

Oral History Interview
with
DAVID H. STOWE

David Stowe served in the U.S. Bureau of the Budget, 1941-47 (as Chief Examiner, 1943-47), and as a Deputy to the Assistant to the President of the United States, 1947-49. He was appointed an Administrative Assistant to President Harry S. Truman in 1949 and served in that capacity until President Truman left office in January 1953.

Washington, D.C.
March 18, 1976

by William D. Stilley and Jerald L. Hill, William
Jewell College

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
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NOTICE

This interview was conducted by William D. Stilley and Jerald L. Hill as part of a winterim and independent study project at William Jewell College in March 1976, under the direction of the Political Science Department of William Jewell College.

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STILLEY: Mr. Stowe, when did you first meet President Truman?

STOWE: I met President Truman in the fall of 1947.

STILLEY: Is this at the time when he employed you on the White House staff?

STOWE: Actually, I was chief examiner of the Bureau of the Budget. I had done some papers for the White House at that time, and John Steelman, who was The Assistant to the President, asked me to come over as his deputy. After some consideration I did; and I worked the year 1947 as deputy to

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John Steelman, and in that capacity I, on occasions, worked directly with President Truman. So that in September of 1948, when I was supposed to return to the Bureau of the Budget, I went in to say good-bye to Mr. Truman, he asked me to stay and I did. And, of course, the rest became history. He won the 1948 election and shortly thereafter he made me his Administrative Assistant, and I worked with him for his second term.

STILLEY: What was your first impression of President Truman when you met him?

STOWE: I think one of the earliest experiences with President Truman came in Raleigh, North Carolina. I had come up from Raleigh, North Carolina some five or six years earlier. I had been on Dr. Steelman's staff for approximately four or five weeks. The President had a very nice custom that he had followed that when he was going into a state, he would invite staff members to go along on such trips where it was appropriate. And, although I had just met the President I was sure at that point in time--I had only been over there

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with Dr. Steelman about four weeks--that he probably didn't remember my name or anything else about me, but I was invited to go on that trip.

When we got into Raleigh, of course, I had all the elations of making a first trip, in my history, with a President of the United States back to my home town, so to speak. I must say it was very heady.

So we went over to the Governor's mansion, and while we were there before luncheon, which the Governor was putting on for the President and his party, we were upstairs and I noticed Admiral [Robert L.] Dennison take a group of cards over to the President; he was getting autographs. Well, my oldest son who was then about eight or nine, before I went on the trip had said to me, "Daddy, if you get a chance, would you please ask the President to autograph a program for me?" So, seizing on this opportunity, and seeing that he was signing autographs, which later turned out to be little autographs for the staff of the Governor's mansion at Raleigh, I walked over to him and I took a program out of my pocket and when I had the

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opportunity I told him, I said David had asked for this, and so he wrote a little note on it: "David, so and so and so, Harry S. Truman." He started to hand it to me and he stopped and he said, "Don't you have another boy?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I do."

He said, "Well, you can't do for one what you don't do for the other." He put it in his pocket and he said, "You go and find another program, or I'll send a note, and then I'll give them both to you." To me this expressed that he knew the staff. Here I didn't even think he knew my name, he knew not only that, but he knew I had another boy and he taught me a real lesson, you don't do for one what you don't do for the other.

STILLEY: When you were on Dr. Steelman's staff, what were your specific duties?

STOWE: Well, Dr. Steelman had sort of a coordinating function with all the Government agencies, contrasted say with the legal counsel for the Vice President on legal matters and political matters; and he had

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a staff of people over which I became sort of a deputy, or a chief of staff, to handle all the functions that either flowed to him directly, but most usually were assignments from the President. But it had to do mostly with Government operations, which, obviously, with my background of the Bureau of the Budget, was where I had had experience.

STILLEY: How much access did you have to the President in his Oval Office each day?

