification. They made the strongest effort to subordinate their own little disagreements. The Navy had been against this form and wanted to prove that they were right. The Air Force was constantly lobbying for more money for the seventy wing air force, etc. and they wanted more money than the President wanted them to have; more money than the Secretary of Defense wanted them to have. So, their efforts were getting out of channels on the fiscal front, and the Navy's, by and large, was getting out of channels on practically every front. The Army was the best.

HESS: How did you handle that when they would not go along?

LEVA: I wouldn't say that we did handle it. We tried to handle it. We tried to handle that. I'll give you one anecdote, which, according to my best recollection is true, and I think that it will show you what I have in mind.

Mr. Forrestal testified before some Senate

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committee on something when he was Secretary of Defense and he repeated an old Navy cliché when they asked him about the future of naval aviation and the future of the aircraft carrier. He said something about, after all two thirds of the earth's surface is covered with water. And when I got back to my office--I think it's factual, it may be three fourths, maybe two thirds, we won't quarrel about that--anyway I got back to the Pentagon and I had a squawk box on my desk which, I guess unfortunately, was connected with all of the Secretaries and it was practically bouncing off the table. Stuart Symington who was the Secretary of the Air Force was calling and

he said, "Marx, I've just heard that Jim said a terrible thing about the Air Force on the Hill today."

I said, "You know, I was with him, I didn't hear him say anything about the Air Force."

"Well, Toohy Spaatz is sitting here with me and he says it was really bad."

I said, "Well, may I come up and see you?" They were right on the floor above us and one or two corridors down. So, I came up and Stuart was blowing his top, and Toohy was blowing his top, and said, "Forrestal:had said that two thirds of the earth's

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surface is covered with water and you know as well as I do that's just the Navy's way of saying that the Air Force is no good."

"I did not so understand it, but maybe I'm just dumb. I didn't know that's the way the Navy says these things." I said, "Now, after all, I was on an LST, you know I wasn't on an aircraft carrier, let me see what I can do about it."

I assume that you're familiar with the great technique of editing testimony because it isn't really said this way, you edit this and I edit that.

All right, I went down and told Mr. Forrestal and I said, you know, "Tempest in a teapot. They say you really insulted them. This time you've really done it. You really insulted the Air Force."

Anyway after about twenty minutes now whether this was my brainstorm or Forrestal's I don't know. I rang Stuart, I said, "Stuart, may I come up? I think I can work the thing out." So. I came up and I said, "I've talked it over with Mr. Forrestal, he really did not mean (this is how you had to walk on eggs in those days), he really did not mean to offend the Air Force. I can understand the sensitivities

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in view of all of the contests that's going on and so on, but I have obtained Mr. Forrestal's permission to edit his testimony, and so as edited it will read, after it says "two thirds of the earth's surface..." it will read, 'but above all the water and above all the land is the air.'"

He says, "That's marvelous," and he pressed his button and said, "Toohy, Marx has just solved our problem."

Well, I think that's a fair illustration both of what my job was and of what the problems were.

HESS: And the sensitivity.

LEVA: Yes. Terrible sensitivities.. Really terrible sensitivities.

HESS: And you mentioned when we spoke last week about some conversations between Mr. Forrestal and Mr. Clifford concerning...

LEVA: Yes, and I said I would try to find that and I have not found it. But I mean--I have it, it was--that was concerning the Greek-Turkish aid program and I think that was in the spring of '47. That was while Forrestal was still at the Navy.

Well, I'll find that and send it to you. The

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essence of that particular one was that Clifford came out and he and Forrestal were going to summarize the alternatives facing the country. It was a very global proposition for the President, and I was sort of the recording secretary of this one and I did write it up and then Forrestal was going to send it to Truman. This was just on the eve of the Greek-Turkish program, you know, this is whether to go or whether not to go, and it's an interesting document.

HESS: Was this concerning our position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union?

LEVA: Yes. You may have seen this one. I don't know, you may have it. But anyway, the only reason for recalling it was when Forrestal was about to send it he said, "You send it to Clark so that it takes the form of a memo from you to Clark," for this reason: The military, or the civilian heads of the military, are very happily saying the military doesn't make foreign policy and the military is the instrument of foreign policy and you know, you just tell us to take Fort Ticonderoga and we take Fort Ticonderoga. We don't bother to think whether it's in Canada or the United States. This is the theory, well actually the

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truth is far away from this.

But anyhow, regardless of who is the Secretary of Defense, I think, whether it's Laird, Marshall, Forrestal, Clifford, the military can't stay out of foreign policy, and doesn't. But anyway it occurred to Forrestal and it occurred to me that he shouldn't be--I guess Dean Acheson was Secretary of State, or George Marshall, I've forgotten which, Marshall I guess.

HESS: George Marshall, at this time.

LEVA: That he shouldn't be sending a memo to Truman saying you should do thus and thus vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, which is what the memo really came down to. So, it took the form of a memo from me to Clifford but it was actually intended the other way, This was just a little delicacy at the last moment.

HESS: Do you know if Mr. Clifford may have been having similar conversations with people in the State Department?

LEVA: I would imagine that he was having them with State, Treasury, that he was really--while perhaps as I said to you last time, operating with initiative on his own, he may not really have been, but he may have been operating for Mr. Truman in a form where he could be

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disavowed if he created any problems for Mr. Truman.

HESS: While Mr. Clifford's name has been raised, let's discuss the Special Counsels to the President for just a moment, and of course, Mr. Clifford left in 1950 and was replaced by Charles Murphy. Did the two gentlemen operate in any noticeably different manner?

LEVA: Well, I think, and it may again be my defective recollection, but I think that Clifford was much more of an innovator, a freewheeler, and an operator on his own, whereas Charles Murphy was much more of what I thought I was for the Secretary of Defense, a carrier-out of orders, and a technician. Now this may be unfair to Charlie Murphy or unfair to Clifford. But this was the impression, or at least it's the impression that I carry now.

HESS: Did Clifford seem to have the authority, or was it just the way that he handled the office. In other words do you think that Clifford was really given more leeway by the President than Charles Murphy was?

LEVA: That one's hard for me to appraise. Knowing both Clark Clifford and Charles Murphy so well, I just think that Clark Clifford exudes authority in any given situation and Charles Murphy in his quiet way may have it,

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but he doesn't tell you about it. So. I think it's just the impression that I have of the two. I admire both of them. I think I really admire them equally in quite different categories but I really think...Clark is much more the extrovert and Charlie is much more the introvert. I guess that's what I'm really saying, and I don't know whether that goes to the substance of what they really do at all.

HESS: What do you recall about the unfortunate mental breakdown that overtook Mr. Forrestal?

LEVA: Well, I may have been in the position of not being able to see the forest for the trees because I was seeing him six, eight, ten, twelve times a day and both in and out of the office. A lot of his friends have said since his death, "Oh, we saw it coming," and, "We knew this and we knew that." The only thing that I knew was that he was terribly tired, terribly overworked, spending frequently literally sixteen hours and eighteen hours a day trying to administer an impossible mechanism, worrying about the fact that a lot of it was of his own creation. I knew that he was tired, I begged him to take time off. I'm sure that others begged him to take time off.

