

Oral History Interview

With

ROSWELL L. GILPATRIC

Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Materiel, 1951; Under Secretary of the Air Force, 1951-53; and Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1961-64.

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by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: Mr. Gilpatric, of primary interest in our interview is your relationship with President Truman and the Truman administration. What was that relationship and when did it begin?

GILPATRIC: My first recollection of meeting Mr. Truman was during the 1935 investigations of railroads by a committee of the Senate, of which Senator Truman was the chairman. The counsel was a famous investigator by the name of Max Lowenthal. I appeared before that committee and saw Mr. Truman in action on behalf of the Milwaukee Railroad, which was one of the railroads under investigation, and I remember particularly how this newly elected Senator from Missouri, who had very little political experience, at least at the national level,

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handled himself in dealing with financial magnates, railroad presidents, and a very skilled staff. He showed, even at that stage, some of the qualities that later on during the Truman investigation committee, the Truman Committee, of World War II years, appeared at such advantage.

HESS: That's interesting. That was the Interstate Commerce Commission of which Burton K. Wheeler headed, and who asked Mr. Truman to serve on that particular committee.

GILPATRIC: In connection with the Milwaukee Railroad hearings, because the Milwaukee Railroad was a sensitive subject in Montana where Wheeler came from, so when the hearings got to Milwaukee, Senator Wheeler turned over the gavel to Senator Truman and that's when Truman really ran the committee hearings for the period when they considered the Milwaukee Railroad.

HESS: And his method in working those hearings impressed you, correct?

GILPATRIC: Particularly since he was a freshman Senator and he was dealing in a pretty high powered league as far as both the committee staff was concerned and

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witnesses he had before him.

HESS: Mr. Max Lowenthal was the Special Counsel for that committee. When did you first meet Mr. Lowenthal, do you recall?

GILPATRIC: I had started practice of law in this firm several years before that and I had been assigned to work on problems of the Milwaukee Railroad for which this firm was counsel. Mr. Lowenthal had a particular animus against my then senior partner, Mr. [Robert T.] Swaine, so there were lots of fireworks between my side of the table and the side on which the Senator and Lowenthal sat. But even then Mr. Truman showed himself to be such a basically fair person. He was in the role of the inquisitor, and the proceedings were not designed to bring out the best on the part of the bankers and the railroad executives under whose aegis the Milwaukee had gone into reorganization. Yet, I felt that we had, essentially, a very decent, a very reasonable, and a very fair chairman, so I came away from that hearing with a pretty warm feeling for Mr. Truman, in spite of the tribulations we had to endure at Max Lowenthal's hands.

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HESS: After the 1940 election when Mr. Truman was re-elected to his second term in the Senate, as you have mentioned, he then headed the Truman Committee, the Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. Do you recall anything in particular about Mr. Truman's handling of that committee?

GILPATRIC: I heard a great deal about it, because his counsel was a former roommate of mine in this firm, Hugh Fulton, and through Hugh Fulton I met the Senator on several occasions in his offices in the Senate Office Building; and because I was also representing at various times during World War II companies that were called to appear before that committee, I did have several occasions to see that committee in action. In the light of my subsequent experience in the Korean war and during the Kennedy administration, I have always had the feeling that that committee had a very positive, substantive contribution to the whole area of procurement and production and logistics problems of supporting a major military effort by this country.

HESS: Did Mr. Fulton ever tell you how he came to be

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selected as Special Counsel for the Truman Committee?

GILPATRIC: I don't recall it if he did. He's now dead, you know. I don't remember. When Fulton left this office he went up to the U.S. Attorney's office. He was Assistant U.S. Attorney here in New York. What brought him first into contact with Mr. Truman I don't recall.

HESS: At the time Mr. Truman became President, there was some speculation that Mr. Fulton would move into the White House staff, and he did not. Did you ever hear him say anything about that? Would he have liked to have moved?

GILPATRIC: I, again, don't have any real recollection of that. I know that Hugh Fulton had a great admiration for Mr. Truman, and he always regarded that period of his professional career as sort of the highlight. I don't think he ever had as much fun afterwards when he practiced law in the Fulton-Halley firm, as he did when he was counsel for the Committee.

HESS: What evaluation would you place on Mr. Truman's handling of the Truman Committee to his receiving the

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nomination in the vice presidential spot in 1944? How important was that to his career?

GILPATRIC: Well, it certainly made, to quote another Vice President, his name a "household term." He became nationally known as a result of that, and I always felt that both the notoriety that he received and the positive effects of that committee's work had a good deal to do with his selection as a vice presidential candidate. But I was not active politically at that time so that I don't have any, you know, inside information about it.

HESS: His name was fairly well-known in government circles and in the Senate, but just in general, over the Nation, he probably was not that well-known. Were you surprised when the Democratic Party selected him for the vice presidential nomination that year?

GILPATRIC: Yes, I was, because he was a dark horse in the sense that his name had not been bruited about, and with the other...

HESS: Justice [William O.] Douglas, for instance; Jimmy [James F.] Byrnes, and then the man who was Vice

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President at the time, Henry Wallace.

