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Clifford Top Man In Truman Era

WASHINGTON—Clark Clifford, the new secretary of defense, allots himself three cigarettes a day, and lunches in his elegant paneled office on a sandwich and orange juice. He drinks prune juice as if it were a martini and is as careful of his diet as he is in handling the cases of his clients.

These clients, which range from the far-flung Du Pont de Nemours to the Radio Corporation of America, from General Electric to El Paso Natural Gas and Phillips Petroleum, will be the only aspect of Clifford's career the Senate will want to examine.

He has almost never lost a case. One exception was the dispute over the sale of President Kennedy's Georgetown house in 1960. When Kennedy was first elected he sold the small brick house on N st. to Harry Ausbrook for \$105,000, then considered a handsome and somewhat inflated price. But Jackie Kennedy changed her mind, decided she didn't want to sell after all; and the president-elect asked Clark Clifford to get the house back.

But Ausbrook retained ex-Secretary of State Dean Acheson in his bid to keep the house. Acheson won. The president-elect was forced to go through with the sale.

CLIFFORD and Acheson, together with Justice Abe Fortas, now on the Supreme Court, today are probably the three advisers closest to Lyndon Johnson. They are consulted on major moves in the war in Vietnam. All three are hawks.

Looking over Merry-Go-Round columns covering the Truman era, we noted an item published June 3, 1946, which read, "a new power in President Truman's entourage is Commander Clark Clifford." Clifford had met Truman through his St. Louis friend, Stuart Symington, then a member of the Truman little cabinet. Though ranking only as a naval aide, Clifford came to the front fast.

In June 1946, the war was not quite one year over. Tremendous problems faced the new president. Significant items appeared in the column indicating the man who was

chiefly helping Truman make the shift.

On Oct. 12, 1946, it was noted that Clark Clifford had "usurped Harry Vaughan's office near Truman's" and that Vaughan was "outraged." The President himself had to suggest the shift before Vaughan would move.

On Dec. 22, 1946, it was noted that Clifford had begun drafting the State of the Union message. In January he advised Truman to end price controls and war powers. In June 1947 he revamped the entire housing program. In July he wrote Truman's message vetoing the Taft-Hartley Act.

Earlier, in February of that year, he had drafted the Army-Navy merger, a law which he will now have to live with as secretary of defense.

By the summer of 1947, the handsome attorney from Eastern Missouri had become so powerful inside the White House that he aroused the jealousy of Truman advisers from Western Missouri, notably Harry Vaughan. Backing Vaughan were John Steelman and Matt Connelly. It was noted that they were leaking stories about Clifford, and heckled him in staff conferences.

CLIFFORD continued to ghostwrite Truman's messages to Congress, but by 1950 jealousy inside the White House intensified to the point where he bowed out.

It was the opposition of Connelly and Steelman, which caused Clifford to lose his first big case—the merger of Pan American Airways with American Overseas Air Line. Clifford was retained by TWA to block the merger. The CAB was with him. But Truman listened to his anti-Clifford advisers and ruled for the merger.

President Johnson once told a friend: "If you ever get into trouble—if you ever get

arrested and need someone to help you out, get hold of Clark Clifford."

For the past 15 years, Clifford has been doing exactly that for some of the biggest corporations in the nation. He was retained by General Electric after it was fined the largest amount in history and had three executives jailed in an antitrust case.

General Electric ranges between being the nation's second and fourth largest defense contractor. In 1967 it had defense orders totaling \$1,289,800,000. This means that the new secretary of defense will be in somewhat the same position Charles E. Wilson of General Motors was in when he became secretary of defense. Wilson severed all connections with GM.

Clifford was also hired by Du Pont when its stockholders wanted to avoid paying a huge income tax following divestiture of General Motors. Clifford persuaded his friends in Congress to pass a special act saving Du Pont millions. His fee, reported to be \$1 million, was to be paid over a period of years.

If that fee is still running, Clifford will be in a worse position than either Wilson or Secretary of Defense McNamara who had to sell his stock in the Ford Motor Co. To give up an unpaid, continuing law fee will be a greater sacrifice than selling stock.

HOWEVER, General Motors ranks ninth as a defense contractor with contracts totaling \$625,100,000 in fiscal 1967; while Du Pont had \$179,600,000 in contracts. Both firms also have research and development grants from the federal government, Du Pont having received \$1,922,000 in 1966 and General Motors \$53,166,000. This money is awarded through the Department of Defense.

The former attorney for Du Pont in its dissolution with General Motors will now be in charge of awarding defense contracts and research funds to both, as well as to a hundred or so other corporations. Overnight, therefore, Clark Clifford becomes the most powerful figure in the cabinet. Another column on his background and his problems will follow.