

Oral History Interview
with
DAVID H. STOWE

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Bethesda, Maryland
July 27 and December 7, 1963 by C. T. Morrissey, Harry S. Truman Library

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MORRISSEY: Mr. Stowe, we're interested in your relationship to Mr. Truman and the Truman Administration. Could you tell me when this relationship began?

STOWE: Sometime in 1946. John R. Steelman, who was then the Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, asked me to come over to work in his office at the White House. At the time I was chief examiner in the Bureau of the Budget; I had had some relationships with the White House staff under Roosevelt and in the earlier days of the Truman

[2]

Administration. At that time, I decided not to go over there. About a year later, for a number of reasons, when I was again asked by John Steelman to join his staff, I decided to go. This was arranged as a form of leave from the Bureau of the Budget. I was to be on the White House payroll for one year and then to return to the Budget Bureau in September of 1948. I was to act as John Steelman's deputy and to work with him fulltime in the White House. One of the reasons that the Budget Bureau was interested in the arrangement, was that John, as the Assistant to the President, and Jim Webb the Director of the Budget, of necessity, had to relate to each other, and at that particular time that relationship was not too clear. I believe it was thought by Mr. Webb that, working with John Steelman and being from the Budget Bureau, I could probably assist in improving that relationship and, as it turned out, it worked out very well. During the year that I

[3]

was with Dr. Steelman, I worked basically on the problems which the President assigned to him and worked with his staff on various matters generally involving Government administration and labor-management affairs. At the end of that year's duty, in September 1948, I asked Dr. Steelman on my last day if I might go in and say goodbye to the President. Although I had worked directly with the President during that year on numerous occasions, it was usually with Dr. Steelman or at his direction. I went in to say goodbye to Mr. Truman. During the course of our conversation, the President turned to me and said, "Dave, I wish you'd stay."

At that point, I was both surprised and pleased, and I immediately replied that I would. Consequently, for the next three or four months although I was back on the Budget Bureau payroll, I remained on the White House staff throughout the '48 campaign. After the first of the year in

[4]

early 1949, the President appointed me as his Administrative Assistant. That's how I got there.

MORRISSEY: Could you elaborate on your relationship with the Roosevelt Administration and the Truman Administration before you joined the Truman Administration?

STOWE: Yes. Basically, in the Budget Bureau, I handled the area of labor relations and manpower. Of course, throughout the war period, manpower mobilization and labor disputes were two important areas. At first, I worked entirely through Harold Smith, then Director of the Budget, on the organization and operation of the manpower and labor-supply agencies and on the labor dispute settling agencies. On various occasions Judge Rosenman, who was then serving on the Supreme Court of New York, would come down about one day a week to work for President Roosevelt; I would

[5]

be assigned over as his staff assistant in the manpower and labor area. During the days he was in New York, matters that required his attention came to me, and I held them until he came down.

This association continued up until the time that Judge Rosenman became full-time legal counsel to President Roosevelt. At that time, he had fulltime assistants in the White House and although I continued to work with him from time to time, this was not as direct or as often as it had been previously.

In the early days of the Truman Administration, I had practically no contact with the White House staff. In fact, one of the first papers I got back from the White House had initials on it, "H.S.T." and I had become so used to seeing the F.D.R. initials, that I remarked to my secretary, "Now they even have clerks handling the matters over in the White House." Obviously, I didn't have any close relationship to HST at that time.

[6]

Sometime, I think, in '46, a labor bill was up, the so-called anti-racketeering bill, which many of the Cabinet, labor leaders, and others, were pressing President Truman to veto. In the course of my work in the Budget Bureau, I had analyzed the bill and the situation and prepared a memorandum for the then Director of the Budget for transmittal to the White House in which I concluded that there was, despite the labor leaders' protests, nothing in the bill that would be particularly harmful to labor; in fact there probably was a need for such legislation. What everybody was losing sight of at that time was the fact that what eventually became the Taft-Hartley Act, was beginning to emerge in Congressional committees. My conclusion was that there were a number of danger areas in that bill and that probably we ought to save our ammunition and veto for the really important bill. This memorandum, apparently, reached Clark Clifford, then legal counsel to

[7]

President Truman. Mr. Clifford asked me to come over and discuss it with him. At that time, the Cabinet almost unanimously had recommended veto of the anti-racketeering bill and a number of other people had recommended veto. Apparently the President was preparing to veto it. Shortly thereafter, he announced that he would not veto it. Now just what effect my memorandum had either on the President or on Mr. Clifford, I'll never know, but from that time on, I had other contacts with Mr. Clifford as well as with John Steelman who was then an Administrative Assistant to the President, and later the Assistant to the President. I didn't know any of the other staff, except Charlie Murphy who at that time was an Administrative Assistant to the President.

MORRISSEY: Could you go back a bit and give me a capsule biography and how you got in the Government service in the first place?

STOWE: Well, I graduated from Duke University in

[8]

1931, with an AB in economics in the middle of the depression. My family and my wife's family had long backgrounds in the teaching profession and I had an opportunity to teach. I taught in

junior colleges in North Carolina for a number of years; however, I had never planned to stay in teaching. About 1937, I decided to move into another area. I became a field supervisor of the North Carolina State Employment Service and subsequently the assistant state director in North Carolina. In 1941, I became interested in moving into the Federal Government. This was the defense prewar period and the Federal Government was looking for people; two former associates of mine in the U.S. Employment Service were then key figures in the Bureau of the Budget. They invited me to come to Washington where I met the Director, Harold Smith. I agreed to come to the Bureau as a specialist in the field of manpower and labor in the Bureau's War Mobilization unit.

[9]

MORRISSEY: In what ways were the relationships between the Bureau of the Budget and the Presidency, first, when Roosevelt was President and second, when Truman was President, in what ways were they similar and in what ways were they different?

STOWE: Well, during the war period (I don't know about the prewar relationship), I know that a close relationship existed between President Roosevelt and the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Harold Smith, when I joined the Bureau staff. During this period Harold Smith was often referred to as perhaps the second most powerful man in the Government. I think this was due, in part, to his concept of the type of service that the Budget Bureau could perform for the President; that is that the Bureau could be the management arm of the executive, as opposed to simply estimating and preparing the budget which had been its role in earlier years. I guess his relationships with the President were certainly on a par with all of the top people

[10]

except, perhaps, Harry Hopkins--and one or two others where there were close personal relationships. There's no question that during the latter part of the war, when the President was spending most of his time carrying on the war, a tremendous amount of Government organization responsibility and the determination of policy relating to the domestic areas, and war support activities were handled by Harold Smith. He developed an excellent staff in the Bureau of the Budget and I think his relationship with President Roosevelt was tops. The President seemed to rely greatly on Smith although he obviously went over budgets and executive orders and all the materials that emanated from the Bureau to the President. He often made changes, even may have reversed Smith for all I know, but it was a good relationship.

After President Truman entered office, Jim Webb became Director of the Bureau of the Budget.

[11]

At first, there was probably not the close relationship that eventually evolved. I think many of the original staff that came in with President Truman either did not understand the function of the Bureau of the Budget as a staff arm of the President, or didn't believe it should function in that capacity. I think there's evidence of both. On the other hand, President Truman was probably even more budget conscious than President Roosevelt. I think President Roosevelt evaluated his

budget in terms of program objectives but the dollars didn't seem to have the same importance. President Truman was the type of person that not only went over the program aspect of the budget, but actually went through the estimates in detail. I doubt if there has ever been a President who took the same interest. I suppose back when the budget was a smaller operation, many Presidents might have been familiar with it, but since the budget has become so large, I don't think

[12]

there has been a President before or since that has gone over the Federal budget in such detail, each and every agency's requests, and was able to talk about it. This was quite obvious when President Truman would meet with the high-powered newspaper analysts and economists in the budget review session held each year. Prior to Mr. Truman that budget conference was usually conducted by the Budget Director and the Secretary of the Treasury who talked on the technical information that economists could understand. Mr. Truman handled his own press briefings on the budget because he was so thoroughly familiar with it. So, the institutional relationship between the President and the Budget Bureau, I think, became even closer than it had been under Roosevelt. Mr. Truman relied heavily on information from the Director of the Bureau of the Budget in forming many policy and management decisions. Another reason for the close relationship may

[13]

have been that the staff around President Truman, certainly in his second term, contained a number of Budget Bureau "graduates." For example, I think I was the first one to go over to the White House staff; I was followed by Dave Bell who also eventually became an Administrative Assistant to the President; by Dick Neustadt who worked with Charlie Murphy and by Harold Enarson, who later came over with John Steelman. In addition there were some junior staff members; my assistant was a Milton Kayle from the Budget Bureau; Russell Andrews from the Bureau was on John Steelman's staff. Actually, I don't think any of those people considered themselves as pipelines or anything like that to the Bureau of the Budget, but when the staff of the President understands the function and particularly understands how to use Budget Bureau staff, it makes for a good relationship and certainly provides additional staff assistance to the President, without creating a

[14]

larger staff in the White House.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall any noticeable difference in the relationship between President Truman and different directors of the Bureau of the Budget?

STOWE: No, I don't think so. Let's see, there were about three that I recall. There was Jim Webb and there was Frank Pace and Fred Lawton. I believe that all of them had similar relationships. It may have been on a little more personal basis with one than with the other but I

don't think that there was any real difference in the institutional relationship between the staff of the President and the staff of the Budget.

MORRISSEY: From your viewpoint, just prior to the 1948 election, was there much thinking at that time about a possible Presidential transition to be anticipated after November '48?

STOWE: Well, of course, prior to the election of 1948, I was working with John Steelman as his deputy.

[15]

What others in the White House may have been doing I really don't know. There was certainly no implication where I was and, although I worked with John, I was on occasions working with the speechwriting group with Charlie Murphy and with Clark Clifford, and I must say that prior to the election I was not aware of any transition plans.

MORRISSEY: In what ways did Judge Rosenman's relationship with President Truman differ from his relationship with President Roosevelt?

STOWE: Well, prior to President Roosevelt's death, the relationship, as far as I know between Judge Rosenman and President Roosevelt was very close; it was a personal adviser type of relationship. Rosenman was relied on in many areas for advice. I don't think such a relationship existed with President Truman, certainly not in the beginning. I don't know what particular project or what it was that brought it about, but obviously over the

[16]

period of the seven years, Judge Rosenman did begin to come back in again. This area I don't know; Charlie Murphy would probably know more about it. However, at the time President Truman left office, there was a close personal relationship with Judge Rosenman which I believe continued afterward.

MORRISSEY: A moment ago, you referred to John Steelman and his area of responsibility. Just what were Steelman's duties?

STOWE: Well, I am speaking only of his duties as the Assistant to the President, rather than some of the many hats he wore on occasions; basically, John was the Assistant to the President in the day-to-day operation of the Government. I think the first and foremost thing to note about John's method of operation was that he did not consider himself as a number two President, a mistake that people who have held that job since seem to have

[17]

made. He kept everybody quite aware that all he was doing was trying to expedite certain matters or to work out certain problems but that the President would make the final decisions. His great forte was his ability to mediate. Dr. Steelman, in my opinion, was one of the best

mediators in the country, not only in labor mediation, but in all types of mediation. Often, as you know, problems develop between high-level Government officials; sometimes they break out into open warfare and get in the newspapers, but even if that doesn't happen, there are problems involving department jealousies or program conflicts. It was in this area, in my opinion, that Dr. Steelman made one of his greatest contributions to the Truman Administration. He was able to work with the high level Cabinet people; they knew that he spoke with authority, yet without telling them what had to be done, he was able to work out many internal problems that otherwise

[18]

the President would have had to handle. In most instances, John was able to take these problems, work them out and that was the end of it; the President didn't have to be involved. And people knew that his relationship with the President was of that nature; they were willing to cooperate; he never tried to block them from seeing the President. With this method of approach, he was able to coordinate difficult areas of Government operation. Of course, he had other areas; basically he gave advice on the labor management problems because of his long background in this field, particularly on what should be done or what should not be done in relation to major strikes. He was involved in many areas but was primarily active in the general operation of the Government perhaps more than in the policy area except for the economic and labor areas where he had a substantial policy input.

