WHY A MILITARY CAREER

But we were reluctant to count upon the Congressional appointment given the vagaries of political life. We, therefore, planned also that I would take the competitive examination given by Senator Hirum Johnson of California each year in order to see whether I might win that appointment competitively. And since Congressman Elliott's first appointment did not become available until a year after I graduated from High School and since in order to compete for Senator Johnson's appointment my father and I judged I needed to take some extra work, I attended Ru erford Preparatory School in Long Beach, California, from June of 1938 - on graduation from high school - until June of 1939. Shortly before I was to take the competitive examination, my father and I met with one of the men who had been our primary political advisors with regard to getting this Congressional appointment, Mr. Patrick M. Ongan, a wealthy oil man who had grown up in New England. Mr. Longan spoke at great length of his life in New England as a young man and of the tremendous adventure of going to see in the New England whaling era, the tale with which had been passed to him by family and friends. He made the adventure of going to sea seem so real to me at that time that at the last moment I decided to switch and take the competitive examination for the Naval Academy, rather than the Military Academy.

My father supported me in this decision: I won the appointment from Senator Johnson by virtue of the mark I achieved on the annual examination.

By the time I went to the Naval Academy in June of 1939, it seemed quite clear to me that this country was going to be involved, sooner or later, in World War II. I judged that there was time for me to complete my Naval Academy education and be ready to serve in that war. However, Hitler invaded Poland in September of 1939, and events accelerated. The attack on Pearl Harbor occurred during my third year at the Naval Academy, whereupon my class was speeded up and graduated in three vice four years in June of 1942, so that I was a little later than I had planned in getting into combat service.

I applied for duty in the Pacific Theatre where the action was and served the entire war on two different destroyers in the Pacific, after a series of exciting adventures in getting to my first destroyer. Throughout the period of this service in World War II, I had planned to leave the Navy upon completion of the war and go either to Medical School or to Law School. In 1946-47-48, I applied to both Law and Medical School and was accepted. Each year when the time came to make the decision to leave the service, I found myself deferring out of concern for the trend of events in the world around me. I had observed the tremendous reductions in military capability under domestic pressure at the end

of World War II. I had observed the steady encroachment of Stalin's Communism across Eastern Europe. I had concluded that it was just a matter of time until the United States would have to get re-involved in another war and that war was imminent enough that I probably ought to stay on, although each year for me and my wife it was a cliff-hanger of a decision. I did not make a final decision to make the military my career until 1948, when it came time for me to experience my first tour of shore duty at the NROTC at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. It was apparent that if I stayed the two years required for this service that I ought, prior to doing so, to make a clear decision that that was the point of no return. And yet, I found myself still wavering even after my wife and I had arrived in that lovely place with our first child.

Then in 1949, I had an opportunity to spend a day with General and Mrs. Marshall, then in between his tour of Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense at Pinehurst, North Carolina. Through a mutual friend, my family and I had the opportunity to be with them in their home and I had a talk of several hours with General Marshall. I spoke of my concern for what was going on in the world and the great pessimism I felt about the political situation in this country, and its reluctance to do the necessary things to maintain a readiness to resist the kind of aggression that we saw going on elsewhere. General Marshall spoke at

some length about the tremendous resilience this country had demonstrated in World War II, and of the personal amazement he had felt that he saw in the dramatic increase in strength as the United States girthed its loins and went to work to build ships and tanks and aircraft and to train its millions of men. After a very detailed description of the way in which the American people had come together in that war, he looked at me and said, "Young man, don't ever sell the American people short. They have vast reserves of hidden strength ready to be marshalled when the crisis is clear." And then he peered over his glasses and said to me, "And when that time comes your country will need dedicated career men like you." If one can point to any single moment at which a decision to make the military a career became firm, in my case this was it, under the benevolent stare of that magnificant man.

