

Oral History Interview

with

JOHN W. SNYDER

Served as Executive Vice-President and Director, Defense Plant Corporation, 1940-43; Assistant to the Director of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, 1940-44; Federal Loan Administrator, 1945; Director; Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, 1945-46; and Secretary of the Treasury, 1946-53. Secretary Snyder was a close friend of Harry S. Truman beginning with their service in the U.S. Army Reserves after World War I.

Washington, D.C.

March 18, 1976

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

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
December, 1985

+NOTICE

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STILLEY: Mr. Snyder, where did you first meet President Truman?

SNYDER: Well, it was my great privilege to have met him back in the twenties. He and I had both been in World War I; we both had been captains. I was with the 32nd Red Arrow Division in Michigan and Wisconsin, and he was with the 35th Division of Missouri and Kansas, I believe it was. He was the commander of the famous Battery D--I am sure you have heard of it quite a number of times in the interviews--and I was the Brigade Operations Officer

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for the 57th Field Artillery Brigade, and later went up into the Army of Occupation under General Irwin, and had a very interesting time for a very young man. I don't know how old you young men are, but I think I was about 22 or 21 when I got my commission. I was interested in seeing Europe for the first time, and in a war, too. But that is the background. We both had military connections.

After we got home we were invited to join the Officers Reserve Corps--Field Artillery Reserve Corps--which we did, and we met at one of the training camps, where the Reserve officers would assemble in the summertime for a two-week course. This was at Fort Riley, Kansas, where we met for the first time. Of course, we were considered veterans having served full-time in World War I, and, therefore, our greatest value was to talk with the young ROTC officers that were just coming out and getting commissioned, and give a touch of reality. And of course, we did instruction in artillery maneuvers.

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It was there that I just immediately decided I liked him. I think at that time he was lieutenant colonel--they gave us a little higher commission--I was a major. But that was when our friendship started and it just continued and expanded through the years. We saw a great deal of each other, we always went there until up in 1938, I believe. He and I went two weeks to these camps in various parts of the various artillery installations, and met with the young officers. We became, he and Harry Vaughan--you've heard of him, he was the President's Military Aide when he became President, and remained with him throughout his Presidency. Vaughan had been with him in France, and so he took a commission and was there with us; and in time, why, we became the three officers of an artillery brigade in the Reserve. It was a paper organization. I've forgotten what the numbers were right now, but we were the three regimental commanders of the group that would meet. We had, in our organization, assigned to it, various young officers from Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri,

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We after years were very pleased after World War II, to check back on the young men that we had with us year after year and find what splendid records they made in the war, proving to us that the Reserve Officers Training had been well worthwhile and they had taken full advantage of it.

We went through those years in the Reserve, and Senator Truman--we of course cut out calling him Colonel Truman--well, of course, he was lieutenant colonel and then became colonel and I

became colonel and Vaughan became colonel, and we were colonels when we were commanding the three regiments. But during that time Judge Truman was Presiding Judge in the Jackson County Court, which you found out while you were in Kansas City, had two courthouses, one in Kansas City and one in Independence. And going to and from--I lived over in Arkansas, and later St. Louis, and so I used to go by and we'd go on over to the camp, and then we'd stop off there on the way back. I used to visit him in his Court and see him presiding.

The Jackson County Court was administrative and not judicial. The three members of that court

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looked after the operation of the County, the various roads, the building of schools, the eleemosynary institutions, various administrative jobs rather than judicial. The President, as you know, did not go to college. Of course, back in those days you could become a lawyer by taking a correspondence course. That's been changed quite a bit during the year.

Now we have brought him up to being Judge. Now what's your next question?

HILL: Do you know why he decided to run for the County Judge post? What brought that about

SNYDER: He had a friend, Jim Pendergast, who was with him in the war, World War I, and he was looking for a connection and Jim suggested that he should run, get into politics, and run for an opening. I think his first race maybe he didn't win. The next time he did, and he was elected to the County Judge's position there, and of the three they chose him as the Presiding Judge.

HILL: I've read in places that he did not work real

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closely with the Pendergast organization.

SNYDER: Well, he did not. See now the man who has the great reputation as the Pendergast boss, was Jim's uncle, and Jim was very, very active in the organization, but Mr. Truman--apparently Mr. Pendergast thought that it was nice to have somebody that he could point to with pride, so he didn't press Judge Truman for any particular favors, he just let him run a good job over there. And he did a magnificent, magnificent service as Judge. He was responsible for the building of the first good hard road system in Jackson County, the first paved good system over the state. He built the courthouse, and he built some of the eleemosynary institutions, and in all of those President Truman early developed a system of finding out about what he was going to try to do. When he built the courthouse he traveled all over the country looking at courthouses, how they were built, what their accommodations were, what the capacities, what they need have for efficient services; and he talked with the various con-

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tractors and various architects and so forth. When he got in the road system, he traveled around to see what other states had done with their road systems and what surface they put on them, and how deep a bed, and the foundation, and the necessity of analyzing the soil through which you went in order to get a firm foundation for the highways. And in everything that he undertook he went to the root of it first before he ventured out on it, and as a result, he built quite a reputation, as you young men learned over there, for efficient operation of the county.

HILL: Did Judge Truman enjoy his years on the court?

SNYDER: Oh, thoroughly, yes. Of course, at camp, too, it became evident that Mr. Truman liked people. Mr. Truman in his court work began to show great depth of human appreciation of humanity, of wanting to know what's best for the people, not for him, and not for the county, but what's best for the people; and he was that way, of course, in the military there. He was always looking out for how

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to help the young soldiers and the young officer; pick his weak spots out and try to fortify those. Then in his county jurisdiction there as presiding Judge, I began to observe how tremendously and penetratingly interested he was in people. I won't repeat the stories you've heard over in Kansas City that he would sit in his court room, and if anyone came in the door, if it was a Battery D man, he pretty near got what he came to ask for. I don't know whether you've heard that one, but that was quite a story around; whether it was true or not, we won't go into the depth of that. But it was showing that he carried through his great attachment and his feeling towards the enlisted men, even after the war.

HILL: If we can back up for just a minute. The business venture that he had in his store, did that upset him when that was lost?

SNYDER: Yes, naturally it did at first, because he was puzzled about his judgment about going into something that he knew nothing about. His friend

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who took him in as a partner, was a very fine person and was a--this was before my acquaintance with him. He had already had that shortly after he got out of the service and was over that by the time I met him. But he was determined though, after it was closed, and as you've learned, during his lifetime he paid back all the settlement that they made for less than dollar for dollar; he later paid them all back. Made quite an impression on him then, too, the importance of knowing what you were doing, and that helped him penetrate deeper into the job that he was going to undertake in later years, and followed him all the way through. And I'll tell you, he was great.

HILL: Now back. What thing contributed to his decision to run for the Senate in the first place?

SNYDER: A very, very deep one. He was offered the spot on the Democratic ticket and the backing of the Kansas City organization, and he just decided he'd try. Of course, the first election was a very simple one. The Democrats were in

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the great majority in Missouri and he got the nomination in the primary very easily and went on to be Senator. The first race for Senator was the easiest race he ever had in his life.

HILL: How was his first term in the Senate? Did he fit in right off, or did it take him awhile?

SNYDER: No. Now, it's a custom of mine, with Colonel Truman, Judge Truman, Senator Truman and--I don't know whether--did you talk with Mrs. Truman?

HILL: No, we didn't.

SNYDER: I don't know who you talked with then that knew the two of us very well, but I never called him anything but by his current title, for some reason. My uncle, who started me in the banking business, Judge Rolf down in Forest City, Arkansas told me one day, he said, "Never be concerned about hurting the feelings of a man by calling him by his title. He likes it, or he wouldn't have gotten it and kept it that way, and particularly if he's out of office; whatever he is, call him by his last title.