MORRISSEY: How would he decide what assignments to

[19]

give to you?

STOWE: I don't know how he decided. We developed an excellent working relationship. To illustrate it--after all, he was the Assistant to the President and I was only his deputy and he was a mediator and he could mediate almost any problem. But there were occasions, when in the course of his mediation, an agreement was reached and everybody was happy except Dave Stowe. The problem that I had was that what had been agreed to either didn't fit into the announced program of the President or might get the President into a lot of difficulty later. At that point, of course, a subordinate staff member has a relationship problem with his boss. This never occurred to John Steelman. When I'd tell John of my fears or my views on the subject, he'd say, "All right, let's go over and talk to the President." We'd go in and talk to the President and John would explain the agreement that he had been able to reach, and then he'd tell the President that I had

[20]

a problem. At that point I had the opportunity to tell the President exactly why I felt that the agreement ran contrary to what he had enunciated, for example, in the State of the Union message. On one or two occasions the President agreed that that was true and asked John to try another approach. This, to me, is a mark of a broad gauged man. And even though on occasions

the President did agree with me and John had to go back and renegotiate again, he never held any ill feeling; he always kept the door open for me. Just what was the basis for assignments to me instead of to somebody else, I don't really know.

MORRISSEY: A moment ago you said you participated in speechwriting sessions. Could you tell me how speeches were prepared?

STOWE: As I indicated earlier my association with various speeches was based on the need for infor-

[21]

mation in areas where I had some knowledge. Basically, the speechwriting group, as I recall it, for the '48 campaign consisted of Clark Clifford, Charlie Murphy, and George Elsey. There were included, on occasions, other people from the Government, as well as people from outside. I recall that Dave Noyes and occasionally others were in for a while. Many of the Cabinet officials, many Government officials were brought in as needed. Since a number of the speeches revolved around matters that had either educational or labor implications and because I guess they needed another hand on occasions, I participated in some of the speechwriting sessions. Also Dave Bell, who was then over in the Bureau of the Budget, was brought in to help out in this area. I was more or less on data gathering and drafting segments in a group headed up by Charlie Murphy. On the train, Clark Clifford and George Elsey took the material received from Murphy and his group,

[22]

did some editing and used them, I guess, wherever they wanted to. I know one speech that we drafted for use in Norman, Oklahoma, to be delivered at the University of Oklahoma, to my surprise wasn't used there but was used later in Boston a number of weeks later. As I recall something came up that had to be addressed at the time, hence the change.

I seem to have gone off on the '48 campaign speeches rather than answer your question directly. I'm sure you will get a much clearer picture of the speechwriting process from Clark Clifford and Charlie Murphy who were in charge of speechwriting--Clark during the President's first term and Charlie during the second term. I participated in the drafting only where the speech or part of it involved areas where I had particular knowledge such as labor and manpower, or education and training. Of the messages to Congress there were three of major importance each year, the State of the Union,

[23]

the Budget message and the Economic Report. These were important because these documents taken together set forth the program of the President for the coming period.

There were also special messages to Congress and major addresses by the President to the country or to various organizations or to conventions. Occasionally these also contained major pronouncements by the President on policy matters.

MORRISSEY: Did you ride the campaign train in 1948?

STOWE: No. The group, basically, the research people, the drafting and writing people, were all in Washington, except for Clifford and Elsey who were on the train; we furnished the material to the train through the communications car. On the last trip out, Charlie Murphy and one or two others did go aboard the train; I didn't; I wasn't on the '48 campaign train at all.

MORRISSEY: Did the speechwriting sessions in the 1948

[24]

campaign take all your time?

STOWE: No, not mine. It did for others, but I was in and out as needed.

MORRISSEY: What else were you doing at this time?

STOWE: Well, of course, I was primarily deputy to Steelman and was carrying on such work as he assigned to me.

MORRISSEY: Did you participate in any speechwriting sessions for non-campaign speeches?

STOWE: Yes, I participated in parts of most of the speeches like the State of the Union, the Budget message, the Economic message. Usually it was those parts relating to the field of labor or the field of education, the field of welfare, the area that I had been dealing with in the Bureau of the Budget and the same areas that I continued to deal with while I worked with John Steelman.

[25]

MORRISSEY: Did you attend the President's staff meetings?

STOWE: At that time, no, not until I became Administrative Assistant to the President in early 1949.

MORRISSEY: Did you attend them regularly after?

STOWE: After I became Administrative Assistant I regularly attended every morning.

MORRISSEY: What is the President's procedure in running these meetings?

STOWE: The staff meetings consisted of what we called the senior staff; that would be the Assistant to the President, the legal counsel, the press, appointments, and correspondence secretaries, and some of the administrative assistants. There were some of the staff who did not attend. On what basis it was decided which administrative assistants attended and which ones did not, I

[26]

don't know. Donald Dawson and I were regularly present. Later on, Dave Lloyd, Dave Bell and George Elsey attended. I think there were one or two others who never attended. The staff meetings were held at 9 each morning and lasted thirty minutes. We seemed to gravitate to our usual chairs--everyone sat in his usual place. Usually at the start the President would assign the problems he wanted the various staff members to look into. Then he would go around the group again to see if any of us had anything to report or take up. Basically, the type of problem that a staff member would discuss at the staff meeting was the kind in which a number of persons might be interested so that they would get the benefit of the President's reactions and discussions. For problems that were technical or involved and would take more time, we usually made appointments through Matt Connolly to go in after 4 o'clock. The President usually kept

[27]

the hours from about 4 to 5:30 to spend with staff members on particular problems that were either complicated or were too involved to take up in the morning staff meeting. Bill Hopkins was always there too--the chief clerk of the White House--and he was sort of the switching center to keep things on track. This was very important because the President occasionally would assign work to one staff man and later put another staff member on the same problem. When I got an assignment out of my normal area and I wasn't sure what I should do I'd check with Bill Hopkins. Bill usually knew whether anyone else was working on the same matter and we could then coordinate our efforts and not get in each other's way. In my opinion these daily staff meetings were important both in the immediate and in the cumulative effect. Each staff member participating had an opportunity to take up with the President any problem which was troubling him or on which he needed guidance. Perhaps just as important, through these day-to-day

[28]

discussions the staff member became familiar with the President's thinking on various issues and programs and could use this knowledge in his contacts with other Government officials and agencies. We could talk with some assurance concerning the President's probable reaction to certain matters after having heard these staff discussions and perhaps discussed it at greater length in the private conferences.

MORRISSEY: Would the President prefer to have problems thrashed out in his presence or thrashed out previously and then brought with a recommendation to his attention?

STOWE: Well, I think it would be the latter; he preferred to have the staff give the problem a thorough going over and to try to find answers--bring these recommendations into him for

approval. However, if there were differences of opinion, he always wanted to know this; he didn't want us

[29]

to feel we had to fight it out with somebody backing off, and then bring in a unanimous position. If there were differences of opinion, he wanted to know about this because then he would make the decision.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall any specific instance of this?

STOWE: Well, of course, the most outstanding one was the termination of the steel strike when we were discussing it in the staff meeting, but I understand we're going to cover that situation in another interview. No, I actually don't think of any although I'm sure I must have participated in some. He always wanted to know the facts and he also wanted to know not only what we thought, if we happened to be in disagreement, but what, for instance, the concerned Cabinet officer thought, because he never looked at his staff as the line to the Cabinet. He reminded us time and time again that we were staff to the President, that he dealt

[30]

directly with the Cabinet; he looked upon the Cabinet officers and agency heads as the line officers; he would not brook anybody getting between them and the President and trying to act for him. However, he relied completely on us, I think, to research a problem, to get all of the byplay and the facts that he would need to know that he wouldn't normally expect Cabinet officers to tell him. When he talked to a Cabinet officer, he had the benefit of the staff work; I think it was quite apparent to the Cabinet officers that they could always speak directly with the President, and that no staff member would try to come between them. On the other hand, I think they were probably aware that the President would be talking with us and that our views would be given consideration. The Cabinet members with whom I dealt talked with me openly and freely, knowing full well that if we couldn't reach some kind of an understanding,

[31]

the Cabinet member could take the matter up with the President directly.

MORRISSEY: What's most prominent in your memory about the way Truman operated as President?

STOWE: His ability to make decisions was the most outstanding thing. He wanted to know the facts and he had an ability to get information and to retain it; he just seemed to be able to store it in his mind and use it when he needed it. Once he had the information he could make a decision and that was it; there was no delay, no fiddling around, no period of indecision, while everybody wondered what was going to happen; he made the decision and knew that it was final. If you disagreed with him you had your opportunity to talk and he always listened, but one thing that

was certain, when he made a decision, you knew there was a decision; that was his method of operation.

MORRISSEY: Anything else that stands out prominently

[32]

in addition to this?

STOWE: One thing that stands out in my mind was his complete loyalty to his staff and the loyalty of his staff to him. Each and every one of us had a close personal relationship with him. In my case, I felt that he was sort of like a second father to me; he was kind; he was decisive; he never bawled anybody out in public; if he had anything to say to them he always said it in private. But he was a man who certainly had the complete, 100 percent loyalty from his staff. As a sidelight, the families of the staff felt the same way toward President Truman and toward Mrs. Truman who always made the staff wives and families a part of her family, and made them feel at home on all occasions. It was a very interesting relationship, I think, for the staff. And this was true, not only for people who had known the Trumans for twenty or thirty years or more, like Charlie Ross and Harry Vaughan, but when you

[33]

became a staff member, the President and Mrs. Truman made you a part of this organization as if you had always been there.

MORRISSEY: Would the President channel all the problems that came to his attention through his staff or did he handle some problems individually, disregarding his staff?

STOWE: Well, I know one, he used to say, "Anything to do with politics in Missouri, stay out;" he'd handle that. I think by and large, the President used his staff for the greater proportion--most all of the problems. I suppose there were some problems he did not take up with any staff member. He may have resolved some by dealing solely with the people concerned such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the department heads or the Secretary of Defense. In the military area he probably dealt with the particular service through Admiral [Robert] Dennison or General [Harry H.]

[34]

Vaughan or General [Robert B.] Landry, but I don't know.

MORRISSEY: How about matters of foreign policy?

STOWE: Oh, there he and Dean Acheson handled those matters. Some staff work was done in the White House; I think either Charlie Murphy or George Elsey were the people used in that area. I didn't have too much to do with international matters except for trips to Mexico on airline

negotiations and the Mexican labor importation program; but I'm sure that in foreign policy he worked very, very closely with Dean Acheson and before Dean with General Marshall.

MORRISSEY: You say the President would get his information from two or three channels? What were these channels?

STOWE: I suppose it depended on the subject matter. Usually it would be from the Cabinet members or

[35]

from papers prepared by departmental staffs in the various agencies which were handed to the President, or by talking to various people such as the Director of the Budget. I think in the matter of getting information he used all kinds of sources such as the Cabinet or sub-Cabinet people, staff agencies such as the Bureau of the Budget, National Security Resources Board, Council of Economic Advisers and then, of course, from his own staff members.

MORRISSEY: How about the newspapers?

