

Oral History Interview
with
JOSEPH G. FEENEY

Legislative Assistant to the President, 1949-52; Administrative Assistant to the President, 1952-53

Washington, D. C.
September 20, 1966
by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
April, 1967

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HESS: Mr. Feeney, could you give me a brief biographical sketch of yourself? Where were you born, where were you educated and what positions did you hold prior to your service in the White House?

FEENEY: I was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. I went to grammar school there, high school and college at the University of Scranton. After graduation from the University of Scranton I took a special course in health and physical education at Stroudsburg State Teachers College, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Upon completion of that course, I took a postgraduate course in adult

education at Columbia University for a period of one year. After completion of that course, I went into coaching of high school basketball and football in the high

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schools of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Following that, I became a supervisor of education and recreation for the WPA. After several months in that employment I became regional director of education and recreation for WPA in thirty-six counties of Pennsylvania. In 1941, I was commissioned in the Naval Reserve and was called to active duty in early '42. I served in the Navy from early '42 until the spring of '49. I entered the Navy as Lt. (jg.) and was retired in '49 as a captain in the Naval Reserve. During the period of 1944 to the spring of '49 I was assigned by the Navy to the United States Senate as naval liaison officer to the U.S. Senate. Upon retirement I was asked to join the staff of Mr. Truman, by the President himself, and I became his legislative assistant in the summer of '49. This assignment lasted until January 20th, 1953.

HESS: Did you know Mr. Truman when he was on the Hill as a Senator?

FEENEY: I met Mr. Truman a number of times in 1944

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shortly after I was assigned to the Senate and came into contact with his staff as the result of many military problems that came up through Mr. Truman's office, as well as his committee staff work.

HESS: During this time, did you ever hear Mr. Truman comment on anything connected with the Truman committee -- any matters that might have been before the committee?

FEENEY: As I recall, the only real meaty comment I heard was, one day in his office a number of subpoenas were being sent out to some of the top leaders of business of the country, and he instructed his staff at that time to assure them that he wanted to be as helpful as possible and he had no intention of punishing anyone. He wanted to try to straighten out many contract matters as well as to assure businessmen that the committee was intent on developing some kind of a re-negotiation plan that would permit businessmen to come to Washington and renegotiate contracts, if necessary.

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He said that he felt that no doubt a great many errors of judgment were made as well as errors by the military in contract work, and he felt that with the cooperation of the committee members as well as his own staff that this could be done without trying to make big headlines in the newspapers -- and this he felt was being done in the fashion that he hoped it would be done.

HESS: Did you see Mr. Truman very often during this time? Did you meet with him in his office?

FEENEY: I had no reason to meet with him personally or directly. My main contact with him was actually for coffee in the morning with he and his staff -- and this was a regular ritual and it

had nothing whatever to do with the committee operation. It was more of a friendly thing than anything else.

HESS: Who were the main members of the staff at that time that you met with -- Hugh Fulton?

FEENEY: Hugh Fulton was there and Matt Connelly was there; Charles Patrick Clark was there -- I just

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can't recall at the moment the other members, but most of the time from about 8:30 to 9:15 was generally a coffee klatsch in the Senate cafeteria, and I was fortunate enough to be able to sit around and just shoot the breeze.

HESS: This was the time that Mr. Truman became acquainted with you and familiar with your duties in the Senate, and your connections with the Senate.

FEENEY: That's correct.

HESS: ...then from there we can move up to the time you went to the White House. Is that right?

FEENEY: That's about right.

HESS: Will you tell me then why were you picked for this particular job, and not only why were you picked but why was anyone chosen at this time? Up to this time there had not been such a thing as a congressional liaison man in the White House. Is that correct?

FEENEY: That's correct.

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HESS: Why was it felt that at this time one was needed?

FEENEY: I can't tell you why it was felt that someone was needed. I can tell you this. I was asked by Steve Early who was then Secretary of Defense, to become his congressional liaison man for the Defense Department. Mr. Early -- I agreed to meet Mr. Early at the White House, because Mr. Early had to get a clearance on a so-called "super-grade" at that time from the White House. The morning I went there I was called in to the President's office and the President informed me that he was going to take me into his family and that Mr. Early would have to get someone else. Mr. Truman told me that for some time he had been concerned about the lack of liaison and contact with a large number of the members of the Senate, and that he was finding it very difficult to handle this himself, with the duties of his office, and further, that he did not wish to have a politician appointed. He said he had read my record and he would like me to join, and I agreed and that was the start of

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my employment at the White House.

HESS: You were in charge as liaison for the Senate, and just about this same time General Charles Maylon was also brought in.

FEENEY: That is correct.

HESS: He was to be in charge of liaison with the House.

FEENEY: That is correct.

HESS: Could you give me just a thumbnail description of his background? What type of a man did they choose for that position?

FEENEY: General Maylon -- as the term implies -- was a general in the Army. He had been a career Army man, but as such, as I understand it, he was used by Army people, over a period of time, to contact members of the House in military matters. At that time there was very little liaison work being done by the various departments of the Army and they felt that General Maylon who had been around this area and had been assigned to various army installations

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and who was familiar with the Capital -- it was felt that he could fill the bill and on about the same basis as I was. He was not a politician; his appointment took place shortly after mine.

HESS: Did you report directly to the President or were you assigned to be under another staff member in White House?

FEENEY: I was assigned directly to the President. And one thing was made extremely clear, that the President would be available at any time that I had any kind of a problem to discuss with him, particularly involving legislation in the Senate.

HESS: Could you outline just what your duties were?

FEENEY: Well, I think I should clarify one thing. Every morning at 9:15 the President had a staff meeting of all his staff people in his office -- a very private meeting. All subjects which the President felt should come up during that day, or would come up during that day, was fully covered with each

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staff member. We were each given an opportunity to say whatever we felt was important, and at the conclusion of the meeting the President generally kept one or two or three of us after the group went out to have a further discussion. Invariably, I was kept after the meeting because of Mr. Truman's very close association with the Senate and because of the importance of legislation going on at that time. He had a very keen desire to work as closely as possible with not only the chairman of the committees of the Senate, but with various individuals who had been friends of his for many years, and he made it especially clear that he would be the quarterback as far as the Senate was concerned and I would be the ball carrier.

HESS: What friends in particular did he work with the most?

FEENEY: Senator Connally of Texas was one of the important people of the Senate at that time; Senator Bridges of New Hampshire, who was chairman of the

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Appropriations Committee; Senator Langer of North Dakota, who was a very, very close friend of the President; Senator Fulbright; Senator Green; practically all of the chairmen were very close to him; and a number of others who were on a rather personal basis with him -- that he could talk with either on the telephone or sometimes I would invite them down to the White House in the evening or early in the morning -- maybe 7 o'clock in the morning for just a brief meeting.

HESS: Would you usually be present at those meetings?

FEENEY: No. I was not -- except when it came to tactical discussions about a particular bill. But in most cases he talked to them alone.

HESS: Mr. Truman met with the Big Four once...

FEENEY: Usually every Monday.

HESS: ...every Monday. Generally, what were those discussions on?

FEENEY: Well, in a general way they were on the program

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of the House and Senate, and the main discussions were on the so-called "must" bills. Bills he felt should be passed ahead of anything else and that they were the most important of the Congress.

HESS: Did you meet with that group?

FEENEY: We had an understanding that we would be available at any time. This meeting generally took place in the Cabinet room, and we had to be available at the time of those meetings. Sometimes, we were called in, sometimes we were not. Most of the times, we were not. He generally handled those himself -- but at various times we were called in for just conversation. The Counsel was called in more than anyone else.

HESS: Can you remember any particular incident or anytime that you were called in -- was it on any particular bill -- can you remember that far back?

FEENEY: Yes, I can very well remember one -- the Displaced Persons bill -- which became a very so-called "hot" bill because the President was trying to

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put a bill through which would take care of many, many thousands of people who had been displaced as a result of the war, and no one seemed to be doing anything about it. Many, many thousands of displaced persons were still living in camps and barracks and no one supposedly was doing anything about them. It was costing the United States millions of dollars to keep them in these camps -- it was a hopeless situation -- so he decided to send a bill up to take care of them -- to permit them to come in to the United States, and change the immigration laws and things of that kind, and it became a very, very rugged piece of legislation, because of the many, many religious overtones in the thing. I can clearly recall that Senator Revercomb of West Virginia was one of the chief opponents of the bill -- he was violently opposed to the bill and had a great many followers on both sides.

HESS: Were you instrumental in working on that bill?

FEENEY: Yes, I should tell you this. Whenever a bill

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was being prepared, the Budget Bureau was instructed by the President to prepare the bill -- no matter what the bill was -- the Budget Bureau generally drew up the bill. The Counsel of the President was always at work on the bill also, with his assistance, and there were many meetings and many get-togethers with the Budget people as well as White House staff people, and then when the bill would get to its final form, we would have a meeting with the President -- we all would be at the meeting, and we would iron out some of the details and eliminate or add to the bill at the President's wish. And then, when the bill was finally ready we would notify the Senate and House that it was coming up. Generally, Mr. Truman would let it be known that he was thinking of such a bill. He did not believe in surprises; so that in most cases, every newspaper and every publication in the country had a fling at the bill long before it arrived in the Congress.

HESS: I have some things on some other bills that we'll get into just a little bit later. When I

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asked awhile ago if you were assigned to someone else, of course, I had reference to the list that I have of December the 9th, 1952, which had you, General Maylon, and Frank N. Parks listed as being under Matthew J. Connelly -- but that just isn't correct, is that right?

FEENEY: I can't understand the Frank Parks entry in there. As I understood, Frank Parks was either with Justice or with another agency. My thinking is that he was with Justice. I'm not entirely clear on him. And, I think, too, in the assignment of the three of us to Matt Connelly, I should say this -- that Matt Connelly was the one person at the White House who determined who was going to see the President and when, and in our kind of work -- my kind of work -- there was no one else to talk to but the President and no matter what the urgency was of other things, I don't every recall being held up more than fifteen minutes to see the President if it was necessary. I think few people understand how close the President was to many members of the Senate. He knew how they thought, he

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knew how they reacted to things, and he had a deep insight into almost every single one of them -- and he wanted to know what the reaction was to certain things, before he would send a message up. So it became quite a busy spot.

HESS: But a lot of these connections were carried on by the President himself, is that right?

FEENEY: Oh, yes...

HESS: He'd pick up the phone and...

FEENEY: He would pick up the phone at anytime of the day or night and talk to anyone that he felt he could talk to in the Senate. And I would say that he could talk to 90 percent of them, even some of his worst enemies -- as far as the newspapers are concerned.

HESS: In the White House, did you work very closely with the Special Counsel -- and you knew both of the Special Counsels -- you were there when both Clark Clifford and Charles Murphy were there?

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FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Could you perhaps contrast their styles of operation?