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It's good business for the bank, and it's good for you, and it's good for public relations." So I started that and Mr. Truman happened to be one that I used it on the longest, because whenever I am talking about him as we go along, I'll be calling him by the title in which he was serving at the time.

Senator Truman, then did another thorough research. He kept quiet for a good period of time, learning what it was all about. How did those other people get there? What were their strong points? What made the people at home select them? Could he detect by their actions, by their words, by the things that they backed in the Congress? He studied his fellow compatriots there and tried to ascertain what was the ground rules of being in the Senate. And he gradually became acquainted with a great number, as a matter of fact, because of his friendliness, and his open mindedness and his administrative good judgment. Frequently he became sort of an arbitrator, two of them get into a battle and everything, he'd get them off in the

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halls or go down to his office and the first thing you'd know they'd smooth it over. That continued the whole time that he was in the Senate. He left the Senate one of the most popular members of the Senate that they had through the years.

But in his work, you asked did he enjoy. Yes, because he liked these contacts with the Nation. Here he knew two men from every state in the Union, and so he got to learning about what California was, what the State of Washington was, what Florida, Texas. He began to, for the first time, although he had had several opportunities meeting national groups in the American Legion and in the Reserve Officers activities; but there he was talking with the people with some official status from these various states and he showed them eagerness and a penetration that Senator [Burton K.] Wheeler--Burt Wheeler was given the job of studying railroad problems. At that time the railroad situation had become very bad in that the railroads were all insolvent and they had spent more money than they had earned. So Congress undertook to make

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a study of the railroads to see what could be done if they decided to help rehabilitate them. Burt Wheeler was given the chairmanship of that committee. But being sort of a lazy fellow, easy-going, why, he chose a young Senator--by young, young in the Senate--Mr. Truman of course, as you know, was not a particularly young man when he went to the Senate. In the terms of the Senate he was young. He was the junior Senator from Missouri. So he took him on his committee and turned the work over to him.

Mr. Truman proceeded then to elaborate on his plan. He went out on the railroad and talked to the engineers, to the firemen, to the brakemen, to the operator, whoever the president or whatever his title was, that was running the railroad. The railroads had the operating side and they had the financial side. The financial side was the banking group in New York and in Boston and places, and then the operating side, the people who actually ran the railroad. So he would go to the ticket offices and talk about how things were going, and he'd go out in the yards, he'd go to the roundhouses;

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then he started going to see the bankers, to the heads that sold the bonds and the stocks and everything of the organizations. He began to learn what these causes were. And they had oversold watered stock--I don't know whether that's a new term for young people, but that's just selling more stock than was needed and, then, they were padding the stock. They were selling stock and then using the money for other things than for what was needed on the railroads. And then he went to talk with the lawyers of the railroad and found out what the legal problems were. As a result the Wheeler-Truman report was of such a high order and it was practically the basis of the later railroad legislation that came out which offered assistance to railroads through RFC loans and things of that character.

Any number of things came up that way, and he pitched right in. His object was to get the job done; to do a good job whatever came up and not necessarily be blowing his horn around as some of our good people do as you read in the

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papers occasionally. He went in 1934, then in 1939 I went to the West Coast as a division commander of the 132nd Division to a paper defense of the West Coast against the yellow peril. That was a fictitious affair, but they had all the Fifth Army, paper Army, out there in San Francisco at the Presidio to study the threat that we had from, actually, Japan, but we called it the yellow invasion. Well, I was just utterly amazed at what I learned, the preparation that the Japanese had done and the strength--you see the war was on then in Europe--the European war was on. I came home thoroughly convinced that we were in for it, although it had been very hush-hush. And I talked with Senator Truman, and I talked with Jesse Jones, quite a number of my sentiments, and told him in my believe we were headed--this was in July of 1939. The next year Mr. Jones, who was head of the RFC, Reconstruction Finance Corporation, asked me to come to Washington here because of my acquaintance with the Army and the Navy. You see, at that time we just had the Army and the Navy, we didn't

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have an Air Force. The Air Force was the Signal Corps in the Army and stayed all through World War II in that designation. It was only after that that Truman created the melding of the services into the Defense Department and set up the Air Force. So at the time that we are now talking about it was the Air Corps.

I came down here, because the RFC was being called on to loan money to companies to build plants, to build them for the Allies. Because the stockholders didn't know if the war was over, what building plants would cost, and get them in trouble with overinvestment in facilities, capital investment. I had been in the banking business ever since World War I and I had known what disaster came to many firms after the war, who if they had collected the balances that were due them on contracts, or if they had had their claims settled, might have stayed in business, that actually did go bankrupt. So we were all talking a great deal about that. Now this was in July of 1940, when Mr. Jones asked me down here. Senator Truman

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and I spent a great deal of time together talking over these things and I, later, visited down here to help, ended my temporary work in St. Louis, because I became head of the Defense Plant Corporation, which was to finance these huge plants. To finance them to build the things that the war needed, don't you see. I set up an organization that was new, there were no guideposts. It was just a brand new situation, in which the Government would finance the building of the plant, keep title to it, but lease it to the manufacturer who had been selected by one of the defense agencies to do this job. For instance, an airplane company was going to build a lot of trainer planes. They needed three big plants right off the bat; a propeller plant, an engine plant, and an airplane plant, and those would run maybe two, three, five million dollars a piece, don't you see. So that was the job that I was undertaking.

So I was talking with Mr. Truman and took two of my attorneys, Mr. Dir, Dirk Dir, and Mr. Hans Klansburg, over one night to the Army and Navy

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Club for dinner. And Harry Vaughan was along with us and we talked about how fine it would be if we could start some investigative unit that would look into these things when they first surfaced. If they were building cantonments, for instance, and word got out that there was a rakeoff, that there was any kind of corruption in it, get in there and find out. Find out if labor was performing all right. If there was any rumors around that something wasn't going well with this construction job, go in and look at it. Then when we began to build these plants it was a place to go and catch it early if there was a problem with the manufacturer chiseling on the contract or something of that character. Then when they got the soldiers in, the treatment of them; if the town was coming through with its obligations, supplying the facilities that were needed, all the way across the board. So we were talking here and it was sitting at that meeting the idea for the Truman Committee was born. Then we went back up and talked to Jimmy Byrnes and two or three and came up with a bill to create

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an investigative committee for defense purposes.

Well, President Roosevelt was a tremendous fellow but he didn't want anybody dabbling with what he was doing and he was playing this defense program like he was orchestrating it. He was kind of routing it, and if he wanted a base, he'd punch the base key, you know, and he wanted all that. So, he wasn't too keen about it. He kind of frowned on it, but we planted seed around and he finally said, "Oh, let him have it, and we'll see what comes out of it."

Well, they gave him \$40,000. Now picture, you've already been in the scene long enough to know that a committee only being given \$40,000 to start, to build--the Senator was a little annoyed at that. But we all got together and decided, "Take it, take it, you can show them what can be done with it." That was the birth of the Truman Committee.

Let me just skip over something, because I can tell you two stories in one here. Years later, in 1945, I was down in Mexico City. I was then about to become President of the First National Bank in St. Louis, and I was down in

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Mexico and working on trying to get a unification of exchange rates that the Mexicans were charging our buyers who'd go down there and buy raw materials or silver, or cotton, or anything. If you were from San Francisco you might go down there and you'd get so many pesos for a dollar. If you were in Chicago maybe you'd get a different number; and if you were in Boston you'd get another, and so, manufacturing the same thing. They were at a disadvantage because of the base cost to them, you see, for the raw material. So a group of us bankers were down there, trying to work this thing out, which we did amicably, but I won't get into that. But that was over, and in a kind of celebration, a friend of mine gave a luncheon for a number of the Mexican and American bankers, and sitting next to me was A.P. Gianinni. A.P. Gianinni is the

man who created the Bank of America; started it off back in the turn of the century as the Bank of Italy. But then after

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World War I, or about the time of World War I, because of the animosities that grew up between U.S. and the foreign countries and everything, they changed it to the Bank of America. Today it's the largest bank in the world as you know. Mr. Gianinni said, "John, tell me, you've got a friend who is Vice President right now and we're hearing bad things about the health of President Roosevelt. If something should happen to him, what kind of a guy is this Truman?"

