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Interview With Senator Stuart Symington

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Goldberg: This is an oral history interview with Senator Stuart Symington,
at 1700 K Street, Washington, D.C., on May 19, at 10:30 a.m.
Senator Symington:

Symington: Before we entered World War II, I was with Emerson Electric in
St. Louis. General Knudsen of the War Production Board, former head
of General Motors, and James Forrestal, then Under Secretary of the
Navy, asked that ^{we} go to England during the Battle of Britain and the
Blitz to study the production of power gun turrets for airplanes.
The problem was as the speeds increased, a man could not move his
gun fast enough to establish the proper lead against his target; and
there was no automatic computation at that time. So we went to England
in early 1941, a group of engineers and a young major in the Army Air
Corps, to examine this new concept of airplane armament. The British
did not believe in daylight bombing; also they used .30 calibre guns.
A young American officer, Follet Bradley, whose father was an Air
Corps general, came over to try to sell them on daylight bombing. The
latter required formation bomber attack, also .50 calibre guns. We
sent six B-17s over for the British to try out. They did so over Norway./
They were
adamant against daylight bombing; and perhaps not too displeased when
all six were shot down. British turrets were stressed to handle
.30 calibre guns. We sent back information about the
machinery needed to build their turret. When we returned to

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St. Louis, we found the stresses in the design for .30 calibre were all wrong for .50 calibre, so we had to cancel out much of the machinery ordered, some of which had already been shipped, and start out fresh. In this first power gun turret plant, because of this required change, we got ourselves into quite a mess. At first, the problem was not understood by some people in government. Accordingly we were investigated, first on an improper basis by the House Armed Services Committee, chaired by Andrew Jackson May from Kentucky (May was later convicted and sent to jail for taking bribes). Later the Senate War Investigating Committee, chaired by the then Senator Truman, started investigating us. By that time I'd had it. Our regular business was going very well, there was little profit in gun turrets because of the wartime excess profits tax; so I decided to turn the turret plant back to the government. Our lawyer, a good friend of Mr. Truman, came out and we talked. Then we had lunch with the Senator. He volunteered, "If we investigate Emerson, I promise you two things: first, it will be orderly." (It had been plenty disorderly before when the House investigated under Congressman May. Actually interfered with production.) "Second, you can always have access to my office." So I agreed to go ahead. Apparently Senator Truman approved of what he saw. Emerson received two more Army-Navy E awards for excellence in turret production than any of its competition; and as soon as he became President he asked me to come into his government to take over arrangements for selling surplus war property. I remember once being introduced as the "hundred billion dollar junk man," a title not particularly relished.

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Goldberg: That was the War Assets Administration?

Symington: First the Surplus Property Board. Now it's hard to run anything in this town with a Board, so the setup was changed. I became Administrator after the/ President abolished the Board; came down to Washington for an agreed six months, stayed 32 years, but that's another story. When the surplus property policies had been laid down to the best of our ability, President Truman asked me to head the War Assets Administration. Having had experience in merchandising, I told him I couldn't build up a/national organization which would/go out of business as soon as the surplus was sold; I couldn't build up a/national organization which would/go out of business as soon as the surplus was sold; requested he give me some existing agency and suggested the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. My friend John Snyder, later Secretary of the Treasury, objected to that because he and Jesse Jones, the Texas banker, had built the RFC into a fine organization. He said they were bankers, not salesmen. I said they didn't have to be salesmen to sell something for anything they could get for it; all needed was (1) shoe leather, (2) hard work, and (3) no corruption. The President's advisers wouldn't buy that, so I made plans to go back to Emerson, where they had held open my job. Then Snyder and Bob Hannegan, Postmaster General and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said the President didn't want me to leave the government, and offered me a choice of three jobs-- Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air, Assistant Secretary of State in charge of commercial aviation, and Assistant Secretary of War for Air. During WWI and WWII the Navy was the force in being. My father-in-law, when President Wilson lost the Congress over the League of Nations issue, became chairman of the Senate Military

Affairs Committee. He had told me how the strength of the Army went down to almost nothing between World Wars I and II.

Goldberg: That was James Wadsworth.

Symington: Yes. James W. Wadsworth, Jr. His son, James J. (Jerry Wadsworth (Later our Ambassador to the United Nations Under President Eisenhower) came in to help at Surplus Property. It was a difficult situation because most everybody working for the Surplus Board wanted to get out--assigned servicemen, businessmen, people who had been hiding from combat or were too old. So we had to first build an organization--then progressively kill it as we sold off the surplus property. Soon the Board was abolished and I became Surplus Property Administrator. The Navy, being the force in being between the two wars, was relatively experienced on logistics. The Army, cut to pieces between wars, had some fine people but relatively little logistic background; and therefore the Army Air Force had even less, being in the same kind of position the Marines found themselves in--maybe still do--with the Navy. So I thought I could be of more help with them than with the Navy, even though, having originated in Baltimore, I was closer to the Navy in background. So I took the place of Bob Lovett--my friend before either of us came into government--as Assistant Secretary of War for Air. He had done a superb job under trying conditions with this orphan, the Army Air Corps. Everything over a certain figure had to be approved by the office of the Secretary of War, this after it had been approved by the Air Corps. I think at one time anything over \$5 million had to be approved; but after the war that requirement was cut from \$5 million to something like \$100,000. General Spaatz, Army Air Force Chief of Staff, was quite a man. President Eisenhower once told me