FEENEY: I'd like to try to contrast their styles. They were two entirely different types of people. Clark Clifford was a good organizer. And it was his job to present these plans and bills to the President, and Mr. Clifford made it a policy to have all people that had anything to do with a piece of legislation, or a presidential plan, to get together in his office and discuss the pros and cons long before the bill would go up, or the plan. He was there -- Clark Clifford was there -- I believe only about six or eight months during the period I was at the White House and then Mr. Murphy was his assistant. Mr. Murphy was promoted to the job of Counsel. Mr. Murphy was a different type in this respect, in that he was a very studious kind of a fellow who wanted to be especially sure of his ground, more so than Mr. Clifford. Mr. Clifford had a flair for doing the right thing at

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the right time, and sometimes it was done a whole lot faster than by Mr. Murphy. Mr. Murphy was a product of the Senate -- he had worked on the Hill for years and he knew many of the pitfalls of legislation. He wanted to be absolutely sure of everything before it would move. Sometimes this would cause some delay, but in the long run this delay was quite welcome in many respects, because it would give us time to make our contacts and see what the reactions were going to be. I think they were both excellent although entirely different personalities. Mr. Murphy was extremely capable and had a leveling influence on the President.

HESS: Did you work very closely with both the men?

FEENEY: Yes. Especially with Charlie Murphy.

HESS: In working with him -- just what was your relationship -- just what did you do?

FEENEY: Well, it had most to do with legislation. And instead of having one meeting a week on a piece

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of legislation such as Mr. Clifford would do, Charlie Murphy might have four in two days. And he had some excellent assistants, too. Dave Bell was one of them -- Dave Stowe, Dave Lloyd and George Elsey. There was another fellow that went to Harvard from the White House as a professor. He was Richard Neustadt. And incidentally, Neustadt became a special adviser to President Kennedy immediately after his election. Richard Neustadt was on the staff with Charlie Murphy and Charlie Murphy had a -- I'd say -- a larger staff than Clark Clifford. At least all these people were pulled in at times when Mr. Murphy wanted to have a discussion. In other words, at a Clark Clifford meeting we might have five or six -- at a Charlie Murphy meeting we might have ten, and, of course, too, Charlie Murphy had the added responsibility of being a speechwriter for the President. Mr. Bell also took part in the speechwriting as well as Mr. Neustadt, Mr. Lloyd and George Elsey. I had hardly anything to do with that phase of it.

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HESS: With speechwriting?

FEENEY: That's right. Nothing. Except in the final go around with the President. There were usually two or three drafts that he would cover with the whole staff and we would all be part of that. Sometimes people from the State Department would be called in if it was a major speech on international affairs. But Mr. Truman would add or subtract from the speech at anytime. But Charlie Murphy, Dave Bell and the others I have mentioned were the major people who produced the speeches for the President.

HESS: Now most of the meetings that were held with the Special Counsel, was that when preparation was going on for a message to be sent to Congress or was that after the message had been sent?

FEENEY: No, it was prior to the message.

HESS: Prior to the message?

FEENEY: In other words, it would be on the...

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HESS: On the preparation of the message.

FEENEY: ...on the preparation, not only of the message but of the legislation, because the legislation generally went up just about the same time as the message -- except for State of the Union which was the speech and the other major speeches that are given with the opening of each Congress.

HESS: Did you work on any of the State of the Union messages?

FEENEY: No. I did not.

HESS: After the message and the legislation had been sent to the Hill, did the Special Counsels then concern themselves very much with it or was that mostly your and the President's bailiwick?

FEENEY: This again comes back to staff meetings. We had a very close operating team because it wasn't a large team.. There was usually about nine or ten seated around the President's desk every morning. Whenever a problem came up with a particular phase

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of the legislation or a particular individual of the Senate, we would try to get this worked out in the meeting or after the meeting was over.

Quite often there was a lot of help given by the other staff people who knew of someone who knew someone else who knew a particular senator. This got down to personalities in a great many ways. It wasn't that every member of the Senate had his mind made up. The grass-roots were very important, and for some reason or other which I assume still takes place, everyone on the staff knew someone in every state who knew someone who knew a particular senator.

HESS: Was there anyone on the White house staff that seemed to be particularly knowledgeable about what the senators were thinking. Or did you get suggestions from just about everyone?

FEENEY: We got suggestions from everyone, but it was hard to beat Mr. Truman. He was really a fine professor in human chemistry. He generally knew where to go, if he couldn't go direct, he generally

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knew how to get there. And Mr. Connelly was extremely helpful because of his reservoir of knowledge, having been through every campaign and having a photographic mind for everyone he met. And, of course, people coming and going to the White House to see Mr. Truman became very close friends with Mr. Connelly, and I can very clearly remember when we really did get stuck usually Matt Connelly would come up with an answer.

HESS: Can you give me an indication of that? An example?

FEENEY: Well, on Federal judgeships we generally had many problems. For this reason: Senator McCarran was chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Mr. Truman didn't talk to Mr. McCarran -- Mr. McCarran didn't talk to Mr. Truman -- so it became a roundabout merry-go-round to get messages back and forth, and quite often Mr. McCarran was against Mr. Truman on selection of judges. Trying to develop this information, to find out whether or not somebody would be agreeable to the chairman

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was quite a project. So we simply had to rely on people who lived in Nevada, who were friendly with both, to try to get a liaison going between the two of them. And I very frequently did so, as a result of being in the Navy up there and knowing Mr. McCarran and Eva Adams, who was his administrative assistant (and who is now Director of the Mint); she was extremely helpful, and knew a great many people, and Mr. McCarran relied on her to a great extent in the operation of the committee as well as his office.

HESS: How influential was Leslie Biffle in matters of White House and congressional liaison?

FEENEY: Mr. Biffle was Secretary of the Senate and widely known throughout the country and well loved by -- I would say all members of the Senate. The word "influential" I don't think applies to Mr. Biffle. While he was well liked by Mr. Truman, and all members of the staff of Mr. Truman, as well as all members of the Senate, he was an employee of the Senate and was not in a position to be

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influential. However, I do know that he and Mr. Truman had many happy times together.

HESS: Did you speak to him very often in your efforts? Did you phone him anytime?

FENNEY: Almost every day.

HESS: Almost every day.

FEENEY: The reason for that is that I had a White House line in his office.

HESS: In his office.

FEENEY: In his office -- in an anteroom of his office -- where the White House was available just by picking up the phone. There was a direct connection with the White House switchboard.

HESS: Who were the people that you generally talked to when you went up on the Hill? Who did you find most helpful up on the Hill?

FEENEY: It depended upon the particular piece of legislation. And I always worked on the theory that

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the administrative assistants to senators were pretty much as important as the senator, because during those years the big rush of business toward Congress was developing to a fast degree -- television was getting underway in a big way and people were getting conscious of the Senate and the House. People around the country who never dreamed of writing a letter to a senator or a congressman were now writing, so the staffs were starting to expand and the administrative assistants were being selected on a basis of their ability rather than political appointees -- such as they were in former years, and they just had to know what was going on. Not only from the senators' standpoint but from the standpoint of all the Government agencies. So, therefore, I

would spend a whole lot of time with the administrative assistants on any bill that would come up, but then I would be guided by them to the senator. They always provided a good wide open door to the senator -- and a top administrative assistant was very important. So that in the contact work that I

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went through I always started with the chairman. The Chairman would, in most cases, give you a rundown on the members of his committee, he would know the problem children, and he would know who was against you, he would know who was for you, and sometimes he'd be capable of giving you some ideas on how to change the mind of a particular senator. I'd say this, there were, of course, a great many senators who were definitely set against the administration and against the President -- sometimes on a personal basis -- such as Senator Jenner of Indiana. He was violently opposed to Mr. Truman and usually went against any kind of a piece of legislation that was sent up to the Hill, particularly in foreign affairs. However, we were able through our other contacts around the country to get the support of Senator Jenner on many domestic issues and he would reserve the right to raise hell on the floor of the Senate, but quite often we'd have his vote on it -- domestic affairs.

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HESS: Well, that brings up the subject on domestic affairs and foreign affairs. You worked on both types of legislation. Is that correct?

FEENEY: Oh, yes.

HESS: During the years that you were in the White House did you work on a preponderance of one over the other -- were there more matters dealing with domestic affairs than foreign affairs?

FEENEY: No. I believe that Mr. Truman had a great deal of success in his legislative programs. One of the reasons for this -- this is not generally known -- it's my opinion that we used to ask for about 120 percent of what we would like to get and we would always settle for about 99 percent.

HESS: You'd ask for 120 and get 99?

FEENEY: That's right. And it was very well done. Some types of legislation we did not expect to win, but we would make friends by losing them for more important pieces of legislation.

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HESS: What type of legislation will fit in that category?

FEENEY: Now, this is very difficult to answer. We can take a situation like the civil rights. Mr. Truman had an excellent rapport with Mr. Walter White who was then head of the NAACP. They understood each other pretty well. Of course, it must be remembered that in '47 to '50 there was an entirely different situation than there is today. The population of the Negro was not only a great deal smaller, but most of them by far were in the South, and there was very little or no agitation. The other groups that have come into being just in the last three or four years and

particularly since the Supreme Court decision on the desegregation of the schools things of that kind -- were not present in those days. You didn't have the problems that you have today in the large cities. You didn't have the slums and the ghettos and the big problems that have arisen as a result of poor education and lack of employment. So that Mr. Truman always did feel that there should be a civil rights bill, and that there

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should be a fair employment practices act, to protect those who in his opinion were being discriminated against. But because the pressures were not as great and because you did not have the situations as we have today throughout the country -- the demands as far as the NAACP was concerned were extremely small as compared to the demands today. And therefore Mr. Truman made several recommendations which on today's order would be relatively very mild, and even so it was difficult to get that type of legislation approved by the Congress. Congress was not in a mood for it. Mr. Truman felt that if he could get a little at a time it would be far better than just sending a wide, encompassing bill up there, and taking care of all the problems of the colored people at one time. He was well aware that in the previous election he had lost four Southern States due to his position on civil rights.

HESS: It would be better than getting nothing.

FEENEY: It would be better than getting nothing, and

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Mr. White understood that very well from Mr. Truman, and the leaders of the colored people at that time had a full understanding of it. But, of course, today's programs are far, far wider -- they cover a great many things that we didn't have at that time. The President had a very fine adviser on minority problems, Mr. David Niles; sometimes called a mystery man by the press. Mr. Niles was held in high regard by all minority groups and leaders and consequently was an invaluable man to Mr. Truman in this field.

HESS: There are those that say Mr. Truman really wasn't serious in requesting some of the civil rights legislation, that perhaps some of his requests along this nature were made just for political expedience. What do you say about that?

FEENEY: I'd say that is not true. It must be remembered that in those years all chairmen of major committees of the Senate and House were from the South. All the top ranking people on the committees were from the South. So we would start off

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with two strikes against us. All of this legislation was delayed in hearings, simply by reason of these chairmen being kings in their own right. The chairman would determine when a hearing could be held and no one could ever move them one direction or another. He was the kingpin. Today, just by public demand, the chairman has no choice but to hold a hearing on almost any piece of legislation, and if he doesn't the President can tell the people of the country to demand it and usually that's what happens. And today, too, you have a big change in the chairmanships of these major committees. This is a result of the death and the attrition of many older members of

the Senate, who at that time -- in those Truman years -- were their own bosses and they ruled the committees with an iron hand. The rest of the members meant practically nothing. So I would say that Mr. Truman was very sincere, but he never did change the whole character of his long range plan to help the underprivileged, the unemployed, and obtain better education for the Negro. He was convinced

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that education was the solution to most of the civil rights problems.