I tried to arrange, and on one occasion did arrange,

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a fishing trip for him with his friend Ferdinand Eberstadt, which he cancelled, he didn't take it. I tried to tell him he ought to go south, go somewhere, and rest. I did realize that. But I did not--I had no background with mental illness, I had no knowledge of how it manifested itself and I did not equate exhaustion and mental illness. I just thought he was terribly tired and he ought to take time off.

I even came up with what I thought was a very ingenious device because he told me he didn't have any under secretary; he didn't have any assistant secretaries, he couldn't leave. And I even gave him a legal opinion (I hope not written because it was not very valid), in which I said that, I think I told him this: That because the 1947 unification act didn't create an under secretary or any assistant secretaries, but did have a number of presidential appointees in the Pentagon, it would be quite all right for him to designate any one of the three secretaries as the acting Secretary of Defense in his absence because they were the next level of presidential appointees. And I said, "If you feel that Secretary Symington cannot be objective on a Navy matter and Secretary Sullivan cannot be objective on an Air Force

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matter, then you have Royall as a possible man, since the Army is less partisan, or if you feel that it would be an insult to one of the secretaries to have one of the others and what you want is a caretaker for a couple of weeks, you can appoint a fellow like Gordon Gray, who was my specific recommendation, who is the Assistant Secretary of the Army, or perhaps then Under Secretary" And I said, "Nobody could be insulted, everybody respects him and he is a presidential appointee. I'm sure Mr. Truman would approve, and you could just let him run the department administratively, and we can always get you on the phone when we need to," which I thought was a rather ingenious solution, but nothing came of it.

That is a long answer to your question, or a long non-answer, I did not know what was happening. Now my observation of what did happen is as follows: Louis Johnson, who I had not met before he was sworn in, was to have been sworn in on March the 31st of 1949. Forrestal apparently just thought he couldn't hold on any longer, I didn't realize that until later, and asked that this ceremony be moved up to March the 28th. It was moved up to March 28th and while Forrestal was

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terribly tired, it was--he spoke briefly but well. The ceremony went off fine.

I believe that either Forrestal went to an office that had been set aside for him afterwards, or he went home. In any event, we had an appointment on the Hill the next day, March 29th before the House Armed Services Committee because Chairman Vinson had said to me, "Be sure to have Mr. Forrestal there." They wanted to take note of his outstanding service, etc. So I arranged that Mr. Forrestal would be there. He came to the Pentagon.

I rode up to the Hill with him. That was the day after Johnson was sworn in, and we appeared before the House Armed Services Committee and Forrestal was sort of overwhelmed by the compliments of Carl Vinson and the ranking Republican member, Dewey Short, from the great state of Missouri. And he was a little teary eyed, I think, but he responded very beautifully and said that anything that he had been able to accomplish was because the Secretaries of Army and Navy and Air Force had been working so closely with him, etc. He made a, you know, good routine response. My further recollection at that time is that Stuart Symington said

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to me, "Marx, old fellow, would you mind if I rode back to the Pentagon with Jim; there's something I want to talk to him about." I don't know what it was.

I said, "Sure."

So, I rode back with Royall because Forrestal and I had driven over together. When I got back to the Pentagon I went back to my office. Forrestal had been given an office down from the Secretary of Defense a little, next door to mine. So I stuck my head in--it was next door to my office--and he was sitting there just like this with his hat on his head, just gazing. And I went in and I said, "Mr. Secretary, is there anything I can do for you?"

He was almost in a coma really. That was when I first knew and that was when I first got scared. So I said, "Do you feel faint?" I don't remember what I said.

He said, "No, no, I want to go home."

So, he got up and headed for the door and I said, "Where are you going?"

He said, "I'm going for my car." Well, he didn't have a car.

So, I ran like hell. I remember whose car I got;

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I got Dr. Vannevar Bush's driver, who was then head of the Research and Development Board, and I said, "Take Mr. Forrestal home and phone me when you get him there." I knew Mrs. Forrestal wasn't in town, and I told the driver to make sure that the butler knows that he's there, etc. And then I phoned, as it happened, Mr. Eberstadt who was testifying on the 1949 amendments to the unification act before the Senate Armed Services Committee. And I said, "I don't like what I see. Can I meet you?"

He said, "Yes, I'll meet you at the house."

So, I met him at the house and the butler said he had gone upstairs. I don't know, anyway--I'm sort of short-circuiting this. That wasn't exactly what happened. We first phoned the house, Eber and I got together, the butler said, "He won't speak to anybody."

Eber said to the butler, "You tell James (Eber and others of the Princeton group called him James), you tell James he can get away with that with a lot of people but not with me." And so he came to the phone and apparently babbled a lot of stuff about the Russians--apparently it was just like that. I don't know. The only further thing I knew is that I did

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drive to the house, I waited while Eber had the butler pack his clothes. Eber came out once and said, "Can you get a plane to take him to Florida?"

And I said, "Certainly."

And I phoned and we got a Marine plane, I think, I don't know. And so Forrestal came down and Eber sat in the back seat of my old, old Chevrolet and Forrestal sat in front with me and then the butler came running back, came running after us. He brought the Secretary's golf clubs. So I opened the trunk, we put in the golf clubs and I drove out to the private plane end (we didn't go to the military planes), private plane end of National Airport. And on the way out Forrestal said three times, the only thing he said, Eber tried to speak to him and he would say, "You're a loyal fellow, Marx." "You're a loyal fellow, Marx," three times. I remember that, I think I remember that. And we put him in the plane and I had also phoned to be sure to have a military aide there to look after him and then I said to Eber, "I hate for him to be going down there by himself but I know Bob Lovett is down there," who was a close friend.

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And I said, "I'm going to phone Bob to be sure to meet the plane." So I phoned Bob and Bob did meet the plane. I never saw him after that.

By the way, psychiatry. He was never permitted to see the people he should have seen. I'm not sure he should have seen me, I would have reminded him of too much, but friends of his, people who loved him; Senator Leverett Saltonstall, just to mention one name, not really a political ally but just someone who really loved him; Kate Foley his secretary.

The great vice of military medicine is that you see who they want you to see. Louis Johnson came out to see him and he saw him and that was the last person that he should have seen you know. Captain [George N.] Raines couldn't say no to Louis Johnson but that's the last thing that should have been done.

Actually, as I understood later from Mr. Eberstadt--Mr. Eberstadt sent a plane down, chartered a plane, and sent Dr. Menninger from Topeka and wanted the Secretary to fly up to the Menninger Clinic, but Mrs. Forrestal and Mr. Truman agreed that it would be--neither of whom knew anything about psychiatry either--that there would be less stigma at being at the naval hospital.

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And only a Navy doctor could put a VIP patient on the seventeenth floor you know. I mean nobody else would put anybody above the second floor with that particular illness. Who is to know whether that had gone so far. I mean he apparently was beyond being neurotic, I mean it was apparently paranoid but I didn't see it at all. It's a long way to tell you that I did not see it at all until the day after he left office.

HESS: What would be your evaluation of his general effectiveness and his administrative ability and Mr. Forrestal's overall value to the United States?

