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Biggest Question At Pentagon, Environs Is Who Will Succeed Gen. Omar Bradley

back the chief executive's opinions and hopes to the chiefs. It is a job calling for rare tact, and the air force feels sure it has just the man who can do it. They don't want to bet against him.

WASHINGTON, April 21 (INS) - The \$4 billion dollar question around the Pentagon and its environs is "who will succeed Gen. Omar Bradley as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff?"

The consensus is that it will not be an army man, old army man Bradley having had the job as long as the post has existed; four years. He goes out in August. That leaves the air force or navy very much in the running, though the army feels that old army man Eisenhower, who'll make the choice, may turn his back on the fact understanding that the post should be rotated in the interests of unification. One hears frequent reports that he'll bring in his old friend and fellow worker, Gen. Al Gruenther.

Very much in the running is Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, whose long tour of duty as chief of staff of the air force is coming to an end.

Vandenberg is well below the mandatory retirement age of 62, but has had 30 years of military service. While primarily an airman he has done enough jobs on the outside to give him the widest experience of any of the present members of the joint chiefs who might be in line for the coveted job.

He served in Moscow for six months during World War II has head of a mission to the U.S.S.R. after the war he was director of intelligence in the war department General Staff, and served for a year as head of the newly created central intelligence agency. He has been a member of the joint chiefs longer than his opposite numbers in army and navy. His air force life has covered the full range of operations, light and heavy stuff, strategic and tactical, personal participation to teaching in-staf schools.

The air force has long been accused of boastfulness and arrogance in inner military circles, and sometimes not without complete justification. But its top man, Vandenberg, for all his glittering appearance, has always been a model of soldierly conservatism. Insid-

ers feel that he has done a better job of preventing serious conflict between various interests within the air force itself than Gen. Joe Collins, or Adm. Fichtelberg.

Boosters of a navy man for chairman of the chiefs, at this dawn of the atomic naval age, felt certain that the late Adm. Sherman would succeed Bradley and be an able boss of the country's vast military establishment. There is no question in Washington but that Sherman would have made a splendid chairman.

His untimely death and succession by Adm. Fichtelberg did not necessarily make Fichtelberg a good gruff man, the choice of all champions of a navy man for chairman, Adm. Radford, who went to Korea with Eisenhower and was his host on the voyage of the U.S.S. Helena from Guam to Honolulu, became their favorite, though he had never had any joint chiefs experience. The Staff over-

Radford's support of a naval blockade of Red China, however, is believed to have hurt the admiral's chances of making the big leap.

Radford's "Lightning Joe" Code, the army's director of information before being raised to chief of staff, will not approve any spectacular support of his bid. If the three aspirants were put on a stage, however, and asked to speak in their own behalf, "Lightning Joe" would win hands down. He is an inspired speaker.

The job of chairman of the joint chiefs of staff was an afterthought. For the first two years of the top chiefs' life together, under the national security act, they had no chairman. The Navy fought the revision of the law which created the post, and won one point: The chairman does not function as a member of the joint chiefs of staff.

Little known fact: The joint chiefs do not vote. It is a debating society, but one which is assigned a heavy job, that resolving service differences, controversies and priorities as old as the Republic's compromises and splits of the chiefs to the President and brass.

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