STOWE: Well, when I was working the first year with Dr. Steelman, I went with Dr. Steelman on numerous occasions, dealt directly with the President. Occasionally, he would send me over on my own, so that I had some contact with the President during that first year. However, once I became his Administrative Assistant I was added to the group that went to every staff meeting every morning. So, we had thirty minutes with the President from 9 to 9:30 in the morning, and then if we had matters that fell within our particular work assignments that would be too long, take up too

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much of the staff meeting, we would ask for appointments in the afternoon. The President would set aside usually a couple of hours every afternoon to deal with staff members on problems that took longer than what you would take at the staff meeting. I would see him on the average of, oh, every morning at first, maybe once a day, or once every other day from then on out,

HILL: Did the President prefer to work with the staff individually, or did he work mostly in small committee type meetings?

STOWE: He worked both ways, I wouldn't call them committee type, because actually what he did at the staff meeting--you may have had this description from others that have attended--but I can recall almost every staff meeting, Murphy sat there, Dawson sat there, I sat there, where everybody sat, and he'd go right around the room and we'd take up anything that we wanted to

take up with him, which wasn't going to take but five, fifteen minutes, and not too long. Those were when we would ask for appointments.

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HILL: How about the Cabinet, how did he like to work with his Cabinet officers?

STOWE: Well, I never attended a Cabinet meeting. The president did not have any of these staff things like they've set up oftentimes where the Cabinet can operate with or without the President. It was his Cabinet, he met with them, and only, I think, Matt [Matthew] Connelly may have met with them; I'm not sure what staff members. I do know one thing, though, the President very definitely had a very clear-cut military concept of line and staff, and he considered Cabinet members and heads of independent agencies as his line officers. We were his staff and the staff better not get in the way between the Commander and Chief and the line officers. We were used as staff. None of us ever got the concept that we were running the Government. We knew who was running the Government.

STILLEY: In the 1948 campaign, what role did you play?

STOWE: In the 1948 campaign I had a very minor role. In that particular campaign, they had the speechwriting group pretty much here in Washington. Clark Clifford

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and George Elsey were on the train, but a lot of the research and a lot of the drafts were all done here, which Charlie Murphy headed up. And Dave Bell and David Lloyd, and in some areas such as education and labor, some areas which I had backgrounds in, I participated in the drafting of things that were sent out there, which eventually were or were not used in the form we sent them or edited by Elsey and Clifford on the train. They also on the train did all of the back platform quickies, the famous whistlestops.

In 1952, when we had the train out for the [Adlai] Stevenson campaign in '52, which we did a tremendous amount of campaigning on behalf of Stevenson, we had all the speechwriters right on the train, Murphy, and Lloyd, and all of them were on the train. Bell happened to be on the Stevenson train. I did not participate in the speechwriting at all. At that particular time, my assignment in '52 was to handle the President's car. In other words, determine who was coming aboard it, who was going to stay there and talk

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with him, who was to go forward on the train. Mrs. Truman's mother, I believe, was quite ill at that time and she didn't participate, and Margaret was on the train and she was the official hostess of Car Number 1. I was sort of the major domo and the mover-in and the mover-out, and the bouncer, and who got on and didn't get on, and that type of thing.

STILLEY: During this campaign were there any particular humorous moments that you remember involving the President, or a particular story that he told?

STOWE: You mean in the '48 campaign? Well, again, I wasn't associated in that capacity. I really don't know. George Elsey was on the train. He and Clark Clifford were there at all times. They would probably know a lot more about that.

HILL: Was the White House staff pretty confident all along of the President's victory in '48 or were they inclined to be, as many of the newspapers thought, that he would be defeated?

STOWE: I really can't speak for the other staff, I

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don't know. I think we realized that it was going to be a very difficult fight. We all realized that we had a real fighter, but we kept reading the newspapers, you know, and it was like, "What are you doing here?" "Why are you even contesting it, Dewey's going to win."

I know one thing, that all the people that were associated with the President, he never had any doubt who was going to win. I have been told by people who were on the train that during the last two weeks of that campaign they began to sense a turning of the tide. Now why they sensed it, or what brought it about, I don't know, but they've told me. But again, I wasn't there so I don't know.

STILLEY: Did you personally have doubts about whether he would win or not?