"Well," I said, "A.P., Truman is the kind of man who will try to think through the job he is going to do. He has always." And I went back and told him about his being Judge and about his starting off there, and then I got off into his running the defense planning. I said, "In those days the reason he made such a tremendous reputation in that job was that if it was a matter of a construction job, that they were overcharging for building a cantonment, or a factory or something, he went out and studied what the current costs were. He got hold of an engineer, got hold of a

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contractor, he got hold of an architect, and saw what was proper and what was not proper, and got guidelines. If he got into a question that had a legal base, he'd go to lawyers and find out the corporate law, the criminal law, or whatever the question was. If it was a matter of constructing some of these specialized plants, he'd go to an engineer and get him to dig into it and tell him where to look for the weak spots and where to look for the good spots."

Whatever he got into, he tried to prepare himself to know what he was doing when he'd go on the job, and then to get the job corrected and going on without a lot of publicity. He wasn't trying to build up a great fanfare of newspaper notoriety. He was trying to get the defense organization built up so it would be effective when the war came, and he continued on that throughout the war. He always seemed to be able to get good men to help him in his specific job. He said, "Well, you make me feel better." Within 30 minutes the butler came and announced that the

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radio just said that Roosevelt was dead. But I can tell you an appraisal of what he did there in the defense committee as a Senator, don't you see. He did a good job. In everything that he did, it looked like he had the capacity and the training which he himself had trained in, to get the right people to help him, and to base his opinions on the proper background.

Now, we've got him up in the Senate. Any questions back in the Senate?

HILL: When a bill was before the Senate, what procedure did Senator Truman go through in trying to decide how to vote on this bill?

SNYDER: Have you checked to see how many hundreds of bills flow through Congress? You can't be an expert in all of them, you've got to work yourself around and get on certain committees. He was on the Appropriations Committee and on the Armed Services--I don't know what they called it back in those days, but today Armed Services--and the Interstate Commerce, I believe; but he con-

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centrated on: knowing what was flowing through those committees, don't you see. The Congress, until you get accustomed to it is the most awkward, unbelievable, ineffective organization you ever saw. Just go up and sit there in the balcony one morning, and you'd say, "How do they ever get this country..." There would be three or four sitting around reading a newspaper, or two or three standing over in a corner talking; and here they were going along, bills were being read, and the chairman is operating and calling this, and then something comes up and he rings a button for a roll call, and they all come pouring in there and they take a vote on it. You'd say, "That's about the most harum-scarum operation I ever saw." What actually happens, when a bill comes in it is assigned to a certain committee, of which there are quite a number. You've got a directory, haven't you, to see the tremendous number of committees that they have? Well, it's assigned to a committee, for study and for presentation and recommendation.

When that happened, Mr. Truman would start

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immediately to breaking down the bill into its various component parts and picking out the things that he himself would like to dig into, don't you see; and he would start studying it. If there was an appropriation bill he would start to try to find out what they are doing with the money. Had they spent it well? Did they overestimate their expenses--last year's budget--or did they waste money, or so and so, and go at it in that fashion, don't you see. If it was an Interstate Commerce bill, he'd go back and see about the trade between the states and what the laws were and things of that character; whatever was germane to the subject matter of the bill that was up. He would consult with other experts in that area. He'd discuss with friends from the outside what they thought of this bill. He'd write to people that were going to be affected by it and get their notion about what it was. That was the way he went about deciding what position to take on a bill.

STILLEY: Did he ask you for advice in certain areas?

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SNYDER: He and I talked about things. We were very close. We were together three or four times a week in the evenings and I would drop up. Remember, during that period I was down here running the Defense Plant Corporation, so we were very close together. Weekends we'd go off to Gettysburg, or down to some other place, and refight the battles together and things of that sort. All that time we were talking about this and that, whether you were advising or not; we

never called it that, we were just consulting about various things. I was constantly talking with him about the Defense Plant Corporation. Whenever I was having trouble, the first thing, I'd get him to send somebody out and take a look at it. Things of that character. When he was doing something, he would say, "I wish you'd"--banking for instance, he'd say, "I wish you'd get around that bunch of highbinders of yours and find out what this is all about. What are they up to? What do they want?" So that kind of relationship, very sympatico. No one could say that he was

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advising the other, or seeking advice. We were just discussing it, and, trying to be helpful one to the other when the time came, and it was reciprocal; he was extremely helpful to me many times. He was kind enough through his life to have said I was helpful to him.

HILL: Did President Truman follow the Democratic leadership in the Senate?

SNYDER: Oh yes, yes, yes. He was a very loyal Democrat. Of course, he went off on his own occasionally, but he followed the leadership pretty well. He was a loyal Democrat.

HILL: There are basically, two types, or philosophies of legislature. One would think that the legislator should vote exactly as the majority of his constituents think, and another type that thinks that he should do what he thinks is best.

SNYDER: Well, I think the latter was what he actually followed. If there was something else he voted against, but on the principal policy-forming

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things, I think he helped work to get that policy molded in the right shape and then he was for it, don't you see?

I think you can go and look at his record. He wasn't just a rubber stamp by any means. He had his things he was particularly for. He was never ostentatious about it, he never got pinned a liberal or this or that. He just didn't accumulate those kind of designations, but he always went to the side that was going to affect the people. I remember time and again when a bill would come up he'd say, "Now, let's sit down here and see how this is going to affect the people," not 'me as: Senator, not the Democratic party as a party, or not Missouri as my state. How is it going to affect the people? Let's look at that first, don't you see, and then we got around to other things.

Now, we're in the Senate still.

HILL: Yes. He had a particularly rough go at it in his second election to the Senate?

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SNYDER: He had a rather bad trip. I don't want to repeat a lot of things that you already know about, but Mr. [Lloyd C.] Stark, who was the apple grower up there in Missouri, a very wealthy man, decided he wanted to run for the Senate. He first was going to run for Governor, so he came to Senator Truman and said, "I wish you would introduce me to Tom Pendergast, I want him to back me for Governor." You've heard all this haven't you?

HILT: Go ahead.

SNYDER: He said, "Well, I'll introduce him to you. I'm not going to tell you that he'll back you, because I don't have any influence with him at all; but I do know him and I'll introduce you."

Well, he said, "I'd sure appreciate it."

It turned out Mr. Pendergast was out in Denver, on a kind of vacation, but he called him up and he said, "I don't think much of him but I'll talk with him."

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So Truman tells Stark. Stark calls him. He got on the train and went to Denver to see him, and persuaded him to then announce that he was backing him for Governor, which he did and Stark was elected. No sooner did Stark get into office than he started to digging into some of the seamy sides of the Pendergast business. At that time it happened to be one of the Pendergast men was the superintendent of insurance in Missouri, and at that time there was an argument about rates that were being charged. They got passed a bill in Missouri on that that so much of each policy, the premium, was to be held back in a reserve. A reserve was set up for that until the litigation could get over as to whether the insurance companies were entitled to that premium or whether they would give it back to the policyholder.

