

Q&A with Arthur Herman

Arthur Herman & Brian Lamb

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BRIAN LAMB: Arthur Herman, what made Douglas MacArthur so controversial?

ARTHUR HERMAN: Well, a number of things. I think there was the aspect of his personality. There was the aspect of his politics and then there is also, simply the what I can say, the "thisness" of the man. And I'll start with that first.

He was someone who was a major American figure for more than half a century. Someone who commanded American troops in action and help to shape American war policy and not one, not two, but three World Wars World War I, World War II and the Cold War.

And here is somebody who really with the possible exception of Franklin Roosevelt presided at more events and made more decisions that shaped the history of 20th century United States and so I say, I think can't think of anyone else with the exception of the FDR.

There was his politics. He was a conservative Republican, which didn't rub well with the Democrat presidents he had to work with, particularly FDR and Harry Truman. But he wasn't a conservative Taft Republican.

He was not someone as Taft Republicans were interested in overturning aspects of the New Deal and the incipient welfare state, when he runs for president in 1952 he's more moderate than that and that offended some conservatives on that point.

He's a resolute anticommunist at a time when again a lot of depending on the left is more sympathetic and more willing to sort of work with the Soviet Union. And then there's the person, man himself.

He is somebody who always gives off the air that he is the smartest person in the room. And that if you don't know that you're going to find out very soon. That the decisions that he made are made from the best possible evidence, from the weightiest judgment and that therefore really shouldn't and can't be questioned.

This is something, again, that rubs other people with a similar large scale egos the wrong way and it led to friction and conflict, both with American presidents, two in particular, FDR and Truman, but also but also led to conflicts with people within his own service and in the other branches of the U.S. military in that half century-plus career.

LAMB: When did you decide you wanted to write a big book on him?

HERMAN: A big book on him. The idea of a book on MacArthur was planted in my head by an editor at Random House originally. And I had actually thought about MacArthur as a great follow up to some of the other biographical work that I had done, you know, I had done the Joe McCarthy book for example.

The war in the Pacific, particularly the South West Pacific had intrigued me when I was working on my book on Gandhi and Churchill. And it was one of those moments when someone sort of flashes a sign at you and suddenly everything converges and you realize this is something I would not only love to do, but something I think that could be really different from the kinds of books that have been written about MacArthur in the past and a way in which to really rethink and reevaluate who this person was. What his real significance was. What his virtues really were that made him the most one of

the most adored and adulated figures of the American history, but also what were his flaws and what were his what were the things that made him in many ways unpleasant and even hated by millions of people.

LAMB: Here's some video from the 1952 Republican National Convention where he spoke, the reason to show this is not necessarily because he was at the convention, but so people that have never seen him get a chance to see what he looked like. This video is not very sharp, but let's watch this and we'll ask you about it.

Douglas MacArthur: I think with a sense of pride that all of my long life I have been a member of the Republican Party. As before me was my father an ardent supporter of Abraham Lincoln.

I have an abiding faith that this party, if it remains true to its great traditions, can provide the country with a leadership which as in the days of Lincoln will bring us back to peace and tranquility.

LAMB: That was 1952. He died in 1964.

HERMAN: Right. Right.

LAMB: He was 84 years old when he died. Where was he in his life at this point?

HERMAN: Well, this is an interesting clip for a couple of reasons. One is it's hard to believe that man is 72 years old. He looks great. And everybody who knew MacArthur from always were stunned at the degree to which even at times of enormous stress like during the Korean War and then leading the Southwest Pacific area during World War II.

People were stunned by the fact that he always seem to be very healthy. That he seemed to be very strong, you know, people will always talk about how tall MacArthur was. He was he was under six feet. It was just that he stood so tall and erect that he had this bearing about him that just made people add a couple of inches to his actual height.

The other thing I will remark about that is is that's not MacArthur at his best. That is a speech of a man who is at that point deeply disappointed. To really get a sense of where MacArthur is, in terms of his rhetorical power, you really have to go back to his speech to the joint to a session of Congress right after he returned from Korea in which the House rose as a body over 50 times to applaud lines in the speech.

And that's, of course, the one that finishes with a famous "Old soldiers never die. They only fade away. A soldier who has done his duty as he saw it." That's probably MacArthur at his best.

But this is an interesting clip for this reason. This is a disappointed MacArthur. This isn't a MacArthur who had hoped that that speech of the Joint the session of Congress would be the propellant for getting him into the White House, getting the Republican nomination and, in fact, he really got almost nowhere.

He was swamped by the Taft and Eisenhower forces and, of course, Eisenhower is the man who his former chief of staff, going back to the days in the Philippines. The

person he always looked down on. He's a kind of, sort of, a junior officer type, well a protégé, ends up with the nomination instead.

LAMB: Did he support him?

HERMAN: He does. He does. And he comes out in favor of that. Up until the convention, he took his 10 delegates that he had when the convention sat. He was originally a Taft supporter. He was a little embittered about the way in which Eisenhower sort of handled the campaign and had treated him.

But I think after the election, they become more reconciled, you know? Eisenhower reaches out to Truman. Asked his advice about how to end the Korean War which looks like it's on the point of becoming one of the most endless wars that we've gotten used to, but which was a new experience for Americans.

So he is a disappointed man. He's a tired man. The rhetoric sounds from that clip, sort of, old fashioned, sort of, old stage actorish. But the other thing what is interesting about it is that's not how we usually see MacArthur. MacArthur was someone who, early on, understood the importance of trademark look as a way to project leadership.