STOWE: I don't think he got a lot of guidance from the newspapers; he read them every morning and he certainly was familiar with what was going on, but I don't think he relied very much on newspapers any more than he relied on the polls in terms of decision making. He certainly was fully aware of problem areas; he was an avid reader and had many pipelines, including the

[36]

newspapers, as to what might be problem areas.

MORRISSEY: As White House staff member, did you have much to do with the Council of Economic Advisers?

STOWE: Only for a brief period. This was one of the areas that in the first year or two the Council reported through, you might say, John Steelman. However, John had Bob Turner who was an economist and who did most of the technical dealing. I was chiefly concerned with anything that affected the labor situation or the welfare education areas, but not in the overall economic problems such as the balance of trade, tariffs and so forth.

MORRISSEY: Were you concerned with liaison between the White House and the Hill?

STOWE: No. I never got near the Hill; relations with Congress as far as I know were handled through the legal counsel's office, in part, and through a

[37]

couple of people in the appointments secretary's office. Just how they related to each other I don't know, but much of the Congressional relations were handled by Mr. Truman. He handled a good deal of his own Hill contacts directly; since he had been a Senator he knew the people and knew their methods of operation. He had a great respect for the Congress. As far as I can recall he never tried to put pressures on them in the way I think we could say that President Roosevelt did. He had a respect for the procedures of the Senate, particularly, and also for the House. While I'm sure he had many methods and channels of communication, he never applied great pressure tactics. In fact, sometimes some of us thought maybe he should have cracked the whip a little bit more than he did. I think, however, his relationships up there never caused him to back off from anything he had decided was the right course; he kept his contacts with Congress, but he didn't do it the way other Presidents have done, by trying to capture the Congress

[38]

or by forcing them through patronage or other methods into positions he favored.

MORRISSEY: Did you attend any of the President's prepress conference sessions?

STOWE: Yes, I believe I attended most all of them after I became an Administrative Assistant; the staff would go over together to the press conference.

MORRISSEY: could you tell me how the President would prepare for a press conference?

STOWE: The press secretary who was in contact with the reporters every day would bring up two kinds of questions--those that he had been informed by press representatives that they intended to ask the President, or those that he could more or less predict on the basis of events at the time. During the first part of the pre-press conference he told the President the questions that he would probably get, and suggested the type of reply

[39]

that the President might make. If it was something where obviously a statement would be the best way to handle it, the press secretary or the legal counsel would prepare a statement in advance which could be read at the outset. This advance preparation also occurred occasionally when the question was of such importance, particularly in an international area, that answering off-the cuff might have been ill-advised. After the press secretary had gone through his questions any of the other staff members brought up any additional questions which might be asked and would quickly brief the President on them. For example, each time I returned from the Mexican negotiations there was the possibility there could be a question on that. This was something the press secretary wouldn't have because the question would probably be from a representative of a Texas paper where there was a local interest. The major part of the briefing, however, was from the press secretary.

[40]

MORRISSEY: How would you characterize relations between the President and the press?

STOWE: The relations were excellent. I think the working press had the greatest admiration for the President and I know he had for them. He used to cuss out the publishers, their bosses as he called them, but I think the White House correspondents were top-flight reporters, who had a great admiration for him; I've heard them express it privately since he's been out of office, and I've heard a number of them express many times their deep affection for him; and I think, as a result, their reporting was always pretty fair. Occasionally statements might get a little garbled or changed around, but I think the majority of the White House press corps reported accurately. They reported things as they saw them and when they disagreed with him they said so, but I think there was a good relationship.

MORRISSEY: I understand you were concerned with the

[41]

location and operation of the President's office in case of a national emergency. Could you tell me about it?

STOWE: During the days when we had to face the possibility that there might be conflict, we had the problem of what we called "The Continuity of the Operation of the Government." This would involve not only the Congress and the executive departments, but most particularly the office of the President because in wartime many things flow out of executive orders or decisions by the President. In order to assure ourselves of continued operation, we had a number of plans. These were, at the time, highly classified--I suppose after we discuss this we better check to see how many of them are still classified. I don't know. I would suppose the plans are no longer the same since each President has his own method of operation. Basically, our plan included three means to provide for the mobility of the President

[42]

in the event we had to leave Washington. This meant plans that could involve land, air or water movement. The President's railroad car had been moved to a safe place which we could reach within a matter of an hour; that car together with the signal car which was equipped with almost all communications systems that the President would need was one option. The second means of mobility was the Williamsburg, the Presidential yacht, which unlike other yachts of its size was complete with communications equipment equal to that on a battleship. And then, of course, there were arrangements for helicopter and plane transportation. In addition to these three methods of transportation we had pre-arranged spots in the area near Washington from which communications could be maintained. At that time one of them was Shangri-La. The plans were based on complete mobility in the event that we had to evacuate Washington; each option had to be complete with communication systems, files and necessary staff. The major emphasis, however, was

[43]

on the underground operation at the White House. Since the White House was being reconstructed during a greater portion of the President's second term, we had complete freedom to do some new construction work. Although there had been what was known as a bomb shelter during World War II, this was completely inadequate for the days of atomic bombs, and particularly, the thermonuclear bomb. The first objective was to put the old shelter into a state of readiness. During the reconstruction of the White House the new facilities being installed had to be designed to withstand bombs that we were developing and whose power we could estimate. As long as the White House facilities could be used we would operate from there with the situation determining the employment of our other plans. Availability of communications was of first importance. All of the other facilities were completely equipped so that the President could operate through communication systems. At the same time in our planning we had developed the concept of dis-

[44]

persal of the key executive agencies to various outlying areas of Washington. This idea has been carried out over the years to where many have been permanently moved. During our time, however, these places were only temporary headquarters where the Cabinet officer together with some of his key aides would go; arrangements were made through Civil Defense for coordination with plans for the civilian population. Of course the agencies most important to carrying on the Government during an emergency situation were the first to be arranged for. Communications were established including a microwave network connecting all of them in order that they would be in communication with us no matter where we were. I think actually our work was both for the protection of the President and for the continuity of communications. There was also the problem of what files, what orders, what executive orders, many of which were pre-prepared, had to be available at each of these places; many

[45]

of these had to be kept up-dated as we went along with sufficient copies so that wherever the President went they would be at hand. And then there were other matters that were of such a sensitive nature that orders couldn't be prepared in advance or if they were there was only one copy which had to be with the President. There were three staff members whose standing orders were, if there was any attack on the city of Washington, we were to get to the President as rapidly as possible without regard to Civil Defense orders or anything else. Other key staff were assigned specific points they were to go to and to wait for us to contact them.

MORRISSEY: Who were these people?

STOWE: The three people were Admiral Dennison, General Landry and myself. The other two were an integral part of the operation. Bob Dennison was to be the chief operations officer while I was chiefly

[46]

involved with the advance planning. Dennison and I worked together in the planning. Bob was the chief operator; if we ever went into operation, he would take over and I just came along with the plans and files. Of course, General Landry would have been particularly involved if the air movements were necessary and was also familiar with operations. I would have had nothing to do with the actual operation, as Dennison and Landry were much more experienced in command, except to be there to be sure that all the planning aspects were keyed to the operating aspects and that all the documents and other things that were part of the plan were readily available. I had a special Signal Corps telephone in my bedroom at home and I always worried that the thing would go off. Fortunately, it never rang except on Wednesdays at noon when they would check it out regularly to make sure the lines were working.

MORRISSEY: How would you decide what papers should

[47]

go with the President in case of such a situation?

STOWE: Well, we knew that in the event of an attack we would have to take certain actions and to set certain things in motion throughout the Government. These were included in the plans that had been worked out with the Department of Defense and by various agencies. All of these were not necessarily prepared by us but we had them. And, of course, many of the papers came through the National Security Council, but getting the President's files organized was handled within the White House.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall the President ever commenting on these points?

STOWS: They were checked with him quite regularly. He understood them. I'm not certain that when the time came he might not do as he once said, he'd sit right in his office and we could go

[48]

running to our little shelters or not. He was kept fully abreast of the plans and he approved each one. I'm sure he was fully cognizant of the fact that the Government would have to continue to operate and he was the man that would have to continue to make it operate. I'm not sure that he always agreed that all of the things we were doing were absolutely necessary. I think he would have cooperated in leaving the White House if the Secret Service and I had suggested that's what he ought to do.

MORRISSEY: What was your function during the 1952 campaign?

STOWE: During 1952, when the President was campaigning in support of Governor Stevenson, operating procedures were considerably changed from those of 1948; it was decided to move the speechwriting team, the researchers as well as the stenographic and mimeographing operations that were essential

[49]

aboard the train instead of leaving them in Washington. This meant we had a much larger group on the train. Matt Connelly, as the appointments secretary, was insofar as the Presidential staff was concerned, in charge of tying together all of the operations. He made decisions on who we were going to see, those who came aboard, and managed relations with the railroads and the staff on the train. Charlie Murphy, as the chief speechwriter, along with Dave Lloyd and others, prepared the speeches as we moved along and when we were back in Washington. My major role was to manage what we called "Car Number One," that's the President's car. As we pulled into our various station stops, there were crowds of people who wanted to come aboard the train to meet the President; the job was to manage this and yet keep our rear platform speeches on time; close up and move out on schedule. Doing this required a certain amount of advance information. The advance man would be in continuous communication telling us what

[50]

committees and what groups would be wanting to shake hands with the President. If it was a large group they would walk across the rear platform and shake hands. If they were important officials such as Governors, we might pick them up in advance and they would ride with the President part of the time. Others would have, maybe, four or five minutes with him during the course of the trip. All of this had to be worked out in advance, and of course, it was always complicated by late starters or last minute changes that you had to play by ear. The difference in 1952 was that the President was not running for office; he was supporting a candidate. I gather that in 1948, people rode with him no matter what the distance between stops was; so that he seldom had a chance to sit down and relax. In 1952 he was four years older; he was the President and not a candidate and it was sort of a different kind of relationship. The Governors and Senators came aboard, and they did spend some time back there with him,

[51]

but nothing like it was in '48. The various committeemen, local, county, state and otherwise--we would move forward about two cars where they had a place to ride but they didn't monopolize his time. We tried to give him sufficient times to rest, to attend to his business as the President of the United States, and also to work with the speechwriters from time to time.

MORRISSEY: Who was the advance man for the 1952 campaign?

STOWE: Don Dawson was the primary advance man. Actually, Don used a number of people but he was the person we looked to primarily as I recall it. Matt Connelly and Charlie Murphy were more in contact with Don because all I had to worry about was getting people on and off the train making sure the President was not bothered, and seeing that the President had the services he needed such as telephone connection when the

[52]

land lines were brought aboard at each stop and setting up appointments for staff aboard the train. I was given the typed lists telling who would be coming aboard the next day at what stop. How much time they would have with the President was decided by me except I would check with him about certain people.

[53]

Second Oral History Interview with David H. Stowe, Bethesda, Maryland, December 7, 1963.
By C. T. Morrissey, Harry S. Truman Library.

MORRISSEY: Two weeks ago yesterday, Mr. Stowe, was the date of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas and two weeks ago today, President Truman came to Washington for the funeral. Could you tell me about President Truman's visit here two weeks ago?

STOWS: The President arrived sometime Saturday afternoon. Originally he had planned to stay at the Mayflower Hotel, but apparently those plans were changed when President Johnson asked him to stay at Blair House. I didn't see the President on Saturday at all. Admiral Dennison, General Vaughan, and General [Neal] Mara were with him. I gather that he went over and spent considerable time with President Johnson. I went to the Blair House about 8 o'clock on Sunday morning and spent all day there.

