

Oral History Interview
with
BRIGADIER GENERAL CORNELIUS J. MARA

Air Force liaison officer to the White House, 1947-49, and Assistant Military Aide to the President, 1949-53

Washington, D.C.
June 7 and 9, 1971
by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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BRIGADIER GENERAL CORNELIUS J. MARA

Alexandria, Virginia
June 7, 1971
By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: General, would you tell me about your background; where were you born, where were you educated, and just tell me a little bit about yourself.

MARA: Okay. I was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey on June 27, 1896. At about the age of four or five my parents moved to Brooklyn, New York, due to the death of -- some member of the family. I went to school at St. Vincent De Paul's Academy Grammar School and graduated from there and then went on to Commercial High in Brooklyn where I remained for three years (it was a three year course). I entered St. Leonard's Business Academy, which was run by the Brothers

of St. Joseph, and there I learned stenography, typewriting and bookkeeping and other business subjects, a bit of English too.

Upon graduation from there I went to work for the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company as a stenographer, in their

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main office in Brooklyn. In about a year, I was transferred to the Crosstown Depot as secretary to the division superintendent.

While employed by the railroad I went to Columbia University at night and studied English and economics. I remember I had two excellent professors at Columbia. I had to travel from Greenpoint to Columbia up at 116th Street and Broadway each night on the subway.

While I was at Columbia, the war broke, the First World War, and I volunteered. I wrote the Adjutant General and set forth my credentials, and he replied in a very short time and directed me to report to a recruiting station for physical examination and to Hoboken, N. J. for a mental examination.

So, I went to Hoboken and took the mental and passed and was assigned to duty then in the Judge Advocate's office as a stenographer in the Army. That was in May of 1918.

I wanted to get overseas and about July or August I made application for admission to the officer's training camp and was accepted. Orders came out for me to go to Fremont, California, for second lieutenant training as an infantry officer. The war closed on November the 11th, just the day I was to report to California.

Later I was secretary to some of the older generals of

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World War I, R. L. Bullard, Hugh Drum, Frank L. Winn.

Later I was secretary to the commanding general in Panama, from '32 to '35. General MacArthur was just going to the Philippines in 1935 and I wanted to get on his staff as his secretary. I had served under Colonel Kenyon Joyce, for whom the chapel at Arlington Cemetery is now named, to help me get the assignment, but it did not materialize.

Colonel Kenyon Joyce had been my boss at Governors Island prior to 1932 in the G-2 Section, when the march of the veterans on Washington took place. I was chief clerk as a warrant officer. We were in close contact with the new head of the FBI, young Mr. Hoover. I used to go over to New York City and sit in on some of the Communist meetings.

I remember attending a meeting at Carnegie Hall. There were two old military officers, one a retired general -- the other an admiral, debating a couple of smart young Communists. The hall was filled with men in black shirts who harassed them and I felt sorry for the officers. I was taking the proceedings down in shorthand, for our records at Governors Island.

I was ordered to Omaha, Nebraska from Panama in 1935. I didn't care about going to the Midwest, I decided to go to Washington and see if I could get a change of assignment. On the way down I stopped at the Army headquarters,

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in Baltimore. An old boss of mine was there as the Inspector General and he said, "What are you doing here?"

I said, "I'm on my way to Washington to see if I can get a change of assignment."

He said, "you're free?"

I said, "Well, I'm on orders to go to Omaha."

He said, "Well, how would like to work here?"

I said, "I'd like it."

He said, "Well, I'll see what I can do about it," and the next thing I was ordered to Baltimore.

That's how I probably got to Washington.

I stayed at Baltimore for three years in the Inspector General's Department.

Before I went to Panama I served in the Inspector General's Department under some very capable old Indian fighters; General Tyree Rivers and his brother William C., who later was the Inspector General of the Army. I learned so much from them -- and the stories they could tell.

Old W.C. told how, as a young second lieutenant, he had been assigned to an Indian reservation in the far west. He thought the traders were cheating the Indians on the weight of the corn, so he put a couple of his cavalymen on the road leading into the trading post who weighed the corn on

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the way in. The trader did not give them cash. He gave them script with the weight of the corn, and they would have them come back later to get supplies. Young lieutenant Rivers, then compared the weight shown on the slip and he sent the trader to jail. That was his beginning. He was later a brevet brigadier general in the Boxer Revolution in China (W. C. Rivers now I'm talking about). After the Boxer Revolution, he went back to the grade of captain. In World War I he went to France and commanded a brigade of artillery again as a brigadier and again returned to his old rank of colonel. That's when I served under him. He was then the Inspector General of the Second Corps area, and I was his chief clerk.

General Charles P. Summerall who was the Chief of Staff had been our commanding general at Governors Island and he liked Rivers. I remember saying to him, "Colonel, you've got a chance

to be the inspector general, General Summerall likes you -- but he can't do it alone; you've got to go down and make your contacts with your Senators from Tennessee."

He said, "Mara, I don't know them and I can't be mixed up in politics."

I said, "Well, you've got to help General Summerall."

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He said, "All right, just to get you off my back," And he did go and he made contact with his two Senators from Tennessee and got the appointment. He later said, "I owe that job to you." But here I was a brash young kid advising this a smart old colonel, but that's the way it goes.

Now, we'll go back to my assignment. After Baltimore I was assigned to Washington in 1938 to the Inspector General's office as an assistant to the Air Corps inspector who was working out of the Washington office, General Julius Jones, who was another brilliant officer. Our duties consisted of inspecting air bases, air depots, and special bases that were assigned to the Washington office. We also made rather lengthy investigations, as well as inspections of the finance officers. We made these inspections once or twice a year. And General Jones was a pilot and we'd get into an airplane and go out to the base and stay there for a week or two and inspect the base. In that way I got to know practically everybody in the old Air Corps.

I held a commission as a first lieutenant in the reserve. With the possibility of war if I went on active duty, I would get a reduction in pay. You see, a warrant officer made more money than a first lieutenant. I went downstairs in the same building and saw the sergeant in charge of organized Reserve

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and I said, "Sergeant it's about time I was promoted to Captain." (I'd been a lieutenant since 1926).

He said, "I think so too." He arranged the papers and I appeared before a board and took the examination and was promoted to captain.

In '40 the war clouds darkened and I was called to active duty as a captain. They wanted me in the Inspector's section of the Air Corps. That's when I served in the same office with General Twining, he was a major at that time and I was a captain. We sat across the desk from each other. And I served there, oh, I guess for about two years, until the war came on. Then the war broke out.

HESS: Where were you when you heard the news about Pearl Harbor being bombed?

MARA: At home, I didn't know it until late that afternoon. I hadn't turned on the radio. And that afternoon Millard Libby, who was another captain in the office with me, called and he said, "Have you heard the news?"

I said, "What news?"

He said, "Pearl Harbor's been bombed."

And I said, "Oh my God."

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Well then he said, "Get the uniform on and get down to the office."

HESS: Were you surprised that the Japanese took that action?

MARA: Oh yes. Oh yes. Was I surprised? Yes, of course, yes, I'm sure I was surprised. I don't think we anticipated the sudden move, but we should have. I remember on maneuvers in Panama some years previously. There was a point in the interior where the maneuvers had been held and there had been a successful breakthrough. The invading force trying to get through the Panama Canal broke through at this particular point. And we later learned that the Japanese, some Japanese people tried to buy the land where this breakthrough occurred. So they were planning for years...

HESS: They had their eye on that too.

MARA: Previously. They had their eye on the canal.

HESS: As you know, in years since the war, some historians have said that President Roosevelt thought that the Japanese were going to strike at Pearl Harbor and he did not give the commanders there adequate warning of the invasion, so that the bombing would solidify American opinion against the Japanese.

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MARA: I don't believe he knew it. I don't believe he knew it. If he knew it he would have told them.

I hold the commanders responsible to some degree in that they were not more alert -- with war threatening and with the war going on in Europe greater caution should have been exercised. But we always learn the hard way. The great mistake that this government made earlier was when -- who was it, oh, yes. Secretary [Henry L.] Stimson; when Stimson tried so hard to get the Administration at that time to take action against the Japanese when they invaded China for the first time. You know, where was that, at some gates, I forget...

HESS: I know what you mean.

MARA: That was the beginning, that was the first time the Japs got the free hand. Stimson recognized it, and the Army recognized, but nothing was done. And then after that you had Mussolini going into Ethiopia and disregarding the then League of Nations. That was the beginning, that was the first time where an aggressive nation was free to do what it liked. I think that that was the beginning.

HESS: All right. After Pearl Harbor was attacked tell me about your service during the war. What did you do during World War II?

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MARA: I stayed in the Inspector General's office there until May. Then General Arnold wanted to organize -- see we were bringing in the officers in by the thousands and we were getting all kinds and types of people. General Arnold, wanted to start an Inspector General's school. That was in the planning stage for several -- oh, for a month or two, I knew that it was being planned, and I knew that there was a possibility that I might be assigned to it as commandant. But at that time I was executive for the colonel in charge of inspection, I forget his name now. He did not want to lose me because of my experience. This Colonel Jones whom I served as assistant when we were inspecting bases, was now Major General Jones and the Army Air Force Inspector General, who wanted me to organize and command this school. I was then a lieutenant colonel.

So there was a battle between the two for a couple of weeks. And one night I was at home having dinner and received a phone call from a Captain Fogerty. He said, "Colonel, you've been assigned to that new school at Knollwood Field."

I said, "Yes, when do I go."

He says, "Tonight."

I says, "You're kidding."

He says, "Oh, no. No, sir," he said, "the orders are out."

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I said, "Well, how am I going to get transportation?"

He said, "I've already arranged that."

So I left that night at midnight for the school at Knollwood where the students had already arrived; there were fifty officers and fifty enlisted men, in a golf club. And I think it was the Pines Golf Club where the school was to be held.

The next morning I was on the platform lecturing and I instructed for about an hour or two. After that I got on a telephone and started phoning all over the country for instructors to come in to teach. And I called on the staff here in Washington to send officers down to teach, and then return to Washington.

Well, somehow I got the school organized and kept it going for thirty days. I'd be one day ahead of the students. There still are people around who tell me what a fine school we had at Knollwood.

But then I transferred the school. It was impractical to hold it there in the golf course, and I found out there was some buildings out at Fort Logan, Colorado that I might get. I got it from one of my instructors, he had just come from Denver.

I called Washington and Washington called Logan and the next thing I was on my way to Logan to open up that class.

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I commanded that school from May of '41 until I transferred it to Orlando, Florida in January of '44, and I stayed with it in Orlando until June of '44.

I wanted to get overseas and I had it all fixed up with a very close friend of mine who was taking a B-29 group out to the Pacific. I was going out as his exec and he was going to be commanding officer. I was still a lieutenant colonel, and he said, "The minute we get off the shore, you're a colonel, because I'll have the table of organization and I'll appoint you colonel.

I thought I had this all fixed up, I had been approved by the training command under whom I served, and I could foresee no objection in Washington. I had already arranged for an officer to relieve me, a West Point graduate who was going to take my place as commandant of the school. But when the orders came out, I was ordered back to Washington.

And I went into Millard Libby's office, he was then executive officer for General -- General Barney Giles, General Arnold's deputy Libby was the chap who phoned me at home the day of Pearl Harbor. He's now an eagle colonel. I walked and I said, "Millard you so and so what the hell have you done to me?" I said, "I had everything all fixed up to be a colonel

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and here you have me back here in Washington."

He said, "Keep your big mouth shut. You'll be a colonel in two weeks. We need you here."

I was appointed Deputy Adjutant General of the Army Air Force on General Arnold's staff. That's how I came to meet the Truman crowd.

The war in Europe was coming to a close, and General Arnold wanted to organize a command here that would be responsible for retraining, refurbishing and transferring to Asia of the air forces returning from Europe. He called it the Continental Air Force. It had command of all of the stations in the United States. He had been trying to get this thing organized for several months, and each morning at staff meeting he'd say to General Barney Giles, his deputy,

"Barney, how about the Continental Air Force?"

And Barney assigned different officers to it but they just couldn't get it started.

There was one man in the Air Force who was General Arnold's troubleshooter. Whenever he couldn't get something done, he'd say, "Where is Bill Streett?" Bill Streett was then commanding

the Thirteenth Air Force in the Pacific. He had commanded the Third Air Force at Tampa when they were having trouble with the fighters. Then they had trouble

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with the bombers out in Colorado. Arnold transferred him (Streett) out to the Second Air Force to straighten out the bombers. Streett was then assigned to the command the Thirteenth Air Force, in the Pacific. He's the man that introduced skip bombing. St. Clair Streett is his full name, actually one of the greats of the Air Force. He had been General Billy Mitchell's aide following World War I when the German battleships were sunk in the Norfolk area.

HESS: Since you were closely associated with the Air Corps what is your opinion of the Billy Mitchell affair.

MARA: This man, Bill Streett, he is one of the greatest of the Air Force. I'll give you a little of his background.

HESS: All right.

MARA: Bill Streett, I say he had been aide to Billy Mitchell, and he told me personally, he said, "You know, it was an impossibility for us to bomb those battleships from ten thousand feet."

HESS: That was during the demonstration of bombers and the battleships?

MARA: Yes, down in the Chesapeake. Bill Streett told me this

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story. He said, Mitchell sent him from -- Langley Field to Washington to tell the Army officials that he was going to violate the rules. That he couldn't hit the ships at ten thousand feet but he was going to hit the ships.

HESS: And they wanted this to keep that information from the Navy.