LAMB: Like the hat.

HERMAN: The man on the cover on the book, the corn cob pipe, which by the way, he didn't smoke. He actually preferred cigarettes and cigars, but because it was a trademark, corn cob pipe, which he personally designed, as a matter of fact with the Meersch-chaum Company because he knew that was the image. That's Douglas MacArthur. You see the corn cob pipe.

The hat, the cap with the, you know, the scrambled eggs on top and then the eagle, which he designed himself as a matter of fact. And he had he had a haberdasher on New York in Park Avenue, who when he lost a hat or it wore out, he would write to them and have an exact copy sent to him. The leather jacket, the Airforce jacket that he wore, the Ray-Ban sunglasses.

All of these things are what it is that made Douglas MacArthur an icon. All of them very consciously worked on in his thinking about himself as a leader because he saw these as ways in which to communicate that sense of leadership, that sense of confidence which inspired his troops from really, from the first World War all the way through to the darkest days in Korea.

LAMB: In this clip, he mentions his father, Arthur MacArthur.

HERMAN: Yes.

LAMB: And you point out in the book, of course, how the two of them are both in the military. Can you give us they both got a Medal of Honor.

HERMAN: He did. They both got it.

LAMB: How did that happen? They're both generals.

HERMAN: Well, the Medal of Honor that Arthur MacArthur earned was for his actions during the siege of Chattanooga, leading the charge up Lookout Mountain.

LAMB: Civil War.

HERMAN: Civil War. You got to remember, he is 16 years old when he goes off to war, becomes adjutant to the 24th Wisconsin. When you look at pictures of him, you kind of have a feeling that you're looking at somebody who's dressed up for Halloween as a Union soldier, some kid.

But that's him. That's the real Arthur MacArthur. He's a Civil War hero. He's wounded, severely wounded several times and at the end of the war, he has become Lieutenant Colonel and commands his regiment, 24th Wisconsin.

He's not old enough to vote, but he is old enough to command a Union army regiment. After the war, he had a choice of careers. He could have gone into politics. He could have gone into business. He was a Wisconsin hero. And instead, what he did was to remain in the Army and served on as I described in the book, it's a series of John Ford movie sets out you know, from films like *Fort Apache* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, where he goes and eventually brings his wife and then sons are all born there.

His career is in many ways a pathway to Douglas MacArthur's. And one of the things I wanted to do in this book was to really make it clear for the first time just how much the linkage between MacArthur the son and MacArthur the father, how strong that link really was.

Most of them talk about the mother. And we'll talk about her in a minute, I'm sure. She's a very powerful figure in MacArthur's life, up until her death in 1935. But Arthur MacArthur is the person who teaches him about the art of war, who teaches him about the honor of service in the U.S. military, U.S. Army and also the one who opens his eyes to America's possibilities as a great power in Asia and becoming the light of democracy and freedom in Asia as the European colonial powers and empires fall apart.

Arthur MacArthur was the David Petraeus of the Philippine insurrection. He is the one who figures out a way to defeat the Philippine insurrection after the end of the Spanish-American War. And by ruse manages to capture the Philippine Gorilla leader Aguinaldo, who he then signs a peace treaty within releases from prison. He begins the process of reconstruction of the Philippines as military governor there.

And there's a whole series of reforms to bring the Philippines, former Spanish colony, into the modern world and to give it rule of law, independent law courts, sanitation and roads, services and roads. He even writes a textbook on Philippine history for his school kids.

There, he's a master administrator as well as brilliant military strategist. And as I pointed out in the book, when his son Douglas then goes to Japan to administer the occupation, the postwar Japan. Everyone is amazed at his ability to pull the society together and to make these important, even radical changes in some ways and to juggle all of the forces and all the different pressure groups within Japan and in Washington and the other allies with such effortless skill.

And part of it is explained in the book. He learned all this from his father, from his father's experience in the Philippines.

LAMB: You mentioned his mother. I might as well go there.

HERMAN: Sure.

LAMB: Did I did you say in the book that he finished first at West Point?

HERMAN: Yes. Probably the finest record of a student at West Point of anyone since Robert E. Lee. And a record that in many ways still stands unchallenged to this day.

LAMB: All right. Can you tell us I know that FDR's mother moved near him when he went to Harvard. Why did Douglas MacArthur's mother move to West Point?

HERMAN: She moved there to do two things. One is to help supervise his studies. She lived in a rooming house outside of the outside of the grounds of the West Point. There they are. That's young Douglas there on the right and, of course, his mother, Mary Pinkney Hardy.

Pinky Pinky MacArthur as she became known as a matter of fact. She looks pretty formidable in that picture and she was. But when I started this book, I was very much led by other previous biographers of MacArthur to sort of think of her as this kind of domineering woman, like almost the kind of lady Macbeth type, you know, and sort of pushing and propelling her son forward career.

And she did push. She did propel him forward. But what I came to realize, the more I, sort of, learn about their relationship and how it was built, realized and this is the second thing that she did at West Point. She provided a strong emotional support and guidance for him with the really tough decisions he had to make. MacArthur throughout his life conveys his image of a man of who's totally certain of himself, completely in command. Someone who is sure of every decision that he makes and choices that he makes in life.

From West Point on, this is one of the characteristics everybody noticed about him. But underneath it was a very insecure, someone who needed support, filled with self-doubts. Mary MacArthur, his mom, provided that support.