STOWE: Well, when the President asked me to stay on September 30th, it was just some 34 days before the election, I went home and told my wife. I said, "The President asked me to stay and I told him I would;" and I said, "I don't know, maybe we've

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terminated my Government career, I'm not sure." Fortunately, the type of person that she was, she said, "Well, if that's what you wanted to do, I'm glad you did it." I said, "Well, so am I, we'll see what happens." It turned out it was the best decision I ever made.

STILLEY: Did he have a political board set up, called the Political Liaison Board or something, President Truman?

STOWE: Yes, he had a group of people, I really wouldn't know--again, I would think John Snyder would know more about that because he and John and Clifford were involved in that. At that stage, of course, I was deputy to Steelman and I was removed from the political--the "inner circle" so to speak. In '52 I knew more about that, but we weren't running; it was somebody else's campaign.

HILL: During your time as the Administrative Assistant to the President what were your functions?

STOWE: Well, there were not too many that had clear functions. The legal counsel had clear functions.

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Don Dawson had very clear functions in personnel and on Presidential appointees; and of course, the three Secretaries had theirs, but the Administrative Assistants were sort of different areas. One area, which I handled, was atomic energy, this was then and is still much of it classified, and I and I alone handled that for the President. Because of the fact that I had come out of the Budget Bureau and had general contact with all of the Government agencies in that capacity--or many of them--I continued to do a lot of the day by day White House to agency work which would be on specific assignment to the President.

In the labor management area, of which Steelman was the kingpin of the business, because of our different backgrounds I took with me sort of the dealings with the CIO, and in that I coordinated, but Dr. Steelman was still the number one person in the labor management field in the White House; but he dealt mostly with the management and with the AF of L and all of the dealings with the CIO seemed to gravitate to my office. But, in that I coordinated

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with Steelman rather than directly through the President.

The staff meeting concept itself brought about coordination, because you could tell from the assignments he made and from the questions and comments they made, every morning you kept hearing it, you pretty well knew who was working on what, who was doing what, and what the President's attitude was. People would come to you and say, "Would you see if you can do something on this matter?" Well, you knew it was being worked on by someone else, it was no time for you to get into it, "You go see so and so." Or if the President had already expressed himself and is taking a very pale view, say, of something that's coming up, somebody comes to you and says, "Why don't you talk to the President and see if you can," I know already about what his mind is, I wasn't about to go over and say, "Hey, I've got a problem or two with this." So it had a very coordinating effect, the staff meeting, excellent throughout. The White House was smaller in those days, it was usable and Mr. Truman knew how to use it.

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Then we had the chief clerk, the administrative officer of the White House, many titles, a fellow by the name of Bill Hopkins, who was just absolutely fabulous. He knew where everything was going on, he was the switching station of all pieces of paper, and if you had any doubts that somebody was working on a subject, all you had to do was go in and ask Bill and say, "Hey, you know somebody wants me to do this?"

He'd say, "Wait a minute, so and so is working on that," or "So and so is working on that." So, indirectly, he had the most unusual but the most effective coordination of staff work that I've seen.

HILL: How did President Truman deal with Congress, did he feel like they were making the decisions he wanted or if he wanted them to make a decision. . .

STOWE: Again, that is an area that I had little or nothing to do with. That was handled pretty much --the President, having been a Senator, had the greatest respect for the Congress, and he, also,

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did not use the tactics of trying to bulldoze them. He respected their rights to reach independent judgments, and the right of the Executive to reach his judgments and the right of the Congress to reach their judgment. He had a couple of people, who did deal with the Congress. But I would say on the major issues I think the President probably did his own dealings with the committee chairmen and key people, but these matters were not matters the general staff dealt with at all.

STILLEY: Did you help assist in any contingency plans, for the protection of the President say there was a national attack?