GILPATRIC:all those names, you know, were the ones that accorded with general expectations. So I shared in the general surprise when Mr. Truman was selected by Roosevelt.

HESS: In 1948 when Mr. Truman was re-elected, that also surprised a good many people. Do you think Mr. Truman had a good chance for re-election or not?

GILPATRIC: I didn't. I think I was probably laboring under the same misapprehension that many people in New York did, where Dewey's base was and where we probably gave Dewey more credence as having the potential for becoming a national figure than he did out in the boondocks. Again I was not active politically in the campaign. I voted for Mr. Truman, because I had always been higher on him than I had been on Dewey, but I didn't expect him to win.

HESS: You became Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Materiel in 1951. Why were you selected for that position?

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GILPATRIC: Mr. [Thomas K.] Finletter, who was then the Secretary of the Air Force, had known me through this firm of which he had previously been an associate. He had left this firm before I became an associate. We had met. He called up one of his former colleagues here, a man who had become one of the senior partners, Maurice Moore, and asked if we had in this firm anyone who would be willing to come down for consideration as his assistant in the procurement area.

When I heard about this opportunity I went to Washington, met with Mr. Finletter, and with Mr. [John A.] McCone, and I did not at that time meet Mr. Truman. Mr. Finletter put my name up after he had reached a decision that he wanted me to join him, and I did communicate with two individuals I knew in the Democratic Party: Frances Perkins, who had been my mother's roommate at college, and Jim Farley, whom I had known, along with many thousands of other people, in a casual way; and my impression was, however, that as far as Defense Department positions were concerned, the President wasn't interested, or wasn't primarily concerned with political affiliations. This came up very vividly later on when I became Under Secretary

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in October 1951. The question of filling my place came up, and I recommended a man who was a vice president of Westinghouse, had had a great deal of experience in handling large organizations and installations, and I felt in a period when we were building these overseas bases in North Africa and England and in Western Europe, we needed somebody with that kind of organizational ability. The man in question named Huggins, Edwin V. Huggins, was a Republican, and this being only a year before the '52 election, the President went under considerable pressure from people like Mr. [Paul E.] Fitzpatrick, who was the Democratic State Chairman here in New York, to put in a good, staunch Democrat, and hopefully someone with plenty of resources to support the party. The man in particular, I remember, was Mr. [James David] Mooney, who had been vice president for overseas affairs of General Motors, a Democrat, a very wealthy man, a man who was then in his late sixties. He, among others, was sort of proposed by the Democratic Party organization, and they, on the other hand, opposed my suggestion to Mr. Finletter of bringing in Huggins. So, the matter

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had to be resolved at the highest level.

I went over with Mr. Finletter to see the President, because Mr. Finletter didn't know Huggins. As I remember there were present: Mr. Fitzpatrick, and I think Charlie Murphy, the President's Counsel, and there may have been some others of the White House staff. But after hearing all the reasons from Mr. Fitzpatrick why it would be good for the party, and if Mr. Mooney was selected, or some other good Democrat, and the President simply turned to Mr. Finletter and he said, "Now, Tom, is this the man you need and want, and is he qualified?"

And when Mr. Finletter said, "Yes," the President said, "That's the end of it."

I always remembered that because it was typical, so far as I know, of all of President Truman's appointments, not only with Mr. Finletter who was not at that time a particularly active Democratic politician, but of course, Mr. Lovett was a Republican, General Marshall bore no political label, and none of my colleagues in the Defense Department, the Under Secretaries, or the Secretaries, Frank Pace, Dan Kimball, the Under

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Secretaries [John F.] Floberg and Earl Johnson, none of us were there because we had any political support, and that was my initial and my lasting impression as far as the element of politics entering into the Defense Department.

HESS: He wanted the best man irregardless of politics.

GILPATRIC: Absolutely, and he made that very clear.

HESS: At the time that you were Assistant Secretary, just what were your principal duties? Were they directed towards building up the Air Force for prosecution of the Korean conflict?

GILPATRIC: Yes. The state of all of the military departments, particularly under Louis Johnson, had been cut back, and the Air Force simply didn't have a modern, large fleet of aircraft, and it meant really mobilizing an entire new defense industry, because the structure for the support of the effort in World War II had been pretty much dismantled.

One of the major problems that the Air Force faced was bringing into aircraft production the companies that never had anything to do with either air

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frame or aircraft propulsion unit manufacture, such as all the motor car companies. Mr. McCone, who had been given as the Under Secretary of the Air Force, this principal responsibility for this needed a lot of help, because he was also generally acting as deputy to Mr. Finletter. So, my job was to see that a number of the World War II facilities, things such as major Government-owned plants in Oklahoma, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Marietta, Georgia, and in Fort Worth, Texas, and elsewhere, and great stocks of machine tools that had been mothballed at the end of World War II, were brought back and put into use, and there were all kinds of struggles among the services, because each service resisted trying to build up the Air Force, with perhaps larger a mission and being further to go being a newer service, with less resources built up over the years behind it.