He would find it later on with his second wife, with Jean MacArthur. But her role, I came to realize more and more, was really much more very constructive, very helpful. And I don't think he could have had the kind of career he did or achieved the kinds of heights of success in his career in the army if she hadn't been there to support him and provide help and guidance.

LAMB: Now, I hate to do this to you.

HERMAN: Go ahead.

LAMB: Short, quick points from the different periods in his life. We've got so much to go into, but and you'll see why I want to do this, but like what did he do that was significant in World War I?

HERMAN: Well, he did two things. One was his what earned him it should have earned him the Medal of Honor, nobody had any doubts about it was his incredible bravery in action, leading troops of the 42nd division, the Rainbow Division it was called and then of commanding a combat brigade within that division. He wins seven Silver Stars in World War I.

LAMB: What's that mean?

HERMAN: The Silver Star simply means for exceptional bravery under fire. And he is a staff officer. He is someone who goes and leads the troops from the front. He said, "I have to go and see what's happening for myself. What our guys are going up against and what the terrain is and what the enemy positions look like."

And so he goes into action on a regular basis. Seven Silver Stars, two Distinguished Service Medals and nominated for a Medal of Honor, but in the end, General Pershing says no. His incredible bravery at the Châtillon goes without question.

However and if he had been killed, maybe then he would get a Medal of Honor, but he survived, so I think we're going to skip the Medal of Honor this time around.

LAMB: What...

HERMAN: But his second role but his second role, Brian, I want to stress this is, as part of the general staff helped to structure the American Expeditionary Force as it went over. He helped build the 42nd division as one of the first units to go over there and to organize which divisions from the U.S. Army that wasn't really ready for this kind of large scale conventional warfare in Europe. He really is the one who helps to mastermind the whole campaign, the whole putting together of this force that Pershing leads in the war. So he's a hugely influential figure, as a young major and then brigadier general.

LAMB: What year did he go to Europe and fight?

HERMAN: 1917. It would be in the fall of 1917. The main action that he and the 42nd division saw as in 1918.

LAMB: Was he married then?

HERMAN: No. He was still single.

LAMB: He would have been in his 30s.

HERMAN: He would have been in his 30s. He would have been yes.

LAMB: And he got to be a brigadier general in his 30s.

HERMAN: Yes.

LAMB: OK.

HERMAN: And then a major general.

LAMB: Let's go to World War II. Let's go to World War II. What's the major accomplishment in World War II?

HERMAN: The major accomplishment from my standpoint is, is that he manages to turn what looked like a massive defeat in the Philippines into a springboard to victory. And I mean it in this sense. The Philippines comes under attack the same time as Pearl Harbor.

A surprise attack that wipes out the B17 force that MacArthur and everybody else in the Army Air Force everybody in the Army Air Force thought were going to defend those islands, protect it from Japanese invasion.

He's completely outclassed in terms of equipment, in terms of quality of soldiers, numbers of soldiers where they can rely upon in the campaign and yet in the retreat to Bataan he manages to fight his fight the Japanese to a standing a stand still.

He's pulled out from there by orders from Franklin Roosevelt, contrary to myth, MacArthur didn't arrange to leave the Philippines and the fortress at Corregidor where he was where he was holed up with a handful of his staff.

He intended to fight to the death. He assumed that that was going to be his fate in the Philippines, but Roosevelt for various reasons orders him to go to Australia to help organize the war effort in Southwest Pacific.

LAMB: Let me just ask you about the geography of all this.

HERMAN: Sure.

LAMB: The Philippines are located near ...

HERMAN: Closer into Japan. They are, in a sense, as MacArthur understood, they were really maybe to be the springboard for a successful invasion in Japan when the warcourse of the war reversed it.

LAMB: Who owned the Philippines in those days?

HERMAN: Well, in those days, it was still an American protectorate.

LAMB: And where was Corregidor? Where is it?

HERMAN: Corregidor is in Manila Bay. It overlooks Manila harbor. It had been built originally by the Spanish and then refortified by the Americans as a way to control and to block naval Japanese naval or any of naval forces from seizing control of Manila from the sea. But the Japanese didn't bother with that. They came overland.

LAMB: And what about Bataan? Where is that located?

HERMAN: And then Bataan is the peninsula that sticks out like an oversized thumb from the island of Luzon, just to the west of Manila and then and sticks into Manila Bay. And that's where MacArthur's army finally had to make its last stand against the Japanese onslaught.

LAMB: OK. I know this is quick, but let's go to the next step would be, when he was in charge of Japan after the war for five years.

HERMAN: Sure.

LAMB: What did he do there?

HERMAN: Yes. We can't forget of course his campaigns in the South West Pacific area when he took, the situation in which he had very scant supplies in men and equipment and turned it into a major victory.

LAMB: What year?

HERMAN: That would be he took over that right after he left Corregidor, so that would be in March of 1942. And three bloody years of fighting in New Guinea, in the Solomons and then up to liberate the Philippines.

LAMB: And where is New Guinea?

HERMAN: New Guinea is the large island, second largest island in the world as a matter of fact, after Australia that just sits north of Australia. And it was a jumping off place to the Japanese for invasion of Australia, to dominate that whole South West Pacific area.

LAMB: How many troops were under his control over there in the Pacific?