HESS: To illustrate congressional liaison just a little bit, I wonder if you could give me a specific example of one particular bill that you worked on, and if you could take it from start to finish and show me just what steps there were in this?

FEENEY: Of course, the foreign aid programs were always terribly important, but in that type of legislation -- the voting on those bills were very much inter-party votes. There were people on both sides of the aisle who favored it or were against it. And generally then, at that time, many of the people in the West, in the Middle West, were real isolationists. And there again today the whole picture has changed by reason of television, radio, better communications between people. And the whole picture has changed. The people in the Far West, and the West today, and the Middle West, are strong supporters of foreign aid. Quite often you get the opposition from

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people who are from the east coast or west coast, and this is because of an entire change in the character of the operation of Congress -- but I'm trying to think of a bill -- I'm going to suggest the Displaced Persons bill. At the time thousands of people were being held in almost concentration camps -- they were displaced persons camps. Entire families and children were being kept there, some of them five or six years. There were no schools, no jobs, it was strictly a vast relief program being conducted in these camps in Germany, France and Italy, and the President decided something should be done about it. So we developed a bill, immediately there was great furor about the fact that this bill would destroy the immigration laws, break down the quota laws and bring a great many people into the United States who would cause further unemployment, and then the religious issue came to the front, and it became very rough in the Senate. The leaders of the opposition were very strong, and sometimes very vicious. I can recall it was an extremely close vote. The bill

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was passed by one vote. But during the week of debate on that bill -- the bill was debated I believe about two weeks -- Mr. Truman showed how he could operate in the Senate, and for an example of his humanness -- which I think is highly important with President Truman -- I can recall that during a staff meeting one morning Mr. Truman said that Senator O'Connor of Maryland, who was a Democrat, could not be depended upon to vote for the bill. I said I thought he was wrong because I had talked with him the day before and he said he would be all right. He said, "Well, you'd better go back and talk with him." So, I went back to talk to Senator O'Connor, and O'Connor said he would vote for us the next day, which was scheduled for the vote.

When I came back to the White House I went in to see the President and I told him that I thought he was wrong at the staff meeting in the morning, that Mr. O'Connor had again said that he would vote in favor of the bill and Mr. Truman said, "Joe, you and I better go over and have a dip in the

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pool" -- so we went over and had a dip -- we came back and he said, "Now, I want to tell you something. Politics is a very unusual game." He said, "You have to know the background of each senator and you have to know the reason why he's in the Senate."

Senator O'Connor was being investigated by the Senate Election Committee of which Mr. Jenner was chairman. It was a very, very close vote in Maryland, and O'Connor was in serious trouble. An agreement was made, Mr. Jenner agreed to allow him to be seated probably on condition that he vote against the Displaced Persons bill and -- that's exactly what happened.

HESS: That's what he did.

FEENEY: ...The following day, I called the vote in from Mr. Biffle's office to the President -- he said, "I'll make a bet with you, O'Connor wasn't with us." I said, "You're sure right!"

HESS: The President knew those men didn't he?

FEENEY: He knew. He was excellent at head counts.

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Very good on head counts. We had too many close votes though.

HESS: On something like that when a bill of that nature was in the Congress, would you go around and speak to the various senators yourself?

FEENEY: Oh, yes. On that one I think I contacted sixty members of the Senate.

HESS: Do you also contact their administrative assistants?

FEENEY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

HESS: Speak to both of them then?

FEENEY: Now on a bill of that kind you have to work seventeen hours a day.

HESS: What's the main thing you'd say besides when you'd go at a time like that, "We'd like you to vote with us" -- what do you do -- do you try to feel them out?

FEENEY: Exactly. You try to find out why. I always started with the opposition.

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HESS: With the opposition?

FEENEY: Always. You'd waste a lot of time talking to people that were with you. I always started with the opposition to find out why they were opposed and if there was any hope that they could change their minds, if they could learn the facts, and if we could offer them something. There's always a lot of horse trading on these situations. I can easily recall four or five Midwest senators who would agree to vote for the bill if we didn't bring the displaced persons into their states because of the high unemployment situation in those states. But we did obtain four or five votes on the condition that...

HESS: They weren't brought into those states.

FEENEY: ...That's right. But they had good reason to worry. They had high unemployment and they couldn't see how they could be absorbed and, of course, too, another point here to remember in these kinds of things -- the big plant manufacturing concerns were concentrated in cities. Today you

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have the exact opposite, they are spread all over the United States. So where unemployment was a problem in some of those states, today, even if we had unemployment it would be spread throughout the forty-eight states -- fifty states. I don't consider Hawaii and Alaska as provinces for unemployment because they are still small and it will take some time for them to develop from a manufacturing standpoint or industry standpoint. But, in general, in those days the big industries were in Michigan, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and even not so much in California, but today the whole picture is changed. The South, in the last fifteen years, has developed thousands of manufacturing plants -- thousands -- all the space activities are in the South. California, without any question at all, is the biggest electronic manufacturing state in the Union. You have a far different picture today than you had at that time. But coming back to the bill -- we would contact all the opposition. Mr. Revercomb was extremely vicious; he was tough, tough adversary, and made some pretty

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rugged speeches on the floor of the Senate against Catholics and Jews.

HESS: Would you say that that was one of your most important jobs at the time you were in the White House, the direct contact with senators to find out what they needed -- to find out what would sway their vote.

FEENEY: Absolutely.

HESS: That was the prime reason that you were there. Is that correct?

FEENEY: Yes. We had a lot of horse trading to do.

HESS: Do you remember any other prime -- I know you remember many -- but are there any prime occasions like this where the vote was close and...

FEENEY: The public works bill was always a tough one to crack. It's very difficult to get a senator, or member of Congress, I'll say, to support everything in the public works bill unless he gets some benefit out of it -- that's the reason it's called

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the "pork barrel" bill. And that involves a great, great many contacts. Because eventually you do find that if a particular member can obtain something for his state or his district, you can generally get his support.

HESS: Then, he'll vote for the other fellows getting theirs too.

FEENEY: Right. But it has to be spread -- must be spread. TVA in those days was a great, great problem -- because many Southern senators didn't agree with TVA. They didn't believe in public power. They wanted private power developments.

HESS: There were an awfully lot of conservative fellows down that way.

FEENEY: Oh, yes.

HESS: What is your estimation of the liaison between the White House and the Congress? Was it successful or unsuccessful during the time that you were in the White House?

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FEENEY: I would say it was successful. It was successful.

But I do believe that we were very definitely understaffed. You have the same number of senators that you have today and yet the legislative contact section of the White House today probably has better than fifteen or twenty assistants. We had one for the Senate and we had one for the House. It required us to have the freedom to bring in Cabinet members as well as assistants to Cabinet members to use in contact work.

HESS: Why wasn't more emphasis given to it back in the Truman administration?

FEENEY: This was the beginning of legislative contact work. And then, too, it was also the real beginning of a big change in legislative work. Prior to this time many bills -- and most bills -- were developed by Congress. This was a new idea to have bills sent up from the White House. Now some of it had been done, but not all of it.

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HESS: Not to the magnitude that was getting underway then.

FEENEY: Right. And for the first time, the Budget Bureau became an arm of the President's office, and I would say that the President would talk to the Budget Bureau chief, whoever he might be, at least four times a week -- sometimes eight times a week -- sometimes four times a day. He was a great believer in having a strong Budget Bureau and, of course, the Budget Bureau was responsible for the whole budget -- they had to know, and the President had to know where

he was at -- each day or each week. They were the experts on tax work, and there was constant contact between the Bureau of the Budget and sometimes with his staff and the President, and this was the beginning of a new phase in legislation. The Budget Bureau then, of course, would clear all legislation with an agency before it was released. And sometimes agency heads would disagree with the legislation, and then they would have to come in and talk with the President about it. And that has grown over the years up to a

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point today where the Budget Bureau is almost the two arms of the President.

HESS: Did you have very many dealings with the Bureau of the Budget?

FEENEY: I used to meet Bureau of the Budget people almost every time they came into the White House, and we would discuss the legislation. Jim Webb was budget director, Frank Pace, Fred Lawton...

HESS: Harold Smith.

FEENEY: ...Yes. Smith. But they were always on deck. They had to be, and they had many, many contacts with the Counsel to the President.

HESS: The Budget Bureau was quite instrumental in deciding whether a bill was to be signed or to be vetoed -- is that correct? Did you also get in on those discussions?

FEENEY: Yes. The whole process was reversed once a bill was passed, and it went back to the Budget Bureau and then to the department.

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HESS: Legislative reference section, I believe, isn't that correct?

FEENEY: Yes. And the recommendations of the Budget Bureau on veto or approval were generally followed. They have a great deal of power and authority, and I think rightly so. They have the legislative bureau that gets a lot of answers to a lot of things.

HESS: There are several things that Mr. Truman tried to get through Congress, but was not successful -- repeal to Taft-Hartley, establishment of the Fair Labor Employment Practices Committee, his national health program, the Brannan plan for agriculture, the Federal aid to education. Why, in your opinion, was the administration unsuccessful in its efforts on these important points in Mr. Truman's Fair Deal policy?

FEENEY: Well, let's start with the Brannan plan. The Brannan plan was something entirely new and different from any other plan that had ever been suggested for the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Brannan himself was not a popular appointee with

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the farm people. At that time -- and we come back to this continually -- the farm bloc was extremely powerful. Whatever they decided was pretty much the order of the day in the Senate, and trying to pass something that they didn't want or didn't like was almost impossible. Now that whole picture's changed today, because there has been a great change in farming, and many people of the so-called farm bloc of years ago have disappeared -- they've died or they have been defeated. And the spread of agriculture today has changed considerably. California has become a great agricultural state, even Pennsylvania, Delaware, places like that -- the whole picture has changed again so that the farm bloc is not anything like it used to be and you don't have the top chairmen who were present during Mr. Truman's day. Now, that's one bill -- but I do think that if the same Brannan plan were offered today it would probably get approved. It could not get approved in those days, considering Mr. Brannan's unpopularity and also the fact that the farm bills at that time were probably more

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important than a space bill today, which you didn't have because of the changes that have taken place. The farm bill was one of the number one bills of the administration at that time. Today it is not -- it has taken a back seat more or less -- even though it's important, it is still not in the top echelon. Civil rights today is the big thing. So these changes have a whole lot to do with whatever bill is a success or not. I think that the Brannan plan would be approved today, but it couldn't be at that time. There were too many people opposed to anything that would change the character of a farm legislation at that time.

HESS: The farm blocs just opposed it?

FEENEY: That's right. All the way, and the farm organizations opposed it, and they have a great deal of influence on a great many senators. They do not have as much today.

HESS: Do you remember any of your conversations with any particular senator when you were working on

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that bill?

FEENEY: That's difficult to answer because -- the farm bloc was totally opposed to the Brannan plan, and being totally opposed they could also influence other legislation -- so in doing so they were able to pick up other votes.

HESS: They were doing the horse trading; you weren't?

FEENEY: Right. The shoe was on the other foot, and we knew that the Brannan plan was not going to go. We knew before it went up there.

HESS: You knew before it went up there?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Did you ever hear the President make any comments on this?