MARA: That's right. That is absolutely right, and...

HESS: What altitude did they bomb from?

MARA: About two or three thousand feet.

HESS: When they were supposed to bomb from...

MARA: From ten thousand.

HESS: ...from ten thousand.

MARA: They had no bomb sights. All they wanted to do was prove that they could sink the ships, and they damned near dropped the bombs in the smokestacks. So, he came to Washington and told the Army officials here that he was going to do it. And of course, that was kept secret.

Bill Streett later was the supply officer who had to go out and stash the gas and oil in the Pacific off the

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Asiatic coast for the round-the-world flyers. He was the advance man.

The Air Force, and all the services, have had men who have done such great things, and the stories will be lost. When the old times pass on.

HESS: That's what we in oral history try to do.

MARA: It's the greatest thing that has ever been invented, because you'll get the story, nobody will ever know about these stories otherwise. I would get these stories from General Streett, I'd get them from General Rivers, and I remember the first time I reported to General Brown. Now there's an interesting story too, Preston Brown.

I got orders to report to the Commanding General, Panama Canal Department, while I was on duty at Governors Island in 1932. Transfer orders always read, "Report to the Commanding General, but you report to the Adjutant and he assigns you to duty. Well, I reported to the Adjutant as usual expecting to be assigned to duty. He said, "You report to the Commanding General."

I thought I had done something, I just reported -- you don't ask questions.

So, I walked into his office and saw the aide and he

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said, "Oh, Mr. Mara," he said, "oh, yes, the General's expecting you." Then the aide took me in to see him. "Oh, Mara, oh" he said, I'm glad to see you." He says, "Sit down, I'll be with you in just a moment.

He dismissed the officer shortly and turned to me and said, "Mara, I suppose you're wondering what you're doing here."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Well, I'll tell you. You were recommended to me (and he didn't tell me by whom), as a man who knows how to keep his ears open and his mouth shut. There are things in this Panama Canal Department that only you and I will know about, and," he says, "that's why you are here." So, your reputation goes in front of you.

I'm diverting again, but that's a bit of egotism on my part.

HESS: Well, that's all right.

One question about Billy Mitchell: You know there was criticism of him at the time that he was making his accusations that we were not going to be properly defended, that if he wanted to make these accusations that he should have retired from the Army before he started to...

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MARA: Shout his mouth off.

HESS: That's right, before he started to criticize the Army and the Air Force.

MARA: That is true, but Billy Mitchell was a very strong, courageous man. And I believe that he felt that he would be dealing with men as big as he was, but he wasn't.

HESS: All right now, at that time, there was a movement underfoot not only to take the Air Force out of the Army and make it an Air Corps, but there was also talk underway of taking over the Navy's air arm. In other words, all airplanes, all pilots, whether they fly from land or fly from the sea, should be under one unit, not an Army Air Corps, not a Navy Air Corps, but an Air Corps. What's your opinion of that?

MARA: I think that might have been in the minds of some of the Air Force men, but I don't think it had reached a stage where it was seriously considered even by the men who thought it.

Do you follow me there?

HESS: Yes.

MARA: But I think that Billy Mitchell, I think he was definitely

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a sacrifice in this country. I had great admiration for him, although Mr. Truman personally did not approve of Billy Mitchell's action. He just -- and the boss, Mr. Truman, when he gets an idea into his head, he sticks with it. Now he did not like Billy Mitchell personally. I think he thought Billy Mitchell was a glamour boy and a scene-stealer. I think that's Mr. Truman's opinion of Mitchell. But I don't agree with it. I personally think he was one of our greats. And had we followed his intentions, we would have been far better off, because we were not prepared for World War II even. We didn't have the airplanes that we should have had in World War II, even after all of our experience.

Now that's interesting too, that you bring up Billy Mitchell. While I was serving at Governors Island we had a Major Gullion there, who was a Judge Advocate, and he had a large family of girls. There were girls from about three to eleven, five of them, and he had a beautiful house at Governors Island. One day he got an order to report to Washington for duty in the Judge Advocate General's office. He said, "What the hell do they want me in Washington for? And

what am I going to do with this family of mine?" He says, "Well, I know what I'll do," he says, "I'll rent me an apartment down in Southeast, because my social status is established."

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Well, he was ordered to Washington to be the Judge Advocate who prosecuted Billy Mitchell. And he was later the Judge Advocate General of the Army.

HESS: Well, now, let's see, what other positions did you hold during the war?

MARA: Oh. I started to tell you, I must have diverted, talking about General Streett. Finally he ordered General Streett into Washington to organize this Continental Air Force.

HESS: Yes, that's right.

MARA: And he reported, and I joined General Streett then and became his executive and secretary of staff of the Continental Air Force and we organized this new command.

And here, I was going through these papers the other day, I did not get this out purposely, but I did happen to see it. Here is the table of organization of the Continental Air Force, which was the parent of SAC.

HESS: The Strategic Air Command.

MARA: Yes. Well, I stayed with them until, oh, I don't know, sometime in '46.

HESS: Were you with them at the end of the war?

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MARA: No, at the end of the war I was liaison at the White House. This led up to that. Now had I gone to the Pacific, none of this would have happened, I'd have been a colonel out there and probably retired as a colonel.

HESS: You'd have missed a lot, wouldn't you?

MARA: I'd have missed a lot, yes. It goes to show you, you try to set your own plans, your own career, and somebody interferes with it and does a much better job than you planned to do.

HESS: What outfit were you with by the time of the end of the war?

MARA: I was at the White House.

Now, let me see. Oh, somewhere -- I was with General Streett I guess a year or so, a year, maybe a year and a half, and then I came down with a bad case of ulcers. I got those commanding this school out there in Colorado. I was ordered out to Walter Reed Hospital, ostensibly for retirement.

And I think it must have been in 1946 or '47 that I went to Walter Reed, but they returned me to duty and I did not go back to the Continental Air Force but was assigned to

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some sort of duty at the -- oh, yes, I was assigned to the headquarters again on General Arnold's staff.

I was a little ahead of my story when I went with General Streett. While I was Deputy Adjutant General of the Army Air Force the Truman Committee was going to investigate the war effort in Africa and Europe. The two of the committee members were Senator [Harold H.] Burton and Senator [James M.] Tunnell. Well, the request for a liaison officer of the Air Corps to accompany this committee to Europe came over my desk as the Adjutant General.. I thought it was a rather important assignment and I'd better assign myself to it and see what took place. I talked to General Giles, who was the deputy commander, and explained what I planned to do and he said, "You go ahead and keep an eye on things."

So, that's when I first met Harry Vaughan. I was drawing clothing at a warehouse and Harry Vaughan walked in and we met for the first time. He was a colonel and I was a colonel. And there were a couple of other officers there and we were all drawing our overseas equipment. Harry Vaughan and I seemed to hit it off right from the start. And then the trip, we were to take, we would leave after Christmas in 1944.

HESS: Mr. Truman had left the Committee and was Vice President elect at that time.

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MARA: This is Christmas '44. We started out on a thirty-day trip of Africa and Europe, Jerusalem and Iran. Vaughan and I, wherever we stopped, we'd occupy the same room. We'd have the twin beds at the hotel and we became very good friends in those 30 days. I was then Adjutant General of the headquarters Army Air Force, you see, and when we came back I had Vaughan out to the club at Bolling and he had me to his home and we became very close intimate friends.

HESS: Did you ever attend any of the hearings of the Truman Committee after that time, after that trip?

MARA: No, I don't believe so.

HESS: You were just along as liaison officer.

MARA: That's it. I was just the Air Force liaison officer to the Committee.

Now, we had a photographer along and he took both motion pictures and still pictures of the trip, and I arranged to have the committee -- oh, in the meantime, after we got back, Harry took me up to the Vice President's office and introduced me to the then Vice President, and that's the first I met him.

Then a month or so after that -- oh, this is -- when did he become President?

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HESS: He became President in April.

MARA: April, yes, all right.

HESS: Was it shortly after you returned from your trip that General Vaughan took you in to introduce you to Mr. Truman?

MARA: That's correct. Vaughan was then Aide to the Vice President.

HESS: Okay, this must have been '45 then, is that right?

MARA: This is '45.

HESS: This is '45.

MARA: That's right. I was arranging a party at Bolling Field for Senator Burton, Senator Tunnell, the Army, Navy liaison officers, Harry Vaughan, and I wanted to include Mr. and Mrs. Truman.

HESS: Was he able to attend?

MARA: He said, "Wait here, the boss will be here in a few minutes, and I'll see what our engagements are."

We waited a very short time, and Mrs. Truman came in and he told her that I was inviting them to dinner at Bolling and explained what it was and she thought for a minute, and she

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said, "Friday, Friday, Friday," she said, "that's all right, we're free."

So, we set up. The next week, on Wednesday, Mr. Roosevelt died...

HESS: He died on Thursday.

MARA: On Thursday. The day before the party I had everything arranged at the club for the dinner and Mrs. Mara was sitting downstairs outside my office. We were having a party that night for General Streett when Roosevelt -- oh, see I had subsequently been assigned to Streett then, see. When I went with Vaughan I was at the headquarters, but in between there, and however much time, I had been assigned to the command at Bolling, because I was at Bolling when Roosevelt died.

HESS: What were your impressions? What were your thoughts when you heard that Mr. Roosevelt had died?

MARA: I was grief stricken. I was really grief stricken. I thought a terrible tragedy had occurred. And of course, as I say, we were having this party at the club that night. General Streett had already left for his quarters to get dressed to go to this cocktail -- it was a -- we had just

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organized the command and this was his first introductory party for the officers. When I arrived at the club I whispered to General Streett that the President had died. You see it had just come over the radio and he said, "As soon as the line gets through, get the word around and clear this place out." He gave me those instructions.

So as soon as the greeting line ended I made announcement that word had just come across that President Roosevelt had died and that the party is discontinued, and that was that.

But that was the first time I met Mrs. Truman, that when I was in the President's office.

HESS: That one week before.

MARA: One week before, that's right.

HESS: Since you had met Mr. Truman and had known him before he became President, what kind of a President did you think he was going to make?

MARA: I didn't know. I didn't know. I was impressed with him the first time I met him, of course, as everybody is. You couldn't meet Mr. Truman in those days and not recognize that here is a very unusual man. That's the impression you got.

And in my days in the White House I would have men of the

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greatest minds, I'd be talking to them after they had met President, and they say, "That man amazes me with the depth of his knowledge." Here were brilliant minds, scientists.

I remember one day we were at Key West, and the Director of the Budget, he had brought the budget down from Washington to show to Mr. Truman, and we were at lunch later and little talking, just casually, and he says, "You know, that man, it's unbelievable, he knows more about the budget than I do." Here was a Director of the Budget.

HESS: Mr. Truman used to like to pay a lot of attention to the budget didn't he?

MARA: Oh, he knew it. He knew everything about it, and he would go through it and explain the different phases of it. The man had an unusually, oh, he had an unusual ability to analyze most everything. What time is it?

HESS: About 3:30. Shall we shut if off for the day?

MARA: I think we might.

HESS: All right, that's very good.

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Second Oral History Interview with Brigadier General Cornelius J. Mara, Alexandria, Virginia, June 9, 1971. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

MARA: We were just at the point where I was liaison officer between the Air Force and the White House. You see -- after I met Harry Vaughan, I went on duty with the Continental Air Force with General Streett. After I was there a year or so, I came down with ulcers and was sent out to Walter Reed Hospital, with the expectation of being retired. The doctors out there decided that I was still fit for duty and I did not go back to Continental Air Force. I returned to the Pentagon and was assigned as liaison between the Air Force and the White House.

We had in the headquarters there, what they called a Legislative and Liaison Division. You had a representative -- an Air Force officer represented the Hill; one for the House and one for the Senate and I was for the White House. I served then for about I'd say two years.

HESS: Did you have an office in the White House also?

MARA: Not at that time. My office was in the Pentagon, but any papers that the White House was concerned with I would get and bring it back to the Pentagon and have it processed and then I would return them some days later.

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HESS: When you would go to the White House who would you usually go in to see?

MARA: Well, I would see Rose Conway and probably say hello to Matt Connelly, and then I'd go over and I'd make a kind of a tour. I'd go over and talk to General Vaughan and stop by his office and see what he had. And I believe that's about the extent. Each morning I'd make that round and then come back to the Pentagon and take care of whatever their problems were.

Well, that continued until '48 I believe, late in '48 when Johnson was appointed Secretary of War and [Louis H.] Renfrow went with Johnson. Then Harry Vaughan asked me to stay in the White House as his assistant. So that's how I come to be in the White House.

HESS: Did you often see General Renfrow when you would go to the White House?

MARA: Oh yes. Well, I knew Renfrow before that, when he was at Selective Service.

HESS: Did he help you in the performance of your duties? Was he particularly helpful when you'd go to the White House?

MARA: Well, there would be no necessity for that that I know of.

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I don't recall. No. I'd just speak to him, there was no particular need for him to be helpful.

HESS: Okay.

MARA: I knew him.

HESS: All right. Now getting into your duties as Assistant Military Aide. Just what were your duties? How would you carry them out. What were some of the problems that arose?

MARA: Well, it's most difficult to describe, they were so diverse -- anything that might pertain to the military that came into the White House would be referred to our office. Just by routine it would be referred to us. And then it was our job to follow through and to see that we got a satisfactory answer to send to whoever wrote the inquiry. We would send the papers over to whatever department concerned.

