

Oral History Interview
with
JAMES J. ROWLEY

Secret Service agent in charge of the White House detail during the Truman Administration.

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by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

NOTICE

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JOHNSON: Mr. Rowley, I'm going to begin by asking you to tell us when and where you were born and what your parents' names are.

ROWLEY: I was born in the Bronx, New York on October 14, 1908. My father was James J. Rowley; my mother's maiden name was McTeague--Bridget Theresa McTeague. Both of them were immigrants from Ireland. They met in New York City and were married in Manhattan. We lived in the upper Bronx, as we called it, around Fordham Road where the university is, in that general area.

JOHNSON: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

ROWLEY: Yes, I have a brother, a Jesuit priest, and a sister.

JOHNSON: What's his name?

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ROWLEY: Father Francis Rowley, S.J., and my sister is Marge Borise. Of interest though, the parish we entered, when we moved up to the upper Bronx, was Our Savior Parish, whose pastor was the famous Father Duffy of the Fighting 69th. And of further interest is that when he returned from World War I--it was a rainy Sunday and there was a parade coming up Washington Avenue towards the church--all of the parishioners were outside the church waiting for him. And also there, on horseback, was General Bill Donovan. Remember Colonel Bill Donovan?

JOHNSON: Wild Bill?

ROWLEY: Yes. I mentioned that for the reason that during the early part of World War II I ran across him aboard the Potomac when he was the guest of President Roosevelt. I happened to be on duty on the aft deck of the presidential yacht, and he came out one morning and we got talking. I mentioned to him that I remembered when he came up Washington Avenue with Father Duffy and the retinue. He was very much interested. Then, years later I ran into him overseas when I did the advance work for the conferences abroad.

JOHNSON: Oh yes. We'll want to get into that a little bit. Were you educated in the public schools there?

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ROWLEY: No, I went to a parish school, run by the Dominican Order.

JOHNSON: What are the names of these schools that you attended?

ROWLEY: It was the Our Savior School, parochial school. Then I went to George Washington High School and finished the term. I went to that public high school because they had a good baseball team, which was an inducement in those days. At the end of the semester, on June 30, 1926 my brother and I, both of us, had jobs downtown, lower New York--he in the Federal Reserve and I in a brokerage firm--when about 11 o'clock in the morning I got a call from Father Pigott, Assistant Pastor of Our Savior's Church. He said, "I want you to get your brother and come and see me in the rectory." We couldn't imagine what it was. So we got to the rectory and when he had us sit down, he said, "The reason I asked you to come here first was that your father was killed this morning." And he said, "Your mother is in complete shock, so I wanted to prepare you for it."

JOHNSON: What was you father doing? What was his occupation?

ROWLEY: He was with the highway department, the City of New

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York.

JOHNSON: There was an accident on the job?

ROWLEY: Yes. My father was checking the deterioration of an overpass when the railing gave way under his weight. His assistant reached out and tried to save him, and hold on to him, but he was a little heavy and he couldn't. He almost pulled the man over. That's the way it was described to me. So that meant that now I had to go to work. But fortunately, in New York City you had night high schools.

JOHNSON: Now you are the oldest child?

ROWLEY: Yes. I finished up at what was called Fordham Evening High School. It was housed in the regular day high school. So I went there and got my diploma, and then enrolled at St. John's University in Brooklyn. I went there for two years and studied science. At that time I was working for the New York State Banking Department on liquidation work for banks that closed, particularly the bank I was working with at the time.

JOHNSON: What year would this be?

ROWLEY: In 1930 the bank closed. So I had six years of liquidation work. Of course, with the Depression on,

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they had to cut costs and those of us who were single were released. They held the people who were married and had responsibilities with children. So I finished two years of social science and then quickly entered law school. I wanted to be sure to have the tuition, because my sister and I had to support one another.

JOHNSON: What law school was this?

ROWLEY: St. John's University. And so I received my LLB there in 1936 and my masters degree in law in 1937.

JOHNSON: You had already learned a lot, at least about banking, and banking procedures, and banking regulations through this liquidation work you were doing.

ROWLEY: Yes. At that time stockholders of a bank were responsible for any problems a bank had, in that they could be assessed on their stock. It was quite a hardship for those who held stock in a bank.

JOHNSON: That got you acquainted with currency and currency laws, counterfeiting possibly. Did you have any exposure to counterfeiting problems at that time?

ROWLEY: No. I was in the Credit Department. First, I worked as a messenger, and then I went into the Credit Department and handled the files, and then, one day,

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they had me analyze financial statements and so forth. Eventually, after a year, I was out doing credit investigative work.

JOHNSON: After your law school, you law work is done, you moved into what position?

ROWLEY: I was out for six months, and one day I had luncheon with a vice president that I used to visit in connection with my work in Brooklyn. I'll never forget. This Mr. Hickey, the bank vice president, said to me, "What are you going to do?" And I said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Did you ever think about joining the FBI?" I said, "No." He said, "These fellows are in here every day." He said, "You know a lot about this business. So I said, "Yes." Of course, I'd worked on liquidations. I'd worked on embezzlement and bankruptcies and things of that nature. Some time later I dictated an application to the FBI, to my sister. She typed it all up and I sent it to J. Edgar Hoover. A few months later, there was a call to take an exam down in the New York office, which I did. Then the next thing I heard from my references was that they were investigating me.

JOHNSON: You're still living in the Bronx at this time?

ROWLEY: That's right, yes.

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JOHNSON: What year are we talking about here, that the FBI decided to hire you? What year was that?

ROWLEY: That was in '36.

JOHNSON: You came down here to Washington to work for the FBI then?

ROWLEY: Yes, for training school.

JOHNSON: How long a training period was that with the FBI?

ROWLEY: Twelve weeks in those days.

JOHNSON: Twelve weeks. Where was their training school located?

ROWLEY: The Department of Justice Building at the time. They didn't have Quantico in those days.

JOHNSON: So then as soon as your training is done, you get assigned as an agent?

ROWLEY: Yes. Special agent. I was assigned to Charlotte, North Carolina.

JOHNSON: Were you the only agent in Charlotte?

ROWLEY: Oh, no, we had several agents in Charlotte.

JOHNSON: And you were there how long?

ROWLEY: About six months or eight months, and then I was

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transferred to Boston. After Boston, I left and went down to New York. Then I ran into friends of mine that I hadn't seen for years at a restaurant one night, and they wanted to know what I was doing. I said I had been in the FBI. One of them had worked for the Secret Service.

JOHNSON: What's his name, this fellow?

ROWLEY: Frank Lyons. He had his law practice in New York.

JOHNSON: So he had been in the Secret Service, and now he brings your attention to the Secret Service.

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And this is what, 1938 or '39?

ROWLEY: This was '38 because I was appointed in October of '38.

JOHNSON: Into the Secret Service.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Is that just kind of a simple transfer or do you have to take training again?

ROWLEY: Oh no, I had already resigned from the FBI.

