

Oral History Interview

with

GEORGE M. ELSEY

United States Naval Reserve officer assigned to the White House, April 1942-April 1947; assistant to Clark M. Clifford in the White House, April 1947- August 1949; an administrative assistant to the President, August 1949-November 1951; and assistant to the Director for Mutual Security, December 1951-January 1953.

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by Charles T. Morrissey and Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

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By Charles T. Morrissey, Harry S. Truman Library

MORRISSEY: Let's start, Mr. Elsey, by hearing how you became a member of Mr. Truman's White House staff.

ELSEY: I was on duty at the White House on April 12, 1945, the day of President Roosevelt's death. I had been at the White House for the preceding three years, from April 1942, as a naval reserve officer. I had been assigned in April 1942, by the Director of Naval Intelligence to the White House Map Room. I don't know to what extent you care to hear about the Map Room but I'll be happy to explain what it was since the Map Room did exist for, not only all of the Roosevelt war years, but through the early months of the Truman administration till the end of the war with Japan.

The White House Map Room was an intelligence and

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communications center. It was established in the first few days after Pearl Harbor on the ground floor of the White House proper--the mansion. This was a room where officers of the Army and the Navy maintained up-to-the-minute maps and charts of all of the active theaters of combat. The room was off-limits to all civilian personnel in the White House, except the President himself and Harry Hopkins, his closest friend and advisor. The only other personnel ever admitted to the Map Room were military officers. The Map Room was under the immediate jurisdiction of the Naval Aide to the President, who at the outbreak of the war was Capt. John L. McCrea. He was succeeded in 1943 by Rear Admiral Wilson Brown.

The job of those of us--junior officers--Map Room watch officers--was to maintain a twenty-four hour a day, seven day a week active room where telegrams and dispatches were received from the Army and the Navy. We were to transcribe the information onto maps and maintain current files, so that whenever the President or Mr. Hopkins or Admiral William D. Leahy, the President's Chief of Staff, wanted to know what was going on we would have the information instantly available for them. We also were the communications center for classified

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communications. There was, of course, the regular White House switchboard for normal public telephone communications, but we had cryptographic systems and coding equipment so that we were able to put into code any messages from the White House to the President when the President was traveling away from Washington. We were also able to receive and decode messages that were addressed to the President from outside Washington. We served as the secretariat for the President's communications with Prime Minister Churchill and Generalissimo Stalin and a few comparable figures such as Chiang Kai-shek and leaders of the other Allied war effort.

When I say secretariat, we were the only place in the White House--the only place in the government, for that matter--which kept complete files, incoming and outgoing, of all communications between the President and these figures: the background data, the correspondence, the memoranda of conversations, the other things which led up to the final drafts of the messages that were sent out.

I've said the President here because, and I'm referring both to President Roosevelt and to President Truman when he became President, because the procedures—

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the staff pattern, all this--was exactly the same in both Administrations. There was no change in the situation until V-J Day at which point, of course, the Map Room was rather rapidly dismantled.

And so, that's a rather long and rambling answer to the question of how I got to be on the White House staff when President Truman was there. The fact is I had been there for three years when President Truman came to the White House. I was serving in April 1945, as the senior naval officer in the Map Room, reporting directly to Admiral Brown, the Naval Aide.

MORRISSEY: Could you give me a brief thumbnail description of your life prior to April 1942?

ELSEY: I'd gone on active duty on December 8, 1941, the day of the declaration of war between the United States and Japan. I'd had a naval reserve commission and had been a graduate student at Harvard University, a graduate student in American history, for the two years '39 to '41, having graduated from Princeton in 1939.

MORRISSEY: How did you move from the Map Room staff to Mr. Truman's presidential staff?

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ELSEY: This is a combination of an accident and good luck and fortuitous circumstances, I suppose. Mr. Truman came to the White House, as we all know, rather poorly prepared for the Presidency. This is in no sense a criticism of Mr. Truman himself. He has frequently, in his writings and in his speeches, referred to the fact that he came to the White House poorly prepared. He had been Vice President only three months. President Roosevelt was away from Washington most of the time from January 20, 1945, until his death on April 12--first at the Yalta Conference and then at Warm Springs, Georgia--there had been practically no opportunity for Vice President Truman to have any briefings from President Roosevelt or to have much contact with the civilian or military leaders of our Nation.

It was his concern with his own unpreparedness that led Mr. Truman, subsequently, to take very, very vigorous action to make sure that no future Vice President came into office as poorly briefed as he had been.

What I really am saying here is that he came to the White House with no staff familiar with the Presidency and with White House procedures; the vice-presidential staff up to his time had been just two or three aides

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concerned mostly with the routine duties of the Senate, and so he found it necessary to continue to assimilate as many of the Roosevelt staff members as possible. Those that were willing to stay on, he asked to remain. He brought a few new staff members, one of them being a young naval reserve officer named Clark M. Clifford, who came to the White House as Assistant Naval Aide to the President.

Mr. Clifford had been in private life an attorney in St. Louis, Missouri. He was known to the President and various other of the President's Missouri associates. Clifford was an extremely capable, energetic, young lawyer and very rapidly, within a matter of weeks, outgrew his post as

Assistant Naval Aide. Mr. Truman and other senior members of the staff began relying on him more and more for assistance in the transitional months of '45-'46 from the war to a civilian economy. When Judge [Samuel I.] Rosenman resigned to go back to New York--resigned from his post as Special Counsel of the President--Mr. Truman asked Clifford to become his Special Counsel.

During the months of '45-'46, I had been working closely with Mr. Clifford. Since I was thoroughly

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familiar with the White House procedures, intimately familiar with the White House relations to the Army and Navy Departments and to the State Department, Mr. Clifford found that I was able to be of some considerable assistance to him in this evolving, quickly changing role that I've just mentioned. When Mr. Clifford did become Special Counsel of the President, he asked that I serve as his assistant, which I did. Do you want the rest of the chronology here?

MORRISSEY: Certainly.

ELSEY: I remained on as a naval reserve officer, however, until April 1947, and in April '47, finally was demobilized and became the civilian assistant to Clifford. In August 1949, President Truman named me as one of his Administrative Assistants and from that point on, I reported directly to the President, although, since all of the White House was very much of a team, I worked closely and received many of my assignments from Mr. Clifford during his remaining period at the White House and subsequently from Charles S. Murphy, who succeeded Clifford as Special Counsel to the President in about February 1950.

Just to wind it all up, you'll recall that the Korean War broke out in June of 1950 and W. Averell Harriman was

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summoned home by President Truman from Paris where Harriman had been head of the Marshall plan activities in Europe. Harriman was brought back by the President to be his principal assistant in the extremely difficult problems of coordinating the relations of State and Defense and I found myself working daily with Mr. Truman.

In the fall of '51, Congress passed the Mutual Security Act which established the position of Director for Mutual Security in the Executive Office of the President. For the first time, one official, in a job created by a statute, had the responsibility of coordinating the military, economic, and technical assistance activities for our Allies abroad. The job description was written with Harriman in mind, and as soon as the act was passed President Truman named Harriman as Director for Mutual Security.

Since I had by this time been working closely with Harriman for more than a year from that June 1950 until the fall of '51, Mr. Harriman asked that I join him in this new office of Director for

Mutual Security, which I did; and thus I officially resigned from the White House staff as such in December 1951, becoming assistant

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to Mr. Harriman at that time. I remained in Mr. Harriman's office through the end of the Truman administration. Actually this was more of a legalistic change than one amounting to much in substance, because both Mr. Harriman and I maintained the exact same offices in the same White House space that we had from the outbreak of the Korean war and continued to work closely with all of the presidential staff just as we had before.

MORRISSEY: The White House staff grew tremendously from the early years of Mr. Truman's administration to the latter years. How did the smaller staff at the earlier time manage to handle the volume of work?

ELSEY: I'm not so sure I would agree with your word "tremendously;" I don't believe that the White House staff actually grew tremendously. It's true that the . . . I suppose it's a matter of semantics. What do you regard as the White House staff?

The Executive Office of the President grew because some new things came into the Executive Office of the President. In 1947 the National Security Council was created; the National Security Resources Board was created; the Council of Economic Advisers, I believe,

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had been created in 1946; but, while new elements came along, some old parts of the Executive Office had evaporated--the old Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, for example, had passed out of the scene.

The actual White House staff, in terms of the persons immediately reporting to and responsible to the President, I don't think you'll find in checking the figures, actually grew very much.

Just as a footnote on this, you know you can't rely on the budget figures or any of the official archival records on the size of the White House staff, because many people who worked full-time at the White House were carried on the budgets of various departments and agencies of the Government, so that the White House staff wouldn't look too large. So it doesn't do you much good just to go back and look at the *Federal Register* or some of the files of the Bureau of the Budget; the printed figures aren't necessarily accurate as to people who really were working at the White House.

What did you mean by growing tremendously? If you can give me some examples, perhaps. . .

MORRISSEY: Well, the point I had in mind, I think, was that

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Charles Murphy, as Special Counsel to the President, seemed to have more assistance than Clark Clifford had had when he was holding the same job.

ELSEY: Yes, I guess that's true. Mr. Murphy had David Lloyd and David Bell working with him; Clifford had had only one. Judge Rosenman, who was the first Special Counsel to the President, had no assistants in the White House office. This was partly, I think, the evolution of the job itself, and largely, I would say, was a reflection of the increasing involvement of the United States in world affairs.

During the war years, when Rosenman was Special Counsel to the President, his principal work for FDR had been helping in speeches, major speeches of national significance and importance. Despite the fact that Rosenman had the title "Special Counsel," he really wasn't a lawyer. He was FDR's principal "ghost," but you couldn't call a man that; since he was a judge, since he had been a member of the New York Supreme Court, he had to be given a legal or quasi-legal title, so the phrase Special Counsel was created to suit the personality of Judge Rosenman.

This was somewhat the same with Clifford, who was not the President's principal lawyer or special lawyer

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or anything else. His major responsibility was to assist Mr. Truman in speeches. And increasingly, from 1946 on, the speeches, the messages to Congress, the special statements that Clifford had to work on, had a foreign policy emphasis. We all know this. We all know the fact that the United States in 1945 dismantled its military machine as quickly as possible in a somewhat mistaken notion that we could get back to a peacetime situation. This has always been true of the United States. We've done it after every war. This time we found we could no longer disengage ourselves from the world; we had to remain a part of it, willy-nilly, and our obligations and commitments overseas were thrust back on us. The problems of foreign policy; the problems of rebuilding a military force; the problems of the relations, the involvements of political-military strategy found their way right back to the White House doorstep in a way that was absolutely unprecedented in our national history. This brought just a new dimension to the Presidency, a new degree of difficulty to the burdens of the job.

That's why the White House staff did grow in the Truman years. It continued to grow, as we know, in the Eisenhower years and has kept growing in the Kennedy and

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now in the Johnson administration, and I'm certain that we'll see this kind of growth. I don't think any President welcomes it. He obviously doesn't seek a larger staff around him for any reason other than the fact that he's got to have them to do the work.

MORRISSEY: What were your first responsibilities when you assisted President Truman?

ELSEY: Well, here again, what do you mean "when I assisted President Truman"? In '49, when

I became Administrative Assistant to Mr. Truman or back at the beginning in '45--because my role changed? It depends on what point in time we're talking about.

MORRISSEY: Well, chronologically, let's begin in '45 and see how the role changed.

ELSEY: Yes, in '45 I was still in the Map Room as we discussed at the beginning. I was with the President at the Potsdam Conference; when we returned from there, of course the war ended within a matter of days, and the Naval Aide's office began to be faced with many, many problems relating to demobilization and postwar planning.

Mr. Clifford was asked by the President and by

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Commodore James K. Vardaman, who was Mr. Truman's first Naval Aide, to focus on, particularly, the problems of postwar military organization, merger, or unification, as it was commonly called at the time.

There were a number of bills on the Hill for postwar merger of the Forces or a reorganization. There were numerous advocates of an independent Air Force. There were advocates of a single commander-in-chief for the armed forces. There were advocates of a merger of the War and Navy Departments. There were all kinds of proposals.

The Navy was not of one mind as to what would be best from the naval point of view, and Clifford quickly found himself involved in conferences; discussions with civilian leaders; congressional leaders; military people; naval officers, of course; and I did a great deal of fact finding and rummaging around for Mr. Clifford in this area.

A matter near and dear to President Truman's heart was universal military training. As a Senator, he had long advocated universal military training; even though, he recognized that the headlong rush toward demobilization was probably something that nobody could stop. This

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was just the will of the whole populous. It was hard to say who was out-distancing whom in racing toward demobilization. Congress was probably leading the pack at that point, but Mr. Truman realized that the United States had to have some sort of a permanent posture of military defense which was of a different order than anything we had had before and he believed the universal military training was an absolute necessity to our national security.

So another task that came the way of our office was analyzing the various proposals for universal military training, helping draft legislation which would meet the President's wishes and do the necessary staff work in that regard. Those, I'd say, stand out as the two most significant subject matters that I dealt with for Mr. Clifford in those early months after the end of the war, that is, namely the winter of '45-'46.

As for just routine work of the office of the Naval Aide, we got in almost literally by the bushel basketful, letters, telegrams, phone messages with respect to individuals in the naval service-- parents wanting their sons out, Congressmen wanting White House favors, and so on and so forth. This is par for the

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course, nothing special, it could have happened in anybody's administration; but, it was particularly a burden in those first few weeks after V-J Day and this was a heavy work load on us trying to handle these things equitably, trying not to respond to improper requests for special attention and favors; finding, in some instances that the requests we got were very well grounded because some poor devil seemed to have gotten stuck on an atoll in the Pacific and his personnel records had been lost and something had to be done for him.

MORRISSEY: How did this role evolve with the passage of time?

ELSEY: When Mr. Clifford became Special Counsel, which was in July of '46, more and more of the work that he gave me related to the civilian and normal administrative responsibilities of the White House.

With Rosenman gone, and with no staff member having any special responsibility for speech preparation, Clifford found himself--not by his initiative or by his choice, certainly not by his desire--he found himself looked to as the principal speech preparer on just

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about every conceivable subject that a President has to make speeches on, and he began asking me to help him in this regard. So that, originally where I was working mostly for him in these relations with the military departments and State, it very quickly broadened to all aspects of the Presidency.

Thus, for example, by the autumn of 1946, by November, Mr. Clifford found the State of the Union, January '47, staring him in the face and asked me to take a hand at doing the first draft of that message and working with the Bureau of the Budget and the Council of Economic Advisers on the other messages that the President would have to send to the Hill also in January '47; namely, the budget message and the economic report of the President.

This exposure to preparing the January '47 State of the Union was a rude awakening to me, because I had to do homework in subjects that I to that point had scarcely even realized existed. From that point on, the sky was the limit; there was just no subject that he and I didn't seem to find ourselves involved in.

I recall that the spring of '47 was particularly hectic in this regard. We worked through January and

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February on the unification question, and, if I recall correctly, it was about February 20 of '47 that the President was finally able to send a message to Congress covering his recommendations in the field of postwar military organization--the recommendations that in due course became the National Security Act of 1947. That had really been an around-the-clock struggle for weeks and weeks, with spokesmen for the Navy Department and for the War Department and for the Bureau of the Budget, I recall, the principal Army man we dealt with at that point was General Lauris Norstad, who of course, in due course, became an Air Force officer, and Admiral Forrest Sherman, subsequently Chief of Naval Operations.

As a minor and somewhat wry footnote, I might add that my work on the unification question is what led to my ceasing to be a Naval Reserve officer on active duty. It was not always possible, while serving as a White House spokesman and chairman of working groups, to advocate a point of view which was completely acceptable to the Navy Department; and in one instance I, then being a Naval Reserve three-stripe commander and chairing a meeting, found myself taking sharp issue with a three-star regular admiral who was present in the room.

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The admiral was short-tempered and went back to the Navy Department blowing off steam in all directions, and Mr. Clifford and I decided that it probably would be better for the White House image if I put on a civilian suit instead of wearing a Naval Reserve uniform. This is why, on the first of April, I became a civilian rather than remaining as a commander, USNR.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any other specific recollections of the difficulties of forming the legislation that became the National Security Act?

ELSEY: Well, my recollections on that subject go back to those first weeks at the end of the war in October and November '45, so I have lots of recollections, yes, from that time right on through to February '47 and then all of the struggles through '47 during the congressional debates on the subject.

We didn't regard the Security Act of '47 as being the last word, but as only an interim measure, and it was not until 1949--the amendments to the National Security Act--that we finally achieved a form of military organization that resembled what President Truman had been trying for all along.