The period from April, I think it was, when I started work, and continuing after I became Under Secretary in October, was characterized by a great deal of pulling and hauling among the services with issues being cast up to the Secretary or the Deputy

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Secretary, Mr. Lovett, who became Secretary not long thereafter, for decision and with lots of congressional intervention and supervision.

It was during this period that I first became intimately acquainted with Lyndon Johnson, who had taken over the leadership of what had been the old Truman Committee, and was attempting to make it as much of a force as it had been during World War II.

HESS: You mentioned the cutback in the Armed Services during the time that Louis Johnson was Secretary of Defense. If it is your opinion that the services were cut back in such a manner that they were unable to operate effectively when the Korean situation occurred, where should there be blame placed? Why were those cutbacks made as they were?

GILPATRIC: It was really a question of judgment on the part of Louis Johnson. He had, as is well-known, come into the Truman administration, after, and I guess partly as a result of, the strong work that he did for President Truman during the '48 election. He felt it was in the interest of the country, and it was his mission to cut back on defense spending, and he took

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great pride in those efforts. I remember going to a symposium here in New York just a few months before Korea broke out--in which he made a great thing of what he had done in cutting back.

It was just a question of lack of prescience or foresight or, as I say, basically a matter of judgment. In the light of hindsight it didn't look very well, and it made the job of building up the military establishment during the Korean war much harder. But it's like other major steps, particularly I think of Vietnam where I had such a part in the beginning, and looking back it's hard to excuse myself and my colleagues for some of the mistakes that we made, but they were honest mistakes of judgment.

HESS: Of course, at the time that he came in, we did not know that we were going to be attacked in Korea. He came in March of '49. One of his first actions, as you may recall, I believe it was in the next month, in April of '49, was the cancellation of the contract for the U.S.S. *United States*, the super carrier, which John L. Sullivan became quite angry about and resigned as Secretary of the Navy. Did you feel, or did you not

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feel, that Mr. Johnson cut back one service more than the others?

GILPATRIC: I don't really have any vivid recollections on that score. I do recall feeling that the manner in which he operated was not conducive to getting cooperation and support from the services. I certainly learned during the Korean war while I was in the Air Force and later while I was Deputy Secretary of Defense under Kennedy, that you don't accomplish much if you beat the services over the head and make a public spectacle of overruling them. I saw enough of the problems that Mr. McNamara had, who operated in an entirely different way, but nevertheless, the services are always on guard against new civilian officials coming in and disregarding their judgments, and I just felt that that was not the way; and in contrast, of course, Mr. Lovett operated in an entirely different, and I think, more effective manner when he took over.

HESS: One more question on Mr. Johnson. There is a school of thought that he was just merely carrying out the directives of Mr. Truman. That the Budget Bureau gave him a budget limit, and that the cutback in the services

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was not really his idea; he was just carrying out orders as he was instructed to by other persons. Would you see it in that manner, or did it look like he was carrying out things with verve and wanted to cut back the armed services?

GILPATRIC: I would subscribe to the latter view, that he supplied a lot of enthusiasm and verve for his job, which undoubtedly found sympathy with and perhaps was directed by the Bureau of the Budget, which then had a very key role in establishing force levels and parameters for defense spending. I think he hurt his own effectiveness by embracing the cause of cutting back

too avidly and making his constituents feel they didn't have someone who was on their side at the top.

HESS: At the time that you were at the Department of Defense, did you often work with the directors of the Bureau of the Budget? I believe at the time you were there it was Frank Pace and then Frederick J. Lawton.

GILPATRIC: At the time I arrived on the scene, Frank Pace had become Secretary of the Army and I worked with Frederick J. Lawton, and then the man under him, who

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I saw a great deal of particularly, was Ellis Veatch, one of the ablest public servants I've ever run into. But I also saw a good deal of Mr. Lawton and I attended many sessions at the Bureau of the Budget, because as I took on the duties of the Under Secretary, Mr. Finletter brought me more and more into the budgetary process, and I did a great deal of testifying; I had a great deal of work not only within the Air Force during the Secretary's review of the Air Force budget request, but in presenting those to the Secretary of Defense and then defending them before the Bureau of the Budget and later before the Congress. I would say that I spent a third of my time after, say, from the fall of '51 until we presented our fiscal year '53 budget just before we left office, on budget matters.

HESS: In his *Memoirs*, Mr. Truman says that on budget matters the way that the services would try to do, if there was a pie to be cut up, they would want it cut in equal portions, each service getting the same amount, and he did not like that, so he wanted each service to come to him with a fully documented request showing exactly

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how much they wanted, justifying their expenditures. And he said in his *Memoirs* that the toughest service to deal with was the Navy. Would you think that Mr. Truman's observations were correct?

GILPATRIC: I would, and I don't think that's changed since his time either. The Navy is the best organized as a uniformed service. It has its best people presenting its case. It's, I would say, the most capable of the services in the kind of in-fighting that goes on within the Department, within the broader regions of the executive branch and finally before the Congress.

HESS: Why is that so? Is it just part of their tradition to build up their staff in Washington in this manner?

