

THE HONORABLE WILLIAM FRANKLIN (FRANK) KNOX
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
July 11, 1940 - April 28, 1944

Secretary Knox took pride in having actively served in the three major wars fought by the United States in his lifetime. "This is the first war I didn't enter as a buck private," he once commented of his World War II service. He was a senior in Alma College, Michigan, when with 15 men he had recruited, he enlisted in the Michigan militia at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. On June 1, 1898, he was enrolled in the famous "Rough Rider" First Regiment, U. S. Volunteer Cavalry, commanded by Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, and took part in the charge up San Juan Hill, as a buck private. He was honorably discharged on September 15, 1898.

He was a Major on the staff of the Governor of Michigan from 1908 to 1910, and later held the same rank on the staff of the Governor of New Hampshire. On May 15, 1917 he entered the Officers Training Camp at Madison Barracks, New York, as a civilian in training for a commission, and was commissioned Captain of Cavalry on August 15. His first duties were with the 78th Division staff as personnel officer, classifying 50,000 draftees before being given command of a section of the 303rd Ammunition Train, 78th Division, which was sent to France via England in the spring of 1918. There his outfit delivered ammunition to front-line batteries of the 90th, 78th, 35th, 6th and 42nd Divisions in the Saizerais and Puvencelle defense sectors, the St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne and Sedan offensives. A Major at the war's end, Frank Knox was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve in 1923, promoted to Colonel in 1937, and held that commission on the inactive list until his death.

Mr. Knox took up newspaper work upon his discharge from the Army in 1898 as a political writer for the Grand Rapids Herald. He became city editor of the newspaper the next year, and in 1900 its circulation manager. In 1910 Mr. Knox undertook his first venture as a publisher, buying the weekly Sault St. Marie Journal, in Michigan, and converting it to a daily. Two years later he brought the News-Record of the same city and combined the newspapers as the Evening News. Mr. Knox operated that newspaper until the summer of 1912, when he sold it to George A. Osborn, and on October 9 of that year he brought out the first issue of his Manchester, New Hampshire, Leader. Ten months later he acquired the Manchester Union, and merged the newspapers which he published as the Union and Leader in partnership with John A. Muehling, at whose funeral, on April 23, 1944, the Secretary was stricken with his fatal illness. During his newspaper career in Michigan he was president of the State Press Association of that state.

In 1927, Colonel Knox was appointed general manager of the Hearst newspapers and publisher of the three Boston journals of that chain.

He resigned in 1930, and in August 1931 became publisher of the Chicago Daily News, having bought a controlling interest in that publication with Theodore T. Ellis.

Colonel Knox divested himself of active direction of his newspaper properties when he took the oath of office as Secretary of the Navy on July 11, 1940, succeeding Charles Wilson, who resigned to become the successful candidate for the governorship of New Jersey. On June 20, 1940, President Roosevelt sent the Colonel's nomination to the Senate, which confirmed it on July 10. Colonel Knox was sworn in by Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Felix Frankfurter, in the President's White House office.

The Secretary always considered himself a newspaperman. His last public pronouncement was in an article in the April 22 issue of Editor & Publisher, trade organ of the newspapers, which described the special arrangements made by the Navy under his direction to expedite the news of the European invasion to the American press, and promising the minimum exercise of censorship. One of his first acts as Secretary was to transfer the Navy's press relations from the Office of Naval Intelligence to his own executive establishment, and to make news of the Navy more accessible to the newspapers and magazines. Before the war, he was a frequent contributor to magazines in advocacy of a permanent Naval policy based on the maintenance of a two-ocean Navy. He was an active member of the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the annual convention of that organization in 1944 was the first he had missed in more than 25 years.

Colonel Knox became active in national politics in 1912, when, as a member of the Michigan Republican Committee, he cast his lot with his old commander, ex-President Theodore Roosevelt, and followed "Teddy" in his bolt from the convention that renominated President William Howard Taft. Colonel Knox was chairman of the Michigan delegation at the Progressive Party convention in Chicago that August, and chairman of the convention's credentials committee.

