

H. LEE WHITE

THE MAN

The Early Years

H. Lee White was born in 1912 to Frances B. and Walter White of 46 E. Oneida St., and graduated from Oswego High School where he was a varsity basketball player before matriculating at Hamilton College. In 1937, he received his law degree from Cornell University, where he was on the Law Review. In 1954, he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Syracuse University.

After law school, White worked for a year as special assistant to the General Counsel of the US Casualty in New York City. In 1938, he went to Binghamton to join the law firm of Mangan and Mangan, becoming a partner two years later.

In World War II, White entered the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant, and worked under the Secretary of the Navy in Washington, DC. When discharged in 1946, he held the rank of Commander.

Post-War

In 1946, White joined the law firm of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft at 14 Wall Street, NYC. He became a partner there in 1949, and eventually became a senior partner. Once in the shipping business, it was said that "H. Lee White wears a law hat in the morning and a shipping hat in the afternoon."



H. Lee & Betty-Johnson White c. Late 1940s



Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Air Force

Between January 1953 and July 1954 White served as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force in the Eisenhower administration. One of his colleagues remarked that "Lee, you'll be remembered around Washington as the man who made deals." Notably, he was able to cut cost while increasing recruitment, and made many influential friends in Washington including Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson, Deputy Secretary Roger Kyes, and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Anderson who became stock-holders of Marine Transport Lines along with Nationalist Chinese partners.

On President Johnson's Maritime Advisory Committee

White became a member of President Johnson's 15-man Maritime Advisory Committee established by Executive Order 11156 on June 17, 1964. As a member of that committee, White wrote a strong dissent of the Committee's majority report. The majority report recommended retaining present policies and procedures of ship subsidies keeping legislative restrictions on registering foreign-built ships under the American flag. White disagreed with this decision and in his minority report detailed why American ship owning companies would have a hard time turning a profit on vessel built at American shipyards. He argued that those same companies should be free to have ships built in other countries, and allow them to fly the American flag.