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he thought he was the finest airman the war produced. Spaatz created true devotion in his subordinates, as he certainly did in me. We had no problem getting along. I said, "I don't know anything about flying airplanes, but can try to install the best possible business methods and procedures. Then, after you and the Air Staff decide policy, let me roll the balls you make to the best of my ability in the Executive Branch and on the Hill." In the spring of '46 Judge Patterson, then Secretary of War, told me he, President Truman, and General Eisenhower--then Army Chief of Staff after coming back from Germany--were anxious to create a Secretary of Defense with true administrative authority over all three Services. He then asked if I would monitor this desired law through the Congress. Believing implicitly in the logic of such a development, of course I agreed, and started exploring the idea on the Hill. Senator Wadsworth at that time was a Congressman. (Served 12 years in the Senate, was defeated, out six years, then went back to the House for 18 years, one of the most respected men in Congress.) Wadsworth was a friend of Senator Saltonstall, another fine person on Naval Affairs in the Senate. I went to Judge Patterson in mid-1946 to report there was no chance of achieving true unification until more work was done, suggested we had better work quietly through 1946, then make an all out effort with the Congress in 1947 where we knew there would be major opposition, primarily because of the great strength of the Navy lobby. That service had been the force in being between the two wars, with a great many experienced people. Part of our problem was the relatively little experience Army Air Force people had had in Logistics and on the Hill.

I well remember one conversation with Spaatz. First he raised hell about the relatively few Air representatives on the War Department General Staff, but only a few minutes later was emphasizing that no flyer liked to sit behind a desk. I said, "make up your mind, we can't have it both ways," and we had a laugh. About that time General Lauris Norstad did go on General Eisenhower's staff in the Army. That helped. The Navy, however, expressed strong opposition to anybody having any control over any part of their operations, including their air power. In looking back, one can't blame them. The wise men in the Navy saw a Navy future in the air, realized battleships were becoming absolescent to obsolete.

With this I agreed. In the early spring of 1941, while returning from England to the United States through Lisbon, hoping no German planes would see us, our Sunderland flying boat ran into the Bismark-Hood fight, so we were rerouted to Ireland. I mention this because the new German battle cruiser Bismark had just sunk the world's greatest battleship, the Hood, off northern Scotland. After this unprecedented success, the Bismarck, trying to get into one of the French ports then controlled by the Germans, was sighted by a few old-fashioned seaplanes off a carrier out of the Mediterranean (think those planes were called "Faireys"). These planes didn't sink the Bismarck, but damaged it to the point/it couldn't go forward. Then British warships, led by a heavy cruiser, finished it off near the French coast. Also, as I remember, in late 1941, two great

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ships were lost off the Malay Peninsula, the Prince of Wales and the Repulse; sunk by Japanese planes, a great shock to surface Navy adherents. At that point, the Japanese had not flushed their new Zeroes. The two ships were sunk by relatively old-fashioned planes. Air power was beginning to show great and steadily increasing effectiveness. Under these circumstances, visionary people in the Navy were anxious to have no infringement of their own air mission. They were strong in protest, to the point where at first it looked just about hopeless to achieve what Truman, Eisenhower, and Patterson wanted; namely, one authority ^{with} / one air service. But the more we got into it, the more convinced we became it was the right thing to do from the standpoint of eliminating duplication and achieving both cost effectiveness and ^{more} battle efficiency. The older services wanted to maintain the status quo, the Navy ^{much of} openly opposed, the Army covertly opposed, even though their chief, Eisenhower, was for separate air. Each service saw the great future of air power; therefore each wanted it as part of their ^{perhaps} own team; /a parochial approach, but one could hardly blame them. In government there is no profit motive, so a strong tendency to reach out for power.

Goldberg: Was Eisenhower opposing it?

Symington: No. He was all for it, based on his experience in Europe.

Goldberg: Who in the Army was opposed?

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Symington: A surprising number. Some of those most opposed had been turned down for flying, primarily because of poor eyesight.