STOWE: That was another one of my sole functions, because we'd had some problems in certain areas and I had gone to Britain and made some studies of how the British handled the grand war. One of the areas which I did have was the developing along with the staff of the National Security Resources Board, contingency plans. We had a substantial set of contingency plans which the

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continued operation of the Government was what we were striving for even if we were bombed here or elsewhere. There were a couple of times, of course, when some of the tensions were kind of tight, those plans had to be looked at and reviewed and worked through. I was one of three people under those plans that, if we had had any kind of a surprise or emergency attack or anything like that, there were three of us that were designated, and our first assignment was to get to where the President was. Everybody else had other assignments of where they would go, where they would be, and then the President would get in touch with them and direct an assembly. But I was the planner, and the holder of many of the files and other things; but one of them, Admiral Dennison, who if it ever had to be would have immediately become the chief operating officer. He would have been the one who would have executed the plans, not me; that would have been, I think, Admiral Dennison. And because of the essentiality of air, General [Robert] Landry was the third person that would have to have been there. And all three of us had those

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powerful little phones next to our bed, that if the damn thing would have ever gone off I'm afraid I'd have had a heart attack before I could answer. And they checked it every Wednesday at noon to make sure that they were functioning, and when the telephone man put it in my house my wife said, "You know, he wanted to know what kind of a phone this was, he said he couldn't find out where it went to or where it came from."

And I said, "Well, it's probably just as well that he doesn't know."

STILLEY: Was part of the plan for the President to go to Shangri-La, now Camp David?

STOWE: Well, we had, if I recall it, some seven alternatives. These were things that would have to have been made depending on the nature of the problem, but we had, I think, a total of seven alternatives, and since many of those may still be in existence today, for all I know, I'm not at liberty to discuss the alternatives. But I think you could gather from the nature of the people there, both air, water,

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rail, and many other devices were in their plan patterns.

STILLEY: What was the President's impression or feeling about having these type of plans?

STOWE: I don't think he thought too much of them.

STILLEY: Is that right?

STOWE: Oh, he was very cooperative; he knew that they were essential, there wasn't any question of that. But it wasn't in his nature to think about things like that. He knew what we were doing, but he'd rather get out and shoot back I think instead of just take off for someplace or other. Fortunately, we never had to use it.

STILLEY: Did he indicate certain ways that if it would happen that he wanted to make sure that he could address the American people, or . . .

STOWE: Those contingencies were all--yes, they were all encompassed in his plan. We had one security room over in what was called Old State then, to

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which there were only about two people in the Government admitted to the room. As a matter of fact, I don't think 99 percent of the people in the White House even knew the room was there. They talked to people over there that never heard about it. Some of the staff may have known that I was involved in it. We had a small staff. This all had to be coordinated with all of the Government agencies, and yet they knew only what they had to know, no more. The only place the whole thing was together was in that one locked room, and that was the biggest, fattest,

secure door I've ever seen. And we had a former FBI agent that I had gotten--Mr. Hoover was the head of that unit; so it was secure.

STILLEY: Were you with the President when the Puerto Rican assassination attempt was made on his life?

STOWE: No. I was down the street about a block and a half having lunch. Somebody came in and said, "Mr. Stowe, there's been some shooting."

I said, "Go on and shoot."

They said, "But Mr. Stowe, it's down at the

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Blair House." They still swear I turned over two tables going out of the dining room. I don't remember it, but I was in a hurry.

But we had been discussing the problems that were inherent in the security of the President living at Blair House, which was so exposed, only ten feet you know from the windows to the street, practically. Some of those plans were being processed and some of them were even on my desk at that time, and I can assure you they were moving that night, real fast. Within the next 48 hours they measured for screens that would withstand 16 pound weight thrust, and we had completely secured all of the windows against any shape or form of rifle that could be used. I guess, probably, the only good thing about that was that the Puerto Ricans didn't know we had so many unsecured points at that point; but they were quickly taken care of.

HILL: This never happened to you, of course, but you may know. If the President had a staff member that had not worked out or that he thought it was

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time to replace, how would he go about replacing a staff member?

STOWE: Well, as you said, thank goodness it never happened to me. I really don't know. There were some people on the staff and then they were not there, but I'm not sure whether they left on their own or whether they...

HILL: You don't know if the President personally . . .

STILLEY: Were you in the White House--I understand when the Chinese came across the border in Korea, and the President was in Independence, I believe, or Kansas City, at the time, were you at the White House when the word came in to the White House that the Korean war had started?

STOWE: No, I just don't know where I was.