We'd get a lot of correspondence of course, from veterans and veterans' families and soldiers' families and, of course, a lot of mail would come in from the Hill, from the Senators and the Representatives. And oftentimes we'd get telephone calls from the Hill, and it was a great assortment of things.

And then of course, any matters in Army or Air Force that

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was of vital importance to them, they'd send it over to us. Each morning General Vaughan would attend the staff meeting in the President's office and anything that we felt was important enough to bring to the attention of the President, he would take it over in his envelope in the morning and discuss it with the President and with the staff. Now, that's the general modus operandi of the office.

HESS: Did you ever attend the President's morning staff meetings?

MARA: No.

HESS: Did General Vaughan when he returned to the office let you know if there was anything of interest that had taken place?

MARA: He would always discuss with me what took place.

HESS: Now the date that I have down for your entrance onto the White House staff was July the 25th of 1949, is that about right? July 25?

MARA: 1949?

HESS: Yes.

MARA: Oh no, before that.

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HESS: Now see Louis Johnson took over in...

MARA: Oh, maybe that's right.

HESS:March of '49.

MARA: Oh, that's right now. That is right.

HESS: You see Forrestal was replaced in March of '49.

MARA: I thought it was earlier than that, but see, it's hard for me to differentiate, after all these years, between my service as liaison and being actually in the White House.

HESS: Were the duties quite similar?

MARA: Oh no, I was much more occupied doing things when I was in the White House.

HESS: You previously mentioned that the legislative liaison people were also in the same office that you were in the Pentagon. Was Charles Maylon there at that time?

MARA: Yes, Charlie was really one of the important characters in the old Air Corps, he was in the personnel division.

I first met Charlie Maylon when he was a warrant officer at Bolling Field, about 1935 or 6. We both were warrant officers. In getting things done, if I couldn't do it he

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could, and we worked like that for many, many years.

I recall Charlie had been a lieutenant, a second lieutenant, in the Reserve Corps. And as I told you the other day, if he went on active duty he'd lose a lot of money. So, he resigned his Reserve commission. Well, when it came time to recommission Charlie, we needed him desperately, we had one devil of a time convincing the War Department that he should go on duty as a captain and not a second lieutenant. But those old timers in the Army Adjutant General's Department, couldn't see it and we had a hard time. At that time I was a captain, in the Air Corps, and Charlie was still a warrant officer over at Bolling. We needed him badly in headquarters. I worked at that time with then Colonel Vic Beau, he was A-1 Chief of Personnel. We manipulated things so that we finally got Charlie -- this is before World War II -- called to active duty as a captain. He was assigned to personnel and was executive for each of the Assistant Chiefs of Staff, Personnel, practically all through the war. He was a man of vast experience, He knew everybody. He knew everybody in the Air Corps and everybody knew Charlie Maylon. And I don't think there was an enlisted man in the whole Air Corps that wouldn't call on Charlie Maylon when they'd get into a jam or need some help, Charlie would always come through for them. Now, that's the

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kind of a man that Charlie Maylon was.

HESS: Did he know most of the people on the Hill when he would go up there?

MARA: He knew practically everybody on the Hill. Then of course, after I was in the White House, and after Charlie retired, then Matt Connelly brought him in as liaison between the White House, and I don't remember now whether -- I think it was the House.

HESS: That's right.

MARA: Because Feeney was White House liaison with the Senate.

HESS: Joseph Feeney. At that time and I believe Mr. Maylon was a colonel.

MARA: No, he had been promoted to brigadier general.

HESS: Was he a general at this time?

MARA: He was promoted after he retired. He was colonel first, and I think while he was at the White House there the Air Force promoted him to brigadier general in the Reserves.

HESS: While those two gentlemen were at the White House, Feeney

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and Maylon, did you have occasion to call on them or work with them?

MARA: Very often. Very often.

HESS: Could you give me an example of something that you worked on with those men that might illustrate how they operated in the White House?

MARA: Well, here's the way it would work out. They would visit the Hill daily. If there was something pertaining to the Air Force, Charlie Maylon would come to me either by phone or in person and we'd discuss this matter, then I'd take it over to the Air Force and work it out. Or, well, that's the way it was done. Or if I had something that I had to -- something really important -- that had to be taken up with some particular Congressman on the Hill, pertaining to some military matter, I would go to Charlie, and he would take it up in person with the person on the Hill. There was very close liaison.

HESS: On the development of legislation, were those two men in on policy development, or were they more or less head counters and liaison with the Hill?

MARA: I don't know. I'm not in a position to pass on that because their office was over on the other side of the White House.

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HESS: Were they in the West Wing?

MARA: No, I believe they were over in the, what is the building that is across the street?

HESS: The Executive Office Building?

MARA: The Executive Office Building, I think they had offices in the Exec Office Building.

HESS: Where were your offices?

MARA: In the East Wing. We were right next to John Steelman. John Steelman had the office next to us and across from us was Bob Dennison, the Naval Aide.

HESS: Who else was in the East Wing at that time; the Military Aide, the Naval Aide, and John Steelman's shop. Who else was there?

MARA: Well the social office was upstairs and the police had an office on the right side as you came in off the street on the East Wing. The chief of the White House police had his office there. But John Steelman had the office next to us and then his girls had the office across the hall, that is on the north side of the East Wing. And the chief of police was on the

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north side also, and there's a big hall between.

HESS: Concerning John Steelman, how did he occupy his time? What seemed to be his major duties?

MARA: Well, he was Mr. Truman's number one aide, and he was a wonderful person. There was a very harmonious atmosphere there in the entire staff.

HESS: Were there times that friction developed with the office of Special Counsel? When you first went there it was Mr. Clark Clifford, he left in 1950, some time after you started in the White House, and then Charles Murphy became the Special Counsel. Did you notice a degree of friction between the offices of Special Counsel and the office of John Steelman?

MARA: No, I was not aware of it. Are you referring now while Clark Clifford was there...

HESS: That's right.

MARA: ...or while Charlie Murphy was there?

HESS: Both. Both, since you were there during both periods of time.

MARA: I can't conceive of there being any friction between

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Charlie Murphy and John Steelman.

HESS: What about Clark Clifford?

MARA: That's possible.

HESS: All right. All right, since you worked with General Harry Vaughan, what can you tell me about the man that will illustrate and characterize General Vaughan as the man you know him to be.

MARA: Well, to begin with, religiously, I'm a Catholic. Harry Vaughan, I consider him to be one of the most genuinely religious men, without showing it. He'd never demonstrate being religious, but when it gets down to basic fundamentals, he is. To me he is one of the most really and genuinely religious men that I have ever known.

And that's why I was so, I was so angry at Drew Pearson. He was my special hate, for his efforts to describe Harry Vaughan as a drinker, and a carouser, in any way to tear the man's character down, because he was absolutely the opposite.

Now on that trip we took overseas in late '44 , to show you the type of man he was, when we were in Cairo we had a few hours for ourselves. You know, we could do what we liked one afternoon there, otherwise, we were with the committee attending meetings and or attending some social, but for one afternoon

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we had, I think it was like two or three hours we could do with our own time. Well, I went down to the -- Shepherds Hotel in Cairo, got a guide and told him, "I want you to show me the highlights of Cairo. I want to see the King Tut tomb and I want to see all of the highlights, but I've only got an hour and a half to do it in, you show it to me quick." And I gave him a good substantial tip.

Now that's what I did with the time. You know what Harry Vaughan did? He spent those two hours going around trying to find trinkets and these fez caps for his Sunday school class in Alexandria.

HESS: Does he still teach that Sunday school class?

MARA: I believe so.

HESS: The Presbyterian Church, isn't that right?

MARA: Yes. It's the Westminster Presbyterian Church here in Alexandria.

Cliff Johnson was a young North Carolinian who came here as a young minister and Harry Vaughan has helped him. Well, he had the President out there for the dedication of the new church when they built it some ten or fifteen years ago. But here some two years ago, Harry said to me, "Cliff is

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having his twenty-fifth anniversary with the church. I'm trying to try to raise a fund and give him a trip to Europe." With the other members of the church, they raised \$10,000 and sent Cliff Johnson and his wife on a two-month's vacation in Europe. He went to Israel and Jerusalem and the holy places, and he came back and he told them he had the greatest time of his life. He went to Rome and all of the religious places of the Old World.

Well, you know, a year later that man died. Cliff Johnson the next year developed a brain tumor and he died. But there's Harry Vaughan again, he's such a thoughtful person.

HESS: You mentioned Drew Pearson and his...

MARA: Attempt.

HESS: Attempt. When did that start and what was the reason?

MARA: I'll tell you exactly what caused Drew Pearson to be so antagonistic to Vaughan. There was a trip planned to Greece, headed by Paul Porter. There was a lawyer in Washington who had somehow been named to accompany this commission to Greece and he was going to ride on the same airplane. His name was Vournas, he was a Greek attorney here and a member of the ACLU,

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and as I understand it, or understood it at that time, his wife had worked for a leftwing newspaper in New York City. One of the priests, one of the Greek orthodox priests here I think it was Father Thomas (I could be wrong on that) came to General Vaughan and said, "This man Vournas is going on this trip, and it would be a great aid to the Communists if he accompanies this mission." He was not a member of the mission, he was going over as a newspaperman I believe.

General Vaughan took the story to Mr. Truman and Mr. Truman said, "Well, if he's going to be a disturbing factor, take him off the airplane," and they did. His name was removed from the list and he could not go.

Now this, the next part, I got from Charlie Ross himself. Charlie Ross one day was sitting down on the beach at Key West and he told me, he says, "Pearson came in and complained that Vaughan was interfering with this man Vournas going to Europe, and that if Vaughan did not have this man replaced on that list, or if Vaughan didn't stop interfering, he would blast Vaughan across the Nation on Sunday night." So, he said, "I called Harry in his office and I told him what Pearson said and Harry said, "Is he close enough to hear what I'm going to say?" He says "Yes." He said, "Well, you tell him I'll be listening on Sunday night. " See? And Sunday night he

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blasted him and he continued to blast him and he accused him of the most -- he accused Vaughan of breaking into the police headquarters here and getting papers before Vaughan had even come to Washington. He made some of the most vicious lies up about Vaughan. He would lead you to believe that he was a sot, a drinking man.

Now, I've been with Vaughan for the last twenty-five years and I have never seen him take more than two drinks. I have never seen him, actually he doesn't like the taste of liquor, but yet -- oh, I had one great satisfaction, a really great satisfaction, of getting back at Pearson.

There was a lawyer here in town who had been a former Assistant Attorney General and Pearson accused him of malpractice or something. That is he accused him of representing two opposite governments at the same time when their purposes were completely opposite. I had done some kind of a favor, I forget now, for one of the men who worked for Pearson, John Hinshaw. He was one of Pearson's leg men.

Oh yes, I remember now what I did for him. He had been a Marine and he had gotten into some difficulty in the Marines and I straightened the matter out, and then I helped him I believe, to get a house. After the war it was pretty difficult to find housing and I think I helped this John somebody,

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John -- what the hell was his name? Well, at any rate, I helped him get a house and he appreciated it greatly, and he used to come in to visit me, and he'd give me little inside stories about what was going on in the Pearson establishment. And I kept my ears open very wide.

HESS: You had your own pipeline right into Pearson's camp?

MARA: I did, yes. And one time he told me about how Pearson got the information concerning this attorney, and I didn't say a word. But I had the facts, and the man who gave the information to -- oh, this John told me that this fellow didn't know what he was talking about that gave Pearson this information. And, well, to make a long story short, I passed the information on to this attorney, and damned if he didn't win his case and win \$50,000 from Pearson.

HESS: On a damage suit.

MARA: It was a damage suit.

Pearson had his tentacles in all sorts of places.

HESS: Did he have any in the White House?

MARA: I don't think so, not in our group. Of course, he was in there, but I don't think anybody in the White House.

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HESS: Did General Vaughan ever discuss with you any steps that he might have taken, any plans he may have made, to counteract what Pearson was saying about him in the papers? How did General Vaughan react to Pearson?

MARA: Now, that's a difficult question. Of course he discussed it with me, and I was sort of his shield, he knew all of these things that were taking place. It was a matter of daily conversation between he and I. What I'd hear about Pearson I'd pass on to him.

HESS: Did he know about your contact?

MARA: Oh definitely, yes. Anything I did he knew and vice versa, anything that he would find out I would know.

Well, Vaughan did not worry too much, he had nothing to worry about, he knew these were all lies. Of course we'll get around to the fight in the Senate investigation.

HESS: They may have been lies but his reputation was being hurt.

MARA: Oh definitely. Yes, but what could he do about it? What could you do about it at the time? Did you know about him subsequently winning a case against the *Saturday Evening Post* for \$10,000 on account of Pearson?

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HESS: Yes, that came later, is that right?

MARA: That came later, yes.

But now, let's get back to Pearson and his tentacles. I was over to the Pentagon one day to see Secretary Louis Johnson, or maybe it was to see Renfrow, I don't know, but here sitting outside Johnson's private office is Pearson. And there had been a lot of leaks in the Pentagon that could have only come from Johnson's office. And I came back and I told the President about it. We had been concerned about those leaks from the Pentagon. I think this was subsequent to Johnson's speech down there in West Virginia where he initiated this five percent business. You know he made a speech down in West Virginia and said that there were thousands of five per centers in Washington. It was Johnson that started that damn thing, and he should have known better.

But I came back and I told the boss about it and he said, "Well, I'd like you to go and see Johnson privately and tell him that we were getting a little bit tired of these stories coming out of the Pentagon."

HESS: Where did you think those stories were emanating from?