In sum, the Army people did not want to lose their air arm any more than the Navy wanted to lose its air. But Eisenhower had seen what air had done and could do, as had ^{some} others in the Army. General Jim Gavin, the highly decorated paratroop general, was our house guest some weeks ago. We talked about those days. Later Gavin sent me a book in which he points out how air saved several major ground battle situations. Eisenhower was big enough and broad enough to understand quickly the value of unified air. So was General Douglas MacArthur, especially after he lost all his B-17s at one time in the Philippines and later saw what air could really do in that fantastically successful battle of the Bismark Sea. MacArthur realized those B-17s might have changed things a lot in the Pacific. Admiral Ernie King, whose son-in-law in due course became a four star Air Force General (Freddie Smith) also saw it clearly. King had won his Navy wings. But the greatest opponent of all was Admiral Arthur Radford. After he became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, however, Radford bent over backwards to be fair--perhaps even a little more than fair--to the new Air Force. He was very pro-Navy, but a ^{fair,} strong and able man.

Secretary Patterson and General Eisenhower lent us General Norstad to supervise our unification efforts. Secretary Forrestal assigned Radford to block any effort to control naval air except within the Navy, including any real control by the proposed new Secretary of Defense. President Roosevelt had been Assistant

Secretary of the Navy. After Pearl Harbor he wanted a strong man to head up that service, and he sure got one when he appointed Admiral Ernie King to be Chief of Naval Operations.

A fascinating development incident to all this occurred during the war. Senator Wadsworth, later the Congressman, told me this story about Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Towards the end of the war Wadsworth was appointed vice chairman of the so-called Woodrum Committee, a committee formed to investigate and recommend how the Armed Forces should be structured in the future, based on the experience of World War II. Woodrum was a Virginia Congressman. One day he and Wadsworth went to see Knox about another matter. To their surprise and delight, the Secretary himself brought up the question of a proposed single service, and told these two Congressmen he was for a unified service structure, with a single administrative head at the top. The two could hardly believe what they heard, the civilian head of the Navy feeling that way, and asked, "Would you come up to the Hill and testify to this effect?" Knox replied, "Yes." "When?" "Anytime you want me." "How about next week?" Knox agreed, but that weekend the Secretary had a stroke and later died. What I believe might have happened afterwards--strictly conjecture--is as follows: Everybody knew that, not even excepting Admiral Leahy, the closest military man to FDR at the time was probably Ernie King, Navy Chief. Forrestal at the time was Under Secretary of the Navy. I surmise that after Knox's death, over a period of days King got over this message:

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"We want to see you Secretary of the Navy, but we don't want a Secretary who would agree to any plan which would put control of a third party over the Navy." Sort of like Churchill's "I've not become Prime Minister to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire." The job of Secretary of Defense we understood was offered to Secretary Patterson, a Truman favorite, when the law finally passed. Patterson turned it down because he was tired and needed money. Then it was offered to Forrestal who accepted. The whole issue incident to what should be the new law revolved around two words, "administration" or "coordination." In 1946-1947 the Navy paid for a study called the Eberstadt Report. Present one afternoon, in Secretary Patterson's office, were Secretary Forrestal, Mr. Eberstadt, General Eisenhower, Secretary Patterson, and myself. The Eberstadt Report had approved a separate Air Force, but specified that the new Secretary of Defense would "coordinate," not "administrate." I asked at this meeting, "Do you agree with the Navy report that's just come out?" Forrestal replied, "It's not the Navy report, it's the Eberstadt Report." (Eberstadt used to work for Forrestal at Dillon Read.) I replied, "But the Navy paid for it, didn't they?" His answer was, "It's the Eberstadt Report." Then Mr. Eberstadt volunteered, "Stuart, if you will agree to coordination as against administration I think I can sell Jim (Forrestal) on a separate Air Force." In effect, what he was saying was that if it was agreed not to bother naval air, the Navy didn't care whether the Army did, or did not, lose its air. I didn't answer Eberstadt because his was clearly a proposition that would not have met the basic objective; namely,

cut out all the duplication, even triplication. At that point, if I had not been with the Air Force and they had put three numbers in a hat, that would have been all right with me. From the standpoint of both efficiency and cost effectiveness, at the time it appeared what would be best was a single suit, with a civilian head and the most appropriate military man as Chief of Staff.

Goldberg: Control of the Defense Department?

Symington: Yes. I've always felt that those people who believed in one uniform and a single Chief had much merit on their side. The Navy was far superior in logistics, having been the "force in being" between the two wars. (Ironical and interesting, however, that there's never been an Admiral president; eight or nine generals but no admirals.) You could make a proper contract with the Navy in an elevator, by means of a verbal agreement. / But people in the Air Force (Air Corps) who had been dealing in thousands of dollars suddenly found themselves dealing in billions. That Service went rapidly from some 20 thousand people to millions. All their logistics nevertheless still had to go through the War Department. It created delay and inefficiency. those in favor of Over many months / "coordination" as against "administration" chipped at the proposed bill, to the point where the proposed Secretary of Defense ended up with no real control. Then Senator Saltonstall came to my father-in-law and reported, "Jim, you better tell your son-in-law this is all you're going to get. If they don't take this, you're not going to get any bill." So, considering it a step forward, we accepted coordination as against administration rather than losing the whole concept of a single Department of Defense.