HERMAN: Oh in very early days, he had, perhaps 5,000. In the end, he commands probably the largest military force the United States has ever assembled for the invasion of the Philippines. And then he was to be placed in charge of supreme command of all of the invasion forces of the island of Japan for the final onslaught, for Operation Downfall, which doesn't happen because we drop atomic bombs...

LAMB: Is it true that he didn't know they were dropping those bombs?

HERMAN: He learned about the dropping of the bomb by reading Stars and Stripe in the army newspaper. He was aware that the bomb had been developed. He'd been given that information, but that it was going to be used and when it was going to be used, all this was kept secret from him.

LAMB: Would he have used it?

HERMAN: I think not. I think he washe felt that the bomb had this tremendous potential to completely undermine and demoralize the Japanese. He was more in favor of using it in a demonstration way as opposed to an actual dropping of it.

And for the rest of his life, MacArthur looked upon nuclear weapons as being reallyas something that really should mark the end of warfare as we know it and was part of his whole campaign towards later on his life, towards unilateral disarmament.

LAMB: During World War II, was he married? Did he have children? And where did his mother live at that point?

HERMAN: He had met his wife, as I explained in the book because I wasthis is the first biography that's had access to oral history that his wife did in the late 1990s before she died.

LAMB: Which wife?

HERMAN: This is Jean MacArthur. The second wife. The second wife. And they met on the voyage out to the Philippines when he went to assume command of basically the Philippine military mission the United States had set up there to help the Philippines build a self-defense force, basically an army that could be used to defend the islands.

This is why he was headed out there. His mother was with him. She was very ill at the time. And I don't think it's coincidental that shortly after his mother dies and is buried in the Philippines, it's not so coincidental then that his friendship with Jeanwith Jean Faircloth was her name.

A girl from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, not far, by the way from where his father had fought during the Civil War, the battle of Stones River, where my great, great grandfather fought, as a matter of fact.

It's not coincidental that their friendship then blossomed into a romance and before she returned to United States, they had a secret agreement to marry the next time he was back in the States.

LAMB: When did he divorce his first wife?

HERMAN: The divorce comesI'm thinking of the date now, comes about 1927, 1928.

LAMB: I've got it down as 1927 from your book. Yes.

HERMAN: '27, 20s, yes, 1927.

LAMB: And why did they get divorced?

HERMAN: It was a very unhappy marriage. I think it was as he fell hopelessly and helplessly in love with her while he was superintendent at West Point. She was enormously, his first wife, Louise Brooks, not the film actress, but the heir to actually a very large Wall Street fortune.

She was very vivacious. She was delightful company. She was very sexy. And, of course, she was enormously wealthy as well through the inheritance from her settlement with her husband. And I think she was just she was just irresistible to someone like MacArthur. And it was only, I think after the marriage that he began to realize he had really picked the wrong person.

She was not going to be the kind of strong emotional support that he really needed that his mother who disapproved very much of the marriage was able to provide. And who Jean was finally able to step up and provide, while at the same time, providing that same kind of vivacious, outgoing, sexy personality that made her the perfect companion for him as wife, as mother and as his confidant.

LAMB: Who did have access to the oral histories of his wife Jean?

HERMAN: It's now at the MacArthur Memorial Archives in Norfolk, Virginia where I spent a good deal of time working on this book. It just hadn't been available. The other biographies had come out before that was done.

She had always promised to Douglas that she would not do an oral history. That was and her son also had made that same promise to her, don't do that. "Our lives together are private. The public record about myself," Douglas would tell her, "is public but our lives together is private."

But just before she died, I think she realized it was important perhaps to ignore that promise and to carry forward with it. And we're all very glad she did. It's a fascinating, fascinating history.

LAMB: He dies in '64. She lives to be a hundred and ...

HERMAN: She lives into her I don't think she lives to 100, she dies in 2002. I could you might want to check on that, but I think that's right.

LAMB: And how long did they live with the Waldorf Astoria?

HERMAN: Well, they lived there until his death in 1964. She probably I'm not entirely clear about how long she continued to live at Waldorf Astoria by herself but for years after her son after all was also in New York City, Arthur MacArthur.

The Waldorf Astoria apartment was one was a place that really was for him, not just a refuge, but also a watchtower where he could keep track of current events and have distinguished visitors, including American presidents.

It was and a place to, sort of, gather the mementos from his years in Japan. Everything else of his pre-earlier life had all been destroyed during the recapture of Manila during World War II. Everything had gone up in smoke with the Hotel Manila.

He's a man who a couple of times, basically had to, sort of, rebuild his life, rebuild the mementos, the favorite things around him and his family several times. Here's one of the remarkable things about him, I think that I would want the biography, people to

read the biography, this is someone who was knocked down and beaten down so many times in his career where it could have been written off as being someone who would bethis is the end of his career. This is the end of hisend of his usefulness to America. And yet he always comes back. It's an extraordinary story.

LAMB: The next step, Japan and – how long was he in Japan, what kind of power did he have after the war was over?

HERMAN: Pretty much absolute. He was empowered by the other allies and by President Truman to basically do what he like in order to reconstruct Japan. And he did with success that I think even his most severe critics today who've gone over his record, you know, with a fine tooth comb looking for any kind of flaw or any serious mistakes, I think even his most, you know, severest critics give him high marks for what he was able to do with Japan.

Take a country which was a broken nation devastated by war, demoralized by defeat with a cloud hanging over it because of the way in which it should have behave during the war, treating Chinese, allied POWs, it was – it was a country whose reputation was in tatters.

