

Oral History Interview
with
GEORGE E. ALLEN

Commissioner of the District of Columbia, 1933-39; Treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, 1940-45; Secretary of the D.N.C., 1943; a Director of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Federal National Mortgage Association, the War Damage Corporation, and a Director and President of the R.F.C. Mortgage Company, 1946.

Washington, D.C.
May 15, 1969

by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
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NOTICE

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[1]
HESS: Mr. Allen, when did you first meet Mr. Truman?

ALLEN: I first met Mr. Truman, as I remember, when he first came to the Senate. I think that was in...

HESS: It was '35 when he came to the Senate.

ALLEN: Yes, when he first came to the Senate. I know very well he was in the Senate when the fight for the Senate leadership was up with [Pat] Harrison and [Alben W.] Barkley,

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and the Senator voted for Harrison, who was a great friend, although he was very close to Barkley, and Barkley afterwards became Vice President with him. But he voted because he had promised to vote for Harrison and he stuck to that promise. That's when I first met Mr. Truman.

HESS: Could you tell me about the events that led up to Mr. Truman's nomination on the Democratic ticket in 1944?

ALLEN: That I could tell you quite a bit about, because that's quite a story. As you know, Senator Truman didn't want the Vice Presidency, as far as that was concerned. He was perfectly happy in the Senate, as I remember. Now, at that time, Frank Walker was chairman

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of the Democratic National Committee, and I was secretary of the Democratic National Committee, and Ed Pauley of California was treasurer. Ed Pauley deserves more credit than anyone else for stopping Wallace. We all felt, really, that possibly Roosevelt wouldn't live, and that the man we were nominating would become President.

HESS: Would he deserve more credit in that than Robert Hannegan?

ALLEN: Oh, much more. Hannegan was merely just...for the simple reason that Pauley saw this quicker than anyone else, and Pauley had it in for Wallace more than anyone else, at least he thought Wallace would be a bad influence on the country. So, Pauley worked

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out a deal with "Pa" [General Edwin M.] Watson, who was then the secretary to Roosevelt, that any Democrats that came into Washington would go in and tell the President that under no circumstances should we have Wallace, that the President should run again, but we shouldn't have Wallace. Now, that was Pauley's idea, and he worked with Watson on this, and Roosevelt realized that the political leadership of the Democratic Party was against Wallace. Labor was for Wallace, of course, and the very left wing people were for Wallace. So, we finally had a meeting, a dinner, it was in the summer, if I remember it, yes, it was in July, with the President, with President Roosevelt; in fact, I cover all this in my

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book* which I want to give you and that will tell this story better than anything else. So why don't we go ahead with something else and that will tell you this whole story.

HESS: What do you recall about Mr. Truman's campaign in 1944?

ALLEN: Well, President Roosevelt and [Harry] Hopkins sent for me one day and they said, "We want you to go with Mr. Truman during the whole campaign for Vice President," and I was really the campaign manager for Mr. Truman in '44, for Vice President. We started out in Los Angeles, and we worked all over the country and we had some very unusual experiences. He used to speak

*See Presidents *Who Have Known Me*, by George E. Allen, Chapter 10, "The Conspiracy of the Pure in Heart."

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to sometimes as many as five or six people sometimes, ten or fifteen thousand. And I remember very distinctly he was speaking in some little town out west and somebody said, "Senator, how old are you?"

And he said, "On my next birthday, I'll be sixty."

So I remember now how old he was because of that. And we had some great experiences during that campaign. Hugh Fulton was his speechwriter, and Hugh wrote some pretty dull speeches, and Truman did better when he just spoke off-the-cuff. And he made a number of these speeches. I remember we got into New York and we were meeting at Madison Square Garden and Truman and Wallace were both to speak. Well, the CIO wanted to show

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up Truman and who show how strong they were for Wallace. So we got to the old Madison Square Garden and Wagner, Bob [Robert] Wagner was up for re-election to the Senate, and I remember Truman and Wagner, we were all sitting there, waiting for Wallace. And their strategy was to have Wallace come in after Truman. Well, our strategy was to have Truman and Wallace walk down at the same time so that any ovation they gave, Truman would get just as much of it as Wallace would.