Upon becoming Secretary of Air, there was much confusion on the logistic side, the Army having previously called all major shots. So we asked a man who had been president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., Arthur Barrows, to come in as Under Secretary, in the hope we could improve the logistic picture. He accepted and was great. Most airmen want to fly. Some in the new Air Force were silly, saying air power could do it all; in effect, forget the land and sea. That was a lot of nonsense. One of the ironies was that Forrestal, who fought long and hard for the "coordination" bill, later found he did not have the necessary authority to handle properly the job of Secretary of Defense. I remember when Assistant Secretary of Air Gene Zuckert--later Secretary under President Kennedy--came in to say, "They've given us only \$3,600,000,000 for the whole Air Force." I replied, "That's not possible, the Secretary hasn't mentioned any such decision to me." Just then Spaatz came in, livid, to report the same decision. Incredible. So I rang Mr. Forrestal on the open box to say, "Mr. Secretary, I understand we're only getting \$3,600,000,000 (spring of 1948)." He replied, "That's right." I said, "But you have never talked to me about it." (Here I was, Secretary of Air, and at that time a member of the National Security Council.) Forrestal replied, "I didn't have time."

I said, "Well, I can't support it." He said, "Well then why don't you quit?" I said, "I won't quit and I won't support it." He said, "Come up here immediately." I did, and stated respectfully, "We just can't live with any such figure." It got pretty tricky but I survived.

In the past couple of years my job had been to cut, cut, cut, especially such units as military transport, because we were out of the war. At one point I had asked General Spaatz, "How many groups do you need to carry out properly our assigned mission on a minimum basis?" (We had been up to around 230 groups, as an offhand estimate.) After several days Tooey came back and said, "70 is the absolute minimum." That's how the "70 group program" originated. We could never achieve anything like 70 groups for \$3,600,000,000. The whole amount allocated at that time for defense was some 13.9 billion. The Army too was cut heavily. Navy money was also reduced. Everybody was in a hell of an argument with everyone else, fighting honestly for what they thought was right.

I remember a day when we were all up testifying on the Hill before the new Senate Armed Services Committee. Senator Harry Byrd, a friend, was able but very pro-Navy; logical in that Newport News was in his state; also his brother was the famous Admiral Byrd. Senator Byrd, in his questioning, was quite critical of Forrestal, then head of all three services. In reply the Secretary became evasive and was obviously upset. I later asked John Sullivan, Secretary of the Navy, "Did you notice something

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peculiar about Jim at the hearing? He seemed unusually nervous under the questioning of Senator Byrd." Sullivan replied, "Did you notice he scratched his head to the point where blood started down his neck?" Forrestal apparently was distressed when he realized he now had to deal with the conflicting interests of all three Services; and as a direct result of his own efforts, did not have adequate authority to enforce his decisions.

Goldberg: Do you remember when this was?

Symington: It would be the spring of '48. I went up to the Hill and, under questioning, said what I thought was right. Somewhere we have a copy of the Washington Times Herald, which had a headline, "Truman Spanks Symington." I remember calling a friend very close to President Truman and saying, "Look, if the boss wants me out, I want to get out, but I don't like to read such stuff." In a few hours word came back, "Keep quiet and keep working." Truman was more Army, however, than either Air Force or Navy. All this was before missiles and the Polaris submarines. Truman felt, and properly, that we had cut the Army too heavily.

I remember, back in 1920, a college student visiting my wife-to-be. Her father was then chairman of Military Affairs in the Senate. At dinner I sat well below the salt with a general who

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stated, "Never forget the three basic rules of war;

(1) each war costs more per man killed than the previous one;
(2) if a new weapon isn't immediately successful, the opponent, almost immediately, will find something to stop it. (He illustrated with the pillbox for tanks--tanks were very slow in those days--and gas masks for poisonous gas); (3) regardless of all technical developments, wars will be won by a man going to a piece of land where he's not wanted, with a knife, and staying there against the wishes of his enemy. Sometimes the knife is on the end of a gun and is called a bayonet." This made sense, and years later was one of the reasons I never went overboard about air power being able to do it all. Some did, and their position and statements hurt us badly as we tried to establish more identity through a separate service. George Kenney, for example, fought the battle of the ship, Bismarck Sea brilliantly, sank every Jap/ was great; but apparently he didn't realize there was more to war than sinking ships and bombing cities. Ground had to be both occupied and held.

Goldberg: How about Spaatz?

Symington: Never like that; but always strong for air power.

Goldberg: But quite anti-Navy during this period too, wasn't he?