Mr. Pendergast loved the race horses, and he loved a lot of comfortable living. He got to spending more money than he really could afford, and the first thing you know, why, this superintendent of insurance came to him and said, "I've

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got an idea to take care of all your problems, monetary problems." He said, "We'll just make a deal, and we'll pay off these insurance companies, and we'll just charge them so much for it." So you can imagine what clear thinking that was. Well, they did it, and cleaned up his debts; but it leaked out, got all over everything. So, Stark who had gone out and got Mr. Pendergast's assistance to make him Governor, started in an investigation and sent Pendergast and, oh, I don't know the fellow very well, the superintendent, to jail--prison. Then comes Mr. Truman's time to run for Senate you see, the second time, 1940. Lo and behold, Mr. Stark decides he'd made such a to-do, the St. Louis papers, the Kansas City papers, had just rolled him into the Archangel, waving his wings and bringing peace, happiness and trustworthiness to the state. So they both tied up behind him. The St. Louis machine got behind Stark. The political machine under

[Bernard F.] Dickmann at that time. Well, it was ugly. Oh, they drug this smear. Then by that time a man by the name of [Maurice] Milligan who had

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been Attorney General, who had helped in all of this business of investigation and so forth, he decided that it was just too good, he got in too, in the primary.

Well, it went bad. Oh, they were smearing. They were trying to drag Truman into anything that had happened in the Pendergast record there. He had been boss over there for quite a number of years, and did a lot of interesting things, and they drug those all out you know and plastered them up on the wall.

We sent out Mr. Truman--we didn't have any money, so we had to develop a system of getting him before the public. So we sat down and wrote five speeches on things that Mr. Truman had done well as Judge and as Senator. His relations with labor, agriculture--five subjects. We got his own car and we got a public speaking thing up on top of it, loudspeaker was all it was. It wasn't anything elaborate at all. And he started out and he went to every county in the state. He was Baptist, not Episcopalian, but I used to tease him, I'd

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say, "You're just like us Episcopalians, let's two or three of us get together and we'll start a speech." That's an old thing about Episcopalians.

Well, but that's what he'd do. We would stop in the square and held get on there and say, "Ladies and Gentlemen, Senator Harry S. Truman coming to visit you." The first thing you'd know, he'd have a little crowd around him, and he'd get off on one of those, according to the neighborhood that he was in. If it was agricultural he would talk about agriculture; industrial, he'd talk about labor, this, that and the other, never one time mentioning Stark's name. He was all telling about Truman, what his interest was, what he believed, what his feelings about the state, what the State of Missouri was entitled to in its representation in Washington. This was about the time they were going to start the Defense Plant Corporation, too, don't you see. So, I was most of the time in Washington. Did you all hear of the Skouras brothers, the great motion picture people?

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HILL & STILLEY: No.

SNYDER: Well, there were three--let's see. I've got to keep coming back or I'll talk to you forever--but they were three Greeks who came over to St. Louis as bus boys in a hotel. By gosh, by pooling their earnings and everything, they finally wound up with something for expansion, and they bought one of these little nickelodeons, a store building with chairs in it. You all probably never heard of them, but that's what we started with the motion picture. They built that into twenty-two theaters there in St. Louis. Well, anyway, they own the Ambassador Building

which had the Ambassador Theater in the bottom and then an office building above. I borrowed half a floor--borrowed from them. We borrowed desks, we borrowed stenographers, and the headquarters for Mr. Truman's campaign was in St. Louis, not Kansas City, see. Then later he set up one in Sedalia, Missouri, but our main operation was handled in St. Louis and Sedalia and not in Kansas City. We just got away from the paper and the Pendergast organization

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that had ranted on Truman, don't you see.

Mr. Truman, I'll say now, because I'm covering all the territory, he and I loved cartoons and particularly political cartoons. There's one over there that he simply loved. Here were two of these big giant moving trucks--didn't you see it--and here running around under the bottom was a little bitty one, you know, running around under these big trucks. Well, these two big ones, one was named Milligan Company, the other one was named Stark Company, and the little one down here was called Truman, and the title was "This is No Time for a Kiddy Car."

Well, truth, justice prevailed and the first thing you know people began to get the feel of the man. St. Louis suddenly realized they were backing the wrong man, and that's when this man [Robert D.] Hannegan--he had been the foot boy for Mayor Dickmann's organization, and he was all out for Stark, this, that and the other--but then finally Dickmann said, "Here we're in the wrong alley," and they switched to Truman. That was the thing that switched it and he won

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the primary, and then the general election was no problem at all. But that's where he really had the rough time of it; and we lived hand to mouth, I'll tell you. We never knew exactly where we were going. We were so discouraged. I went up to see Senator Truman and to talk about plans, and he said, "Well, John, I'll tell you this. We just as well make up our mind one thing, I am not going to run out. This man has attacked me and all this sort of thing, but I'll not run." Stark had started before Truman had ever announced that he was going to run again. He said, "I've got to, my honor calls on it." He said, "I'm going to do it."

And I said, "Well, how are we going to raise the money?"

He said, "Don't bother about that. We've got to win." He said, "I'm going to run if only Bess, you, and I vote for me,"

"Well," I said, "a11 right."

We were downstairs and were walking out of the Senate office building and I ran into a man from St. Louis, who was a contractor out there.

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He said, "What in the world is wrong with you? You look like a steamroller just ran right over you."

I said, "It has. Do you know we haven't even got enough money to buy postage stamps to write people to help us?"

"Oh," he said, "well, you are bad." He said, ".lust a minute," and reached into his pocket and walked over to a car and on the fender of the car he wrote out a check and handed it to me: \$1,000.

I said, "Sir, thank you very much." And I went upstairs, and I said, "We're saved" He looked at that. It looked like a million dollars to us, because then that really got us started where we could write to our various folks and tell them that we are going to get into business, we are going to run. Then we set up headquarters operating down in St. Louis.

Now, any questions?

HILL: Was President Truman confident throughout that primary campaign?

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SNYDER: Never showed the least signs of lack of confidence that he was going to win, never. There was quite a number that didn't think he'd win, as was later in another race, when he ran in '48. But there were a lot of them didn't think he was going to win, until all of a sudden he began to leak through that he was making an impression.

HILL: What legislative things that he had a part of in the Senate was he most proud of?

SNYDER: Oh, I would say appropriations probably. He was tremendously interested in appropriations and the budgeting, and that proved to be of exceptional value to him when he later became President. He was the only President that I know of to date that could go into a press conference when the budget was announced, and with 75 to 150 press men who had had copies of the new budget and a day or two to go through it, were firing questions at him about the various facets, "Is this justified?" "Why are you doing this?" "Who got to you on this?" See? The budget man and I sat with him.

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It was rare that he had to call one of us in, maybe on a technical matter of distribution or something of that sort. He'd say, "Well, how is that handled, John?" or "How is that handled, Tim, George, Pete?" We had about four budget directors while we were there. You see, I was Secretary of the Treasury for nearly seven years with him. So, I would say appropriations, because it was trying to keep the Government operating within its means. That was a vitally important thing. He stayed that way all through the Presidency. He and I had an understanding we were going to try to pay for all the good things we were going to do for the people, and for defense, and all those things, out of our earnings and not going into the tremendous deficit. And

we never did. I'm getting a way ahead of myself. We better stick where we are; we're in the Senate still.

Now, any questions?

HILT: His decision to run for Vice President, did he ever have any plans to try to become Vice President?

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SNYDER: No, never, it was just the opposite. One day Hannegan called me. FDR had made him the Chairman of the Democratic Party. Robert Hannegan--he was from St. Louis. FDR brought him down here, first as head of the Internal Revenue, and then took him as Chairman of the Democratic Party and he was that at the time of the '44 campaign. He called me one day--along about May, I guess, or June--the latter part of May or the first of June. He said, "The Boss wants to know,"--he had started to calling Senator Truman the "Boss" then. He thought he was a great buddy and so forth. He said, "He wants to know if you'll come up to Chicago to the Convention."