The President was visibly shaken by the assassination, quite saddened. As the day

[54]

progressed, I had the feeling that I had never seen him as upset. In the morning there was some confusion as to just where he was supposed to be at 12 o'clock. Originally he had planned to attend church at 11 o'clock. He was going to walk over to the church; I was to walk with him. Then messages began coming in from the White House about where he was expected to be, causing some confusion; it was decided he would not go to church but would go directly from Blair House to the Rotunda of the Capitol at about 12:30. Admiral Dennison and General Vaughan went with him, as did Margaret. He hadn't had any lunch. Before he left we persuaded him to eat a little bite; I think he had a glass of milk and a piece of banana. The ordeal up at the Capitol must have been pretty hard on him. He arrived back at the Blair House at around 2:30 or a quarter to 3. Lunch was prepared and waiting. Our first real indication of how seriously the ordeal was

[55]

affecting him came at lunch; Margaret, the three aides, and I were lunching with him and I noticed that he wasn't eating. He was just staring at his plate. He was obviously either very tired or not feeling well. I suggested to him that perhaps he might want to go upstairs and rest a little. I thought he was just worn out. He agreed despite the fact there were a number of people waiting in Blair House to see him. Admiral Dennison and I went upstairs with him, got him in bed and he rested for about an hour. During that time Margaret went out to visit with Drucie Snyder Horton.

When he got up a little later, we tried to persuade him to stay in bed. He still appeared upset, but he got dressed and came in to the library at Blair House. We cancelled all appointments for the rest of the day. Admiral Dennison and I just sat with him and talked. During the course of the conversation he did make the state

[56]

ment that this had hit him harder than anything he'd ever had in his life. A couple of times when he got up to walk around the room, he obviously wavered. He appeared to have dizzy spells. At that point, Admiral Dennison and I became concerned about his health; we chatted together and finally decided to suggest to Margaret when she came back, that they cancel their dinner appointment for that night. He and Margaret were to have dinner with Ambassador [Stanley] Woodward and Mrs. Woodward, just the four of them. Around 5:30 or 6 the President became quite nervous and upset and kept inquiring where Margaret was, to the extent that Bob Dennison phoned Drucie's to see when Margaret was coming back. When Margaret came in we persuaded her to consider canceling their dinner plans. The upshot of it was that Admiral Dennison and I talked with Mr. Truman; he wasn't willing to change his plans. Margaret went up and talked to him and he still wasn't willing to

[57]

cancel. We then made another swing-at it. I guess it was General Vaughan that time; I was on the first one--the Admiral and I went up the first time. He was finally persuaded to cancel the dinner and after that was accomplished, it wasn't too difficult to talk him into seeing a doctor. Admiral [George C.] Burkley, President Kennedy's physician, was over at the White House. Admiral Dennison asked him to come over. He gave Mr. Truman a physical examination; he then had a long telephone conversation with General [Wallace] Graham who was in Kansas City; I gather that the two doctors felt that it was more of an emotional reaction than anything physical at the time, which was a great relief to us. He went to bed then and stayed there right on through to the next morning. I left the Blair House that evening somewhere around 7:30 or 8 o'clock; I had not planned to go back the next day. The following morning, Admiral Dennison called and filled me in; he said that Mr. Truman had gotten up and he seemed to be in good

[58]

shape; and there didn't appear to be any bad effects. I returned to the Blair House after the call. Admiral Dennison informed me that a plan had been worked out whereby Mr. Truman would not walk with the procession from the White House to the Cathedral as the others were scheduled to do. In view of the evening before we had been concerned about that long walk. Bob told me that President Eisenhower and President Truman were to be at the Cathedral when the funeral procession arrived, and that they would then ride together to the cemetery. Admiral Dennison knows a lot more about how this happened to come about. I believe it was he who worked it out with General Eisenhower's staff.

When it was determined that the two former Presidents would ride in the same car from the Cathedral to the cemetery and that the Eisenhowers probably would be going on to Gettysburg after bringing Margaret and Mr. Truman back to the Blair

[59]

House, it was suggested that they ask the General and Mrs. Eisenhower in for some refreshments before their trip. Mr. Truman thought it was a fine idea and decided to do it. As the military aides accompanied Mr. Truman to all formal functions, I remained at the Blair House. We arranged for the refreshments to be ready in the event the Eisenhowers accepted the invitation. I watched the funeral on the television; when they left the cemetery I began watching for the car. When it arrived Mr. Truman and Margaret got out and then the Eisenhowers and they all came in. They were seated in the front parlor of the Blair House; Mrs. Eisenhower and Margaret sat on a sofa in front of the window overlooking Pennsylvania Avenue. Mr. Truman sat in a winged chair at one end of the sofa and General Eisenhower sat in a similar chair on the other side of the room. Although I was busy making sure the refreshments were being brought in, I was fascinated with the

[60]

meeting because of tensions that were reported to have existed between the two past Presidents over the past few years. I overheard General Eisenhower ask Mr. Truman if he remembered a certain assignment Mr. Truman had given to him; I didn't catch what it was. Then Mr. Truman replied that he did remember it and said, "and you did a hell of a fine job too." With that General Eisenhower stood up, picked up a nearby side chair, moved it over beside Mr. Truman's chair and sat down. They appeared to have a good conversation for the remainder of the visit, about twenty minutes. I believe this was the beginning of the return to a friendly relationship between them.

MORRISSEY: Do you know anything about the conversations between President Truman and President Johnson?

STOWE: No, I do not.

MORRISSEY: Let me move on then to the 1952 campaign

[61]

which is what we were talking about at the end of our previous interview. Could you tell me why in 1952, the speechwriters and research people were moved on the train, whereas in '48 they had stayed at the White House?

STOWE: I am not sure. First of all I think it was a matter of convenience. It was very difficult in '48 to keep speeches flowing to the train. Also there were last minute decisions on the train where speeches that were written in Washington were modified or not used. Of course, there always had to be a certain amount of speechwriting done on the train. In '48, Clifford and Elsey

did it. They did the whistle stop speeches which required a lot of research and knowledge of the locale. I think Charlie Murphy made the decision to put the group on the train in '52 .

MORRISSEY: Did you participate in any speechwriting

[62]

sessions in the '52 campaign.

STOWE: No. I sat in on the final wrap-ups when the speechwriting team would bring the draft in and go over it with the President before it was made final.

MORRISSEY: Why were you chosen for the job you did?

STOWE: I guess the main thing was that somebody from the staff had to do it. Bill Bray had managed the car in 1948. Bill wasn't in the White House in 1952. The job was to see that everything ran smoothly in the President's car, the Ferdinand Magellan; the car contained a dining room, three bedrooms, and a sitting room at the back. With the number of people who come aboard a campaign train at the stations, you have the job of both taking care of all those people coming in to see the President as well as more or less managing the rear platform appearances at each of the whistle stops.

[63]

The organization of the train, basically, was that Matt Connelly was pretty much in charge. I was in charge of Car I, the President's car. Margaret Truman served as the official hostess on that car--because during that campaign, Mrs. Truman's mother was quite ill and Mrs. Truman was unable to make any trips, with the exception of, I think, one or two days when she did join us. So Margaret, in terms of running it as a home away from home and I in terms of running it as the rolling office of the President, worked together and we had some interesting experiences.

MORRISSEY: Who would decide who would come on the train?

STOWE: It was quite different in 1952 than it was in '48. I wasn't on the train in '48, but I understand that from the time the train pulled out until the time it came back, the President's car was full of people. Of course, he was a

[64]

candidate then and he had to see and visit with people. In 1952 he was not a candidate; we had some pretty fundamental ground rules. Don Dawson was doing most of the advance work and he would furnish the train with lists of people that either should come aboard, or that would do a cross-over on the rear platform, that is come up the steps on one side, shake hands with the President, and go down the other side. This was usually arranged in advance. Of course, one problem was there were always added starters, and there were some people who for one reason or another, had to be given time with the President. Those lists were furnished to me before each

stop, and to the Secret Service, so that we would pretty well know who and how many were coming aboard. And we did have different rules from those in '48. The first rule in '52 was that no one stood on the rear platform while the President was speaking. In '48 he was surrounded

[65]

by people trying to get into the pictures. We permitted no one on the back platform, so that almost everyone preferred to be outside the train rather than to sit in the car, although on occasions, there were visiting dignitaries in the car waiting for him to come back in. We also followed a rule that as soon as the speech was over and the President came in, the people who were coming aboard at that point, would come to his car, and by the time the train started or shortly thereafter, I would move them forward two cars. The car immediately preceding ours was used as an office car by the speechwriters and some of the Secret Service. The next car forward was a lounge car with a bar. We moved those people from Car I up there right away and they stayed there until the next stop. Those who were to appear at the next stop, or who were to be introduced, would be asked to go back to the President's car about five minutes before we reached

[66]

that stop. Between each stop then the President was free from visitors for awhile. Sometimes these stops would be only an hour or so apart or sometimes they would be four or five hours apart. With no one back there to claim his attention, he could conduct his work, or he could work with the speechwriters, or he could rest. But he was not, as in '48, completely surrounded by people all the time. This rule sometimes created some difficulties with the bigwigs who felt that because they had ridden all across their state visiting with him in 1948, they should be permitted the same privilege in 1952. I guess I became rather unpopular with some of these National Committeemen and others, but we decided that this would be the best way. On occasions, when certain visitors would be aboard, the President would indicate that he would like to see them and then I'd go forward and bring that person back; he might spend twenty or thirty minutes with those particular people,

[67]

on those occasions. For the most part we kept the car pretty clear.

MORRISSEY: On what basis would Donald Dawson decide who should and who should not come aboard the train?

STOWS: I presume most of these decisions were made in consultation with local committees--arrangements committees and various party committees. There were some changes that we had to approve on the train. There were people, of course, from trade unions and various organizations, approved either from the train or approved by Dawson so that we knew who would be coming aboard.

MORRISSEY: Is there a danger of aggravating the feelings of some big-wigs who either don't get invited or don't feel they're given enough respect when they come aboard the train?

STOWES: I don't know about those that weren't invited--I never saw them--but I can assure you that there

[68]

were a few who were quite irritated that they only got to spend two or three minutes aboard, along with a group of twenty or thirty as we moved one group off the train and picked up another group. We usually picked up those who were going to be introduced from the rear platform at the preceding stop if it was feasible to do so, so they were aboard the train when we rolled into their town. Then we dropped them off there and picked up a group that had come on from the next town. Of course, there would usually be another group at each stop who would walk across the rear platform for a handshake, or there would be a few added starters that had to be brought aboard the train. All of this was done pretty quickly and the net result was that some of them felt quite annoyed. One Committeeman told me very definitely that in 1948, he'd spent the entire trip all across his state with Mr. Truman; it happened to be a very long state,

[69]

and he didn't like it one bit that he could only get to visit for four or five minutes. I think most of the people were cooperative. They realized that after all, the President was busy; he had to continue carrying on his office, and the fact that he was not a candidate made a different situation. I would say that 99 percent of the people were very cooperative.

MORRISSEY: How would the President manage to carry on his daily Presidential business when he was out campaigning?

STOWE: Well, most of the staff that he would have had in the White House was with him. Murphy handled all the legal business. I was on the train and handled some matters including material that Steelman would send out. Neustadt, Lloyd, and Heckler were also on the train. All of us were doubling in brass-handling campaign assignments and the regular business. The communications

[70]

car, of course, was in contact with the White House at all times, and whenever we hit a larger city and were going to be there more than three or four minutes, land lines would be hooked up and we had telephones in every room on the train so we could all be conducting business with the White House offices.

MORRISSEY: Who decided the itinerary for this trip?