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One of the critical elements in the whole struggle, I guess, was the attitude of Secretary of the Navy, Forrestal. As long as Forrestal conceived of himself as fighting for the Navy, we weren't making much progress. But when Forrestal finally caught the vision of what Mr. Truman was working for and was able to free himself from his single service partisanship and look at the matter from the point of view of national security in the broader sense, from that point on, real progress was made.

MORRISSEY: When was that point?

ELSEY: As for an exact point in time, I'm not sure at this point I can give it to you, perhaps December 1946. I'd have to reread, I suppose, *The Forrestal Diaries*, refresh my recollection with that and some of the other things to come up with a more precise date.

I don't want to imply just obstructionism on Forrestal's part, because I don't mean that; I don't mean it to sound that way. Some of the most important steps that were taken--and probably wouldn't have been taken without Forrestal's adamant insistence--was the creation of the National Security Council and the National Security Resources Board.

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You see, an awful lot of people, both in the Congress and public at large, were yammering "merger," "unification," "single chief of staff," their eyes were focused on putting the Army and Navy together or maybe splitting off the Air Force and then putting all three in some sort of a super-military organization. And that was as far as their thinking or their argument went.

What Forrestal kept pressing for--and pressing really even before the war itself came to an end--was the absolute necessity of some kind of governmental machinery which would attempt to bridge the gap between military and foreign policy. He was acutely, agonizingly aware of the gap that had existed between the State Department and the military services during the war and even more significantly in the preparations for postwar conduct of foreign and military policy.

He was greatly helped in this regard by Ferdinand Eberstadt, whom Forrestal asked to do a study and Eberstadt prepared a document known commonly as the *Eberstadt Report*, which stressed the necessity for a mechanism which we subsequently came to have in the National Security Council.

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Forrestal felt equally strongly about necessity of adequate industrial economic preparations for defense. The National Security Resources Board was the principal effort in this direction. So . . . while the military and particularly the Army were talking merger, Forrestal was constantly keeping the heat on, with the President and the Congress, to pay attention to these other elements which were, in his way of thinking, even more significant than just a bringing together of the uniformed services in some sort of--what at first to him seemed a jerry-built structure.

When he felt that he had succeeded in convincing, in educating--if you will--the executive branch, the White House and the Congress to these broader problems, then he turned his mind to this matter of just what you do with the Army, Navy, and Air Force as such, and came around to the idea of a single Secretary of Defense.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about the steps leading up to the 1949 amendments to the National Security Act?

ELSEY: The 1947 National Security Act, you may recall, was born of, of course, compromise. The people on the Hill who were very, very much concerned, lest a single

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Secretary of Defense somehow do the Navy in.

The Secretary of Defense was given very limited power and authority. He was the head of some monstrosity called The National Military Establishment. There was a separate Air Force created by that 1947 act, three secretaries: Secretary of Air, Secretary of the Army--War Department being renamed Army--and Secretary of the Navy. These three departments remained executive departments--and don't think that's just a matter of semantics, there's a lot of legal significance behind an executive department--and those three service secretaries continued to attend Cabinet meetings as well as the Secretary of Defense.

The Secretary of Defense in the '47 act had only three assistants and had a very tight limitation on the number of employees he could have in the National Military Establishment.

A Central Intelligence Group was created, again with extremely limited authority and manpower ceilings and so on.

The '47 act in short . . . well, it did a lot of good things, such as creating the National Security Council and the National Security Resources Board and

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making a first step toward an orderly organization of the military services and creating a separate Air Force, which I certainly think was necessary. It had a lot of limitations which were a result of the political compromises. If those compromises hadn't been made, we probably wouldn't have ever had the act.

But the two year passage of time, '47-'49, showed that it simply wasn't enough, it wasn't enough to do the job. The '49 act turned CIG into CIA; created a Department of Defense instead of a National Military Establishment; and to the violent chagrin of the three service secretaries downgraded them from executive departments to departments and those three ceased to sit with the Cabinet or the National Security Council.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about your involvement in the handling of the Forrestal papers?

ELSEY: Yes. When Secretary Forrestal resigned as Secretary of Defense, he told President Truman that he would like to put in--over at the White House--some of his personal papers; personal notes; diaries; other documents which had so many comments about personalities, about some of the issues that he had dealt with; he thought it

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better not to leave them in the records of the department and President Truman readily acquiesced, of course.

The papers were sent to the office of the Naval Aide to the President, who at that point was Rear Admiral Robert L. Dennison. There were other, incidentally, papers preserved in the office of the Naval Aide at that time. Some of the White House papers from the Roosevelt administration were still there in Dennison's office for good and sufficient reason, and because I was familiar with those and had a familiarity with certain of this special kind of paper, Admiral Dennison talked with me about these Forrestal papers and he asked my opinion, and I said I thought by all means they should be kept in his office.

Of course, none of us, at this point, could have foreseen the tragedy of Forrestal's death just a few weeks later. And at that point a wholly new situation arose, namely the legal one of title--whose property were they, what was the legal situation.

The executor of the Forrestal estate consulted Mr. Clifford and Admiral Dennison and me on the subject and in due course the estate informed us that it wanted to make these papers available as well as other

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correspondence and documents of Mr. Forrestal's for publication.

Mr. Eugene S. Duffield had known Mr. Forrestal well and had worked with him in a variety of governmental positions, and Mr. Duffield, at this point, was serving as spokesman for the Forrestal family and estate. Mr. Duffield told us that it was the wish of Mrs. Forrestal and other members of the family that Mr. Walter Millis, who had a national reputation as a writer, would serve as the editor.

I was something of a legman and go-between at this point between Mr. Millis and other members of the White House staff and the officials of the Department of Defense. The safe in which the papers were kept was opened one day in the summer of 1949, as I recall it, at the White House, in the presence of representatives of the Department of Defense, lawyers for the Forrestal estate, and myself. We went through, rather quickly, and ascertained the general nature of the papers; found that a number of them were classified top secret, or bore other security classifications. Others bore no security classification but were obviously very personal notes, memoirs, in some cases carbon copies of matters that Mr.

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Forrestal had put down after conferences, perhaps with the President, the Secretary of State or other senior officials.

I'm not sure of the exact sequence here; if I recall correctly some of the items were felt to be so sensitive because they bore on the performance characteristics of weapons then in production or

still under test and not yet in production, that there was unanimous agreement that these should be returned to the Department of Defense immediately; that they couldn't be printed in any case and there is just no point in running any risk of criticism or violation of national security by letting them out of Government hands.

Other matters that where it was really a question of discretion and good taste and judgement, again it was the unanimous conclusion that Mr. Millis' reputation was such that he could safely be entrusted with these documents; and therefore, after clearance all the way around, personal approval by President Truman, these papers were released to Mr. Millis.

Quite some time later, I guess it was a matter of months later, Mr. Millis had completed his editing of those papers that had been at the White House,

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together with all the other material that the Forrestal family had, and the galley proofs of the book, subsequently published as *The Forrestal Diaries*, were sent to the White House for our review, and simultaneously, galley proofs were given to the Department of Defense for its review, just in the remote chance that something of national security significance might be there and of course Mr. Millis and the estate wanted to, not in anyway, violate security.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense, Mr. Marx Leva, reviewed the galley proofs from the point of view of the Department of Defense--Mr. Marx Leva and Mr. Clayton Fritchey, then serving as Director of Public Information for the Secretary of Defense. Admiral Dennison and I went through everything; also, at the request of President Truman--not because in any sense we were censoring anything, because we had nothing to censor. There were a few, a very few places--perhaps four or five--where we felt that Mr. Forrestal had put down in writing some highly privileged comments that President Truman had made in personal conversation with him and in Admiral Dennison's and my judgment, no really useful purpose would be served by printing these. I'd prefer

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not to name names, but, most of those that caused us concern were simply comments by Mr. Truman to Mr. Forrestal on third persons--other people high in Government posts, who either were still in Government or were certainly very prominent publicly, and we didn't think that any useful purpose would be served here, but simply embarrass all concerned and would have embarrassed Mr. Forrestal himself, to have been a party to that kind of thing.

Admiral Dennison and I did not review these points with President Truman. We told him that we preferred not to go over these. We thought it much better to leave him out of it, and he said he would rely on our judgment in this matter. So, President Truman had no hand, at any time, in what went into or what stayed out of *The Forrestal Diaries*. He was not party to putting anything in; he was not party to keeping anything out.

MORRISSEY: Was it Mr. Forrestal who suggested that the President appoint a secretary to the

Cabinet?

ELSEY: I don't think that was a Forrestal suggestion, only. Other people felt that way--he felt it perhaps more strongly than anyone else. This again came from his

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study in those late months of the war and the first months following the war of what kind of postwar organization we ought to have. It came from his study of the British Cabinet and its cabinet committees. But, General Marshall felt this same way, too. Marshall, if anything, was more of an admirer of the British Cabinet system than Forrestal was.

Certainly, it's true that Forrestal, as a member of the Cabinet, advocated a Cabinet secretary, but, he was not unique or alone in this regard. He was probably the only member of the Cabinet who ever did anything about it and he frequently, when Cabinet luncheons were held in his office at the Pentagon, he would invite Clifford to be present and on some occasions, I was asked to be present too. This matter of having somebody from the White House staff present at luncheons of this sort to take notes was not looked on with favor by other members of the Cabinet. No other member of the Cabinet ever followed the precedent that Mr. Forrestal attempted to establish. Nothing ever came of it. Actually, Forrestal had more of the so-called Cabinet luncheons in his office than anybody else ever did. John Snyder had two or three, but, most of the Cabinet members simply didn't

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go along with the idea at all. Nothing came of the Cabinet secretary or secretariat throughout the Truman administration.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall the President's response to this suggestion?

ELSEY: Oh, I think Mr. Truman looked at it with sort of amused tolerance. He wasn't going to be against it. I don't think he ever thought a heck of a lot would come of it but if Forrestal and some of the others wanted to have a whirl at it and thought it could be useful and helpful to them, that was fine with the President. He wasn't going to tell them no; but, I think he was always skeptical and so far as he personally was concerned, he didn't feel that it would serve any need of his. If some of the Cabinet members thought it would help them do their job, fine. He was certainly not going to be against it.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me what kind of man Mr. Truman was as President?

ELSEY: Well, everyone has to answer a question like this subjectively--as well as objectively. I'll start with

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the subjective answer.

He was, as I'm sure you know, an extremely thoughtful, courteous, considerate man. He was a pleasure to work for. He was very kindly in his dealings with staff members--I speak, of course, as a junior staff member. When he first began to be conscious of me as an individual by name and face, I was still a young Naval Reserve officer in uniform. I first began to see him on the *Williamsburg*. Representing the Naval Aide, I would frequently be the White House staff member--the only one distinct from the officers and crew of the *Williamsburg*--who would be with him on some of his weekend trips down the Potomac, when he'd simply go down on a Saturday, Sunday to rest, sometimes alone, sometimes with Mrs. Truman. From those early times, right on through to the end of his administration, he was unfailingly thoughtful and kind.

He was never too busy to think about the members of his staff. These are the comments that I suppose are traditionally and tritely said about all Presidents, but, somehow I think, in Mr. Truman's case, they happen to be true and I've seen enough of some other Presidents over there to know that they're not

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quite so true as they are in his case.

He had an interesting faculty, which I was particularly conscious of, having studied history--and which he would sometimes talk with me about on these weekends at the *Williamsburg*, at Key West or elsewhere--of detaching himself from the Presidency itself. He had a tremendous veneration and respect for the institution of the Presidency. He demanded at all times respect for the President of the United States. He didn't demand any respect at all for Harry S. Truman; he demanded respect for the President of the United States.

He could see himself and the President as two different objects. He could stand aside and talk about the President as though the President were something entirely different. He would speculate aloud about what should the President do. "What do you think the President ought to do?" He wouldn't be asking what I ought to do, but what should the President do. And, he'd try to stand back and look at the Presidency and see what the President ought to do rather than what he, as a man should do.

This has its virtues and its admirable characteristics. It sometimes, however, I think led him into

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some of the more embarrassing situations that he got into. Because sometimes he would behave as Harry S. Truman, forgetting that the rest of the country couldn't make this differentiation that he could between the man and the office. When he would write a boiling, hot letter to a music critic or would call Drew Pearson a "son-of-a-bitch"--which I happen to think he is--he was behaving as Harry S. Truman, not as President of the United States. But, of course, other people couldn't see that and this caused embarrassment to him and I think reflected on the Office, which, of course, is the last thing in the world, he wanted to have happen.

This was also true in his continued association with some people, some individuals. He had an intense loyalty to old friends who'd stood by him through thick and thin and he was determined to stand with them. This was notable from the, really the earliest weeks of his being President. He flew out to Kansas City to attend the funeral of "Boss" Pendergast and was soundly criticized for that. His reply was that Pendergast had been a friend of his.

He never changed this behavior pattern throughout his administration. If somebody had been a friend of

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his and had stood by him when he needed help, he would stand by that man or woman, when he or she needed his help.

I don't know how one handles a situation like this. I suppose a President has to be cruel and hard-blooded at times and cold-blooded and cast friends aside. Mr. Truman, somehow, didn't have that element of cruelty and he couldn't quite cast aside some people that probably, from the point of view of the Presidency, he might well have managed to find another role for.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any recollections about the President's knowledge of history or his interest in history?

ELSEY: Oh, recollections on this score are legion. The President, as we know very well indeed, is an omnivorous reader of American history. He had and constantly kept reading, acquiring new books on American history, particularly biographies of political figures. He could quote obscure facts about early Presidents, early Vice Presidents, Senators, and so on that would embarrass most people around the table because they simply, couldn't keep up with him.

There were no anecdotes, no legends about the White

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House or the Presidency that one could tell that he didn't already know. When I was just beginning to get acquainted, trying to show off my knowledge of American history, I would occasionally come up with one of these, only to be thoroughly put in my place to find that the President already knew it and knew more about it than I did.

He knew a whale of a lot about the Civil War and all of the problems of Andrew Johnson and the investigating committees on the conduct of the war and the trumped up charges against Johnson and other executive branch officials following the war. Lord knows how he'd ever found time to read the horrible print of some of those hearings and some of those proceedings, but he had done so.

He liked, of course, ancient history as well, and could ramble around in anecdotes about Alexander the Great and other figures of the past. I don't think his knowledge of the European

history was very deep, he had not paid too much attention to European history. His knowledge of Latin American, African, or Asian affairs was good, but, simply that of a general well read individual. It was not deep in the way that his

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American history and his ancient history was.

MORRISSEY: Did he continue to read when he was President?

ELSEY: Oh, yes . . . yes, he continued to read. His bedside table at Blair House, during the nearly four years that he was living there in the second term, while the White House was being rebuilt, was always stacked with new books. On these *Williamsburg* and Key West weekends, new books from the Library of Congress or that friends or that admirers or publishers had sent him, always abounded. He did read a great deal, continues to, of course, but, found time early in the morning, in mid-afternoon or in the evening to do his reading and would frequently scribble notes to staff members while this was going on.

MORRISSEY: To what extent were you responsible for the historical materials of the Truman administration?

ELSEY: Are you referring to just the archives and the handling of the plans for the Library at Independence, that sort of thing?

MORRISSEY: Yes.

ELSEY: I was quite familiar with the Hyde Park Library—the

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Roosevelt Library--and had visited it with President Roosevelt. As a matter of some interest, in the first weekend in October of 1944, although I don't think anybody in his right mind thought that FDR would be beaten by Dewey, nevertheless, President Roosevelt was thinking about that remote possibility and took me up to Hyde Park with him to survey the Library and see what physical and structural changes might be necessary, in the event he had to leave the White House in January of '45 and move his classified and war papers, those that he could take with him, up to Hyde Park.

After his death in April '45, all the negotiations and representations on behalf of the Truman White House staff with the Archives and the Roosevelt family, I had dealt with and so I knew Dr. Buck, Dr. Grover and other members of the Archives very well indeed and had continuing relations with them throughout the Truman administration as tentative plans gradually shaped up to the more definite plans for the building at Independence.

I'd gone out with President Truman to Independence, had met with him and other members of his family, while we looked over prospective sites for the Library. But,

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I'd say that's the general nature of it.

If you mean by historical content of the President's speeches or messages, I had very little to do with that. He did that himself. If he tossed in historical allusions in his speeches, that was HST. That was no ghost.

MORRISSEY: I think we're running out of time, Mr. Elsey, and we'll have to stop right here.

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Second Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, at his home in Washington, D.C., February 17, 1964. By Charles T. Morrissey, Harry S. Truman Library.

MORRISSEY: Towards the end of our last interview, Mr. Elsey, we were talking about the planning for the Truman Library. Could you tell me how you were involved in this planning?

