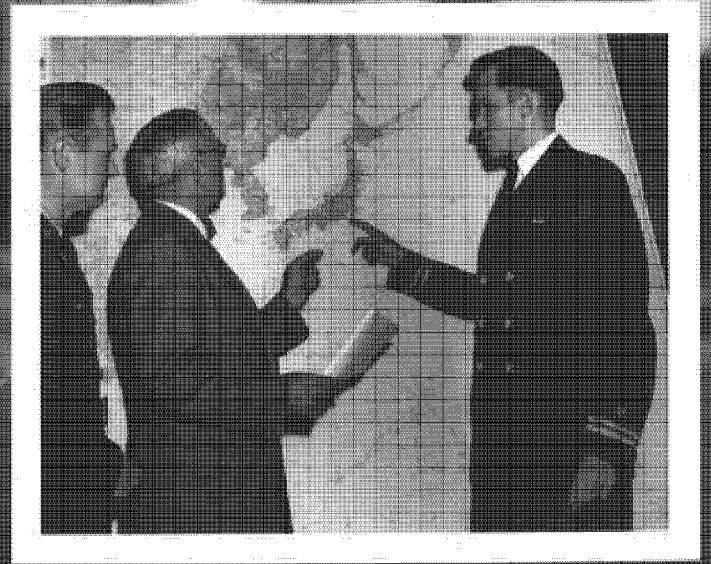


EXHIBIT 11

An Unplanned Life

A Memoir by *George McKee Elsey*



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Chapter Two

The Map Room

The first White House Map Room took shape in a cluttered temporary space in the West Wing of the White House. In the hectic days that followed the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941, the naval aide to the president, Captain John Beardall, took over what was known as the Fish Room. This windowless room directly across a corridor from the president's Oval Office owed its name to the trophies Herbert Hoover had caught on his fishing weekends at his camp on the Rapidan River in Virginia. Roosevelt's much larger deep-sea catches replaced Hoover's fish, and the room kept its name. (It is now known as the Roosevelt Room with portraits of Theodore and Franklin to maintain a bipartisan atmosphere.) Beardall placed maps of battle areas on easels positioned around the room; brought in safes where classified messages from military commands and cables from Churchill, Stalin, and other leaders could be filed; and added desks for the young army and navy officers who stood watch around the clock ready to brief the president on war events whenever he had a break in his schedule.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill arrived in mid-December, bringing with him his own portable map room, which he set up in a second-floor White House bedroom across the hall from the Queen's Bedroom, which he took over as though he owned the place. Roosevelt was a daily visitor to the prime minister's sophisticated presentation of military fronts and vivid displays of allied and enemy naval fleets. Enchanted, Roosevelt told Beardall after Churchill's departure, "Fix up a room for me like Churchill's."

Beardall plucked Lieutenant Robert Montgomery from the Office of Naval Intelligence. Montgomery, fresh from duty with the U.S. Naval Liaison Office in London, was familiar with Churchill's underground

War Room, far more impressive than the traveling map room he had brought to Washington. The War Room was the command center for the British war effort, Churchill being minister of defense as well as prime minister. Impressed by what he had seen in London, Montgomery responded to Beardall's instruction to "fix up a room like Churchill's" with a grandiose proposal for an American underground war room to be dug under what was then known as Ickes Park, the area between the Department of the Interior and Constitution Avenue where the War and Navy Departments were located. (The Pentagon was still in the early states of construction.) Montgomery proposed that top admirals and generals and civilian officials gather in this war room for a once-a-day presentation of the war situation. He envisioned himself as the ideal "presenter." His proposal went nowhere. The only digging that took place was a tunnel from the White House under East Executive Avenue to the "gold vaults" of the Treasury Department, where Roosevelt could be moved to safety in the event of a German attack on Washington. (This was as ridiculous as the panicky mounting of antiaircraft guns on the roofs of downtown buildings. The Germans had neither land planes capable of transatlantic flight nor any aircraft carriers.)

Thwarted in his grandiose scheme, Montgomery came down to earth. He would leave the Fish Room—it was too exposed to newsmen and the numerous West Wing visitors—and relocate to the White House itself. He found the perfect spot in the Trophy Room, so named for the gifts—official and unofficial—that were sent to the president and Mrs. Roosevelt. The room was on the ground floor, directly across the corridor from the elevator the president used in going between his living quarters on the second floor and his office in the West Wing. He could catch the overnight news first thing in the morning and stop in again at the end of the day. Security was ideal. This area was off-limits to all except the official family.