STOWS: Matt Connelly and the Secret Service did most of the work on the itinerary, working with the National Democratic Committee and Stevenson's people. The intention was to firm up

the itinerary as far as possible in advance in order to inform the railroads. As you know, when the President moves by train, the tracks ahead have to be cleared and other rearrangements made. Also once the routes were decided we definitely did not want to make any changes or to zigzag to please any particular group or city. One problem

[71]

was coordinating the President's itinerary with that of Stevenson. There was some confusion when we were not able to get the Stevenson itinerary as far in advance as we would have liked.

MORRISSEY: Who handled press relations on this train?

STOWE: We had two men to handle the press relations at that time. Joe Short, the previous Press Secretary, died just a short while before, and his work had been taken over by Roger Tubby and Irving Perlmeter. Both of them were on the train most of the time. In Washington (state) at the beginning of the first long trip, in the early part of the campaign, Irving Perlmeter had a heart attack on the stage in Spokane, I believe it was. It was decided that he would not be flown back, but that it would probably be safer to bring him back on the train. Dr. Graham, the President's physician, was on the train and was in charge of the case. Roger Tubby handled the

[72]

press relations for the remainder of the campaign.

MORRISSEY: Looking at that itinerary of the 'S2 campaign in your lap, are there any particular dates or cities that cause any particular incidents to come to mind?

STOWE: Well, yes. The first one I remember chiefly because it was my trial flight to see if I could handle the car. It was a short, two-day trip, on which there weren't too many of the so-called whistle stops. The thing I remember most about that trip is--I believe it occurred in Grafton, West Virginia. We were due in there at 5 o'clock in the afternoon--in the late afternoon, but encountered some delays and we actually arrived there around 8 o'clock at night. The delays were giving us a great deal of concern because we were informed that at around 5 o'clock there were thousands of people waiting, having come in from

*Mr. Stowe had an itinerary before him of dates and places visited by the President in 1952.

-73-

the surrounding countryside. Somebody decided to telegraph ahead telling them to go home, have their supper and come back. We thought when we rolled in there that there might be only a handful of people. Well, when we actually rolled in there not only were the number that had been there earlier that day, but apparently they had picked up about twice as many because there were around ten thousand people. It was a fantastic crowd. The longest trip was from September 30th to October 18th, where we went out across the country and then down the West Coast and then back through Southern California and north up into Colorado and then on across

the country to New England and back down to Washington. I recall that whenever we had an overnight stop, and we only had about five of them, everybody would rush to get off the train and make a bee-line to a hotel to get a shower and a good night's sleep after being cooped up for so long. On the

[74]

train there were showers in the President's car and forward in the signal car but that one was reserved for the secretaries, the girls who were on the train with us. It was also on this trip that Irving had his heart attack [October 1, 1952].

In Exeter [New Hampshire], I think there was an interesting occurrence. When we pulled into Exeter for a rear platform speech, the entire crowd consisted of students from Phillips Exeter, many carrying signs who were obviously down there for the purpose of heckling the President. The President started his talk and the students started heckling; they were rather disrespectful. He stopped right in the middle of his speech and gave them about a five minute lecture on the subject of manners. He did it very politely but very firmly and it obviously had a very deep effect on the students because the heckling stopped immediately. You could feel the reaction

[75]

when they realized that they hadn't been quite sporting and had been told off politely. They accepted it and it was one of the most interesting changes of attitude of a group of young people that I think I've ever seen.

MORRISSEY: Were there problems with hecklers?

STOWE: We had very little of that. The only other incident that I recall was in Muskegon, Michigan [October 30, 1952]. When we got into Muskegon the train had to back in and there were a couple of eggs tossed and as the train was pulling out somebody tossed a tomato; it hit a newspaper photographer in the face. He was standing right next to the President and a little of it splattered on the President, but aside from those two incidents I don't recall any objects being thrown. In Cincinnati, on our second trip, on Halloween Eve we had some cause for concern, particularly the Secret Service. Apparently, the custom was to rope off a section of the main

[76]

part of the city for Halloween parades and people in costume. They were all in masks. Also we had been told that some of them were going to try to demonstrate. So the tops of the cars were raised instead of riding with the cars open and the speed was increased to about forty miles an hour. We moved through there at a pretty fast clip. Actually nothing happened at all. However, completely unrelated to that we were told that two people had that day escaped from the state mental institution in Cincinnati and because of that, the guards around the train and around the President who were local police had been tripled over what they would normally have been. There was no indication that either of these escapees had any intent or interest at all in

harming the President but they were mental patients who were at large at a time when the President was there and you know that would worry the local police and the Secret Service.

[77]

MORRISSEY: Do you recall anything about the final two speeches in that campaign in St. Louis and Kansas City?

STOWE: There wasn't any speech in Kansas City as far as I recall. President Truman wound up his 1948 campaign in St. Louis. He always felt this was sort of a lucky omen, so our last formal speech was in St. Louis in the same hall where he had wound up his campaign in 1948. There was a tremendous crowd.

MORRISSEY: No, you're correct. The final speech was in St. Louis and then he went to Kansas City and went home to Independence to vote, but he didn't speak in Kansas City.

STOWE: I think one of the things that perhaps was misleading to us aboard our train was the tremendous crowds that the President drew throughout the entire campaign. For example, in New York City, when he came through Grand Central Station

[78]

people were packed in so tightly that a man could have had a heart attack and not dropped to the floor because they were so jammed together. We had tremendous crowds everywhere we went. Apparently in 1948, the large crowds didn't appear until about the last two weeks of the campaign. The people who were on the 1948 train said that in the last two weeks you could begin to see and feel the difference in the crowds. That was when they began to feel that maybe the campaign in '48 was going over as it eventually did. But there were crowds from the outset in '52, and consequently Stevenson's ultimate defeat came as more of a shock to us on the train. I have no explanation for it, because he was President both times. People say, "Well, they always come out to see the President," but he was President in '48 too. We were completely floored by the results. Those of us who had lived on the train for so long weren't in touch with what was going on elsewhere; we hardly even read

[79]

newspapers, we were so intent on what we were doing. The crowds, the reception, the whole atmosphere was extremely good, and deceptive, as it turned out.

MORRISSEY: Were you with the President on election day?

STOWE: Yes. He voted in the morning; the train pulled out of Kansas City and he came aboard in Independence along with Senator Symington and some other friends. Then we came back to Washington so that we were with him the entire day. The train that night was a very dismal place. In 1948, after the victory, some of the Secret Service and some of the staff had put on an impromptu floor show. I understand it was quite an hilarious evening. They had made tentative

plans to put on the same kind of a production in 1952. Many of the same actors were there and apparently were preparing to do it. The production never went on. The train was dark by 10:30 or

[79]

11 o'clock. It was a pretty sad bunch of people.

MORRISSEY: On your New England trip, in mid-October, a Congressman, John Kennedy, rode the train through Massachusetts. Do you remember anything about this?

STOWE: Just vaguely. He spent most of his time in there with the President. Actually at that time, we had so many coming aboard, he was just another Congressman.

MORRISSEY: I noticed looking over this itinerary that the President wasn't routed anywhere south of West Virginia. Was there any significance in this?

STOWE: As you may recall, we were not on the ballot in '48 in many of those states but I don't know the significance of the particular routing. I would suspect that they felt that he could be of considerably more help in the Stevenson campaign in areas of where it was touch and go

[80]

and also in areas where there was a large labor vote because the President was extremely popular with organized labor. I hadn't noticed that before, as a matter of fact, but whether it was by design or not, Murphy could probably tell you about that.

MORRISSEY: You spoke a few minutes ago about the relationship with Stevenson headquarters regarding the planning of the itinerary. Do you recall anything else about relations in general between the Truman staff and Stevenson's headquarters?

STOWE: Yes. It was very difficult to get decisions as to what the candidate's position was going to be on certain national issues. The President felt these were very important because after all, he wanted his speeches to tie into Stevenson's positions. I remember the farm program in particular. We just never did get an answer from Stevenson's staff on that. As a result of the difficulties

[81]

that developed in coordinating our campaign with their campaign, it was finally decided to put a liaison man from the White House staff on the Stevenson train so that we could be in closer communications. Dave Bell, an Administrative Assistant to the President, was assigned over to the Stevenson train and worked with the Stevenson group. From then on the liaison was much better and I know there were at least two or three occasions when the President and the candidate were in touch with each other by telephone. There were meetings in the White House and there were some joint planning operations, but frankly coordination was poor. At times this lack of

coordination would become very irritating to those of us who were having to work fast and did not have the needed information.

MORRISSEY: What was the relationship between the two campaign trains in 'S2 and the Democratic National Committee?

[82]

STOWE: Well, actually, we didn't have a very close relationship with the committee. They probably had their hands full and their first attention was to the candidate's needs. We were pretty self-sufficient. We had our own research staff; we had our own people; we didn't need their help particularly. Somebody like Matt Connelly or Charlie [Murphy] would know a lot more about this. Matt handled the relationships, I believe.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any more comments about this campaign before we move on to the transition?

STOWS: It was during this campaign that the strained relations between General Eisenhower and President Truman began. General Eisenhower, in his campaign speeches made certain statements about decisions reached at the Potsdam Conference. There was some feeling that the General was not giving an accurate picture of what transpired or wasn't giving the whole picture; there appeared to be inferences which

[83]

President Truman felt very strongly could not and should not be drawn. There was some discussion as to how this was to be combated in terms of political strategy. It was decided that since Mr. Stevenson had not been at the Potsdam Conference and could not know first hand what the facts were, the person who would be able to correct the record was the President. The reply was put in a speech which was used, it seems to me, first out on the West Coast. Parts of that speech were used on two other occasions; three in all. The gist of it was to challenge the statements being made by the Republican candidate as not being completely accurate, and to set forth the facts of the situation. This tended to rub the General the wrong way, he felt his veracity was being impugned. As I understand it this led to cool feelings between the two which extended over a number of years. Prior to that time, the President and General Eisenhower had been good

[84]

friends. I'd seen them in the White House together and I know the President had a great deal of respect for General Eisenhower. I believe this was the beginning of the period of coolness between the two.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall anything said by the President or by staff members on the train in response to General Eisenhower's "I will go to Korea" statement?

STOWE: The general reaction, as I recall, was that was a way-out political type of statement and it was meant to be that. It sure got its reactions.

MORRISSEY: What occupied your time during the transition period?

STOWS: During the transition period, of course, we still had our regular work to perform. Early in December [Sherman] Adams came down as head of the General's transition team. He spent a good part of each day in the White House offices

[85]

along with two or three other people that he'd brought with him. They interviewed staff, talking to the people about what they were doing. I spent, I think about a half a day, with Sherman Adams describing some of the functions I performed. The President made it very clear that he wanted the transition made as easy as possible. He instructed everybody on the staff to give complete cooperation. There was one incident when it seemed that one of the persons on the transition team for the new President was beginning to throw his weight around and giving orders to some of the Truman staff people. Mr. Truman spoke to him very forcefully about this and said that while he was all for a smooth transition that he would not stand for "his people being ordered around." I think by and large the work was carried on pretty much as usual. John Steelman remained on for a few months after the inauguration to assist further

[86]

in the transition.

MORRISSEY: Had John Steelman thought previously of leaving the Government?

STOWE: Yes, definitely. In fact, John and I had talked on a couple of occasions of our having joint offices together after the change of administration. It was pretty clear that he intended to leave the Government. I don't know anything about how he happened to be asked to remain on for this post-transition period. It was probably something Sherman Adams worked out with the President.