ELSEY: Fairly early in his administration, President Truman began to comment from time to time to members of his staff about his desire to have a suitable place for his papers. He was, of course, extremely conscious, by virtue of the wide reading that he had done and was continuing to do, of the fate of most presidential papers, the fact that they're widely scattered, subject to accident and destruction and family whims.

He liked to recount some of the more horrendous episodes, which are pretty well-known, about papers that members of the families had burned up, simply because they thought they shouldn't be seen by historians and so on.

It was natural, I guess, that I should be brought into this picture, because of my association with the National Archives and the Roosevelt Library at Hyde

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Park. Some of the Roosevelt papers remained at the White House well into the Truman administration, because they were consulted, fairly often, by the White House and by officials of the Department of State. The security nature of them made President Truman think they were better off there at the White House than if they were sent off to Hyde Park. And, because I did know the members of the Archives staff who were concerned with the Roosevelt Library, as I say, I just naturally drifted into the situation of being involved in discussions on a proposed Truman Library.

Mr. Truman had mixed motives with respect to a library out in Missouri. He was interested not just in a safe place for his own papers, but increasingly his thoughts turned toward a center of

research and scholarship in the whole governmental process that would be available to scholars in his part of the country.

When I would occasionally raise a somewhat quizzical eyebrow about the desirability of having presidential libraries sprout up all over the countryside, the President, in good humor, would dress me down for being too “eastern minded,” too “parochial,” and he reminded me that there were scholars in the Middle West just as there were in the eastern seaboard.

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His early decision to have the library at Grandview on the family farm didn’t go unchallenged. I recall that Elmer Ellis and others at the University of Missouri tried quite hard at one period to persuade the President to deposit his papers at the University of Missouri. This, they felt, would meet his desire to build up the historical resources of that part of the country. It would have the additional great advantage of relating these papers to other standard library reference materials.

If the President wanted to have his stuff in Missouri, I personally thought that it made a good deal of sense to use the existing University of Missouri. But, of course, once you got the University of Missouri in the act, why then you had to consider the University of Kansas City and so on and so forth. And, these discussions, while there were a number of them over a period of a year or two, never really got off the ground, the President most of the time, staying pretty firm on his decision to have the Library ultimately built at Grandview.

Grandview fell by the wayside simply because of the problem of proper site location. The President and his

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brother didn’t always see eye-to-eye on just what kind of land and how much of it should be made available for the Library.

The actual decision to move from Grandview to Independence, however, took place after I had transferred from the President’s immediate White House staff and so I’m not familiar with all the details. I do think that Independence is a far preferable location from all points of view to the farm at Grandview. It’s more accessible, of course, to Kansas City.

The early plans, the first plans that Edward Neild, a member of the Fine Arts Commission and longtime personal friend of the President, drew up for the farm at Grandview were utterly inadequate. It was a very small building, would have been merely a repository for archives. It had practically no working space, would have been stuck out in the country, miles from every facility for, well just meals, for example.

And, I suppose as much contribution as any that I made was pointing out how a building, if it were to be out there, had to be much more than just a shell to house books and documents; that the building ought to have a place for the President’s own office, and

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office space for a permanent staff, and working quarters for students and scholars, and it ought to have an adequate museum space because, a President, inevitably, attracts a lot of curios as well as worthwhile historical objects that you will want to have on display. So, the first Neild drawings were shelved and from that point on, expansion was the watchword of the day and the Library moved on to the present concept which is so well exemplified at Independence.

Just as a personal note, which I hope won't offend Mr. Truman or his brother or any other member of the family, it was interesting to see some of the intrafamily bickering on the subject of the site. I recall, one day, tramping around the farm at Grandview with Mr. Neild and with Vivian Truman, the President's brother, and Vivian was pointing out where he thought the Library ought to be. It was a depressed area, swampy in one corner, railroad track right behind it, and Neild and I kept pointing to a much more attractive site some distance away, across the road, on a high rise with a good view in all directions, and I asked Mr. Vivian Truman why the Library couldn't be put over there and got the very clear and direct answer, "Ain't no use wastin' good

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farmland on any old dang library." Now, the problem of the farmland, of course, was resolved by the move to Independence.

MORRISSEY: After our last interview, you suggested today, that we discuss the relationship between the President and his staff in regard to the decision making process. What was this relationship?

ELSEY: I think what I probably was referring to was a discussion I'd had just a few days earlier with a young scholar who is engaged in working up his doctoral dissertation. And, it became apparent to me in the course of that interview that he had, what I thought, was an entirely erroneous concept of the role of the staff of the President. Over and over again, I kept being questioned: "Who advised the President to do this?" Or, "Who advised him to do that? What did this member or that member of the staff think about this or that subject?" I was trying to educate that young man to my own philosophy, at any rate, it may not be the prevailing one, but it's certainly mine, about the role of the staff of the President.

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The staff of the President is not a great body of experts who have decided views and who recommend to the President what he should or shouldn't do on fundamental national policy questions.

The President's principal advisor in foreign policy matters is, of course, the Secretary of State. The President's principal advisors on military matters are his Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Joint Chiefs, themselves. It's not up to individual staff members to intrude themselves between the President and the responsible officials of the executive branch, nor between the President and the responsible leaders of the Congress.

The job of the staff members is to help the President find out what the facts are; to clarify, where clarification is needed, the opinion and advice of the senior officials of the executive branch; when the President has a sharp view of his own, to advise the President as to whether it's feasible or not to carry it out the way he wants to; whether the temper of the times, the attitude on the Hill and all that sort of thing, makes it necessary to change the timing, or change some of the details, or change the method of

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executing what he wants to do.

An ideal staff member ought not to be a person who has sharp and decided views of his own that he is determined to see carried out. If a staff member is so prejudiced or so opinionated or so determined on a particular matter of foreign policy or defense, he simply can't be trusted to be an effective staff member of the President.

Special pleaders, special advocates, to my way of thinking, have no place on a presidential staff. To illustrate, by going back to something we were talking about last time, the matter of merger and unification, the staff members working with the President on the whole question of postwar organization of the armed forces were not trying to influence the President's decision, one way or the other. They were trying to help the President carry his objectives as far as he could. They were trying to advise him on what was practical, what was feasible, what you could get out of the Congress at a given time, or what the prevailing sentiment of key figures on the Hill were. Also, so far as the executive branch was concerned, try to convey current and accurate intelligence as to the shifting

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positions and points of view of the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of War, and other key figures in the executive branch.

If staff members, if Mr. Clifford, for example, or Charles Murphy, or the military or naval aides, had been serving as special pleaders, trying to get their point of view ground into the drafting process, into the discussions on what shape the military establishments were going to have, they would have been doing the President a disservice.

The staff around the White House--well, I think I have perhaps beaten this point to death, but if you have any questions, please ask them.

MORRISSEY: Well, you emphasized Cabinet members as prime advisors of the President. Was this true generally, or were there other advisors outside the Cabinet who were close to the President?

ELSEY: Oh, there are always advisors outside the Cabinet and there are many cases, where, of course, there are heads of agencies that aren't traditionally regarded as having Cabinet status,

that, at given times and given circumstances, have much more influence and importance

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than a Cabinet member himself. Obviously, in today's world, the director of Central Intelligence, on many, many matters, has far more influence and far more to say and far more reason to have something to say than some Cabinet members. So, I don't mean to confine it just to the nine or ten members of the Cabinet, or however many Cabinet members there happen to be at the moment.

Rather than Cabinet members, perhaps, I should say the official who is responsible for executing, carrying out, administering the agency in question or the policy in question. Staff is staff and staff should never construe itself as line, to revert to old military terminology. When a staff member starts thinking of himself as being in the line, and being a person whose views have to be considered and who has a position to advocate and defend, then he has ceased to be effective and of real use to the President as a staff member.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about the mechanics of the President's daily staff meeting? Who would attend, and what would be discussed?

ELSEY: These were highly informal. It was the practice

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to convene at 9 o'clock in the President's office. The time would vary a bit, as the longer he stayed in office, the later the meetings tended to be. I think toward the end, they were generally at 10 o'clock rather than nine.

The Appointment Secretary, the Press Secretary, the Special Counsel to the President, The Assistant to the President, John Steelman, usually the Administrative Assistants to the President, and the three military aides; it was a large group that would seat themselves informally in a large semicircle around the President's desk. The President usually started by asking the Appointment Secretary to run over the appointments for the day and Matt Connelly would comment, if comment were necessary, about the background of some of the appointments and other staff members were free to chime in if they had anything that they thought would be helpful or useful to the President in connection with that meeting.

The President would always ask the Press Secretary if there were anything special, any particular problem that the Press Secretary saw coming up during the course of the day, or comment on anything that appeared in the

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morning papers that should attract presidential notice or comment. After that, it was a general discussion. The President would usually just move around the semicircle, asking each person in turn if he had anything on his mind or anything that

should be taken up by the group as a whole.

Fairly often, a staff member would say, “Well, I have something, but, no need to bother the whole group. May I stay behind?”

To which the answer, of course, was always, “Yes.”

Mr. Donald Dawson, who, most of the Administration, was concerned with personnel appointments, would frequently mention existing vacancies in major spots, or ask for suggestions from staff members. Let’s just say that we’re on the lookout for such and such a post, such a commission; anybody have any suggestions, I’d welcome them, or he’d toss out names and see what the President and staff members thought about some of the impending appointments or vacancies that were under consideration.

The atmosphere was very friendly, very relaxed, and even the junior members of the staff, such as I, felt we had the right, and did have it, to take matters,

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in that body, directly to the President in the presence of everybody else. I think the only reason for mentioning this is that it is such a sharp contrast to the situation that prevailed in President Eisenhower’s administration, where a rigid pyramid funneling up through Sherman Adams, came into being. I don’t mean to say that the Eisenhower-Adams way of doing business was wrong. All I am saying is that President Truman and President Eisenhower organized their staffs and ran them in a very different fashion. And, what little I saw of the Roosevelt staff, of course, was very different, too. But, that was during the wartime and I was not directly reporting to the President, at all, but, I was aware, conscious of the staff patterns, and it was not FDR’s practice to have general staff meetings of this sort at all. He just didn’t have them.

MORRISSEY: Could you comment, specifically, on the relationship between the White House and both Houses of Congress in regard to legislative matters?

ELSEY: In the Truman administration, there was very little staff concerned with legislative matters. Here again, this is pretty much a post-Truman development of the

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White House staff, of having several professional, fairly senior experienced men, who spend all their time on legislative matters.

In the Truman first term, there really was no legislative staff at all. Charles Murphy, who came in January of ‘47, as an Administrative Assistant to the President, and remained in that spot until about February 1950, when he succeeded Clark Clifford as Special Counsel, Murphy knew a great deal about the Hill, having served in the Legislative Drafting Service of the Senate, and the President relied on him for information. Charlie would occasionally visit with staff members of congressional committees or with individual members of the Senate or House. But this was a

very hit or miss affair. It was not his regular assignment. It was not a day in day out occupation at all.

Clifford, as Special Counsel, later Murphy, on matters of extreme importance, would see chairmen of Senate committees or House committees, but this was only in matters that one might say were of the utmost crisis nature.

The President relied, for most of the discussion on legislative matters, with his weekly meetings with the

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Vice President, that is when he had a Vice President in his second term, and the congressional leadership. In which, in an informal fashion, they'd run over the list of things that were coming up or that were of prime concern on the Hill.

Matthew Connelly and Don Dawson, because of their special relationship to political matters, partisan matters, had a good deal of voice in legislative relations. But, this tended to be more, as I observed it, to matters of the partisan nature, patronage, appointments, and so on and so forth. The things of that sort that are so necessary to keep an Administration's relations with the Hill smooth and effective.

In about '49, maybe early '50, two new staff positions were created: A representative to the Senate and a representative to the House. I'm ashamed to say that I can't recall the precise titles used for these two men. But, they functioned as assistants to Mr. Connelly, the Appointment Secretary, and they spent most of their time, again in keeping up friendly relations between Connelly's office and members of the Senate and House.

They were not concerned with development of the

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legislative program or of the drafting of major messages or legislation. It was more of just the errands and the chores which are absolutely vital and essential to keeping good relations between the Administration and the leadership of one's own party on the Hill.

In short, we simply did not have at that time, the White House staff hadn't evolved, hadn't matured, hadn't developed in the way that it was to in the later administrations.

MORRISSEY: Could you comment on the relationship between the President and the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee?

ELSEY: The relationship varied a good deal, depending on the person occupying the chairmanship. When it was Bill Boyle, who was a longtime personal friend of the President, I'd say the relationship was obviously a good deal warmer. Bill Boyle was in and out of the White House as an old friend in a way that the other chairmen were not.

Here again, this is, I suppose, a matter of part of the general reticence of Americans to recognize some of the facts of life. The White House has always been just a little jittery in recognizing that the President

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is a political leader and a politician 365 days of the year. The White House, in the Roosevelt and the Truman and the Eisenhower, the Kennedy administrations, doesn't advertise the fact that it has continuing and close relations with the national party headquarters. Somehow, it's just not thought to be very nice. As I say, this is part of the mythology of American life. We don't want to admit that a President has to be a good politician, if he's going to be halfway effective as a President.

And so, there never were any members of the staff, as such, designated to be liaison with, or work with, the Democratic National Committee during the Truman administration.

Facts being facts, however, it was perfectly obvious that the Appointment Secretary to the President had to have, and did have, a very close relationship with the committee. He needed to know the background of some of the people who wanted to see the President. He had to be responsive when the national committee or the party machinery wanted certain people to get in to see the President. Naturally, they had to go through the Appointment Secretary's office for those appointments and the Appointment Secretary needed to take into account and

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effect the wishes of the Democratic Party machinery.

Similarly, the Administrative Assistant responsible for personnel matters had to be very sharply attuned to the wishes and the needs of the party. I'm not apologizing for it at all. It has to be that way. And, when the White House and the party machinery fall out of step, if they ever do, the results are bad for the Government, because the President immediately starts tripping and stumbling in his relationships with his party and with the Hill.

The time, when I personally was most involved, most directly related to the committee, was in the preparations for the 1948 campaign. We had a very small White House staff for speech purposes and it was very apparent to me in the fall of '47 that we were going to have to take some very drastic steps, if we were to be at all prepared to serve the President during the '48 campaign. Mr. Clifford and I talked this over at great length and Charlie Murphy, also, I recall, as well as Charlie Ross, then Press Secretary, and concluded that it would be a big mistake to try and build up a "stable," if you will, of speechwriters in the White House or, for that matter, any place on the Government payroll. The latter would not

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have been proper at all. The obvious answer was to build up a team in the headquarters of the

Democratic National Committee.

The committee always gets busy during a presidential year and has a lot of things, but nothing is more important than electing a President or re-electing one, but at the same time, they've got a lot of other things on their mind, such as Senators, Congressmen, state tickets, and so on and so forth. And so, it didn't seem to us, as we looked over the situation, that it would be very satisfactory simply to augment the regular staff of the committee. And so, a separate new division was established called the Research Division of the Democratic National Committee, separately housed in its own building, some distance from the main committee, where it could fulfill its principal function of preparing material for use by the President's associates in drafting speeches and digging up the information he would need during the course of the campaign.

MORRISSEY: I've noticed in the papers of the various White House staff members in the Truman Library that there was great disappointment that this Research Division was allowed to lapse after the 1948 campaign and not maintained on a

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continuing basis. Could you comment on this?

ELSEY: Well, I suppose it depends on whose papers you're looking at. There were some of us on the White House staff, who felt that the Research Division had abundantly demonstrated its usefulness. But, I've just mentioned that it functioned pretty independently in a separate building, and the regular staff of the committee, quite frankly, were upset by this and wanted everything to be back in their own shop, reporting through the normal chain of command. This was just a jurisdictional fight as much as anything else.

Those of us who wanted a vigorous, separate Research Division, felt that if it were simply brought back as part of the publicity section or something of that sort of the national committee, that it would cease to be of much help to us.

The budget had something to do with it too, of course. An operation of that sort is darn expensive, salaries of the staff members and their secretaries and all that sort of thing runs into a whale of a lot of money and that was a factor too. The committee felt that it simply couldn't afford to put that much money into that function.

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Yes, there were a number of us who were disappointed, but not everybody on the White House staff felt that way.

MORRISSEY: In your remarks to Kenneth Hechler's class at Princeton in 1949, you mentioned that factually, the whistlestop speeches of 1948 were extremely well prepared. Who did the factual preparation for those speeches?

ELSEY: The background material was done by this Research Division. Every place on a

presidential itinerary, every community, no matter how small or how large, was looked into by the Research Division. It prepared digests, briefs, having just the sort of the Baedeker kind of historical, geographical background--population, so on and so forth, anything notable in the history of the place. Then it would focus on the issues of 1948, material on the candidates, both for the incumbent Congressman and his opponent, material on state candidates, if that was germane, a suggestion as to what subject or what topic would be of most interest to the voters of that region, and sometimes, if the Research Division had had enough time, they would outline a suitable talk.