And he manages to rebuild its economy, manages to restore a sense of pride, give it a new democratic constitution, the same what they have today and to really bring Japan into, integrated, into the family of industrialized democracies of which we're a part and Europe. It's an amazing achievement. He didn't all – didn't do it all by himself as some admirers have claimed. He had a lot of great ideas that came from members of his staff.

Also, important instructions that came from Washington about what to do, but in the end, the ability to orchestrate the reconstruction of an entire country of 80 million people, to do that in – from 1946 to the outbreak of the war in Korea when all of his attention now has to focus to the conflict unfolding in the Korean peninsula.

So as I said, it wouldn't have been possible, I believe, if he hadn't had his father's example before him of how to deal with an occupied country and to build that kind of confidence and build those kinds of modern institutions. But you have to give him credit for the way in which he was able to do this with such aplomb and in the face of in many cases really intense opposition including from his own, including from Washington.

LAMB: By the way, what else did you find that was new besides the oral history?

HERMAN: Well, oral history was one. There was a lot of material that has to do with MacArthur's war in Korea, which we haven't gotten to and talked about at this point.

LAMB: That's next.

HERMAN: That's next. That comes out of, you know, Soviet and former Soviet and from Chinese archives which I don't think have already been interwoven with the discussions that his previous biographers were involved. And I also think though, this is a biography which has really taken, taken full account of the degree to which allied

intelligence, US intelligence, played such a vital role in MacArthur's successes in the southwest pacific area.

The degree to which being able to decrypt, first, Japanese naval codes, but then, Japanese army codes was able to provide him with the means by which to outsmart and outguess his Japanese opponents on the battlefield and to conduct to the kind of bold moves that he was able to do.

His first sort of comprehensive – first two comprehensive biographers, William Manchester and Clayton James didn't know about any of this, were really unaware that the degree to which Ultra provided this vital information to MacArthur.

His other biographer for whom I have a lot of respect, Geoffrey Perret, talks about it but this is a biography in which now I think you can really sort of see its overall impact, it gives a whole new perspective not just of MacArthur as military commander but also someone who really understood the importance of good intelligence.

LAMB: Some biographical information on you, where do you live now?

HERMAN: We live in Washington DC, I'm senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

LAMB: And this book is what number?

HERMAN: This is number eight of my books since *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* was number one.

LAMB: And was that – the *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, was that the number one best seller?

HERMAN: It was a – it was never a New York Times number one bestseller but it was a New York Times bestseller. Yeah. And it had sold well-over half a million copies worldwide at this point. It's a book which I'm enormously proud and it's one which I think was – it was a good one to start on the direction which I've headed since.

LAMB: When writing a book like this – now this book was – when was the last day you spent what writing this book?

HERMAN: Gosh.

LAMB: Nine months ago, ten months ago?

HERMAN: No. Yeah, probably about right for the manuscript version, then you go through – you have the whole process of galleys and adjustments and adding new materials and things like that.

LAMB: Have you moved on already to the next book?

HERMAN: Yeah, yeah, as a matter of fact.

LAMB: What's it about? Can you tell us?

HERMAN: Do you want to know?

LAMB: Sure.

HERMAN: The new book which I will be doing with Harper Collins who published my – how – *To Rule the Waves*, my history of the British Navy in building the global system, the new book with Harper Collins is on Woodrow Wilson, Vladimir Lenin and the year that shook the world, 1917.

And why that year, in the midst of the World War I and the two momentous decisions that those men did, Woodrow Wilson to enter World War I and then, Lenin

to topple the provisional government that had taken over in St. Petersburg after the abdication of the tsar and to install a revolutionary Bolshevik government instead, how those two events have ricocheted through and shaped the modern history, shaped world history. It really is. That's what the next book is about. It's going to be shorter than this one, I can promise.

LAMB: Moving to the next war, the Korean war, this is a video that a lot of people have already seen, but it's Harry Truman relieving General MacArthur of his duties and then, we can come back and you can explain how that happened.

[video clip]

Harry Truman: I thought long and hard about this question of extending the war in Asia. I have discussed many times with the ablest military advisers in the country. I believe with all my heart that the course we are following is the best course. A number of events have made it evident that General MacArthur did not agree with that policy.

I have therefore considered it essential to relieve General MacArthur so that there would be no doubt or confusion as to the real purpose and aim of our policy. It is with the deepest personal regret that I found myself compelled to take this action. General MacArthur is one of our greatest military commanders, but the cause of world peace is much more important than any individual.

LAMB: What happened?

HERMAN: This is one of those moments when you begin to realize that the clash of personalities is as important as clash of ideologies or collision of events or convergence of social and economic forces.

The fact of the matter is that neither – that Douglas MacArthur had come to develop a strong dislike of Harry Truman and Harry Truman had a strong dislike of Douglas MacArthur. That's number one.

Even though one was president, the other one is – had to – was given the power as supreme commander of UN forces in the war in Korea after North Korea invaded South Korea in June 25th, 1950. MacArthur believed the way in which to end this conflict as he began the process of painfully pushing back up the peninsula after Chinese intervention in November of 1950 in the conflict.

As he begins the process then of pushing backup re-liberating South Korea again, the second time around after the first liberation in September of 1950 when MacArthur assumes command, we can talk about the Incheon landings if you want, but that is the landmark of – which are the highlight of MacArthur's military career was that landing it in Incheon on the Korean peninsula that really shattered North Korea's ability to conduct a war, liberating not just Seoul but Pyongyang, then the Chinese intervene.