JOHNSON: Did you have to go through retraining again?

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ROWLEY: No. They had training, but I had all that training from the Bureau.

JOHNSON: I went through the FBI headquarters the other day, and that was the first time I've had their tour. I did ask them a question about coordinating with the Secret Service. I guess they get into everything but counterfeiting of currency and bank notes and that sort of thing; that's still reserved for the Secret Service. Of course, the Secret Service started long before the FBI was founded. What was your first assignment; what kind of cases, or problems were you to work with when you started out with them?

ROWLEY: Well, I had a variety of cases. One case dealt with Social Security identification cards. Apparently, a lot of people went in in those days and applied for cards giving different names, and a lot of merchants were defrauded by their identification. They would only make partial payments when purchasing expensive items. I worked with a New York City detective, and eventually we located one suspect and brought him before the U.S. Attorney. The U.S. Attorney released him on his own recognizance. There was a question of whether we had jurisdiction. At that time, the Social Security Administration didn't have any investigative

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organization. But in any event, that was an interesting experience. Then I was on maybe one or two counterfeiting cases. Then I was assigned to Utica, New York. I wasn't there very long when I was transferred to Washington.

JOHNSON: From Utica, New York.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: When you're here in Washington, with the Secret Service, on your first assignment, where were you stationed and what was your headquarters?

ROWLEY: In the main Treasury Building. Worked out of the Treasury Building for a month or so, and then I was transferred over to the White House.

JOHNSON: So you're assigned to the White House
in . . .

ROWLEY: In 1939.

JOHNSON: Way back in '39. So you worked for Roosevelt.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: You did go over to Africa, you said, to prepare for the Casablanca conference and you flew this route that a later airplane flew and crashed . . .

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ROWLEY: And the President flew that too.

JOHNSON: And the President flew that same route later on?

ROWLEY: I think it might have been a non-stop; it was on Pan-American, a Pan-Am seaplane.

JOHNSON: Of course, that was his first flight across the ocean.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the circumstances? Were you the first airplane with the White House Secret Service people to fly to Africa?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: What was that route again? Where did you start?

ROWLEY: Well, we started from Washington, D.C. We took one of those four-motored planes, a DC-4, and flew to Miami. Then we flew to Trinidad, from Trinidad to Belin, and Belin to Natal, where we refueled. By the way, after taking off from Natal, we're in the air, and all of a sudden I smelled some odor. I'm looking up and they had sort of a canvas ceiling. I could see this liquid-like water coming out, and so I called to the crew chief. I said, "I don't know, but something's leaking here." So he got hold of the pilot

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and he came in and took a look at it. He said, "Turn off any radios and stop smoking," and so forth. He flew around off Natal. We found out later that the cap wasn't on one of the fuel tanks and the fumes were coming from that. So we flew around for some time to exhaust as much fuel as we could, and the pilot came in for a landing. As the plane started to taxi down the runway, some of us started jumping off. But anyhow, the sergeant who was in charge of the crew slept with that plane from then on; he never let anybody touch the plane.

JOHNSON: All right. So then you got on over to Ascension Island, which you said was a secret at the time; it wasn't publicized that that was an airfield?

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And then on over to Dakar, in Africa?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And then on up to Casablanca?

ROWLEY: They called it British West Africa then, on the Gambia River, and then up to Marakesh where we were met my General Clark and General Grunther. They said, "We'll let you use our plane." There were four of us, and we got in his plane. He said, "See if you can beat

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our time." His plane was a bomber.

JOHNSON: You had to check out the place where the others were going to meet?

ROWLEY: We had to set up security perimeters. We worked with General Patton and his staff.

JOHNSON: Now this other plane that crashed that I was telling you about; you heard about that while you were there in Africa? You heard that that plane had crashed? [In January 1943, an American airliner, with 35 persons aboard, crashed in Dutch Guiana, killing all aboard. Among those on board were two FBI agents, 12 Army officers, and two representatives of the U.S. State Department.]

ROWLEY: That's right. In the jungles, after they took off from Trinidad.

JOHNSON: Were these people also coming to help provide security?

ROWLEY: Well, I don't know what they were doing. We had no word on that.

JOHNSON: Well, one of J. Edgar Hoover's right-hand men, the one in charge of the New York office and an expert on sabotage, was one of the victims that was on board that airplane. Did you ever see any evidence, or hear any rumors, that it might have been sabotaged, that

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airplane?

ROWLEY: No, but it was a natural conclusion, you know, that it went down there. Subsequently, Tommy Harmon's airplane went down in the same general area.

JOHNSON: That's what you said, but he managed to get out.

ROWLEY: Yes. He hacked his way out.

JOHNSON: Was he by himself in a fighter plane?

ROWLEY: Something like that, yes.

JOHNSON: About this plane that crashed in January 1943, there was an Army investigation apparently. Did you hear anything about the results of an investigation on that plane that crashed?

ROWLEY: No. No, you see, I became involved in my current assignment. I was a member of the advance teams.

JOHNSON: So you did advance work for all of the conferences of Roosevelt, beginning with Casablanca?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Then, of course, when Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, he was in Warm Springs, Georgia. Were you there?

ROWLEY: That's right, yes.

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JOHNSON: You were there in Warm Springs?

ROWLEY: Yes, with Mike Reilly, head of the White House detail, and with other agents. What happened down at Warm Springs was that we were supposed to have a picnic, and I was going to lay out with the Marine captain the security around this picnic area. I get a call from Mike Reilly. He said, "I want to see you, come over to the cottage." So I got over to the cottages and went down to the house. He said, "Come on, walk up the path with me." He said, "Don't say anything, but the President is gone." I said, "What do you mean, gone?" He said, "He's dead." I said, "What?" We had to handle that situation delicately because what they were doing was trying to get Steve Early, locate him, and try to get Mrs. Roosevelt. They didn't want word to get out prematurely; they wanted to give them a chance to come down. So Mrs. Roosevelt came and landed in Atlanta and then motored in.

JOHNSON: Had you met Truman by this time, as Vice-President?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: You hadn't met him?

ROWLEY: No, that was George Drescher and two or three

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agents assigned.

JOHNSON: Where was your office here in the White House? Where were you located?

ROWLEY: In the West Wing. Right as you come into that office there, there used to be a huge lobby, with a big, round Filipino table with oxen heads. I was in a little office, as you came in, to the right.

JOHNSON: But during the Truman period was that where the Secret Service people had their main quarters in the White House?

ROWLEY: Yes, that's where I was. The chief of the Secret Service was still over in the Treasury Department. That's where the headquarters of the Secret Service was located.

JOHNSON: In '46, you became supervising agent, I believe, but when Truman became President you were, what, assistant to the . . .

ROWLEY: No, I was head of one of the shifts. Then I was appointed to what we call "agent in charge of the White House detail."

JOHNSON: Some of these articles have numbers, just approximate numbers, of Secret Service men who were on detail at the White House. Do you recall about how

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many there were that were on duty there at the White House when Truman became President?