Frequently, the time pressures were so great that they were not able to get on to this last job. But, I

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would receive on the train anything from four to five typewritten pages about these communities and the background of the issues believed to be of interest there.

My job on the train was to take this material, on each of these places, and prepare an outline that the President could actually use from the rear platform of the train. Sometimes, where possible, I used as a basis the material that the Research Division had sent out. If they had not been able to do it, I'd do my own. Sometimes I would, despite all the work they'd put into it, I would discard that simply because of the currency of the situation. After all, they were writing some hundreds or some thousands of miles away, thirty-six or forty-eight or seventy-two hours earlier, and I would adapt something that was much more current and that was reflecting the situation of the moment, in the last few hours or the preceding days events. Or, sometimes on the basis of my own conversations with local political figures, who were riding the train with us. I would, where possible--where time permitted, would talk with the local chairmen, local Congressmen, the local Senator, and say that this is what the staff was thinking about for

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the President that afternoon or the coming morning. How did this strike them? Sometimes they had good ideas; sometimes their ideas didn't seem to be very germane to the President's pattern of campaigning and they'd necessarily be discarded.

All the President's whistlestop speeches were delivered from outlines of salient points, so that the President didn't have to just stand on his hind legs on the rear platform and shoot from the cuff. That would have been an impossibly difficult situation for him and would have put him under impossible pressure.

MORRISSEY: Were efforts made to correlate the President's campaign with the statewide and congressional campaigns being run at the same time?

ELSEY: Well, if so, it was being done the other way around. The statewide and the local campaigns might have been correlated with the President's. But, at the pace the President was moving--by plane, by train--it was simply not possible to correlate his with what each candidate

for a congressional district or for the Senate.

Of course, we tried always to be aware and sensitive to the positions of the party candidates. We

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certainly would have avoided, and so far as I know, did avoid, having the President ever take a stand on an issue which was in known and open and direct conflict with the position of, let us say, a Democratic candidate for Senator or for Governor. But, there again, any situation as open as that, the Research Division would have known all about, and would have been very careful to make that point clear. I personally, at the moment, at this late date, can't recall any conflict of that sort.

The Research Division did a magnificent job. They worked like dogs and they ground out an incredible amount of material. They were on the long distance phone all the time, meetings in Washington, Government documents. All kinds of historical, literary, political, economic data flowed from them, and the news clippings, photostats of useful documents, anything that would give spark and vitality and originality and vigor to President Truman's campaign effort. This is what they were after and I think the results obviously speak for themselves.

With respect to the organization on the train, much of the time there were really only two people who

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were concerned with speeches per se: Clark Clifford, whose principal concern was with the major addresses, the evening speech in a stadium or in a coliseum, or something of that sort, and I would be with the whistlestop speeches. When Mr. Murphy was with us, which was not on all the trips, he worked with Clifford on the major speeches.

On the whistlestops, I can recall one case, getting as many as sixteen per day and that's an awful lot of stuff to turn out when you're rocketing around in a railroad car.

MORRISSEY: Several people have commented that the President, in 1948, was confident throughout the campaign that he was going to win. How about these people that rode the train in the different states? How'd they feel about his chances?

ELSEY: You're referring to local people who came aboard the train?

MORRISSEY: Yes, these people that often gave you good advice on what should go into the whistlestop drafts.

ELSEY: Well, most of the state candidates or local

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candidates were concerned, of course, with their own situation. They could size it up pretty well. It was not a case of our asking them what they thought nationally, we were the ones on the receiving end of the questions. They'd want to find out from us, how it was going elsewhere. They could tell us about Keokuk or Kankakee or something of that sort, but as for nationwide, why, we were the ones who were on the receiving end of the questions.

And, whether their opinions were optimistic or pessimistic, depended, of course, on the local situation. Some of them were very optimistic with good reason. Some were optimistic with not very good reason, as it turned out, and the reverse.

With respect to your first point, the President's own optimism, I can testify to this. I never saw President Truman at any point, during the campaign, on the train, or at the White House, or anyplace else, reveal anything other than confidence that he would win, come election day. He was certainly very frank at the early weeks of the campaign that he was behind. He knew he was behind and he said he was behind, but he was catching up and he was confident that by election

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day, he would be out in front.

This is easy to say. How do I know that he really felt that way? I can recall one day, we were, I guess, not far from Duluth, Minnesota. We had a ride of about an hour and a half without stops. I had gone back to his car with some additional outlines for some more whistlestop speeches that were coming up. He was alone, everybody else was catching up on much needed sleep or off doing other chores or errands and I handed him my papers and he asked me to sit down and chat a bit. And, it occurred to him at that point that he'd like to check the electoral count. So, acting as stenographer, I wrote out the names of the forty-eight states as he called them off and he told me and he knew the--of course the names of the states--but he also naturally knew the electoral count. Then he told me what column to put the votes in, Republican, Democrat, Dixiecrat, or Progressive.

Well, he didn't hit it exactly on the nose, but, he was in front and his count that afternoon was very close to the final electoral college count. And, this was purely private. He was not putting on a show for anybody. Obviously, he wasn't trying to influence or persuade or sell me. This is what the man, himself,

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believed. This is the way he saw the situation turning out. If I'd ever had any doubts about the President's own personal views on the matter, this would have been the clincher, so far as I was concerned.

MORRISSEY: I realize that many people have asked the question many times since 1948, that how could observations differ so much; let's say between what the President expected the results of the election to be and what most of the newspapermen riding the train or most pollsters thought it would be?

ELSEY: Well, I think you've got some different . . . you're lumping some different things together there. The newspapermen riding the train, with, I suppose, perhaps a few exceptions, were pretty accurately reporting the growing crowds and the growing enthusiasm and the growing responses that Mr. Truman was getting. Pollsters are something else again. Do you have any evidence that the newspapermen who regularly rode the train thought he was going to be elected?

MORRISSEY: No evidence. That's more of an impression. I should rephrase that to say, "Many newspaper people

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writing about the campaign."

ELSEY: Yes, newspaper people writing about the campaign, publishers, wire service people, and so on. I think it was a case fundamentally of, let's just say, bad reporting. People were so convinced, so many months ahead and so many weeks ahead of the election, that Truman didn't have a ghost of a chance. They were convinced after there was a first, a third, and then a fourth party. All evidence, all historical evidence, any kind of evidence anybody could think of, showed that he couldn't possibly win. And, all evidence showed, of course, that the Republican--Dewey, the challenger--would win, and people just kept on writing what they'd convinced themselves of weeks in advance without paying attention to what was actually going on in the course of the campaign.

MORRISSEY: Are you familiar with the issue which arose from the lack of storage bins for grain in the fall of 1948? Could you tell me about that?

ELSEY: Yes, indeed. We took care of that at a great many whistlestop speeches. Well, I think perhaps I covered that about as well in those remarks to Hechler's class

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at Princeton as I could.

Now, and with your indulgence, perhaps the thing to do is simply reread that paragraph or refer you to it, because, I'm sure I stated it more concisely and accurately then.

MORRISSEY: How did this get to the attention of the President?

ELSEY: I can't answer precisely how he heard about that. Probably from some of the Democratic congressional people on the Hill. No matter whether he had heard of it directly from a member of Congress or from some official in the executive branch, this is the sort of thing that the Research Division of the Democratic National Committee would certainly have found out all about and would have been busy keeping us on the train and at the White House posted about.

No, I think that undoubtedly the President knew it from officials of the Commodity Credit Corporation itself. Probably from a few Democratic leaders on the Hill. But, then the translation of it into specifics and keeping the facts right up to the minute, as to the actual selling price of corn at different places in the

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country and all that sort of thing and being sure that the President's facts were accurate almost to within a matter of hours at the time of his speech, that's what the Research Division of the Democratic Committee was doing.

This matter of farm price supports and the fact that the C.C.C. didn't have the authority to store grain is the sort of thing that was completely absent from the Dewey effort. It was not the kind of subject he talked about. Not the kind of factual, specific, down-to-earth, pocketbook matter that entered into the Republican campaign strategy.

This was where the whistlestops really counted, because, they were sharp, precise, and very factual. And, he never would use the same subject twice in one day. So, that there was a continuing flow of stories off the train. The wire services could just keep a continuing flow. They didn't have to listen to one speech and know that he was going to say the same darn thing day in, day out. Those newspaper reporters had to hop off, scamper through the cinders, and get back there because every single stop would add another subject, another topic to that day's lead story about

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the Truman campaign. And, it would always be something that would make a tremendous splash in the local or regional papers because it was something the people knew all about.

MORRISSEY: How was the itinerary for the President's travels in 1948 established?

ELSEY: The itinerary was established by consultation. Mostly by the work of the Democratic National Committee, the permanent committee staff, in consultation with Connelly and Dawson of the President's own staff and on their part by incredibly numerous phone calls all over the country. And, by advice that the President would get from old friends and staunch political advisors and allies like Alben Barkley.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any recollections about the selection of Mr. Barkley as the vice-presidential candidate?

ELSEY: Mr. Barkley summed this up fairly well, I think, himself at the time by commenting on being a--what was it, he referred to himself as being just a "warmed over biscuit." He knew that he wasn't the first choice, but he was glad to take it anyway.

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MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about the source of the suggestion that the 80th Congress be called back into a special session?

ELSEY: I'm sorry to say, I don't remember the source of that. I'm sure I knew at the time. It may well have been the President's own idea. It may have been suggested to him by someone. I do not now recall.

I recall very well indeed the preparation of the President's acceptance speech there in Philadelphia. The work we did around the Cabinet Room table on that speech. The uncertainty as to when we were going to leave for Philadelphia because of the prolonged and dragged out proceedings up there. The struggle over the platform and so on and how our departure time, which was by train--we traveled every place by train in those days--kept being put off hour by hour by hour, but, at what point the suggestion for the special session, I don't know if I could find--do you have the folder of my notes and drafts and so on the acceptance speech? If so, it's barely possible, although unlikely, that there might be some marginal note at some point on that point.

MORRISSEY: What prompted the question was the not surprising

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fact that Bernard Baruch mentions in one of his memoirs that he suggested this to Mr. Truman.

ELSEY: I would find this hard, hard to believe. I have no recollection that the President was seeing or hearing much from or of Baruch at that point.

Sam Rosenman was one of those that the President was relying on very heavily at that point. So many people were in and out and so many things were constantly being talked about that I would doubt that any single individual could say he and he alone was responsible for that. After all, as we would "bull" over subjects of this sort, nearly every possible alternative and every possible course of action would be talked about in the days preceding something of this sort and I imagine that this and a number of other things were talked about by many people over a period of some days. But I'm sorry, I simply can't recall.

MORRISSEY: How great was the likelihood before mid-summer 1948 that Mr. Truman would not receive the nomination of his party in the convention at Philadelphia?

ELSEY: I don't know how to answer the question on a solid,

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factual basis, how great was the likelihood. So far as I personally was concerned, I thought it inevitable. I simply couldn't see how a party could fail to renominate its man in the White House. I'm sure there were, of course, mixed opinions on that score. But I never doubted that he would be nominated and I certainly don't think any of my colleagues on the White House staff doubted that he would be renominated.

Our concern was the circumstances of the renomination, hoping that it could be done in such a way that it would not lead to any open feuding and fighting that would weaken the Democratic Party and weaken the President's own admittedly difficult task in actually getting elected.

MORRISSEY: To what extent is the President the chief fundraiser for his party?

ELSEY: Well, here again I suppose it's a matter of semantics. If by chief fundraiser, you mean somebody who actually goes out and speaks at fundraising dinners, the President usually is not the chief fundraiser. But, if by chief fundraiser, you mean the guy who has a successful administration, why obviously, he's it. If an administration is going well and the President's personal prestige

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is high and the public thinks well of his performance; if his chances for re-election look good or if he can't run to succeed himself because of constitutional limitations; if the chances of a successor, to his personal taste and of probably his personal choosing, if those chances are good, why, his party's going to have no problem raising money.

I don't think the President should, too openly and obviously, be involved in fundraising on a continuous basis. Certainly, it's all right for him to show up at Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners, or Lincoln Day dinners or speak over nationwide closed circuit television, which is a practice today, but here again, we're back on that subject we were talking about earlier, the sensitivities of the public if a President is too openly active in partisan fundraising. This would hurt and would react against him. But certainly, he's the chief fundraiser. He can't be anything other. It's all a case of how successful he is and what method he chooses to use.

MORRISSEY: What I had in mind behind that question was really how much personal attention or personal interest did the President take in raising money for the party in 1948?

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ELSEY: I don't think I can answer that simply on the basis of limitations on my factual knowledge. I don't know. I was, personally, not involved in any way, shape or form in that. My own area of responsibility was so much that of speeches that this was something that I didn't have time for, even if it had been any of my business, which it didn't happen to be.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall President Truman commenting after his victory in 1948 about not running again for the Presidency?

ELSEY: Oh, I don't know. He commented jocularly on many subjects. I don't recall his having said anything immediately after the election of '48, which could be taken, or was taken by anybody as being a serious statement on that subject. There was lots of banter and lots of conversation, but, as you know, he had not made a statement that was regarded by the public or by his own party leadership, a definitive statement on that subject until the spring of 1952. No, I

don't remember anything. If by this, you mean the first few weeks after or something of that sort, no, I don't recall any statement that anybody could have taken as being anything

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other than a joke or a wisecrack.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about the pre-press conference sessions?

ELSEY: In Charlie Ross' day, these were always very interesting and sometimes quite entertaining. Ross knew Mr. Truman, very well indeed; they'd been boyhood friends and they'd known each other all their adult lives, so Charlie could say things and do things with the President that few other people could. And, what I specifically have in mind at the moment was Charlie's habit of asking the President, in a sharp, sometimes almost rude fashion, blunt and unpleasant questions and the President would sometimes flair back or snap out a quick answer, not always in diplomatic terms, nor would it be very politically wise, at which point, Charlie would lean back and laugh and the President would also grin, and realize that all Ross had been doing was simply putting him on the alert to the fact that that was the kind of a question he might get from an unfriendly reporter or from a reporter who was trying to get from him, precisely the reaction Ross had succeeded in getting.

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I should have said that these pre-press conference sessions were of the same format and fashion and style as the regular staff conferences. Most of the staff would sit in a semicircle around the President's desk. The Press Secretary would always lead off with all of the questions which he had been told by reporters were going to be asked and then, he would follow up with other questions on which he thought the President might get a question. And, as I say, sometimes he would step out of his normally soft, gentlemanly demeanor and flash one of these sharp questions, flick it across the President's face, so to speak, in whip-style. But once the President was put on notice by that kind of a question from Ross, he would never make the mistake of behaving that way in a press conference itself. And, he understood perfectly well, we all did, what Charlie was doing. Charlie was simply doing his best to brief him in the most effective fashion he could, which was very good indeed.

Mr. Joseph Short, who succeeded Ross when the latter died of a heart attack in December of 1950, hadn't known the President in the same fashion at all. He'd known him as a newspaper reporter and in his capacity

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of newspaper reporter and the distance between him and the President was of a different order than that between Ross and the President. So, I felt that Short never quite was able to prepare Truman as effectively as Ross had.

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Third Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at his office, 1616 H Street, N. W., Washington, D. C., March 9, 1965. By Miss Carol Hoffecker, Graduate Student in History at Harvard University, and Charles T. Morrissey, Harry S. Truman Library.

MISS HOFFECKER: When you first went into Government work, you were in the Navy, weren't you?

ELSEY: Yes, that's right.

HOFFECKER: In World War II?

ELSEY: Right.

HOFFECKER: And that's how you got to know Mr. Clifford?

ELSEY: Correct. I was at the White House at the time of President Roosevelt's death and when Vice President Truman became President. A few weeks after that, when Mr. Truman began assembling his own staff, one of the first men to join him was Clark Clifford, who was then a Naval Reserve officer. Mr. Truman had known him in the prewar days, Mr. Clifford being a prominent attorney in St. Louis. Clifford came to the White House to be Assistant Naval Aide to President Truman and within a year he was serving as Naval Aide and then as Special Counsel to the President. As Special Counsel to the President, from the time he assumed that position until

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he left the White House in early 1950, he was the President's principal assistant in the matter of speeches, messages to Congress, and pronouncements of that sort.

HOFFECKER: And you became an assistant to Mr. Clifford?

ELSEY: Right.

HOFFECKER: I see. Were Mr. Clifford's assistants divided up into different areas? For example, were you in charge of one particular area and other people in charge of others?

ELSEY: In the first place, the assistants were not plural; they were singular.

HOFFECKER: There was only one?

ELSEY: Yes.