HILL: What events or policies at the White House disturbed the President most, was it the assassination attempt, the Korean war, the beginning of that, just what were the tense moments at the White House?

STOWE: Well, I would state that that would certainly

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be one, I think when the Chinese came in and drove us right down the Pusan Peninsula, that was another. I can assure you the final decision moments of the MacArthur incident were rather tense moments around there. I worked more with the President on domestic affairs, affairs other than military. I really wouldn't know. We had a man by the name of Admiral [Sidney] Souers who was sort of the representative of the President in this whole international area. Unfortunately he's now dead. But he carried on a lot of that, which would get into that type of tension.

Mr. Truman spent a lot of time being President of the people of the United States. He looked upon himself--and he often said that he was--as the only lobbyist the people of the United States had. All these other organizations and things had their lobbyists, but he was the only lobbyist for the people. And I think he weighed legislation, and he weighed decisions, with "what is best for the people," as much or more than any President in the history of this country. It was foremost in his mind in making

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decisions. It was foremost in his mind when he would question us on bills to veto or to sign. There was tremendous recognition that the President really had to represent the good of the people. The others could take care of their own through lobbying on the Hill, but the great mass of the people had to look to the President of the United States; and he took that obligation very, very seriously.

HILL: There is a lot of talk today about the President being shielded and separated from the American people. What effort did President Truman make to have contact with the average people, and keep attuned?

STOWE: Well, first of all, he was a very avid reader. He was up at 5 in the morning, and he was through half a dozen newspapers before the rest of us would try to fall out of bed. He kept in touch very carefully through the media. He did not isolate himself; he saw many, many people. He made, I think, a very conscious effort to expose himself so that he would be getting various views, and also even in his staff assignments, sometimes, you never knew whether you were doing it alone, or whether there

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were two other people doing it. Because he was interested always in getting independent views, and then he'd make the decision. He didn't have to depend on any one person; he would get the facts together and oftentimes I would be working on something, knowing full well that in all probability there was somebody else either in the White House staff, or someone over in a department who was similarly working on this. Then he would bring them together and make his decision after he saw all the pieces of papers. Now, I think he made a very conscious effort to keep in touch with the people. That was one reason why he loved to campaign, he got out among them; and he could get their reaction, and he talked to them, and he listened.

STILLEY: In 1952 when he ordered the takeover of the steel mills, did he ask you for any advice, or . . .

STOWE: Well, there had been a number of negotiations in that, and of course, it was a dispute complicated by the fact that we had stabilization at that time. And there was a question of wage increases related

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to price increases, so that we had the price people and we had the wage people and we had the dispute between the steel workers and the steel companies. So it became a very difficult type of negotiation. At a point, the President asked Dr. Steelman and myself to take over mediation of the disputes. And so Dr. Steelman and I had three separate series of meetings with the parties trying to bring about a settlement. We were not successful. During that time, Mr. Murphy, his legal counsel, was coordinating with us as to what legal steps the President should take. The first decision, and I believe that decision was made solely by President Truman, that when the contract ran out and when he had been led to believe by the military and others, that we couldn't stand one day work stoppage in the pipeline in Korea, was a very serious matter. We asked Phil Murray not to shut the steel mills down but to continue working in spite of the philosophy of "no contract no work." Mr. Murray extended 125 days with continued production while all these discussions were going on. Then finally, when it became to the point where Murray

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felt he could no longer continue that, the strike actually did start. Of course, everybody assumed that President Truman would then resort to Taft-Hartley. Mr. Truman did not. His expressed feelings were that Mr. Murray had given them 125 days at his personal request, he was not now going to turn around and hit him over the head with an 80-day club. He was highly criticized from many sources for that decision, but that was a typical decision, that he felt that he had gotten more with his personal request than he could have gotten if he used the Taft-Hartley back in the early days, and he wasn't going to double barrel Phil.