MARA: We thought they were coming right from Johnson.

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HESS: Right from Johnson.

MARA: And I arranged to see Mr. Johnson in his room at the Mayflower Hotel before he left for the Pentagon one morning and I had a very private talk with him and told him that the President was concerned about all these leaks from the Pentagon and to do something to stop it.

HESS: What did he say?

MARA: Well, he said he would take action.

HESS: Did he?

MARA: We didn't notice it. We didn't notice it particularly.

HESS: Why would he have planted stories with Pearson?

MARA: Well, it's hard to tell, it's hard to tell why those men do those things, it's a difficult matter.

HESS: Do you think that Secretary of Defense Johnson would have liked to have run for President?

MARA: Oh, I believe he had visions of that possibility.

HESS: Did you ever hear that discussed?

MARA: Oh yes, yes.

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HESS: Did the people around him discuss that possibility?

MARA: I don't know.

HESS: General Renfrow was one who might have.

MARA: He wouldn't discuss it with me.

HESS: Do you know why Louis Johnson was appointed Secretary of Defense there in March of 1949?

MARA: No, I do not.

HESS: Do you know why Secretary of Defense Forrestal, our first Secretary of Defense was replaced?

MARA: Oh, I think he asked to be replaced, and I think he was ill.

HESS: You were at the Pentagon during Forrestal's last few years there.

MARA: Yes.

HESS: Did you see Mr. Forrestal?

MARA: No, not enough to say that I could describe what -- I did not see enough of Forrestal to -
- but I think Forrestal was a really great man, and a great mind.

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Oh, there again, that son-of-a-bitch Pearson, he destroyed Forrestal. He actually destroyed that man when he accused him of cowardice, during some kind of a little disturbance outside of his home in Georgetown. Oh, he just wore that man down. He destroyed more people in Washington.

HESS: Is that where a lot of the pressure on Forrestal came from?

MARA: Oh, decidedly. I think he was actually responsible for his...

HESS: His mental deterioration.

MARA: For Forrestal's death, when he jumped out of that window at the hospital.

HESS: The naval hospital.

MARA: And this man Pearson was really poison in the atmosphere. If you cooperated with Pearson, you did no wrong. Oh, there were many people in Washington who cooperated with him. And his runner told me one time, he said, Oh," he says, "every once in a while he'll take a crack at his friends just to...

HESS: Keep them in line.

MARA: "...keep them in line, show them what he can do."

I recall a woman coming to me. She was the wife of an

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attorney from New Orleans. He had been, at a very early age, in his twenties, or early thirties, leader of the senate of Louisiana, this attorney, he was in jail when his wife came to me seeking to see if we could get a pardon for him. I'm trying to remember now, I can't tell whether she told me the story. I can't remember whether she told me, or he told me, later. He was a friend of Pearson's he had been a friend of Pearson's. Pearson had employed him when he was active as a lawyer in New Orleans and while he was still in the state senate. Pearson had employed him somehow to get some information for Pearson in Washington on somebody down there. And he said he got the information and passed it on to Pearson and Pearson and he became very good friends. And then he got into this difficulty.

Oh, he was accused of tampering with a jury, and the judge in the case, I think, if my recollection is correct, was a brother of Senator Borah, a Republican appointee on the Federal bench in Louisiana, and then he said, "They were out to get me, and they got me," and he went to jail. And that's when his wife was up.

But he told me then that he came to Washington for assistance from Pearson. Pearson was on very close terms with the then Attorney General, Tom Clark. And, as a matter of fact,

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Pearson gave quite a party for this attorney, and I think Clark was at it. But they did nothing for him. He went to jail. Pearson also was very friendly with a deputy in McGrath's office. There was another instance where a man had visions of becoming a President, and McGrath...

HESS: J. Howard McGrath?

MARA: Yes. He was a very fine man and I think honest in every respect, but he did have that vision. And he was letting his chief deputy, I don't think he was a political appointee, but he had been in the office quite awhile, I forget the name now, he was McGrath's deputy. And he was very friendly with Pearson.

To show you a example, during the five percent investigation, prior to that, Pearson had accused Vaughan of accepting a bribe of ten thousand dollars from some oil man in New Orleans. Vaughan told me this story, and I knew that it was true, but having been so many years in the Inspector General's Department I didn't accept Vaughan's version. I said, "I want to see the record." And the only time I was in Justice Department I called down to this man who was the Deputy Attorney General, and I said, "Several years ago the FBI" -- oh yes. At the time of the accusation Hoover called Vaughan and said, "I've got this charge against you."

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And Vaughan says, "Well, what is it," and he explained it and he said, "Well, I'll tell the President about it and I'll let you know what to do."

So, Harry told the President of this accusation, and the President said, "See that it's thoroughly investigated, get a complete investigation of this because I want to know."

And they did, they sent their investigators down to New Orleans and made a thorough investigation of the entire thing, to try to establish whether or not this was the truth or not, and of course, it wasn't true. But I wanted to see the record. I didn't take Harry's word for it. I called this deputy down in Justice and said, "I want to see that investigation to see with my own eyes that this took place and that the record shows this," because they were building up at that time to the hearings on the Hill and I wanted to be able to say that I saw the record, somebody didn't tell me about it, I saw the record.

Since I had never been in the Justice Department before, instead of going to the Deputy Attorney General's office, I landed up in the office of Hoover's headquarters. And I told them who I was

and what I was looking for and they said, "Oh, that's over in the Justice Department, you can get it over there."

So, I went over and this man was downstairs in the

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dispensary at the time, and I waited around and he came up and he got the record for me, I read it, I saw from the findings that is it was a complete fabrication, and that satisfied me, I left.

Well I subsequently found out, during the hearings on the Hill, that apparently before I left Justice the word had been passed on to Senator McCarthy, who was conducting the investigation, that I was in Justice, because during the hearings on the Hill, Senator McCarthy pointing at me said, "Who is that officer sitting next to you, Mr. Vaughan?" Vaughan said, "Colonel Mara."

"Oh, yes," he says, "I want to speak to him, I want to ask him what he was doing down in Justice Department." The word had been passed.

Well, during that entire hearing, I used to go down and see Bill, Bill -- who's the Secretary of State now?

HESS: Rogers.

MARA: Bill Rogers, he was the attorney for the committee. I used to go down and see him, because I was coordinating our side of the case. I'd get down to see Bill Rogers on some matter and here would be Pearson in the office there. You see, he was out to get Vaughan. And of course, a funny thing about that

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trial, or that hearing.

For weeks we had been coaching General Vaughan, "No matter what they say to you, no matter what they call you, don't get excited, just take it and answer it casually." And he did marvelously.

HESS: Were you a little concerned about that?

MARA: We were worried yes, that he might lose his temper and that's what they would love to have, because all of the Republican Senators were up there, the Democrats, one or two of them showed up. Later I went and called on some of them and said. "For God's sake, get up there and give us a little bit of help, or stop these other Republicans from accusing us of everything." And I did, I succeeded in getting several of them up there, one from Maryland, and Robinson from Virginia.

HESS: Who refused. Were there some who refused to come?

MARA: Oh no. No. they were just neglectful, that's all. There was no animosity or anything, but -- oh, yes, getting back to coaching Harry.

When McCarthy called me on the phone -- get into the witness chair, I was so anxious to tell this story about this accusation down in New Orleans and about all these damn lies,

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Pearson was sitting right back of me and I started to lace into Pearson and I hit the microphone and I got so excited, Harry leaned over to me and he says, "Hey you so and so, what have you been telling me for the last three weeks?"

HESS: You weren't practicing what you had been preaching?

MARA: No, not a damn bit.

Well, now that's all on this.

HESS: Well, now on the five per center matter, if I recall correctly, one of the things that was brought up was that various people were making phone calls from General Vaughan's office, correct?

MARA: That's correct, yes, they made all those accusations.

HESS: Were there people who would come in and make phone calls from the office? What about John Maragon, did you ever see him in the White House?

MARA: Oh, very, very many times, yes. John used to be a fixture around there, but he was treated more or less as somebody that you could get to run an errand or something. John had been friendly with all of them on the Hill in the Senate there, not only with Harry Vaughan, with Matt Connelly...

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HESS: He had worked on the Hill, hadn't he?

MARA: John Maragon was employed by the Baltimore Railroad as a sort of liaison man between the Senate and the railroad.

HESS: That's right, he was a railroad employee, but he was stationed on the Hill, was he not?

MARA: He had an office on the Hill to arrange the trips of the Senators on the B & O Railroad, and he knew not only Vaughan; Mr. Truman knew him, and Matt Connelly knew him, they all knew him. I didn't know him before, but they all knew him.

HESS: Were there times that he may have made phone calls from the White House, not necessarily General Vaughan's office, to arrange deals so he could take five percent of the profit that may have been made off of a deal?

MARA: That is possible. That is possible, but I don't know.

HESS: Now that is what he was accused of, is that correct?

MARA: He was accused of that, yes. What he did, I don't know. I know that he did have a job. While we were there in the White House he had a job with some perfume manufacturer, and it was a good job apparently, and he used to make trips to Europe on -- what was that? Bennett, wasn't that the name?

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I think the man's name was Bennett who owned the perfume manufacturing company.

HESS: Were there times when Maragon tried to get perfume essences through customs?

MARA: I wouldn't know.

HESS: Were there others who would come into the White House and perhaps use General Vaughan's phone?

MARA: Yes.

HESS: Who?

MARA: Not use the phone, there was some Jewish boy that used to know them on the Hill, and I later fired him the hell out of the office, I really did, because I suspected him of some...

HESS: What was his name, do you recall?

MARA: I can't recall his name now. But actually -- we had a battle of words. And oh, he threatened me with all kinds of -- but I kicked him out of the office, because he was an operator.

I subsequently learned that he would bring people and have them wait outside while he came in, he might discuss something that completely had nothing to do with the party that was

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waiting outside.

HESS: Come in and talk about the weather.

MARA: Yes, come in and talk about the weather, but then go out and say that he had, and I caught him in something like that. I don't know, something came to my attention that I had definite proof he was using us.

HESS: Did that man's name come up in the five per center investigation?

MARA: No.

HESS: It did not:

MARA: No.

HESS: Were there others that...

MARA: Maragon was his own worst enemy. I personally cautioned him to keep his mouth shut. That is, he thought he was smarter than Bill...what's his name, the Secretary of State now?

HESS: Rogers.

MARA: Bill Rogers. See, Rogers -- oh, there's another instance.

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Rogers was a Republican. He had been appointed by a Senator from Illinois (Ferguson) who had been chairman of this committee prior, in the 80th Congress. He had been appointed by, he's now on the Subversive Activities Board, he was then a Senator. And he continued in office (Rogers) I had nothing personally against Rogers, except that he was doing his job as a Republican. And we recognized that, that he was out to hurt us if he could but he was working for old Senator Hoey, a very fine old gentleman from North Carolina. And what threw me, what showed me definitely that Rogers was trying his damndest to establish some of these facts against Vaughan, was, there was a question of an automobile that Vaughan had purchased. And Vaughan was so damned honest that he didn't -- he used to cash his check at the beginning of the month and he'd have all this cash, and he thought nothing of paying for an automobile. I realized that he shouldn't do that, but this was before I had enough influence to stop him. But he bought an automobile. and paid cash. He gave the cash to Maragon, and afterwards, I said, "Harry you shouldn't have done that," but he did it, he didn't think anything of it. And the question of the honesty of Vaughan's purchase came up.

Rogers was in daily contact with me during this investigation because I was conducting it from our end. I was

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consulting with the attorneys. We had a couple of attorneys from the Department of Justice. When they came in they had been reading the papers of course, and they had their doubts about Vaughan, when they reported first to us, they told me afterwards. And when they came in Vaughan said, "Now here's the office, it's yours. Go through it lock, stock, and barrel, anything here is open." That's the way he was, and in about three or four days, those men were the greatest friends Vaughan could have because they saw there was nothing wrong about the man.

But Rogers, in a very subtle way, was trying to establish something, and he said to me, he said, "I'd like to get the bill of sale concerning that car." He said, "All I want is to show it to the Senator. Nobody else will see it."

I said, "Well, under those circumstances I'll let you have it, but I want it back, immediately." And those were my words to him.

A day or two passed, two or three days passed, I didn't get it back. I went up, that's one of the times I saw Pearson there. I went up and I said, "I want that bill of sale. You told me that you were going to send it back to me, where is it?" I was angry. I got it back, together with four or five photostats of it. The agreement was that he was to

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see it, the Senator was to see it, and nobody else.

HESS: And they had made several photostats.

MARA: They had made these photostats. I was mad, and I went back and I told the President about it. And he says, "You go and see Senator Hoey, and tell him what happened, and tell him. that we are not satisfied with the way this investigation is being conducted."

And I arranged to see Senator Hoey in his own room at the Raleigh Hotel one evening, and I told him I said, "This man Rogers is trying to undermine us."

He said, "Oh no, Colonel, he's a fine young man, he wouldn't do that."

Well I said, "Now Senator, I wish you would" -- oh, and here is -- up until that time Rogers was just trying his damndest to get a hold of Harry Vaughan's personal checking account. And I kept putting him off, and at this meeting at the Raleigh Hotel, I said to the Senator, "Senator, is there anything else you want? Is there anything else you can think of that you need?" And Rogers had been telling me that the Senator was asking him for these things. And he said, "No, Colonel," he says, "you have been most cooperative, there is nothing else that I know of."

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I said, "Thank you."