FEENEY: He was quite sure the Brannan plan would have a hard time. He knew.

HESS: He knew before it went.

FEENEY: But he believed in it.

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HESS: He believed in it, but didn't think it would pass?

FEENEY: That's right. That's where we come back to the 120 percent.

HESS: What about the repeal of Taft-Hartley -- now that was quite an issue with labor -- and the Taft-Hartley Act is still on the books?

FEENEY: That's true. The Taft-Hartley bill was one of those which could not be repealed and mainly because of Senator Taft. Senator Taft was pretty much on the order of Senator Dirksen of today. He could, in many cases, block legislation if he was determined to do so, which he was, of course, in those days. And he had a following. He had some Democrats who would stay with him, Democrats from the Far West and from the farm bloc who were not labor orientated, and he would use those fellows to good advantage. And Mr. Taft, to the contrary of what most people think, had some very friendly labor people with him, and he felt and he was convinced that the Taft-Hartley Bill was a good bill.

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HESS: Mr. Truman employed the injunction part of that a few times to...

FEENEY: That's right. With much distaste.

HESS: With much distaste. Fair employment practices committee -- that actually would come under the civil rights heading which we have already talked about.

FEENEY: That's right.

HESS: Now what about his national health program?

FEENEY: The national health program at that time was something that I think was too early. People did not have an awareness of the need of a national health program such as they have today. We didn't have investigations of cigarettes for cancers, and we didn't have President Eisenhower and Senator Johnson having several heart attacks, and it was a new idea, and it would bring about many far-reaching changes. At that time the AMA was exceptionally strong and they fought against that bill stronger, I think, than any bill that was ever brought up to Congress. The timing on it was wrong.

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but the projection of it was good. But it could not get very far at that time.

HESS: What about Federal aid to education?

FEENEY: There you come to the same situation. The Federal aid to education was really stopped before it got going by the all Southern chairmen of all the committees of the Congress. They simply were violently opposed to such ideas, and still are.

HESS: On this subject, it has been stated in a book on the Truman administration that is just out, edited by Bernstein and Matusow, that, and I quote, "Truman's best proposals proved to be a form of public education that prepared the way for enactment of similar programs in more favorable times." What is your reaction to that?

FEENEY: I would pretty much agree with that. Mr. Truman had some excellent ideas on education. He felt that there were too many illiterates in the United States. The South had -- because of past history and because of the way the South lived, had the highest illiteracy rate in the country.

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The illiteracy rate in Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana was extremely high, and he knew it well. We conducted a survey of the forty-eight states on illiteracy and we were shocked ourselves -- there was so much illiteracy. And, of course, too, the professions, particularly in the medical profession, it was brought home very vividly as a result of the war, how few doctors there were to take care of so many people. Mr. Truman was the only person I knew who ever mentioned the "population explosion." There were many towns throughout the United States that had no doctor at all, and people were dying just because of lack of medical care, and Mr. Truman was determined to do something about it. He was blocked at every level. His idea, by the way, at that time, was to build, at Government expense, Negro colleges and medical schools all through the South. He had an idea that Negroes should be educated -- this was something that was never really proposed because it was knocked down before it even got off the ground. But he did have an idea that the South

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should have at least fifteen or eighteen major colleges built by the Government to education -- and high schools -- to educate the colored people.

HESS: What time was this?

FEENEY: This was in 1950.

HESS: 1950. Did you talk to him about this? Were you present when he was talking about this?

FEENEY: Yes. This was on the *Williamsburg* one night on the way to Key West. He felt that this was a growing problem and that there was so much illiteracy that it was unthinkable that something shouldn't be done about it. So he decided to talk to some people about it in the Congress, but it never saw the light of day because the opposition to it was total.

HESS: Who was the opposition at that time -- the southerners or...

FEENEY: All the southerners.

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HESS: Did he say anything else of substance at that time, or was that the main thing that he had to say?

FEENEY: That's the main thing.

HESS: We want to get into their trips to Key West a little bit later on. We don't want to give the impression that everything was a failure in the Fair Deal, of course. Now, the Housing Act of 1949, Mr. Truman signed on July the 15th of '49 -- was that too early for your time?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: What was the date that you came in, 1949?

FEENEY: It was June.

HESS: June. But actually all the workings for the Housing Act had taken place before you got there?

FEENEY: That's right.

HESS: Now, the Social Security Act of 1950 is usually regarded as one of the major accomplishments of

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the Fair Deal of the Truman administration.

FEENEY: That is correct.

HESS: Did you help with that?

FEENEY: Very much so, and Oscar Ewing was then head of...FSA wasn't it -- Federal Security Agency, and Oscar Ewing was the chief witness before the committees. He had some very able assistants, and we'd have a meeting every morning on that bill. And I think that that was a bill where there was more coordination between agencies, and the help that they provided than any other bill I can think of. There was great opposition to it. The medical profession was very strongly against it -- they had a fear that they would lose a great deal of Federal grants, and they felt that the Federal Government was being given an opportunity to centralize all their operations, and they were opposed to it. The drug people were opposed to it. There was very deep seated opposition to that bill -- very much.

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HESS: Did you work in the same way with this one as you did in most -- with your contact with the senators?

FEENEY: No, this was different. We had to find out who in each state was the leader of the opposition. And I think -- that's why I say -- this was one bill where we were able to reach out into the states and obtain help in many forms, much of it political, to overcome the opposition to this bill.

HESS: Then most of your work on this bill was done through the Federal Security Agency.

FEENEY: Yes, they were the...

HESS: Some of your contacts.

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: And your other contacts were throughout the states.

FEENEY: That is correct.

HESS: Were any other members of the White House staff -- for instance the staff of the Counsel...

FEENEY: They in

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general stayed away from the Capitol, pretty much. However, we were in constant touch with each other.

HESS: On this matter, and any other matter, is that right?

FEENEY: Yes. However, if any particular member of the staff knew a particular member of the Senate or House, he'd be either invited down for lunch or dinner or they'd be invited up, but for the most part, they stayed pretty much away from politics, and all of this is pure politics -- all of it.

HESS: Did you have any particular duties in relation to the establishment of the President's Committee on Internal Security and Individual Rights; the Nimitz committee that actually didn't get off the ground?

FEENEY: Somewhat, yes. This again came between the Budget and the Counsel's office -- Counsel's staff, President's Counsel staff and the Budget Bureau.

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HESS: And you were -- as congressional liaison and in charge of legislative matters -- you were really a part of this from beginning to end, from the time that the bill was drafted, to the time that the message was presented to the Congress and you rode herd on it in Congress until it came back.

FEENEY: That's right. You have to keep in mind one thing -- that the drafting of the bill was the job of the Counsel and his staff and the Budget Bureau. And, of course, the top people of the agency which would be affected most by it.

HESS: For my next question I'd like to take up some of the members of the White House staff and your possible relationship with them or if they had any relationship with you at this time. But before we do that, are we skipping anything? Are there any other major pieces of legislation that you worked on that might help to illustrate your duties?

FEENEY: No. I think that covers it very well.

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Appropriations bills were always sticklers. We had Senator McKellar from Tennessee who was chairman of appropriations, and we had Senator Bridges, too. McKellar was very, very difficult. He would deliberately hold up, as chairman, appropriations bills until the last three or four days of the Congress just because he sometimes wanted to be cantankerous. And then, too, you had split situations; in a state like Tennessee, you had McKellar, and you had Mr. Kefauver, and when small jobs like U.S. marshals would open in a state like Tennessee, the two of them were forty miles apart on who should get the appointment. And this would cause untold headaches on our end of the thing. We had no interest of any particular individual getting it. The only interest we had was to get them to agree to get together so that they could make a recommendation. But in most cases, between the two of them, it was a terrible job. Sometimes it almost wound up where you'd -- I asked Senator McKellar one time if he'd toss a coin, and he told me he would if it was two headed. And he had no use -- he had no contact whatever with Kefauver. They never spoke to each other. When Federal judgeships would open

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up in a particular state we would have many, many battles.

HESS: Now, this is something else other than legislation actually, the appointments. What percent...

FEENEY: But they had a great deal of bearing on legislation, you see. Federal judgeships were always a very touchy situation. Take a fellow like Douglas and Dirksen -- it became very touchy.

HESS: That's the Illinois judgeships?

FEENEY: That's right. In almost every state where there was a split between the Republicans and Democrats, because Mr. Truman had a very strong policy that any judge would have to have the approval usually of both senators.

HESS: Wasn't that the time he didn't get the approval of one of the senators?

FEENEY: Yes. He didn't get the approval of several. I can well remember when a member of the Federal Communication -- a woman -- was nominated for a judgeship,

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and New York State, where she came from, became very, very upset about it, so much so that they had the American Bar Association, and the New York Bar, the New York City Bar, come down here and deliver some pretty rough testimony. So he finally withdrew her name. But anyway, major appointments were intertwined with legislation, and they always will be.

HESS: What I was wondering about, what percent of your time was spent on legislation and what percent was spent on appointments? Would that have any bearing on illustrating your job?

FEENEY: I don't think so. Sometimes a fellow like Senator Langer was perfectly satisfied to stay with us on major legislation if he could get a job for somebody from North Dakota.

HESS: They were very closely intertwined.

FEENEY: They were. And sometimes we would use appointments as levers to...

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HESS: Part of that horse trading you were talking about.

FEENEY: ...Yes. And while we in a big city think a major appointment would be a cabinet officer of some kind, the man who might be appointed as postmaster in Timbuktu might be the very man who was very important to a senator, and if he didn't get his man appointed he might lose his job as senator. So this horse trading was just that, it became very important. But you had to find out what was important to a particular senator, and the only way to find out what was important to a particular senator, and the only way to find out was to go and talk with him. We had this come up a number of times with a very powerful senator like Senator Bridges. Senator Tobey was always a bitter enemy of administration, particularly with regard to the RFC and yet we were able to get the administrator -- it was formerly a five man board -- we were able to change that to one administrator -- the RFC -- on the condition that the

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deputy could be named by Senator Tobey. Senator Tobey had a vicious speech prepared against the President and the administrator that we picked, and yet he was willing to drop it if his man could be named deputy -- so we named his man deputy.

HESS: Who was that?

FEENEY: Harry A. McDonald.

HESS: I have a list of names of people who worked in the White House and I'd like to know if you worked with these people or if they helped you in any manner with your duties. Some of them we've already mentioned, and will just glance over lightly: Matthew Connelly.

FEENEY: Matthew Connelly I worked very closely with. Anyone in the White House would -- working in the White House on the President's staff -- had to come in contact with Mr. Connelly almost every hour of the day. He was the one who decided who should see the President and for how long, no matter who it was. This included all Cabinet members, all people

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who wished an appointment with the President had to be cleared by Mr. Connelly, and he was the final authority whether or not a man would see the President. This also applied to anyone working in the White House.

HESS: Now Clark Clifford and Charles Murphy we've pretty well covered.

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: How about William Hassett?

FEENEY: Bill Hassett was probably one of the biggest assets to Mr. Truman of the entire staff, particularly on the handling of correspondence. He was not only a brilliant man, but he probably had one of the finest vocabularies of anyone I've ever met. He was an expert on history, and also had worked very closely with President Roosevelt during his time in office. His major job and his major function was the handling of the President's correspondence.