GILPATRIC: The Navy regards itself as capable through the Marine Corps, through its naval air arm, and through its surface ships, of providing single handedly for the defense of the United States. It's naval doctrine that I think is inbred into their officers, from their days in the Academy and the Naval War College, that the Navy is the most important of the services and that anything any other service can do, they can do better.

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They believe that. It's an article of faith..

In many respects they have certainly proven themselves. Look at the Polaris missile program, which is probably the most effective weapon system in our deterrent force today.

So that even though I was often on the opposite side from Navy Department advocates, I had to admit that they had a very important mission and they had a very clear sense of it. They were far less confused and disoriented at times and far less torn by internal controversy than the other services.

For example, the classical division between the submariners and the battleship admirals is pretty much dealt with within the Navy Department precincts itself, rather than becoming the kind of a public controversy that you have between the Strategic Air Command and the Tactical Air Command in the Air Force, where General [Curtis] LeMay and--I've forgotten the head of the Tactical Air Force--practically didn't speak to each other they were so opposed in their concept of the most important role of air power.

HESS: According to some of the figures that I have found

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on the reductions of the various services before Korea, and even after the time of the invasion of Korea, the Air Force was reduced less than the Army and the Navy. Do you recall that? Does that square with your thinking?

GILPATRIC: I do, and I attribute that in part to the, I would say, almost the militant advocacy of the first Secretary of the Air Force, Senator [Stuart] Symington, now Senator Symington, and such Air Force leaders as General [Henry H.] Arnold, General [Carl] Spaatz and General [Hoyt S.] Vandenberg. They took the initiative, almost the offensive, in trying to preserve what they gained at the end of World War II in the form of recognition as a separate service, and I think they were more politically astute in the best sense in the way they presented their case, both within the executive branch and on the Hill.

And also, as I said earlier, they didn't have as much to go on, because they were castoffs from the Army, and when it came to dividing up the resources and facilities they didn't get the first choice. So they didn't have the kind of infrastructure that

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the Navy and the Army had in terms of bases and facilities and industrial support of the private sector who traditionally looked, you see, to the Army and the Navy as their principal customers; the Air Force was a newcomer.

So all those elements combined to make the Air Force more aggressive, and also, I think, there was a considerable feeling at the time after the Finletter Commission that preceded Mr. Finletter's selection as Secretary of the Air Force, that air power was the coming thing, and such supporters as Senator Johnson and, of course, Secretary Lovett who had been an aviator himself in World War I, all these elements combined to give the Air Force a better break on the surface at least than the other services got in these cutbacks.

HESS: Mr. Symington at the time that he was Secretary of the Air Force had a gentleman on his staff named Stephen F. Leo, and his position was Director of Public Relations. After he left and Mr. Finletter came in, as far as I can find, there was no one with that specific title.

GILPATRIC: There was a man who had the equivalent duty,

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a fellow by the name of Lennartson.

HESS: What was his first name, do you recall?

GILPATRIC: Nils Lennartson, who was really Mr. Finletter's right hand man. I don't recall his exact title, as far as public affairs, public relations, relations with the press and so forth. He was an entirely different type of individual from Mr. Leo. I knew Mr. Leo, but not in his governmental role because he had left before I came down.

I say this without implying anything sinister, but Leo was a real operator, a real political operator, whereas Lennartson was a professional journalist and newsman, and really functioned primarily in that role, although he was very close to Finletter and I think did give Mr. Finletter a lot of policy advice and guidance on his external dealings.

HESS: My line of thinking was, was Mr. Symington more image conscious than perhaps Mr. Finletter had been? Is this a good thing? Did it work to the Air Force's advantage?

GILPATRIC: Well, there were a lot of comparisons made, I

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recall, between Mr. Finletter's style and Mr. Symington's style. I remember once some officer said to me, "Well, Mr. Finletter doesn't go up on the Hill and fight, bleed and die for the Air Force the way Mr. Symington did." I don't consider that a fair comment. I know both men very well. I've been very close to both men over the years, and they were just entirely different in their way of dealing.

Mr. Finletter is very controlled, somewhat of an introvert, very dispassionate, unemotional, and yet I recall seeing him before some of the appropriations and armed service committee hearings, where he really went all out within his capabilities to present the Air Force case. Symington was

more flashy, flamboyant. He had a very keen political sense. He knew how to make the best use of publicity, and so there was this contrast.

I must say that looking back on what happened to the Air Force during those early years up through the Korean war, I think each one of the two contributed a great deal, and I think it was, in a way, very provident that Finletter took over at the time that he did. I think President Truman's choice was right, that when you

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get into a period such as the Korean war period, you needed less of a combative type in the Secretary's role. You need somebody who can work in cooperative sequence with the other Secretaries, and who would not fight "city hall" the way Symington fought Forrestal, as you can tell from Forrestal's diaries. Finletter was not one to try to undercut or run around the end as far as his superiors were concerned. I'm not implying criticism of Symington, it's simply that at this period when the Air Force was getting started it had to fight for survival and...

HESS: A different style was needed.

GILPATRIC: ...was needed, exactly.

HESS: You became Under Secretary of the Air Force in 1951 and remained in that position until the end of the Truman administration in 1953.