ROWLEY: I would say maybe 15.

JOHNSON: Three shifts, 24 hours, seven days a week.

ROWLEY: No, you had days off in those days.

JOHNSON: Yes, but I mean there was somebody on duty at the White House all the time.

ROWLEY: Oh, yes, 24 hours a day, exactly.

JOHNSON: I suppose as soon as Truman came to the White House for the oath of office, that night, he had Secret Service people there.

ROWLEY: Yes, that was Drescher.

JOHNSON: And Drescher was the one up here, at the White House?

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And was he in the room there where Truman was taking the oath?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: So when did you get up here then; what was your first day with Truman?

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ROWLEY: Right after the funeral of President Roosevelt.

JOHNSON: Let's take an example. Truman, on one of his first trips, went out to Olympia, Washington to visit Mon Wallgren and then went down to San Francisco.

ROWLEY: Yes, I did the advance at both places.

JOHNSON: In Olympia or San Francisco?

ROWLEY: I did both of them, yes.

JOHNSON: What would be entailed in that? Typically, what would be involved in doing advance work for a presidential trip like that? What would be your duties?

ROWLEY: Well, the first thing, I went out to Olympia and met Governor Mon Wallgren and worked out the details with him. I left somebody in charge to work out the details with the State Police. Truman was to be a guest at the residence of the Governor. I had a plane assigned, and I flew down to San Francisco and then I worked with our office there. I got together with Colonel Means of the Army security, who incidentally was from Missouri and knew Truman, and the San Francisco Police. We went over all the details for the places the President would visit. For example, he stayed at the Fairmont Hotel, and there would be a

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motorcade. Then, after a few days there, I went back to Olympia to see how the arrangements were progressing. Then I flew back to San Francisco. The President landed at Hamilton airfield in San Francisco.

JOHNSON: You had the airplane the Sacred Cow, and usually it seemed that he and White House people, staff, would fly in the Sacred Cow and then another plane behind them would have the newsmen, and even some Secret Service men, along with these newsmen.

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: But there would be Secret Service men in the Sacred Cow as well, I suppose.

ROWLEY: Well, yes, in case there were any problems where it came down to evacuation, and so forth.

JOHNSON: Well, who or how many did that leave at the White House?

ROWLEY: The White House Police.

JOHNSON: The White House Police then took over duties . . .

ROWLEY: Well, just the normal duties about the White House.

JOHNSON: Normal duties. As long as the President wasn't in the White House, you didn't have to be there.

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ROWLEY: That's right, well, especially when we were away with the President, like when he went for a week, say a Christmas period, to Kansas City. But in my office, you had the

secretaries there who kept in touch with us. Then, too, you must remember we did not have too many agents in those days.

JOHNSON: I have a letter here from Edward McKim who was, for a short time, administrative assistant to the President. The letter is to Fred Canfil. McKim claims that a Secret Service group went to Kansas City in May of '45 and then the report came back to him about some kind of delinquency and so on. There's no follow-up on this, and I just wonder what this flap was about. He claimed that there was some kind of misbehavior and that the Secretary of the Treasury may be taking disciplinary action. Did you ever hear anything about this little incident, or whether there was anything to this?

ROWLEY: I was in Washington, so I didn't know.

JOHNSON: This was in May, about a month after he became President. I didn't know whether there was anything to this, or whether you recalled anything about it, but you weren't there in Kansas City you're saying. Also there's a little memorandum here, from the President to the chief of the Secret Service at the

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White House, which says that someone on duty refused to call, or allow her to call, the house for verification. It says, "Miss Murray is an old friend of the family and merely wanted to leave a box of candy for Mrs. Truman. It seems to me that Mr. Frederick should be transferred." Do you recall that incident at all?

ROWLEY: No. What date is that?

JOHNSON: This is January 28, 1946.

ROWLEY: George Drescher was in charge, wasn't he?

JOHNSON: I suppose at that point, yes.

ROWLEY: Miss Murray.

JOHNSON: She was a friend of the family. According to the President, the agent was overreacting or something; they wouldn't accept a package from her, or call. What was the normal practice? Say if somebody came to the White House and wanted to leave a package, or...

ROWLEY: Well, we would process it first. We eventually got those x-ray machines. You know that was one of the responsibilities, to check them if they didn't know who they were. You wanted to ascertain the identity and the reliability of the individual.

JOHNSON: How about mail that came to the White House, I

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suppose to the mailroom?

ROWLEY: That's right, and it was turned over to us.

JOHNSON: You took a look at all of the mail?

ROWLEY: Yes, right. We were building up a department, which is now called the Protective Research Department.

JOHNSON: You assigned two or three Secret Service people to do this?

ROWLEY: Yes, and we sent it to a field office to identify the person, if it was really serious, and so forth.

JOHNSON: Did you ever intercept any package that had something dangerous in it, to the President; to President Truman?

ROWLEY: No. We've come across things that had spikes and hairpins and stuff like that. I think Mike Reilly's book devotes some time to that, which would answer a lot of your questions. [Michael F. Reilly (as told to William J. Slocum), Reilly of the White House (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947).

JOHNSON: There's a story that Truman, you know, liked to take his early morning strolls.

ROWLEY: Right.

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JOHNSON: And the first time he did that, he just went marching off and I guess the Secret Service people had to run after him to catch up with him.

ROWLEY: They weren't forewarned, yes. I wasn't there that time. I was assistant to Drescher.

JOHNSON: And they'd have to be fast walkers too.

ROWLEY: Yes. You had to get up early, because he came out at 6 o'clock or 6:15 a.m.

JOHNSON: Do you remember who it was that usually walked with Truman on those strolls, which Secret Service men?

ROWLEY: Well, initially, it was Drescher. When Drescher left, when he was assigned to the Baltimore field office, and I was appointed in charge of the detail; then I walked with the President.

JOHNSON: You did.

ROWLEY: I walked with him every morning for a month--my wife can tell you--getting up at 5 o'clock, especially in the winter when it was so dark, and you get down there and it's still dark.

JOHNSON: Where were you living at that time?

ROWLEY: In Chevy Chase.

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JOHNSON: So you had to get up and get down to the Blair House.

ROWLEY: Yes, it was no trouble at that time, but Truman would be out at 6:15. He never retraced his steps. It was amazing; each morning it was a different route, and if a traffic light caught him he'd go with the green light. You couldn't get a fix on him, if anybody wanted to try something untoward.

JOHNSON: Well, apparently people began to expect to see him; they kind of grouped around to see him. Then you started taking him out farther from the White House to do his strolls. Do you remember that?

ROWLEY: Oh yes, but it was the President who decided the route. One day we walked right up to Union Station from the White House. He was living in the Blair House then. You know where Union Station is? Up near the Capitol.

JOHNSON: Oh, okay.