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HESS: Did you work with him any?

FEENEY: Very little. We got together on trips. He had no political interests whatsoever, but he was a very happy soul to be with.

HESS: How about Charles Ross?

FEENEY: Charlie Ross was also one of the more brilliant men that I've come in contact with. He had an excellent command of English, ran the press section from top to bottom. He was very close to Mr. Truman. They had a very close association. But there again, he had no interest in politics.

HESS: Joseph Short.

FEENEY: Joe Short was brought in on the death of Charlie Ross. He had been a staff writer, I believe, for the *Baltimore Sun*, if I'm not mistaken. But he was an entirely different type. He was a newspaperman, pure and simple, and I thought did a good job. He did not have the close association that Mr. Ross had.

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HESS: Did you ever attend any of the pre-press conferences?

FEENEY: Always.

HESS: You always did?

FEENEY: Always.

HESS: The ones on Thursday?

FEENEY: Always.

HESS: What were your duties there?

FEENEY: To listen. Mainly to listen, except if some question came up involving legislation on the Hill, I might have something to say.

HESS: Now how were those run? Did the two men run in any different manner?

FEENEY: Usually, the pre-press conferences involved about six or eight people. The Counsel to the President was number one, and the press officer was number two. But Admiral Dennison, who was

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naval aide to the President, handled many, many duties and many important assignments from the President in the general operation of the Government. He was, I'd say, one of the President's top advisers on many matters. Admiral Leahy, of course, was very close to Mr. Truman and was very frequently in the White House at that time and quite often attended meetings with us -- quite often.

HESS: Could you tell me of a particular assignment that Admiral Dennison had that might not be generally known to illustrate his value to the President?

FEENEY: Well, at that time there was a great spurt going on in the air travel from Europe and from South America and from the United States to those areas and there were many, many sticky and very difficult problems that came up, and Admiral Dennison was assigned by the President to the job of trying to straighten out a very difficult mess. They were all international problems and Dave Stowe also was assigned the same job with Admiral Dennison,

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and they made many trips to Mexico and to Brazil and to Europe, trying to reach some sort of an international agreement on air travel. Maritime problems at that time were very, very serious, and both Mr. Stowe and Admiral Dennison handled those. There were so many things going on at the White House, as you can well imagine, that the President had to have people whom he could trust implicitly and without advertising it. Admiral Dennison was a naval officer, but the

only time he took part as an aide was at public functions or state dinners where he would put the gold braid on, but he had many, many other assignments and many activities and did a terrific job. Very few people knew it -- very few.

HESS: What about Donald Dawson?

FEENEY: Donald Dawson. I came in contact with Donald many, many times. This comes right back to the story of horse trading. We would get names submitted to us by senators for ambassadors, for judges, for everything. Don had the clearinghouse for all

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this information and it was his job to get investigations on people that were suitable, and some would come back unsuitable, and then it might be my job to go and tell the senator that the people he recommended just wouldn't fit. And sometimes it was difficult for a senator to understand, but as soon as you showed him the record, why, they'd get the point in a hurry. Don had a difficult job because Mr. Truman insisted on quality first.

HESS: What about David Niles and Philleo Nash -- to put both of them together there.

FEENEY: I came in contact with Dave Niles a great deal more than Philleo, mainly because Dave Niles used to come over to the White House quite frequently. Dave knew a great many people. He had close associations with Jewish leaders, Negro leaders, and quite often with union leaders, particularly in the textile business and the coat and suit industries. And he knew where to reach people, and how to reach them, and bring them in. Dave Niles

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had a vast knowledge of reaching the right people on the right problem, and knowing how to bring them into Washington if necessary or go to see them if necessary. He was a very unusual sort of a man. He had no interests in politics as such -- none; but he sure could produce the right person in the right kind of problem.

HESS: Did you ever work with him?

FEENEY: We had, many touchy situations because of a lot of controversy rolling around the office of the President, and because of many people disagreeing with him or with a particular senator. Mr. Truman liked to travel a whole lot and in his travels he would always insist on meeting all the leaders of the party, plus all people he had met, perhaps at a dinner, or who were friends of his. And trying to organize these trips and the visits to the suite where he might be in a hotel, or on a railroad car, and yet trying to keep the things smooth, where they wouldn't be meeting their own enemies was quite a project, and Dave Niles was a

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master at this. He was not a mystery man, he was just a quiet, good operator.

HESS: How about the man who held the title "The Assistant to the President," John R. Steelman?

FEENEY: Well, John Steelman, of course, his biggest problems during those days were major strikes, and Taft-Hartley, and trying to placate some of the critics of Mr. Truman, not only in the labor field but in the business field, and John was a very hard-working man in a very difficult situation. Most of the time he was dealing with people who didn't like Mr. Truman, so it became quite a problem sometimes.

HESS Did you work with him very often on legislative matters?

FEENEY: Very little except on the things involving labor.

HESS: How about General Harry Vaughan? Did you have any contact with him?

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FEENEY: I had lots of contact with him on trips, and during the investigation that was going on on the Hill. But Harry did not, to my knowledge, ever have an important assignment as far as -- none that I can know of or I can understand or remember, about legislation.

HESS: How about George Elsey?

FEENEY: George Elsey, yes. Now he was an assistant to Charlie Murphy. George was very good on speechwriting -- very good. And I would say that that was one of his main jobs. But he was an assistant to the counsel of the President, and for the most part, while I would see him very frequently, we'd be together more on trips -- such as Key West or Shangri La or someplace.

HESS: Did you have any dealings with Jack K. McFall over at the State Department?

FEENEY: Very few.

HESS: Now, he was legislative representative for the State Department, I believe.

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FEENEY: Yes. Very few.

HESS: But you didn't have too many dealings with him?

FEENEY: No.

HESS: All right. How about on to Key West now, okay?

FEENEY: All right.

HESS: All right. William Rigdon in his book, *White House Sailor*, states that President Truman told a portion of his staff on November 19th, 1951, while at Key West, that he did not intend to run for reelection in 1952. Mr. Rigdon lists your name as one of those present at that time. Could you tell me about that incident?

FEENEY: Yes, this took place late at night -- around midnight. We were playing cards and as I recall, there were about seven people there -- six or seven people -- and he said, "I have an announcement to make," and he pulled an envelope out of his pocket and read from it -- he had just written it that afternoon -- and he said that under no circumstances would

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he become a candidate for the Presidency. He felt that two terms was enough for any man to be President, and he felt that he had served two terms, and he further added one thing, that if anybody at that table ever mentioned this to anyone, that he would have no choice but to say that the man was a liar...

HESS: Who was there at that time?

FEENEY: ...and he would also lose his job, he added.

HESS: That's a pretty big stick. Who else was there? Do you recall?

FEENEY: I believe General Landry was there and Admiral Dennison and...

HESS: Mr. Rigdon has a number listed in his book: Charles Murphy...

FEENEY: Charlie Murphy was there; Matt Connelly -- there was about seven.

HESS: Did the President say anything else of substance at that time?

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FEENEY: Well, he added one thing -- that he hoped the Democratic Party would be smart enough to select someone who could win. And just prior to that time some conversation was going on about Stevenson, and he added that he was not referring to the Stevenson type, and he said that he didn't think the people of the United States were ready for an ivy leaguer.

HESS: For an ivy leaguer? Did he say anything about Mr. Stevenson at that time?

FEENEY: No. Not at that time.

HESS: Did he say anything else about Mr. Stevenson at that time?

FEENEY: No. Not at that time.

HESS: Did he say anything else about who he thought would be a good nominee for the party?

FEENEY: Yes. He began to talk of possible candidates. He mentioned the name of Vinson, and he also mentioned the name of Barkley. He felt that Vinson

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would be elected without any trouble or problems, but he felt that Vinson would not accept or go for it. I believe that Mr. Truman knew something about Mr. Vinson's health, because he did say that he wasn't sure whether Vinson could stand up under a real political campaign for the Presidency, but he also mentioned Mr. Barkley at that time.

HESS: What did he have to say about Mr. Barkley?

FEENEY: He said that with Mr. Barkley's background, that he felt that he could carry the country as well as anyone in the United States.

HESS: Were there any references to Mr. Barkley's health?

FEENEY: No, there were none.

HESS: Of course, there were none to Mr. Vinson's health either.

FEENEY: No. Really none -- but I always had the feeling that he knew something about Mr. Vinson.

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HESS: At the time that the President made his announcement, were there any comments from any members of the staff that were there? What was said by the members of the staff at that time?

FEENEY: We were -- you must remember that this was quite early -- and we were thinking that he would run. For two reasons: First, that he had done pretty well in all the violent criticisms of himself while he was President, and he felt that (as any President probably feels), that he was the only man who was really running the country right. Now this may sound a little bit conceited on his part, but he felt that he was doing a good job. On the other hand there weren't many outstanding Democrats available, or in politics at that time. He knew Mr. Stevenson had a public relations outfit giving him a build-up, but he wasn't too warmed up about that idea. There were a lot of people dumbfounded at the announcement, I can tell you that. I think everyone at the table was rather dumbfounded.

HESS: That was pretty well kept secret, too.

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FEENEY: It had to be. It had to be, because whoever would let it out would be ostracized for life.

HESS: The announcement was made at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner.

FEENEY: That's right, at the armory. And I'm sure it was a big, big surprise and shock to everyone there, because the whole place was hushed.

HESS: Were you there that time?

FEENEY: Oh, yes.

HESS: Will you tell me about that?

FEENEY: There were two head tables, one on each side of the armory. My table was directly under Mr. Stevenson, who was on one side of the armory at a head table, and Mr. Truman on the other. When that announcement was made there was absolute quiet for about half-a-minute, and everything broke loose, and every photographer who had been at the President's side of the armory came racing over toward the Stevenson side of the armory, and

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actually leaped up on top of my dinner, as well as others at the table, for pictures, and things of that kind, and Mr. Truman introduced Mr. Stevenson. Then he walked over from one side of the armory to the other and, of course, the usual political roar began in earnest, but the newspaper coverage of it was on the announcement more than it was on Stevenson. But Mr. Truman had a very deep feeling about this two-term business, and it was not based on politics. He felt that no man should be President for more than two terms at any time, and strongly supported a bill to that effect. There was a bill passed, you know, later on, on two terms.

HESS: The same thing now as the twenty-second amendment.

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: I thought he was opposed to that?

FEENEY: No, he was not opposed to it.

HESS: At this time Mr. Stevenson still was not an avowed candidate?

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FEENEY: That's correct. In fact he made a couple of statements that almost caused Mr. Truman to have a conniption. I remember one distinctly where Mr. Stevenson said he was not physically or morally equipped to be President of the United States.

HESS: What did Mr. Truman say when he heard that?

FEENEY: Well, I say he almost had a conniption, and he said he must be about the dumbest politician in the United States.

HESS: Remembering back, I think Governor Stevenson had made a commitment to the effect that he was going to run again as governor of Illinois, and he felt he was committed to that. That lasted all the way up until the convention.

FEENEY: All the way. And this was one of the things that used to make Mr. Truman so mad. Mr. Stevenson at no time during the following months gave any indication at all that he wanted

to run for President. This bothered Mr. Truman very, very much. He thought it was the worst kind of politics.