GILPATRIC: That's right.

HESS: Why were you selected for that position?

GILPATRIC: Well, during the summer and early fall of 1951 it became evident that there was a falling out between

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Mr. Finletter and Mr. McCone. Mr. Finletter felt that Mr. McCone was--as I see it, this is subjective--was overstepping his role as Deputy or Under Secretary, and he was really, to use the common expression, throwing his weight around a good deal. I think Mr. Finletter took umbrage at that, resented that.

McCone, on the other hand, was feeling his oats as far as the coming '52 election was concerned. He was a great admirer of Eisenhower's and I believe he was one of those who has taken credit for helping convince Eisenhower to run for the Presidency.

So there was a breach there, a break between the two, and one day--I only sensed this under the surface, I hadn't seen any manifest evidence of it--but Mr. Finletter called me in and told me that Mr. McCone was leaving and he'd like to have me take over.

One of the interesting aspects of our conversation was as follows: At that time Mr. McCone's office was the same size as Mr. Finletter's. They were cheek by jowl and they each enjoyed a beautiful outlook across the river entrarim to the Pentagon, across Washington. And one of the things that Mr. Finletter said to me, "Now, Ros, you don't really need as big an office as

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Mr. McCone's had. Don't you think it would be better if we rearranged things and put our military aides in between," which meant cutting the size of my office.

Well, I couldn't have cared less, but it was so indicative of what the problem had been with my predecessor.

But actually, my work, you see, with not much more than a year to go before the end of the Truman administration and the '52 election, Mr. Finletter didn't give any thought to bringing in somebody completely new at any time on the job, and while he did disappoint another Assistant Secretary [Eugene] Zuckert, who had been inherited by Finletter from Mr. Symington, and that was rather a blow to Zuckert to be passed over in favor of somebody who had been there less time, who was less experienced. Nevertheless, Zuckert and I had no problems, and of course in the end Zuckert was made a member of the Atomic Energy Commission before the end of the Truman administration. Then he came back as Secretary of the Air Force, largely at my own instance, advising McNamara when the Kennedy administration came in the end of 1960.

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HESS: In September of 1951, Robert Lovett replaced General Marshall as Secretary of Defense. How effective were those two men in that position?

GILPATRIC: Both remarkably effective, albeit unlike in many respects. They both happen to be heroes of mine, so I find it hard to avoid superlatives. I didn't see a great deal of General Marshall, although I'll never forget one of my earlier encounters with him.

When I was going to be sworn in in April of 1951 as Assistant Secretary, Mr. Finletter just assumed, as this was a minor appointment, he would do the swearing in, and the usual little ceremony was set up in his office, and as the hour approached who showed up but General Marshall. Apparently any swearing in that was to be done of presidential appointees in the Pentagon, he was going to do it. Well, I was under the impression, never having had a presidential appointment before, that this was sort of a gala occasion, that everybody would be full of smiles and it was a very happy affair. So, when I stood up and took my oath, I guess I had a smile on my face, and the General looked at me and said, "If I were you, Mr.

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Gilpatric, I would not smile during this ceremony. This is a very serious undertaking that you're embarking upon, and I think you should look more solemn."

HESS: You got bawled out a little bit.

GILPATRIC: During that period, from then until September, I had occasion to see General Marshall maybe, you know, a dozen times, and I worked particularly with Lovett and with Anna Rosenberg and with [W. J.] McNeil, and his assistant, [Lyle S.] Garlock. But it was just one of those unforgettable experiences in one's life to have worked in that juxtaposition with a man of General Marshall's qualities, and working in tandem with Lovett made the transition very easy for Mr. Lovett.

Mr. Lovett was, I think, as effective a Cabinet officer as I've ever seen in action, again in his own manner and style, in his inimitable way. From that point on, from the fall of '51 on until January of '53, I saw Mr. Lovett several times a week at least, and he had a way, which John Kennedy later emulated a decade later, of calling directly the people that he wanted to do a particular job, or from

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whom he needed particular information. He didn't stand on ceremony; he didn't have an aide do it, or simply make a request to the secretary of the department. He would get on the phone or ask to come down, particularly an individual he felt could deal with a particular situation.

From the beginning of my relationship with him, he used me almost as one of his own staff. He was very much interested in all the problems of aircraft production, and procurement; he knew a great deal about it; he knew the industry as well as anybody, because he, in effect, had had the same job during World War II when he was an Assistant Secretary for Air in the Army. So we had a great rapport, and I learned a great deal that stood me in good stead when I got back in his position ten years later in the Kennedy administration.

HESS: You have mentioned several occasions when you met with President Truman, but approximately how many times and on what occasions did you meet with Mr. Truman during the administration, do you recall?

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GILPATRIC: Not frequently, because Mr. Finletter rightly prized very highly his own personal relationship with the President, and he rarely would deputize me as the Under Secretary to appear before him; nor did he follow the practice which McNamara followed in the Kennedy administration, of always bringing his deputy with him. So I would say, the best I can recall, that I had perhaps, maybe, in the course of a year, maybe a dozen meetings with the President other than for social occasions.