LEVA: Oh, I think he was one of the ablest public servants I have ever known. I think that he was simply tremendous in everything that he went into. I think that most people's memories have been clouded by the end of the story without any attention to the early chapters or the middle chapters.

I think in particular of a column that Arthur Krock wrote that impressed me very deeply. The day after Forrestal was sworn in, which now has us to September '47, in which Arthur wrote, in substance, "He entered on his new duties as Secretary of Defense

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with a measure of public respect and esteem unequalled in the memory of this correspondent." It's easy to lose sight of that. He apparently did a simply fantastic job at the Navy during World War II both as Under Secretary and as Secretary. I only got there when it was over but those who were there say that that multi-multi billion procurement program that he put together, hiring for the purpose the best and the most outstanding lawyers anywhere in the country to make sure that the country got its money's worth, and what he did on a crash basis, and I'm sure what Patterson did in a similar context in the Army, was simply a fabulous administrative achievement. I think within the limit of what one could do in the very difficult framework of starting unification, he did magnificently.

I have been fond of saying that I doubt very much that Mr. Forrestal could have done what Mr. McNamara did in the early part of the Kennedy administration of really tightening up the administration. But I doubt even more that Mr. McNamara could have done what Mr. Forrestal did. I really think that from the period in which I functioned, Secretary Forrestal and Secretary Lovett were the two standouts. They were really head

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and shoulders above everyone else. I do not mean that as any denigration of General Marshall. I understand that he was in a class by himself during World War II. When I knew him he was beyond the peak of his powers, and knew it, and therefore left to Bob Lovett the running of the operation which ran very well indeed.

Mr. Forrestal did a tremendous job. If you look at the things which he did there was really (now I'm going to use integration in a different sense), there was really no integration in the armed forces when he started. This was one thing on which he and Mr. Truman really felt strongly about and he set out to see to it that if you were in the Navy and black or Filipino, it didn't mean you had to be a mess attendant, and he really drove like the very devil on that, working with Lester Granger who was then head of the National Urban League with whom I worked on it and really doing a magnificent job.

HESS: Did they meet a lot of resistance on that?

LEVA: Oh, enormous, in the Navy, I should say so. And then--that was when he was still at Navy--and then extending that to the Air Force and the Army, and trying to get

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integration into the National Guard in some of those states at that time was simply fantastic. But he was driving. Lots of people looked on him as a wealthy man, president of Dillon-Read at thirty-seven. They forgot that he was the son of an Irish immigrant bricklayer. That was what - his father was. But he never forgot. On religion the only thing that I think he ever said to me just after (now I'm going back to the beginning of our discussion), just after I had become his counsel at Navy, I think about two days, he came stalking out to my office just outside of his, he said, "I understand that you're Jewish."

I said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "That's not going to hurt you or help you around here." So that was that.

HESS: He let you know it was just an unimportant item.

LEVA: That's right. Neither hurt nor help.

HESS: It's ten minutes till four.

LEVA: I think we should sign off. And I hope I haven't rambled too much.

HESS: No, and we have a lot more to cover.

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Second Oral History Interview with Marx Leva, Washington, D.C., June 12, 1970. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: Mr. Leva, to begin this morning, let me say that since our last interview I have come in and used a couple of the printed hearings that you have, and I think the B-36 controversy is probably pretty well-known, most of the ins and outs about that. But just one question on that: On April the 12th and the 13th of 1948, Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington, testified

before a committee of Congress that the United States required an Air Force in excess of that supported by the President and the Secretary of Defense. At this time just what was the relationship between Secretary Forrestal and Stuart Symington?

LEVA: They had known one another for a great number of years. I'm trying to phrase this carefully, not trying to be discreet, but trying to phrase it carefully to be as accurate as possible and trying to reflect the relationship objectively and not my own feelings on that matter.

I was on the staff of Mr. Forrestal and like any

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staff man, I objected to seeing my boss undercut by testimony on the Hill, by representations at the White House, by anything that was done. Therefore, I deeply resented, personally, the role of the Air staff, the role of the civilians in the Air Force, the role of the Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington, who is a good friend of mine, in undercutting the Secretary of Defense. And I'm going to try to be as objective as possible in terms of appraising the Forrestal-Symington relationship.

My impression is that the friendship between the two of them continued up until the time of Mr. Forrestal's death. My further impression is that because of their long-existing relationship, Forrestal tolerated things from Symington that he would not have tolerated in someone else. I think that some of the things that Stuart Symington did you could only characterize as arrant disloyalty by any objective standard. I also think that Stuart Symington deeply believed that what he did was essential to the security of the United States and that he had to do it.

My own feeling was that if he had to do it, he should have resigned and he should have done it

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outside of his position as Secretary of the Air Force. You don't accept the position as Secretary of the Air Force under a Secretary of Defense, and both publicly and privately criticize the Secretary of Defense, and indirectly the President of the United States, because what was here involved was Mr. Truman's loyal lieutenant. Because Mr. Forrestal may have felt that additional funds were needed just as strongly as Mr. Symington did, but he went down the line once the decisions were made. He did his fighting within the establishment. And I suppose my own criticism is that Symington, having done his fighting within the establishment, did not discontinue the fighting once the President had made the decision.

This must have affected the personal relationship between Forrestal and Symington, but on the surface it never did, they remained the closest of friends. I believe I told you, perhaps not, I know I have told others, that on the occasion of Forrestal's last appearance on the Hill, when the House Armed Services Committee paid tribute to him for what he had done, he rode back from the Hill to the Pentagon with Secretary Symington, so that the closeness of the personal

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relationship continued to the end.

I do know that a lot of Forrestal's friends from New York were bombarding him all of the time, whether April of '48 or later dates, saying, "You've got to get this guy to resign. You cannot afford to have this guy boring from within and making this sort of presentation to the Congress to the public, through his public relations people, to Drew Pearson's column, and all of the rest." Because I was frequently on the phone with people from New York phoning Mr. Forrestal, and I know that Forrestal's friends felt very strongly that Symington was making Forrestal's job impossible.

I didn't feel quite that strongly about it. I thought it was making it more difficult, but I thought I understood the role of the two men. I had strong feelings though you know.

HESS: Were approaches made to Secretary Symington that if he had a disagreement with the way things were going, wouldn't he please do it in the privacy of the office rather than in the newspapers?

LEVA: I can't recall that. I can't recall that in detail. This was a running sore of early '48, maybe as long as

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'47, right up until the time of Forrestal's retirement in March of '49. I think it was probably more of a running sore after the Finletter Commission made its report and recommended a stronger Air Force, and then that provided the Air Force with a vehicle for saying, "See here, we need the additional funds." I do remember that in November or December of 1948, Forrestal said that he was going to talk to Mr. Truman about Symington's resignation, he told some of his friends. I doubt that he ever did, but I do know that he said that he was.

HESS: All right. Moving on, in March of 1949 Mr. Louis Johnson succeeded Forrestal as Secretary of Defense. Just why was Mr. Johnson selected for that position?

LEVA: I had never met Louis Johnson before he was appointed Secretary of Defense. I have no personal knowledge of why he was selected for that position. My impression from the comments of others, would run about this way. Mr. Johnson was Assistant Secretary of War during the Roosevelt administration when Secretary [Harry H.] Woodring was Secretary of War. There apparently was considerable difficulty within the Department at that time, and particularly

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between Secretary Woodring and Assistant Secretary Johnson, culminating at a later date in the resignation of both and the appointment of [Henry L.] Stimson as Secretary of War.