There's a massive roll back down the peninsula again. MacArthur and General Ridgway pushed the – pushed the Chinese back, approached the 38th parallel. MacArthur's plan was he's going to win this war with a victory. We're going to defeat not just North Korea but we're going to defeat the Chinese forces in North Korea. We've got to take the necessary steps including strategic bombing including perhaps the use of nuclear

weapons as a means to create a cordon around which – through which the Chinese cannot resupply their armies in North Korea.

As the famous statement, there is no substitute for victory. The Truman administration disagreed. They thought there was a substitute for victory which was stalemate, to return UN forces to the 38th parallel, freeing South Korea from communist but allowing North Korea and the Chinese to remain in place north of that – north of that border or that boundary line, the 38th parallel.

MacArthur was outspoken, let's put it that way, about why he felt that this kind of an approach to the war would be a mistake, why he felt that his hands had been tied by the Truman administration in terms of being able to deal and really lash out at the Chinese and deal them a decisive defeat.

This is what MacArthur does, he sounds off to reporters, he'd done it all his career. But in – for Truman, this became I think a moment in which he had to decide whether he was going to be able to continue and have someone who would embrace a stalemate strategy as opposed to a victorious strategy and keep his mouth shut at the same time.

LAMB: By the way, did he – did General MacArthur answer directly the president or did he have to go the joint of chief of staff?

HERMAN: He goes to the joint chiefs. This is one of the important points to keep your mind about this as I explained in the biography is that all of MacArthur's moves in Korea for which he later faces intense criticism, including his push up to the Yalu River during the initial drive through North Korea after the Incheon landings.

The fact is the joint chiefs had approved and more the actions that he had taken there. From the military point of view it seemed unimpeachable, the approach and strategy he was taking, but from a political standpoint, from the point of view of Truman and he's advisers, there was a feeling that the push for war might with all out war with China might do two things; number one, it would force the European allies to drop out because they would not be interested in doing that.

They did not want to see a war that would be continuing up beyond the 38th parallel that would engage China more extensively, but that also might trigger a response from the Russians and Joseph Stalin who might – seeing his Chinese ally in the point of collapse might launch an offensive in Europe, which, of course, where Soviet divisions were poised right on the borders of Germany.

LAMB: By the way, how many American troops are still on the 38th parallel or in that vicinity?

HERMAN: I'm talking about 400,000 UN troops, US.

LAMB: No, I'm talking about now.

HERMAN: Oh, now?

LAMB: Yeah.

HERMAN: About 28,000.

LAMB: After all these years.

HERMAN: Yes, the war hasn't ended. There still – from that point of view there still hasn't been, there isn't a peace treaty. We're still – formally – there's armistice but there's not a peace treaty.

So MacArthur dismissed these ideas. He believe that China could be defeated in this war and I think as I point out in the book there may be good reasons to believe he could have done that. He believed Stalin wouldn't intervene in this, that he would not risk a fall out war in Europe to save his Asian allies and we now know that's also was true. MacArthur was right on that point.

LAMB: How did we find that out?

HERMAN: Through the Soviet archives. Basically, Stalin thought that this entire operation had been botched almost from the beginning. He was given the guarantee by the – by the North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung that if North Korea invaded with Chinese help into South Korea, Americans wouldn't intervene. They immediately intervened. From that point on, Stalin was like, "This is your problem. It's not my problem any longer."

But Truman had to make a call, did he do the right thing under the circumstance, was it necessary to remove MacArthur in order to carry forward the policy he had? I guess probably it was. Was it the right policy to carry through? I think history may have to have a different judgment of whether it was right in the long term.

You know, history is dotted by what we can call necessary blunders and I think the removal – the firing of Douglas MacArthur and the acceptance of a final stalemate in Korea might just fit into that – fit into that.

LAMB: So he came home and we've now been through the First World War, the Second World War, the Japan experience, the Korean War and he's back here and we saw him address the republican national convention. I want to go to the chapter that kind of brings a lot of him together in one chapter. I don't know if you agree with me, it's called Saving FDR.

HERMAN: Yes, that is an interesting chapter.

LAMB: I want to read back to you what you wrote and then you explain it.

HERMAN: Sure.

LAMB: Roosevelt's own assessment, and this is out of context of what we've been talking about, but this I during the FDR years and MacArthur is in the oval office talking to FDR. Roosevelt's own assessment was more nuanced despite "his most danger – he calls him the most dangerous man in America" remark

Before the inauguration he revealed his true thinking to one of his brain trusts of economic advisors Rex Tugwell, this is FDR speaking, "I've known Doug for years," he said reflexively. "You never heard him talk but if – you've never heard him talk butno, but I have. He has the most pretentious style of anyone I know. He talks in a voice that might come from an oracle's cave. He never doubts and never argues or suggests, he makes pronouncements of what he thinks is final." And what does that tell us about the relationship between General MacArthur and FDR?

HERMAN: Well, maybe a little bit of background for the context for that remark. This is at a point in which Douglas MacArthur holds the highest point – post in the US Army, he's chief of staff. And he had just go on through a debacle called the Bonus Army march.

It was a public relations disaster for the Hoover administration in which Army troops were used to oust World War veterans including many who had served with MacArthur who came to demand payment of the bonuses they'd been promised on their government pensions for having served in the services during World War I.