On the latter subject, President Truman was very solicitous about what he called the "Little Cabinet," the Assistant and Under Secretaries. He paid much more attention to them than either President Kennedy or President Johnson did. Of course, they had grown in the meantime in size. President Truman gave a number of dinners for the Little Cabinet. There was one I'll never forget, because when he came into the State Dining Room, instead of the usual arrangement of

tables, the tables were all arranged in a semicircle facing a whole battery of television sets, and the President got up at the beginning of the dinner and he said, "I hope you'll pardon the folly of a father

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who wants to see his daughter appearing for the first time on television."

Well, you know, it was a disaster. Margaret was on some kind of a slapstick comedy show where she had everything but pies thrown at her, and she handled herself well enough, but it was one of those...

HESS: The Milton Berle show?

GILPATRIC: Maybe it was the Milton Berle show, but anyway, it was her debut on a national television program, and for her father to have to witness what they put her through must have been excruciating. But he carried it off with such good spirit and with grace, and I think it warmed everybody's heart to see that he was willing to sit through this as he did.

But he was a very much more attentive to some of the people under the Cabinet level than other Presidents have been, and we all, of course, appreciated that, and I think--maybe it's not possible today--but at the time, it did sort of weld together into a much closer feeling of loyalty and brotherhood the people in the administration than otherwise would have been the case.

HESS: Did you often have occasion to work with or request

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the help of any of the members of the White House staff: General Landry was the Air Aide; of course, General Harry Vaughan was the Military Aide; we've mentioned Charles Murphy, who was the Special Counsel, earlier; there were others: Matthew Connelly, the Appointments Secretary. But did you have any dealings with the White House staff?

GILPATRIC: Not to any great degree. Again, Mr. Finletter handled that, and unlike the Kennedy administration, the President's staff didn't come through to the Under Secretaries, particularly down at the service level. I'm sure that at the Defense Secretary's office it was different. But I got to know Bob Landry quite well and Charlie Murphy quite well. I didn't see very much of General Vaughan or Matt Connelly, and the meetings I had with the President were either in connection with resolving budget issues at the time of appropriation bills that needed to be prepared, or when there was some major difference between, say, State and Defense.

I remember one occasion when Lovett was pitted against Acheson, and it must have been a particularly

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difficult decision for the President to make. I mean, here were two of his boys, two men whom he had built up and admired and who admired him, and I do recall that even though Acheson was the most spectacular advocate, as was his professional style, and Lovett underplayed it, as he always did, very low key, his position, the President did decide in favor of the Defense Department's line in that particular case, and overruled Acheson.

As I recall those experiences that I had at sort of a Cabinet level type of meeting with President Truman, he had no difficulty in reaching decisions, I mean, he didn't need to read a lot of papers, he didn't need to reflect and go off into the Lincoln Room with a yellow pad, or any of those methods that were followed by successors. He seemed to quite easily come to a point and in almost an offhand way, not in an awesome miraculous way announce his decision, which, as far as I can observe, was usually the right decision, even when it went against Defense. But it was always done in a way that didn't leave any rankling, in a sense, on the part of the advocate whose position

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did not prevail. It was not a formal, organized kind of a National Security Council procedure, it was more like the Kennedy procedure, namely, rather informal, and ad hoc.

HESS: Should we have prosecuted the Korean war in such a manner that would have brought about a clear-cut military victory?

GILPATRIC: I did not think so then, and I still do not think so. I think that if those who shared General MacArthur's point of view had prevailed, the consequences could have been a far broader conflict, and at that time, I think, would have brought Russia as well as Communist China directly into the conflict. I still believe that the observance of sanctuaries, the self-denial that we practiced in the application of military power in that contest was in the best interests of the United States and its allies.

HESS: Did you approve of the dismissal of General MacArthur when it came?

GILPATRIC: Yes I did. That happened before I came into...

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HESS: That was in April of 1951.

GILPATRIC: Yes, just as I was appearing on the scene, so I was not privy to the events leading up to it, but what did strike me was the way the uniformed members of the military establishment accepted that and supported the President in that rather unprecedented action.

HESS: The major change in our military setup during the Truman administration was the unification of the Armed Forces into the Department of Defense. As you know, in that changeover there were quite often statements by naval officers and members of the Department of the Navy voicing concern that if unification were imposed the Navy might lose all of its air

activities to the Air Force and perhaps the Marine Corps to the Army. From your vantage point, do you think that those fears were justified? Would the Air Force have liked to have taken over all air activity?

GILPATRIC: Not realistically, not seriously. The Navy was overreacting to fears that had grown out of the original Palm Beach agreement among the Chiefs on roles and

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missions and of course the Navy's own attack on the B-36 that's been the Strategic Air Command role. There was a great sensitivity and sort of a chip on the shoulder attitude manifest on both sides. I must say the Air Force under General Vandenberg was still inclined to be the aggressor, the provoking agent in many of these cases. Admiral Forrest Sherman, who unfortunately died quite young, was a very fine naval officer, who had much more of a sense of balance and proportion than some of the others.