So, first of all, we were about an hour late. Wallace first lost his glasses and had to go back to the hotel. They used every excuse in the world. But, finally, he did show up, and they walked down together, and that's the way that turned out. But Truman was a great campaigner, and one of the sweetest men that ever lived. There's no doubt about that he was a fine, lovable fellow.

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HESS: How was the liaison worked out between the Truman campaign and the Roosevelt campaign? Just how was that handled? Mostly through yourself?

ALLEN: Yes, I worked with Hannegan who was running the Roosevelt campaign out of New York, and I would report back to Hannegan from California or from wherever we were. That's where I first met Hubert Humphrey. He was then state chairman in Minneapolis when we came in there. We had a lot of problems when we would go into places like Butte, Montana. But

Truman never worried about the little jealousies in politics. He was really too big for that. We would try to think of all those things, but it didn't bother him at all. If a man wasn't a friend of his, that was that; if he was, that was fine. He was really a great campaigner.

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HESS: You mentioned Hugh Fulton just a minute ago. Did you ever hear why Hugh Fulton did not join the White House staff? This is getting ahead of the game just a little bit. But when Mr. Truman got to the White House there was some speculation that Hugh Fulton would take some post in the administration, and he did not.

ALLEN: Well, I'm sure it was due to Hugh Fulton's saying he was going to be Attorney General. That's my opinion. He came down that morning and made a speech in the lobby of the White House and intimated that he was going to be the new Attorney General in the Truman administration, as I remember it. This, of course, is a little hazy. I was there during the whole time. I was in Las Vegas

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when Roosevelt died, and Truman's office phoned me and told me about it, and I came back. Ed Reynolds, sitting over there, and I worked on the first three speeches that he made as President.

HESS: Is that right? Tell me about that.

ALLEN: We did all three. Well, that, there's no question about. Matt Connelly said, "We've got to make three speeches..." In fact, we had worked on Truman's speeches as Vice President. Now, Hugh Fulton sort of dropped out of the picture after that, because we worked on most of the speeches after he became Vice President, during the time. I remember one or two of the speeches we helped prepare, we got a lot of criticism on them, said we weren't much of economists,

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because we said there was going to be no slump after the war was over, and it turned out that we were right. We got a lot of letters, Truman did. So during those days there was Matt, myself, and Charlie Ross -- well, no, first, we had a Press Secretary named J. Leonard Reinsch. He didn't last but about two days.

HESS: Why?

ALLEN: You'll have to ask Mr. Reinsch. He's still around. A nice guy.

HESS: He's been asked. I just wondered...

ALLEN: What does he say?

HESS: I don't know.

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ALLEN: Well, I don't know why he wasn't, but anyway, he lasted only about two days. And then the President took Charlie Ross, who was then with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and Charlie became his secretary. So there was Matt, Charlie, Harry Vaughan, Harry was in on everything, Jake Vardaman, who was his Naval Aide. They attended the morning conferences, which used to start about seven o'clock every morning.

HESS: Let's take a few of those men, just one at a time, and tell me about your impressions of those gentlemen when you met them. Now, you had worked with Matthew Connelly probably on the campaign, is that right?

ALLEN: I hadn't known any of them. You see, I

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was a Roosevelt man, and this was a new group that came in. There was a boy named -- the druggist that joined us on the train too, what was his name? From Kansas City -- Evans, Tom L. Evans. And a lot of other fellows came in. But they were nominated. My friends had been the Roosevelt people up until then. I had been in Roosevelt's "sub-administration." I had been commissioner of the District, and I had done a lot of things for Roosevelt.

HESS: What part did Tom Evans play in the campaign?

ALLEN: Well, he was a personal friend. He was with us on the train quite a bit. And a boy named [Edward D.] McKim was along too. Those were the fellows that were around Truman at

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that time. And if anybody belonged to Battery "D", he could get right in. There was a great fellow, was his partner too, what was his name, that ran the haberdashery?