Symington: I think this about Tooe, wanting to be totally objective. He was somewhat anti-Navy because he had a fine concept of authority, as much as any man who ever served; and when his chief, Eisenhower, came out for "administration" at the top, as did Secretary of War Patterson, Spaatz didn't think the Navy had the right to object as hard as they did, especially as they were also bucking the Commander-in-Chief.

Goldberg: I worked for him over in Europe during the war. I knew him well.

Symington: Then you know what a fine person he was, getting together people like Ira Eaker, Fred Anderson, Ted Curtis, Jimmy Doolittle, all devoted to him. I was honorary pallbearer the other day for another man much like Spaatz, Omar Bradley. In quiet leadership, Brad was the same way. Let me deviate a bit to tell a story about Spaatz, George Patton and air power. I met Patton this way. My father-in-law called up and asked, "How would you like to come to dinner with two interesting people tonight?" "Sorry, I'm dining with a young Air Force major with whom I was in England last year." "Why don't you bring him along? I'm having dinner with General and Mrs. Patton." So we both went. Murtha was a major and Patton at that time a major general. We met at the Army-Navy Club here in town. Murtha was a fine-looking officer, killed later.

Goldberg: He was killed in the Pacific.

Symington: That's right, I think on the Nashville, MacArthur's headquarters, perhaps the first Kamikaze attack. At this dinner Murtha had his wings on. We were introduced around. I said, "General Patton, this is Major Murtha." The major said, "How do you do, sir?" Patton looked him over, went over, flicked his wings, then said, "Look at those damn wings. They never did a damn thing for anybody. Tanks count, tanks kill. Those things don't kill anybody." It went on, got pretty bad as he ground it in; so I turned to my father-in-law and said, "We'll go now. He's too rude." Apparently Mrs. Patton heard me. She leaned over and said in a low voice, "Now don't be upset with George. He's just come from a very

important mission." (Actually he'd been out in Arizona or somewhere, practicing for the Africa landing, which occurred a few days later.) So I thought things would get better and asked, "What mission have you been on?" The reply, "None of your goddamn business;" so bad everybody got to laugh a bit, including Patton. Back to the Air Force. O.P. Weyland, tactical air general in Europe, later commander at Leavenworth in 1946, was the one who once saved Patton. The latter pushed ahead so rapidly in his drive towards the Rhine that his tanks ran out of gas; and there he was, a sitting duck. Weyland had a tactical air unit under either Pete Quesada or Hoyt Vandenberg. Now Spaatz told me this in his stuttering voice, "You know, that Patton was really something. He did not admit he was wrong in the normal way about air power, but did say later 'Tooey, do me a favor, will you; turn me around and kick me square in the ass.'" Tooey got a kick out of that apology. If you knew Spaatz, you would know he would.

Goldberg: Lovett told us some stories about him too.

Symington: Lovett and I were friends before the war. When I took over his job he asked me to come down to Hobe Sound, Florida, where he had a house, and observed, "I want you to meet one of the finest men I've ever known." That's where and when I first met Spaatz. Years later I gave a farewell stag dinner for Tooey at 1925 E when he retired (Two wars and the unification fight had taken its toll and he was very tired). At that dinner was a congressman, Leo Allen of Indiana, Chairman of the House Rules

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Committee. He was a bit plastered, came up to Spaatz, put his arm around him, and pronounced, "Tooeey, I'll tell you one thing; if that damned super carrier can't get through the Panama Canal, it's never going to get through the Rules Committee." Spaatz was very popular with many people. They even beseeched him to run for Governor of Pennsylvania.

Getting back to the new Air Force and our problems under the new defense setup, much of it culminating in the "Revolt of the Admirals." For reasons best known to himself, in 1948 Jim Forrestal did not appear over-interested in the reelection of President Truman. In that year Louis Johnson took the vitally important job of getting money for Mr. Truman's campaign, and Truman won despite almost everybody's conviction he would lose.

Johnson
/ badly wanted to be Secretary of Defense. He had been Assistant Secretary of War, then fired by President Roosevelt. I remember one time we were called in to the cabinet room at the White House shortly before Forrestal left. The President opened the meeting by saying, "Now this is the defense budget, and I want everybody to back it." (Said budget had been heavily cut.) General Eisenhower had come down from Columbia to talk about it before Senator McKellar's Appropriations Committee, in the Senate. I met him in his little Pentagon office prior to his testimony and pleaded with him to ask for more money. When he returned, he was furious. The hearing room had been overcrowded. Someone suggested they go to a larger room, but McKellar refused, saying, "I'm not furthering any presidential candidacy." This upset the general

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plenty. In any case, we didn't get any more money, were reduced as I remember it, to about 48 groups. The record would show.