Incidentally, I was responsible in bringing together two of the senior officers of the Air Force and Navy who subsequently rose to great heights, namely, General [Nathan F.] Twining, who was Vice Chief of Staff for the Air Force, and Admiral [Arthur W.] Radford, who was then CINCPAC--this was in '52. When I went out to Korea, Japan in '52, one of the trips I took out there, I had General Twining with me, and when we got to Honolulu, I insisted that we spend an extra day there and sit down with Admiral Radford, really get to know him, and get the Navy's point of view on the conduct of the air war. The two men had never

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met each other before, and for the first few hours they were obviously eyeing each other with some suspicion, perhaps, certainly questioning. But that did lead, that and other associations, to their becoming tremendously close, and in the end Twining succeeded Radford as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the Eisenhower administration.

At the time I appeared on the scene, Lovett and the service secretaries: [Dan A.] Kimball (Kimball didn't take over until the end of the year, but he was pretty much the Acting Secretary during the time I was there); Frank Pace and Finletter working with Lovett, were all disposed to play down these interservice conflicts, and the only one that reached any great state of intensity was the division of roles in the missile field.

Lovett had brought down K. T. Keller, who had been head of the Chrysler Corporation, one of the strongest industrial leaders, made him sort of a monitor or the czar of the missile program, and he just took the bit in his teeth and he proceeded to assign out a lot of programs to that there wasn't much

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opportunity for in-fighting and byplay while I was there. Subsequently, during the Eisenhower administration, of course, the thing erupted and became a major issue that had to be dealt with by

the President himself. But with Lovett, assisted by Keller, the missile controversy didn't assume very large proportions, and that was one of Lovett's great gifts. He had a way either through deflating one through his sense of humor and his underplaying, or through a very quiet, firm decision disposing one way or the other, of just damping out these incipient interservice conflicts before they took off and became great public issues.

HESS: Was one aspect of that conflict the Air Force's request to take over the Polaris missile project?

GILPATRIC: I don't recall that particular issue, but it might have come up. My recollection blurs between one half in '52 and in '53 and '54. The ICBM programs, the long-range ballistic missiles were just in their incipiency in the Truman administration. We were more concerned with immediate-range missiles and short-range missiles, and cruise speed missiles rather than the supersonic intercontinental missiles. If there was

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any major issue on the part of the Air Force at that time, I didn't get involved in it. I think it took place later.

HESS: What's your general opinion on the subject of unification of the Armed Services? Was it necessary, and should it have been carried further than it was?

GILPATRIC: I think it had to be carried further than it was during the Truman administration, because due to all the pulling and hauling that went on in the adoption of the original Unification Act in 1947 and then the amendments (I've forgotten the exact year), of 1948 and 1949, the power of the Secretary of Defense was still imperfect. The Secretary of Defense still had to operate over a group of sort of proconsuls or semiautonomous units within the Defense Department. The Secretaries had more power than was good if you were going to have real unification. So it wasn't until the 1957, I guess, amendments to the National Security Act that the Secretary of Defense was given the power he needed to run the Department and to transfer missions and to reorganize certain units.

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Now, when I came down in the Kennedy administration to the Defense Department, I had ideas of carrying unification even further. In fact, I was one of the authors of a report to President-elect Kennedy, the Symington Committee Report, which went much further than the '57 amendments had gone. In the course of the following three years, I revised my views, and I now feel that the way that the structure of the Defense Department has emerged, beginning with the original act and with the changes that took place in the Truman administration and the Eisenhower administration, as far as legislative sanction and overall legal structure, the Department as it is probably set up today doesn't need another reorganizing or restructuring.

HESS: As you mentioned, you were Deputy Secretary of Defense, and you held that position from 1961 to '64, during the administrations of both President Kennedy and Johnson. How

would you compare the general handling of the Department of Defense between the time of the Truman administration and the Kennedy and Johnson administrations? What had evolved between one period

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and the other that you might point out to give a comparison of how the Department changed?

GILPATRIC: Well, during the Eisenhower administration there had been definite steps forward in unifying many of the common functions. For example, in connection with selecting strategic targets for Minutemen and Polaris missiles and B-52 bombers, Secretary [Thomas S. , Jr.] Gates brought about a mechanism for avoiding the kind of overlap, duplication or conflict which existed before when the services went their own ways. Also there had been set up several agencies, common agencies, for atomic weapons and for communications to which when McNamara came in under Kennedy, we added to the Defense intelligence agency, the Defense supply agency, but we were picking up and carrying on a trend which had begun before. I think the principal difference between the two periods in broad terms, was that the position of the Secretary of Defense, as the chief executive of the military establishment, had been tremendously strengthened, there had been a real centralization of power; whereas in the Truman administration days, originally the Secretaries

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of the services had been members of the Cabinet.

HESS: Back during the National Military Establishment period of time.

GILPATRIC: Yes, and then they lost that particular prerogative in 1949 , but they did continue to have major roles in the deployment of forces and the assignment of commands, and they were in the operational line of command to a greater degree than I think was wise, and that did change and was accentuated during the McNamara period when the major unified and specified commands would report up through the JCS to the Secretary of Defense and to the President without going through the services, and that was a major improvement in streamlining the effectiveness of the Commander in Chief who controlled the services.