He remained actively identified with the progressive wing of the Republican Party until he accepted President Roosevelt's appointment to head the Navy Department on July 11, 1940. He was an active supporter of the presidential candidacy of Major General Leonard Wood, in 1920, and four years later himself became an unsuccessful candidate for nomination to the governorship of New Hampshire.

A delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1936, Colonel Knox left immediately after the nomination of Alfred M. Landon and was driving home with Mrs. Knox the next day when he was astonished to hear the radio announcement of his nomination for vice president. He frequently referred to himself as "the most reluctant candidate there ever was."

Always tremendously interested in public affairs, especially in the national defense, Colonel Knox also crowded into his active life as a newspaperman a career in social, economic and industrial development. Active in the pre-World War "Preparedness" campaign, he was at the beginning of World War I president of the Military Training Camps Association of New Hampshire and himself graduated from an officers' training course to enter immediately upon active service. He helped organize the American Legion in New Hampshire after the war and became its first state commander. He was one of the organizers of the New England Council, founder of the New England Newspaper Alliance, chairman of the Community Organization Group and a leader in the cooperative marketing movement, all activities designed to restore and improve the industry, agriculture and living standards of northern New England. He maintained his interests in New England public affairs till his death, but as publisher of the Chicago Daily News he was soon prominent in Chicago civic activities, a trustee of the Century of Progress Exposition and of the Armour Institute of Technology, and a Director of the new City National Bank & Trust Company. He also served as a member of the Indian Commission from 1911 until it was abolished in 1933.

Colonel Frank Knox had visited Naval activities in Europe, North Africa and the Pacific with the same determination to see for himself that caused him to go to Pearl Harbor as soon after the Japanese attack as transportation could be arranged.

In addition to his duties as Secretary of the Navy, Colonel Knox was on the directorate of the War Production Board, the War Mobilization Committee, the National Munitions Control Board, the National Archives Council, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater Commission.

Following is a list of offices and memberships held by Secretary Knox during his career:

- Chairman, Republican State Central Committee, Michigan, 1910-1912.
- Member of Board of Indian Commissioners appointed by President Taft, 1911.
- Chairman, Michigan Republican Committee, 1912.
- Vice Chairman, President Theodore Roosevelt's Campaign for Nomination for President, 1912.
- Chairman of Michigan Delegation and Chairman of Credentials Committee, National Progressive Convention, Chicago, August 1912.
- Chairman of New Hampshire Delegation Republican National Convention, Chicago, 1920.
- Republican Nominee for Vice President, United States, 1936
- Chairman, Community Organization Group, New England Council.
- Chairman, State Publicity Committee of New Hampshire, 1922-24.
- Chairman, National Campaign to Combat Hoarding, 1932.
- 1st State Commander, American Legion in New Hampshire.
- Trustee, Century of Progress Exposition (Chicago).

Trustee, Armour Institute of Technology.
Member, New England Newspaper Alliance.
Member, American Newspaper Publishers Association.

Secretary Knox was a member of the following clubs:

Derryfield Country Club, Manchester, New Hampshire; the Chicago Club, Old Elm, Union League and Wayfarers, all in Chicago; the Army and Navy Club and the Burning Tree Country Club, Washington, D. C.; the Lotos Club and the New York Advertising Club, New York, N. Y.

Among the many honors he received was the 1943 Award of Merit by the Decalogue Society of Lawyers. Secretary Knox held honorary membership in many civic and national bodies.

Under Secretary Knox's administration the United States Navy grew in less than four years from third place to by far the most powerful aggregation of fighting ships and trained men in history. There were less than 190,000 officers and men in the Navy and Marine Corps when Colonel Knox became Secretary. Including 180,000 men and women of the Coast Guard, which was placed under Navy jurisdiction November 1, 1941, there were more than 3,155,000 persons in the Naval establishment at the time of his death.