I said, "Well, Bob, if Senator Truman wants me to come up there, the same call that you made, he could make; it wouldn't cost any more and he could ask me and I could tell him right quick." I said, "If he asks me to come, I'll answer him."

Well, later in the day I had a call, "Can you get away from that bank of yours down there

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long enough to do some intelligent work?"

I said, "What's the intelligent work?"

He said, "I'm the chairman of the Missouri delegation for the Convention, Democratic Convention in Chicago. I've got to go up there and I want you to come up and sit with me."

I said, "Senator, if you want me to, of course. I'm sure that my bank, they are so keenly interested in the Democratic Party--the bank was as Republican as all outdoors--I said, "I'm sure that they are so keen with the Party, that they would love to have me go up there."

He said, "Well, will you come?"

I said, "Yes, I'll be there."

So I met him. He and his wife and Margaret had a room at the Morison Hotel, I believe it was. But he had quarters in the biggest hotel there. I can't think of it right now, but we'll think of it after while. I got quarters in the Blackstone, right across the street. I sat there with him all day, every day, with people coming and going, and

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all that sort of thing. He said, "Hannegan keeps talking to me about"--oh, I've got to go back a bit.

At Christmastime the Trumans and my family had Christmas dinner together, and the question came up as to whether or not he was interested in being anything. We all decided that he was where he was doing the finest. He loved it. Mrs. Truman liked it. He was building a nice reputation as a leader of the Senate. So it was decided that he was not going to be in a moment of--you know, you had friends and you all make pledges, but later something would come up and you couldn't carry them out exactly, and so you had to make another decision. Well, anyway, he said, "I'll tell you this. I'll never agree to be a candidate unless you and Bess--I talk with you about it." Well, we were shocked--not that we were going to be consulted.

Well, he got to talking about it up there at the Convention, and he said, "Hannegan keeps press-

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ing me to run for nomination to be Vice President." Truman said, "We can't do it, because I promised Jimmy Byrnes that we would write his nominating speech, and I'd give it. So let's get to work. So we started to working on a speech for Truman to give to nominate Jim Byrnes for Vice President. Well, we were right in the middle of that going on, when all of a sudden, Jimmy Byrnes busted in the door and he said, "Good-by fellows, I'm going back to Washington."

I said, "Wait a minute, Jim, sit down here and let me read you what we're going to say about you. We're going to nominate you."

He said, "The hell with that."

Truman said, "What's the matter with you?"

He said, "Well, I just talked to the Boss." The President was out on the West Coast. He made a loop examining, presumably examining, the defense operations. This was in '44 remember. He was out there checking on the West Coast to see how

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they were set up in case that we got pressure from the Japanese and so forth. Things were beginning to look like we had pretty well got them contained over in Europe by that time, and there were feelings going on that we could lick the Europeans, but we didn't know what we were going to do with the Japanese if we got tangled on both sides. So, presumably, really what he was doing was feeling out the people and seeing--that would be his fourth time running. He was a good politician, he was checking--also he wanted to get away from the Convention, and rule it from a distance. So, he said, "I just talked to the Boss and he said, 'What the hell are you doing down there in Chicago, I left you to run the store back in Washington.'" Why, Mr. President, I

thought you wanted me to be here to help. He said, "I want you to be where I asked you to be." And he said, "I'm going back, good-by." We argued, but he was gone; came back here.

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Well, we were somewhat stunned, you know. Here we were making a beautiful speech, there was no question; and a very effective one, we felt. The phone rang. I answered it, and it was Hannegan over at the Blackstone across the street. "Is the Boss there?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Could I help you?"

He said, "Well, I guess so." He said, "I just had a funny talk with Jimmy Byrnes."

"Oh, you know about it."

"Well, oh, I guess we could. John and I will be over in a few minutes. All right, I'll come." And he hung up the phone. They don't want you."

So then he told me, he said, "There's a group over there, they want to talk with me. I guess I better go over and see them."

"Good luck."

Well, he got over there and there were about

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five people there, Sidney Hillman, Kelly, Hannegan--there were about five. Kind of big operators in the Party--labor, and machines, things of that sort in the big city. Every city had a big daily operation, you know. And Hannegan said, "Well, the President wants you to be his running mate."

He said, "Well, I understood that he wanted Douglas."

"Well," he said, "he wants either you or Douglas."

"Well, I'll let you have Douglas, that's fine."

"But Douglas won't take it. He won't give up the Supreme Court to run. He wants you."

About that time the phone rings--now all this sounds like a script--and it was FDR calling Hannegan, and if you ever sat or heard in a room when FDR was talking, all you had to do was hold the phone out a little and you didn't need a loudspeaker or anything. He said, "What's that

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stubborn Missouri mule doing out there? Is he still holding back?"

Hannegan said, "Well, he doesn't feel like he's the man. He thinks you ought to take Douglas." It had already been decided he would not take Wallace; he just wouldn't run with Wallace again. He found that the Nation just didn't care for Wallace too much. He said, "Well, if that stubborn guy wants to ruin the Democratic Party, let him do it," and hung up the phone. Well, what would you do fellows?

He said, "Okay, John, we'll go over and see Bess and get this straightened out." So he came on back over, and he agreed to do it. That was the great effort he put into trying to be Vice President.

HILL: Did President Roosevelt's health bother him?

SNYDER: A great deal. We knew he wasn't well. We knew he wasn't well during the--well, that was

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before the election. But, he wasn't well, and he overtaxed himself through the whole election. He went out in bad weather, and pretty, and rode in cars that were open and did many things he shouldn't do; but he was determined to get elected again, and he did. Then after the Inauguration which wasn't held at the Capitol, it was held there in the back part of the White House. President Roosevelt was sworn in on the porch there at the White House. The balcony wasn't up there on the south side at that time. Mr. Truman built that on there, the Truman balcony. But he was sworn in there and the people all stood around in the snow out on the ground. Immediately following that he left and went into seclusion for a day or two, and then got on a ship and went to Yalta and met Churchill and Stalin. That's where our great problems started, right there, because we were getting close to the end of the war, and that was in January 1945, and well--that's about where we are. Now what?

HILL: About President Roosevelt, did Senator Truman

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mention to you that he thought he probably would succeed to the Presidency?

SNYDER: He didn't want to talk about it. He just didn't want to even consider it. Mr. Roosevelt told him very little about what was going on. They had one or two conferences, but he didn't even know about the atomic bomb until after he was President. So he had not been too well briefed on the problems of the Presidency. Shortly after he got back from Yalta, Roosevelt went to Warm Springs, and never returned.

HILL: What were the circumstances around you contacting President Truman right after he became President, the first time?

SNYDER: I was down in Mexico, as I was telling you, at that meeting, and a few minutes after we closed--an hour or two later--the call came, said that he wanted to talk with me when I got back to the hotel after dinner, at the Reforma Hotel there in Mexico. Helm was President of the Chemical Bank and Trust Company in New York, was one of my

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close friends and he was at the meeting. He said, "What do you think that means?"

I said, "Well, there's just a lot of things it means, but," I said, "I think just to be on the right side, we'll get on back up there; and I'll let him know I'm available, and I'll just sit and wait for him."

He said, "I'll go and sit with you."

So we went up to my room and he sat with me there. Oh, I guess forty-five minutes or an hour later, the call came in. He said, "What are you doing down there in Mexico, I need you up here."

I said, "Well, you knew about this meeting we were having."

He said, "How soon can you get back up here?" He said, "The whole earth has just fallen on me. The sky has fallen right on top of me, and I want you here to talk to."

I said, "Well, remember I'm a civilian right now." See, I was back in the bank. I said, "This is wartime and there are priorities on plane travel and I'll have to see what I can do."