Apparently Louis Johnson always felt that he should be vindicated and wanted to get back into the Government. He was a strong man, powerful man, as I learned when I met him later on. Apparently during the 1948 campaign (and others would know more about this than I), when it was so very hard to get political contributions, Mr. Johnson was one who could be counted upon, and he did raise what were then large sums of money. And according to the people with whom I have discussed the matter, there was a clear understanding between President Truman and Louis Johnson that in the event of his re-election he wanted Louis Johnson in his Cabinet and that Louis Johnson could pretty well call his own shots as to where he wanted to serve. And Louis Johnson, having been thrown out of the Army, wanted to come in as Secretary of Defense, which if this is the case and if this is true, is a very normal human reaction.

Along the line Forrestal had become quite worn

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out with nine years of public service having originally come in in 1940. I think Mr. Truman was concerned about Forrestal's health also, and Mr. Truman tried to cushion the blow as much as he could with decorations, awards, public expressions of praise for Forrestal's record. But I think the essence of it was that Louis Johnson really had a blank check on any Cabinet position, and this is the way he filled in the check.

HESS: What changes did he seek to implement, in routine or policy, when he first came in?

LEVA: Oh, that's very hard to say. He was very much interested in establishing the fact that the Secretary of Defense was really the top dog and not first among equals vis-a-vis the Secretaries of Army, Navy and Air Force, and vis-a-vis the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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HESS: How about the Secretary of State?

LEVA: Well, that's a separate and later subject. You asked what did he do when he first came in.

He wanted to establish his pre-eminence in the Pentagon. Therefore, whereas Forrestal when he came in had operated in a low key and had not taken the principal office in the building, which is the large

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office facing the river, Forrestal took an office on the side of the building so as not to disturb the Secretary of the Army who was already ensconced in that office. One of Louis Johnson's first moves was, "I want that office. I think I want General Pershing's desk," and I didn't regard this as ego. I thought this was, you know, "Where Duncan sits there is the head of the table." But you might as well sit at the head of the table and be Duncan, do both.

And so there was all sorts of carpentry work and electrical work in moving the office of the Secretary from the mall side to the river side and moving the Army from the river side. None of

this was done in Forrestal's eighteen months as Secretary of Defense. And Johnson moved into the office, which from that time up to the present time, has been The office of the Secretary of Defense. That was a symbol, but that symbol permeated at various echelons and he also wanted this to be known to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as to the civilian military establishment; the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. I'm sure, going back to your early question, he wanted it to be known to Stuart Symington who was, I believe, still Secretary

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of the Air Force. The date of Stuart's resignation I do not have very clearly in my mind. I think he stayed on, but not too long. I think Mr. Truman got him out of an impossible situation by moving him to the National Security Resources Board shortly thereafter.

HESS: I believe it was almost a year. He went to the National Security Resources Board in March of 1950.

LEVA: All right, well...

HESS: So he was there...

LEVA: There were some stormy times during this early period, but...

HESS: Were they as stormy between Symington and Johnson as they had been between Symington and Forrestal?

LEVA: Not in the early period because Johnson was asserting his supremacy, etc. I think they became as stormy, yes. And I think that was the reason that Mr. Truman made the particular move that he did make.

HESS: What was their main bone of contention?

LEVA: Adherence to the budget. I mean, basically, there was never but one bone of contention.

As I recall, and the figures sound a little ridiculous in retrospect in view of the figures now,

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but as I recall Mr. Truman had said there could only be thirteen billion dollars for the military budget. And of course, the Army could have used thirteen billion, the Navy could have used thirteen billion, the Air Force could have used thirteen billion. And the real bone of contention was who got how much out of that budget. And in Forrestal's period he tried very hard to keep all of the fighting within the building. And then he went to the President (I've forgotten the exact figures), and said, "National security requires fifteen billion," or something. And there was a long review and Mr. Truman came back, "I hear you loud and clear, 'thirteen billion,'" which in view of the economy at the time, may have been the correct answer. But Forrestal fought the

battle, and once the decision was made, went up to Capitol Hill and supported the President's position.

The chief difference between Forrestal and Johnson I would say, is that Johnson, having seen Forrestal's battle, having heard of it, or read of it, never fought for more funds. If Truman said it was twelve billion or eleven billion, "Well, that's it." And Johnson went out making speeches saying, "We're going

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to cut out all the fat, but we're not going to cut out the muscle." And unfortunately, he said that if we're attacked at 2:30 in the morning we'll be ready. And when South Korea was attacked at 2:30 in the morning, we weren't ready.

HESS: Now there is an argument as to how strenuous Louis Johnson was towards cutting back the Armed Forces, whether he was just following orders, or whether he really carried out those orders with gusto like he really thought that they should be cut back. What is your view?

LEVA: My impression is he was carrying out the orders he had from Truman. My further impression, I suppose, is twofold. One: As I just said, he had seen the results of Forrestal's fighting for more funds and he had seen you didn't get them so there was no point in fighting for them. All you got was people on the White House staff who said, "You've got to get rid of this guy. He's not doing what you want him to do." So Johnson wanted to be the fair-haired boy and he was fighting the President's battle, and Johnson was always thinking that he might be the Democratic nominee for President in 1952, and therefore,

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better be a very firm adherent of anything that Mr. Truman wants. So, that gives you a little different viewpoint when you are running for high office.

HESS: Did you ever hear him make a comment on that, of that nature, that he wanted to run for high office?

LEVA: Oh, it was very much common talk around the Pentagon. It was very much in the papers in the early days of his appointment. One of his principal assistants who came in with him, General Louis Renfrow, who was an old American Legion friend of his, Lou Renfrow, who was always saying to me--once I got to know him, a very happy jolly fellow--"We've got to do it the way that helps the boss get to be President." Well, I don't think this was Lou's own idea. Louis Johnson never said to me, "I want to run for President." But there were some pretty strong indications that he expected the next President Johnson to be Louis and not Lyndon.

HESS: I understand that shortly after Mr. Johnson came in he cancelled a contract for a super aircraft carrier and that rather upset Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan and Admiral Louis Denfeld.

LEVA: Well the work on the so-called "super carrier" had

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just been begun. The Navy rushed either to lay the keel or to do something down at Newport News Shipbuilding so that what was cancelled was largely a paper plan. But this had been a bone of contention also for several years.

The Air Force said, you know, "We have these planes that fly all over the world, we don't need a carrier." And this was, again, back to the fight over the budget. And if you have a fifty billion dollar budget you may need seven aircraft carriers, but if you have a thirteen billion dollar budget, you may not be able to afford any more than the aircraft carriers you've got.

So, I think that the decision to cancel the carrier was, shall we say, a relatively routine decision once the presidential decision was made, not to expand the budget. But, in keeping with what Johnson wanted to do to dramatize the fact that he was the boss, he personally ordered the cancellation. According to the reports at the time, the Secretary of the Navy learned that when he read it off the ticker tape and Secretary Sullivan resigned on that issue.