And they had set up a tent city, had refused to go when ordered when the bonus was voted down by Congress and in the end the police were unable to control the crowds, they asked for support from the US Army.

And MacArthur as chief of staff showed up to basically supervise the operation and it was ugly. It was an ugly series of riots, people were killed, a big propaganda campaign was launched by the communist supporters of the Bonus March to paint Douglas MacArthur as this, you know, this fascist killer of innocent men and women in the course of the march, et cetera, et cetera.

So the question had come up about when FDR then becomes president, probably doomed Hoover's re-election in 1932. If the great depression didn't sink his chances of re-election, the Bonus Army debacle really sank them.

So the question came up whether FDR was going to keep him on as chief of staff. Everybody assumed he was going to be fired, that MacArthur was out. MacArthur is considered Republican. FDR is a liberal democrat.

It's a no-brainer, but in fact, Roosevelt was smart and he realized that MacArthur was somebody who despite these characteristics of his, this tremendous egotism, this sense of infallibility to papal, you know, standards, that despite this, that this was a man who would be useful for Roosevelt to have part of his team and he could be really a support to the administration.

And Douglas MacArthur to his credit realized that as well. And one of the things I describe in that chapter is the interesting cooperation between those two men that began to arise after Roosevelt became president, when to everybody's surprise, the arch conservative and the arch liberal become partners in rebuilding the US Army and helping to rebuild the economy.

LAMB: That quote wasn't when MacArthur was in the oval office but this one is and you – I'll read through this and again give us the background. "For the third and last time in my life," MacArthur confessed, "that paralyzing nausea began to creep over me," the nausea that had overwhelmed him at West Point and then, after the tongue lashing by Pershing during World War I.

Then, this paragraph, as the feeling of discomfort grew and he's sitting there with FDR, he grew more reckless, this is General MacArthur, "When we lose the next war," he finally intoned speaking in the voice he usually reserve for biblical prophets, "and an American boy," these are in quotes again, "Lying in the mud with an enemy bayonet through this belly and an enemy foot on his dying throat spits out his last curse, I

want the name to be Roosevelt, not MacArthur.” And then, later FDR says, “You must not talk that way to the president of the United States.” What is that all about?

HERMAN: It was about budget cuts to the US Army, the Army budget having been slashed. First of all, by Hoover, it wasn’t just Roosevelt but Hoover also had made serious taken a serious axe to funding appropriations for the US Army as did Congress. MacArthur as chief of staff had fought against those.

Roosevelt comes in with further cuts. So that scene that you’re describing the unfolds in the oval office is Roosevelt, the secretary of war and MacArthur then sort of fighting it out over the implications of these budget cuts. How crippled would the US Army be if these budget cuts were put into place, where our boys would be dying needlessly because of – that’s what MacArthur’s...

LAMB: Where did those quotes come from by the way? Were they from General MacArthur, are they from FDR?

HERMAN: A lot of that comes from MacArthur’s own account.

LAMB: What about this line, I just vomited on the steps of the White House, was the way he described it many years later.

HERMAN: Now, this is very interesting, isn’t it because these are the memoirs he writes just before – just before his death when he’s really sort of talking about – and for the first time for many people exposing that aspect of human weakness that we were talking about the very beginning, those insecurities, that sense of self-doubt, that feeling of being overwhelmed at certain moments in crises that would come to him. And this is – this is an example of that kind of thing.

This is MacArthur realizing that what he has just done could end his career but also – and also a feeling that this is a situation in which – although he had to speak out, he had to take the strong position against Roosevelt, that this is one which was not from a position of strength but was in fact from a position of weakness.

And that there’s no doubt when MacArthur recounts this episode, he knows what he said was wrong. He knows that he should not have confronted the president in that kind of way and the scene is the scene on those steps where he throws up was sort of a symbol of that feeling. And yet the secretary of war turns to him and says, “Douglas, you’ve just saved the US Army.”

LAMB: There’s other things in this chapter, one of them is named Isabel.

HERMAN: Yes.

LAMB: All kind of comes together, the mother, the fact that there’s a Major Eisenhower who was a top aide to – I mean we talked about that a little bit earlier, it’s hard to put together at this stage thinking that Eisenhower was an aide and a low level, relatively low level Army officer to Douglas MacArthur, went on to be president as we saw. But talk about Isabel and...

HERMAN: That was one of the things to bear in mind, of course, is that Douglas MacArthur, everybody is junior to Douglas MacArthur, you know, that’s a simple fact of life. Even in World War II when he becomes supreme commander in the southwest pacific area, there’s no one else to choose from.

He's the one person who has had by then, after the Bataan campaign had actual command experience fighting against the Japanese, but he's also the – just about the only officer who's actually seen military combat in World War I and had a General's rank during that conflict.

That's an important thing to keep in mind about him and why he's able to speak with this kind of Olympian, you say command here, is because everybody else has been sort of, you know, they're all latecomers to the Army career.

LAMB: But Isabel.

HERMAN: Isabel. Dimples. Dimples was an actress from the Philippines who he met when he returned to the Philippines in the early 1930s. There she is looking very charming, just the sort of thing to tempt the attention of an Army officer, recently divorced.

This is one of things to keep in mind when we talk about MacArthur's mistress, he is invincibly monogamous. This is during his – after his divorce and before he meets Jean that he strikes up with Isabel Cooper, nicknamed Dimples because she was – she was the actress who is in the first Philippine movie to show a kiss on film as a matter of fact. And they had a very – even though she's a couple of decades younger with than he is, they have a very close relationship.