HOFFECKER: How about Mr. Murphy?

ELSEY: Mr. Murphy came to the White House in '47 as an Administrative Assistant to President Truman, concerned principally with legislative matters, helping the Administration put together its legislative proposals and then push for their enactment. Mr. Murphy came to

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the White House from many years of service on the Hill.

He'd been in the legislative section of the Senate. While Mr. Murphy worked closely with Clifford, in fact the whole White House staff worked closely together, he was not an assistant to Clifford. He succeeded Clifford as Special Counsel when Clifford resigned in 1950.

HOFFECKER: Did you yourself work on speechwriting tasks? Mr. Clifford's role, from what I've gathered from others, was advising the President particularly on the domestic issues, but in the realm of foreign affairs did he tend to give the President advice on how various foreign policy statements would affect public opinion, as opposed to the State Department's point of view of our foreign policy and how it affects other countries?

ELSEY: Well, let me comment on the beginning of your statement there. Things don't break down into neat little packages, neat little compartments. You don't draw a distinction between domestic and foreign. The White House staff in those days was very much smaller than it is today. At the time, people said it was large because it was larger than Roosevelt's staff. But the point to remember is that as the functions of Government increased, as the place of the United States in world affairs has vastly altered in the

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last generation, the White House staff has correspondingly grown. Hoover's was bigger than Coolidge's and FDR's was bigger than Hoover's and Truman's was bigger than Roosevelt's and so on, right up to the present, where Johnson's is bigger than his predecessors. And whoever succeeds Mr. Johnson is going to have a White House staff that causes people of that time to say, "My goodness, how could it have ever grown so much?"

But to get back to the Truman period, it was a small group. We did not have neat little compartments, little boxes, one person being assigned or one group of people being assigned to one area of work and another group to another. You coped with the problems and the chores as they came up and it might one day be concerned with a veto on a major matter of domestic legislation and the next day a speech that the President was going to make to a group of visiting dignitaries from another country. In between times you were working on two messages that were

going to the Congress the next week, and there probably would be an acceptance speech of an honorary degree from some college thrown in there too. At that point, Clifford and I, and the people that we would borrow from time to time from the Bureau of the

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Budget or other Government agencies, did what had to be done. There wasn't a matter of one group being domestic and another group being foreign and another group being political, another group concerned with Capitol Hill relations. Today, as you know, the White House staff being larger, the problems of the Presidency being much bigger, there is a degree of organization and specialization which simply was nonexistent in the Truman time.

Now, you had another part of your question there. Did Mr. Clifford tend to advise the President on let's say, the domestic implications of a foreign policy matter, whereas the State Department would be concerned with perhaps the international repercussions? Well, that's doing the State Department something of an injustice. I don't think that the Department has ever been oblivious to domestic concerns or domestic reactions. After all, the most articulate expression of domestic opinion is the Congress, and most certainly the State Department is never oblivious to what the Senate and the House think. It can't be; it can't afford to be, and the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary and the various assistants, in many ways, their feet were much closer to a much hotter fire because they

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are the ones then and now who testify, who have the cross-examination, who have to go up and defend the administration policies. So to think that the State Department lives in something of an ivory tower and is concerned only about what London or Paris or Moscow think is, as I say, not doing it full justice. It is true that the White House staff in the Truman administration would sometimes feel that the State Department had not fully taken into account some of the domestic considerations, that we might want to alter, or propose to alter, some draft language. In fact, we frequently did. This was because of just a different point of view, a different interpretation possibly of the significance of some domestic concern. It was not that we were suddenly adding an ingredient that the State Department hadn't even thought of at all. I suppose Israel would be a good example, where the White House--probably that's the best example--where the White House was more sensitive to the domestic political implications of U.S.-Middle Eastern relations than the Department, and an area of argument sometimes ensued.

HOFHECKER: Why was the White House staff more sensitive to this? Was this because the Zionists were putting greater

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pressure on the White House staff? Or because the White House staff was more concerned with Mr. Truman's political future?

ELSEY: Well, the President, of course, is a political leader. He's not President if he isn't a

political leader, or he doesn't stay President very long if he's not a political leader, and a President has to be concerned with the domestic political implications of international matters, and there were very, very strong emotions in many areas in the United States, particularly the large cities of the East, on the independence of Israel. This is not solely a partisan matter. Republicans and Democrats alike were concerned. The parties were jockeying for position in this matter, and particularly as the '48 election approached. And if you didn't have your fingertips sand papered to the sensitivities of a matter of this sort, it would be easy for domestic political quarrelling to break out in such a fashion that it could have serious international repercussions. I mean if you get one party out-promising another party, this can cause hell overseas.

HOFFECKER: In other words, if Mr. Truman hadn't taken a strong stand in favor of Israel, Mr. Dewey certainly would

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have, as he did, and this would have been disruptive of American political life in general? I see your point there.

How about the Vinson mission. Did that start as an idea in the White House staff?

ELSEY: No, I don't think that did start as an idea in the White House staff. That started principally as an idea from some friends and associates who were not on the White House staff. It was, from my personal point of view, a grandstand public relations gesture that was not very well thought through. It didn't make sense then and it has never made sense since.

HOFFECKER: Do you think the President would agree with you on that statement? I mean, that it was a grandstand political gesture, or public relations gesture? Obviously, he wouldn't agree that it didn't make sense or he wouldn't have done it. Did he see it in terms of public relations or did he see it entirely in terms of easing the tensions between the United States and Russia?

ELSEY: I think he was willing to give these friends who were urging it their day in court. They felt very

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keenly and very strongly about it and he thought the idea was at least worth exploring and he was unwilling to reject out of hand an idea which was presented to him with much cogency and much fervor.

HOFFECKER: Was the idea presented in terms of American foreign relations or President Truman's political image?

ELSEY: It was presented in terms of American foreign relations.

HOFFECKER: When you were preparing speeches did you make use of the public opinion

mail that the White House received or the public opinion polls, or any other sources of information for reaching public opinion?

ELSEY: No.

HOFFECKER: How did you arrive at a notion of what public opinion was, and how it would react to a statement?

ELSEY: Well, the President's job is to lead public opinion, not to be a blind follower. The President can't sit around when he's faced with a crisis like the -- well, to use an example, the January, February, March '47

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period, when the United States Government on very short notice was confronted with the fact that the British were going to pull out of Greece. You can't sit around and wait for public opinion to tell you what to do. In the first place, there isn't any public opinion. The public doesn't know anything about it; they haven't heard about it. You must decide what you're going to do and do it, and attempt to educate the public to the reasons for your action. Of course, you watch with interest to what the public response is after that, but you don't allow yourself to decide what you're going to do on the basis of public opinion polls.

HOFFECKER: The reason I asked was, taking that as an example, the Greek-Turkish Aid bill, in the Joseph Jones book he makes a big point of the fact that in the preparation of the President's speech there was an effort to avoid talking much about Britain, because there was a lot of anti-British feeling in the country, and to avoid talking about Turkey because our aid there was going to be primarily military, and American public opinion probably wouldn't accept military aid at that point, and to make a big point about how the United Nations can't handle the situation because public opinion would

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probably favor the United States nations handling it if it were at all possible--these sort of things . . . how did they know about that?

ELSEY: They didn't, and neither did Mr. Jones then and neither does Mr. Jones now. Mr. Jones has written a whole book about something that was done in a matter of a very few days. You don't sit down and take time to think through and debate ad nauseam all these points. You don't have the time. You've got a job. You've got fifteen or twenty minutes to present your case to the Congress or over the radio to the public, as it was primarily then, and soon of course to become TV, and you don't sit around thinking of all the things you can't or shouldn't do. You try to state what has to be done and what you propose to do in simple, cogent terms. And somebody else can later sit around for days and weeks and lie on the psychoanalytic couch and figure out how things might have been done differently. This is all very well and very interesting but quite irrelevant.

HOFFECKER: When you people in the White House staff think about public opinion are you likely to think of it as being synonymous with the opinion of Congress, since

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that's the first major barrier from your point of view?

ELSEY: I think it's awfully hard to generalize on something of that sort. It depends on what the subject is, what the timing is, whether you have a legislative problem on your hands in which case you think of Congress. If it is not immediately a legislative problem, of course, your mind is not much on Congress as such. Public opinion of course takes every conceivable form. It takes polls and editorials and mail and the opinions of your staff and your Cabinet members so far as the President is concerned rather than paying much attention to what the Gallup Poll says, let's say on an agriculture question or labor question. The President is going to care very much more what his Secretary of Agriculture and his Secretary of Labor tell him than he is about a poll that appears on page one of the paper.

As for mail, you mentioned mail at the White House, it was a matter of minor interest, but never more than minor interest as to how the mail ran. The press likes to ask about it and the Press Secretary would usually have some figures--"Well, the mail is running even on this, or three to one in favor of what the President said"--these would be general comments, but they didn't

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mean very much. If you get five thousand telegrams, all with identical wording, you know that it doesn't mean very much. Well, somebody felt keenly, some organization felt keenly, some organization put a lot of time and effort, but you already knew what that organization felt anyway. So, you don't bother to do anything with the 5,000 telegrams except take note of them, and so on.

HOFFECKER: Did you personally ever read any of the mail that would come into the White House?

ELSEY: Yes, but it was very much the exception rather than the rule, if we're speaking of general mail from the general public. If we're speaking of letters from important individuals, obviously from governmental officials, Governors, mayors, from members of Congress, from leaders of national organizations, that kind of mail, of course, is read and handled with dispatch and with as much sensitivity as is possible. The volume of mail coming in now is so great that no senior person on the White House staff could even begin to look at more than the tiniest fraction of one percent. The very interesting item, the human interest letter that

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is winnowed out of the bottom and passes through a dozen layers of staff screening before it finally reaches a newspaper, this is just fishing for a human interest story. It's not anything that determines or guides or has any bearing on public policy or the presidential action.

HOFFECKER: In assessing President Truman's leadership in foreign affairs, I was wondering why the fireside chat technique that President Roosevelt had used was not very frequently used by President Truman?

ELSEY: Have you done any counts?

HOFFECKER: No, I haven't counted up how many fireside chats FDR had as compared with Truman.

ELSEY: Well, my impression is--I haven't either, I probably knew at the time but that was a long time ago and I don't remember -- my impression is that President Truman was probably on television and radio more than President Roosevelt was. Charlie, do you know?

MR. MORRISSEY: I'm hesitant to inject myself in this. The same question was asked of John Kennedy, and his response was, to whomever asked the question, "Have you counted the

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number of speeches that were so-called fireside chats that FDR gave?" And Kennedy gave whatever the answer was, and it's a very, very small number.

ELSEY: I think the point is that fireside chats were an innovation. Radio was still--there was no television--not common; it had been a very unusual business for a President to take to the air, and the very fact that the President would make a so-called fireside chat once in three or four or six months, that was a major event. By the time of Truman, and of course with increasing frequency, we have come to have a President on the radio or television or recordings of the voice coming along in some cases almost every day.

HOFFECKER: That's true, and that can be cheapening the President's coin in a way.

ELSEY: Yes, yes it can. I think there is one observation of course, about President Truman, that President Truman's radio delivery, his television manner was perhaps not quite as dramatic or effective as President Roosevelt's. The formal read speech was not Mr. Truman's most effective way of getting a point across. He was far better face to face before an audience speaking with a fair amount of

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extemporaneous comment and expression, even when he had, as of course he most of the time had to, read a speech. The points that his audience remembered were where he was most effective in putting himself across. The phrases that were remembered were the extemporaneous ones at the beginning or the ending of a speech or injected into the middle of it. This is the difference between the two men. So, A, I would say that Mr. Truman was on the radio and television probably more than you realize, and B, FDR was on less than you realize. But as to why he didn't develop the fireside technique, this was simply not his best medium, not his style.

HOFFECKER: I notice in reading President Truman's speeches that there is a great emphasis on spiritual and moral qualities--that he's forever bringing these into his addresses. For example, in a number of his speeches I noticed that he said that God Almighty had intended for the United States in 1920 to become involved in world affairs and by not doing so we had, in a sense, added to pressures that led to World War II--statements of this sort. Were these statements put in Mr. Truman's speeches because they were Mr. Truman's personal opinions?

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ELSEY: I think I would answer that by saying, how many speeches of how many other Presidents have you read, and wouldn't you find this from George Washington to the present? I think you would.

HOFFECKER: I'm not saying that this is bad or good. All I'm saying is that it seems to me that of the Presidents that I'm familiar with, Truman mentioned moral and spiritual and particularly religious ideas more frequently than any that I am familiar with.

ELSEY: This could be. We would have to make a check of that point too, I suppose, to find out whether the frequency is greater or less. As to Mr. Truman in this matter, I would say that he led and the staff followed. The staff did not deliberately compose phrases or paragraphs of this sort, and inject them. This was very much a part of President Truman's own personal belief and feeling. Many of these phrases and sentences were added by him in longhand very near the final draft of a speech. In cases perhaps where the staff would have made references of this sort, it was only because we knew this was the way the President felt and if we didn't at least have something like this he would do it on his own. But this

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is genuine insofar as the man himself is concerned.

One could find long before he had ever had a staff helping him in matters, references of this sort, back in his early campaign speeches, in his senatorial days in the '30s and '40s, so this is A, a reflection of Mr. Truman's own beliefs and, B, I think most national leaders in the United States have similar expressions of thought, although perhaps as you point out not with the frequency or fervor perhaps that Mr. Truman showed. Just as a purely personal reference, I recall one occasion when a former college professor of mine was visiting in Washington and he berated me on the point that there was so little of the spiritual or moral in President Truman and President Truman's speeches, and because I was conscious of what you have brought out here, I pulled out the last eight or ten major national addresses of the President and marked them and sent them to this professor, who shall remain nameless, although I think Charlie knows who he is.

HOFFECKER: President Truman was once quoted as saying that he thought it was awfully easy to demagogue on public issues and that he personally always tried to avoid

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this. My own reading of his speeches tends to make me feel that he really did avoid it, particularly in foreign affairs, but not so much in domestic issues. I won't say that he demagogued like Cleon, but I think that one cannot say that he abstained altogether. I wondered if he saw a great difference here between domestic and foreign issues on how they could be treated by the President in speeches?

ELSEY: Yes, I think he saw a distinction and observed the distinction. He was very conscious of the fact that--well, he used to say over and over again that politics should stop at the water's edge. That was not an original phrase of his; I don't suppose anybody knows who first coined it, but he believed this very keenly. He tried to practice it. He had tremendous respect and admiration for Senator Vandenberg and many other Republican congressional leaders as well as Republican national figures who were not in Congress. He knew that the only possible way for the United States to have any effective foreign relations was to have a single foreign policy and a united nation in dealing abroad, so he did try to avoid partisan arguments. You can't always succeed, of course, but you can make an effort. But in domestic matters,

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partisan politics or sharpening the issues and finding them out was the whole lifeblood of everything he believed and lived. So he did approach foreign and domestic affairs very differently.

HOFFECKER: How about when the MacArthur dispute arose? Did he see that as having partisan implications?

ELSEY: Well, it was perfectly obvious that it would have partisan implications. It was bound to. You couldn't avoid partisan implications in something of that sort. Even if they weren't there they would immediately be created. But this was just a price that had to be paid. He regarded it as military defiance of the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, military defiance of the national policy as expressed by the Commander-in-Chief and as agreed to by the National Security Council. This simply couldn't be tolerated, couldn't be allowed to go along any more. He had tried various remedial measures, including going practically half way around the world for a face to face discussion with General MacArthur. The fact that there were going to be bitter fights as a result of it could be deplored, but this could not alter the fact that what had to be done had to be done and had to be done cleanly and decisively and fast.

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HOFFECKER: Well, when bipartisanship broke down, as I think that this issue demonstrates that it did, did the President then change his attitude toward how he should address the public on foreign matters? You said that the reason that he was so very careful earlier was because he wanted to preserve bipartisanship. Now, once bipartisanship is gone, did this change his attitude toward how he could address the public?

ELSEY: Well, I don't think the MacArthur firing destroyed bipartisanship in foreign affairs.

HOFFECKER: No, I think it just pointed to the fact that it was already destroyed, myself.

ELSEY: Well, perhaps in some areas, but no bipartisanship across the board on all matters of foreign policy on a particular issue. Yes, I suppose there never was perfect bipartisanship one hundred percent and on all foreign policy. That's too much to be hoped. But there was no breaking down of general, national agreement and bipartisan agreement on the matter of foreign aid, of carrying the Marshall plan through to completion, of the development of what was to become NATO, which was then in the process of negotiation and formation, of the

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necessity of opposition to Soviet pressures, of Berlin—we can carry on a dozen or more major areas of extreme national significance where the national unity and the bipartisan approach did not break down either over the MacArthur firing or subsequently. There were arguments of emphasis, but the bipartisan approach didn't break over the MacArthur firing.