In any case, at this White House meeting, the President said, "I want everybody here to back this budget and tell me now they're going to do so. If they have anything to say against it, let them say it now." All the time he was talking to about 20 people, but looking directly at me. I asked, "Mr. President, are you asking me to, in effect, perjure myself if I'm asked a question about the Air Force's ability to carry out its mission with this amount of money?" He looked at me for a time, then answered, "Will you give me your word you won't originate the question?" "Yes, sir, I will." "Well, then, tell them what you think." So we got over that hurdle at that time. Soon afterwards Forrestal left and Johnson came in. The latter wanted to cut everything, Army, Navy, and Air Force; and soon ran into problems with Dean Acheson and State. Finally the President dismissed him, the fall of 1950. Earlier I had gone to/
Mr. Truman,

early 1950, to say, "I can't stay with the Air Force. The cuts are too deep, so deep the Air Force cannot perform its mission properly; but I'll stay in government if you want me." The President replied, "Well, what would you like to do?" "I'd like to get back into manufacturing something, and to that end become chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission so as to produce this new revolutionary weapon." He replied he had already promised that position to a partner of Senator Brien McMahon,

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Gordon Dean; later asked if I would be Chairman of the National Security Resources Board. That put me back, by statute, on the National Security Council, thereby placing me in a better position to work for an adequate defense budget, for what I thought was right; because by then everything was being cut; all this just prior to the Korean War. So I left the Air Force in the spring of 1950. Within a few weeks everything was doubled, then doubled again, and so forth. Again we were at war.

been
The year previous there had/ some interesting developments. One was the so-called "Revolt of the Admirals," started when someone put out a vicious pamphlet attacking General Vandenberg--who by that time had taken Spaatz's place as Chief--the famous aviatrix Jackie Cochrane, and myself. We had already been hurt by an unfortunate development. The Air Force was only a few weeks old when we caught a crook, all in the papers; a major general; and this subjected us to a lot of unfavorable publicity.

Goldberg: Benny Meyers?

Symington: Yes. Meyers had a company on the side, was feeding military business into it. At a meeting requested by Meyers I asked Spaatz to sit in. I don't know if Meyers is dead. I do know he went to jail.

Goldberg: He's dead.

Symington: He is? Able but dishonest. At that meeting Benny said, "If you won't agree to give me a court martial instead of letting this

civilian trial proceed, a lot of names will come out, including General Arnold." I said, "Sorry, there's nothing we can do about it; it's all gone too far in the press. It would look as if we were covering up for the Air Force." Meyers then said, "One of the names will be yours." I replied, "Any chance you ever had for a court martial just went out the window." Benny got up, went to the door, looked at us both, and left. Spaatz had never said a word during the meeting. After Meyers left, I turned to Spaatz and asked, "What do you think?" He replied, "I'll tell you what I think. I never won at poker with that SOB in thirty years."

Goldberg: Spaatz never won with anybody else either.

Symington: Tooey's trouble was he liked to play every hand. But how he enjoyed it! President Truman, when he played, had the same problem.

At any rate, we had plenty to think about after this Meyers situation. Previously Edgar Hoover had lent us Joe Carroll in the Surplus Property picture, then taken him back. After the Meyers episode we realized the Air Force just did not have anybody equipped to handle such problems. So I asked Edgar Hoover to give us Carroll for good. He said he'd never done it before--let an FBI man leave permanently for another agency--so would only lend him, but we finally persuaded him to give us Carroll for good, and Joe came to the Air Force as a Colonel.

One day some months later Carroll came to my office and said, "I'm just not getting the information needed to do this job properly." "Why not?" "Well I'm not in the chain of command." So I went to Spaatz and asked, "Please make Carroll a general and put him directly in the chain of command." Tooey said, "I can't do that." "Well, I

can block any recommendation and you won't have another general in the Air Force so long as I'm Secretary unless you do."

"You don't mean that." "Try me out." So Spaatz agreed, but later reported back, "I can't do it by law." "What law?" He read the law. "Well, let's get the law changed." So I went to Senator Saltonstall, told him the circumstances, urged said law be changed because "we must have one expert in this field." Saltonstall agreed, got the law changed, and Carroll was made a Brigadier. About a year later, after really getting to know Carroll, the Air Staff recommended him for Major General. I called Joe and congratulated him. Typical was his reply: "I don't rate that yet. These people don't really know me well enough. If it's all right with you, I'd appreciate a postponement." Sometime later he was again recommended and this time it went through. Carroll ended up a Lieutenant General, later the head of DIA. Quite a man.

Goldberg: He was also the Vice-Commander of USAFE.

Symington: That's right. I saw him over in Germany.

Goldberg: I guess he was the IG in the early sixties.

Symington: Believe that was before DIA. He was ideal for these investigating jobs. Everybody trusted and respected him. As we came to the Revolt of the Admirals in '49, things became pretty bad--threatening letters and so forth; and he was a great help during those days.

Goldberg: Do you think this was one of the things that bothered Forrestal also?