The next morning I called Bill Rogers, I said, "Bill, I had an interview with the Senator. He tells me there is nothing else he needs, so that closes the matter."

You see, Rogers was trying to get the damned stuff, not the Senator. And this guy Pearson was in there every day during those five percent investigations.

Those were very touch and go days I tell you. I sometimes think I couldn't do it now, but the things we did -- when I think of having all those Senators up there, it would scare me to death now, but those days it didn't bother me one bit.

HESS: What's your general evaluation of the manner in which General Vaughan carried out the duties as Military Aide?

MARA: There was nothing that General Vaughan could do to assist the President that he would not do. And the President knew that. General Vaughan, so far as the President was concerned, his one purpose in life was to do what he could do to help the President. Anything that he would

learn, I think that the President realized that Vaughan would bring anything to his attention that needed to be brought to his attention. I don't think anybody in the White House had that close rapport. I don't believe there was anyone in the White House who could talk to the President like Vaughan did. That is, they had

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been together so long, and the relationship was so close, nobody else, Connelly...

HESS: What about Charles Ross. Now Charles Ross was one whom he went to high school with.

MARA: Now Charlie Ross was another one. Charlie Ross and Harry Vaughan were the two that...

HESS: They had known him the longest probably.

MARA: Yes they knew him the longest, and were completely open. As a matter of fact, Vaughan went to him at the height of this five percent investigation and when the news -- the trouble with the press is that somebody like Pearson writes a story, then all of these columnists, they all pick it up and they all make a great to-do about it.

I remember at that time, this great columnist, and a very fine columnist from New York, he's now broadcasting with Mutual Insurance Company, he was originally a sports writer from Washington, can't think of his name -- he wrote some scathing reports on Vaughan during that time based on stories that were being circulated.

Later, years later, he apologized personally to Vaughan, he said, "I'm sorry that I wrote those things," he said, "because

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you're not that kind of a guy." It was Bob Considine.

HESS: General Vaughan was also Coordinator of Veterans Affairs.

MARA: Oh yes.

HESS: Did you assist him in that?

MARA: Oh, indeed, I carried out most of the work.

HESS: What type of duties did you have in this field as Coordinator of Veterans Affairs?

MARA: All right. Veterans at that time were very, you know, very much in evidence.

HESS: Right after a war that's natural.

MARA: Yes. And they had their difficulties. We worked in very close liaison with a man here in Washington who was in charge of veterans affairs. He had a little office on 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. His name was Leonard, Waldron Leonard, and I think that man did more to assist veterans.

HESS: Was he associated with a veterans group?

MARA: He was the veterans affairs officer for the District of Columbia, he took care of the veterans of the District. In

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every state you've got a veterans affairs officer, employed by the state.

HESS: He's a state officer.

MARA: A state veterans affairs officer. He was a veterans affairs officer for the District of Columbia. And he used to live up here on the Hill in Grovedon, and he died last year, after he had been elected commander of the veterans of World War I. I'm just using him as an instance, now this occurred throughout the states. If they got into a jam, something they felt had to be done, then they would come to us, and then we would tell the Veterans Administration, "Get on this, do something about it." That was our coordinating job, because with the power of the White House back of them, they would get whatever it was they needed to have done.

HESS: Did you often have representatives of the veterans groups, the American Legion, the VFW, come in to you with problems on this nature?

MARA: Yes, we did, very, very often. You'd get it more from the operating personnel, the men who were in the Legion here. We had very close association with the working elements of the Legion. And of course, whenever a new Legion commander would

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be elected, he would be brought into our office and we would arrange for him to meet the President.

As a striking example of our close association with the veterans groups; at the time of this five percent investigation on the Hill, and at the time that the newspapers were having these awful cartoons about Harry Vaughan, this Leonard, he had a dinner at which all of the veteran groups, the heads of all of them -- the Irish-American veterans, and the Jewish veterans, and the veterans of the -- the oldest veterans; the war of 1898 wasn't it?

HESS: Yes.

MARA: And all of the veteran groups, the Foreign Legion -- the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the...

HESS: Disabled American Veterans.

MARA: Disabled, all of the veteran groups, they gave this lovely dinner for General and Mrs. Vaughan, and all of the veteran organizations, this was during the turmoil of the five percent investigation, they gave this dinner of appreciation to General Vaughan, attended by hundreds of veterans and veteran organization leaders, and this Leonard was the sparkplug that started it. Yes, we had very close relations with all of the veteran

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groups. And of course, we could walk into the office of the Administrator and many times I would go down to see him (he was an old railroad man at that time), and have a discussion with him on these problems of the veterans.

HESS: Well, especially at this time, when there were so many people who were veterans, this represents a good many votes. In your office did you ever have any feelings of political expediency, such as we should try to help this particular group so that when the next election comes around they will vote for us. Does that thought come up?

MARA: No. No. We were conscious of that fact, of course, but it was more or less a feeling that it was our duty, that's what we were being paid for, to work for these veterans.

HESS: Political considerations were secondary, or very minor.

MARA: They were very, very secondary.

Of course, we were conscious of the fact, but that it was a secondary thought. We were being paid, that was our job to assist these veterans.

HESS: All right now, one question on General Vaughan. Did you ever hear if he had been proposed at one time to be Chief Defense Aide, or Chief of the Military Service Aide? As you

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know there was a Military Aide and a Naval Aide and an Air Force Aide, was it ever considered to have one Defense Aide and place one of those servicemen above the other? Did you ever hear anything on that?

MARA: When they established the Secretary of Defense there was some thought. I don't think it ever got beyond the think stage of having a Defense Aide, but I don't believe it ever got beyond the think stage. It never became a serious proposal.

HESS: We will probably have other questions on General Vaughan as we progress, but now I'd like to ask for your evaluation on the relative merits, on the effectiveness, on what their duties were, of some of the other people who worked in the White House. Now, you have mentioned the Naval Aide, Robert L. Dennison.

MARA: Oh, he is a great man. A very fine, very fine naval officer, and a man of great character. And the liaison between his office and ours couldn't be better.

HESS: Do you recall a specific time when you may have worked with him, worked with the naval aide's office on a particular matter that might help illustrate the smooth coordination between the offices?

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MARA: No, I don't think I could recall a specific instance. I just have the general recollection of absolute harmony.

HESS: His Assistant Naval Aide was Commander William Rigdon.

MARA: Bill Rigdon was a very capable, very capable officer, extremely so, who did a magnificent job in every respect.

HESS: I believe he was in charge of such things as the *Williamsburg* and Shangri-La and Key West, which we will get to later, is that correct?

MARA: That's correct, yes.

HESS: Those were a part of his duties.

MARA: Oh, yes.

HESS: All right, and the Air Aide.

MARA Landry.

HESS: Was Landry, Robert B. Landry.

MARA: I was responsible for Bob Landry.

HESS: Is that right? Tell me about that.

MARA: I actually picked Bob Landry. I don't know whether it

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was good or bad, but I did the job.

When the Air Force became a separate air force, Vaughan said, "We need an Air Force Aide." He said, "Here's three names. The Chief of Staff has given the President -- Spaatz has given the President these three names," he says, "I don't know them." He said, "Pick whichever one you think should be the aide."

HESS: Do you recall who the other two were?

MARA: I think one was Goodfellow and the other one was a war ace. He was an outstanding ace of World War II, he was then a lieutenant colonel. I'll think of his name.

HESS: Fine. Now the dates that I have for General Landry's starting in at the White House was 1948, correct? That was before you came?

MARA: Yeah, but I was liaison.

HESS: That's right, that's what I was getting around to. This was at the time that you were liaison in the Pentagon...

MARA: I was liaison and that's when Harry Vaughan said, "Here are the names, recommend one of them."

HESS: All right, now this is an important point that we had missed up until this point. Something of importance, that

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you dealt with relative to the White House before you really were on the White House staff.

MARA: That's right. I went back. Landry at that time was executive in Spaatz's office. Either Spaatz -- no, no, I think he was exec in the office of Symington who was then...

HESS: Secretary of the Air Force.

MARA: ...Secretary of the Air Force. I didn't know Bob Landry too well, I knew him just as another officer, but not too well. So, I went to Charlie Maylon, again see, my close old associate, and I said, "Charlie I've got three names here, they want to pick out an Air Force Aide." And he knew all three of them. So, he recommended Landry.

And I then went to my old friend Bill Streett, and he knew all three of them. He said, "They're all three good officers," he said, "but I'll tell you, the job of (here again is the old experienced officer talking now, Bill Streett), he said, "The job of Aide to the President is one that requires that the lady be the right one." He says, "Mildred Landry would be a great supplement to Bob at the White House," and he says, "for that reason," he says, "I would recommend Bob Landry."

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It's funny how things happen.

HESS: Is that often the way it is in the military, they take a look at the wife over the husband's shoulder?

MARA: Very, very often.

HESS: And see how she's going to fit in?

MARA: But let me show you how it panned out. Mildred Landry was a lovely person, and she and Bob Dennison's wife were very close and they lent much to the White House. Mildred developed some sort of a cancer condition, I forget now what it was, but I don't know whether that's -- but Bob and Mildred subsequently were divorced and I don't think it happened while they were at the White House. No, it was after they left the White House.

Here's a strange twist. After I was in the White House, Bob was Air Force Aide, I was a Deputy Military Aide, we were very friendly and very cooperative, but when my promotion came up, Bob didn't approve it. Vaughan recommended me; Connelly approved it, and thought I should be a brigadier general, but Landry didn't approve it.

HESS: Matthew Connelly?

MARA: But I got the appointment nevertheless. But just to show

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you how things turn out, I was responsible for Landry. Landry would never have gotten his job if I had not picked him for the job, whether he knew that or not I don't know, of course, I never told him.

HESS: You say Connelly approved.

MARA: Connelly approved of me.

HESS: Matthew Connelly?

MARA: Matthew Connelly, yes, Matthew...

HESS: He had to approve of your promotion?

MARA: He had a great deal to do, because he had great influence with Symington, and Symington of course was out of there then, but Matt had power there and he really worked hard to get my promotion in addition to Vaughan. So I'm very devoted to Matt, and I think it was a great, great tragedy and a grave injustice that that man was ever prosecuted.

HESS: Why do you think that that prosecution was carried out.

MARA: Oh, it was completely political. Brownell -- they were determined to get somebody. They were determined to get somebody. They couldn't get Vaughan, they tried their

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damndest through Rogers to get Vaughan, but of course, Brownell and Rogers were very close, closely associated and apparently they decided they couldn't get anything on Vaughan and then they went out after Connelly, years after we left the White House. They didn't try the case in a city in St. Louis where it should have been tried, they took it out in the country, picked countrymen to be the jurors, and then this damn tailor came in and accused Matt Connelly of

accepting a couple of cheap suits as a bribe. Why, it was utterly ridiculous to any sophisticated person.

What did Matt Connelly need a suit of clothes and a top coat -- how would he be -- how would he be influenced by some such? He accepted the clothes in order to keep from embarrassing the man who bought them, and then they sent that man to jail. That was a terrible miscarriage of justice and it broke my heart to see that happen.

HESS: Did you work closely with him at the time that he was Appointments Secretary?

MARA: Oh yes. Well, I had a lot of respect for Matt Connelly.

HESS: Do you recall offhand if Charles Maylon and Joseph Feeney reported to Matt Connelly, were they sort of considered in his shop?

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MARA: Definitely. They were in his shop.

HESS: Was he thought to have any particular ability on legislative matters?

MARA: Who?

HESS: Matt Connelly.

MARA: Oh, Matt was really a man of great competence in legislative matters.

HESS: All right, now moving on to just a couple of the other people who served at the White House, now we have mentioned Mr. Clifford and Mr. Murphy, but how would you characterize Clark Clifford as Special Counsel, and how would you characterize Charles Murphy as Special Counsel? Did you see these people often?

MARA: Yes, I saw them quite often. You know at the time of the deep freeze, when that story broke, I don't know whether that has been explored sufficiently.

Vaughan and I the year before that had gone to Guatemala on an official invitation. It was the anniversary of the military academy in Guatemala, and we were invited there as guests of the Government. And we enjoyed the country so much

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that we decided that we would take our families down on a personal visit the next year. I don't know whether we decided then or not, but we did that.

HESS: What year was that that you went?

MARA: That was '49.

HESS: '49.

MARA: Vaughan and his family, a son and daughter; Mrs. Mara and I were six. The president of a girls school in St. Louis and his wife was eight; Colonel Hevasy, who served with Vaughan in the Pacific, and his wife, were ten; the daughter of Colonel Hevasy and a friend of the Vaughan's boy, a boy his age, comprised the party of twelve.

I went to the United Fruit Company and arranged to go down on a United Fruit boat. I saw the manager here and asked what the cost would be and he tried so hard to give us a free trip, that is, Vaughan and I. He really tried awfully hard. He said, "We do it every day for Senators. We send them down, it's good for our business."

I said, "Well, that is all right, but in our case..."

HESS: Not this time.

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MARA: "...I insist that we pay our way," and I was the finance man on the trip and I got the money from all of these people and I paid for it, and I kept a record and thank God I did, because while we were on that trip, Johnson made his speech in West Virginia about the five percenters. The reporter in charge of the New York *Tribune* office in Washington sent a long telegram to Harry Vaughan on the ship. At this time I was the liaison officer and...

HESS: This was before you came over to the White House.

MARA: This was before I was actually on duty in the White House. Harry received this telegram from the New York *Tribune*, which was an opposition paper to the Democrats at that time. And the wire said in effect, "What did Harry Vaughan know about five percenters?"