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HESS: During this time was he more for Mr. Stevenson or for Mr. Barkley?

FEENEY: He was for Mr. Barkley.

HESS: Then why was he disturbed that Mr. Stevenson did not want to run?

FEENEY: Because Mr. Stevenson was supposedly the leading candidate and the front runner really.

HESS: Even though he wanted someone else in there, he thought the man who was supposedly the front runner ought to run?

FEENEY: That plus the fact that he thought he was really running down the Presidency. He thought that any man who had any desire to be President ought to say so, and have guts enough to make a flat statement of it.

HESS: Now the union...

FEENEY: He was strongly against these hard to get people.

HESS: ...Now the union sort of pulled out from under

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Mr. Barkley didn't they?

FEENEY: At the convention.

HESS: They cut him out at the convention?

FEENEY: At the convention. The first day of the convention, the unions got together in a group -- all of the top labor leaders -- and told Mr. Barkley they couldn't support him, and Mr. Barkley agreed to withdraw. And as soon as we heard it, Mr. Connelly called the President at the White House and told him he ought to come to Chicago. So four of us went into Washington and came back the same day with the President. And the President talked to Mr. Barkley for about an hour-and-a-half, but he couldn't get him to change his mind.

HESS: Mr. Stevenson came to Washington a couple of times before the convention, didn't he, to talk to the President?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Were you present at any of those?

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FEENEY: No. No one was present that I know of.

HESS: After the convention when Mr. Stevenson got the nomination, the President put on a very strenuous campaign for him, but Mr. Stevenson didn't move his headquarters here to Washington, and it has always seemed to me that there was just poor liaison between the two. Is that a correct assumption?

FEENEY: There was extremely poor liaison between the two of them. Mr. Truman had a very deep feeling that as President, and as a Democrat, he would campaign as hard for Stevenson as he would for anyone else. And he planned the campaign himself. He went all over the country, but he was very, very disappointed with the operation of the Stevenson campaign. He felt that it should be operated from Washington, number one; and number two, the communication between the White House and the Stevenson crowd was, I'd say, quite anemic.

HESS: Now at one point, Dave Bell, I believe, was

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assigned to the Stevenson camp...

FEENEY: Right, and Lloyd.

HESS: ...to try to improve liaison.

FEENEY: That's right.

HESS: Did that help?

FEENEY: No, it didn't. It was an improvement over what was going on -- it was a very definite improvement, because you had two very sharp able fellows there. But, the big difficulty was they weren't politically minded. Dave Bell was a very brilliant fellow -- very brilliant -- and very able as an administrator, but he was not a politician. Dave Lloyd was a writer, and had published, I think, one or two books at this time, not on the Presidency, but on other subjects. He was not a politician. So the political part of it suffered, and it suffered because the headquarters of Stevenson was in Illinois, and Mr. Stevenson had appointed his young assistant as director of his campaign -- I just can't think of his name at the moment -- but Stevenson's law firm

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people were the people who were running his campaign.

HESS: He brought in his own chairman of the Democratic National Committee, too...

FEENEY: Stephen Mitchell.

HESS: How did that set with the Truman people?

FEENEY: Oh, just lukewarm.

HESS: Did you travel on the train with Mr. Truman?

FEENEY: With Mr. Truman, yes.

HESS: During this campaign?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Now, he made more than one trip -- did you make each trip with him?

FEENEY: No, I made the major trip -- all through the West.

HESS: The Western trip. What were your duties at

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that time, and what do you recall about that event?

FEENEY: The duties were quite simple; they were all political. Mr. Truman had a very strong feeling that he should never go through any town without stopping the train -- this was why it was called a whistlestop trip. Sometimes we'd stop at only whistlestops, but there would be two or three hundred people out on the back of that platform waiting to meet Mr. Truman, and very often Mrs. Truman and Margaret. They were also on the train for a good bit of the way. But the major reason for these stops was to pick up big politicians in tiny towns -- big fish in Democratic ranks. And they would ride to the next town -- they they'd get off and a new crowd would come on and then we'd have each one brought in for a few minutes with the President, which they thought was the greatest thing that ever happened. But this is good politics.

HESS: How was it known who to invite aboard the train?

FEENEY: Well, this took a lot of checking and rechecking

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and this was one of the problems we had. Fortunately, the national committee at that time was in pretty good shape. The people there had a knowledge of who was a politician in each town. Certainly everybody knew who they were in the cities, but the towns were the biggest problem. And quite often we'd get ahold of one of the larger politicians, such as Jake Arvey, and he would assign a couple of people to find out who was in many areas where we were going to stop. And this kind of thing was right up Mr. Truman's alley. He liked to talk to the little fellow who was the big fellow in a small town. He always liked it. Sometimes, he'd hold up the train just to talk to a district committeeman. But this was constant. They'd come aboard and might have three or four men, and we'd only have twenty-five minutes between one town and another, so you had to keep them going all the time. Mr. Truman always made himself available even during meals to sit down and talk.

HESS: He would talk to these people between towns?

FEENEY: Oh, yes -- always, and always personally. Now sometimes you'd go into a city, of course, and then it became almost impossible. You'd have fifty people wanting to get on the train and you could only take ten or twelve, and then you'd have to leave it up to somebody like Jake Arvey from Chicago. He would be the one who determined who would come on and who would come off.

HESS: During this time -- still on Stevenson -- did you hear the President make any comments on Mr. Stevenson that you can relate?

FEENEY: Mr. Truman felt that Mr. Stevenson was not getting to the people. He felt that there wasn't enough warmth in his approach to people, and he felt very often that he was making mistakes in what he would say, and how he would say it. And to put it plainly, he felt as though Mr. Stevenson was talking over the heads of most people, and particularly so in the West. And then, as I recall,

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I don't think Mr. Stevenson went to the South -- I'm not sure of this -- but he spent hardly any time in the South which Mr. Truman felt was a very serious mistake and, in fact, at one time, I know he talked to him about going to the South but Mr. Stevenson did not go.

HESS: Was this over the phone or...

FEENEY: This was in person at one time, at the White House.

HESS: Were you present at that time?

FEENEY: No. I was not. I can't recall that anybody was present during Mr. Truman's talk with Mr. Stevenson except maybe Matt Connelly, once in awhile.

HESS: During the campaign Mr. Truman held forth pretty much against General Eisenhower. But there was a time in October when he toned down his -- as they said in the *New York Times* -- his "anti-Eisenhower campaign." Do you remember anything about that?

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FEENEY: I think that Mr. Truman -- I know that Mr. Truman liked Eisenhower very much. He felt that he had made Eisenhower -- which he did when he appointed him Supreme Commander over the opposition of a great many military people. And he always had a close feeling toward Eisenhower, but during the time you mentioned, Mr. Eisenhower had made some speeches that were directed against the administration and Mr. Truman, and Mr. Truman did not like it, and said so, publicly. He was really shocked and amazed that Eisenhower would attack his administration. And shortly thereafter, they seemed to both taper off on their criticism of each other, but Mr. Truman was very, very disappointed with Mr. Eisenhower.

HESS: As an observer of the political scene, did you think that Stevenson would win that election?

FEENEY: No, I did not.

HESS: Why? Were your views principally the same as the President's?

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FEENEY: Yes, pretty much. You know, Mr. Truman was, I think quite a teacher. He seemed to have an awareness of all areas of the country. He could tell from a reception of a crowd whether or not he was going over. He could tell -- he used to get a great kick out of being on the back platform of a train and have somebody say, "Give 'em hell, Harry," because it would give him a chance to open up. But he never felt that there was enough enthusiasm for Stevenson. It was sort of an accepted thing, but not the wildly enthusiastic thing that you need in politics to win.

HESS: Do you have any other recollections dealing with the 1952 campaign? Or Truman-Stevenson relationships?

FEENEY: No, very little. I would say that their relationships were pretty much limited.

HESS: Well, we got off this by a question on Key West. Let's go back there just for a minute. How was the work of the staff carried on in Key West?

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FEENEY: Each morning we would have a session. Usually at Key West it was a time when Congress was not in session. The President never liked to be away from Washington when Congress was in session, and he would time the trips so that they would take place when the Congress was not in session, or in recess such as Easter. For instance, at Easter-time, and then possibly the day after the Congress would end, everybody would take off for Key West. But we would have a morning session down there -- but since the Congress was normally not in session it had to do with general or broad problems of the White House. Mr. Truman had a very strong feeling about Key West -- he would never permit -- rarely permitted anyone in Government to come to Key West to see him, and this applied to all Cabinet officers.

HESS: There was a time when Mr. Wilson came down to see him during the steel controversy...

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: ...and were you at Key West at that time?

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FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Can you tell me anything in particular about that? Was this an exceptional case, in other words?

FEENEY: This was exceptional. Very definitely exceptional. As I recall, a number of Cabinet officers wanted to come to Key West and tried to get invited to Key West but they just weren't -- but the steel strike was a real emergency. And another that I recall was during the newspaper campaign on the President with regard to the so-called scandals in Washington. And I distinctly recall that when Mr. McGrath appointed Newbold Morris as the director of a so-called clean up committee, Mr. McGrath did that without consultation of Mr. Truman (which is contrary to what I've read just recently), but the President did not appoint Newbold Morris; Mr. McGrath did. But Mr. McGrath was not available for several days after that appointment -- couldn't be found anywhere by the President. And then the man in charge of the Criminal Division of the

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Department of Justice, Lamar Caudle, had got involved with a trip to Italy, while he was chief of the Criminal Division, and when Mr. Truman heard about it, he called Mr. McGrath from Key West and told him to fire Caudle. But Mr. McGrath could not bring himself to fire anybody so Mr. Truman fired Caudle. It was direct orders of the President to fire Caudle.

HESS: Did you ever hear Mr. Truman make any comments on the Newbold Morris case?

FEENEY: Yes. Mr. Morris -- Newbold Morris -- wasn't in the job very long before he sent out a questionnaire of about nine pages involving the entire history of the family of every appointee to a Government position, right back to their grandfathers and their grandmothers, and their sisters and brothers and cousins. And I distinctly remember at breakfast, Mr. Truman looked at this thing and he said, "The fellow that developed this doesn't belong in Washington; he's out of his mind" -- so he fired him.

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HESS: I believe Mr. McGrath also lost his job over that, too, didn't he?

FEENEY: Yes, he did. Shortly, thereafter, we all returned to Washington and -- Mr. Truman, prior to this appointment of Newbold Morris, had tried to appoint a three man committee, and he started with Judge [Thomas F.] Murphy in New York -- a Federal judge. Murphy was called down to the White House, very much off-the-record, and agreed to be a member; and then a clergyman from Philadelphia -- Rev. Daniel Poling, also agreed to serve, and then a top lawyer from Chicago agreed to serve. But an argument developed between Judge Murphy and the clergyman as to who was going to be chairman, and Mr. Truman just told them that they would have to settle that. Later Judge Murphy notified the President that the association of judges or the judicial panel of Federal judges would not permit him to be on such a commission while he was a Federal judge and, therefore, he was turning it down.

HESS: Do you think that was a straight story or just

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the fact that he did not get to be the chairman?