Although the so-called "two-ocean Navy" bill was enacted by Congress just a month before the Secretary took office, all of its provisions were executed under his administration, besides the periodic, successive increases Congress authorized in response to the Secretary's recommendations to meet the demands of global warfare.

In the next four fiscal years after Colonel Knox became Secretary the grand total of \$94,000,000,000 was appropriated by Congress for the Navy. One of the Secretary's last major acts in office was to submit to Congress the 1945 estimates of Naval needs covered by the pending \$32,647,000,000 appropriation bill.

Translated in terms of ships, the Navy under Secretary Knox added to the 385 combat ships it possessed in 1940 nine battleships, 19 first-line aircraft carriers and more than 50 CVEs, a score of cruisers, more than 500 destroyers and destroyer escort ships and over 100 submarines, besides thousands of amphibious ships, landing craft, mine layers and sweepers, tenders and auxiliaries.

The Navy had 2,112 aircraft of all types when Secretary Knox took office. When he died it had 42,600 airplanes, of which more than 28,000 were tactical combat aircraft.

When Secretary Knox attended the commissioning of the battleship NORTH CAROLINA on April 9, 1941, he witnessed the addition to the United States Fleet of the first new capital ship in 18 years.

Secretary Knox's policy is expressed in a few extracts from the public addresses he made during his term with the Navy. In September 1941 he told the American Legion convention that "we now know how futile it is to place our trust in written promises to forsake war...Promises to keep the peace are just so much worthless paper to be scrapped when some ruthless, acquisitive leaders of greedy, warlike people feel so disposed..In such a world as that of today, sea power for America is more vital, more essential, than ever before in its history."

The following January, 36 days after Pearl Harobr, Secretary Knox told the U. S. Conference of Mayors that "we know who our great enemy is, the enemy who before all others must be defeated first. It is not Japan, it is not Italy. It is Hitler, and Hitler's Nazis, Hitler's Germany...Japan became the useful tool of Hitler, who sought, through the use of Japan, to divert our productive capacity from Britain and Russia to our own use...Never in modern history was a nation so obviously committed national suicide as has Japan."

Secretary Knox believed in the maintenance of the fleet at full strength after the war as a joint guaranter with the British navy of world peace. Addressing the English Speaking Union in Chicago in December 1943, the Secretary said that "the present instruments of military cooperation must be maintained as a police force, a fire department, a sanitary squad against another outbreak of war rabies and international gangsterism...All means to preserve the peace will fail without they be founded on Anglo-American co-operation."

In his devotion to the principles of national preparedness the Secretary often advocated universal military training for the youth of America. His ideas on such a program were last expressed in an issue of Collier's Weekly, the only magazine article he had written during the war. His belief in the universality of service in wartime made him the spokesman for a law to invoke the national selective service principle to end labor shortages in essential war industries.

Secretary Knox, born January 1, 1874, at Boston, Massachusetts, was the son of William Edwin Knox and Sarah Collins Barnard Knox. During his boyhood his family moved from Boston to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and he attended the Grand Rapids public schools. He was graduated from Alma College, Alma, Michigan, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1898. In 1933 he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of New Hampshire and in 1936 he received the same honor from Alma College. Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, conferred upon him an honorary Doctor of Literature degree in 1937.

Secretary Knox died at his home, 4704 Linnean Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C., April 28, 1944, following a continuation of a heart attack first suffered while attending the funeral of his friend

and former newspaper partner, John A. Muehling, at Manchester, New Hampshire, April 23, 1944. He was buried at Arlington National Cemetery on May 1, 1944, with full military honors. He was survived by his wife, the former Miss Annie Reid of Alma, Michigan, whom he married on December 28, 1898.

Navy Office of Information
Internal Relations Division (OI-430)
24 April 1946