There were those who said--in a line from Shakespeare--about Secretary Sullivan and other of

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my friends that, "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it." He wasn't a very active Secretary of the Navy, but Johnson gave him the opportunity to leave in a blaze of glory. So he is remembered very fondly by the Navy. He fought their battles, namely he resigned when the carrier was cancelled.

My own impression was that he hadn't been fighting their battles very aggressively up until that time. He might have gotten the carrier sooner. It might have been in such an advanced stage that you couldn't cancel it. But that's my observation.

As to Admiral Denfeld, I don't recall whether Admiral Denfeld resigned simultaneously or shortly thereafter, but....

HESS: Shortly thereafter.

LEVA: But it was substantially the same issue.

HESS: He was transferred.

LEVA: Admiral Denfeld was not a carrier admiral. And there was within the Navy the rather schizophrenic approach, for the lack of a better term, the battleship admirals and the carrier admirals, and I think the carrier admirals might well have felt that Denfeld hadn't really fought their battle aggressively enough

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so that he was subject to that additional pressure. In any event he did resign at that time and I believe--was he succeeded by Admiral Forrest Sherman?

HESS: Yes.

LEVA: Who was by all odds the ablest of the admirals that I came in contact with. I speak as one who was a very seasick ensign, lieutenant junior grade, and lieutenant, as I told you before, and I didn't know what anybody above the rank of lieutenant commander really looked like. So, when I met .real live admirals, I was already in awe. But I must say in terms of level of ability, whatever the merits of the controversy over the super carrier and its cancellation, whatever the merits of that particular conflict, if the result was to give to the Navy the appointment, by President Truman I guess, on whose advice I don't know, of Admiral Forrest Sherman, it was a real shot in the arm to the Navy because they had great confidence in Forrest Sherman.

While the Navy at the top level gives pious support to the principle of civilian control, they really look to see who's admiral. And it's a great tragedy that Forrest Sherman did not live longer

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with a--this is a very great digression, but I had hoped once I got to know him, that he would not only be chief of naval operations, but when the rotation came up he would succeed [General Omar N.] Bradley as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when it became the Navy's turn--it isn't supposed to be turns but it always is. He would have been a great Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

HESS: And after Mr. Sullivan resigned, Francis Matthews was selected. Why was he selected?

LEVA: I haven't the slightest idea. He said in an interview at the time he thought he was selected because he once rowed a rowboat on a lake near Omaha, which was his home. A very, very sweet man, who knew absolutely nothing about the Navy. Whether he was a political confrere of Johnson, I just don't remember at this time. He was a very sweet man, very ineffective, but he had a good Chief of Naval Operations.

HESS: Jumping ahead just a bit, but during, the time of the Korean war, at the time of his resignation, he made a speech. I'm not sure if it was in New York--he made a speech on the way that we were handling the war in Korea and then shortly thereafter he was made

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Ambassador to Ireland. Correct?

LEVA: I think that's the sequence, but I don't recall that. You may have the dates, but I resigned in the spring of '51 and I don't remember when Francis Matthews resigned. I don't really remember in that detail.

The only thing I ever really helped Secretary Matthews with, my job kept me all over the building, he did ask me where could he get someone to do for him what I had originally done for Forrestal, which was review all papers before they came down to his desk and so on. And I had met him obviously when he came down to be Secretary and then I learned something about who his children were and who they were married to. And I said, "Well, you have someone in your family by marriage who would be excellent for that."

And he said, "Who's that?"

And I said, "Well, I understand your son Francis, Jr. is married to a girl whom I don't know but I know her sister, who is married to Jack [John Forrest] Floberg."

And, "Oh, yes, I know Jack very well, practices law in Chicago."

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And I said, "Well, Jack was a year ahead of me in law school. He was in the landing at Salerno with me, and I've known him many, many years. He's an excellent lawyer, and if you could get him down here it would be very good."

So, Secretary Matthews got him down and I had meant him to be sort of a Special Assistant, but apparently he had to make him Assistant Secretary to get him down. So Jack Floberg became Assistant Secretary and I think by designation there was only one vacancy then. He was Assistant Secretary for Air. He was a very able Assistant Secretary; didn't really answer Matthews problem that Matthews had talked to me about, but he got the Navy a good man.

HESS: A general question: Just what were your outstanding duties, your major duties, as Assistant Secretary of Defense, and that was the position that you held from 1949 to 1951?

LEVA: There hadn't been any Assistant Secretaries of Defense until the 1949 amendments to the Unification Act. Under the 1949 amendments there were created three Assistant Secretaries of Defense. As they were

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set up administratively, one was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Budget, now the Comptroller of the Defense Department. One was the Assistant Secretary of Defense for miscellaneous matters, White House relations, etc. And one was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legal and Legislative Affairs, and I held the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legal and Legislative Affairs, and I had one Deputy for Legal Affairs who was Felix Larkin who subsequently succeeded me as General Counsel of the Defense Department, and another Deputy for Legislative Affairs who was Major General Wilton Persons who had been General Marshall's man on legislative affairs, then General Bradley's and then at a later date, General Eisenhower's.

HESS: At the time that you came in, the two other Assistant Secretaries were Paul H. Griffith and Wilfred J. McNeil.

LEVA: Right.

HESS: What kind of men were they?

LEVA: We all three came in simultaneously. We were the first three Assistant Secretaries of Defense.

I had worked with Admiral McNeil since Forrestal's days as Secretary of the Navy. I had been counsel to

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McNeil when he was Comptroller of the Navy, Fiscal Director of the Navy, and he became the Assistant Secretary of Defense and Fiscal Director, Comptroller, of the Defense Department. An able, very hard working, hard driving man who later, upon leaving the Defense Department, became president of the Grace Lines.

HESS: Where he still is, I believe.

LEVA: No, he has retired. I had dinner with him a few weeks ago.

HESS: Does he still live in New York?

LEVA: He has an apartment in New York. If you haven't talked to him you should. He's down here about once a month. He's been on the Fitzhugh Committee, appointed by the Secretary of Defense, which is studying the reorganization of the Defense Department. And it's Admiral Wilfred J. McNeil and he would be a goldmine of information. I think we went into that before.

HESS: Yes.

LEVA: The other Assistant Secretary, Paul Griffith I had not met before. He had succeeded Louis Johnson as National Commander of the American Legion. Perhaps there was a hiatus between--he had apparently worked with Louis Johnson when Louis Johnson's law firm got into

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matters that required non-legal skills in the business area, or in the political area. He was a mysterious character to me and I must say after serving with him for a couple of years, he still is a mysterious character to me. I don't know what he did. That's why I say the third Assistant Secretary did miscellaneous work. I can't characterize it.

HESS: Is he in the legal business here in town?

LEVA: No, he's not a lawyer. He lives here in town; has a farm on River Road about three miles beyond Potomac, Maryland. He would know a great deal about the non-Defense Department

things that Louis Johnson was active in. I don't think in point of fact, he was very active within the Department very much.

He was sort of a personal assistant as indeed I had been with Forrestal in my earlier years because--there are an awful lot of things that need attention, but he really wasn't in the guts of the organization in the sense of saying, to use the present Assistant Secretary structure, that there's an Assistant Secretary for Manpower, and an Assistant Secretary for Installation and Logistics, etc. He didn't really have a functional job.