ROWLEY: Well, anyhow, we were passing the entrance, and coming out of the entrance were a lot of the Government people coming in to work and so forth. Among the people was Phil Murray, the labor leader, who saw the President, and they exchanged greetings. So we got talking. I never started any conversation with the

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President unless he started it first. So he said something, and I said, "Well, a lot of historic events happened here at Union Station. I understand from our agents, when the President, President Hoover, was leaving office, and the agents that were assigned to him escorted him to the train, he got on the back of a private car, and immediately after the train pulled out, he waved good-bye. It was rather sad, because the agents were dropped, and he had no security." I said, "It was something that the agents always talked about." He didn't say anything; I would say we walked a city block before he said something. "Well," he said, "I'll fix that, Jim." Shortly after that, he appointed Hoover to some special assignment.

JOHNSON: Of course, the Potsdam Conference was Truman's first, and only, summit conference with Stalin. Were you there at Potsdam?

ROWLEY: I did the advance at Potsdam.

JOHNSON: At the Cecilienhof?

ROWLEY: That's right. Well, the Cecilienhof was where the meeting took place; that's the old Prince's residence. The houses or residences were in Babelsberg. General [Major General Floyd] Parks was the commanding general there, and that area was where the motion picture

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industry was located, so it's quite a nice area. A number of houses were assigned and it was my duty to look the houses over and so forth. Some of General Marshall's staff were there--the military. Of interest, I couldn't find anybody when I got there who really knew about the meeting arrangements. I landed in Paris and I called Bob [Robert] Murphy, who was Ambassador, and he was going up to Berlin, so he wouldn't be available. Finally I found out that an admiral that I worked with in Hawaii when Roosevelt went and met the admirals and General MacArthur, that he was there, so I went to see him.

JOHNSON: This was Admiral . . .

ROWLEY: Admiral [Vice Admiral Robert Lee] Gormley, and he still had the same aide that he had that I worked with. So I called up and said to him, "I'm having a tough time here trying to find out...." He said, "I'll straighten that out." So he called the Air Force and the Army, and all, in for a meeting in his staff room. A lot of them had ideas, on this and that. He listened and he said, "Gentlemen, I think we had better listen to this young man." So then I went on, and from there on I had no trouble. But the reason I'm citing all of this is that the one that worked with me was Colonel Jim Blair who later became Governor of Missouri.

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JOHNSON: Oh yes, sure.

ROWLEY: Remember he died of monoxide; they left the car running when they came back from a dinner.

JOHNSON: He was the one that you were working with over there?

ROWLEY: He was there and he was responsible for the quartering and so forth. So I worked with him and told him what we needed.

JOHNSON: How about the Russians? If anybody was security conscious, I suppose they were, for Stalin.

ROWLEY: Oh, they were. They had the whole place set up because they were in that area. The President and staff were located by a lake. On the lake was a little island, and the Russians

wanted to take care of it. I said, "No, we'll use American troops there. We'll take care of it because that's our responsibility." They didn't push too hard, so that's what we did. That detail had a lot of sharp, young American soldiers.

JOHNSON: How many Secret Service people did we have there, would you say, at Potsdam, that were working with you?

ROWLEY: Oh, I don't know. You would have to look up the records. Three of us were on advance, and then [Floyd] Boring was there . . .

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JOHNSON: But you did have to coordinate with the Soviets' security people?

ROWLEY: Oh, I had a meeting all of the time with the Soviets.

JOHNSON: You had to work through a translator?

ROWLEY: Yes, through a translator. Some of them could speak English; a lot of them knew English and they pretended that they couldn't. Colonel Jim Smith was the Provost Marshal; I worked with him.

JOHNSON: Everything went smoothly, or did you have any hang-ups, any problems?

ROWLEY: Well, you remember Churchill was defeated and you had to wait until [Clement] Attlee was briefed and he came to the meeting. Stalin pretended he was sick, and Truman said, "If we don't have a meeting tomorrow, I'm going home." And Stalin got well real quick.

JOHNSON: So no problems with the Russians while you were working with them?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: Good.

ROWLEY: The only thing, the only trouble, was that Colonel Smith and myself met with the Russians and then we'd

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get a call about 2 or 3 in the morning from Colonel Kerensky and a General Gorlinsky [The spelling of these two names is uncertain]. They called up and said, "We can't agree; we have to get approval from the higher ups. I was used to that. Then we went there and we worked until about 10 o'clock in the morning; going over the details and returned to the same plans we agreed to the day before. They were attempting to make us weary and submissive.

JOHNSON: Were you on the *Augusta*? Did you go on the ship with Truman?

ROWLEY: No, I was over there in advance.

JOHNSON: When did you come back? Did you come back after the President left? See, he announced the use of the atomic bomb on the way back, on the *Augusta*. But you weren't on the ship either coming or going over?

ROWLEY: No. I flew back to the United States.

JOHNSON: How about the *Williamsburg*? Did you have any special problems there, and did the Secret Service have an escort boat, or ship, or was it all just on board the *Williamsburg*? Did they have a boat that went along?

ROWLEY: Yes, we had agents in a follow-up boat.

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JOHNSON: In a follow-up boat. Did they have a boat that followed the *Williamsburg* whenever it went out on cruises?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: A separate boat?

ROWLEY: Yes, because there are only so many cabins on the presidential yacht, and that would be for some of his staff and guests, and an agent or two.

JOHNSON: Okay, so there were only one or two agents on the *Williamsburg* itself.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And after you became supervising agent in '46, was that your job to be on the *Williamsburg* whenever he was on board?

ROWLEY: Well, yes, when I was not doing advance work. You had to, because the responsibility was yours. And when they anchored at night, the agent would be out in a motorboat from the follow-up ship, circling around.

JOHNSON: What kind of boat was that? I don't think I've seen pictures of it.

ROWLEY: It was a small motor boat.

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JOHNSON: But the ship was a smaller one than the *Williamsburg*?

ROWLEY: Yes. Run by the Navy, converted by the Navy.

JOHNSON: In February 1946 a letter bomb in a valentine package exploded in an OPA office in Wichita, Kansas. I noticed a memo sent from the White House Secret Service, saying that the fluoroscope formerly used at Hyde Park should be sent to Kansas City for handling packages addressed to Truman. Do you remember a fluoroscope that had been used at Hyde Park being moved to Kansas City to inspect packages that came to you in Kansas City?

ROWLEY: I assume. But at that time I don't think I had anything to do with that.

JOHNSON: You had a Kansas City office that handled all mail that came to the President out there?

ROWLEY: Yes. Agent Jackson Krill was in the Kansas City office. He always checked with the President, and his mother and his sister out there. He was very close to the brother, J. Vivian Truman.

JOHNSON: Yes. J.V. Truman.

ROWLEY: He [Krill] is still alive.

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JOHNSON: How many people did they have stationed out in Kansas City?

ROWLEY: Not many. We had a small office. As I said, we had 275 agents around the country, agents handling counterfeiting, protection and all the other assignments. You know, when you think of the offices, and how large this country is, that wasn't very many people.