HESS: Eddie Jacobson.

ALLEN: Yes, he was in there. If you look over there, you will see some very interesting photographs. That's when we used to go down on the *Williamsburg*, and the President would autograph all our place cards after the meeting. We used to have a lot of poker games and the President loved to play poker, and so did Fred Vinson. The President's trouble in poker was the he liked to look at an inside straight. Vinson and Joe [Joseph E.] Davies, Scott Lucas, Stuart Symington, Clark Clifford, were always there. Clark and I

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were usually in on all the poker games. But we quit at eleven o'clock at night. We played what we called a "poverty" poker game. In other words, you could only lose a certain amount and then you would go on poverty. So nobody could get hurt. It was just a social game. There wasn't anybody trying to make any money.

HESS: Were you along at anytime when there was business of a substantive nature discussed on the *Williamsburg*?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, they used to talk business all the time, and you can't be around a President without the world affairs being there all the time.

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HESS: Do you recall a particular incident, a particular problem that may have been discussed?

ALLEN: Oh, I think so many that I wouldn't know what...

HESS: In some files that I have run across, I found a memo from you and from John Snyder and from Judge Samuel Rosenman giving some suggestions of things that might come up at Potsdam that I believe you discussed with the President early in July.

ALLEN: That was his first trip as President you know, his Potsdam trip. That's right.

HESS: Do you recall that episode?

ALLEN: Well, you'd make suggestions all the time. Some of them would be accepted, some

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would be thrown out. Now, you mentioned about the Stettinius thing. That was really an interesting thing.

HESS: Tell me about that.

ALLEN: Well, we were on the *Williamsburg*. You see, the President had three things to do when he got in office: He had to address Congress; he had to address the Armed Services, and then he had to go out and address the United Nations on its formation, and it was just being formed in San Francisco. No, it hadn't been formed in San Francisco. The war wasn't over when he got in.

HESS: I believe that was when the charter was signed, was it not?

ALLEN: That was in San Francisco when the charter

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was signed. That was after the war, but anyway, we were on the *Williamsburg*, and it was decided there that somebody should go out to San Francisco to represent the President. At that time, the "big five" was meeting there: Russia, England, China, United States and France. And, so, they were setting up the meeting. So it was decided that someone should go out to represent the President, and I drew the assignment. So I went out. Our headquarters were at the Fairmont Hotel. So, I was talking to the President over the phone one day, and he said, "Are you where you can talk?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I want to make Jimmy Byrnes Secretary of State. Would you go see Ed

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Stettinius and tell him this and see if we can't put him in -- isn't there going to be something in this new organization where Ed could fit in." And it was, as Secretary General.

So I said, "Yes," that I would talk to Ed.

Well, Ed was furious. He said that he wouldn't resign. So we had two or three days of real tough...

HESS: How did you convince him that he should?

ALLEN: I finally said, "Ed, who are you close to in this delegation that you trust?"

He said, "Dr. [Isaiah] Bowman." Now, Bowman was the geographer from Johns Hopkins, he was president of Johns Hopkins at one time.

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So I said, "Well, get him in here with me," because I wanted him to hear my argument. Because Ed wouldn't listen.

He said, "You Democrats are just trying to throw me out, and I've done a great job."

So, I convinced him that -- and Bowman agreed with me -- that the President had the right to have his own Secretary of State, he didn't have anything against Ed. And Ed said; "No, this job is a terrible job. It doesn't amount to anything."

And then we made possibly one of our biggest faux pas in the Truman administration right at that time, I think, because we intimated we were going to have a big announcement to make in Independence. This was after we had had the meeting out there. The announcement was that Ed Stettinius was going

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to become Secretary General and that Jimmy Byrnes was going to become Secretary of State. Well, everybody knew it anyway. So we'd built this big press conference up, and the boys thought something was going to happen. And they were very much disappointed when something that had been prophesied all the time did happen. So, I remember Charlie Ross realized that he had made a mistake intimating that there was going to be such an unusual announcement, because it had been prophesied all along.