Well, Harry's sense of humor sometimes gets him in trouble. And he did not tell me about the telegram, unfortunately, because had he told me we'd have discussed it and I would have said, "Well, tear the damn thing up and forget about it." Instead of that he thought it should be a good joke to give this fellow a nice expensive reply, you know. And he went on and said that there must be three hundred five percenters in Washington. But what he had in mind was, all you had to do

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was pick up the telephone book and read the list of liaison men, that's what he had in mind, but the reporter interpreted it that Harry Vaughan knew three hundred five percenters. And the next morning headlines said that in bold type.

We were in Guatemala while all of this thing was building up here. We spent a week down there, I think, and when we came back the reporters were waiting for us at dockside. And the first question they asked was, "Who paid for your trip?"

Well, the United Fruit prevented them from meeting us at dockside. They were waiting there, but the United Fruit shuttled us over to the railroad and we got to Washington and the newsmen were waiting for us there. And that's where the questions, started, and they wanted to know who paid for the trip and all of that stuff, and that was the beginning of the five percent investigation. So, that's -- what got me onto that?

HESS: Oh, let's see, we were talking about General Vaughan. Yes, what did get us off onto that? We'll have to check and see. Oh, the deep-freezes, you mentioned the deep-freezes...

MARA: Oh yes, the deep-freeze.

HESS: ...which I have written down here...

MARA: Yes, that's where...

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HESS: yes, tell me about the deepfreeze.

MARA: I'm getting a little confused in my thinking. Oh yes, Rogers was the guy that opened up that deepfreeze thing.

HESS: Was this during the investigation?

MARA: Yes. He was reading something and Mrs. Truman's name came up as having received a deep-freeze, and that's where Clark Clifford -- at the time of the breaking of the deep-freeze story, Clark Clifford was there and it seems that he issued a news release that sort of put the onus onto Harry Vaughan. I don't know, I forget now, but that's my recollection, and I was very angry. I was extremely angry at Clark Clifford at that time for having issued this.

HESS: Didn't General Vaughan know the man who had the deep-freezes though?

MARA: Well, somebody must have told you the story of how that came about, haven't they?

HESS: I've heard it from two or three different sources, but you know, sometimes it comes out two or three different ways.

MARA: All right, I'll give you my version of it and the way I got it firsthand from the individuals involved, Harry told me.

It seems that when Mrs. Truman was out in Independence

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for the first time after entering the White House, the farmers around were sending things in, and she phoned the White House asking to get a refrigerator. It seemed that Harry Vaughan and the Naval Aide, I think, were discussing it one day. Harry was on the phone discussing it with the Naval Aide. You see, the Navy purchases all of the White House mess equipment. There was a

man sitting alongside of Vaughan; an advertising man from Chicago. This advertising man had been a neighbor of Vaughan when he lived in Milwaukee. Vaughan worked in Milwaukee before he went with President Truman as his secretary, Hoffman was one of his neighbors and they became friends. Hoffman is sitting alongside Vaughan and he overheard the discussion about the deep-freeze.

Hoffman went back to Chicago and probably to show what a big shot he was, he was telling the president of the Verleigh Perfume Company about the deep-freeze conversation. Well, apparently this man who was -- the president of the perfume company, knew these people; Vaughan, Matt Connelly, he had met them apparently, someplace before. This was before my time, this is in 1945.

Well, so the manufacturer says, "Oh, I saw some of those freezers in Chicago, there's a friend of mine just making them. I'll call him up and maybe we can get some." He said, "Find out how many they need."

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I don't know how they found out, but they sent one to Connelly, to Vaughan, to Vinson, to the home in Independence, and one to the White House mess. And they arrived while the gang is over at Potsdam. When the one arrived at Mrs. Vaughan's house up here in Arlington, she didn't know what it was and she didn't know where it came from, so she took the manufacturers name off the box and wrote them a letter, saying, "I've just received a deep-freeze, my husband's in Europe, please tell me what the cost is."

Vinson never used his. They put it in the cellar. Fred Vinson who was then in the White House and later was Supreme Court justice. I don't know what the rest did, but the White House one was still there, and the one that went out to Independence.

So when they got back from Potsdam, they were all surprised to have deep-freezes, and all wanted to pay for them. Apparently this fellow says, "Oh, forget about it." Now this wasn't looking for favors or anything. He was just trying to be a big shot, that's what he was trying to do. And they would have much rather he would keep the damn deep-freezes and the Navy could have bought the freezers. But that was the beginning of it..

Vaughan's, I saw the damn thing, it was made of plywood, painted with ordinary paint and a separate little section with

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the...what do they call it, compressor.

HESS: The motor and the compressor.

MARA: The compressor. It gave him more trouble and...

HESS: Made out of plywood?

MARA: Made out of plywood?

HESS: Well, how about that.

MARA: And painted over with -- Vaughan got the worst of the deal.

HESS: He got the worst of the deal.

MARA: He got the worst of the deep-freezes too. Some of them were fairly decent looking, but his was actually made of plywood and painted over, and the compressor was separate. And when it would break down, they had no parts for it, so it was a case of fabricating a part.

HESS: One question: We have mentioned Senator Joseph McCarthy, but at the time that Senator Joseph McCarthy started making his accusations on a broad scale, did that cause the people in the White House, to use a modern term, to seek a lower profile?

MARA: To what?

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HESS: To seek a lower profile, as Mr. Nixon would say. Did that make the people in the White House edgy trying to keep McCarthy from accusing them of doing something? Trying not to be a target for McCarthy.

MARA: I don't know, I don't know, I wasn't conscious of that situation.

HESS: Okay, now we had mentioned Clifford and Murphy...

MARA: I say, I became provoked at Clifford. He issued a press release at that time that was completely uncalled for. I didn't like him quite as much afterwards as I did before.

HESS: Did those two men try to carry out the job of their office as Special Counsel in any noticeably different manner?

MARA: Oh, I'm sure of that. Murphy is so much -- so much, superior, that's the word I would use. I think so much more of Charlie Murphy than I do of Clark Clifford. I consider Clark Clifford more interested in Clark Clifford than he was of Mr. Truman or anybody else, now that's my personal opinion.

HESS: You were at the White House when Mr. Clifford left. He left on January the 31st of 1950 which was roughly six months after you started to work at the White House.

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MARA: Yes.

HESS: Do you know why Mr. Clifford left?

MARA: Well, he went to get a better job, one that would make him more money. That was my impression. And he's the only one, I think, of the staff that left. Is that so?

HESS: I think so.

MARA: Yes, I think Clark Clifford left in order to enhance his financial situation, I believe that was his...

HESS: Well now, one of the Administrative Assistants left and that was Mr. George Elsey, later on, who went over to Averell Harriman, as sort of an assistant to Averell Harriman.

MARA: Well, that's a different, that was a different deal completely, and I have a great admiration and respect for George Elsey.

HESS: Do you know why Mr. Elsey left the White House proper and became assistant to Averell Harriman?

MARA: Well, I would think that it would be to help the entire administration.

HESS: Did you often work with Mr. Elsey on matters?

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MARA: Oh, yes. Yes, many times. I can't recall now, but we had a very close and friendly feeling of cooperation.

HESS: And I trust that your evaluation of him and his duties and ability would be quite high.

MARA: Extremely high.

HESS: All right, now while we are on the Administrative Assistants, let's get just a few more. How about David K. Niles, who was in charge of minorities?

MARA: Oh, David Niles was a man of great ability.

HESS: Was he much in evidence around the White House?

MARA: No. No.

HESS: Why?

MARA: But a man of ability, and humility.

HESS: What seemed to be...

MARA: He was working someplace, doing something that was good for Mr. Truman.

HESS: What seemed to be his major area of responsibility and how did he carry out his duties?

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MARA: Well, his area of responsibility was the minorities group and he was right on top of it. He knew everything that was going on, in those days it was the Negro question and the Jewish question, but Niles was a man of great competence, and he was a man of extreme modesty.

HESS: His assistant for quite some time was Philleo Nash.

MARA: Oh, yes, Philleo.

HESS: Now, did it seem to you, or did it not, that David Niles took the Jewish matters and Philleo took the Negro matters, or is that too simple, is that simplifying it?

MARA: I couldn't give a determination of that.

HESS: Were their offices over in another wing?

MARA: They were over in the Executive Office Building.

HESS: That's right.

All right, now Donald Dawson, who was the personnel man.

MARA: Donald I knew very well and had a lot of respect for him. Donald was a man of great competence and an extremely fine person.

HESS: Do you recall he also had a little bit of difficulty also

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in the press over some RFC matters? Do you recall that?

MARA: Yes, there was something there, I don't recall it too well.

HESS: But your general impression is favorable.

MARA: Oh, he's a very fine, fine person, and extremely loyal to Mr. Truman.

HESS: And David Stowe, who was Deputy to Dr. Steelman.

MARA: Dave Stowe and I used to work very close together. There was a very close relationship between the two of us. I don't know, I can't describe what...

HESS: Do you recall if he was still in the East Wing when you got there? Now why I ask is, he was deputy to John Steelman until sometime in 1949, and during that year...

MARA: Now he became an assistant.

HESS: ...he became an administrative assistant on his own...

MARA: Yes.

HESS: ...and moved over from the East Wing to the West Wing. Do you recall if he was in the East Wing when you arrived? You came in July, that's when you opened up shop.

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MARA: Dave Stowe never had an office in the East Wing. He was in the Executive Building.

HESS: But Dave Stowe is one of the men who worked in both places. He's both an East Winger and a West Winger, as some people refer to them.

MARA: Well, I know that Dave and I we were very close and we conferred quite often on many different matters.

HESS: Now John R. Steelman we have mentioned several times. Do you know where Dr. Steelman got the title The (capital "T"), Assistant to the President?

MARA: Where he got it? Well, I just assumed that he sort of earned it.

HESS: I have had it explained to me that the Special Counsels worked a great deal on formulation of policy, whereas Dr. Steelman was actually in charge of the day-to-day operations. Would you think that was a valid statement?

MARA: No.

HESS: All right, why?

MARA: I think Dr. Steelman had as much to do with policy as anybody

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in the White House, and if somebody said that I think it must have been during a time that -- what was his name, the -- Clark...

HESS: Clark Clifford?

MARA: ...Clark Clifford was there. I don't think that would emanate from Charlie Murphy's office.

HESS: All right, now one thing that Dr. Steelman did take care of a great deal was labor matters, and as you know they had one strike after another.

MARA: Us, decidedly.

HESS: Did it seem to you that he was an effective labor negotiator, and mediator?

MARA: I don't think that can be doubted.

HESS: Okay. Now, the press office, there were two men who held the job for the longest period of time; Charles Ross and Joseph Short. Did you work closely with those two men?

MARA: Yes, both of them.

HESS: How would you characterize Charles Ross and then how would you characterize Joe Short, and what type of a job did they

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do as Press Secretary?

MARA: Oh. I think both of them were very competent. It would be hard to distinguish. Charlie, of course, was the older man and a close intimate of the President's. They had been in the same high school in Independence. Oh, yes. Charlie Ross was the old, well, fine old newspaperman. It would be hard to distinguish now except one was a little bit younger than the other.

HESS: Charlie Ross died on December the 5th of 1950. When did you leave the White House?

MARA: I stayed there until '53.

HESS: Until '53, all the way through.

MARA: Charlie Ross died the night that Margaret Truman had her debut at Constitution Hall, and that was a sad occasion.

HESS: What do you recall about that night?

MARA: Oh, I recall it vividly. I recall the word went out when Charlie died, he dropped dead in his chair there at the end of the day at the White House, and the word came out, "Be sure that Margaret doesn't hear about it." I attended the concert that night and sat maybe, oh, twelve or fifteen feet down from

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the President's box.

HESS: What was your evaluation of Margaret's singing, was it any higher than Paul Hume's?

MARA: Than what?

HESS: Was your evaluation any higher than Paul Hume's?

MARA: Oh, Margaret had a very fine voice, but of course, she didn't have the operatic, the volume, that's what she lacked.

I thought she had a very sweet and good voice, but of course, well...

HESS: What do you recall about the letter that President Truman wrote to Paul Hume?

MARA: Well, I...

HESS: The music critic.

MARA: I recall everything about it. I know how the President took the letter out the next morning and mailed it. He didn't put it in the basket for fear somebody would stop it, and...

HESS: How did you first find out about this letter, do you recall?

MARA: I don't recall.

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HESS: But that's what I understand, he took that out early the next morning and . . .

MARA: Yes, he took it out and mailed it, on his walk. He knew that if anybody saw it they would stop it. He was such a sharp...

HESS: Do you think that one of the reasons that he was upset was...

MARA: It was Charlie Ross.

HESS: ...Charlie Ross' death.

MARA: Oh, unquestionably. And I watched him that night I recall, and he was so torn, he was torn up over Charlie. And I was trying to look, I know, I suffered with him that night. Of course, we all adored Charlie, he was such a nice, nice man, and to have him go that way, and then it was so much worse on the boss because he had known him so many years, and here this -- there was a culmination of -- but it's turned out to be quite an event.

HESS: Did you ever attend the President's press conferences?

MARA: Yes, many times.

HESS: Did you make it a regular practice?

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MARA: No, occasionally I would go over and just stand around and hear what was going on.

HESS: All right, now when you first started at the White House they were held in the Oval Room, is that correct?

MARA: That's right.

HESS: And then they were moved into the Indian Treaty Room in the Executive Office Building, during April of 1950.