HOFFECKER: Mr. Goldman in his book says that Mr. Benjamin Hardy of the Public Affairs Division of the State Department gave you the idea which became point four and that you told Mr. Clifford about it and got the idea put into President Truman's inaugural address. Would you like to comment on that?

ELSEY: Eric Goldman had the story right.

HOFFECKER: Why was the point four put in the inaugural address when it wasn't as yet really worked out in much depth yet?

ELSEY: Well, it was an objective; it was a goal; it was something the President said he was going to work for and believed the United States should work for. Are you implying that nothing should be in an inaugural

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address until it has been fully developed?

HOFFECKER: No, I'm not implying that but some people have argued that way. I don't take any stand on it; I'm just asking.

ELSEY: Obviously inaugural addresses would not say anything if they consisted solely of accomplished facts and programs that have already been fully developed; there would be little inspiration or little meaning, or little significance. I think the point here is that there is not, I suspect what is meant here, is that there still was some disagreement in the Department of State over the enunciation of this program. There were some people who felt that it was premature, they didn't quite know the full implications of it and they would have liked to have slept on it a little longer. This is all that is meant, and I suppose if the Constitution hadn't fixed January 20 as the date for the inauguration, they could have had their way, but here was a date. This gets back

to something we were saying at the beginning. The White House staff does what has to be done and sometimes what has to be done is determined by the calendar, determined by fixed events over which

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you don't have any control and the President doesn't have any control and what was required and what was necessary here was what the President wanted, was a far-reaching, broad, expression of the aim and intentions of his administration in the field of foreign affairs. And he believed very, very keenly in what we called point four, I'll call point four, or used to call point four, and this was a natural, logical, evolutionary step.

HOFFECKER: From the Marshall plan to this.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall when the phrase Fair Deal gained currency as a label for Truman's legislative programs? Was that in response to that 1949 inaugural address?

ELSEY: No, I think that was the 1949 State of the Union.

MORRISSEY: It was 1949?

ELSEY: My recollection is, offhand, that it was the 1949 State of the Union. And that was a phrase, Charlie, of the President himself, no one else. That was put in in longhand by him one night when he was working over a draft. That was not coined by any staff member. Clifford and I saw it first the next morning in the

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President's longhand when he sent the draft back for us to look at.

MORRISSEY: And the press picked it up as a headline phrase?

ELSEY: The press picked it up. Yes, I don't think there was any consciousness on our part that this sentence was his, the paragraph was his, but that those two words would suddenly emerge as a phrase.

MORRISSEY: It's curious that the same could be said about the phrase, New Deal, in the 1932 acceptance speech.

HOFFECKER: I think I've asked just about everything Charlie, if you want to ask some more questions you go ahead.

MORRISSEY: Just out of curiosity, somewhere in the 1948 campaign, someone shouted to the President from the crowd, "Give 'em hell, Harry." Do you recall where that happened?

ELSEY: I certainly don't recall where it first happened. Here again was something that the

press picked up. As the campaign went on, this became a phrase that you just heard hundreds and thousands of times, over and over and over. It began to be a refrain. No, I'm

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sorry, I can't say; I don't know where it was first used.

The "whistlestop," you know the origin of that, I'm sure. The crack on the whistlestop.

MORRISSEY: Senator Taft?

ELSEY: Senator Taft used that.

MORRISSEY: I think Mr. Truman has said himself that Mrs. Truman occasionally read over some of his speech drafts. Do you have any recollections of this?

ELSEY: I'm certain that Mrs. Truman must have. He said so and I've heard her comment also, but this would have only been in the family living quarters. She did not participate in meetings in the office nor did the staff meet with her. This would have just been in the privacy of their own sitting room, the President and Mrs. Truman. She had helped him and worked with him in his Senate years and did, I say I'm certain, I never witnessed it, but just because of the fact that they both commented on it so many times in my hearing, I just accepted it as a fact, of course. In the earliest days of the Truman administration, '46 and '47, when I was still in naval

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uniform and Assistant Naval Aide, I used to spend a number of weekends with them on the yacht *Williamsburg* either in Chesapeake Bay or in the lower reaches of the Potomac. And, Mrs. Truman -- of course, one was in very close and intimate contact all the time--and Mrs. Truman certainly did read documents, read papers, look over things with the President. As to what she might actually have said, what literary phrases or words or editing can be ascribed to her pen, this I'm simply unable to comment on. I just plain don't know.

MORRISSEY: Many of us who have done research at the Truman Library have read the transcripts of these whistlestop speeches. I've often been curious to know the mechanics of how these transcripts were produced. Who would go out and take down the words, and how would they be taken down, and how would they be typed up, and how reliable would the transcript version be to the actual spoken version that the President delivered?

ELSEY: Well, you know the name, Jack Romagna. Of course, you've heard of Jack. Jack Romagna went with the President on all these trips, and Jack had, simply because of the volume of business on the whistlestop campaigns, had

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at least one and sometimes a couple of assistants, and they took down in shorthand what the

President said, not from the crowd but from the car. They would be just inside the presidential car, so they were within three or four feet of him. And not only did they hear his voice, but, of course, it was amplified so that there was no question of their hearing it all. I think they're quite reliable. I never had any reason to question the accuracy. There may have been an occasional word, an occasional phrase, a misspelling, but these were very, very minor. I can recall, for no reason at all, that we were in Texas and there was a Big Bend (Big Bend of the Rio Grande), National Park and Jack Romagna, who was born in London, his transcription came out "Big Ben," which aroused the ribald comments from the press and the correspondents who twitted Jack about his nationality and his lack of Texas knowledge and so on. But that was the kind of mistake that was so minor that--a proofreader's error you could practically call it. No, I think they're reliable. It would be a very, very rare occasion when some phrase, some sentence that Jack might feel simply had not turned out to be a sentence and he would call it to the attention of Charlie Ross, the Press Secretary, and they might straighten it out just to get

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the grammar right, but this was a minor and very infrequent occurrence. As for censorship, rewriting, editing, no.

MORRISSEY: I was wondering if Commander Bill Rigdon got involved at all in the transcribing process?

ELSEY: Oh, I don't think that Bill went on any of the whistlestops. See, this was political, and he was a naval officer, and I don't recall Rigdon, the Naval Aide, having been on any of the campaign trips as such; other trips of the President, yes, but not campaign trips. Now, the only military people in evidence were the Army Signal Corps and they simply went along for communications reasons. They maintained the radio car, the communications car between the train and the White House. This was essential. The President as President had to be in contact with the White House. The Army Signal Corps had a special car in the train and military personnel were on the train, but they were there for part of the official governmental process.

MORRISSEY: Shortly after the 1948 election, *Life* magazine ran an article by Jay Franklin on the '48 campaign which Mr. Truman and some others took exception to, in December

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of '48 and January of '49. Do you recall any of the details about why Mr. Truman was somewhat critical of this article?

ELSEY: I don't remember criticisms of the article. I remember that Jay Franklin Carter did write an article for *Life*. I don't now recall particularly what he said in the article. I thought it was more of a commentary on the campaign than anything else, but he made some statements to the press and took some other positions which did arouse some reaction from the White House.

MORRISSEY: I was wondering if it was the propriety more than the content of what he wrote that bothered some people in the White House?

ELSEY: I doubt if it was the article so much as the fact that he had some pretty exaggerated ideas about his own importance, and he began making some statements on foreign affairs implying that he was an intimate of the President and an advisor, a high-level advisor to the President on foreign affairs, and that he shortly expected a major post in the Administration. This was the sort of thing that got people upset about him, more, I think, than the article.

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HOFFECKER: How about the train of thought in the article, that President Truman...

ELSEY: You'll have to refresh me on what he said in the article.

HOFFECKER: He made a big point of the fact that President Truman had said in Eugene, Oregon, "I like old Joe; he's not such a bad guy. It's those people in the Politburo that are always keeping him from keeping his agreements." Then he referred to the Vinson mission, and to the Wallace speech right before Wallace was fired in '47, and said that all these things put together--showed that President Truman was more willing to get along with the Soviet Union than were some of the people in the State Department, particularly his military-type advisers, like Marshall and Leahy and so forth, who had urged upon him an anti-Soviet policy with which the President was not in full agreement.

ELSEY: Well, I amend my earlier comments then. If this is what he said in that *Life* magazine article, yes. This is what upset people. I did not recall that the piece in *Life* got into the foreign policy matter. My recollection, obviously erroneous, was that the *Life*

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piece dealt more with just the campaign and the aspects of the campaign, whistlestopping and so on. No, it was the fact that he took it upon himself to be a spokesman and an interpreter of the President's views and an erroneous interpreter of the President's view with further implications which he was quite free in scattering around Washington, that he was soon going to be a major administration figure. This was what required him to be slapped down, as he was.

MORRISSEY: I assume that that quip the President made in Eugene about "I like old Joe," was strictly extemporaneous--something he threw off in a light vein.

ELSEY: Yes, off-the-cuff, completely extemporaneous. I'm certain that he has wished many times he'd never said it. It has to be understood for what it was--that just on the purely personal level of the Potsdam Conference, Stalin had behaved well and had been agreeable and it had been possible at that meeting to discuss matters with him without hating him. He was not discussing U.S. or USSR relations or Soviet policy when he was making a comment of that sort.

HOFFECKER: Do you think that President Truman really

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believed that Stalin was more agreeable than Molotov or Vishinsky?

ELSEY: No, I don't think he had any illusions on that score.

HOFFECKER: Do you think that he might have said this because he thought that Stalin would be flattered by it and might be more willing to be agreeable?

ELSEY: I don't think he thought about it, as Charlie says. I don't recall--I was not on that trip--that was in the spring of '48 prior to...

MORRISSEY: June of '48.

ELSEY: June of '48, yes, prior to the actual campaign trips. I think it just came out in the course of some remarks he was making. I don't believe that it was the result of deep thought or analysis at all. We try to read too much into many of these things. We try to ponder why they were said. Well, that doesn't do any good because they are not the result of lots of deliberation, discussion, thinking and so on.

HOFFECKER: The only reason I brought that up was because,

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when I was talking to Admiral Dennison, he said that one time he had asked President Truman why he didn't make more off-the-cuff statements on foreign policy because it seemed that his off-the-cuff statements were more effective than his written speeches given his delivery style. And the President told Admiral Dennison that it was because every word that the President utters about foreign affairs is part of the public record and therefore he has to be extremely careful about what he says. If he really believed that he had to be extremely careful you'd think that he would be extremely careful all the time.

ELSEY: Well, when you consider, of course, that a President is under pressure and under scrutiny and under the microscope twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, it's just not possible to weigh every word, every sentence all the time. I think this is why Mr. Truman didn't let himself go all the time on foreign affairs extemporaneously, and no President does. And even today, the presidential press conferences consist of prepared statements which you may comment on. But you don't stand up in front of a microphone and begin thinking at that point about what you're going to say

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on foreign affairs. And Mr. Truman did have something of a quick temper and snapped back, sometimes too fast, in press conferences on domestic as well as foreign matters. Sometimes the implications were horrendous. In December of 1950 there was a great concern over the use of the atomic bomb in Korea. He was asked the question and he made an answer. The answer was interpreted as having far more significance than he intended it to have. This resulted, among

other things, in the British Prime Minister climbing on an airplane and coming to Washington in a hurry because the British were so alarmed about the possibility that the United States might start using atomic weapons in Korea. This was all caused in a matter of seconds in a press conference. This is the problem, of course, that every President faces.

MORRISSEY: George, you once remarked to me in conversation that of all those whistlestop speeches in the '48 campaign there was only once when the President went out without any preparation from yourself and I think you said that was in Enfield, Connecticut. Does this ring any bells?

ELSEY: Yes, I recall the problem that we made an unscheduled

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stop that none of us knew about or knew was going to happen and it was up there on the Massachusetts-Connecticut line. Was Enfield the name of the town?

MORRISSEY: As I recall your telling the story. My memory might be wrong or we might both have the name of the town wrong.

ELSEY: This was in the period from mid-September through to the election. We had done at least some preparation for every whistlestop speech and every appearance, which didn't mean a full text, as you know. This meant notes and outline--of course, a major speech is a full text--so that the President was at least armed or prepared with something. He didn't go out there completely at the mercy of the audience and the passions of the moment. This was a great difference between the Truman campaign and the Dewey campaign. Dewey went out and just said the same, what from our point of view we regarded as platitudes, over and over and over again. The press got tired of them and stopped carrying them. His campaign appeared to lack steam and lack vigor. The number of press accompanying Truman grew rather than shrank because they knew he would have something to say, and he did.

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MORRISSEY: When you were riding that train, how much attention did you pay to what Dewey was saying?

ELSEY: Practically none, because we had very little way of knowing. The kinds of newspapers you pick up in the small towns or even in a good-sized city would maybe have a headline or a few sentences about the content. Most of the political reporting would be about where he was, where he was going, or something of that sort, very little about the content of his speeches. What we learned about them came rather from Washington, from the Democratic National Committee. They were the ones who had the text, had the chance to see what was being said. Of course, there weren't texts for most of Dewey's small town appearances.

Miss Hoffecker has asked another question here, "Were security restrictions an important deterrent in explaining foreign policy to the public?" I don't recall this having been a problem.

Obviously there are some things you don't talk about; you don't explain the disposition of your military forces. There are lots of things you don't talk about, but with foreign policy and foreign policy speeches you're not much hampered by security restrictions. You usually don't get into

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the areas where security is extremely tight. You're obviously not talking about an intelligence matter or details of military matters when you're making a foreign policy speech. I thought a little bit about--after seeing your question here -- I simply can't recall its having been a problem to us.

HOFHECKER: That's very interesting, thank you.

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Fourth Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at his office, 1616 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., July 10, 1969. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

ELSEY: This interview will be based upon a questionnaire submitted to me by Mr. John E. Hopkins of the College of Communications, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. Jack Hopkins is a candidate for Ph.D. and is working in the field of speech preparation and he has submitted to me a number of questions regarding the preparation of speeches for President Truman. I have requested permission from Mr. Hopkins to make a copy of my responses available to the Truman Library and, hence, this interview will be available both to Mr. Hopkins and to the Truman Library staff. I am requesting the Truman Library staff to keep it closed until December 31, 1970. Following that time, it will be opened to all under the normal rules that prevail at the Truman Library.

The question numbers that I shall refer to are those as listed in Jack Hopkins' questionnaire [see appendix], a copy of which is attached to the transcript of this interview.

The first question asks what my undergraduate and graduate school academic majors and minors were. My undergraduate degree was received from Princeton University in 1939. I majored in history. It had been my expectation

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that I would teach history at the college level, American history, and so my undergraduate major was in European history. My graduate school work, at Harvard, from 1939 to '41 was in the field

of American history.

Jack has asked me to identify two or three academic courses, undergraduate and graduate, that were of particular value to me in preparing presidential addresses for Mr. Truman. I have no special courses that come to mind in response to that question. I feel that the breadth of study that one has in history, world history, European history, American history, is of enormous value because of the scope of one's thinking, the background, the breadth of vision that history, in my prejudiced view, gives one, but I'm not able to put my finger on any particular course that had any more value than any other single one.

As for extra-curricular activities that were of particular value in preparing presidential addresses, I recall none that I would specifically identify. I was involved in some college publications. I was president of a history club and the other normal undergraduate and graduate school activities, but I do not think any of them were particularly helpful.

Question four asks what factors influenced my

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personal theory of speechwriting and speechmaking. I think that this is perhaps too philosophical, or too professional a question for me. I don't believe I have any theory of speechwriting or speechmaking. I have some ideas now, based upon my own personal experiences in the last twenty years of fairly extensive public speaking, but I certainly had no theories, as such, in the period that I was working for President Truman. The work that I did on his staff was very practical. My ideas were purely pragmatic, how to get the job done and how to do it most effectively for the "Boss." I believe that I will be elaborating on this further on in the questionnaire.

Question five addresses itself to formal training in the areas of journalism, radio, television, and so on. I had no formal training at any point either prior to or subsequent to my work on the White House staff. In the fields of political science, government, and history, I have already alluded to that in my first and second questions.

Question six, again, is a rather technical one asking for information on my formal training or experience in developing arguments, structuring ideas logically,

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adapting to President Truman's language and style. I had no formal training here. The experience was simply on the job experience with respect to meeting the needs of Truman as they arose.