HESS: What was your opinion of Mr. Truman's choice of James Byrnes to replace Mr. Stettinius?

ALLEN: Well, I had known Jimmy Byrnes ever since

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I had been in Washington, and I had great respect for him; of course they broke afterwards, as you know. But I thought it was a good move. I have a letter* from Ed Stettinius thanking me afterwards for the courtesy I had shown him in this matter. Oh, so then, I finally got the letter up that he was to write Truman, and the letter that the President would send him, and then Truman came out a day or two in advance, and went up to Mon [Monrad C.] Wallgren's in Olympia. So I flew up there, took him Stettinius' letter, and the suggested letter and the President agreed on it. And then we announced it in Independence later.

HESS: Well, backtracking just a little bit, but what were your thoughts on April 12, 1945

*See Appendix A.

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when you heard of the death of President Roosevelt?

ALLEN: Well, I tell all that in this book of mine.

HESS: By the way, I have read your book and I think it's very good.

ALLEN: Thank you. It was a "conspiracy of the pure in heart." That's where I talk about Wallace and all that. That gives you the whole facts.

HESS: We'll place a footnote in our transcript indicating where the story can be found.

ALLEN: Chapter 10. I call it "The Conspiracy of the Pure in Heart."

HESS: Do you think they were so pure in heart?

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ALLEN: Oh, I don't, of course not. But I think the average politician is a great fellow, and he's a fine character, and most of them are as honest as the day is long. Pure in heart? No. They'll do anything for votes, but they're not crooks.

HESS: On that subject, just what is your definition of politics, and what's your definition of a politician?

ALLEN: Well, I don't know really. Well, a politician is a fellow who has only one guy he can jump on, and bounce around, and that's his secretary. Everybody else is a constituent. He has about one person he can control. Politics is the art of the possible, of course. That's

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what everybody says, and that's politics. No matter how good you are, you've got to first get in office, and then second, you've got to carry out what you think is the best for the majority of the people. It's very simple. Maybe it's over-simplification.

HESS: When Mr. Truman first came to the White House, what seemed to be his degree of awareness of his new position, it's responsibility, its powers and his duty?

ALLEN: Well, he was unbelievably great. He was humble, there was not an ounce of arrogance in him, maybe he might shoot off a little quicker than he should and without thinking something through, but it was an honest fault if he did it. And he was a kindly, very

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kindly fellow. Oh, Truman will go down as quite a man in history.

HESS: You mentioned a few moments ago about some speeches that you worked on.

ALLEN: Three, the first three. There was the speech for the joint session of Congress, and the speech to the Armed Forces and the speech to the United Nations. There was another one in between there. The United Nations' one was done by Samuel Rosenman, I think, yes, I know it was.

HESS: Who worked on the same speeches that you did?

ALLEN: Ed. Nobody else. We went up to Roosevelt's funeral in an upper berth. We worked on it all the way up there, nobody else worked on that.

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HESS: While I'm here, Mr. Reynolds, I want to say that I want to return and interview you also.

REYNOLDS: Oh, no.

HESS: Oh, yes.

ALLEN: Ed played a great part in it really.

HESS: That's fine. Tell me about the staff meetings that were held. Just how were Mr. Truman's early staff meetings conducted?

ALLEN: He would sit there and each fellow had a folder with his name on it. And Truman would go through that folder and say, "Here's something for Snyder, here's something for Allen, here's something for Connelly, here's

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something for Ross." My principal job for Truman was trying to get people for jobs.

HESS: Personnel, is that right?

ALLEN: Yes.

HESS: Now, a little bit later on in the administration, I believe Donald Dawson held a similar position, is that correct?

ALLEN: Well, yes and no. Donald became the head of personnel. I wasn't the head of personnel. I wasn't on salary. I was strictly a volunteer in what I was doing. Then I finally took a job at the RFC.

HESS: Which we'll get to in just a minute.