I think one of the interesting sidelights to conversations with Adams, both from what I know about Steelman's conversations with him and some conversations that others told me they had with him, was that it was often pointed out to him that there was no Assistant President in the White House; that after all, the people elected the

[87]

President, they didn't elect his staff. Mr. Truman had felt that his Cabinet and his agency heads were his first line officers and that his White House staff was like a military staff to be used for consultation, planning and obtaining information, but when it came to the line in the chain of command, the staff was not to come between him and Cabinet officers and agency heads. He made it very clear to us, and this is one of the things we tried to pass on when we discussed the

organization of the staff with Sherman Adams, but apparently Adams didn't believe us or preferred not to work that way since he later began acting like an Assistant President. After all, the President is the President and staff cannot run the Government for him. He has to do it. Mr. Truman was adamant on this point; he would listen to us, take advice, but when it came to the operation of the Government, he never wanted us in between himself and the person who was responsible in the agency or department.

[88]

MORRISSEY: Do you recall from the transition period any involvement with either the President's plans for writing his Memoirs, that is gathering the papers that would be used in writing the Memoirs, or in planning a library for his papers out in Missouri

STOWE: No, I didn't know of any plans for memoirs at that time. The idea of a library had been discussed but no specific plans had been made. Of course all official papers had to be removed from our files and placed in the Official Files and decisions made as to what were official or private papers; but I think this takes place normally at the end of every administration. Possibly this was done more carefully in our administration, because President Truman had a deep sense of history and of the value of Presidential papers. He felt strongly that we had lost too much in our history by losing Presidential papers, one way or another in the

[89]

past. He wanted everything where it could be made available to historians no matter how unimportant it seemed to be.

MORRISSEY: During Mr. Truman's administration, would you go to Key West when he did?

STOWE: Yes--after I became an Administrative Assistant in 1949.

MORRISSEY: How were staff operations in Key West different from operations in Washington?

STOWE: Well, in terms of ability to get things done, I think I got more done in three or four hours down there than I did in ten or twelve hours in Washington, because we had so few interruptions. Actually, we had a continuous telephone line to the White House; I could pick up the telephone in Key West and talk to my secretary in my office in Washington. There were direct lines to the White House all the time. The staff usually spent the early morning hours working as did the President.

[90]

We had a fairly early breakfast followed by three or four hours which most of us used for whatever we had to do for the day, telephone calls, letters or whatever. About 12 noon we went down to the beach to go swimming. Whether you went back to work after lunch depended on whether you had work to finish. Usually we'd work about half a day and vacation half a day. I

found that without all the interruptions and the telephone calls you always had in Washington, I could turn out just as much work down there in a half a day, as I used to be able to do in a whole day in the White House. It really was a much better working atmosphere down there.

MORRISSEY: Were you at Key West when the President told his staff that he didn't intend to run again in 1952?

STOWE: No, I was not there. What we referred to as the senior staff, The Assistant to the President,

[91]

the Legal Counsel, the Press, Appointments, and Correspondence Secretaries, the Military Aides would normally stay for the entire time. The Administrative Assistants would rotate; we usually spent ten days to two weeks there and the rest of the time back in Washington so that there would be at least one of us in Washington at all times. I think I was in Washington when this actually occurred.

MORRISSEY: Did you have any knowledge one way or the other about the President's plans in '52?

STOWE: No, but it was pretty clear from many things he had said that he didn't believe in third terms. I didn't hear it officially until the night he actually announced it. There were others, I believe, who did know, but I didn't. I wasn't really surprised.

MORRISSEY: Were you in Key West when Charles Wilson came down to consult with the President?

[92]

STOWE: Yes, I was.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about that?

STOWE: As I recall, there were some misunderstandings concerning price and wage control policies under the Stabilization Program and the President asked Mr. Wilson to come to Key West to discuss the matter. I came in late to their meeting so do not know the exact details but it was clear that they had reached an understanding which apparently included not making any announcement to the press until those immediately concerned in Washington had been informed of the discussion. Mr. Wilson left Boca Chica without making any statement to the press there, but when he arrived at the Washington airport he made some statements that were, as I understand it, contrary to the commitments he had made to the President. The result, from that point on, was things went from bad to worse and eventually ended with Mr. Wilson leaving the Government.

[93]

MORRISSEY: I'd like to ask you as a member of Mr. Truman's White House staff, did you, and I mean the staff collectively, have a problem with things leaking to the press?

STOWE: Yes, occasionally we did but I don't think the problem was inside the White House. Those that we were able to really ever pin down seemed to come from people in departments where the person had either firsthand or secondhand knowledge and wanted to give a scoop to his favorite newspaper guy. As far as I know, no one on our staff was ever accused of it or, so far as I know, was there ever any suspicion that a staff member was talking with the press. As a matter of fact, the staff in the White House seldom had any contact with the press because Charlie Ross or Joe Short handled that part.

MORRISSEY: Did you have any connection with the President's Commission on Health Needs?

[94]

STOWE: Oh, yes. In fact, I guess I had something to do with setting it up. As you know, the President had a strong interest in developing a health program. In '48 this had unfortunately got off to a bad start by being labeled "socialized medicine" which had not been Mr. Truman's intention. He was interested in the health of the people but he wasn't really concerned about the methodologies. To meet the problem and to get off the hook of this glib political phrase of "socialized medicine," we decided to set up a commission to study the health needs. We felt that it was very important to have top people from the medical, mental health, and nursing professions for this commission. We spent considerable time consulting and planning with Dr. [Howard A.] Rusk, an orthopedic surgeon in New York, who was a close personal friend of the President's and who also wrote the medical articles for the New York Times; with Dr. [Wallace] Graham, who was the President's physician; and

[95]

later with Dr. [Paul B.] Magnuson who subsequently became the Chairman of the Commission. As members of the Commission we looked for people of prominence and with an excellent reputation in their own fields who would be above any suspicion of being politically motivated and whose judgment would be respected. I think the members of the Commission were, without doubt, the top people in the profession in hospital administration and in the medical and surgical fields. I recall that when the report was finally presented to the President, Dr. Evarts Graham from St. Louis, at the close of the meeting said, "Mr. President, I think I should say one thing, that when I undertook this assignment I had the feeling that maybe we were going to be pressured into saying things that I could never go along with. I want to tell you that throughout this entire study never once were we opportuned by anyone, your staff or otherwise, and that this represents our completely free view, and under

[96]

these conditions, I feel it an honor to sign the report."

The report came out so near the end of our administration that very little became the subject of direct messages to the Congress by the President. I wasn't really aware of the great number of those recommendations that during the course of the years, and without a lot of fanfare, had now become law or programs, until in 1960 when I was looking through the report trying to find something that we might use in Mr. Truman's speeches in the Kennedy campaign. In fact there wasn't much left undone that I could get out of that report to use in a speech for Mr. Truman.

MORRISSEY: Since this commission was set up late in the Truman Administration, did you have some difficulty in getting good people to come at this particular time?

[97]

STOWE: No. I believe we got almost everyone that we asked. There were two reasons. Everyone in the professions knew Dr. Magnuson, who had agreed to be the Chairman, and Dr. Rusk, who also agreed to serve on the Commission. These two were able to persuade most of the other people. Some may have been concerned that they might be pushed into positions that they as doctors and members of the AMA might not like, but I think Dr. Magnuson, personally, and to some extent the President when he talked with them, were able to assure them that this was not going to happen. I believe all of them realized that this would be an honest and sincere study. I recall some people thought we had sold out to the AMA by putting them on the Commission. But among these doubters as well as among members of the medical profession, the report was generally well accepted.

MORRISSEY: Beyond staffing this commission, what was your relationship to it?

[98]

STOWE: That was all. I was involved in the actual selection of the members, getting them together and providing them with space and people to work with. After that I didn't see them except when Dr. Magnuson as Chairman might have some problem he would call me and I'd help him work it out if I could. It usually was an administrative problem which had nothing to do with their substantive report.

MORRISSEY: Why were you the White House staff member chosen to take this assignment?

STOWE: Others on the staff worked on it also when the idea was being developed. When I was in the Budget Bureau my work was in the area of manpower, labor, education and public welfare, so I may have been assigned because of my background. There were practically no formal, cut and dried divisions of work among the White House staff; often it was a cooperative effort depending on who was qualified

[99]

and free to undertake assignments like this.

MORRISSEY: In your papers there's some indication that you were concerned with housing legislation, particularly housing for the military. Do you recall anything about this?

STOWE: Vaguely. I remember making a couple of trips to Quantico to see some prefabricated houses, which had been put up for junior officers and non-commissioned personnel and their families. I think such connection as I had was due to our urgent need for housing and because of our interest in the possible use of prefabricated homes in a housing program. At that time the prefab industry was just getting started and was a controversial matter as far as the building construction industry was concerned. The prefab people were applying for loans through the R.F.C. and other agencies and we wanted to know more about that type of construction so the President

[100]

asked me to look into it.

MORRISSEY: Were you concerned with either the passage or the administration of the Defense Production Act?

STOWE: I'm not sure which one you mean.

MORRISSEY: In 1950.

STOWE: No.

MORRISSEY: One more question along this line. Were you involved in the writing of the veto of the Taft-Hartley Act?

STOWS: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any recollections of that?

STOWS: Yes. I think basically the people working on it were Clark Clifford, Charlie Murphy, Dive Bell, myself; however, we had a great deal of help from other people, too. One thing I do remember, because I think it was characteristic

[101]

of President Truman, is that he wrote to seven or eight top public figures in the labor field: George Taylor, Bill Davis, Lloyd Garrison, I'm not sure I remember all the names. In his letter he asked them, "If you were the President, what would you do and why?" And I recall of the seven that replied, six of them took a very firm position giving very clear reasons why they would veto it. There was only one who would have signed it. We who were working on the veto message had very strong feelings on what was wrong with the bill. At the time we were concerned about some of the effects it might have. Looking at that veto message now in the light of ten years experience, it's easy to see that some of the things that we sincerely feared at the time, did not come to pass. There are, however, other provisions we objected to which have been

plaguing us ever since, and have been the subject of considerable modification. Even Senator [Robert]

[102]

Taft himself, before his death had some twenty amendments which went to many of the same points we covered in the veto message. The main thing was that in making the decision to veto we consulted with all the experts in the field of labor management relations who were available, people like Taylor and Davis. We also consulted with people in the Government in the labor field.

I want to go back just a little to the period when Wilson was serving as Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization.

When it became apparent that someone would be needed to head up defense mobilization and planning specifically for the Korean war as opposed to the long-range planning handled by the National Security Resources Board, an Executive order was drafted by the Bureau of the Budget setting up the Office of Defense Mobilization. This order very carefully detailed the responsibilities of the Director among other things; it was fully

[103]

reviewed in all respects. Apparently it had been agreed that Wilson, who was to head up the agency, would see it before it was signed by the President. At any rate at that time what appeared to be a slight change in wording was made. I do not recall at the moment the exact wording, but the changes had the effect of giving the Director considerably more power than had originally been intended. My understanding is that the change was not called to the attention of either the Attorney General or the Director of the Budget, as it should have been, perhaps because the change was considered to be so minor. As soon as the order went into effect problems developed in certain areas between the White House staff and Wilson's staff. Someone on Wilson's staff read the change in wording to mean that he (Wilson) had the full authority to act in all matters without consultation with the President or without his approval. I'm not sure, but I don't think Wilson himself felt this way; some of his

[104]

key staff, however, clearly did. The White House staff had an obligation to be sure that the President's programs and the President's status were observed. We discussed the matter among ourselves and someone made the suggestion, "Well, look, why doesn't all the staff get together and kick this thing around because we don't want any problem with Wilson's staff; on the other hand, we know that the President didn't give up his right to be President of the United States in this order."