As a final solution of it, we did have problems in that. Everybody had said, "Well, use the Selective Service Act." The Department of Justice quite properly pointed out that this particular language of the Selective Service Act that we might have used had been eliminated from the most recent repassage of that act, which if you had to read anything, the fact that it was no longer

there would lead to the conclusion that it was the intent of Congress not to make it available to him. So, it would have been

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a tricky argument to have used that. The alternative was the inherent powers of the President, and the decision was made to go with the inherent powers of the President. Of course, that was what subsequently was taken to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court said the President did not have that particular item as an inherent power. That's when we had some problems.

STILLEY: What was the President's reaction when the Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional?

STOWE: Well, I don't know, I don't recall him making any specific comments. We had the greatest respect for the Court. I am sure he was disappointed with the result, because it not only created a situation where we had a very difficult strike to deal with, but a strike with practically no weapons to deal with it. But I never heard him express, and I don't think he would have expressed any criticism of the United States Supreme Court.

STILLEY: How would you describe the President's personality?

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STOWE: Well, of course, I'm very prejudiced, and I think next to my father this was the greatest man that ever lived. He was warm, and he was thoughtful, thoughtful almost to a fault. I don't think you would find anyone that ever worked for him, from the highest capacity to the lowest capacity, that just didn't feel completely wrapped up in loyalty to the man. It was just a tremendous personality.

HILL: What characteristics did he have that you feel might have made him a successful President?

STOWE: First of all, he was absolutely dedicated to himself and to his responsibility as President of the United States. He never once lost that. He had the ability to get people to feel this tremendous quiet leadership that he had, to where you would find everybody was working as a team. It was just non-flashy; people would probably recognize a tremendous ability to lead. But then, of course, his thoughtfulness. A man in the office he was, the many complex problems he had--if a Secret Service youngster was sick, the first thing

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in the morning he would want to know, "How is the youngster today?" It was fantastic for a man with all of his responsibilities, all the decisions he had to make. Then I think, probably, as President he made decisions; he'd try to get the facts, he'd get them from, various sources and then he'd make decisions, and he really meant what the sign said, you know, "The Buck Stops Here," He had no problem, and once he made his decision, that was it. It was firm and

everybody knew it. It takes this. You can't run a big operation by indecisiveness, or "we'll put it off two weeks or three weeks," or try to find out what's going to be politically popular. He went right to the source of the issues. He got all the facts that he was able to command, and then he made his decision. I think that probably, from the point of view of the presidency, was one of the greatest factors of his success.

HILL: What accomplishments during his administration did he take pride in; that he was really glad that he was able to accomplish?

STOWE: Well, I think the whole postwar period in Europe,

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particularly the Marshall plan. I think he felt that there had been wars before that had not been handled properly, that these people were in a great difficult situation. He had given a great deal of thought to that as General Marshall had, and when the time came he was ready to make the decisive moves that were essential. And I think the termination of World War II was almost unique for a termination of wars. I think we came out of it as a result with many, many friends that we might not have had otherwise.

I think there were many decisions in the domestic field that were equally important, but because they didn't show up as much we forget them.

I think another area was his desire to fight to reorganize the Government. When he realized that the Government was getting larger, it was cumbersome, it was difficult, but you just didn't tinker with the machinery unless you knew what you were doing. And he felt very strongly that a person who might best be qualified to head that up was a person who had sat in the chair of the Presidency. And if you

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recall, he got President Hoover to head up both Hoover Commission I and Hoover Commission II, whose primary purposes, along with very qualified artisans, were to study segments of the Government and to suggest reorganization.

Then, I think another area which people forget was that he was the one who moved the whole country in the direction of health care. He was greatly concerned with the health of the nation. He had seen the problems that were created during the war, the fact that we weren't such a healthy nation, that there were problems of health. He got together a group of doctors, hospital administrators, all men of great integrity, all men of great experience, and brought out the proposal for the report. I think it was titled "The Health of the Nation," which I was surprised when in the Kennedy campaign they called me up and said, "You know, we'd like to get some areas of health."

And he said, "Gee, the report the President set up," --and they said, "Where have you been, those have all been enacted."

Well, I wasn't aware of it, but that report in

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the next ten years, even under Republican administration had all been practically enacted. The beginning of all of our Medicare, and of course that was why President Johnson went out and gave the first Medicare cards, Number 1 and Number 2, to President and Mrs. Truman. His interest and his leadership in that area was one, that and many others, but these just happen to be some.