An item in your article in the *Current Biography* for 1946 states that you "acted as

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liaison between the White House and Capitol Hill" during those early days. Is that correct?

ALLEN: No, that isn't correct. Well, except I knew a lot of the people up there, the Roosevelt people. I possibly did quite a bit of that, but I don't think I said that. Did the article say I said that?

HESS: I'm not sure. It's in the article, but perhaps it's something that the person who wrote the article just put down without directly attributing it to you.

Let's discuss a few of the men on the staff. Looking back, what can you tell me about Sam Rosenman. Just what type of a man was Sam Rosenman?

ALLEN: Well, Sam Rosenman was, without a doubt, one of the ablest men I've ever known. He

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was Roosevelt's chief speechwriter, he was Roosevelt's counsel in Albany when Roosevelt was governor; he came here, he was a great lawyer. He was a member of the Supreme Court of New York, he and Sam Rosenman and the playwright, Robert Sherwood, wrote all of Roosevelt's speeches. And Rosenman was great. I can't say enough good about him.

HESS: I understand that he wanted to resign shortly after Mr. Truman came in, and that Mr. Truman asked him to stay, is that correct?

ALLEN: That's correct.

HESS: Now, historians attribute one of the main things that Mr. Rosenman did during the time he worked for Mr. Truman, as the twenty-one point message of September 6, 1945. Do you recall that message?

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ALLEN: No.

HESS: That was the message outlining the twenty-one points that Mr. Truman thought should be put through Congress.

ALLEN: Well, I would think that that would be accurate.

HESS: Tell me about Clark Clifford. Just how did he come in?

ALLEN: Well, Clark Clifford was from St. Louis. He was brought in really by Jake Vardaman, I guess. You don't have Vardaman's name on here.

HESS: No, that's an oversight. I should have. Vardaman came before Clifford.

ALLEN: Yes, and Vardaman brought Clifford. Clifford was in the Navy. He brought him in and

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Clifford, due to sheer personality and ability, just has the combination of everything, brains, intelligence and everything.

HESS: And he was Assistant Naval Aide for Vardaman, wasn't he?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, and that's where he got started. But he did a great job.

HESS: What type of a person was Vardaman?

ALLEN: Well, Vardaman was an irascible, nice guy really, but made people mad. He was quite a fellow. His father, who was a great friend of mine, was old Senator [James Kimble] Vardaman of Mississippi, who was quite a guy.

HESS: Did you know his father?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, yes. And I knew Jake. I knew his father better than I knew Jake. Well, I knew

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him very well after this, when he came over there, but then Truman put him on the Federal Reserve.

HESS: Do you know why that move was made?

ALLEN: I think because Jake wanted it.

HESS: What about Matt Connelly?

ALLEN: Well, Matt was one of the nicest boys that ever was. He got the most unfair break that anybody ever got. I went out and personally testified as a witness in his case in St. Louis, because I never saw Matt ever do anything, or ever try to do anything that was the least bit out of the way.

HESS: Why do you think the outcome of that case was as it was?

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ALLEN: I can't understand it.

HESS: And Bill [William] Hassett.

ALLEN: Well, Bill was a great character. Bill was a Roosevelt man, of course. Bill was a Yankee from up in Vermont and was quite a guy, and everybody liked Bill, but he was strictly a technician. He wasn't a Rosenman, he was just very able, quiet, never made anybody mad, a very lovable yankee.

HESS: What about Charlie Ross?

ALLEN: Charlie was a great character too. Charlie was a wonderful fellow. He was from St. Louis. He had been a newspaperman all his life. He had a little trouble adjusting over to being on the political side. He wasn't a Steve Early, but he was good.

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HESS: How would you rate those two, and if you would rate Mr. Early higher on the scale of press secretaries, just why would you rate him higher?

ALLEN: Oh, well, Steve Early was terrific. Steve Early was an original AP man. He covered Harding when Harding died in San Francisco, climbed up in the back window. Steve Early was mean, arbitrary, hateful, one of my best friends as far as that is concerned. So, I can speak freely of him.