Symington: No, the problems Jim Forrestal faced became critical as he realized he just didn't have the authority to do the job the way he knew it

he was not too keen for should be done. Also some avid supporters of the President thought/ Mr. Truman's reelection in 1948. Now in the White House, and very close to Truman, was General Harry Vaughan, to whom the President was truly devoted. Harry hocked his liver and lungs for the President when the latter first ran for the Senate. He was sort of Truman's court jester. There were great stories about him. Once he was fishing with the President near Bermuda. Clark Clifford, then in the White House, was on board and told me this one.

It was very rocky. Vaughan got seasick, was over in a corner, white and ill. Mr. Truman was at the rail fishing, and had a strike. Someone suddenly cried, "Mr. President, look, you just caught a School Master." Truman, elated, turned and said, "Harry, look. I just caught a School Master." Vaughan groaned, "I don't give a good -- -- if you caught a Superintendent of Education." But there was/a serious side/to Vaughan. Because of his old Legion friendship for Louis Johnson, in late '48 and early '49, Harry was cutting Forrestal to pieces, day in and day out, with the President. He wanted to see his friend Johnson get the job. Johnson had been one of the founders of the Legion and was the one who raised the money for Truman's 1948 campaign. I was at a meeting in the Ring Building where, and when, it was finally decided Johnson should become treasurer of the campaign, and he did a fine job, which increased even further his leverage, not only with the White House Staff, but now with the President himself. A short time before the 1948 election, all of us in the Pentagon except Forrestal

had just been to the White House for tea and to hear the President, with Mrs. Truman and Margaret present, make a superb talk, in which he said, "I've been in politics all my life. You can't make any money in politics if you are straight and I have no more money." Later that afternoon, at the Democratic Headquarters in the Ring Building meeting a man from Philadelphia--/ think his name was Greenfield--made a terrific speech, saying, "Our President is probably going to lose. We know that, but at least our party should give its chief the means to be able to tell the American he and people what ~~we~~ stand for." At that meeting a lot of money was raised; and later Louis Johnson was chosen to be the campaign fund raiser.

Johnson had always been anxious to be Secretary of Defense. As soon as he came in he started really cutting the defense budget. During his first summer came the Revolt of the Admirals, no doubt partially started after he cut out the much desired and proposed new big carrier. I remember a Star cartoon about that carrier and the Secretary.

Someone later put out a scurrilous paper previously referred to. With the help of Joe Carroll we narrowed it down to one of eight people. Now, Carl Vinson was basically an honorable person even though he was very pro-Navy, a former Chairman of the now defunct Naval Affairs Committee. Bradley had come by and testified before Vinson against some of the Navy admirals, calling them "Fancy Dans." My lawyer was Bart Leach, law professor at Harvard, a mighty good man. Lauris Norstad felt he was the ablest civilian to come into the Air Force out of private life. I had an idea, went to Mel Price

from Illinois--today Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee--and proposed, "Radford is deep in this. Each day he's sitting in the hearing, with that captain. (The captain was Arleigh Burke.) They both are in on this paper attacking the Air Force; two of the eight people we suspect. Please ask me at the hearing tomorrow if I know who wrote this attack against the Air Force. I'll say yes. (Didn't know exactly but knew it was one of eight.) Then ask me who. I will turn to Radford and say, 'Why don't you tell this committee? You know.'" Risky, and against Leach's advice, but it might have worked. Now the Committee had a counsel, Joe Keenan. Under him was an assistant counsel, Sol Horwitz, a good man and a superb lawyer. Keenan got the credit for the conviction of Tojo and other Japanese war criminals, but Horwitz, we had understood, did much if not most of the spade work. Keenan was supposed to be amicus curiae, but as things developed it became clear he had become increasingly pro-Navy. Price asked whether I knew who wrote the attack. "Yes." Price asked, "Who?" I was turning to Radford when Keenan jumped up and shouted, "Mr. Chairman, the Secretary hasn't even told me. I protest, I protest." The hearing thereupon was recessed. Later, upon reconvening, I was sitting in the witness chair before Chairman Vinson and the Committee, under oath. Vinson had integrity, and perhaps began to have sympathy for us. He had been Chairman of Naval Affairs; but we were pretty good friends. In any case, out of a clear sky, he, Chairman of the new House Armed Services Committee, suddenly asked, "Is Cedric Worth in the audience?" A large man, in civilian clothes, answered, "Yes Sir."