LAMB: He met her when she was 16.

HERMAN: Sixteen, yeah. So it's definitely a May-December or maybe May-November romance and he's so taken with her that he arranges for her to come United States and to be in Washington DC while he's Army chief of staff. In fact, she has an apartment over in the Chastleton Apartments which is over here on 16th Street.

When my wife and I first moved to Washington DC, we looked for apartments in Chastleton, as a matter of fact, I did not know at that time that it was, you know, a historical landmark the home of Dimples Cooper, but it doesn't really matter.

The point about this is is that it was a romance that quick, soon fell apart as he became – realized that she was someone however attractive and alluring, she was really much too young and inexperienced and shallow for him. Her life does not end. Well, she goes off to Hollywood and tries to get involved in films there and has all kinds of problems that come after it.

LAMB: I'm watching the clock which drives me crazy because we have such little time left and I want to get the rest of it in. Drew Pearson gets in.

HERMAN: Yes.

LAMB: His ex-wife Louise gets in this, what's all that about?

HERMAN: She's very bitter about – this is the first wife, remember, the one with the fabulous wealthy and very vivacious, but that marriage had fallen apart. Very similar kind of thing, disillusionment in the MacArthur's case. She was happy to spread all kinds of nasty gossip about him and about his sexual prowess or lack thereof as a husband.

And the real issue that was at hand was about whether there was going to have – MacArthur brought a libel suit when the story came out about the – about Isabel

Cooper, came out in a kind of odd way and reflected back on Louise Brooks. It's a very, very complicated story. Brought a libel suit.

Drew Pearson and his lawyers were going to spring on him in court the letters that Isabel – that Dimples had written, that he had written to her in exchange back and forth, pretty torrid stuff and in the end they arranged for a settlement and he arranged for those letters then to be buried forever in the archives of one of Drew Pearson's attorneys.

I was able to get those letters which are at the University of Texas library as a matter of fact. And they are pretty tart, they are really quite something. We have to say that Douglas MacArthur in the end, you read those letters, also the letters he wrote to his first wife when they were courting in the 19 – in the early '20s and you have to say that not only was Douglas MacArthur a great military commander and not only was he a great statesman as we see with during his time of occupation in Japan, he's also a master of erotic prose in ways that are really striking.

LAMB: There was a Congressman Ross Collin also, the chairman of a subcommittee that dealt with war back then and he got involved – he didn't like him and...

HERMAN: No, they had – they had enormous conflicts over how money was to be appropriated for the US Army, over questions about which branch of the Army should get the kind of support that was necessary. MacArthur was absolutely certain in times of – and it's a good lesson in many ways for any military force facing tight budgets is that you keep the appropriations spread equally across the different services and different divisions. And Collins had a fixation on the question of mechanized warfare at that time and felt that the money should be put into that and they had bad, bad feelings.

LAMB: But the threat – in other words, he was going to leak the affair, he knew about the affair.

HERMAN: He did.

LAMB: And he was going to leak it to Drew Pearson and Drew Pearson would publish it and there was all that stuff. What – how did this all end up?

HERMAN: Washington sure has changed.

LAMB: It sure has.

HERMAN: You don't sort of hear stories like that anymore I'll tell you.

LAMB: I want to run before we close, just one last clip and this is some more of what General MacArthur was saying at the republican convention in '52. Let's run that.

[video clip]

Douglas MacArthur: Our people are desperate for a plan which will revive hope and restore faith as they feel the oppressive burden of a tax levy upon every source of revenue and upon every property transaction.

As they see the astronomically rising public debt heavily mortgaging the industry, the well-being and the opportunity of our children and our children's children, there is no plan to transform extravagance into frugality, no desire to regain to economic and

fiscal stability, no prospect of return to the rugged idealism and collective tranquility of our fathers.

LAMB: That was only 64 years ago.

HERMAN: Yes. Isn't that something?

LAMB: Our children's children, they're already here and gone.

HERMAN: Yes, they were here and gone.

LAMB: So what do you think?

HERMAN: Well, it was. I mean he was – in many ways an incredibly prescient speech. And the issue of debt and public spending and how that becomes a way in which you mortgage the country's future, my gosh, it's an issue that's been hanging over us for the last couple of decades, if not longer. People have asked me what – if MacArthur had won in 19 – won the nomination, won the election, what kind of president would he be like? It's an intriguing question.

I think he would have been a lot like Eisenhower. I think a lot of the policies that Eisenhower pursued would have appealed to MacArthur in many ways. He was someone who believed the federal government had a strong role to play in things like infrastructure, interstate highway system, he probably would have approved of that.

But I think he was also somebody who foresaw that the growth of the welfare state would be something that politicians including Congress, even the federal government itself might not be able to control, that it could be a runaway train that America would face later on. And I think that's one of the things about MacArthur that you have say.

He saw the future more clearly often than he saw the present, whether it was America's role in Asia, the rise of China, the split between China and the Soviet Union which he foresaw but also perhaps too, the fate of American domestic politics.

LAMB: I can hear the historians and the people – the veterans of World War II following this and screaming that we didn't get to anything on the war but this 927 page book we try to, you know, but anyway, Arthur Herman has been our guest. The book is called Douglas MacArthur: American Warrior. Our author here has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and we thank him very much for joining us.

HERMAN: It's been a great pleasure, Brian.

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