JOHNSON: How about in Puerto Rico? You just had one or two agents down in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 1947, for instance. In a memo in March 1947, the White House Secret Service noted that the leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalists, a man named Pacheco, was reported to have said the President "should be received with bombs instead of bullets," and so he sent this information to the Secret Service office in San Juan. Apparently, then, they did have an office there with what, one or two agents?

ROWLEY: One agent.

JOHNSON: So you were keeping some kind of tabs apparently on the Puerto Rican Nationalists, but you didn't have many people to do it.

ROWLEY: No, we didn't.

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JOHNSON: On another subject, and since food has been mentioned, did the Secret Service have to do any taste testing?

ROWLEY: We check the people that prepare the President's food.

JOHNSON: You mentioned perimeters, setting up a perimeter. Would you explain what that means; to set up a perimeter?

ROWLEY: Well, you take a place like the White House, and you're in a situation like during the war, you've got to have men patrolling around the area. The whole perimeter may be a house. For example, in Casablanca we had an inner and outer perimeter. In other words, we had tight security around all of the cottages in Casablanca, in North Africa, and then we had a wide perimeter surrounding the whole area.

JOHNSON: During World War II, of course, you had the Nazis to worry about, and that sort of thing, but after the war is over, during Truman's administration, rather than Nazis and sworn enemies, so to speak, who did you see as the biggest threats to the Presidents's security?

ROWLEY: People that were mentally deranged. You never knew what they were going to do.

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JOHNSON: Would you intercept mail from these people and also phone calls?

ROWLEY: The White House would get the phone calls and would refer it to our office. Our people would take down the information, and make it a matter of record. Then when we went to a certain area with the President, we'd get all of this information together and pass it on, say to our Kansas City field office, and then they would check on these people to see if they were still there or where they are.

JOHNSON: Did they put a tail on some of these people?

ROWLEY: Well, yes, with the assistance of detectives.

JOHNSON: With the local police department?

ROWLEY: Yes, observe them and so forth. If they could locate them in a house where they lived, they would just watch the house.

JOHNSON: Did you ever, before the Puerto Rican incident there, the Puerto Rican Nationalists in November of '50, did you ever intercept anybody with a hand gun who might have been aiming to get the President? I think there is a report in 1946, in Chicago, when the Secret Service noticed somebody on the train station up there and he was in one of your files, and he had a gun. Do

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you remember anything about that?

ROWLEY: No, I don't remember.

JOHNSON: How about the trip to Mexico in '47? Were there any incidents or any problems with security there for the President's trip to Mexico City?

ROWLEY: No, the only thing is that the staff didn't like the trip from the airport to the Embassy; they described that lamp posts looked like picket fences, they were going so fast. They complained about the speed.

JOHNSON: The speed.

ROWLEY: Speed, yes, and that's the only thing that I recall. Everything went well, and I must say that we got excellent cooperation from the Mexican officials, from both the Army and a new Mexican organization that was comparable to a mixture of the FBI and the Secret Service. Both of the heads of these organizations spoke English quite well, which was most helpful.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the car that you usually used for the President's trips that was shipped by airplane ahead of the President?

ROWLEY: Well, we did do that, but on this occasion they were driven overland to Mexico City. Later on, we used

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a cargo plane; I think cargo planes are being used still. We shipped the cars for the Geneva Conference by boat [in 1955] to Hamburg, and then they took them off and they motored down to Geneva.

JOHNSON: How about the limousine down in Mexico City? Was that our American White House car or limousine?

ROWLEY: Yes. And airplane transportation of cars came later.

JOHNSON: That was later.

ROWLEY: That came about through Bill McAvoy, who was vice president and represented Pan-Am Airlines here. He had taken a group of Congressmen down to the Antarctic and while he was waiting at the airport he sees two big cargo planes, and off come some buses for the Congressmen to be driven around in. He came home and wrote a letter to me. It was during President Eisenhower's time. He said, "Hey, you could use these for your cars whenever you travel abroad." So I got in touch with Bill Draper--he was the President's pilot and Air Force Aide--and I told him what happened. He said, "We'll set up the arrangements over at Andrews."

And that's what they did. Also at this time, we started using helicopters for transporting the President.

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JOHNSON: You were using helicopters under Eisenhower?

ROWLEY: Yes. For example, when we were in the German capital, Bonn, we flew from there in helicopters to Wiesbaden.

JOHNSON: Yes, that was after Truman, during Eisenhower. How about the trip to Rio de Janeiro on the U.S.S. *Missouri* [The President and Mrs. Truman and Margaret flew to Rio de Janeiro and returned on the USS Missouri, which Margaret had christened at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in January 1944].

ROWLEY: That's right, coming back.

JOHNSON: You came back on the Missouri?

ROWLEY: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: Were the cars taken along the Missouri then, the limousine, the White House limousines?

ROWLEY: No. The open car was shipped to and from Rio de Janeiro. We also used the Ambassador's closed car.

JOHNSON: I asked you about that incident, you know, where they went up into the mountains and skidded and the President's car had a wheel near the edge of the cliff.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: But you weren't in that car at that time?

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ROWLEY: No, I was in the lead car.

JOHNSON: Apparently, that wasn't considered a major problem. No problems with the Rio trip, then, as far as you can recall?

ROWLEY: No, I think things went quite well. Incidentally, that's where Colonel [Vernon] Walters came into the picture. He was down there then because he was with the Fifth Army in Italy, and worked with the Brazilian Army that was assigned to the 5th Army.

JOHNSON: Yes.

ROWLEY: He was the translator that had an ear for languages, so when Truman delivered his speech before the Chamber of Deputies, he [Walters] translated it into Portuguese.

JOHNSON: Yes, it would be Portuguese if he was in Brazil.

ROWLEY: That's right. He knew German, French, etc. So he did that, and everybody was amazed the way he handled the whole thing. It went well.

JOHNSON: At the Democratic Convention in Philadelphia--I've talked to you a little bit about this--but there was this controversy, this harsh criticism in the Philadelphia Inquirer about the Secret Service allegedly locking the doors to Convention Hall. In one

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of your reports you mentioned what I think was a man named Ryan who was in charge of the private detectives that had been hired by the Democratic National Committee to guard the Convention Hall, who actually had done this. You had to coordinate with the local police department, and in this case you also had private detectives you had to coordinate with?

ROWLEY: No, I don't recall. You see, it doesn't make sense for us to lock the doors. We put people on those doors. If you lock it, and have a crowd, you're violating the fire laws in the community. So we wouldn't do that. Then, also, if there was any unfortunate incident, you would have to evacuate the President, so you've got to have the nearest doors unlocked and you're not going to have it locked even if it's over at the other end of the building. I did the advance on that convention.

JOHNSON: Were you with Truman when he gave his acceptance speech about 2 in the morning?