So, we had a discussion in the Cabinet Room where I drew the organizational chart on the blackboard showing where there could be points of conflict, on the theory that if we could identify where the problems might be, then we could assist in eliminating them or getting around

them so they didn't create problems. I think the conflict was built right into the Executive order by this unfortunate little change.

[105]

In the course of the conversation it became clear that the legal counsel over there and Charlie Murphy, who were old friends, were having no problem; others had only minor problems. Bob Dennison and I were the only two who had really encountered serious major problems. During the course of this meeting the President walked by on the outside and the next day he called somebody in and asked, "Why did Dave have all you people in there going to school yesterday?" Unfortunately, the reply to him went something like there were personality conflicts, which I must say Bob Dennison and I never did quite appreciate. In any event I believe that the change in wording in the Executive order and the reaction by some of Wilson's staff sowed the seeds for difficulties between the Defense Mobilization and the White House and led to Wilson's finally being removed as the Director.

[106]

MORRISSEY: Let me ask, why did you become involved with problems of Mexican labor when you were a White House staff member?

STOWE: Well, I suppose it was because basically the Mexican farm labor program was administered through the United States Employment Service. I had been the assistant state director of the North Carolina State Employment Service. Incidentally, Mr. Truman had been, for a brief period of time, the NRS Director, that is the National Reemployment Service, forerunner of the State Employment Services, in Missouri. Also in the Bureau of the Budget I was Chief Examiner for all manpower agencies during the war--the Selective Service, the Civil Service, the War Manpower Commission and the United States Employment Service. At any rate the President asked me to go down.

MORRISSEY: Were other White House staff members

[107]

assigned similar problems regarding other countries, or was your involvement with this matter of Mexican labor pretty much distinctive?

STOWE: I think it was probably distinctive. I don't recall any other similar assignments. After about the fifth or sixth trip Harry Vaughan would jokingly say, "Here comes Chief Wetback," or "Here comes the wetback specialist." Possibly my role continued because of an incident which occurred on my first trip down there. I really went down to assist in the negotiations; the Ambassador [William O'Dwyer] met me at the airport around 2 in the morning and I went to the Embassy where I went to bed. The next morning I had an appointment with President Aleman at 11 o'clock in his office to present a letter from Mr. Truman. There seemed to be some consternation at the embassy. I didn't know quite what it was, but it turned out that the Ambassador had learned

[108]

that the President of Mexico had left for Acapulco that morning and from there he was going on to Mazatlan. My 11 o'clock appointment seemed to have evaporated. After considerable telephoning back and forth between Ambassador O'Dwyer and Senor Manuel Tello who was then the Foreign Minister, the situation became rather tense. I kept saying to the Ambassador, "Well, don't worry, I'm sure he's made some plans for this." The protocol aspect of it wasn't too important to me. About five minutes to 11 the secretary to President Aleman telephoned to say he had just come back in the President's plane from Acapulco; that the plane would be at the airport at my disposal; and that the President invited me to join him either at Acapulco or, if I wanted to delay coming I could join him at Mazatlan a few days later. I decided that one quickly; I wanted to see Acapulco. The way President Aleman moved reminded me somewhat of Mr. Truman. You had to stay one jump

[109]

ahead of him if you wanted to be sure to see him; so I flew to Acapulco in President Aleman's plane. A car was waiting for me at the airport and I was driven to the hotel; I thought I'd probably meet the President there. The hotel was built on the side of the hill with the entrance on the middle level. Instead of going up as I expected, we went down. To my surprise I walked out on a wharf and saw my bags being put into a speedboat. I got into the boat and we proceeded to a yacht, the Soto Vento, which was the President of Mexico's yacht. It was an old Higgins boat which I later found out really groaned and creaked as it moved. I went aboard and it suddenly dawned on me that I didn't know the President. I'd never seen him in my life, but a picture on a political poster I'd seen at about 2 in the morning, as I'd been driving from the airport to the Embassy, came to my mind. I saw a man that looked like that picture sitting on the

[110]

fantail with three or four other people; I addressed him as "Mr. President;" fortunately he was the President. It developed that he would not talk in English while negotiating and I didn't want to use my very poor Spanish. President Aleman spoke in Spanish--I in English, and we were able to understand each other. At this point he dismissed his staff and the one State Department person who had accompanied me left. We carried on our conversations, he in Spanish and I in English. As long as we stayed on the subject at hand and didn't digress into things even as simple as the weather, which would throw me off, we got along all right. When it was over, we had reached our understandings on how the Mexican labor negotiations would be handled. I had explained to him the President's interest, the assurances of the President that the United States had no desire to exploit these people, and the protections that the President

[111]

thought should be set up; Aleman had explained to me some of his problems, particularly those relating to [V. Lombardo] Toledano, the Mexican Communist leader, who was a thorn in his side. We had a pretty good understanding of our respective problems, the needs of the Mexican Government and the needs of our Government.

Then he suggested that we bring the staff back, and we'd have a drink. Shortly thereafter I heard the anchor chains coming up and realized that I was off on a cruise with the President of Mexico. When we returned he insisted that I remain another day to see Acapulco and to visit with Senor Peresquia who was known as "Mr. Acapulco." He was one of the men who developed Acapulco and was a close personal friend of the President's; I remained another day in Acapulco with Peresquia and then went back to Mexico City in the President's airplane. It was all a very delightful experience. After I'd been back in

[112]

Washington about two weeks President Truman received a letter from President Aleman which was very flattering about me, "muy simpatico" and so forth. I told the President, "You can discount all that as typical Latino." And he said, "Well, even if only half of it's true, it sounds pretty good."

This trip started a pattern which I think probably was best described by Pepe Romero, a newspaper columnist in Mexico City. On my fourth or fifth trip down there he saw me in the hotel dining room and in his column the next day he wrote, "I saw Senor David Stowe, Assistant to President Truman in [such-and-such] a place. For those who know, this means that President Truman is talking with President Aleman."

This became a pattern on a number of things that the President wanted handled. I never was sure that the State Department approved of these direct negotiations. I want to point out that

[113]

probably we have had one of our strongest ambassadors in Mexico at the time, Bill O'Dwyer. His relations with the Mexican officials and people were just great. I think and I know many people, including some Republicans, feel that Bill was one of the best Ambassadors we ever had in Mexico certainly up to that time. I became involved not only in negotiations on Mexican labor, but also in trying to persuade Mexico to give some show of support in the Korean war, even if they sent only a very limited force. I also became involved in discussions on the air treaty with Mexico establishing airline routes.

MORRISSEY: Did you succeed in the Korean business?

STOWE: No. I was never quite sure why, but I do know that Aleman always had to take into consideration possible reactions from Toledano. I don't know too much about Mexican politics but it was obvious there were political pressures from the Communists. Also Aleman had many of his own reforms that he

[114]

was trying to institute, and I think he knew just how far he could go in certain areas without really getting into difficulty.

MORRISSEY: Throughout these negotiations you had with President Aleman, was there any participation at any time by any one from the State Department or other departments?

STOWS: No, I did not participate in the actual negotiations. The official negotiating teams were always there in session during my trips. I remained in the Embassy, many times for three or four days at a time. In the evening the chief U.S. negotiator would come by and tell me what they had accomplished or what they hadn't accomplished, and what their problems were. Usually on each of these trips I'd meet with President Aleman at the very beginning and we would go over the areas that he and Mr. Truman might reach agreement on, and it was up to the negotiating

[115]

people to work out the details. Occasionally their people or ours would get off on tangents and when this happened I'd talk with President Aleman, maybe once, maybe twice, maybe three times, while the teams were working for a period of a week or ten days on the details of the negotiations. Then either he would send a message down to his people or I'd clarify it with our people and we'd get over the roadblock. So I was never in the direct negotiation sessions. President Aleman and I would try to set the broad areas on which agreement could be reached; the negotiating teams would start on it, and if they got into problems, we'd have a little meeting to straighten matters out.

MORRISSEY: Did Mr. Truman and President Aleman communicate with one another during this time?

STOWE: I took messages back and forth quite often. They had a very friendly relationship. As you

[117]

know, President Truman visited Mexico; his trip will never be forgotten down there for his appearance at the statue of Los Ninos at Ghuapultepec. It was a very dramatic episode and the Mexicans loved it because he recognized the bravery of those young students. I was not on that trip and I'm not sure that Aleman was President then. I think it probably could have been in Aleman's predecessor's term.

MORRISSEY: Were you involved in any discussions about a President's Commission on Migratory Labor?

STOWE: Yes.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about that?

STOWE: The problem was that illegal laborers from Mexico were being used in states nearest the border and were being paid very low wages and living under squalid conditions; at the same time farmers in states further from the border such as beet growers in Colorado, Northern California and

[118]

Washington and cotton farmers in Mississippi and Louisiana, needed the stoop labor and were willing to provide higher pay and better working conditions. As long as we had no treaty or working agreement with Mexico the illegal labor could not move far from the border; they would be sent back to Mexico by the Immigration Service although some might return the very next day. There was a need for a government-to-government arrangement both to protect these migrant workers from exploitation and to be able to move some of them to parts of the country where they were needed. This was why we entered into negotiations with the Government of Mexico. The import labor program, however, was very controversial. The farmers along the southern border felt we were forcing wages up and imposing impractical rules as to accommodations and travel. The unions objected that if we were setting higher standards for Mexican labor, we should certainly be doing

[119]

it for our own people, and there were those in Congress who felt we shouldn't have any program at all. Because of all this the decision was made to set up a top-flight commission which would investigate the problem and make recommendation as to what should be done to improve the situation. Archbishop [Robert E.] Lucey of San Antonio was Chairman; another member was Dr. William Leiserson, because of his broad background in labor problems. I don't recall the names of the other members right now. This group went to various sections of the country during their investigations and made a very thorough report but the report was submitted near the end of the Truman administration, and it really was left to the next administration to follow through on it.

MORRISSEY: With this commission, were you responsible for the selection of members?

[120]

STOWE: No. As I recall I was consulted; I suggested some names. I think probably the Secretary of Labor may have had a part in the selection, because the administration of the program was in the Department of Labor.

MORRISSEY: When a Presidential commission was set up and operating, how closely did it correlate its work with either the President or White House staff members?

STOWE: Well, there were one or two earlier commissions, such as the Commission on Higher Education and the Commission on Science. I don't recall the exact title; John Steelman worked with these earlier commissions. There was probably a closer relationship between Dr. Steelman and these commissions because he was the Chairman of both as I recall. Later commissions which I dealt with were not set up in the same way; the one on migratory labor, the one on medical health, the three-man panel set

[121]

up to study labor relations procedures for atomic energy facilities all had an outside person as chairman. Our role was basically to provide the commissions with a staff until they could get organized and get their own staff, to work out their financial status with the Bureau of the Budget, and to provide working space. The President would explain to them what his interests and purposes were, to give them guidance, and then they were pretty much on their own. We did not look over their shoulders. We did not attempt to dictate. We did review the reports, in advance of any publication. There were occasions, I recall, where if the way things were said could have been misleading, we made suggestions but we did not say, "Delete this" or "don't say this." I believe that was the way practically all the commissions were handled for most of the President's second term.

MORRISSEY: In regard to your negotiations about

[122]

Mexican labor, did you deal with groups like the League of Latin American Citizens or other Spanish speaking groups?

STOWE: Yes, there were a number of such groups active in Texas who had very strong feelings not only in terms of the Mexican labor, but of their own situation and feeling that they had only third-class citizenship.

MORRISSEY: Did you deal with anybody on the Hill in regard to this matter?