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Messerschmidt was our Ambassador down there and so Helm and I drove over there, and we finagled a passage on the first plane. There wasn't any night planes in those days out of Mexico. Mexico City is--have you all been down there?--it's down in a kind of a valley, and it gets foggy pretty much. It's in the base of a big kind of a volcano like. Well, anyway, I was on the first plane that went out in the morning, but we didn't have those mile a minute--I don't mean mile a minute--I mean ten miles a minute planes in those days. We had the DC-3s and in coming from Mexico City to Washington we had to sit down about I guess at least five times to refuel, don't you see. So I got on it and started back. That was the saddest trip I ever experienced. We'd sit there and the people were standing around the airports in a daze. "We had lost our best friend," don't you see. "What are we going to do?" "Who can possibly lead us out?" "The war is still on." All that sort of thing, don't you see.

By the time I got to Washington, took all day

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to get up here, why, there was a message there for me to call the White House as soon as I got there, and I did. They said, "Well, the President is tied up now. He wants to see you the first thing in the morning. Come over and have breakfast with him."

I said, "Wait a minute, the President's spending the night in his apartment. He hasn't moved downtown."

They said, "But you come to the White House, then, at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning."

I said, "Okay. "

When he was Vice President he stayed in his apartment out here on Connecticut Avenue. Then a day or two later he gave Mrs. Roosevelt all that she--he told her--and I was there with him when he did--he said, "Mrs. Roosevelt, what can I do for you?"

She said, "Harry, you don't have to ask me what you can do for me. I want to know what I can do for you. You're the man that needs the help now." Pretty nice.

"Well, you take your time. You've been living

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here for twelve years, you take your time and get your things sorted and packed and we'll get along all right." He said, "They're going to set me up over in the Blair House, and I'll be right across the street. You take as long as you want here, and we'll get things operating over in the West Wing there," where the administrative offices were.

So a couple of days later, or the next day after I got there, they moved down to the Blair House, and he stayed there for several weeks, until Mrs. Roosevelt got packed up and got out. He didn't rush her at all.

STILLER: What were the circumstances under which you were chosen as Secretary of the Treasury?

SNYDER: Well, the first thing when I walked in to see him the next morning, I was really pleased how well he was taking it. He seemed to have a good night's rest. He spent some time telling me what all happened the day before and it was just phenomenal to me how he had gotten organized and gotten

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moving. How many people he had seen and how quickly he got brought up on papers and things of that sort. He had read pretty late at night on various position papers, for different activities. So, he said, "Well, I want you to come down here with me."

I said, "Oh, don't do that, Mr. President. I'll have you know that the 1st of July I'm going to become president of the First National Bank in St. Louis. It's been my life's ambition, you know that that's what I've been aiming for years and years, and preparing myself for it. Now it's mine, they've already given it to me, and I'll become president"--this was April 12th or something like that.

He said, "No, I want you to come down here. I just need you. I know I just want you around me while I'm President."

I said, "Just don't ask me. I can be of more help to you out there at the First National Bank. That's the biggest bank west of the Mississippi under one roof." You see, that's a joke we had. You see the Bank of America had branches all over the State of California. Take all of those branches away from

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them and we were the biggest bank west of the Mississippi River at that time, under one roof. I said, "We've got influence around. I could be helpful to you."

About that time Jimmy Byrnes came in. Mr. Truman had sent for him. He got out of Government from the time out at the Convention. He just washed his hands and got out of Government. But he called him back up, because they had been friends for years, ever since Truman had been in the Senate. He came in and he said, "Jim, come in here." He said, "John and I are going on with our plan." Apparently they had been talking about my coming right on up, being there. He said, "Harry, you don't forget who you are. Order him to do it." And there went my bank out the window. So he said, "Well, I've already looked around. You're going to be a Federal Loan Administrator. You know that thing from top to bottom, and you've been on the advisory to the Board of Directors there for six years." He said, "You take that, that's vacant. We won't have any argument about it right now." He said, "I'm ready to

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appoint you." I was his first appointment there.

So I went over there and stayed about three months. Mr. Truman then went to Potsdam, and he was not satisfied with Morgenthau as Secretary of the Treasury. But I was still wanting to go home. I thought, "Well, I'll go over here and I'll stay a few weeks and months and something like that, and then I'll still get back." And they were nice out there at the bank. They were going to hold a place for me a reasonable length of time. You just can't--once the word's out, you've got to act. But anyway, I stayed there.

Truman didn't want Morgenthau. He didn't like the Morgenthau plan, making an agrarian plan for Germany, and a lot of things like that he stood for. So he and I talked about it and I said, "Mr. President, I think that a good man would be Fred Vinson." He was running the old Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion then, which was in the east end of the White House that

Jimmy Byrnes had started; and then when he walked out the President brought Vinson over. I said, "There is

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a man who has been in the Ways and Means Committee." That's a taxing committee, you know, in the House. And I said, "He can be a help. You can have a lot of trouble with this making ends meet. You're going to have a tax problem." I said, "We've got to stop them from going in when the war is over." Let's see, now the war is over here in Europe right now, but you've still got this here Japanese thing, and we're not sure how long that's going to drag on. I think we ought to send him up there, because he could help us hold the taxes from being raided and cut down as soon as the war is over, and he can help us straighten out taxes and get a better balance into that picture. And then he's a politician, which I am not. I was never in politics except when he was concerned, never any part. I didn't think a banker's got any business stepping around politics, because he needs all five sides to help him there in the bank. I said, "Think about using him."

He said, "He doesn't know anything about Treasury, or banking, or anything." He said, "He's

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a good politician."

Well, I said, "That's what we need right now, I believe."

Off he went. He told Morgenthau, "I'll talk with you when I get back."

Well, Sam Rosenman was General Counsel. Of course, everybody wanted to go with the President to Potsdam but he just cut it down to them. He didn't take any of those that really were anxious to go. I was over at the Federal Loan Administration, RFC. That's another long story. It would take a great deal of time to tell you the maneuvers of FDR and Jesse Jones and everything. It started out the RFC and then the RFC had all these subsidiaries that came into it for the war. Then FDR tried to maneuver Jesse out of the big job of the banker of the RFC, and created the Federal Loan Administrator and moved him up into that vacancy, and leaving the head of the RFC, but Jesse just took it right on up. Well, anyway, I talked with the various ones about this, and they all seemed to agree that that might be a good thing to do.

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So, Truman goes to Potsdam. Now I get a call from Sam Rosenman, and he said, "Come over here; I've got a problem." So, I went across. He said, "Henry Morgenthau was just in here, he says he's got to have a decision, he's humiliated. He's been there in the Treasury for eleven years now and he thinks he's got a right to know where he stands, with his experience and so forth. This new man, what's he going to do about it, is he going to continue him in the job?"

I said, "What did you tell him?"

I said, "Now, Henry, let's be patient. This man's gone over there to face these folks to try to decide what they're going to do about this European situation." That war was over then, you see on May 8th. And he said, "Well, I've got to know."

So, he said, "I'll call him and he'll come back over." Well, the Treasury is right across the street from the White House, so he came on over. He said, "I've got to know. I'm just embarrassed. I don't know what to tell to people, I can't go

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out nights they're all asking about it."

So Sam said, "Why don't you write the President a letter and tell him that and we'll put it in the pouch." When the President's away, every night there's a pouch goes out with all the papers for him to sign, and any important matters for him to make decisions on. That's gotten to him quickly, you know. Every night the pouch goes out. "We'll put it in the pouch. Of course, it will fly across, and catch him and drop it on the ship." I think he was just about to land there.

Well, anyway, the next afternoon it was, Sam called, said, "?Guess what the Boss did."