As a result of the nearly 7 years that it had taken me to make my own personal career decision, the following elements were included in it. First, I thought that I was making the conscious decision to forego the career that could have had equal professional satisfaction and intellectual stimulation - the career of the practice of medicine about which I knew a great deal having been raised by two parents, both of whom were Doctors. Second, I felt such a

keen personal awareness of the disaster that was going on around the world as Stalin prostituted the meaning of World War II detente that I felt a very strong compulsion to put my shoulder to the wheel in a continuing effort to make the country better able to resist. Third, therefore, I was between those careers both of which were service-oriented. I saw the opportunity, at sacrifice of financial and family opportunities, to bring my own personal commitment to bear in the service of my country. I felt patriotic; I was patriotic; and feeling that way I saw in my own case with 7 years of experience, having been Executive Officer of a Destroyer and knowing that I was now considered ready to command one, that I had more to contribute to my country by continuing in the profession to which I had already dedicated seven years of my life than to start anew in a profession where I had nothing significant to offer in competition with the thousands of others who would also make that choice. When the Korean War broke out, soon after I had made this decision and as I commanded first a destroyer escort in that war and then navigated the Battleship Wisconsin, I found myself thankful for the wisdom of General Marshall to which I had been exposed and which helped me make that final decision. I consider it one of those series of important and lucky circumstances which must befall anyone

who gets to the top in a military career.

As I look back over that military career I find a sense of ebb and flow with regard to the prestige associated with that career. In World War II, we all felt like heroes and were treated like heroes, and when we returned home at the end of that war it was to mass exultation and acclaim. In the years between World War II and the Korean experience, I recall being questioned very often by my peers as to why I had made the decision to stay in the Navy and these questions were slightly deprecating in nature, as though the questioneer could not really believe that a man of ability would consciously select that life-style. During the Korean War there was a surge again of popularity, and although by the end of the war public support for that war effort was very low, indeed, the military man returning from it was generally acclaimed again for his service. Following the Korean War there was a period again in which a military career fell to low esteem but by the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis when the United States Strategic Forces and the United States Navy made it possible to win that great Cold War victory, we had again the feeling that there was support for our chosen careers by a large majority of the United States public. And when we became embarked in the long and disastrous South-East Asia War, the military man at the outset was accorded the esteem he had

received in World War II and in Korea. But by the end of that war not only was the public badly turned-off by the war itself, but on this occasion the military came in for the large share of the criticism for that war. And by the time I became Chief of Naval Operations at the end of twenty months in Command of U.S. Naval Forces in South Vietnam, I had no illusions about the estate to which the reputation of the military had fallen. It was in the light of that ebb and flow and with the knowledge that the ebb was now at an all-time low, that I embarked upon the job of Chief of Naval Operations with the conviction that sometning had to be done to restore the image of the military service. I had by then seen the country draw upon its career military personnel three successive times in my military lifetime. Upon each occasion I had seen excessive casualty rates result from this lack of preparedness and had been poignantly aware that beloved friends had died in excessive numbers as a result of the inadequate funding of defense budgets. And having observed this phenomenon, I had no qualms about experiencing the unpopularity of the lean years in order to continue to fight hard for the maintenance as much military strength as possible to make the sacrifices in terms of life and lost U.S. interests a minimum at the outset of successive wars.

One sometimes encounters the question: How is it possible for you to be a military man whose real criterion of success is his destruction of men and material in wartime: To me the answer to this is quite clear. First, a true military professional is one who believes that if it were possible for his country to maintain sufficient defense establishment in peacetime, he would never have to suffer the agony of war, and that part of his role is to continue to remind his country of the expenditures necessary to maintain that degree of deterrent. Second, every military man knows that democracies in peacetime have never been successful in maintaining this level of strength and over time in the euphoria of detente - which we have experienced after each war - and misled by false optimism, our strength will be permitted to deteriorate and our foreign policy become sufficiently passive that we will embark upon another war to regain vital, national interests. Every military man recognizes that while fighting for sufficient defense establishment to maintain deterrents, he also faces the imminent prospect of having to fight as that deterrent fails with inadequate funding. And every military man knows that when that national failure leads to war, it is his duty - not withstanding the poignancy with which he views the funding failure - to be ready to get

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the very maximum from the men, money and materials that has been made available to him during the peacetime years, and that he must try with every fiber of his being to compensate to leadership, forethought, preparation and training for the inadequate defense establishment, and with good fortune his nation will be able to survive the early disasters and to begin to marshall its strength to fight its way back at much greater costs than would have been necessary in terms of life and money had adequate preparation continued in peacetime.

And, so the meaning of a military career is first to be a profit without honor, predicting what will come to pass through lack of preparation and preparing to deal inevitably with what will come to pass.