ROWLEY: Yes, right, it was very hot that night.

JOHNSON: But you stayed with him through that whole day there.

ROWLEY: Oh yes.

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JOHNSON: That was a long day.

ROWLEY: That's right. The Philadelphia police were excellent.

JOHNSON: How about Tom Dewey? Did he get any Secret Service protection in those days?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: So he had what, private guards?

ROWLEY: Probably city or state police.

JOHNSON: In January 1950, Hopkins recommends that the Secret Service and Miss Stiles' offices be moved to the ground floor to "increase efficiency and give classified materials security at least equal to the past arrangements." Did Secret Service offices ever move to other locations in the White House during the Truman period?

ROWLEY: Yes. We were up on the second floor and we finally moved to a small office downstairs. And initially General Vaughan was right next to our office at the time.

JOHNSON: On the first floor, West wing?

ROWLEY: Yes, the first floor. They were expanding and they were adding people; then, eventually a lot of people

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spilled over to the Executive Office Building, across the street.

JOHNSON: Secret Service men?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: The White House Police force--did they have their own chief?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember what his name was in the Truman years?

ROWLEY: Yes. Major Hobart Francis.

JOHNSON: Did he have an office right next to yours there?

ROWLEY: No, he had an office in the East Wing.

JOHNSON: Over in the East Wing.

ROWLEY: Because they had to have space for lockers and all of that over there in the East Wing.

JOHNSON: What floor was it on?

ROWLEY: Well, it would be downstairs, in the basement.

JOHNSON: How about the assassination attempt on November 1, 1950. No doubt you remember something about that day. Where were you when you heard this news?

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ROWLEY: We were going out to St. Louis in a few days, maybe in a week's time. In preparation, I was called into Charlie Ross' office because Arthur Krock was in there complaining that the Secret Service was not going to take care of the newsmen. This was one of the jobs that we always had, even in Roosevelt's time--we took care of the press, picked up their baggage and had rooms assigned to them and so forth. I said, "We don't have the personnel to do all that today," and so forth. So, we're in the midst of a meeting and my assistant Henry Nicholson came charging in the office, and he said, "Come on, come on, come on." His expression was enough to tell me, don't ask questions, to go, and I went. We ran up West Executive Avenue, and I said, "What the hell's the matter?" And he said, "There's a shooting over at the Blair House." I said, "Oh boy." We got over there and, of course, it was over. Boring will tell you about his part of this, but [Floyd] Boring had wounded one of the Puerto Ricans that was trying to go up the front steps of Blair House. Boring was an excellent shot. And we had a man up inside the entrance; as soon as the commotion started he went right to the nearest place where we had a machinegun located, and he was waiting for any attempt to come in the front door. In the meantime, the other Puerto Rican went over to the west front

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security booth, and shot the police officer who was in the booth, on the west end of Blair House. As he was falling, the officer got off a shot and killed the other Puerto Rican. Boring wounded the one person, and we rushed him to the hospital. I assigned Agent Joe Ellis to stay with him because I didn't know how bad he was, and to get any confession or statement from him. So they stayed with him for several days.

JOHNSON: Apparently just before that, in August of '50, there was a request for additional money to pay salaries for additional policemen. One of the reasons for that was that they were going from a 48 to a 40-hour week. In other words, the White House policemen were on a 48-hour week until the summer of 1950, and then they did go to 40 hours?

ROWLEY: Yes, eventually I guess everybody did at that time.

JOHNSON: Okay, what were the prescribed working hours for the Secret Service?

ROWLEY: Forty-eight hours a week. However, I could be off duty and if the President was going to a banquet and required a black tie or tails, then I would go, and that cost additional money and you didn't get overtime in those days.

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JOHNSON: You had to wear black tie and tails?

ROWLEY: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: You had to dress up, like you were one of the guests?

ROWLEY: Yes, exactly. So you could be in there; otherwise you would be conspicuous.

JOHNSON: Then there is a request in May or June of '51 for ten armored vests to be used for Presidential protection. Were armored vests purchased in 1951, and was this the first time that those would have been used?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: After the assassination attempt, President Truman complained that he even had to get in a car to cross the street from Blair House to the White House.

ROWLEY: After that, that's right.

JOHNSON: That was instituted after the shooting?

ROWLEY: Right, and another thing that was instituted--we couldn't walk around the streets of Washington for a while. We went down to Haynes Point, early in the morning. We closed off the entrance to it, and on the waterfront we had the police boats out there

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circulating. Then we had patrol cars, detectives and our people going around. So we walked--and that's quite a walk--all the way down to the end and returning. We did that for several months, and when things subsided the President walked the streets again.

JOHNSON: Okay, there's something about a landing mat, in a memo in 1952, in reference to removing a landing mat behind the President's office. It was removed by the Air Force. Then there's reference to this as a temporary roadway outside the President's office. Do you remember anything about a landing mat or a temporary roadway just outside the President's office?

ROWLEY: I don't remember that, but don't forget, the White House still was under construction then.

JOHNSON: Well, from late '48 until about May of 1952. Perhaps it had something to do with the renovation?

ROWLEY: Possibly.

JOHNSON: Did that create extra problems for you, that renovation?

ROWLEY: No. We checked all of the personnel, construction workers, and everybody, and those bringing in materials and . . .

JOHNSON: How did you do these background checks? Did you

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go to the FBI for whatever they had?

ROWLEY: Well, we would eventually, but we checked them back in their hometown, and ran them down.

JOHNSON: You checked with local police departments, to see if they had a record on them?

ROWLEY: Sure, and probably checked with the FBI, which all police departments did at the time, and still do for that matter.

JOHNSON: Did you talk to neighbors?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: You spent a lot of time probably doing that sort of background check. Didn't that take quite a bit of time?

ROWLEY: The agents would; I didn't do it. That is referred to the field office.

JOHNSON: So the field offices are spending quite a bit of time on background checks

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: When they weren't checking on counterfeiters.

ROWLEY: Such cases had a priority. This was important. That would be priority.

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JOHNSON: But these would be two of their main jobs, counterfeiters and the background checks.

ROWLEY: And check forgeries, too.

JOHNSON: When President Truman left office in 1953, apparently there was no law that said that he had to have Secret Service protection.

ROWLEY: Not at that time, no.

JOHNSON: In other words, officially your protection of President Truman ended when Eisenhower took the oath of office . . .

ROWLEY: Right.

JOHNSON: . . . at the Capitol.

ROWLEY: That's right, like all of the others, just like as happened to Hoover as I explained to President Truman.

JOHNSON: What was your last assignment with Truman?

ROWLEY: The last assignment was the arrangement for his departure. He went onto the Hill with President-elect Eisenhower. Then, after the swearing-in, he got into his car and departed for a luncheon.

JOHNSON: Yes, to Dean Acheson's.

ROWLEY: Agent Henry Nicholson, with other agents, stayed

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with him until he got aboard the train, and, just like Hoover, departed.