FEENEY: I think that it had a whole lot to do with the chairmanship, but it's hard to tell. Mr. Truman tried to pick out people who had no actual connection with the Government, and Judge

Murphy had just previously been commissioner of police in New York and was an outstanding fellow who Mr. Truman thought would do a good job, and he wanted this clergyman from Philadelphia in there, too, and so he decided to drop it. Then none of them wanted to go in it and that's when things began to pop.

So, upon return, after Mr. Truman had fired Newbold Morris and Mr. McGrath was not available, these questionnaires were still in the hands of a great many people, and the Justice Department had not recalled them, Mr. Truman decided that Mr. McGrath was no longer "copasetic" with the administration and...

HESS: Wasn't Mr. McGrath mad at Newbold Morris because he started his investigation right in the Justice

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Department? Isn't that true?

FEENEY: It was probably true, yes.

HESS: He thought he was going to investigate people, but start someplace else?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Was very much known about Mr. Newbold Morris before this time?

FEENEY: Yes. He had run for mayor in New York, and he had been -- oh, I'd say -- sort of an "out-in-space" politician. He was not -- he was certainly not run-of-the-mill. He had some ideas that he thought were great but they never seemed to work out. We had a pre-press conference two days after our return from Key West and Mr. Truman announced that he had decided to fire Howard McGrath, and that he was going to announce it at the press conference.

HESS: Did he notify J. Howard McGrath before he fired him?

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FEENEY: Yes. He picked up the phone and said, "Howard, I want your resignation -- I'm going to announce a new Attorney General at 4 o'clock" -- this was 3:30...

HESS: Were you there?

FEENEY: Yes. And there was criticism on the staff of McGrath for the way things were running -- seemingly no contact with it -- and the President turned to Matt Connelly and said, "Matt, I've got to get an Attorney General right now; who do you suggest?"

He said, "Judge McGranery of Philadelphia."

He said, "That's the man I was thinking about." He said, "Get Jim on the phone."

Matt Connelly picked up the phone and called McGranery off the bench and said, "Jim come right to Washington. The President is going to announce you as the new Attorney General in twenty minutes."

McGranery was quite shocked and asked to talk with the President, which he did, and McGranery said that "If that's what you want, your order is it. I'll leave in an hour." So we walked across the street to the auditorium and it was quite a bombshell.

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HESS: Are there any other events leading out of the general subject of Key West that come to your mind?

FEENEY: Well, I believe that at Key West the President was at his best. He had a great love for history -- great love for history. And I always felt that when he left the Presidency, and I asked him one time if he wouldn't like to become a professor of history at a university, and he said, "That's the one thing in my life that I'd like." He said, "I hope when I leave the White House some university will offer me a professorship." But at Key West there was a great deal of time on our hands. We'd go swimming in the morning, come back and have lunch, have a nap, and go swimming in the afternoon. I usually ducked out of the morning swim and went fishing. We couldn't get the President to go fishing except once and he never got a bite. Everybody else caught all kinds of fish, but he didn't get anything.

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But one of the most enjoyable things I remember about Mr. Truman was during these times when he was at Key West or on the *Williamsburg* or at Shangri-La, invariable a question or an argument in history would come up between Charlie Ross and Bill Hassett and himself. And all the others would just sit back -- except once in a while Admiral Leahy, who always traveled with us, by the way, he was always part of the party, he would make some suggestion. But the thing that amazed me was his very complete knowledge of history; he was an expert on military history. And I said to him one time, "How do you ever remember so many facts and details about military history?"

He said, "Because I love it."

So, one night, down at Key West, he talked for four hours about military history, and the argument between Mr. Hassett and Mr. Ross became quite strong and Mr. Truman proved his points by bringing out four sets of silverware and placing them on a table, and he and Mr. Ross went through the fourteen major battles of world history --

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starting at the time of Hannibal.

HESS: Moving the silverware around the table...

FEENEY: ...moving the silverware all over the table and having discussions with Ross and Hassett about it.

So I said to him that night, I said, "I never enjoyed anything so much." I said, "My father-in-law was a newspaper editor, but he was a great disciple of religious history," and I said, "One night I listened to him for a couple of hours on religious history and he went over the thirty-six forms of religion, who the founders were -- " and I thought this would be interesting.

And he said, "You know, I've been doing some studying on religious history." He said, "Tomorrow morning down at the beach we'll talk about that."

So, sure enough, the next morning at 10 o'clock, we walked about a five or six block walk down to the beach -- it was a private beach -- and we sat on the seawall. And for two hours we talked about religious history, almost identical to the way my

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father-in-law talked about religious history, and he knew everything about religious history. And I recall also down there -- the *Saturday Evening Post* came out one time with an article on the twelve generals who became presidents. It is quite a lengthy article, about ten or twelve pages. And I took the article into his office and I said, "Mr. President, I'd like to have your impression of this article," and he read the article.

And he said, "This is more fakery." He said, "Most of these fellows were honorary generals. They were never generals; they were strictly honorary." And he went over the whole list and he knew all their backgrounds and he, of course, knew the Presidents of the country -- their entire backgrounds -- and family backgrounds -- inside out. And I think someday some writer will put together a story about his knowledge of history and his love for history -- it would be a great thing. And it's unfortunate that it hasn't been done. Because I majored in history in college, but Mr. Truman was so far ahead of the professors I had in history that...

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HESS: Did you also go to Shangri-La and on the *Williamsburg*?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Can you tell me about the President's relationships with the members of the press?

FEENEY: All of the newsmen assigned to the White House, generally speaking, were friendly with the President, and he knew them all by their first name, but the newspaper editors were not. He was always in strong disagreement with most newspaper editors, but he treated the reporters well. Down at Key West he'd go down and visit their quarters and chat with them, and they'd put a show on with crazy costumes, and he'd go down and watch the show, and everybody would have a real good time. But he knew that the editors were doing the stories, and he used to needle people like Merriman Smith and Tony Vaccaro and all those -- and Jack Steele and this other writer who has written several books and used to write for the *Daily News* here. But

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he used to get quite a kick out of it. They'd send one story out and when it was printed in the paper you'd think it was by two different people. Usually, he would go out of his way to be nice to newspaper people, and they knew it.

HESS: When the President would go to Shangri-La, was there any staff work carried on there at all?

FEENEY: Very little.

HESS: Mostly, just straight vacation when he'd take the short trips up to Thurmont. Did you go up there too?

FEENEY: Yes. I was up there several times. He personally didn't use Shangri-La very much.

HESS: Usually the other members of the staff?

FEENEY: Yes. I used it -- oh, four or five times.

HESS: Did you take your family up there?

FEENEY: Yes. Clark Clifford used it, and others on the staff used it. It was open to the staff, and

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we also had boats available, too, at the Naval Gun Factory.

HESS: What boats?

FEENEY: The *Margie* -- the small boats down at Anacostia. Besides the *Williamsburg* there were two other boats available for small parties.

HESS: What were the names of those boats?

FEENEY: The *Margie* was one -- I can't think of the other one.

HESS: Well, do you think that pretty well covers the *Williamsburg*, Key West and Shangri-La?

FEENEY: Yes.

HESS: Did you read any of the public opinion mail that came in the White House?

FEENEY: Yes. I'll give you an example of how this worked. The public opinion mail was very carefully watched at the White House. In the White House there was a room called the War Map Room,

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and it was used to brief the President by military people. But during the time I was there it was used for public opinion mail, and a very close check was made on all major questions. And on all the walls where the military maps used to be, we had columns with various questions at the top. At one time, there was a great deal of newspaper columns being written about Margaret and her tour. And one day we went into a staff meeting and Mr. Truman said, "I want to read you a letter I've just written" ! and the letter was directed to the music critic here at the *Washington Post*, Paul Hume. And when we heard that letter, we all objected to it.

HESS: Was this before it was mailed?

FEENEY: Yes. This was just before it was mailed. The letter was prepared and ready to go.

HESS: He read it to the staff before it was mailed.

FEENEY: And he read it to the staff. And we all strongly objected, but he said he was writing it as a father

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of his daughter, and not as the President. And we could not convince him, and he said, "I'll make a bet with all of you that in one week the people of this country will be on my side."

So, of course, when that letter went out, it broke loose in every paper and every radio station in the United States within an hour, because it was a very strong letter. It took about two or three days for mail to start coming in. Well, at the end of the week, we had better than 50,000 pieces of mail. It was one of the biggest floods of mail that ever took place in the White House. There were truckloads of it coming into the White House, and about eight days after he took us down to the mailroom and showed us the results -- and I think around eighty percent of the mail took his position on the matter, but of the eighty percent, eighty-five percent were from mothers.

HESS: They knew how he felt.

FEENEY: And he turned to Matthew Connelly and myself and he said, "See, you fellows don't understand

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human nature."

HESS: Who was in charge of the mailroom?

FEENEY: Oh, I can't recall.

HESS: Was there much personal opinion mail on legislation?

FEENEY: Oh, yes. One of the reasons I've emphasized the Displaced Persons bill was because it was such a violent bill, and the speeches were very, very vicious, and created a terrible controversy. Much of the other legislation was pure and simple politics, but the displaced

persons thing became a very, very controversial thing and very personal, and all the minorities in the United States were very, very much involved. And, of course, it followed on the heels of the discovery of the human ovens in Germany. You see, they weren't found until 1946, and it was still being published, and then one of the things -- you see, the Italians were very much involved in this too, because Mussolini had sent thousands of Italians into Ethiopia, to redo Ethiopia. But when the war was over those

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Italians had to be sent back to Italy, and they had no place to go, had no jobs -- entire families. So they became displaced too. And all the Italian people of the United States were very much up in-arms about this question, Jewish people particularly. My gosh, I think every top rabbi in the United States was in to see Mr. Truman. And Mr. Truman also had a couple of real good friends in the Catholic hierarchy, and he had a great respect and confidence in Cardinal Stritch of Chicago. He'd never go to Chicago without having a meeting with Cardinal Stritch -- a private meeting. And he also thought a great deal of Cardinal Cushing. He always had private meetings with them -- unadvertised. And whenever newspapermen would ask about it, they'd hear about it but no one ever wrote about it. Until one time up in Boston -- the President was going through Boston -- and the President called Cardinal Cushing and told him he would like to come in for a visit. So when we got to Boston, the President took Matt Connelly and myself, and Joseph Short, the press man, to the

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Cardinal's residence. And this was in a rented limousine, it wasn't a White House limousine. And the Secret Service were very disturbed about this, except that it was extremely quiet. When we arrived at the Cardinal's residence they had a brass band out front -- they had the Knights of Columbus with plumed hats.

HESS: The news had leaked.

FEENEY: This was all done in a couple of hours -- well, the Cardinal probably released it. And I'll never forget the President when he got out of the car. He said, "You know, this is the quietest reception I've ever had." And the band was going a mile a minute.

HESS: Met him with a brass band? I'll bet the Secret Service didn't like that?

FEENEY: Oh, well. No, they didn't like it. But he had a great admiration for Cushing and Stritch.