Question seven asks for my business and professional positions held prior to joining the President's staff. I had no professional jobs before joining the President's staff. I went directly from graduate school, in the fall of 1941, into active duty in the Naval Reserve. I was assigned, in early 1942, as a Naval Intelligence officer to the Map Room at the White House and was there for three years, from '42 to '45, and, hence, had been at the White House for three years in a

naval capacity, at the time that Truman succeeded to the Presidency in April of 1945. The closest thing I would say to background or training that was of benefit to me in working on presidential messages, documents, speeches, perhaps was the writing of precis, of reports, during those Map Room years. We received, in the Map Room, an enormous volume of intelligence material from the Army and Navy and less voluminous amounts from other Government departments. Those of us who were on duty, all of us young Reserve officers, had to digest these

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voluminous reports into very short summaries for the Military and Naval Aides to the President, the chief of staff to the President, who was Fleet Admiral Leahy; Mr. Harry Hopkins, special assistant to the President, and President Roosevelt, and subsequently President Truman. Just the experience of editing, of summarizing, I think--I know, was of value to me in learning to express complex ideas as simply as possible and in handling large amounts of material and distilling the essence, the most important ideas, from this material. During the war years when President Roosevelt, and later Truman, was away from Washington, the Map Room staff would send shore written summaries by coded military channels of communication to the President wherever he was, whether it was Warm Springs, Hyde Park or overseas on one of the military conferences. This, again, was a matter of learning how to make the most of every single word, have it convey the maximum amount of meaning in the most limited space. So, perhaps this background is of, was of some value to me. I happen to think it was. Obviously, this was not direct speech preparation experience, however.

Jack's question eight asks for my business and professional positions since working for the President.

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I remained on at the White House through the Truman administration. In 1953 on leaving Government, at the onset of the Eisenhower administration, I joined the headquarters of the American National Red Cross. I was executive assistant to Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker when he was president of the Red Cross, subsequently General Alfred N. Gruenther when he succeeded Bunker. In 1958 I became vice president of the Red Cross with responsibility for its international programs and its educational programs. In 1961 I resigned from the Red Cross to enter private industry and from 1961 to the present, I have been associated with Pullman, Inc. I was on leave of absence from Pullman for most of the past year serving with Clark M. Clifford while he was Secretary of Defense.

Questions nine, ten and eleven ask about association with Mr. Truman prior to his assuming the Presidency. I had no contact with Mr. Truman prior to his becoming Vice President in January 1945. I met him a few times in a most informal fashion between the November elections and inauguration in '45, but I recall having seen him only twice during the few weeks that he was Vice President. I did not work in any fashion with him or with members of his staff.

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Question twelve asks for my official duties and responsibilities as a staff member during the Truman administration. I can only answer that by running through the chronology here because my duties and responsibilities varied from time to time. As noted above, I was a Naval Reserve officer in April 1945 when Truman became President, serving at that time as assistant to Vice Admiral Wilson Brown, the Naval Aide to the President. I accompanied Mr. Truman to the Potsdam Conference. By the time he returned from that, the war with Japan was practically over, and so during the fall of 1945, I was working with the new Naval Aide Commodore James K. Vardaman and his assistant, Lieutenant Commander Clark N. Clifford, on many matters relating to demobilization. During the fall of '45 President Truman was much interested in universal military training and began to concern himself, among, of course, his many other new responsibilities, with the postwar organization of the armed forces. He asked Vardaman, and Vardaman in turn asked Clifford, to begin analyzing the many proposals in these two fields, universal military training and postwar organization of the armed forces, prepare summaries for him, write assessments of the

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value of different proposals, and I worked with Mr. Clifford in the fall of '45 on into the spring of '46 on these and related matters. In the spring of 1946 Clifford became Naval Aide to the President, Vardaman having moved over to the Federal Reserve Board. I became Clifford's assistant and served, still in uniform, both for Clifford and other members of the White House staff increasingly on civilian matters, not just naval, as theretofore. Clifford became, in the summer of '46, Special Counsel to the President, and I continued as a Naval Reserve commander, by this time spending about three-quarters of my time with Clifford and one-quarter of my time with the new Naval Aide to the President, James K. Foskett. In the spring of '47 I was demobilized and went to work full-time as a civilian for Mr. Clifford, remaining as his assistant until 1949 when I was named one of the Administrative Assistants to President Truman. I was an Administrative Assistant to Truman until December of 1951. At that time Averell Harriman was named director for Mutual Security, a new post just established by law, and the job was prescribed by law as being in the Executive Office of the President. Harriman had the responsibility of pulling together the various foreign aid programs of the Government, point 4 or

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technical assistance, or the Marshall plan, military assistance to foreign nations. These several programs had been administered by State, Defense, and an independent agency. They were going their several ways without much coordination and this was a situation that had to be remedied and Harriman's position, as I said, was established by the Congress so there would be one strong official with full legal authority to pull together these several programs. I had known Harriman since the war years and Harriman asked me to leave the immediate White House staff and join him in the Executive Office of the President as his senior assistant. And I remained with Harriman until January 1953 at the end of the Truman administration.

As to describing my official duties and responsibilities, I think, perhaps, there one can deduce them simply from the outline of jobs I held during that period. Obviously, they varied enormously. When you work for the Special Counsel to the President, or when you are an

Administrative Assistant to the President, there is no limit to what you're involved in, speeches, writing of statements of messages to Congress, drafting of legislation, representing the White House staff at

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interdepartmental meetings, working with the Bureau of the Budget. Across the board there was literally no field of the President's responsibilities or the White House role that at one time or another, I and others, young staff members such as I was, were not exposed to. I'm sorry I can't be more precise, but it's impossible to be precise without spending the next hour listing a lot of minutiae.

Question thirteen asks my first speech preparation duties while on the Truman presidential staff. I'm not sure I recall what the first speech was that I was concerned with. Actually, I had provided some raw material and had done a bit of editing even in the Roosevelt days on statements and speeches that pertained to the conduct of the war. Now Harry Hopkins asked me to give him some comments on materials that he had from time to time. Judge Rosenman, who was Special Counsel to President Roosevelt during most of World War II and for some months into the Truman administration, similarly would turn to me to provide factual material, obtain factual material for him from the War or Navy Department, or sometimes to put that material into a rough draft, sometimes to comment on that draft of material that he

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already had. When Clifford, in the fall of '45, began working on universal military training, he found himself very soon providing material for presidential statements and speeches on UMT, on military matters, and just through natural evolution, I found myself just carrying on what I had been doing in the Roosevelt years. In '46 the Truman White House staff was still not very well organized, the carryovers from the Roosevelt administration were mostly gone, President Truman had not yet assembled a fully developed team of his own and all of us were scrambling around pinch-hitting, catching the balls as they flew past if we could catch them and sometimes we didn't. So, I really can't say what the first speech was. I do not recall which speech I would say was the first of the Truman ones I worked on. I can say that the first major policy speech for which I had an assigned, definite responsibility to develop from scratch, was the Truman State of the Union message for January 1947. And since Jack Hopkins has asked a number of questions about the State of the Union, I'll defer any further comment on that one until we get to that point in the questionnaire.

Question fourteen asks for subsequent changes in

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my speech preparation duties while on Truman's staff. Well, that would imply that there was a degree of orderly sequence in my speech preparation duties and the implication is wrong. There is nothing very orderly about how we went about, how we prepared our presidential speeches. Sometimes I would have the assignment to draft a speech from the first word. Other times I

would find myself editing material that had come over from the State Department or one of the other departments. Sometimes I would be involved at a second or third draft stage of a speech that had been developed by another member of the White House staff. There is no specific chronological time that these, that I can assign to these activities. I was doing any or all of these in the early Truman years, say '47 and '48 just as in the later Truman years, '51, '52, even after I was working for Harriman I would still work with Charlie Murphy, Dave Bell, Dave Lloyd, Dick Neustadt, on Truman speeches.

In Section B Jack Hopkins' questions relate to speech preparation data. B-I reads: "What criteria were employed to decide when, where and to whom, and what type of speech was to be delivered by Mr. Truman?"

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I do not think it's possible to give a single set of criteria in answer to that question. Some presidential speeches are delivered just because the President is head of State. There are formal occasions, an Armistice Day speech, a speech that is given simply because Presidents are expected to give them. We don't spend too much time worrying, usually, about the content of the speech, this subject matter, the lighting of the Christmas tree on the south lawn of the White House for example. The content of the speech is pretty much dictated by the occasion. It would be regarded as poor taste to use a Christmas tree lighting (I'm picking that just as an example), for a formal policy speech. Certainly, that would not be the occasion when you would make a political speech. On the other hand, when you're addressing a group of Democrats at a Jefferson-Jackson Day rally, the purpose of which is to raise money, or to build up a head of steam for an impending election, obviously the content of that speech is wholly different. So, it is the occasion that decides the type of speech that a President is going to give.

In addition to these set occasions that a President is expected to give, either as head of State, or head of

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party, or as the chief in all matters pertaining to foreign relations, there are other occasions that the pace of political events force upon him. The President may find that his legislative program is encountering a very heavy going on the Hill and it's necessary to rally some public opinion to put a little backbone in members of his own party to castigate his opponents whether they are in his own party or the other party, and the President, in a case like that, will be on the lookout for a suitable occasion in which he can say what he feels needs to be said to get his program going on the Hill. There are other times when foreign affairs lead the President and his advisors to believe that, as President of the United States he ought to take a strong stand on behalf of the country. There is no, to repeat what I said earlier, no single set of criteria that I can think of which are wholly responsible to the type of speech. It is the circumstances, the occasion, the time, that determines the type of speech, whether it is going to be a platitudinous speech, whether it's going to be an angry political speech, whether it's going to be a forthright speech of a national leader, these are determined by the events of the moment and the circumstances.

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My answer to the second question in this set is on a comparable basis. Who are responsible for the decisions as to where, when and what kind of speech the President would deliver? Well, obviously the President himself was ultimately responsible and no one on the White House staff in the Truman days would ever have thought of committing Truman to making a speech without his full knowledge, or full participation in the decision and consent. One simply didn't book the President for a speech without his knowing all about it. Now, as to who was responsible for advising the President, I think I've largely--the answer is implicit in what I have just said in answer to the preceding question. If it's of a foreign policy nature, obviously the President would be expecting advice from his Secretary of State; perhaps the Secretary of Defense if military matters are regarded as being very heavily involved. If it's of a political nature, the President, President Truman always consulted his friends, his closest friends and advisers on the Hill. After the '48 elections Barkley was a very key man; Sam Rayburn always was insofar as Truman was concerned in advising where and when the President ought to speak out on a political matter. Of course, he consulted if it was

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partisan politics, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee and those members of the immediate White House staff who were closest to him on political matters, in particular Matthew J. Connelly, the Appointments Secretary. President Truman looked to his Special Counsels. In sequence, they were Sam Rosenman, carried over from the FDR days; then Clifford, and then Charles Murphy, after February 1950 when Murphy succeeded Clifford. These three, insofar as any single official in the White House family was concerned, these three, in sequence, were the principal speechwriters, speech preparers, speech editors for Harry Truman and, although they might not always be the ones to advise Truman or to urge Truman to make a speech, once he decided to do it, they inevitably and invariably, were involved in the preparation of the speech.

I think the third question: What criteria were employed to select and narrow the topic on which the speech would be developed? Again, has been answered by what we have just been covering. The occasion, the reason, the motivation for the speech, largely, determined what the topic would be and the form in which the topic would be developed.

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The fourth question: Who selected and narrowed the topic? Again, this was determined by the occasion. Why was the President speaking? Was he on a campaign trip? Was he raising money? Was he giving mother's day greetings? All this was determined by the personnel, who largely were determined by the occasion. If it was an agriculture speech, obviously, the Secretary of Agriculture would have sent over the material. It would then be whipped into shape by the staff at the White House. But as to who selected or narrowed the topic, I really can't say anything more than, it would be determined by the basic motivation that inspired the decision to make a speech in the first place.

Question five: Describe the timing and sequence of procedures employed in the development of

the State of the Union and the inaugural address. Each of the State of the Union messages was different. The first Truman State of the Union message was January 1946. This was a long message. In my personal opinion, it was pretty much a scissors and paste job, put together by Sam Rosenman, largely from materials that had been sent to him at his request by the various Cabinet members. As I recall it, and I've not had an occasion to look at it for many

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years now, it was very long and lacked very much style or cohesiveness. It was just bits and pieces scotch taped together.

The January 1947 State of the Union was the responsibility of Clifford, who in turn, had me, as his assistant, do the initial spade work. I had been very much perturbed and concerned in the spring, a year earlier, in the closing weeks of '45 and the first few weeks of '46, by the fact that the State of the Union and the budget message really hadn't had much relationship one to the other, and that, aside from Rosenman, who, of course, was gone by the time that we faced the job of preparing the comparable '47 messages, there really wasn't anybody on the White House staff who'd had much experience or much knowledge. And I also felt that we ought to have the State of the Union, economic message, and the budget message, be thoroughly consistent one with the other. This didn't take very much imaginary thinking to arrive at that conclusion, it was self-evident, but I felt and talked at length on several occasions with Mr. Clifford, that unless he took a strong lead in seeing that this was done, we might well find the Counsel of Economic Advisers going one direction with an economic message and the Bureau of the

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Budget in another and the State of the Union being developed quite independently. And this was a situation that was not going to be remedied unless Clifford took a hand in it. Accordingly, Clifford met with Jim Webb, the Budget Director, outlined all of these thoughts to him, and Webb assigned James Sundquist from his personal staff to work with Clifford and me in drafting the State of the Union message and insuring a complete consistency between the State of the Union message and the budget message. I don't recall that we had any effective arrangement from the Council of Economic Advisers. I prepared memoranda for Clifford to send to the Cabinet agencies requesting some material for the State of the Union message. I think it was, perhaps, in mid-November of '46 and as soon as the material came back in early December, Jim Sundquist and I began putting together a first draft. We worked as quickly as we could through a couple of drafts, then presented our package to Clifford and to Jim Webb, and after Clark had had a chance to look it over and make some suggestions of his own, another draft was circulated to other members of the White House staff.

The January '47 message, as I look back on it, should inspire no one to any particular pride of authorship.

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I don't think it was very eloquent, I don't think it was as good as it ought to have been, but it was

put together by a White House staff that didn't have very much experience in these matters and at a time when the Truman administration program, as such, was still in a very preliminary, and very formative and still a bit tentative. The year 1946 had been a rough one for the President in many, many respects. In the foreign policy field there had been the disastrous row with Henry Wallace, and his abrupt departure from the Cabinet. The President was not getting along as well as he should with Jimmy Byrnes, the Secretary of State. The elections, the congressional elections in November 1946 had been a calamity from the point of view of the Democratic party and the Administration was reeling from a succession of blows, although the President's personal courage was high, the morale of the executive branch was not what it was later to become. And so, the January 1947 State of the Union message, I think, reflected all of these things. Perhaps not directly, but reflected in the sense that it was not the forthright, bold, vigorous, advocacy of programs that was to characterize President Truman later in the year '47 and throughout '48.

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Turning now to the 1948 State of the Union. It was clearly apparent to all of us in the White House staff, certainly to the President himself, that the 1948 State of the Union message would be the opening gun--might well be the opening gun in the '48 presidential campaign and it certainly could be if the President chose to make it so. The White House staff by this time was far better organized, far more experienced, far more confident than it had been a year earlier and, insofar as the preparation of speeches was concerned, it had been enormously strengthened by the arrival of Charles S. Murphy. Charlie Murphy had had a number of years experience on the Hill in the legislative drafting section of the Senate. He was well-known to President Truman because Charlie had worked with Senator Truman on a number of matters during Mr. Truman's period on the Hill. Charlie had a very orderly mind, a clear grasp of issues, and, while his prose was not eloquent, it was a simple, clear, and direct prose admirably suited to President Truman's personal style. And so, with Charlie Murphy having joined the team in early '47 and throughout '47, increasingly as each month went by, becoming a stronger and stronger member of the White House staff,

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Clifford and I, who had--Clifford had the responsibility and I was his principal assistant, looked forward to the preparation of the '48 message with a degree of confidence that we had not had a year earlier. The '48 message very consciously was an effort to epitomize, to wrap up, to summarize, the Truman program, and by now we felt there was a Truman platform, a Truman program, a coherent, consistent, cohesive body of ideas that President Truman was advocating, was fighting for and stood for, which, as you know, from my remarks a few moments ago, we'd lacked a sense of that a year earlier. The draft of the State of the Union in '48 was put together, as matters of this sort usually are, as a result of perusing the materials that had come in by request from all of the Cabinet agencies, from the Bureau of the Budget, from the Council of Economic Advisers. It's not possible to say that one person put something together like this. One person may hammer out a first draft, but Clifford and Murphy and I went over these drafts so many times that there is no single author and Clifford and Murphy spent a good deal of time in discussion with the President so that by the time the '48 State of the Union message was ready for delivery, it was thoroughly Trumanesque in

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spirit, in tone, in content, and it set the stage for, I think, the balance of events in the calendar year 1948.