JOHNSON: Were you in the car ahead of him when they went up for the inauguration in '53?

ROWLEY: I was in the car with President Truman and Eisenhower.

JOHNSON: Oh, you were in that same car?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you ever overhear anything of their conversation? Truman reports on what they were talking about, but did you overhear any conversations?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: So you tried not to hear this kind of information, whether it would be personal or classified or anything like that?

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: And when you were concentrating on the crowds, what were you looking for?

ROWLEY: Any motion or something unusual, especially from the crowd.

JOHNSON: So you were with Eisenhower a good deal then.

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ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was Nicholson still the one that . . .

ROWLEY: No, no. Nicholson was still my assistant.

JOHNSON: On the '48 campaign of Harry Truman, on the Magellan, were you on the Magellan with him much, or at all, in that '48 Whistlestop campaign with the President?

ROWLEY: No, I was doing the advance.

JOHNSON: You were still doing the advance work. Most of the time you were doing advance work, so you weren't with him personally on the train?

ROWLEY: No, Nicholson was. He was on that train. Don't forget, President Truman directed his campaign. He knew what he was doing. You can have all the campaign heads of the Democratic Party and all, but Truman ran that detail. Henry Nicholson told me. He said, "You know, I looked outside one day and I said to somebody, 'My God, we were through here the other day.'" He [Truman] was going up and down from Peoria, back and forth; he saw something that he needed. Now you mentioned the Iowa thing. In Iowa I did the advance out there too. Once he left there, I would jump to the next place by a plane that was assigned to

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me, keep moving ahead, and then set up everything there with the local agents and so forth. We were at the Iowa event and we're watching all these people there. They're looking at him, and they're not applauding; they're not doing anything, you know, and we can't understand it. I say "we"--those of us who came from the East, because everybody's demonstrative there; they're cheering and all this sort of thing--and we didn't get that. So I go back to the train to see if there is any additional information I should have before moving to the next stop. So we're on the train and Nicholson and I were talking about the reaction to the speech, and I said, "Boy, this doesn't look too good." The next thing, the President came out and smiled, happy. I think Nicholson said, "There was not much of a demonstration there, Mr. President." The President looked at him and said, "Nick, don't worry about that; I know these people. The fact is that they were there; I have no worry at all."

JOHNSON: Now you're talking about Dexter, Iowa.

ROWLEY: Yes, that's right, Dexter, Iowa.

JOHNSON: Out there in Iowa among those farmers.

ROWLEY: That's right, exactly.

JOHNSON: And you were sitting in.

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ROWLEY: I've never forgotten that. He said, in effect, "I know these people, and the fact that they were there, that's a good sign."

JOHNSON: So you had to keep running ahead and deal with the field agents and the local law enforcement people.

ROWLEY: That's correct.

JOHNSON: So you met a lot of people.

ROWLEY: Yes, and the sheriff's offices too.

JOHNSON: The county sheriff's office.

ROWLEY: Yes, or the state police.

JOHNSON: And the state police.

ROWLEY: That's right; we worked with them all. We'd have meetings; we'd show them the identification we selected for the occasion, and what they represent, and who had access. Today it's more elaborate.

JOHNSON: But you say that didn't happen until after the assassination of President Kennedy.

ROWLEY: Oh yes, that's a shame. It's a shame.

JOHNSON: Were there open cars in Truman's time?

ROWLEY: Yes, these were open cars.

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JOHNSON: In fact there were open cars, I suppose, until after the assassination of President Kennedy.

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: Well, there was a bubble car though; there was a bubble used with Eisenhower.

ROWLEY: That's right. There was a bubble used for Eisenhower, and used for Kennedy too. We had the bubble car and he didn't want the bubble on in the trip to Dallas, Texas. We were concerned about the weather.

JOHNSON: I guess we have a pretty good idea then of what you had to do as an advance man; you had to coordinate with a lot of different agencies. Did they always cooperate or did you have friction at all in working with them?

ROWLEY: I don't recall really any serious thing at all.

JOHNSON: Did you have any problems with photographers and newsmen, the White House Press Corps?

ROWLEY: Not really.

JOHNSON: And then if they were no longer certified, you had to take their card away from them, so to speak? Did you have pretty good control, do you think, then on the White House news corps?

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ROWLEY: Yes, because don't forget there weren't as many in the White House news corps as there is today. If you look at those press conferences now. No, we did not have any trouble, because the way I looked at it, Niel, was they are the first line of defense. I'll tell you, the press photographers would tip me off, when I was doing advance work. [They'd say] "I don't know this fellow," so we'd pull them out, to find out. We would ask them to identify themselves, and so forth. If they weren't legitimate or were trying to insinuate themselves, we'd say, "I'm sorry, " and we got them out. Remember, we always had photographers on one side and the reporters on the other. Before the Eisenhower administration, they would group around the President, when he came off a plane, or he came off the train. They were a buffer zone for our security.

JOHNSON: But that started in the Eisenhower period, with this kind of separation?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: During the Truman period, did you have somebody in the press conferences? They started out in the Oval Office, and then they moved over to the Indian Treaty Room.

ROWLEY: Yes. You see, the men were on the door, and in the

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appointments secretary's office. They would stay at the open door and watch the people from the back, and the other agents would watch from the front. Then somebody else would be on the sides.

JOHNSON: So you had two or three then at each of those press conferences?

ROWLEY: And then we'd have somebody out on the terrace, out there outside the office.

JOHNSON: Of course, when the President was up there in the Magellan, he was certainly exposed to a lot of people out there in the crowd and you had a new crowd everytime you had a whistlestop. Wasn't that a little bit of worry?

ROWLEY: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: You couldn't check everybody out, could you?

ROWLEY: No. The police would be there. No, but we put people, local people, and local agents in the crowd, and the agents aboard the train were directly below the platform. And then those fellows had the tough time to run and get on the car as it slowly moved out. They had to stand there until the President got inside the car.

JOHNSON: They were standing down here, and the President is

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up here behind that little lectern.

ROWLEY: Right. But on either side would be an agent, on the platform.

JOHNSON: Would they allow that today, a President to stand on the back of a railroad car and be exposed as Truman was?

ROWLEY: I don't know what they would do today; I doubt it. But you know, given the conditions today . . .

JOHNSON: Where were you in November of '63 when President Kennedy was assassinated?

ROWLEY: I was at a luncheon for the graduates of one of the training schools. I was giving a talk when the word came. I was with the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. I ran up to the White House.

JOHNSON: It's been written up so much I don't think we need to say anymore about it, but that had to be an awful shock. Were there any close calls with Eisenhower during the years he was at the White House? Nobody ever took a shot at him, did they?

ROWLEY: Oh, no.

JOHNSON: But you had quite a file on potential problems?

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ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: Mental patients mainly?

ROWLEY: Another thing, of course, today, Niel, is computers. This is one of the first things we got, computers, when we got our funds after the assassination.

