

Personality in the News: L. Patrick Gray III, 400 two takes total 640

By JAMES PHILLIPS

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WASHINGTON AP - L. Patrick Gray III, the new acting director of the FBI, has the bearing of a submarine officer-which he was-and the philosophy of a peacemaker, which he also was.

His face is tough and leathery, his hair short. There is an American Flag on his lapel. He exudes what the military likes to call "command presence."

Gray, 55, has no law enforcement experience. But he has been given difficult tasks before-in 20 years as a Navy officer, as a member of the staff of then Vice President Richard Nixon; and as executive assistant to the secretary of health, education and welfare.

In late February he testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was considering his nomination to be deputy attorney general. He was asked about busing in connection with a 1970 assignment in the South for President Nixon.

"My primary concern was reaching out to leaders, black and white, to get them to exercise a good influence in making this transition in a manageable manner so that it was something that the community would join in and cooperate in and accept," he testified.

"I was concerned with citizen leadership," he said. "We set out to reach the hearts and minds of men, and we did."

No Senate confirmation is needed for acting FBI director. His Justice Department nomination was withdrawn Wednesday.

Gray was born in St. Louis in-as he described it-"an Irish-German section of the city which would now perhaps be termed a fhetto."

When he was 11 his father was transferred to Houston, Tex., with the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. Gray attended St. Thomas College High School there.

"My father wanted me to be an engineer, but I wanted to be a sailor," he told the Senate committee. "But I went to Rice Institute and satisfied his wishes. And after four years there, I was appointed to the Naval Academy by my congressman."

He graduated in 1940 and went to sea, serving in the submarine service for 20 years. The Navy reopened its postgraduate education program after World War II and Gray graduated from George Washington University, with a law degree. And with honors.

In 1960, Gray retired from the Navy and joined Nixon's personal staff. After Nixon lost the race for the presidency, Gray went to New London, Conn., to practice law.

He stayed there nine years, then was summoned by Robert Finch, the secretary of HEW, to be his executive assistant. Gray returned after one year to Connecticut but had been there only a month when the President asked him to go into the South and assist the Southern states in making the transition from a dual to a single school system.

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Afterward, Gray returned to New London only briefly before being called back to be assistant attorney general in charge of the civil division.

Associates say is most prominent personal trait is intense self-discipline. After 20 years as a cigarette smoker, he decided one day to quit-and did, cold.

"There was none of this struggling back and forth, manic gum chewing and stuff like that," said one friend. "He just quit."

Gray and his wife have four grown children, and now live in a one-bedroom apartment in southwest Washington-close to his job in the Justice Department building.

He exercises three times a week in the FBI gym and for leisure, returns to his home in Stonington, Conn., near New London.

In World War II he was aboard the submarine USS Idaho and made five patrols into Japanese-held waters. And during the Korean war he commanded the USS Tiru in the Sea of Japan and later Submarine Division 101-a flotilla of 10 fast-attack subs.

In recent months, during the lengthy hearings over the nomination of Richard Kleindienst to be attorney general, Gray attended most of the sessions, often advising the nominee.

Last Friday he was in the news because of a speech he made in Santa Ana, Calif., in which he accused the nation's press of "often inaccurate, biased and grossly unfair reporting."

He cited what he said were errors, omissions or slanted writing about the Justice Department, and said:

"I am unalterably opposed to any attempt to control the press. So also, I am just as opposed to the attempts of the press to control the government."

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