HESS: Is that what it takes to be a good press secretary?

ALLEN: That's what it takes. Honor -- if Steve Early ever told you anything, you could just bet - - no favoritism, strictly, very honorable, and the boys knew they could trust him, and Roosevelt knew he could trust him. I would

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say that Steve Early by all odds was the best press secretary in my time.

HESS: Do you know why he left when Mr. Truman came in?

ALLEN: Oh, sure, sure. I was very close to Steve at that time. Well, the principal reason Steve left was that he thought he had served his time. Steve could have written a book and received a million dollars for it, and he wouldn't do it because he was so honorable. He would have had to say things he didn't want to say, so he didn't do it. But Steve left because he got a job with the Pullman Company. He wanted to make some money.

HESS: At the time of the death of "Pa" Watson, Steve Early was moved from Press Secretary to Administrative Assistant, I understand, and

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then Jonathan Daniels was made Press Secretary. And then Steve Early came back and, if you remember, when Louis Johnson became Secretary of Defense, Steve Early became Deputy Secretary of Defense. That was because we couldn't get anybody to be finance chairman except Louis Johnson. That's why he became Secretary of Defense. And [James] Forrestal had gone nuts then. That's no way to speak of it; he'd slipped.

HESS: Why did Louis Johnson agree to accept the post as treasurer of the Democratic Party?

ALLEN: We couldn't get anybody else.

HESS: And he did agree.

ALLEN: And did it. He did a pretty good job, too.

HESS: Do you think that was the main reason why

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he received the job of Secretary of Defense?

ALLEN: Oh, no question about it. There's not the slightest doubt about that.

HESS: He had been accused by some historians of letting the military machine sort of go down hill a little bit before the Korean attack.

ALLEN: Well, he claimed that he was taking the "fat" out of it, and I wouldn't be surprised if that didn't happen. I'm not enough of a historian to figure that out.

HESS: O.K., back to our list of men. How about General Harry Vaughan?

ALLEN: Oh, Vaughan's a fine guy. He's still around. Have you covered Vaughan yet.

HESS: I personally haven't interviewed him, but a member of our staff has.

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ALLEN: Well, Harry can tell you some great stories. I never knew Vaughan until the Truman era. And Harry didn't play any part in politics in any way. His was personal. He was with Truman as I was with Eisenhower, it was a personal proposition. I didn't ever try with Eisenhower, mine never was political. With Truman I was political, with Roosevelt I was political, with Eisenhower, it was personal.

HESS: All right, now, we've mentioned a little bit about the trips, but did you ever go down to Key West?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, I went all those places with them all the time. Look over there. Those are some...

HESS: More pictures.

ALLEN: No, I mean those are all trips, the cards.

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HESS: Do each of those cards represent a separate trip on the *Williamsburg*?

ALLEN: Yes. You can just figure that those are weekends. Oh, yes, I went on all the trips.

HESS: Tell me a little bit about Key West. Was there much business conducted down there?

ALLEN: There is always business conducted where the President is.

HESS: Was it usually in the mornings so they could take the afternoons off?

ALLEN: No. You never know. It may be late at night. You get telegrams, you get wires, you never know. And they have people come in. There's no set rule for it. It's the same say -- Key West, Shangri-La, *Williamsburg*, they're all the same.

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HESS: Looking back on the Key West trips, is there any one particular...

ALLEN: Key West -- I was there less than anywhere else because he started going to Key West later on. That was something Truman started. Shangri-La we had under the Roosevelt administration. And the *Williamsburg* -- well, it wasn't the *Williamsburg*. No, it was another boat we had with Roosevelt -- the *Potomac*.

HESS: In August of 1945, Mr. Truman appointed you as his personal representative for the study of the liquidation of war agencies.

ALLEN: That's right.

HESS: What comes to mind when you look back on that?

ALLEN: Very little.

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HESS: I got the report that you submitted to the President, I had it sent from the Library of Congress and read it, and I just wondered if there was anything about that that you might know now that didn't come to mind then.