MARA: Well, I went over there a few times, if something particularly exciting might be taking place, or if something out of the ordinary, I would go over.

HESS: All right, just a question on the general location. Which location did you think was best, the Oval Room or the Indian Treaty Room?

MARA: Well, of course, the Oval Room was so much more intimate, and the room across the street was more formal, and more, I'd say more orderly, because in his Oval Office they all would be circled around the desk there right on top of him.

HESS: Did it get to be too crowded though?

MARA: I think it did, undoubtedly. And then when they started

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to rush out it was pandemonium.

HESS: The press officers themselves, Ross and Short, would have press conferences themselves, did you ever attend those?

MARA: Well, those were held in his office. I was there for a few of them, but it was just a matter of the press reporters being around the desk and throwing the questions back and forth at each other.

HESS: Joseph Short died on September the 18th of 1952, during the campaign. Roger Tubby and Irving Perlmeter, who had been his assistants, then took over. Irving Perlmeter then had a heart attack himself out on the west coast and then Roger...

MARA: I'd forgotten that, yes.

HESS: Yes, a little later on in the campaign, and then Roger Tubby for about the last month of the Truman administration, had the full title as press officer.

MARA: That's right.

HESS: Do you recall anything in particular about Roger Tubby and Irving Perlmeter and their handling of the press office?

MARA: I knew both of them while they were assistants, Irving

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Perlmeter and Roger Tubby both. Which one was there longest, I can't recall now.

HESS: They both came in the same time.

MARA: Oh, they did? When did they come in?

HESS: They came in with Joseph Short. Do you recall Eben Ayers?

MARA: Oh, of course, I do. He was deputy to Charlie Ross.

HESS: What was your evaluation of his handling of the press office as assistant press officer?

MARA: Well, he was completely different from the other two.

HESS: In what way?

MARA: It's hard to say. Eben Ayers was kind of slow in his thinking, as compared to the other two. A very, very pleasant person, extremely pleasant. But a different kind of newspaperman.

HESS: And then on the death of Charles Ross, Joseph Short wanted his own men, and at that time, in the latter part of December of '50, he brought in Roger Tubby, I believe, from the State Department (I could be wrong about this), and Irving Perlmeter from...

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MARA: Irving Perlmeter came from Treasury I think.

HESS: I believe so. I believe so.

MARA: Now, I don't know where Tubby came from.

HESS: Wasn't it State, or...

MARA: No, he went back to -- he's in State now...

HESS: He's in the State Department now.

MARA: No, I think he came out of civilian life, I think so. I don't think Tubby was a part of government before he joined the White House. I got to know Roger very well. When we went to Key West we got to be very, very close to each other.

HESS: All right, now one other question before we move on to Key West, you were there during the 1952 campaign?

MARA: Yes.

HESS: You were liaison to the White House during the '48 campaign.

MARA: That's right.

HESS: Does anything come to mind about the '48 campaign? Did you have any duties relative to that campaign?

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MARA: Well, no, I was in pretty close association with all of them, at that time, because I recall Harry Vaughan was quite confident of the President being elected.

HESS: What did you think

MARA: I didn't know enough about politics at that time to know. I was hoping of course, but I was a complete amateur having been in the service for many years. I wasn't savvy on politics.

I learned a lot in the next couple of years though.

HESS: And being liaison officer from the Pentagon, you took no trips or anything like that in '48?

MARA: No.

HESS: All right, now what do you recall about 1952, did you have any particular duties in 1952?

MARA: Not in connection with the campaign.

HESS: All right. Was it a conscious act to try to keep the Military and Naval Aides separated from political matters?

MARA: I think we did it very successfully.

HESS: And this is something that's done as a conscious effort?

MARA: Yes, I believe so.

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HESS: All right, just one general question: Who do you think that Mr. Truman would have liked to have seen as the Democratic standard-bearer in 1952? Who was Mr. Truman's choice to follow him?

MARA: In '52?

HESS: Yes.

MARA: Well, that was when Stevenson was picked.

HESS: Do you think that he was Mr. Truman's first choice?

MARA: Well, I don't know that he had any other choice. Who was trying at that time, do you recall?

HESS: Well, there are several names that are put forward. One is Fred Vinson, who was Chief Justice at that time.

MARA: Well, I'll tell you, Fred Vinson was a very close and intimate friend of the President's. I think he would have preferred Fred Vinson, above anybody else, for anything.

HESS: What about Alben Barkley? Vice President Barkley wanted the nomination very badly.

MARA: Yes, that's right.

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HESS: He went to Chicago that year and made great efforts to try to get the nomination.

MARA: Yes, that's right, that's right, yes, and labor knifed him.

Well, it doesn't matter now, because no matter who they put up, the glamour of Eisenhower would have won.

HESS: What do you think that would have happened if Mr. Truman had decided to run?

MARA: I'm afraid, knowing the fickleness of the public, that Eisenhower would have won anyway.

HESS: Okay, did you ever go aboard the *Williamsburg*?

MARA: Oh, many times, yes. As a matter of fact, I was the only (other than naval) passenger on one of the trips to Key West. I decided I'd like to, instead of flying down, I'd like to go down on the *Williamsburg* and meet the gang when they got down there. And we really had a trip. Everybody on board was sick except me and the naval doctor. It was a rough trip. We had a storm off Hatteras and for a half day we were coming back to Washington.

HESS: I understand that boat rolls.

MARA: Well, you see it was an old private yacht that they put a

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lot of communications equipment on top of it.

HESS: That made it top heavy.

MARA: Made it top heavy and it would roll each -- both ways. But I enjoyed the trip. And then while I was in Key West I had a cabin on board as my...

HESS: That's where you stayed. You stayed on board.

MARA: That was where I stayed. That was one year I was on board the *Williamsburg*.

HESS: What do you recall about your visits to Key West? Did you do any work down there?

MARA: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

HESS: All right. How was your work carried on, any different than up here?

MARA: Well, of course, it wasn't as long hours. Stuff would come down to us in the bags and we'd take care of them, anything that had to be taken up with the boss. They had their regular meetings down there, the top staff did. Each morning they'd get together after the mail came in and discuss things. And then we'd go down to the beach after the staff meeting and

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have our swim and then come back and have lunch and then in the afternoon we'd play cards. And then some of us would go fishing or take a trip into town, but it was real relaxation.

HESS: What was your favorite form of relaxation?

MARA: Oh, I think the swimming, and the fishing. And I played cards with them most of the time.

HESS: What seemed to be Mr. Truman's favorite form of relaxation?

MARA: Well, the swimming and the cards.

HESS: Did you play cards with Mr. Truman?

MARA: Yes.

HESS: Did they have a limit on the pot down at Key West?

MARA: Did anyone describe the...

HESS: I've heard various descriptions.

MARA: Well, what we'd do is we would buy...

HESS: Have a poverty pot or something like that.

MARA: Oh, yes. At the beginning of the week we'd buy a hundred dollars worth of chips, and as we played, Harry Vaughan had

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charge of the kitty, and he had a big bowl, and if it was a big pot somebody won, Harry Vaughan would reach out and throw a half a dollar or so in the pot. So, if you went broke, even the first day, Harry would give you ten dollars and you'd start in again. Well, that went on all week and the only money you could lose...

HESS: Was your original hundred dollars.

MARA: Was the original hundred dollars, but you would have to lose it all on the night before the settlement, because when you settled up, why, the money was all there, so you couldn't lose very much. I don't think anybody ever lost in the whole week more than ten, fifteen, twenty dollars, because you'd probably on Saturday, you'd have eighty dollars in your stack.

HESS: According to William Rigdon's logs, you were along on the seventh trip, which was November the 28th to December the 7th of '49, you were along on the March trip of '51, and went to Fort Jefferson National Monument, do you recall going over to the monument?

MARA: Yes, I recall going over, but that's about all.

HESS: And then you were also along on the November the 8th to December the 9th of 1951 visit. Now, why I mentioned this,

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in William Rigdon's logs, and in his book *White House Sailor*, he says, that the President told a small number of his staff members there that he did not intend to run for re-election in 1952. The announcement was not made public until March the 29th, at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner at the National Guard Armory. Did you personally know anything about Mr. Truman's decision not to run in 1952 before the night of his announcement at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner?

MARA: I can't be sure. I can't be sure. But we did have the impression that he was not going to run. We seemed to have that impression, now whether I knew it as a fact, I can't recall.

HESS: Do you recall if General Vaughan said anything about that? Now, I'll tell you why I asked, William Rigdon says that General Vaughan was one of those present on November the 19th and I was wondering if General Vaughan had let the cat out of the bag, so to speak, between November and March.

MARA: No, if he knew he never told me, because the night of the dinner he said he didn't know about it before.

HESS: General Vaughan said that?

MARA: Yes.

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HESS: All right, anything else come to mind about Key West?

MARA: Yes. I recall the President one day (I don't know whether it was one or a series of days), he used to reminisce, or think out loud. And I recall him thinking and talking about the establishment of the Library. I don't recall exactly where we were. But I recall his talking about the necessity for establishing a seat of information in the Midwest there. And I recall his saying, "Now within an area, a circumference of a hundred or two hundred miles, you have (and this was his words), the heartland of America," and he said, "there are a lot of institutions of higher learning there, that if we had this (and I think he was thinking of the Library), if we had this center of information in this area, where students could go and get firsthand information," and then he said, "I may establish this library there."

Now on which one of our vacations down there he said this, I haven't the foggiest notion, but I remember the conversation. I also remember him talking about what an accomplishment it would be if somehow they could irrigate the lands of the Near East. That was one of his pet subjects and he used to discourse upon it. If they could irrigate that land of the Jordan and turn it into a fertile valley, they would eliminate all of this friction. That was another one of his pet thoughts

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into the future, that he would like to have accomplished.

And then he also reminisced on the forerunner of the Marshall plan, and I in my conversation with him, I'd ask him about a certain part of a certain speech I'd been reading and he'd say, "Well, in order to get the full context of that, you've got to read the speech of such and such a date," and he said, "that will lead you into this." He said, "You know you've got to lead, you can't throw the whole job at the nation at one time, you've got to lead them into it."

The man was so far -- oh, he was so far out in his thinking now into the future. I told you once before about these -- scientists coming out of his office and saying to us, "That man amazes us, the depth of his knowledge." Those are the things -- that mind of his was so great. He was no accident, he was made to be President. It was no accident that he became President. I think destiny provided him with being the head of this country. He was a great, great man.

HESS: The Korean conflict started in June of 1950, just about one year after you started in at the White House, do you recall where you were when you heard of the invasion of South Korea by North Korea?

MARA: I don't recall.

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HESS: It was the last of June of 1950.

MARA: I was then liaison, wasn't I?

HESS: No, see you...

MARA: Oh, I was in the White House, that's right.

HESS: You came to the White House in '49.

MARA: That's right. No, I don't recall. I don't recall. We were awfully busy then. Do you know the day that we left the White House?

HESS: No.

MARA: The day of the inauguration...

HESS: January the 20th.

MARA: ...of Eisenhower. I was still trying to clean out my basket. It's a funny thing, you get so involved in workaday things that I was -- the day of the inauguration of the new President -- I finally cleaned out my basket.

HESS: You didn't go up to the inauguration?

MARA: No.

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HESS: Did you have an invitation, do you recall?

MARA: I don't recall, I probably did.

HESS: All right now, about the transition, did you see Sherman Adams during that period of time?

MARA: Yes, who didn't see him? He made a damned nuisance of himself in the White House. He came around there before we left.

HESS: When did he first show up about, do you recall? Was it in January, December?

MARA: I don't recall.

HESS: The election was early in November.

MARA: In November, but he showed up sometime later -- and he acted as if he was the boss of the line. Well, it got to the point, where somebody must have told the President about it, and then I think the President must have told him just pull his horns in and wait until they took over, because for the first few weeks of his appearance in the White House it was very noticeable.

HESS: Did the people that Eisenhower had appointed to take over the Military Aide's office, come in to get acquainted?

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MARA: No.

HESS: They did not.

MARA: No.

HESS: Walton B. Persons was Eisenhower's first Military Aide, was he not?

MARA: Jerry Persons. He was a good friend of Harry Vaughan's, Jerry Persons.

HESS: But he did not come into the office?

MARA: No.

HESS: All right, now moving on...

MARA: Now he may have, he may have communicated with Harry Vaughan, but I have no recollection of seeing him beforehand.

HESS: Shortly after the Korean war started in June of '50, Secretary Louis Johnson was replaced by General Marshall, that was in September of 1950. Do you recall anything in particular about the removal of Louis Johnson as Secretary of Defense in September of 1950, the reason therefore?

MARA: Well, I think the reason is that the President sort of lost

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confidence in him, and as I told you...

HESS: Do you recall...

MARA: Well, I think the only reason would be that the President just felt he needed a replacement.

HESS: Do you recall evidences of conflicts between the Secretary of Defense, Johnson, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson?

MARA: No.

HESS: There are those that were said that there was some conflict.

MARA: Yes. Others would be in a better position to gauge, I was not.

HESS: Do you know why General Marshall was chosen as the Secretary of Defense?

MARA: Well, because President Truman had the greatest admiration and regard for Marshall's ability. That's why he was chosen.

HESS: Okay. In the following month, October of 1950, President Truman flew out to Wake Island to meet with General MacArthur. Now I don't believe you went along. Is that correct?

MARA: No. Vaughan went.

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HESS: General Vaughan did, now did he...

MARA: Oh definitely.

HESS: Did General Vaughan tell you about his impressions of the trip and of the meeting after he returned?