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"Will you come forward, please?" said the Chairman. Worth did, took the oath, and was told to sit down next to me. Vinson asked, "Do you know who wrote this attack on the Air Force?" Worth said, "Yes, sir." "How do you know?" "Because I did myself." Well, you never saw such a scramble for the doors as reporters rushed out to tell the story. The pamphlet was really rough on us, so I turned to Worth and said "You SOB." Vinson heard this and admonished, "Now, Mr. Secretary, you go sit in the back there." A few more questions about Worth and his background and the meeting was again recessed. Before leaving the room however, I walked over to Keenan and observed, "Joe, you and I are going to have a real nice talk when all this is over." Keenan said nothing, but just about his first question to Worth after we reconvened was, "Have you talked to anybody on the phone since we recessed this morning?" "Yes." "Who did you talk to?" "Well, I talked to Admiral so and so and Admiral so and so and Captain so and so." Worth added he was a former Marine, and a writer of mystery stories; also that he was presently working for the Undersecretary of the Navy. This admission came as quite a shock to some in the Pentagon. The Deputy Secretary of Defense, Steve Early, called me and said, "I want you to put out a statement you have complete confidence in the U.S. Navy." I replied with something unprintable. Then Early said, "Come down to my office at once." Early was a superb human being. After we talked a time I said, "You write the statement and I'll sign it"; which he did and I did. Francis Matthews, the then Secretary of the Navy, came to my office in tears to express his gratitude.

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Eventually it all got pretty well straightened away. Radford was shipped to Hawaii, where Charlie Wilson met him when he went through there on his way to Korea with President-elect Eisenhower.

Goldberg: Best thing that happened to Radford.

Symington: Yes indeed, and in my opinion, he was about the finest of all Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs; outstanding in analysis and mighty fair. In his day, before the Armed Services Committee, he would compare what we had with what the Soviets had. Later that was stopped, with estimates coming from the CIA, no direct comparisons in one hearing. Radford was also about the best briefer the committee ever heard. Another rather amusing incident: I went over to the Pentagon to see Arleigh Burke before leaving the Air Force sent my name in. He came out, exclaimed, "my God! Let's have some coffee." Burke was all right. These men fought hard for what they believed in; but the battle, engaged in by all three Services, cost the taxpayers a good many billion: coordination in the bill had been successful as against administration. Waste in the Mediterranean on intelligence was one aspect especially interesting towards the end of my Senate career, twenty-five years or so after we established the new set-up; and it was unbelievable. You had the CIA, Naval Intelligence,

Army Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, and State Department Intelligence. All were reading the same cables, at a cost of billions of dollars. Certainly two departments at the most could have handled it.

Goldberg: Would you say that during this whole period in the late 40's the Navy was running very, very scared about its future; that much of the

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inspiration for its behavior and opposition was fear of the future?

Symington: Very possible. The Navy wanted to preserve "range," and the B-36 gave the Air Force great range. Therefore the Navy touted the B-47, the first jet bomber, but a medium bomber that lacked long range. The Navy was getting worried. But then came the Polaris-Poseidon submarines, probably the current weapon the Soviets fear most. Something that could be an ideal weapon in the future for all three services is the cruise missile; but in those days it was only a theoretical dream.

I led the fight for the B-70--got Lyndon Johnson to heartily back it when he was Majority Leader. But/ after the Soviets shot Powers down around 80,000 feet, the Air Force itself admitted the B-70 was vulnerable. no doubt But some Air Force generals, following tradition as against modernity, could not stomach the two man crew of the FB-111 and the tremendous implications of the new missiles. So they developed a battleship complex, and started to promote the B-1. I remember much later asking Barry Goldwater, "Does the new B-1 really now cost \$78 million?" He replied, "No, it's now \$95 million." This was some years ago. Now it's some \$125 million moving towards \$150 million so a hundred of those airplanes will cost around 15 billion dollars; and each could well be knocked down by a less than 1 million dollar missile. As Chairman for many years of the Mideast-South Asian Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee, I was deep in the problems of some of those countries at various times fighting each other. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war General Moti Hod, head of the Israeli Air Force,

stated it was actually only a three-hour war, not a 6-day war; because his planes went out to sea, then came in under the Egyptian radar, knocked out eleven airfields with rockets, refueled, then knocked out the remaining nine, finishing it all off by buzzing Nasser's palace in Cairo before flying home. "By that time, within three hours," said Hod, "they had lost their eyes and victory was only a matter of time."

In 1973, however, there was a new deal, because the Egyptians had the new Soviet SAMs. When Israeli planes came in "on the deck" at first those new SAMs knocked them down and the Israelis /nearly lost in '73 because of that SAM development. My greatest criticism of the military, to whom I was and am devoted, is that so many of their leaders are prone to follow tradition as against modernity, especially if they had won the previous war. Military history verifies that fact.

Goldberg: Then you can't except the Air Force from that either.

Symington: Right. An FB-111 only has a crew of two, so who serves the coffee?-- in effect, a duplication of the battleship era. You can't walk the poop deck of a submarine. Now you have the various new missiles. We'll have to prove them, but, in this nuclear age, we could lose our country before convincing the skeptics. Do you agree?

Goldberg: Yes, I do.

Symington: Those are some thoughts for what they are worth. If you want to talk some more I'd be glad to see you.

Goldberg: Very good. Thank you very much.

End of Interview, Part I