ALLEN: It was routine. We had a staff do it, I'm sure.

HESS: Now, we come to something that was a little less routine, the RFC. And you served as a member of the board of directors of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for one year to the

day, January 16, 1946 to January 16, 1947, What comes to mind when you look back on those days?

ALLEN: Well, the principal thing there was the fight on my confirmation. I had no idea -- see, I had been confirmed by the Senate three times

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without a dissenting vote. I had no idea that anybody had anything against me. And I found nearly everybody was against me. They sent my name up, Jake Vardaman's, and Pauley's at the same time. Possibly the three worst appointments Truman ever made. And everybody was against me. I had no idea I was so terrible until I began to read the accounts. It's the first time [Walter] Lippman and [Drew] Pearson were ever in agreement. So that was what I look on more than anything else. But I was confirmed easily, and I served for a year and I got out.

HESS: One of the biggest things you had to work with during that period of time was Lustron, is that correct? What was Mr. Truman's attitude on that Lustron loan?

ALLEN: Well, due to Sam Rosenman's wife, Dorothy Rosenman, she was very great in housing, she told us about Wilson Wyatt from Kentucky, who

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we brought in to head up housing. Wyatt was sold on the Lustron loan, and Wilson and I were good friends, so they came over to see me about the Lustron loan. I looked into it and found that they wanted about thirty or forty million dollars and they were putting up about twenty thousand dollars or something that way. I just said, "You just can't run a bank on that theory." Well, Wilson said, "We'll either do it or I'll quit."

So I said, "Let's go over and have it out with the President." And we went over and met with the President and Clark Clifford was then General Counsel, and they ended up by saying the RFC had to be satisfied or the President wasn't going to overrule us. So Wilson Wyatt resigned. After I got out, they made the RFC loan and lost all the money, which I knew they would.

HESS: Did Wilson Wyatt ever explain to you why he thought that that loan should be made with such

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a shaky financial basis?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, Wilson was honest in it, yes, he was honest in it. He thought it would do a fine job for housing. But it wasn't a sound proposition, that was the whole thing.

HESS: Their plan was to manufacture prefabricated metal houses, is that right?

ALLEN: That's right, that's it.

HESS: And he thought that would work.

ALLEN: Yes. He was honest. It was just a disagreement, and the President agreed with us, the RFC, on it.

You see, I had a lot of interesting things over there at the RFC, it was fascinating. People used to come and say, "The President wants this."

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So I'd say, "Wait a minute, let me call and find out..."

"Oh, no, don't call, wait just a minute, let's see."

That's one great advantage you have in running a department, if you're close to the President, because then you know you can ask him, and you know that nine-tenths of them are fakers, but they come and stamp on the desk and say, "The Party wants this," or "This political man wants this," "Senator says we've got to have this, and the President has agreed to it." You say, "Well, let's call the President."

"Oh, no, don't do that."

But the President had never, the whole year I was there, never asked me to make a loan, in fact, I don't think he even phoned about a loan. I know he never asked me to make one that wasn't legitimate. I don't think he ever

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phoned and asked for anything.

HESS: What other cases were of interest besides Lustron?

ALLEN: Oh, I don't remember now, it's too far back.

HESS: Was that the principal one?

ALLEN: The Lustron was the principal thing, yes.

HESS: Moving on to 1948, what do you recall of the efforts to get General Eisenhower to run on the Democratic ticket in 1948?

ALLEN: Well, a bunch of very prominent Democrats came to Eisenhower, and said that they would nominate him on the first ballot, adjourn, let him write his own platform, and go home.

HESS: Who were those prominent Democrats?

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ALLEN: Well, you know, it's history. I wouldn't repeat them. I know who they were. They were very well known people in the Party. Now whether they could have done that or not -- fellows

like [William] O'Dwyer, and I think Jimmy Roosevelt was one, wasn't he, Brien McMahon, there were a lot of them.

HESS: Colonel Jake [Jacob] Arvey.