But, coming back to where I was, he was determined that this bill was going to go through,

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and the other side was just as determined that it wouldn't. There were some very, very vicious politics pulled on that one. It was really bad. And, of course, at that time, you must remember, and on all this legislation -- the Senate, at that time, was practically evenly divided. There was very little difference in count. I believe that at one time there was only a difference of two votes between the Republicans and Democrats, where today you have an entirely different situation.

That's why I think these comparisons are important. The President today has a great big advantage, and he has a lot of young senators there who are there because of Lyndon Johnson. And others who have been fortunate enough to be elected at a young age, they have a different perspective than the days when Mr. Truman was there, where you had a lot of real old men -- up in their seventies and eighties -- who had direct control of committees. Chairmen today do not have the same control of the committees. The best example I can think of is Mr. Fulbright. In spite of his opposition to Mr.

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Johnson's programs, particularly on foreign affairs, the committee just goes along and approves the legislation with Fulbright against it. But Tom Connally ran that Foreign Relations Committee with an iron hand.

HESS: In December of 1952 you were made an administrative assistant; which lasted just for about a month until the end of the administration. Did you have any particular duties at that time?

FEENEY: No. Nothing different than what I had.

HESS: Nothing different than what you had. It was mainly just administrative change?

FEENEY: Well, you see, when I went into the White House there was a limitation on administrative assistants, and it wasn't broken until 1952. Every bill that went up there on executive pay raises and other matters relating to super grades and things of this kind -- this was a new idea -- the President always included recommendations for increasing the number of assistants. But they just never got along until around that time.

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HESS: What was your involvement in the transition from the Truman administration to the Eisenhower administration?

FEENEY: Very little. Very little. I met all the entourage of the Eisenhower, but Mr. Eisenhower conferred with the President all of the time -- alone. And Mr. Murphy had many sessions with the Governor -- Governor...

HESS: Sherman Adams.

FEENEY: ...Sherman Adams. And at that time, I don't think the counsel of the President was picked -- I can't recall that it was. But there were about seven or eight people in there a number of times to find out something about the operation of the White House. It's a very complicated building.

HESS: Were you asked to stay on after January 20th?

FEENEY: I was asked by the man who was succeeding me, General Jerry Persons, and I declined.

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HESS: Then you declined. Any particular reasons for this?

FEENEY: I felt that it was a good time to get out with the President leaving. And I felt that it couldn't last anyway more than four or five months, and furthermore, I didn't think it was necessary because the man succeeding me had had a great deal of contact work up around the Senate.

HESS: They were bringing a pretty experienced man, too.

FEENEY: Yes. General Jerry Persons had been a contact man for the Army, and was well liked.

HESS: Also, while we're on this, General Maylon resigned, I believe, in 1951, and there was another man brought in for a short period of time, a Mr. John Carroll. What can you tell me about him?

FEENEY: I do recall John Carroll, but as I remember, John was at the White House for a very brief time --

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I'd say a couple of weeks at the most. And having been a former congressman, and General Maylon being ill for such a long period of time, the President felt that the job ought to be beefed up, but Mr. Carroll decided after a very short time to go back to Colorado and prepare to run for the Senate.

HESS: So he didn't stay there too long. How was the job carried on? Now, you mentioned that Mr. Maylon was sick -- who carried on that job at the time he was sick?

FEENEY: Well, several of us. At that time, the same as in the Senate, the chairmen in the House were very powerful in their own right, and quite often the President would invite them down for a meeting on a particular piece of legislation. In most cases the President himself carried on a lot of the contact work with the House chairmen. But here again, the House was then being ruled by Sam Rayburn. But several of us very often went up to the House, particularly on major bills to be sure that...

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HESS: Who along with yourself?

FEENEY: George Elsey, Charlie Murphy and others. We were, all of us, were pretty much on pretty good terms with key House people. And, of course, another thing to remember is that Sam Rayburn was not only Speaker, but he was director-in-chief of the House. He would decide what bills were going to go through and what were not going to go through. He ran the House with an iron hand. It was a very unusual situation and it will probably never happen again. But most House members were not even able to talk with Sam Rayburn. He only saw the people he wanted to see. And he had a few key people -- most of them chairmen -- who would be admitted to the

throne. So for legislative purposes, Mr. Truman would send for Mr. Rayburn, and they were both very friendly, and they'd go over the bills that were to go through and those that would be sidetracked. So you have an entirely different situation.

HESS: That was really the way that liaison was conducted

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between the White House and the House on the Hill?

FEENEY: That's right.

HESS: Between Mr. Truman and Sam Rayburn.

FEENEY: That's correct. Mr. Truman knew, of course, having been on the Hill, that Mr. Rayburn was the "commander in chief" of the House, and everybody in the House knew it. All House members knew that whatever Mr. Rayburn decided, that was it, and anyone who disagreed with him didn't last very long.

HESS: Actually, there was less horse trading done in the House than in the Senate.

FEENEY: It was mostly done with Mr. Rayburn.

HESS: It was not done with the individual members, it was done with Mr. Rayburn.

FEENEY: Of course, House chairman and key members were always consulted.

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HESS: After General Maylon left, were you still sort of unofficially in charge of the liaison with the House too, from 1951 on, after the time he left? I think he resigned in May of 1951.

FEENEY: Yes, he did.

HESS: You were officially in charge of liaison with the Senate?

FEENEY: I spent quite a good deal of time in the House after General Maylon left.

HESS: It could more or less be said that you were officially in charge of the Senate and unofficially in charge of the Senate and unofficially in charge of the House.

FEENEY: ...That is correct.

HESS: All right. I have one last question just on Mr. Truman. Do we need anything to wind it up other than that? Do you have anything else you want to say?

FEENEY: I don't think so.

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HESS: What do you think were Mr. Truman's major contributions during his career?

FEENEY: I think his -- someday, someone, is going to write a good story on Mr. Truman. I think that too often publications in general were too anxious to make him out to be a man of fast judgment, that he was trigger-happy on his judgments. Every single, major matter that came up in the White House Mr. Truman would take about six weeks to determine his position, particularly when there was a vast division, not only between Republicans and Democrats but within his own party as to how something should be done. The decisions he made in all major matters were as a result of long hours of deliberation and study, and he would go as far as he possible could at bringing in people from all over the country to talk with him.

I can clearly remember a similar situation that we have today with the wide-open battle on interest rates between the Federal Reserve Board and the U.S. Treasury. John Snyder was Treasurer and a very close friend of Mr. Truman's -- a personal

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friend. This battle went on for weeks and weeks. During that period of time, Mr. Truman sent for every top monetary man in the country to come to Washington to talk with him, and he was determined not to make a mistake because he felt that any mistake in monetary matters could be fatal to his administration, and he had a very strong feeling about it. And I remember being sent to New York to talk to Mr. [Winthrop] Aldrich of the Chase National Bank, and he wasn't happy about coming to Washington. In the first place, he was a very avid Republican, and in the second place he was on the side of the Federal Reserve Board, but he agreed to come when he was told that the President wanted to see him. He came in about 10 o'clock one night. The interview was supposed to be for fifteen minutes -- well, four or five of us in the outer office just waiting to see what the reaction was -- Mr. Aldrich was in there for an hour-and-a-half.

When he finally came out of the office, he said, "You know, gentlemen, it's no wonder that he's the President. He's a better banker than I am."

He brought in people from California; he brought in experts on taxes; he brought in economic

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advisers -- this thing went on for at least six weeks, and finally Mr. Truman ruled in favor of the Federal Reserve Board. But when the decision was made, every newspaper in the country said it was made in a twenty-minute discussion, and that John Snyder would probably resign that day, which was ridiculous. But this is the way he handled all major decisions. He was determined to listen to a great many people, but once he made a decision, nothing but God could change it. And he hammered at it all the time. Once he made up his mind that was it, but he made up his mind by obtaining all the information possible on a subject -- from both sides. He would deliberately bring in his own enemies into the White House -- political enemies to talk with them on various subjects. He wanted to get their side of it. He brought in Senator Capehart one time. Capehart was a power in the Senate, and he brought Capehart in and they had a chat for about an hour and they wound up having a drink together. Capehart went back to the Senate and ripped him apart on the

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Senate floor. But the old myth that Mr. Truman was a hip-shooter, I think should be someday dissolved because it just wasn't true. He would always listen to his Counsel -- always -- and if there was still any disagreement, they'd have another meeting. And they'd have meetings any time of the day or night. He was always available. He was a hard-working President. He worked many, many hours on major problems. Many times we were there until 10 or 11 o'clock at night. But at the same time, I want to say one thing, I don't think in all my experience I've ever met a more human individual. He knew more about "human chemistry" than any person I've ever come in contact with.

HESS: One last question: What's your estimation of Mr. Truman's place in history? A hundred years from now, how will he be regarded?

FEENEY: President Truman was a man of rare vision and was gifted with the ability to see far into the future. Several examples were his strong belief

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that the Nile River in Egypt should be harnessed to provide power and irrigation for millions of acres of worthless land. That idea has finally been accomplished by the building of the Aswan Dam, unfortunately financed by the Russians.

He also foresaw, with the development of the Western States and the population explosion, the extreme water and power shortages and recommended several times large conservation plans and programs which are now being developed throughout the West.

I think if some of these things that I've mentioned, and a great many others are put on paper somehow -- someone ought to make a study of the major questions that were resolved during his terms. I think in a hundred years he'll go down as a great President -- a man who had to make some very, very unusual and difficult judgments. Of course, the atomic bomb would be one. The firing of General MacArthur was another, particularly after his trip to Wake Island and the assurances he received from General MacArthur. The Korean War was another. But the Marshall plan was not an

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accident, it was not dreamed up overnight like some people have said in their writings. It was the result of long, long hours of study and real hard work to get to the bottom of the problem.

HESS: What can you tell me about that?

FEENEY: The Marshall plan was not popular with the British. The British Government did not favor the Marshall plan. Churchill did not like it. It was set up primarily for Greece. There was a great division in our Government and the other governments as far as the Marshall plan was concerned, and it was a very difficult thing to put over. But it caught hold immediately. It was a success the day it started.

HESS: Where did the idea for the plan originate?

FEENEY: It originated with Mr. Truman, and I think it came out of his discussions with Mr. Churchill. You know, contrary to belief, Mr. Churchill was a very hard man to change his mind, too, and had a great many of his own ideas. But they met, I'd

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say frequently, as world leaders go -- they met quite frequently, when you consider they were 3,000 miles apart. But each time, they'd have an argument, and a strong one, and Mr. Churchill was not very happy about the Marshall plan. He wanted to keep the British Empire as it was, and he wanted nothing to interfere with it. And there was some talk at that time about India, you know, breaking away from the Empire. Mr. Churchill was violently opposed to that -- violently opposed -- at that time.

HESS: Now England cooperated or participated in it once it was established?

FEENEY: Once it was established -- oh, yes.

HESS: But they didn't want it to begin with?

FEENEY: No.

HESS: Well, we're about to run out of tape -- do you have anything else you want to cover?

FEENEY: No. I can't think of anything.

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HESS: We can put on another reel.

FEENEY: No. I can't think of a thing. The only thing I should say is that I think that Mr. Truman had a very loyal staff -- and -- I'd say all of his staff was pretty much incognito. They were team ball players. They were never headline hunters. We have some today who are. They were working for him because he was such a great, great President and this was a feeling that everybody had. I think that just about does it.

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