I said, "I don't know, what did he do?"

"He accepted Morgenthau's resignation."

He got over there, and there it was. Sent Vinson's name up as Secretary of the Treasury, see. Sam and I just nodded our head, but he took our advice. You see, he hadn't said a word to us at all. This came on back you know--"Accept Morgenthau's and send Vinson's name up as Secretary of the Treasury."

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About an hour later here comes another one says, "Move Snyder over into the OWMR job," see. Well, that I wanted just like I wanted a shot in the heart, don't you see. Oh, God, there was the most god awful experience. Purely political and juggling people and trying to keep people happy and trying to deal with Cabinet members and all of these department heads, and labor, and business, and a11. It was just exactly what I had not studied for. He made up his mind.

So, rather than to bother with him, we went on and made the shift, swore Vinson in as Secretary, and I took this job. There are two different jobs in Treasury. One of them is the Treasurer. That is sort of a honorary position that's given to someone who's done a fine job. It has no real responsibilities--the Treasurer. And it's usually been sort of a gift to someone. The Treasurer of the United States has always been a man up until I was in the Treasury and when the Treasurer was killed in an automobile accident, I suggested that they put a woman in the job, and it's been a woman ever since.

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They put Georgia Neese Clark, who was from over in Topeka, Kansas, a banker. She was a banker; and they named her that and she served very well and made a credit to the position. So there are two things now, there is the Treasurer, which is that, and then there's the Secretary of the Treasury, who runs the Treasury, see.

STILLEY: When were you, and how were you finally asked to be the Secretary of the Treasury?

SNYDER: In June of 1946 at a press conference the President had called, he announced that he was going to name Vinson to be the Chief Justice of the United States. Everybody started to run out then because that was the announcement that they had been waiting for a long time. Then someone turned around and said, "Well, who's going to take the Treasury?" He said, "This fellow sitting right here." So that was our preparation for--we had never discussed it. I was highly honored, of course, but I would have urged against my taking it, because it required a great deal more of an education and experience

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in politics than I would have been willing to have admitted that I would try at the time; but that was the selection. He already had it in mind apparently. So that answers your question as to how advanced notice he gave me. But then I stayed in the job until we left there.

HILL: The 1948 campaign I'm sure was an interesting time.

SNYDER: The 1948 campaign was an extremely interesting one. Again he had money problems. We didn't have a great deal of money. I was Secretary of the Treasury then. I had to be very cautious about the activities that I took. I encouraged people to back President Truman and I was able to many times arrange for the quick financing of radio broadcasts, as they were largely in those days. We actually lived from hand to mouth on expenses for nearly the whole campaign. It was a very difficult one, a very arduous one. We got off to a very poor start in Omaha, Nebraska. They had arranged a great big meeting out at a public arena, and it

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hadn't been well planned. It was kind of a dud. I was pretty discouraged about that. Mr. Truman then started off on a trip and that's when the "give 'em hell Harry" program started--talking from the back end of a train. Whenever the train would stop, he would start making talks. He began to just pour it on then, and became himself; and he quit being the successor to FDR. All during the period from the time he became President until '48 he had had the feeling that he had not been elected. The reason he was in that job was because FDR ran on certain promises to the people, and certain policies, and that he was obligated, because that was what the people said they wanted, to try the best he could within his own good judgment to carry out the Roosevelt policies and so forth. He began being Harry Truman on this campaign in '48. From then on he was practically a very different man. He spoke for himself, and what he stood for was Harry Truman, because he had been elected then, don't you see.

STILLEY: During the campaign, did you personally,

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privately, have your doubts about whether he would be elected, or were you confident all through the campaign?

SNYDER: It was a pretty tough go. We all recognized that we were up against it. I had confidence he was going to do the best job he could to get elected, and I never got into ever expressing a doubt but that he was. It was pretty thin ice many times. But somehow or other he communicated some of his confidence and the expectations to me in our visits together.

I went out on the train with him in his car on the last trip out before the election. He stopped at St. Louis and on the way out he handed me, said, "Read this."

I read it. It was a speech that was written for him to give at St. Louis. They were going to have a big turnout for him. That would be his last public speech before the election, Saturday night; the election was the following Tuesday. I said, "You're not going to give this speech are you?"

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He said, "No, I don't think so."

When he got over there--there were quite a number of them that just didn't think he was going to make it. I mean closest to him. Well anyway, there were a lot of cold hands that went into the auditorium. He got up there and made a speech practically off-the-cuff. He had some references there. He had gone up to the hotel after we got there, and had worked some notes up. He got up and I believe it was the best speech I have ever heard him make; and mostly off-the-cuff. He just electrified the newspapermen. They couldn't believe that this was coming out of this particular man. They treated him very well about that speech, and it was in all the weekend papers.

He left Kansas City and went over to Excelsior Springs, a spa over there in Missouri. A couple of Secret Service men went over with him--went by himself, nobody except his Secret Service men, and went to bed. The next morning early called me and said, "Well, when will you be ready to go back?"

So, when his train came through I went down and got on the train and came on back with him. And

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of course, one of the delightful things is--I hope you've seen the picture. His special car was on the back of the train. The newspaper came and someone gave it to him. We stopped in, I don't remember exactly, I think it was Cincinnati or someplace, they gave him a Chicago Tribune

paper, and he held it up and it was on that paper, that picture was printed everywhere, says, "Dewey Defeats Truman."

It was quite a pleasant trip back.

HILL: One thing about that campaign that's not been publicized a great deal, I don't think, is the fact that in that campaign some of the first integrated political rallies were held in the South.

SNYDER: That's correct, and that came as somewhat of a surprise, and then, it was pleasing, of course, very pleasing. In the convention in Philadelphia, there had been some opposition to Mr. Truman. There had been some underground of "Well, I don't know, we don't think he can make it," and this, that, and

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the other; and there was some side efforts to get other candidates to agree to run, don't you see. One of them was [Alben] Barkley. Barkley, not himself, but people promoting Barkley to be the nominee. And I was up there, Mr. Truman didn't come up to the Convention, but I was--every other hour I would call him and tell him all about this, and he said, "Well, just sit tight, just sit tight, this thing will work out." Then after several false moves around and everything, it was decided that Truman would be the nominee. Then they were going to have a night session and have the nominating speeches and things made. Then Truman was invited, and he came up and spent a very miserable, hot, session. The air-conditioning wasn't exactly running, and while they went through the actual nominating end, then he came out and made a very magnificent speech and asked for Barkley to be his running mate, which was agreed on.

HILL: Were the integrated rallies that were held, specifically planned for that?

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SNYDER: Yes, in a way, but they had to be very delicately--oh, what I started to say, I'm glad you brought that back up. Some of the liberals at the convention tried to put through, and did, that anyone that voted for a candidate at the convention had to stay behind and support him in the campaign. To me it was a silly, ridiculous thing to do, but a lot of these northern liberals had a great idea the South didn't have anywhere else to go; they had to stay with the Democrats, see. Well, they found out that wasn't true, because a lot of them were very annoyed and felt insulted to have such a proviso put in there, that they were going to be ordered to do that. So we lost a lot of the South, as you know. So that's why as I say, it was pretty delicate. When he went in the South, they arranged for these meetings and got by with them and they weren't given much publicity. I think you will find that out. Do you all remember any of the towns where they . .

HILL: Dallas was one.

SNYDER: Well, Dallas isn't exactly a Southern town,

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but they liked to be called the South whether they ought to or not. But they had a rally there and they'd invited a lot of the blacks and they turned out. That was one, but that wasn't really a Southern black and white rally, an integrated rally. It turned out all right because the blacks in Texas voted for Truman pretty well. Any other questions?

HILL: On his personality. How would you describe the personality of President Truman?