ALLEN: Jake Arvey. It's all history. I know of some, because I was with the General at the time at Morningside Drive where he lived in New York near Columbia, when they came in to see him, and I knew them. I wouldn't tell you who they were, because that was a private meeting. But records show you who they are.

HESS: At the time you were at Morningside Heights, were you there on a different mission?

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ALLEN: Oh, it was personal, nothing else. I wasn't on any mission at all, I was there personally.

HESS: Cabell Phillips, in his book, *The Truman Presidency* states that you went to Columbia University to speak to General Eisenhower on this matter of getting him to run.

ALLEN: No, no.

HESS: That is wrong?

ALLEN: That is wrong, completely wrong. I was with him and sat down and helped when he wrote that under no circumstances would he accept, and he gave it the "Sherman treatment," and we gave that out to the press. I didn't work on it, he wrote it, but we all went over it together.

HESS: What was the General's attitude at this particular time? Did he just not want to run for

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the Presidency, or what?

ALLEN: At that time, he didn't think that a military man should be President.

HESS: Did he say so?

ALLEN: Oh, yes, definitely.

HESS: What are your recollections about Mr. Truman's campaign in 1948?

ALLEN: Well, I think Clark Clifford deserves more credit on that than anybody. That was a great campaign. I phoned Mr. Truman the night of the election, and I said, "I want to be the first fellow that says that I didn't think you had a chance." And I didn't.

HESS: Was that the way you felt?

ALLEN: Oh, sure, I didn't think he had a chance in

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the world. I thought it was a cinch. I didn't think he had a ghost of a chance.

HESS: President Truman and General Eisenhower tended to draw apart politically and personally. What was the basis of their misunderstanding?

ALLEN: That was really a telephone call. President Eisenhower was in Kansas City, and President Truman called him and President Truman said he never returned the call.

HESS: What time was this?

ALLEN: The time I don't know. But anyway, Eisenhower felt very badly about it. He looked into it. He checked with the Secret Service They couldn't find the call that had come in. But they got very friendly towards the end there, the last...

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HESS: The last few years of the General's life.

Was the incident in 1952, do you recall?

ALLEN: No, it was after Ike became President.

HESS: Oh.

ALLEN: I remember I went over to President Truman from this office right here, the morning after Ike was nominated, and I said, "Mr. President, I want to tell you that I'm going to support President Eisenhower."

He said, "I don't blame you. I know how close you were personally," and he said, "I supported a Republican once for the council in Kansas City. It was a fellow I was with in Battery D." I don't know what his name was. But anyway, he told me that.

So I went over that morning.

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HESS: Some historians have placed the beginning of their misunderstanding in the campaign of '52, when Mr. Truman was campaigning for Mr. Stevenson.

ALLEN: Well, I think I've given you the real break. Now, I don't think there was any question that there was a feeling in between there. And there's no telling what Truman might have said, or what Eisenhower might have said, but the feeling was from this incident that I told you about.

HESS: One last question, what do you see as Mr. Truman's major contributions during his career?

ALLEN: Well, I think it's terrific what he contributed. He saw a world divided, a split to pieces, a Europe that was broke, communism on the rampant,

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through his NATO and his other programs for peace and progress around the world. He did all those things, so those are his great accomplishments. He deserves a great deal of credit, a great deal of credit.

HESS: How do you think he will be regarded by historians one hundred years from now?

ALLEN: Oh, great, great, no question about that.

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

ALLEN: No, I don't believe so, except to say I was very happy during that time, enjoyed it very much, he was a great fellow to work with. I didn't get to see him very much afterwards, because I became a partisan with the Eisenhower situation, because Eisenhower was the best

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friend I ever had, but that doesn't take away any of the greatness from Truman.

HESS: When did you first meet General Eisenhower, was that in England?

ALLEN: No, I first really met him here, but I got to know him in England, that's when I got to know him.

HESS: I remember reading that in your book.

ALLEN: That's right.

HESS: Well, thank you very much for your time.

ALLEN: Well, it's been fine. And you'll send us that and let us go over it, and then you can see Ed sometime. Ed, you can give him the facts.

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