HILL: The decision not to run for reelection in 1952, was that a matter that was--like in his morning staff meetings, was discussed in advance and then Mr. Truman made the decision. Or was that more or less just an announcement that was made by him that he was not going to run?

STOWE: Well, you would have to pursue this. At the time this event occurred I was in London, England representing the President on a mission over there and I did not get back. So, I wasn't present, but my understanding is from those who were there--that on one of the trips to Key West some almost nine months or more before that, he had shown to all, or

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some present, a paper in which he had concluded that it was not in the best interest of the American people for a President to serve more than two terms. And then while he had had only one term as an elected President, the fact that he had served 98 percent of another, he considered it as two terms. Now I wasn't there, but in checking with those who were there, I understand that decision had been made, he had communicated it to people at that time, so that, to some, it was not so much a shock when he subsequently announced that he was not going to be a candidate

STILLEY: Did you travel with the President to Key West?

STOWE: Yes.

STILLEY: Were these sort of relaxing affairs, or was he kept busy all the time?

STOWE: We had a very good schedule down there, because we had the White House phones, we had everything we needed, except we didn't have the traffic that we had here. And I have often stated that in the four hours in the morning, from breakfast until

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noontime, I got more work done down there than I did in my office in the White House. There were no interruptions. Actually we had a very, very good working situation. From noon on we went, usually about 11:30, 12 o'clock, to the beach, we came back at 2 o'clock for lunch, and from then on--except where you had to do it, you had a problem which we were working on--you had relaxation. So it was a combination of relaxation and work, but there was a substantial

amount of work going on. The morning hours were pretty much devoted to that. The President carried on his business, and we were carrying on our business, and we were connected by phone to our offices so that if we didn't have information with us we could get it. Through the White House switchboard we could deal with every Cabinet official or anybody else; so that, I would say that it was a combination.

STILLEY: When he would want to rest in the afternoons, like you said after 2 o'clock or so, did he expect everyone else to do nothing?

STOWE: Oh, no. He took his naps regularly, and at Key

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West usually promptly about 11 o'clock he would announce that he was going to bed, the others could do as they pleased, he didn't care. But he maintained a schedule. He always took a nap after lunch each day whether at the White House--it got to be a portion of his life. He could get more relaxation. I've seen him relax between appointments just in his chair at his desk at the White House. There are some people who can do that, but some like myself, I just can't do it at all, I have to crank down. He could just completely relax and in two or three minutes get a recharge. But he always took his nap, but he didn't expect, you know, like everybody's got to go now and have a quiet hour, because the President did. You just do what you wanted to do.

STILLEY: Did he play poker games there at Key West?

STOWE: Yes, we played some poker, that was one of his great relaxations. They weren't big stake games. In fact, when we'd play with a group of eight or nine people as much as we played, and, of course, it's not the money involved, it's the trying to out-do

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the others, the skill of playing poker. He found great relaxation in playing poker; and he was a damn good poker player too.

HILL: How did pressure affect President Truman? In tense situations did he have different mannerisms, or did he act differently than at times of ease?

STONE: I would say that it was most difficult in looking at him or talking with him at any time to realize the degrees of pressure that were on him at any given time. He had a capacity of not showing it. I know of situations when he was under great pressure, but if I hadn't known it, I don't think I could have told. His demeanor was always calm, it was always collected. Oh, he'd get mad a little bit, usually wasn't a ranting, raving reaction to pressure as some people do; it was just very difficult to tell. In areas, except where I knew a particular thing of my own knowledge, I wouldn't know he was under pressure, he was able to apparently live with it. I think one of the advantages was that once he made a decision, I don't think he went back and worried about it. He didn't have to go second thoughts, and

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third thoughts, and fourth thoughts. That's an awfully good way to do it.

STILLEY: Did you see the play "Give 'em Hell, Harry?"

STOWE: Yes, I did.

STILLEY: Did you think that the language that was portrayed in the play was authentic, or what he actually said? Some have said that he didn't use that kind of language.