There were many, of course, innovations in methodology, in personality and approach, introduced during the McNamara regime, although Lovett was responsible, I believe, for both McNamara's appointment and mine. I have reason to believe that it was his suggestion, when he turned down the job himself as well as other Cabinet posts, that Lovett was the first

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to recommend McNamara, because McNamara had worked for him during World War II, and he had a very high opinion of McNamara. I know he also put in a word with Kennedy for me. So in affect, the two of us, McNamara and I , were sort of legacies from the Truman administration because of the fact that Lovett had brought it about, and we both were great admirers of Lovett

and even though McNamara had a different style, he didn't differ basically in his concept of the job. He was just more of an activist and tried to do more things himself, whereas Mr. Lovett was content to delegate more. To repeat, the process was an evolutionary one and much of what we were able to do in the three years of the Kennedy administration had its roots and beginnings in what had started during the Korean war. There was a definite connection there and a relationship that I was very well aware of having been there both times.

HESS: In your opinion, what were President Truman's major accomplishments during his career?

GILPATRIC: Well, I would express them in sort of a personal way. I think that he really did make

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individuals working for the Federal Government feel that they counted. Now, President Kennedy dramatized that more and was more explicit in enunciating that principle, but it existed in the case of the Truman administration. Everybody that I knew well and my own feelings were that here was a man whose support and loyalty you could count on; who paid attention to you as an individual; and who gave you the kind of environment that it was heartwarming to work for.

I felt he was a very human President; that he had a sort of common touch with how small people reacted. Maybe it was part of a function of the fact that life wasn't quite as complicated twenty years ago as it is today, but I felt he was a very effective President; and I won't comment on his, you know, his Truman Doctrine and some of the major accomplishments of his administration. But just as someone who worked under him and with him, I just feel that he'll go down in history as one of our great Presidents. I believe that very strongly.

HESS: If you were called upon to list one or two major failings of either Mr. Truman or the Truman administration

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what would come in mind?

GILPATRIC: I believe that in some instances the Truman administration picked people who were not strong enough for their jobs and then stood by them beyond the point where their inadequacies had been recognized.

HESS: Who do you have in mind?,

GILPATRIC: Well I think General Vaughan was one example. On the other hand, Admiral [Sidney] Souers was a--I think he had never been given his due as being as effective and able a person as he was; he didn't have the public reputation and acceptance that, say, a General [Maxwell] Taylor or an Admiral [Ernest J.] King would have. I couldn't pick many instances of my own personal impressions, because as I said earlier, I didn't deal so much with the White

House, but sort of accepting the judgments of those who have come later, historians and the like, I think that that is the one thing--and particularly it's true in the Department of Justice, as a lawyer I have--I don't think that Truman's appointments in the Department of Justice were of the caliber that job demands.

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HESS: Who do you have in mind there?

GILPATRIC: Well, the last two Attorney Generals I do not think were comparable in quality to the Lovetts and the Achesons and to other of Truman's Cabinet appointments.

HESS: J. Howard McGrath and James P. McGranery.

GILPATRIC: Yes. Nor, do I think that President Truman's appointments to the Supreme Court were outstanding.

HESS: One of them came from the Department of Justice, Tom Clark.

GILPATRIC: Tom Clark I do not include in that. I think Tom Clark was a very good appointment, but I was thinking of Vinson, and didn't Truman appoint Byrnes or did Roosevelt appoint Byrnes?

HESS: Roosevelt.

GILPATRIC: Vinson I don't think was a strong Chief Justice. He was a fine man and his character was beyond reproach, and you're never going to have at every period of the history of the Supreme Court strong men. I don't offer

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that as a criticism. It was a case where the President had tremendous confidence and faith in Vinson, which was warranted. He just wasn't an outstanding jurist and I don't think the President paid as much attention to the Department of Justice and the judicial branch, perhaps, as other Presidents have.

I don't think he particularly understood the legal profession. He had plenty of lawyers around him, Finletter, myself, Acheson and many, many others, Clark Clifford, of course. But in the relative terms, I think his major accomplishments were in other areas. Those are the only two areas where I would think he just didn't put the strongest people.

HESS: Some historians have pointed out that the Department of Justice was rather a weak link in the Truman administration. Perhaps Mr. Truman did not understand what the Department of Justice could perform, in the fields of civil rights, for example.

GILPATRIC: Yes, for example, he looked more to the services. When it came to civil rights he was very strong in insisting from the beginning that the services had to integrate, and by being so clear-cut and so

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positive and decisive about it, you know, the thing got off right away on the right footing. And the problems that the services had later were not inservice problems, they were problems dealing with communities and off-base facilities where the Defense Department or the Government didn't have direct jurisdiction. But thanks to President Truman there never were any really difficult periods of strife over civil rights issues within the military establishment, because they got on the right foot to begin with.

HESS: Do you have anything else to add on Mr. Truman or your duties in the Truman administration?

GILPATRIC: I don't think so.

HESS: Thank you very much, sir.

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