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HESS: The Republic of Korea was invaded on June the 25th, 1950, and that was June the 24th our time. Just what do you recall of the events of those days?

LEVA: I recall that I was on the first vacation that I had had in a long time. I also recall, and my memory may be defective on this, that I first heard a radio broadcast that there had been a crossing of the demarkation line, and I phoned the Department. I don't remember who I phoned first, and somebody said, "We really don't know much about it yet. Why don't you phone back?"

And I phoned Louis Johnson the second time because I heard something about, you know, massive invasion. And I recall, I think I recall, that he told me to just, "Stay on your vacation. We don't think this is very serious. We think this is just a raid across the border," and so on, "I'll let you know."

Of course I came back the next day when I heard what was up. But the answer is, "I was not here when the whistle blew."

HESS: Louis Johnson had been in the Far East on a fact-finding tour, and I found in the newspaper where he had talked to MacArthur in Japan shortly before this

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time. Did he--did you ever hear him say anything about that?

LEVA: No. No. I did not. I didn't remember that he had been in the Far East shortly before.

HESS: Did Mr. Johnson ever tell you anything or ever say anything about the meeting at the White House that was held with President Truman? President Truman, of course, was in Independence this weekend and came back Sunday afternoon, and at the Blair House there was a meeting held that...

LEVA: Is this where the decision was made to go to the United Nations? I wasn't there. I was not at that meeting, and I don't recall who was.

HESS: I have a list of the people who attended, but I was just wondering if Louis Johnson had ever made any comment about what had transpired.

LEVA: Not to the best of my recollection.

HESS: What seemed to be the reaction of Louis Johnson to the invasion?

LEVA: I really don't remember. I'm sure his reaction was, "Let's get everything we can there as quickly as we can." But I have no independent recollection.

HESS: In the following September, General Marshall

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replaced Louis Johnson as Secretary of Defense. Just what do you recall about that?

LEVA: I think probably the one to talk to about that more than anybody else, we've talked about him before, is Robert Lovett, because I think General Marshall consulted him and perhaps Mr. Truman consulted him, because Marshall and Lovett are really always a team in my mind. I think there had been growing speculation that Louis Johnson would have to get out and so on, in the press, but I cannot recall independently.

HESS: About what time did that speculation start? Before or after the invasion in Korea? Do you recall?

LEVA: Oh, I think after the invasion in Korea. The invasion in Korea was in June.

HESS: June, the last of June.

LEVA: He got out in...

HESS: In September.

LEVA: September. He sent me to New York. I can tell you this, if I didn't--I don't guess we got onto Johnson at all in our earlier discussion.

HESS: No.

LEVA: Louis Johnson had with him as Under Secretary, or Deputy Secretary, Steve [Stephen T.] Early, who had

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been with President Roosevelt in press relations. It was quite clear to me, since Steve, one of the finest men who ever lived, knew nothing about the Defense Department, that his real role was to groom Louis Johnson to be President.

When Johnson began to get a bad press as we fell back into the Pusan perimeter in Southern Korea, Johnson became more and more concerned and he sent me on a private mission which he described to me.

He wanted me to go up to New York to talk to a man that he described as the best public relations man in the country. And he told me that the best public relations man in the country was Ben Sonnenberg. I don't know if that name means anything to you; I had never met him. And I know that it was in the summer and it was in between the invasion of Korea, I can't date it exactly, June, July or August, but it was in that period and he wanted me to talk to him about what he could do about his appearance before the American people, and it had to be a secret from Steve Early, because Steve Early would have regarded it as a vote of no confidence in him. What should he do in terms of his public relations position?

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We are now talking about 1950, I was thirty-five years old, because that's relevant. I went up to see Ben Sonnenberg who was then in summer quarters at the St. Regis Hotel. He has a fabulous house as I learned later, on Gramercy Park, which he locks up in the summer when his wife goes up to Connecticut and he moves into this apartment at the St. Regis. A little man, must be five feet two, walrus mustache, very picturesque. So. I phoned from downstairs and I came up and I knocked on the door. He opened the door, I introduced myself. "What can I do for you?"

I said, "Well, Secretary Johnson said you are the finest public relations man in the country and he wants to know what he should do to improve his position with the American people."

He says, "He's a dead duck. Why waste time on him? You look like an interesting young fellow. Let's talk about you."

So, most of the rest of the visit we talked about me.

HESS: What did he have to say?

LEVA: But he wrote--he wrote him off very quickly. Now in part this was showmanship, but in part it was telling

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me his appraisal was, "There is nothing you can do about this. There is really nothing you can do, why should we waste time?"

HESS: A slight digression, but what advice did he have for you?

LEVA: Well, he didn't have any advice for me. He just talked. He wanted to know what I'd been doing all of my life up to that point. He wandered on and told me how good he was and he said at one point, "You think I'm cocky, don't you?"

I said, "Yes, I must say I think you're cocky."

He said, "Well, why shouldn't I be cocky?" He said, "My father was an immigrant from Russia. He peddled suits on Grand Street and if he made thirty dollars in a month, he was doing well, and I make several hundred thousand dollars in a year. I'm cocky."

So, he was a fascinating...

HESS: He had a right to be cocky didn't he?

LEVA: He was a fascinating character. Where he got to know Louis, whether he got to know him in Democratic politics, in business, whether he had been a public relations man for some of the corporations that Louis

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Johnson had been on the board of directors of, I don't know. But it was a fascinating session. Didn't help Louis' cause much. I had to be very diplomatic in reporting it back, so I tried to give it a little more substantive content.

Well, anyway that's why--I know that the slide was downhill and I don't know the date of the Inchon landing, but that was before Louis Johnson left office and I think he had the feeling that that should help restore him, etc., but it helped restore MacArthur, but not Johnson.

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

LEVA: I think he handled it reasonably well within the framework of a fixed budget, within the framework of knowing there was no point in appealing to the President, in the framework of knowing that there was no point in appealing to the Congress at that time, over the head of the President, if you will. Given a fixed budget I think he parcelled it out and handled it about as well as he could. I think that his bombast and his speeches and his overstatements were against

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him. They alienated the military people whose support he needed. But I think he did probably a better job than he is generally credited with doing.

HESS: All right now one other question on Mr. Johnson. Dean Acheson in his book *Present at the Creation*, states that in his opinion Mr. Johnson was mentally ill during the last few weeks of his term. What is your reaction to that?

LEVA: I certainly did not have that feeling. That's all that I can say, but bear in mind what I think I told you before, I was unaware of the fact that Mr. Forrestal was mentally ill. You live

that closely to a situation, you may not see the forest for the trees. And I wouldn't question Dean Acheson's objectivity or accuracy as a reporter. All that I can say is that I saw no indication of it.

HESS: Why was General Marshall chosen as the replacement at this time?

LEVA: That I do not know. I would surmise that there were two reasons. One is Mr. Truman's great confidence in him which had been vindicated so often before, and the other was the necessity to name someone in

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whom the American people would have confidence. And I think those two things coalesce.

HESS: What do you recall about Mr. Truman's trip to Wake Island in October 1950 to confer with General MacArthur?