STOWE: The President was perfectly capable of using some very choice phrases every now and then. I would say that play, because it brought certain dramatic instances together, may have given an over exposure to that. Not every sentence, every breath, every day by any means, but he was perfectly competent of using very choice language, and I would say that some of it in the play was verbatim from the incidents themselves. But I hasten to repeat that because they were bringing together these dramatic things, this concept sort of came out that that was all he did. Well, that just isn't true. He could give you some good old military language

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when he had to.

HILL: Did you have much contact with him after he left the White House?

STOWE: Yes. When he left the White House they didn't have this arrangement where the former President had staffs, so that when he traveled and when he was asked to travel to various things, two or three of us tried to make it a point of being available to travel with him. For example, when he went to fundraising dinners for the Truman Library, which he did a tremendous amount of right after--we had nobody with millions of dollars with which to build the Library, we had to go out and nickel and dime it to get that Library in Independence. He made a lot of speeches where the money, the contributions, went to the Library. Dave Lloyd traveled with him a lot and Charlie Murphy traveled with him a lot. I used to do a little of that.

When he went to address trade union conventions, such as the steel workers, and people like that, because of the fact that I handled so much labor business, I would usually travel with him on those. When he went

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on senatorial or congressional campaign type of things to speak for somebody who he felt was good, oftentimes somebody like Charlie Murphy would travel with him. Sometimes we did that at our own expense, but oftentimes whoever was picking up the bill for him would also pick up our bill.

Then in 1960 I closed my office for about eight or nine weeks and traveled some.--I never can remember whether it was 19,000 miles -in 20 states or 20,000 miles in 19 states in the Kennedy campaign. There were just the President and myself and Bill Bray, who had been in the White House with John Steelman before I went to the White House, who had been on Car Number 1 in '48. He did what I did in the '52 campaign. Then with John Snyder, and at that particular time in 1960 he was over as a staff member on the Democratic Committee. So we got him from the Committee, and the three of us made all of these travels together, so I spent a lot of time with him, particularly in the evenings. We had many almost hours alone because he tried to keep that out, since he wasn't running, and doing his job making speeches and making the appearances, and we spent a lot of evenings together during those hours.

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HILL: Did he have much trouble readjusting to private life? Did he miss the hustle and bustle of the White House?

STOWE: I don't think so. I think he was delighted to return to Independence. Well, if he had, he would have decided to go again, because, you see, he could have gone again; and he would have gone again. No, I think he felt he had done his job, and I never got the impression that he had any second thoughts or anything like that. He enjoyed it and he enjoyed it all in that period. He spent a lot of time in addition to going out and talking to people and keeping contacts for the Library fund. He gave a lot of talks at college campuses and invitations to go to a college campus and talk with young people just inspired him; he wanted to do that; he liked to do that. He did a lot of that during this time and so he was very active, kept busy.

HILL: Did he stay on top of political and government matters, was he pretty up to date on what was happening?

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STOWE: He appeared to be. Of course, I was here earning a living and only there when I was doing one of those things with him. I wasn't with him day by day, but I certainly had the impression in the time that I was with him that he was pretty fully aware of what was going on.

STILLEY: We are about the end of our interview, are there any general comments that you would like to make about your years in the White House and of President Truman?

STOWE: Well, of course, I have to look back on them as the greatest years of my life just because of the privilege of working with him. As a member of my family one time said, "The trouble with you, Dad, is that you think that there hasn't been any President of the United States since President Truman." Well, it's not quite that bad, I realize that there have been Presidents, but I still think of the President seen through the eyes of President Truman and my experience with him. It was an experience that you couldn't place any value on, it was fantastic. I just say that for good or for bad, and I think it

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was all for good. All of us who worked with him learned the meaning of integrity, we learned the meaning of decision making, we learned a lot that I know has stood me in good stead since then. I might or might not have stumbled on this if I hadn't lived with it and seen how it worked. It's just a way of life which I acquired and I am sure that others still feel the same way. The mark he made on us as individuals and our futures are with us yet.

STILLEY: Thank you very much.

HILL: Thank you very much.

STOWE: Well, thank you

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