Montgomery had the paneled walls covered with soft wallboard for their protection and so that the maps could be readily changed. Desks and file cabinets were placed in an island in the center of the room so that the president, in his wheelchair, could study the maps at close range. The maps of battle areas were covered with clear plastic. Grease pencil markings showed the dispositions of enemy and allied troops. Charts of the oceans were studded with colored pins—blue for U.S. ships, orange for Japanese, red for British, black for German, gray for Italian. The

pins were of different sizes and shapes to denote the category—battle-ship, cruiser, destroyer, submarine, or special troop ships such as the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth*. Pins of capital ships bore their names—as did a ship of whatever size on which a member of the Roosevelt family was embarked.

When I arrived in the Map Room on April 28, 1942, pursuant to a cryptic order from the director of Naval Intelligence to report to the naval aide to the president, I found there to be six watch officers, three army and three navy, maintaining the room twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. One officer from each service was there until mid-evening, with a lone officer remaining during the night. Our “boss” was Captain John McCrea, who had succeeded Beardall as naval aide. Soon after I arrived, the last of the West Point and Annapolis graduates departed for troop or sea duty. Watch officers were to be reserves only, men whose future careers would not be tarnished with too much “state-side duty.” My assignment was due to Bill Mott, now assistant to McCrea. He was carrying out the promise he had made a few weeks earlier.

Nominally in charge of the watch officers, Mott pretty much left us on our own after making sure we were properly instructed in our duties. As he led me into the Map Room for the first time and closed the door, he pointed to a cartoon of three monkeys posted on the inside of the door. Under the first monkey, whose eyes were wide open, was printed “sees everything.” Below, in pencil, was written “something.” Under the second monkey, holding a hand to an ear, was printed “hears everything.” The penciled note: “a little.” The third monkey, with hand over mouth, “tells nothing.” Below, in pencil, “less.” Mott said the penciled words were written by Secretary of War Henry Stimson as dictated to him by Roosevelt one evening when they were conferring in the room. Map Room watch officers, it was obvious, were expected to be discreet in word and action.

Several times a day officer couriers from the War and Navy Departments brought locked leather pouches crammed with telegrams, reports, and documents. From these the watch officers updated the maps and selected the items they thought important enough for the naval aide to show the president. Mott explained that, however interesting the war news might be, the most important papers I would be handling were the cabled exchanges between the president and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, with those between Roosevelt and Stalin or Chiang Kai-shek not far behind.

“When you get a message that is to go to Churchill,” he told me, “the first thing to do is type it in the proper form, give it the next number in the Roosevelt-Churchill file, and then phone the navy code room to send an officer to pick it up. All outgoing messages to Churchill [and Stalin and Chiang too] are coded and sent by the navy. The incoming ones are brought to us by officer courier from the War Department.”

“Why is that?” I asked.

“Simple. The president doesn’t want any place in Washington except the Map Room to have a complete file of these messages. This way, snoops in the navy might find out what he asks Churchill, but they won’t know the answer. Army will get an answer to an unknown question. Sure, people can make good guesses, but they’ll never know the whole story.”

“Navy codes all the outgoing stuff; army decodes the incoming. The only time the Map Room might code and decode would be if the president were away on a long trip. If he’s just at Hyde Park or some place close, stuff gets to him by White House pouch. We’ve been told that if he’s going to be away for some time, cryptographic equipment will be brought here and we’ll be taught how to code and decode stuff that is too hot to go by pouch. Then we’ll be handling not only Churchill and such but back-and-forth things from the cabinet and Congress. We’re likely to be damn busy then.”

I learned that the Map Room was expected to follow up with the naval aide or Harry Hopkins if action was not taken in timely fashion on messages and papers that required action. Hopkins, the president’s closest adviser, had lived since before the war on the second floor of the White House in what today is known as the Lincoln Bedroom, a few doors from the president’s own quarters. Hopkins was the only presidential staff member with access to the Map Room and its files. Not even the president’s longtime press secretary, Steve Early; his trusted speechwriter, Judge Samuel Rosenman; or the director of war mobilization, former Supreme Court Justice James Byrnes (dubbed by the press as “assistant president”) was eligible to enter our sanctuary. Roosevelt was certain that the army and the navy would be reluctant to entrust the Map Room with their most secret information if “politicians” were allowed to nose around.

As a recently commissioned ensign, I had been thrilled not many weeks earlier to hand a cable to a rear admiral directing Naval Intelligence. Now, I was taking papers directly to the commander in chief if something

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