MARA: Oh yes. He told me all about it, but I don't think I ought to at this stage, so many years have elapsed, that I don't think I could -- I know he told me of the meeting, he told me all the details of the meeting, and I have certain recollections of it, but not in sufficient depth to go into it. Vaughan has told his story.

HESS: All right.

MARA: And all the rest were there, you know, Bradley and -- who else?

HESS: Oh, there were a good many. There were oh so many

MARA: Oh, there were so many there, I don't think I can add anything to that.

HESS: All right now, in the following April, April of 1951, General MacArthur was dismissed.

MARA: Oh, yes.

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HESS: What are your views concerning that action. Was it necessary? Could it have been handled in a different manner? Just what are your views?

MARA: Well, that I have a very clear recollection of, and I know that it was handled properly. I feel it was handled properly. The President did definitely tell us, that is he told his staff, at a staff meeting a week or ten days prior to the release that he was going to have to relieve General MacArthur, and that it was the most distasteful thing that he has ever had to do. And at that time he said that he would be damned up and down the country for doing it but it just couldn't be

helped. And I personally, I think it was the proper action because he had gone to Wake to confer with MacArthur, they had come to certain decisions, firm decisions, then they had agreed on certain firm policies, and then very shortly thereafter he sent this message to the, what was it the...

HESS: The VFW.

MARA: VFW in Chicago. And there was an interesting character who was with the VFW at that time, Julius Klein -- I say I knew for quite a lot of time, not too well, just I knew him casually -- I went to Chicago in '45 with the presidential group when they went out to celebrate Army Day in Chicago. And Vaughan invited

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Mrs. Mara and I to go on the President's train at that time. And when we got to Chicago each of us was assigned to a hotel room for the afternoon and Klein happened to be in the same room with me at the, I think it was the Blake Hotel. And that's the first time I met him, but then he was public relations. He was quite close to the Republican administration, that is -- and I guess he was -- and with the Democrats too. But he was primarily a Republican, as I recall, because his strength was with old Senator Dirksen, in later years at any rate. And he was associated with the VFW at the time MacArthur sent this message...

HESS: It was supposed to have been read at their national encampment.

MARA: Yes, it was. Yes. And it was contrary to the policy set at Wake.

Personally I think the President had great admiration for MacArthur as a soldier. They had served together in World War I. MacArthur had the 42nd Rainbow Division over there in France, and the 45th Division, in which Mr. Truman was a captain...

HESS: 35th.

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MARA: The 35th Division, that's right, the 35th Division, in which Mr. Truman had this...

HESS: Battery D.

MARA: ...Battery D, fought next to the 42nd, they supported each other. So, he had a lot of admiration for MacArthur and continued to, and it was distressing to him to have to take the action he did. He told us that.

HESS: During the time that you were Assistant Military Aide, did you ever have very many communications from people saying, "I was in Battery D, I served with Harry Truman, you had ought to do something for me?"

MARA: No.

HESS: You didn't. All right, did you ever have very many people come into the White House saying they were from Battery D?

MARA: Oh, yes. We had Ted Marks in there all the time.

HESS: Oh, yes?

MARA: Ted was a fine person. Did you know the story of their meeting, Mr. Truman and Ted's?

HESS: No I don't. He has been interviewed by my boss, who is

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in charge of our project.

MARA: Well, he's dead now.

HESS: That's right, but this was some time ago.

MARA: Ted Marks is a very likeable person. He told me the story, Ted did.

HESS: Good.

MARA: As a young man he had been enlisted in one of the Queen's regiments at Buckingham Palace. He had served an enlistment as a guardsman, and after he was discharged he came to the United States as an immigrant and landed in St. Louis, as a young man in his very early twenties. And he was lonesome, and having been in the guard, he learned about the guard here, the National Guard. He went down to enlist in the guard and the man behind the desk when he went in to enlist, was Corporal Harry Truman. Corporal Truman said, "You want to enlist, how long have you been in the country?"

He said, "Six months."

He said, "You learned to speak the language pretty fast, didn't you?"

That was their first meeting.

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He enlisted, and then he had Battery C, while Mr. Truman had Battery D in World War I, Ted Marks was the Battery Commander. I suppose you know that Ted Marks was Mr. Truman's best man at his wedding. Well, Ted told me all of these things, he used to come in and sit and talk to us. We liked him very much.

HESS: Were there any other of the Kansas City people who would come in? Did you see very many of the Kansas City people?

MARA: Not too many. Not too many. Occasionally.

HESS: Tom Evans. Did you see him around the White House?

MARA: Who?

HESS: A man by the name of Tom Evans.

MARA: We didn't see much of Tom Evans, he used to visit the other side of the house I believe. And Harry might see him, Harry Vaughan might see him, but I don't recall too many coming in.

HESS: One thing that we have not covered is the assassination attempt of November the 1st of 1950. What do you recall about the assassination attempt?

MARA: Yes, I recall that. I was out to lunch when it happened and when I came back I was told about it. And of course, I

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walked around the corner, but by that time the President and Harry and Bob Dennison had gone off to the meeting place that they had -- they were going over to the Pentagon, I think, or someplace, they just took off.

HESS: Arlington Cemetery for the dedication of a statue to Sir John Dill.

MARA: Yes.

HESS: At Arlington Cemetery.

MARA: That's right down at the foot of the Kennedy monument now.

HESS: Is that where that is?

MARA: In Arlington, yes.

HESS: I didn't know where that was within the cemetery.

MARA: Yes, the steps going up to the Kennedy grave, the monument to John Dill is right at the foot of that, on horseback.

HESS: Well, the only time that I have been to Kennedy's grave I walked down from the Custis Lee Mansion.

MARA: Oh, you went down.

HESS: But I didn't know what was at the other side.

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MARA: You go up from the bottom, John Dill -- there's a...

HESS: But when you're lazy like I am, you see, you drive your car up behind the Custis Lee Mansion and then walk down. That's the only time I've been to the Kennedy grave.

MARA: There's a big statue of him on horseback right down at the foot of the steps.

HESS: Well, that's where they were that day.

MARA: Yes.

HESS: After the assassination attempt, did you ever hear Mr. Truman speak of that attempt or of assassination attempts on the President's lives? Perhaps when he was at Key West, or...

MARA: I don't believe so.

HESS: Okay.

Now, after the administration, then where did you go? What did you do after January the 20th of 1953?

MARA: I retired.

HESS: Was that the date of your retirement?

MARA: No, I had to go out to Walter Reed. See, I had -- by that

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time, 1953, let's see, I had 35 years service. But I had had these ulcers and I had quite a bit of trouble with my back, with arthritis and just several things that the doctors wanted to look at. So, they sent me out to Walter Reed and I stayed there for several months, and they retired me on April 30...

HESS: '53?

MARA: '53, and I lacked just ten days of 35 years service. Then I stayed around -- oh, I've stayed around Washington. Harry Vaughan and I were supposed to have organized a little company to act as import-export, it never amounted to anything.

HESS: What were you going to import and export?

MARA: We didn't know.

HESS: Didn't know.

MARA: We just didn't know. But it never amounted to anything, and let's see what -- oh, I just took odd jobs. I worked in a brokerage office for a while and I got tired of that. This fellow wanted me to be manager of this brokerage office over here in Arlington and I did it for a couple of months and I got tired of it, so I quit. And I don't know, I've got some, a little bit of property around here and there and I busied myself with it.

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HESS: You watch your rentals.

MARA: Yes.

HESS: Okay, what in your opinion were Mr. Truman's major contributions during his career?

MARA: Well, there are so many it'd be awfully hard to -- I think his major contribution is his great mind. I think his mind.

Well, of course, the Marshall plan and his saving of Greece. You know, his courses of action in forcing the Russians out of Iran. There's another thing that is lost, well, the historians of course, will pick it up, but so many people don't realize...

HESS: That was very early on, 1946.

MARA: 1946. He got tired of waiting for the Russians to get out, and he, as I remember the story as it was told there in the White House, he called the Ambassador, and he said, "I'm getting damn sick and tired of your people promising to get out of Iran." He says, "If you don't get out of there in the next thirty days, I'm going to send General Mark Clark up there and drive you out." In context that's what he said to the Russians, and they got out.

Now had they stayed in, we'd have had another Hungary

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or another Czechoslovakia, but that was one positive action he definitely took. And the same thing in Greece. And I was in Greece in '49 when I took the patriarch over for his installation. And they were killing all the leaders of Greece off, the Communists were, and that's when he sent (you mentioned his name the other day, this general, I can't think of it), over to take over that Greece situation and drive the Communists out of Greece. Greece was in a desperate situation The Communists. were really taking it over. They actually -- and they were killing off the leaders. What, who was that general he sent over? But he saved Greece. That was another great accomplishment, because had they gotten their foothold into Greece then, Lord knows what the situation in the Near East would be today.

HESS: One brief question about your job. Were there very many times when social functions became a major portion of the job?

MARA: No. No, we never let that happen.

HESS: Now the social aides, the military aides that were picked to escort ladies at the banquets and at the dinners, were the social aides chosen by other people or by your office?

MARA: Well, they were chosen by our office, the military aides

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were, we chose them, and the naval office chose the naval aides, and the Marine Corps aides. We chose the Army and the Air Force prior to the creation of the Air Force itself. And of course, they were very carefully examined for their rapport and...

HESS: Did you often personally attend social functions or not?

MARA: I did not personally attend too many social functions, General Vaughan was called upon to do that. He attended many of them, but I did not, it was not part of my job to take part in those social affairs.

HESS: All right now, just one question about Commander William Rigdon. Now he was more or less your counterpart, you were Assistant Military Aide, he was Assistant Naval Aide, but Commander Rigdon seems to have had a very wide circle of responsibility, or a field of responsibility. He had Shangri-La to run, he had the *Williamsburg* to run, he had to run the mess. Did you as an old Army man sort of feel like the Navy was taking over and running things?

MARA: It never crossed my mind.

HESS: You had enough to do to keep you busy on your own duties.

MARA: That's right, yes.

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HESS: You didn't worry about petty matters.

MARA: Not one bit, it never crossed my mind, the question. It was all accepted as standard operating procedure, and he had the experience, and he had the training, and as a matter of fact, he was there longer than any of the rest of us, longer than any of the aides. And it's a funny thing, there again shows the character of Vaughan.

Rigdon would consult with Vaughan on many, many parts of his job, his responsibility, and in the Navy, Rigdon was a former...

HESS: Yeoman, they call it in the Navy.

MARA: ...Yeoman.

HESS: Clerk.

MARA: In other words, he was a former enlisted man just as I had been years ago in the military. But in the Navy that division is even more sharp than the Army. If you are a Regular Navy officer, you're a Regular Navy officer, and if you're a Regular Navy enlisted man, or warrant, you're irregular always. And when it comes to promotion, there's very few regular Navy warrants that become commanders. They are lieutenant commanders and they very seldom get above that,

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in extremely rare cases. When it came to promoting Rigdon, he probably would have been a lieutenant commander today, if it were not for Harry Vaughan, without casting any aspersions on Admiral Dennison. Admiral Dennison admired and respected Rigdon, but that's navy when it came to being a commander.

HESS: So there were times when he would consult with General Vaughan and not with Admiral Dennison.

MARA: Oh, he would consult with both of them. He would just get General Vaughan's advice.

HESS: Now one thing about the Naval Aides and the Military Aide during Truman's administration. Many of them were not Regular officers, they were Reserve officers.

MARA: That's right.

HESS: Were there times when you thought that the Regular officers in the Pentagon did not like this situation, that they thought that the people next to the President should be Regular officers and not Reserve officers?

MARA: Oh, yes. They were jealous of Vaughan.

HESS: Did General Vaughan take any note of that?

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MARA: No, it didn't bother him. It didn't affect him in the slightest.

HESS: His public image.

MARA: Yes, they'd get this public image, but as soon as they met the man, they were his greatest enthusiasts, even the Regular officers. Of course, some of them always looked down their nose at him, being a Reserve and -- but...

HESS: Why do you think General Vaughan had such a poor public image? Was it purely the things that were written about him by Drew Pearson, or things like this, or were there possibly things in General Vaughan's manner that contributed to that opinion?

MARA: They were mainly due to the Pearson image. There was something about Vaughan, Vaughan's outgoing character that might antagonize some snobs, do you understand what I mean?

HESS: Yes.

MARA: He has a very outgoing way and he's a man very outspoken. He doesn't hold anything. And some people it would have an effect on them. But the man has so much character that anybody of any real substance would recognize it.

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HESS: All right. What is your estimation of Mr. Truman's place in history?

MARA: Well, I don't think I need to tell you that. I think it will be high in history. It's strange, people now when they learn that I was with Mr. Truman, they are so anxious to say what a great man he was. The same people in 1952 thought he was...

HESS: They were saying something else in '52 weren't they?

MARA: Yes.

HESS: Usually associated with the "mess in Washington."

MARA: Oh, yes, and we were all the "cronies" you know that. We were the "White House cronies," and do you know that there never was a poker game played in the White House?

HESS: No, I didn't know that. Is that right?

MARA: Never. Poker games were always either on the *Williamsburg* or at Key West, but never in the White House proper.

HESS: During periods of relaxation.

MARA: During periods of relaxation. But Harry Vaughan will tell you that he has never played poker in the White House.

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HESS: Do you have anything else to add on Mr. Truman, the Truman administration, or your duties?

MARA: I don't think so. I've already talked too much I think.

HESS: Well, we thank you very much, General.

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