STOWE: No, the Department of Labor handled all that. But we did have to deal with the trade unions because both the CIO and the AF of L took a very pale view of the program; primarily their position was that if jobs were available, American labor should have them. Their research people held to this point and we never could convince them that the Employment Services had tried but could not find the numbers that we needed. It

[123]

is stoop labor and not many Americans would accept the work.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall the President's attitude towards this subject of migratory labor?

STOWE: Yes. He felt very strongly that if we were going to bring in Mexican labor the Government had a responsibility to see that their wages and working conditions were reasonable, and to see that they were not being taken advantage of in any way. He was quite insistent upon this and I think his sincerity in this matter was the bridge to Aleman. I feel sure that Aleman recognized that this was not just a gesture, or a device to use these people, but it was a very sincere and honest effort to work problems out fairly.

MORRISSEY: How did he feel about the various pressures from farm groups or the trade unions you mentioned?

[124]

STOWE: I'm sure that he was aware of the pressures but didn't experience them to the same extent as the staff member assigned to a particular problem who dealt regularly with these people. About every other week the President invited about ten or twelve leaders from industry, labor, professions, politics and others to come to the Blair House for a roundtable discussion of various problems. This was one way the President kept informed and in touch. Charlie Murphy usually was there with the President. Occasionally I was asked to be there particularly when Charlie couldn't be there. I recall one such meeting which occurred shortly after I had returned from one of my trips to Mexico. The CIO technical staff had protested vehemently about some changes we had made in the labor importation arrangements with Mexico. I learned that Phil Murray was to be present at this particular meeting and I expected him to have the same attitude of disapproval.

[125]

I forewarned the President. To my surprise when the President questioned him, Murray said that there was no problem. As I see it one of the major functions of the staff was to help take the day-to-day pressures off the President.

There was one episode which could have had serious repercussions; this was the so-called El Paso breakthrough where about 7,500 Mexicans broke across the border and scattered themselves throughout the area. The border guards apparently dropped the barriers and turned their backs and the Mexicans came charging through. This incident occurred just after a political trip which the President had made to Texas. Some newspapers carried stories insinuating that this incident was according to an agreement which the President had made with certain Texas politicians so Texas could get cheap labor. This was not so; the President was shocked by the incident. At

[126]

his direction the next morning a representative of the State Department went to the Mexican Embassy with an official apology. I think that this immediate reaction convinced Aleman that Mr. Truman stood by his agreements and did not say one thing while doing another. As I understand it an apology from one head of State to another is a rare and unusual event in diplomatic circles.

MORRISSEY: Did you become involved with the negotiations concerning bilateral air agreements as an outgrowth of these Mexican labor negotiations?

STOWE: Yes, probably so. I was down in Key West with the President, when some negotiations were going on concerning bilateral air agreements with Mexico; apparently our representatives were having difficulties and the President decided to send me to Mexico to see if I could help them. So, I flew to Mexico City, and met the

[127]

American negotiating team there which was headed up by Don [Donald W.] Nyrop, who was then chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board. The negotiators were all technical people, since this was a route arrangement treaty. Basically, the problem was whether we were going to continue one single line into Mexico, operated by American Airlines, or whether there would be three lines, with Western coming down the West Coast, Eastern coming in from the east, and American taking the central part. Also the reciprocal flight rights of Mexico and their various subsidiary airlines were involved. The Mexicans wanted rights to flights to Florida and to New Orleans. I talked with President Aleman after I arrived and again we followed the same pattern as in the Mexican labor agreements. I did not sit in on the negotiations. Don Nyrop and his technical people did that, but each night we'd get together and review the progress; I saw President Aleman two or three times.

[128]

At one point, I left a conference with President Aleman feeling quite assured that we had broken the bottleneck, that we could reach agreement. Ambassador O'Dwyer had been in the meeting with me and felt the same way. Then the Minister of Transportation, who was on vacation, was hurriedly brought back by Aleman to take over the negotiations for their government. We thought he was breaking the log jam with a new face and that he would give him his specific instructions in accordance with what I thought was our understanding, and in a couple of days we could be ready to go home with a treaty. Well, it turned out to be quite the reverse; the conferences obviously were grinding to a halt and soon reached an impasse. We were then within two days of the beginning of the Christmas holiday when their offices would practically close down for a period of two weeks. Because of these unfortunate misunder-

[129]

standings I made a quick decision to break off the negotiations using the Christmas holidays as the excuse, and I and the negotiators were out of town in a matter of twelve hours. I explained these misunderstandings to the President when I got back, what I felt my choices had been, and he said I did exactly right, that I had been placed in an untenable position. The President received a letter from President Aleman saying that he was surprised when he was informed I had taken the entire delegation and left town. We left the negotiation in suspended status where it stayed until later treaties solved the problem.

MORRISSEY: Did you feel any pressures on you regarding these negotiations say from American Airlines or different cities that wanted the service flights to Mexico?

STOWE: Yes, there were pressures, but the pressures were on Nyrop and the negotiators more than they

[130]

were on me. There were legitimate pressures from cities like Atlanta and New Orleans who wanted to be gateways into Mexico as well as from Dallas, where most of the flights then were

going through. There was no direct pressure on us from the airlines because they knew they couldn't deal with the CAB officials on a pressure basis. There was a considerable amount of pressure by the airlines on the representatives of the Government of Mexico.

MORRISSEY: This is a general question and a very large one, and after talking as long as this, perhaps, an unfair one. But political scientists would be interested in how what we might call private interest groups try to express their wishes to members of the White House staff who are working on various matters?

STOWE: I would say that in my experience, their main interest was to tell their side of the story.

[131]

It wasn't too difficult to do this. If a representative of the group called Matt Connelly saying they wanted to talk about a particular problem he would tell them what staff member they should see. For example, the Florida citrus growers had quite a serious problem involving the Bahamans who were brought in to harvest crops and he told them to see me.

Usually these private interest groups wanted to be sure their arguments were heard by some one who might be able to do something about it or to persuade the White House to take an interest in their problem. Sometimes, however, they were only looking for a way to be put in touch with the head of the agency or department which was concerned with the problem. On occasions we helped them to reach the appropriate agency or person when their arguments seemed reasonable. I never had any experiences involving bribery attempts. I personally had a pretty

[132]

strict rule to return gifts of any value and I think others on the staff did the same.

MORRISSEY: Was there any reluctance on the part of the Hill to call a White House staff member directly?

STOWE: This I don't know. Since the President had been in the Senate he took quite a different view of his relationship with the Congress than perhaps other Presidents have. Our relationships with the Congress were basically channeled through two or three people. It was not a question of a whole lot of staff members having a whole lot of dealings. Matt Connelly and the person who worked with him handled some of them and some were handled by legal counsel who was Clark Clifford and later Charlie Murphy. I never had many calls from people on the Hill.

MORRISSEY: Would there be any reluctance by White

[133]

House staff members to go to interest groups, even just for information?

STOWE: Well, again, I don't know. I never hesitated and Steelman never hesitated in the labor-management area to go to the AF of L, or the CIO to keep filled in on what was going on in the labor field or to talk to management groups. There was a free flow of information back and forth. Sometimes we'd be seeking information; sometimes they'd be seeking information or trying to press a point. In other areas, I didn't have quite that same type of frequent contacts. For example, at one time a group of people from Florida came in with a serious problem involving a union representative. They had a considerable file on this man. Where they had gotten it I don't know, but if it was true, it was rather unsavory. While these people were in my office I called up Arthur Goldberg who was then legal counsel to Phil Murray and was really Mr. Murray's right hand.

[134]

I told him, "I have this information; if you would like I will make it available to you. There's certainly nothing we can do about it, but I feel that you and Mr. Murray would want to know, to at least assure yourselves whether this is true or not true." And he did look into it and found that it was true; the man was dismissed from the Florida labor relations scene. So, this kind of business went on occasionally both ways.

MORRISSEY: One final question. Do you recall Mr. Truman ever speaking about any of his experiences on the National Reemployment Service in Missouri?

STOWE: No, in fact, I think he'd almost forgotten that he'd held the post until I reminded him of it one day. The NRS was only temporary and was quickly replaced by State Employment Services set up under the Wagner-Pyser Act. I think he came into Washington for a meeting or two with

[135]

Secretary [Francis] Perkins in the early days of the N.R.S.

MORRISSEY: Let's stop there. Thank you very much.

[136]

- INDEX -

Adams, Sherman, and transition in 1952, 84-87
Aleman, President Miguel, 107-112

Bureau of the Budget, and relations with the President, 9-14

Cabinet, and relations with President's staff, 29-30
Clifford, Clark, and David Stowe, 6, 7, 14
Congressional liaison, 36-37, 132

Dawson, Donald, and campaign of 1952, 51, 64
Dennison, (Admiral) Robert:
 and emergency plans, 45-46
 and Truman, Harry S., at funeral of John F. Kennedy, 55, 56-58

Eisenhower, Dwight D.:
 and Truman, Harry S., in campaign of 1952, 82-84
 and Truman, Harry S., following funeral of John F. Kennedy, 58-60
Emergencies, and continuity of Presidential operations, 41-48

Goldberg, Arthur, 133-134
Graham, Everts, 95

Health policies of President Truman, 94
Hopkins, William, 27
Housing policies, 99

Key West, routines, 89-90

Labor legislation in 1946, 6
Lobbies, and White House staff, 130-133

Magellan railroad car, in 1952 campaign, 62
Mexican-American relations, 106-110
Mexico, and bilateral airline agreements, 126-129
Migrant (Mexican) farm labor issue, 106-110, 117-120, 122-126
Murphy, Charles S., 21
Murray, Phillip, 124-125

News "leaks," 93
Nyrop, Donald W., 127

O'Dwyer, William, Ambassador to Mexico, 113
Office of Defense Mobilization, 102-105

Perlmeter, Irving, and campaign of 1952, 71
Presidential campaign of 1948, speechwriting for, 23
Presidential campaign of 1952:
 Hecklers, 74-75
 Procedures of, 48-52, 61-77

[137]

Presidential commissions, role of, 120-121
President's Commission on Health Needs of the Nation, 93-98
President's Commission on Migratory Labor, 117-120

Press conferences, 38-40
Rosenman, Samuel, 15
Smith, Harold, 9-10
Speechwriting:
 in Presidential campaign of 1952, 49, 61-62
 by White House staff, 20.-23
Steelman, John R., 1-3, 16-20
Stevenson, Adlai, and Truman, Harry S., in campaign of 1952, 80-81
Stowe, David:
 and Aleman, Miguel, 107-116, 127.-128
 and Steelman, John R., 19-20
 and transition in 1952, 85,-86
Taft-Hartley Act, veto message, 100-102
Transition to Eisenhower administration, 84-87
Tubby, Roger, and campaign of 1952, 71-72
Truman, Harry S.:
 "Budget-consciousness" of, 11-12
 Decision-making of, 28-31
 and Eisenhower, Dwight D., in campaign of 1952, 83-84
 and Eisenhower, Dwight D., following funeral of John F. Kennedy, 58-60
 and emergency plans in case of enemy attack, 41-48
 information "channels," 34
 and Kennedy, John F., funeral of, 53-60
 loyalty to his staff, 32-33
 and Missouri politics, 33
 newspapers, use of, 35-36
Presidential campaign of 1952, role in, 49-51, 63-69, 77-84
 press conferences of, 38-40
 and Rosenman, Samuel, 4, 15-16
 and staff concept, compared to Eisenhower's, 86-87
 and Stowe, David, 3, 20
 U.S. Congress, relations with, 37-38
 visit to Mexico, 117

Webb, James, 2, 10
White House staff meetings, 25-28
Wilson, Charles, and Truman, Harry S., 92, 105