LEVA: Oh, only that it occurred and that later along the line it came out that somebody had taken notes outside the conference door. I was not among those present. I think I talked with Charlie Murphy who I think was there since, but I don't have any distinct recollection of it.

I think, undoubtedly, MacArthur gave all sorts of assurances to Mr. Truman as he had always given all sorts of assurances to anyone who came to visit him; Stimson during the war, Forrestal during the war; you know he was going to walk on the waters. He apparently--look at the *Forrestal Diaries*, there's some very interesting things in there. I remember one particular passage when General MacArthur was describing how he was going to win the war in Japan, what his plans were, and the phrase that I recall, a nice military phrase, that he was going to deliver a coup de main on the plain of Tokyo. But therefore, the ability

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of General MacArthur to bedazzle Presidents, Secretaries of Defense, Secretaries of the Army, Secretaries of the Navy, with what he was going to do, and I imagine Wake Island was no exception, I think it was a great ability. And he undoubtedly had an enormous ability.

There is also a line in the *Forrestal Diaries* which is interesting on that, bearing in mind that the *Forrestal Diaries* were written not to be published. They were Forrestal's own notes. But his appraisal of MacArthur after that particular trip that I speak of was, "A great ability, mortgaged however, to his vanity and his sensitivity." It was a very succinct statement of the case.

HESS: Speaking of *Forrestal Diaries*, what was your involvement in the writing of the *Diaries*?

LEVA: None. I helped [Walter] Millis and [Eugene S.] Duffield, I guess, get clearances, access and whatnot and I helped with the administrative process and helped with the State Department and Defense Department security clearances, but I had nothing to do with the writing.

HESS: Did you have anything to do with the selection of various documents that might have gone in?

LEVA: Didn't know what was in it until I read the book.

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HESS: What was General Marshall's reaction when the Chinese Communists crossed the Yalu River in November?

LEVA: I have no recollection. You're running like hell doing the day to day things. I'm sorry to say I have no recollection to so many of your questions, but I really don't.

HESS: What do you recall about the events leading up to the dismissal of General MacArthur in April 1951?

LEVA: Well, I remember a series of press leaks from MacArthur's headquarters and I think some letters to members of Congress, and then finally his message to, I think it was, the Veterans of Foreign Wars. And I must say that my own feeling was that Mr. Truman was patient for a long, long time, and he had absolutely no recourse, given the message to the VFW in Chicago. But again, this is just an impression. I don't have much of a recollection of events.

At a time of military disaster which we really had after the approach to the Yalu, everyone is looking around for people to blame and everyone is explaining his own record. And that's what we had and MacArthur was doing that and others were doing that.

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But when this is carried to the point of ignoring an order from the Commander in Chief to keep your mouth shut, this becomes an act you can't ignore.

HESS: Did you think that that was an action that had to be taken?

LEVA: I thought it was really very important that it be taken at that time. I wasn't consulted in any way. I know that General Bradley was consulted and so on, but it seemed to me right.

Whether it had to be taken, no given action has to be taken.

Is it essential that Mr. [Richard M.] Nixon make Mr. [Robert H.] Finch his personal counselor in order to do something about the Department of Health, Education and Welfare? You can do it that way and you can do it some other way. He could have named General MacArthur emperor and named the emperor commander in chief of the Army I guess, but something had to be done and this seemed to be the right thing to do.

HESS: What was your opinion of the way in which it was handled--the dismissal of General MacArthur?

LEVA: Well, again this is another one where it is said

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that you are reading this on the ticker tape. My impression was that Secretary of the Army Frank Pace was told to tell MacArthur, and Frank may not have told him, because Frank doesn't like controversy that much. I just don't know, you know, whether there was a breakdown of communications, whether it was a breakdown in guts. In any event, apparently it was not done right, that someone who had rendered the service that General MacArthur rendered during World War II, during World War I, during Korea, was entitled to be advised of the action of the Commander in Chief in a somewhat different manner.

HESS: And you left the Department of Defense shortly thereafter, the same month, April of 1951.

LEVA: I had already submitted my resignation. I resigned in March of '51, I think, effective the first of May. Bob Lovett who was Deputy Secretary of Defense, said, "You've got to stay on. We've got to have these MacArthur hearings, he's coming back to testify. You've been handling things here for five years, or four years, you've got to handle these hearings."

And I said, "You've got my deputy, Mr. Larkin, General Counsel, very fine man. I've listened to this

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sort of story for a long time." I said, "I went in with Mr. Forrestal and his guarantee that I would only have to stay for one year. It's been over four and," I said, "I'm not staying for the MacArthur hearings." I said, "I will do anything I can to help you from outside, if you need it, but my best advice is to give the job to Felix Larkin, who's excellent, and let him handle it."

So, we later worked out a format. The hearings were handled by Felix Larkin and by Admiral Arthur Davis. Admiral Arthur Davis did the screening from a security standpoint, so the transcript of the hearings could be released within minutes of the time that the hearings closed. It was very well done. So. I had nothing to do with the hearings, but Bob Lovett thought I should stay for that and I said as I just said I wasn't going to do it. But I also pointed out to him that I had stayed at his request when he and General Marshall came in on the clear understanding, and on his clear understanding that I could leave when the military situation in Korea reached a plateau, which it had clearly then reached. And so I said, "Then that's why I submitted my resignation and I'm sticking to it."

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And I did.

HESS: I would like to inquire about some of the men who held positions of responsibility in the Pentagon at the same time that you did. And if you ever worked with them on a particular

project, if you could just tell me a little bit about that, to show their relationships, your relationship with the Secretary of Defense at that time. Now, I believe that everyone on this list that I have is still living except Mr. Early and Mr. Matthews.

Now Stephen Early was Under Secretary of Defense. We mentioned him a little while ago, but what kind of a man was Steve Early?

LEVA: Well, I was very fond of Steve. I thought that he was magnificent in the field of dealing with the press and the radio--we didn't have television quite so much then--with dealing with the media.

He was not a man you normally would have thought of as Under Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense and he did not really relieve Mr. Johnson of any of the load of that enormous institution, as a Deputy Secretary of Defense should. But I would just say that he was an extremely fine person. He would have been a

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magnificent Director of Public Information for the Pentagon. He did handle those duties, but he was not a man that one would select for Deputy Secretary of Defense.

HESS: Did you ever work with him on any particular project?

LEVA: Well, I worked with him on a whole host of projects because he came in and there was no head of public information. I think the late Harold Hinton of the *New York Times* had been and I think there was a vacancy and Steve Early did it himself, and looked to me to help him. Indeed I think I was designated as Director of Public Information after Steve left the Pentagon for a period of time. I got rid of that as quickly as I could. But I worked very closely with him in the Public Relations field.

HESS: How about Clayton Fritchey? Did you work with Clayton Fritchey at that time?

LEVA: I was Acting Director of Public Information when we got Clayton Fritchey up I guess. And Clayton took over and I was--I had never met him before, but I was mighty happy when he came because I could get rid of some of my duties and get back to some of the things I was supposed to be worrying about which was the legal and

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the legislative. Clayton I thought was extraordinarily able. He did a dedicated job over there.