JOHNSON: That's when you got computerization. Before that, did you have a card file on . . .

ROWLEY: That's correct, yes. Then we had to mail the information out; get the sheets out.

JOHNSON: Yes. You had quite a file I suppose. Do you have any idea how many people you had in this file during the Truman period, of potential threats?

ROWLEY: No, I don't.

JOHNSON: Are we talking about hundreds or even thousands?

ROWLEY: Oh, could be, yes, including previous administrations.

JOHNSON: Yes, I suppose there were some anxious moments.

ROWLEY: There were.

JOHNSON: From 1950 when the President was attacked by the Puerto Rican Nationalists, until November '63, there

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really weren't any close calls that you can think of?

ROWLEY: No.

JOHNSON: Then after President Kennedy was assassinated, laws were written to provide protection for ex-Presidents, for former Presidents, including Truman himself.

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you want to recollect on your relationship with Truman after he left the White House? When did you first go out to Independence, for instance?

ROWLEY: Well, Vince Mroz was the agent in charge out there. He was always saying to the President that we have agents available, but the President wouldn't have it. So I called him up one day and said we'd like to put the agents on, and I guess he talked to Mrs. Truman. I believe he said, "Yes," and then later changed it and said, "No."

JOHNSON: Maybe we can take this chronologically. In 1964 there's a letter here from Harry Truman to you, in which he says that you were going to be with him, I guess for his birthday

celebration on May 8. Did you meet with him for that birthday celebration there? Do you remember that at all?

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ROWLEY: No, I don't.

JOHNSON: In the meantime, you were promoted to become chief of the Secret Service in August, 1961, during the first year of Kennedy's term of office.

ROWLEY: That's right.

JOHNSON: You became Chief of the Secret Service.

ROWLEY: Right.

JOHNSON: Who took your place at the White House?

ROWLEY: Jerry Behn.

JOHNSON: Yes, I've got Behn here in this article. Apparently the laws were rewritten to extend Secret Service protection to more people, to former Presidents and so on, and in 1965, in September, you wrote to the President that "pursuant to provisions of Public Law 89-186, the United States Secret Service is authorized protection for you and Mrs. Truman during your lifetime, unless such protection is declined. At your convenience may we have an expression of your wishes in this regard." Then he wrote to you and said, "I phoned you this morning and told you there was no reason for the protection you have been providing for me and Mrs. Truman. I have been 13 years without it, beginning in

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January of 1966"--he really means 1953--"and have had no trouble. I would appreciate it very much if you would relieve me of this protection." Now apparently there were some Secret Service men that were moved into the Library to give protection, but then he said he didn't want it. So then they left.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Sometime after that, that protective detail was resumed at the Library. Do you recall anything about him having a change of mind after this.

ROWLEY: I knew he changed his mind. I can't recall what prompted it, but in any event they might have thought it over. Then we rented a house right across the street where we had an office. It was 24-hour protection, but we were discrete; there was nothing obvious.

JOHNSON: You felt that President Truman was adequately protected after that.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: There was some testimony by Rufus Youngblood before a House committee in which they were asking him how many Secret Service agents were assigned to these former Presidents and to the children, and I think you

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were quoted as saying that the children of former Presidents were entitled to protection until the age of 16.

ROWLEY: Eighteen.

JOHNSON: Eighteen; and that was instituted in 1965 in this law?

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, then you retired in 1973 and got a nice letter from Mrs. Truman.

ROWLEY: Yes, '73, right.

JOHNSON: Looking back on it, how has it changed? What do you think are the major changes that have occurred since, let's say, the Truman years in the way Secret Service work is handled now for the President? What strikes you as major changes? Certainly there were some real changes that occurred since the Truman years.

ROWLEY: Well, number one, you've got the sophistication of the computers today and you've got the computers in the Protective Research and other areas. They're up to the state of the art. You've got a big training center now for new agents and so forth, and you have all kinds of training there.

JOHNSON: More sophistication?

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ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And more agents?

ROWLEY: Yes; more agents. I wouldn't know what it is, but you've got well over a thousand agents now.

JOHNSON: Is that right?

ROWLEY: Yes, well over a thousand.

JOHNSON: As compared to what, 250 to 300?

ROWLEY: Two hundred and seventy-five in the Truman days; maybe less than that in the Truman days. At the day of the assassination, there were 275. That's well documented in the Warren Commission report.

JOHNSON: Apparently, you know, you had these mental patients to worry about, and somehow you managed to prevent direct attempts by mental patients during the Truman and Eisenhower years, or even probably Nixon, but now with Ford and then again with President Reagan, we did have that problem didn't we? I guess we'd call them psychotics.

ROWLEY: Yes, we have that. Ford, you know, they picked up two of them.

JOHNSON: What can you do about this sort of thing? Is there any real protection when you're dealing with

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psychotics?

ROWLEY: You try to thwart it; you try to do the best you can under the circumstances, but you can't isolate the President. Johnson went into crowds, even after the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas, and he resented the state police and others that wanted to carry out their job. They were serious about it. He didn't like it; he told them, too.

JOHNSON: And you had to follow their wishes? I mean, you had to do what the law says, but you also had to . . .

ROWLEY: That's right. You had to be right near by, but don't obstruct them.

JOHNSON: Oh, there was an incident out in Omaha in June of '48--and I was thinking this couldn't happen nowadays probably--they were having a 35th Division parade and one of the cowboys just threw his lasso around the President.

ROWLEY: I don't remember that.

JOHNSON: Were you there?

ROWLEY: No, I was in Seattle.

JOHNSON: And he kind of joked about it, and took the lasso off. Of course, nowadays, if something like that would

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happen, there would be all kinds of trouble. The President really is sealed off more now, isn't he? In fact, I saw President Reagan--I got a sample of this, of the new style--I think it was Monday afternoon. He had just given a speech to an elementary school group, and when he came out, they had him completely enclosed in the limousine and they moved fast.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: They moved fast. Is that part of the methodology now, moving them so darn fast?

ROWLEY: Yes. When you came over here from the station, we remarked about the traffic and all. When I came down to Washington in 1939 it was like a village, a bucolic scene. But you haven't got that today with all those buildings. You could hear a pin drop on a Sunday downtown. I'd be on duty on the front entrance of the White House, looking north up 16th Street, and just see a few people walking through Lafayette Park.

JOHNSON: It complicates the situation for the Secret Service.

ROWLEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: And you're glad you don't have that kind of complication to worry about, I suppose.

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ROWLEY: Well, I suppose if I were younger, but after all I had 35 years. I spent over 24 years on the White House detail.

JOHNSON: Do you have that article with President Kennedy?

ROWLEY: I don't know.

JOHNSON: Well, why don't I leave that with you.

ROWLEY: Yes, thank you.

JOHNSON: Just as a sample of the Secret Service record, I'll give you that memo.

ROWLEY: That's an old-timer, huh?

JOHNSON: Yes. Well, I appreciate your time and the cooperation.