SNYDER: Oh, President Truman was a delightful person. When I got in the Treasury, I made an arrangement with him on every Tuesday night--I think it was Tuesday, one night a week. I would bring out eight to twelve top people of the United States over to see him after dinner, for him to just get acquainted with them; find out what they are thinking about, what they thought he was doing, and what they thought maybe he ought to do, you know. Just let them meet face to face. A lot of them he had never met before; a lot of them knew him just to shake hands, and that was it. But it was a

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tremendous experience for him and they loved it, the people that I brought down there. They'd talk of General Motors; they'd talk of Chase Bank; the head of General Foods, every opposite member of what's called the Business Council, which was probably about 150 of the top businesses of the United States. So I was able to get the very acme of business. And the first thing you know, I began to feel, "Well, you're getting business too much involved with the President;" while he was just enjoying it and eating it up. He'd get a chance to tell them where to get off and everything, you know, at times, and then he was learning something, too, about business.

So the part I was trying to get there is that you asked about--those people came away from that meeting saying, "That's a great guy." His personality, he had real charm. I have taken people over to see him when he was sitting in his desk as President and they'd go in there, "I'll get him told about this, and so and so," and they'd come out, "Say, that fellow really is wonderful. He's

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delightful. I've never seen anybody that had the grasp of so many things as that man has."

Take Army people in there, on one of these big talks about what we're going to do about defense or something, and he'd get one of these big globes over by the fireplace there in the Oval Office, and he'd take them over and point out history; Alexander the Great, where he fell down, where he got his mind on something else, wasn't tending to his business. He'd be pointing out the Palestinian situation and some of these folks had been making life studies, and he told them things that surprised them, don't you see. I got into this China situation, and by gosh, he'd tell them things about China and here they had been studying the Chinese situation militarily for years. Anyway, he was one of the most amazingly self-educated people. That I began to learn back when we used to sit out at the camp. See, we'd be out there and night would come on. We'd have dinner, and usually three or four of us would sit around and visit in the evening.

Many times we were invited to dinner on the post with the officers. Two of our favorites were Patton

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and Terry Allen. We used to be their house guests frequently up until they both died; they were my very dear friends. But we got to talk to people like that. They'd say, "Gosh, what a guy he is." Does that tell you something about him?

HILL: Just two more questions. What characteristics did he have do you think that led to his success in the positions that he held?

SNYDER: His thoroughness. His trying to go get to the bottom of the question on hand; get the best advice that he could get on the subject and then make up his own mind. He was a man who knew how to make a decision and did make a decision. If you go back through the early days of his book, two volumes, and read the decisions that he had to make in the first few weeks. If you'll leave me a card, I'll get a copy of a speech I made one time, "The First Hundred Days With Truman," and tell you all the things that he had to meet and make decisions on. The head of U.S. News and World Report who did not like Truman for some reason or other, but

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was a great friend of mine. He used to come over and have lunch with me at the Treasury, and one day he got talking and he said, "You know, I'm going to tell you this, John, and it will surprise you, but you give Truman the facts and he damn near always will come up with the right decision." So that's the type of man. His humane view of life. He was to me a tremendous humanitarian. He believed in the people; he wanted the people to benefit by everything possible and get the best of what was going on in this great nation of ours. I think that pretty near covers it, doesn't it?

STILLEY: One last question: What was the relationship between the President and his Cabinet?

SNYDER: It was very cordial. Mr. Truman had regular Cabinet meetings, and he had them in the mornings. They were all there. You've been in the Cabinet Room have you?

STILLEY: No, I'd like to.

SNYDER: Well, I'll go over and see if I can find a

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picture of the Cabinet sitting. The table is one of those oval kind that you can sit anyplace and see everybody else. The President sat here and on his right was the Secretary of State, on his left the Secretary of the Treasury. Then it went on down by grade don't you see, rank down around. Occasionally there would be someone invited to come in; to tell about something, that wasn't in the Cabinet. For instance, the Economic Council, or somebody from the U.N., our Ambassador

at the U.N. or somebody of that sort; but normally Mr. Truman would open the meeting, and he said, "I have this to tell you about current events," if there was something that had happened that he thought the Cabinet ought to know about it. He'd tell them his views on it and so we'd have a unified view. Know at least what the President said, and hopefully his Cabinet would agree with him. Then he would, if there were any bills that were coming up in Congress, he was anxious that the Cabinet would take an interest in it and try to help, he would bring that up, and have somebody come in and review the highlights of that bill, and the points that he wanted to stress

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particularly. Then he'd start around by protocol, "Have you anything to report to us that would be of interest to the Cabinet?" He gave everybody a chance to have something to say, and that happened every week, once a week. Sometimes it would be a short meeting. Sometimes it would be a long meeting. Does that answer your question?

HILL: Did he work quite a bit individually with the Cabinet members like in private meetings?

SNYDER: Yes. In spite of arguments that you hear, Mr. Truman was not a difficult President to see, if you had something to talk about. If you just wanted to go in there and gripe or find fault with somebody, or this, that or the other, he wasn't too eager to sit there and listen to it; but if you wanted to come in there and talk about a problem in our department, and you wanted to get his views, or you wanted to convey to him your views and make recommendations, I don't know of anyone that couldn't get in to see him. There was a lot of talk, "I don't ever get in to see the President. Because of

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our long friendship, I adopted a procedure that I rarely got my name on the engagement book. I'd call him--I had a phone right back and forth from my desk right to his desk, go through just one operator there--and I could call him; "I got something I want to talk to you about," or he'd call me and say, "Come over, I want to talk to you about something." I'd go in across the street there, that little street there between the Treasury, and go in that back door there, side door, the West Gate door, and go down through the basement of the White House and in through the back, and not even go round through the press room, and the reception room and all that. I'd go in through his secretary's office. Many times I would be in and out as many as two, three times a day sometimes, and never have any recording that I had been in to see him. Many a time I'd go over in the afternoon, after he'd call and say, "I'm leaving, come by the pool." And I'd go over and sit on the side of the pool while he was swimming and we would talk out things. But that we kept to ourselves, that wasn't counseling.

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This was just work matters. I was so careful to see that he understood and knew everything that was going on in the Treasury, in the monetary side, worldwide or domestic. That he understood what we were trying to do, and that if he didn't think that he was for it, we would try to persuade him to; or if he just wouldn't, we'd change our plan. It wasn't a matter of who would win or who

wouldn't. He let me run the Treasury, because we had a thorough understanding. He wasn't concerned about what I do over there, and then he'd find out about it in the papers and things of that sort. He had that same relationship with--on the basis of ours--Mr. Acheson who was a very highly educated man, and to be very frank with you, he was sort of a snob, and loved it, he liked to be. Because he had a marvelous education, he had been in Government a great deal, he was one of the outstanding lawyers here in town, belonged to one of the prestigious law firms here; but he and Mr. Truman had great accord in views and worked together. He relied on Acheson; he believed in him. He was never a friend

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who'd drop in in the evenings, sit down and have a drink or something of that sort. It was more formal than that. And yet, he counted him as one of his very, very good friends.

Marshall was a man he had great respect for. Yet Marshall was a sort of formal person. He never would call anybody Jim or George, it was "Snyder;" and yet he would surprise you sometimes.

Drucie invited him out to the house for a birthday party for me. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon here came an Army car up there, and a sergeant got out and had a great big box, brought it in. She took the top off and he had had a birthday cake made for me. Now, you'd never think of him having that kind of sentiment, don't you see. Stalwart, "Snyder," you see. But underneath he had a very deep regard for Mr. Truman. There were others that Mr. Truman just casually knew and kept it that way. But so far as getting in to see him, if you had something that you ought to talk to him about, you could get in there.

Did that answer your question?

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STTLLEY: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Snyder.

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