HESS: Did he come to the Department of Defense directly from the *New Orleans Item*?

LEVA: From the *New Orleans Item*. My impression is from the *New Orleans Item*.

HESS: Why had he been selected, do you recall?

LEVA: I do not know.

HESS: How about Robert A. Lovett, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and then he was later Secretary of Defense after you left.

LEVA: He was Secretary of Defense after I left, but...

HESS: In September of '51.

LEVA: In point of fact, he was Acting Secretary of Defense much of the time I was there because General Marshall's health had not been of the best after his tour of duty in China. And General Marshall left the running of the Department very largely to Lovett. So, he was de facto Secretary of Defense during much of that time.

I thought, and think, that of the Secretaries of Defense I have known, both when I was in the Pentagon and when I was outside, that Lovett was second only

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to Forrestal in level of ability. And in many respects better than Forrestal because he had a sense of humor which Forrestal lacked. It enabled him to get through some tough situations with resiliency, which Forrestal lacked. But I just think of Lovett and Forrestal together in terms of really almost superhuman levels of ability. They were in their respective spheres what Dean Acheson was at the State Department as far as I was concerned.

HESS: And John L. Sullivan, we have mentioned this morning.

LEVA: Yes, and I should say that I've always been very fond of John. I shouldn't let my remarks before--I didn't think he was an effective Secretary of the Navy, but in part, that's the system. They don't want an effective Secretary of the Navy. I said that about Francis Matthews. John Sullivan is heavily oriented towards politics, heavily oriented towards the politics of his native New Hampshire, and he thinks in political terms, and he was glad to do the political work of the Navy and let the running of the Department be handled by the admirals and...

HESS: Which suited them.

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LEVA: I am inclined to agree with [Georges] Clemenceau that, "War is too important to be left to the generals." And I think also the Navy is too important to be left to the admirals. So, this is the basis of my criticism. A fine person. One thing that struck me was the high caliber of the personnel and the personal qualities of the individuals that I came in contact with.

HESS: And Francis P. Matthews.

LEVA: Well, I would say much of the same thing of Francis Matthews except that John Sullivan did know Washington and the Washington infighting, Francis Matthews did not, so he had even another handicap.

HESS: And Kenneth C. Royall was Secretary of the Army in August '47 to April '49.

LEVA: I worked very closely with Kenneth Royall, at Forrestal's request, in connection with the early integration of the Army. We had a lot of problems, Mr. Truman's orders, and I had worked on the early orders on integration of the armed forces. Worked largely with a man by the name of James Evans.

This aspect of the Truman administration is worth pursuing. I don't know if you're familiar with

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James Evans, but I would say from '47 to probably '67, he was over in the Pentagon working quietly on integration problems. He was very, very effective. Probably so effective that he lost much of his credibility with his fellow blacks by trying to fight the battles, but I found him an effective guy.

HESS: Does he live in town?

LEVA: I think so, James Evans. I worked with him and with Lester Granger who was then the Executive Director of the National Urban League, because Mr. Truman had made it very clear to Forrestal that he wasn't kidding around and we were trying to implement this.

The Army was the toughest nut to crack, so I worked with Kenneth Royall, I think, more on this field than on any other. And he was a North Carolinian and I was an Alabamian and so we thought we could understand the problems, but we could also understand that the problems had to be overcome.

I frequently felt that Kenneth Royall wasn't doing enough, vis-a-vis the military, to overcome the problems in that particular area, but that was probably just my impatience. He had the responsibility and I

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didn't. I was the staff man and he was the line man.

I liked Kenneth Royall. He was a huge man. Have you ever met him? He is now living down in North Carolina and he has an excellent recollection for all of these events, and if you could interview him, you should, at some point.

He was a lawyer and those who had practiced with him in North Carolina told me he was an excellent trial lawyer. He had gone to Harvard Law School. He later went to New York after being Secretary of the Army and became head of the firm now Royall--it was Royall, Koegel & Rogers, Secretary of State [William] Rogers. And Bill Rogers told me that Royall had now

retired, living in North Carolina. So, that's why I know. The firm is Royall, Koegel and somebody now, but you really ought to see him.

I never felt that he really got hold of the Army. It didn't make much difference with Bradley as Chief of Staff. It made a great deal of difference when Joe [J. Lawton] Collins was Chief of Staff, because Joe Collins, whom I also liked, was not the forceful leader that Bradley was. He apparently was a forceful leader in battle. He was not a forceful leader in

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administration. Kenneth Royall, and I think it's Gastonia, North Carolina.

HESS: The latest information I have is from the *Who's Who* and he was still in New York with Royall, Koegel & Rogers

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LEVA: Well, he's not now.

HESS: So, he's now in North Carolina. Well, that's good, we can--we can find out, because he is one of those who will be high on our list.

LEVA: I thought this book was by--this is by another fellow. This is by Lieutenant Dennis Nelson, but I worked with Dennis Nelson on Navy and then worked with Jim Evans on Army, Navy and Air Force.

HESS: And the name of his book is *The Integration of the Negro into the U.S. Navy*, Lieutenant Dennis D. Nelson.

LEVA: Yes, I think he's here too, but Evans is the one I was speaking of.

HESS: You say you found fewer problems with the Navy?

LEVA: Oh, no. No, no. I didn't say I found fewer problems. The Navy started on it first. When I was in the Pentagon the problem was with the Army because the Navy, which was terrible, had already gotten started.

HESS: A little further along.

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LEVA: I'm just speaking in point of time.

When I was on sea duty for example, any blacks on board the ship were mess attendants, that was it.

HESS: Steward's mates.

LEVA: Shortly thereafter they got into--you know every specialty and every branch, and at first theoretically, but a little later, actually.

So. I think that the problem was attacked in the Navy beginning in '44, '45. It was not attacked in the Army until '47, '48, that's all. So, at the period I speak of, the problem was greater in the Army, only because the process had begun in the Navy, that's all.

HESS: And Gordon Gray, Secretary of the Army from June '49 until April 1950.

LEVA: Oh, Gordon was a superlatively good Government executive. I thought he did a brilliant job, as Assistant Secretary of the Army, as Under Secretary of the Army, and as Secretary of the Army. He was brought in by Kenneth Royall from his state of North Carolina and Gordon did a first rate job all the way through. I thought he was outstanding.

HESS: Did you work with him on any particular projects?

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LEVA: Oh, I worked with him routinely on a lot of projects, most directly on the Uniform Code of Military Justice. He was the Army representative in working on the Uniform Code of Military Justice. And while Felix Larkin handled that mostly for our office, I worked with the group that was working on it. The group that was working on it on the civilian side was Gordon Gray for the Army, Eugene Zuckert who was then Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for the Air Force; and Jack [John T.] Koehler for the Navy. Originally John Kenney for the Navy, but he turned it over to Jack Koehler. Working with those three people and with their military counterparts on trying to pull together the military systems of the services was an interesting experience.

But Gordon had a lot of flexibility and give, which again the Navy seldom had. The Navy wanted to keep them on bread and water punishment. It's a difference in approach.

I'm really going to have to break this up because I have people coming in.

HESS: Well, that's fine. I see we've run five minutes over.

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LEVA: I guess we've gone as far as we can go, really.

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