Forty-nine is a somewhat different story. Of course, the political atmosphere was totally and completely different by January 1949. President Truman had been elected on his own in what to many people was an astonishing election in November of '48 and he remained in Washington for a couple of weeks after that before heading down for a rest and a vacation in Key West, Florida. Prior to leaving Washington, Truman and Clifford had talked a bit about the January '49 messages. And Truman told Clifford that he wanted to make his '49 State of the Union message largely on foreign affairs and he would have his inaugural address on domestic affairs. He didn't think that he wanted to cover both subjects, both times, and he would simply split the subject, the broad subject areas, foreign for State of the Union, domestic for inaugural. And Clifford relayed that to me as he was getting ready to go with the President to Key West and asked that I start thinking about it and start the usual machinery rolling to gather raw material and data from the departments for the messages. I thought about this a good deal while Clifford was in Key West and the

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more I thought about it, the less I liked the idea. It seemed to me that the President was going at this in reverse sequence and that was wrong to split the areas as he had suggested and I finally wrote to Clifford after having talked to him by phone, wrote him a long memorandum in which I argued as persuasively, and as forcefully as I could, that the President had one and only one inaugural opportunity and that he had other State of the Union messages and would have still future State of the Union messages, and there was nothing particularly unusual anymore about a presidential State of the Union message, and while it obviously would be listened to and would be an important State paper, the inaugural address was unique, it would be the one and only time in his life that Harry Truman would be inaugurated and it would command a degree of attention, not just in the United States but around the world, and in my view Truman had ought to address the world in his inaugural address on January 20th and it ought to be the foreign policy matter, the address. It would be an address far beyond just the Congress, it would be the American people and other countries, both friendly and unfriendly; whereas, the State of the Union could confine itself to domestic

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matters. Truman had fought the 80th Congress with mixed success for two years, now he had an 81st Congress, controlled by the Democrats, his own party. And there was a chance for him to make considerable headway in his legislative program, and that ought to be the theme of the State of the Union.

Clifford seemed convinced by this and began talking with the President along these lines. It's not easy to change Mr. Truman's mind when he's made it up and I regretted at the time, and I've

always been sorry that I wasn't at Key West to see how Clark Clifford went about changing Harry Truman's mind, but however he did it, it was done, and a few days after I'd sent my memo down, Clifford phoned me and said that the President had agreed that the inaugural address would be foreign policy and would I go ahead on that basis. Actually from the point of view of the work that was necessary for a staff member in November and December, it really didn't make a heck of a lot of difference other than that the State of the Union, of course, came a few days earlier. But, the preliminary spade work was basically the same in either case.

We prepared the State of the Union in roughly the same fashion we had in the one a year earlier. A letter went out from Clifford to each Cabinet member and to the

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heads of some of the principal independent agencies, asking for their recommendations for material for the State of the Union message and giving them usually, oh, two weeks, I think, two or three weeks to have their material back to the White House. The material that came in was many times the amount that could be included in a message. Each department would send in several pages, sometimes fifteen or twenty pages of material. They knew, of course, that not all of this could go into any speech, but they also saw this as a fine opportunity to have their views and their ideas displayed to the White House staff and, they hoped, to the President himself. As for deciding what was to be included in a message; I can't really explain how we would do that. It would be a matter of some personal judgment on our own. We'd operate basically within a time limit structure. The President, for a State of the Union would

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probably not wish to speak more than forty or forty-five minutes. That set some rather arbitrary length, wordage, on the message, then how do you fit the pieces into it. The judgments, I suppose, on our part were more subjective than we would have liked to admit, those matters that were of principal interest to us as staff members probably got a little more of our consideration than those that were not. We also would bear in mind the political climate of the moment, and particularly in the January '49 State of the Union, the President, in our judgment, had to give pretty adequate attention to those matters which had been key campaign issues the preceding fall. He obviously could not campaign for re-election and then in his first State of the Union message, turn his back on any of the matters that he'd been elected on. That's the kind of guideline, the kind of thinking that we did and I don't, at this point, believe I can think of anything more precise.

With respect to the inaugural address of January 20, 1949, as you see, I put myself into quite a spot by having recommended that it deal with foreign affairs. It was now my task to draft as powerful a statement as I could of U.S. foreign policy. Some parts of the message were simple and posed no great problem as to content. But

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I had worked along through a couple of drafts and still was not satisfied. I felt that the message

lacked any really momentous statement and was in this situation of perplexity and some considerable unhappiness when I received a call from a man whose name was totally unknown to me, Benjamin Hardy. Ben worked in the office of Public Affairs for the Department of State, then supervised by Mr. Francis Russell, whom I did know and know quite well. Hardy asked if he could come and see me and I assured him that he could and we picked a mutually convenient time. I was not too surprised at getting a call from someone in State whom I did not happen to know because I dealt all the time with the State Department on many, many matters and since I did know Russell and worked with Russell's office on various State Department publications, this did not seem too out of the ordinary. But what Hardy had in mind when he arrived was to show me a paper that he had prepared on the importance of technical assistance. How significant he thought technical assistance was, could be, should be, and how American—the United States Government ought to adopt a well thought out major effort to make the benefits of our technology known to the developing countries of the world. Hardy

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argued that the Marshall plan had been successful—was being successful--in Europe but that nothing comparable to the Marshall plan was appropriate to the poor, newly emerging nations of Asia, Africa, the poorer countries of South America. They did not need large amounts of capital the way Western Europe did. They didn't have the industrial base, they didn't have the expertise, they didn't have the trained manpower, they didn't have the educated professionals, and a different kind of assistance was necessary if the United States were going to take the lead in developing, building a more prosperous, and as more prosperous, hence more peaceful international community. Hardy had a good statement running to several pages outlining this thesis and we talked far beyond the confines of his paper. Hardy had come to me, he said, because he was having no success within the Department of State, in getting people to listen to him and he had been rebuffed at each of the higher levels that he had attempted to sell his ideas to. Hardy was an answer to a maiden's prayer so far as I was concerned. I had been grappling with a speech which lacked a bold and great idea. Hardy had a bold and great idea and was searching around for a way to express it. A way for it to see the

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light of day and be seriously considered by high authority.

I had no problems at all in persuading Clifford, on his return from Key West, that this was a concept that deserved the President's personal and close attention. Insofar as I was concerned this idea merited a significant space in the President's inaugural address. Accordingly, I wrote in a summary of Ben Hardy's thought in one of the drafts of the inaugural address which Clifford reviewed with the President and found the President very sympathetic as both of us knew that he would be. This was so completely in line with the kind of thinking that Harry Truman believed in, as a farmer, with his long background in agriculture he could understand, no one had to explain to him, in fact he knew better than we did, than Clifford and I did, how the advantages of American technology in this area could be exported abroad, and should be.

The story of this point 4, as it came to be known, because it was his fourth point in the inaugural

address, is I think fairly, has been widely written about and is no news. When we sent drafts of the inaugural address over to the State Department for comment, which we had to do because it dealt with foreign policy, we got a very

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strong and vigorous objection from Bob Lovett, the Under Secretary of State that this was completely inappropriate and point 4 should be knocked out. I heard all sorts of repercussions from lower staff levels in the department, people saying this was premature, the planning hadn't been done, the budgeting hadn't been done, in other words the bureaucratic red tape had not been gone through and it was a terrible mistake to put words like this in the President's mouth before the planning had been done. I was not convinced, nor was Clifford. From our point of view, if we waited until the State Department got through thoroughly digesting, and chewing its cud, why, we'd be waiting another five years and that would scarcely meet our January 20th, 1949 deadline. So, we stuck firm. Clifford, of course, did make it clear to President Truman that we had objections from the Department of State. I might say parenthetically here that we never did put something in a presidential speech or keep something in a presidential speech if it had been objected to by one of the departments without making very clear that the President understood, knew, and was completely briefed on what the objections or ideas were. We never held anything back of that sort because he would get whatever blame or credit would ensue and he obviously

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needed to know all of the facts if he wanted to make the decision. So, the point '4 idea, and the fact that the State Department objected to it, was made very clear to President Truman and that didn't budge him any more than it budged Clifford or me. I have still in my personal possession Ben Hardy's original memorandum to me and all the drafts of the inaugural address, which I obviously cherish.

To polish off the remaining State of the Union messages very quickly. By January 1950, Clifford was preparing to leave Government service to return to the practice of law and he had very little to do with the January '50 State of the Union. Charlie Murphy by now was so well established that the responsibility was largely his, and I think that for the January '50 and '51 and '52 State of the Union messages and, indeed, the final one, that Charlie Murphy is in a better position than anyone else to describe how those were prepared and what the philosophy and thinking was in those messages. By that latter period, while I participated to some extent, my role was a much more limited one, I was in position merely of commenting and making suggestions on drafts. was not the carpenter who put them together in their formative stages or had anything to do with deciding what

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went in and what went out. My comments for the later years were largely editorial and literary.

Question six in this section, asks for the President's role in the preparation of an address, that is was he the one to initially outline his ideas, suggest he needed a speech? Again, I think this

perhaps has already been covered in our comments on the occasion of a speech, what prompted a speech. Sometimes the President would be the one occasionally to initiate the idea of a speech. I think that was probably rare. Ordinarily there were so many people urging the President to make a speech and usually, the political or the State or Defense, or congressional leadership were at-- these people were at the President all the time to make speeches in their areas or in their behalf, that there were really darn few occasions left for the President to even think up the speech idea himself. The others were already pressing the thought on him. However, be that as it may, whether the President were the one to originate the idea of a speech or whether he acceded, which was usually the case, to recommendations by others, he rarely would outline the speech or dictate its content. As we said earlier, the occasion would be the determining factor,

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and the motivation, the reason why the President acceded to the idea of a speech, those in themselves were the determining forces on the content.

How and by whom were writing assignments made? Oh, this insofar as I can generalize, would depend on the subject matter of the speech. If it were regarded as an important address, a major address, the three Special Counsels in succession, Rosenman, Clifford and Murphy, bore the basic responsibility for seeing to it that the preparation of drafts was in hand and under control. If it was a more perfunctory or routine speech, or statement, back to that Christmas tree exercise again, or an anniversary of the Boy Scouts or something of that sort, throughout most of the Truman administration William D. Hassett had responsibility for that kind of speech, or that kind of a public statement. Hassett was a newspaperman who'd had extensive, classical education. He had a fine and light literary style and Bill was the admiration and the envy of some of us -- and his abilities to clip off mellifluous sentences and paragraphs that sounded fine even though there might not be much content to them. When I say, not much content, that was not a criticism of Hassett. Hassett was simply meeting the requirement

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of the circumstance. As I said earlier, you don't want to have a heavy substance to many of these statements, you want them to sound fine, you want them to be impressed and inspired and made to feel good by the President of the United States. You don't want them to be wearing you down with the necessity of more taxes or labor reforms or foreign policy problems.

The next question, or series of questions, deals with speech preparation conferences. Did all staff members who worked on presidential speeches attend such conferences? Who did, why, why not, and so on. This is hard to answer because over a seven and a half year period the pattern changed from time to time. In the early Truman period, I think, there really weren't very many formal speech conferences and fewer people were in attendance. First Rosenman, then Clifford and always Charlie Ross through his five years of service as the President's Press Secretary. In the latter Truman period, as the staff had grown, as the President became better acquainted with the younger members of the staff, the speech conferences grew. And I refer specifically to perhaps the '49, '50, '51 period by which time Charlie Murphy was there. Charlie had acquired David Lloyd, David

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Bell, and Dick Neustadt and one, two or three of these men would be on hand. After '48 I was almost always in any speech conference session. In '46 and '47 I never was. Hassett was sometimes present, sometimes not. Matt Connelly ordinarily was on hand. Matt had little to do with the content or text of a speech, but because he was the President's principal political contact, he was keenly concerned and interested in the subject matter of the speeches and, of course, it was essential that he be thoroughly familiar with everything that was proposed for the President's utterance.

The question is asked as to whether non-staff members attended. It would have been a very rare circumstance for a non-staff member to attend although if the speech were foreign policy, sometimes the Secretary of State himself would be present or a representative of the Secretary of State. After the Korean war broke out and matters of foreign policy became even more critical and sensitive, and we had to be especially concerned with the implications of sentences and even words, at times we, if we didn't have a representative from State on hand, we certainly made sure that State had a crack at every draft of a statement having foreign policy implications. Toward the close of the Truman

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administration, we became so well-acquainted with Marshall D. Shulman, a young assistant to Dean Acheson, that we tended to regard Marshall almost as a member of the White House staff, although, of course, he was not, and Marshall attended a number of speech conference sessions in the latter part of the Truman administration.

What, the question reads, were the exact purposes of each speech conference? I'm not sure if Jack Hopkins means speech conferences which the President himself attended or speech conferences of the staff. There is something of a difference here. Speech conferences of the working members of the staff were simply to swap ideas back and forth, to tear each other's work to shreds and to try and put it back together again, to be subject to brutally frank comment. The President rarely was in a speech conference until we were very, very close to the end. This didn't mean that he wasn't aware of what was going on, but the President's time is limited and incredibly valuable. You can't waste his time with four or five or more people sitting around the table going through early drafts of speeches. He doesn't have the time, he can't be imposed upon to that extent. As a draft of a speech got to a point where we, on the staff,

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were reasonably satisfied and felt that this was beginning to take the necessary shape, Clifford, later Murphy, would give a copy to the President for him to read at his leisure. At his leisure usually meant the early morning hours, perhaps, after that morning walk, 6:30, 7:00, 7:30 something of that sort, and the President would give his comment back, usually orally, at the morning 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock morning staff, general staff conference. The President would not sit at the Cabinet table with those that worked on the speech

until we were really its--just about the very final draft. Then it was his practice to read it aloud so that he would get the feel and the flavor of it and so that we could, in hearing him read it, detect perhaps awkward phraseology or overlong sentences or even words that just didn't sound right coming out of Harry Truman's mouth. Sometimes he would stop and say, "We have to do something about that." Sometimes some of us around the table would simply check in the margin and do something about it after the President had left the room, or if we felt it needed discussion, interrupt him right at that point and propose that the paragraph be recast, the sentences shortened, the words changed, or what have you. But when the President was in attendance at what we would

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call a speech conference, it was the content of the message, the length of the message, the ideas in the message were already so far along and he had had his chances through seeing drafts of one or two stages earlier to get his own substantive comments in. These speech conferences tended to be dress rehearsals for the final delivery rather than substantive conferences on the subject matter. Of course, there are exceptions, but that is the best generalization I could make.

I believe I've already covered the tenth question here. Indicate and elaborate on the method of conducting each conference. There was no formal agenda. If the President was in attendance, it was not a brainstorming session as Jack has suggested, but rather one to polish the draft, to be sure that it sounded like Harry S. Truman and not a diplomat or a general or something else, but sounded like the President, and this particular President. If it was a preliminary, a conference held in the early stages of the preparation of the speech, with the President not in attendance, then it would be conducted by Clifford or by Murphy to be sure that we were in agreement and that we were hammering out the right kind of philosophy, arguments, rationale, so on and

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so forth. If the speech conferences were of an even more preliminary stage, it might have been conducted, in say, '47 or '48, by me or by Charlie Murphy or by, '49, '59, '51 period, Dave Bell, Dave Lloyd, or Dick Neustadt.

Jack Hopkins asked if notes or recordings were made during the conferences, by whom and where they are available. If by recordings you mean tape or sound recordings, no. I don't recall that we ever recorded anything. Certainly no staff or working conferences were ever recorded to my knowledge at any point during the Truman Presidency. So far as notes are concerned, yes. All of us who worked on this would make our own notes, on drafts, on the margin of drafts, or in longhand, in one form or another. I suppose to the extent that they were preserved, they are in the speech files of those of us concerned. Many of this kind of notes are in the Clifford papers now at the Truman Library. I have extensive speech files, notes, drafts, clippings, comments, etc. in my own papers, some of which are already in the Truman Library, others which will be there in due course, and I believe the same comments hold with respect to papers of Murphy, Lloyd, Bell and

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so forth.

Question twelve asks: Who wrote the first, second and succeeding drafts of an address. I think this has already been covered by earlier comments.

Similarly, question thirteen: Describe the timing and sequence of procedures that were followed during the preparation of each speech draft. I doubt that there is anything that I can add to what we have already covered.

Question fourteen asks me to compare the procedures followed by the Truman staff with those followed by other staffs with which I have been associated. I have really no comments that are very valuable here. The President of the United States is obviously in a unique situation. He has access to information, data, unparalleled. He also is subject to unparalleled pressures from those around him, those below him, those opposed to him, and from the press and others to take positions, to say things, to speak, both in substance and in style. So, I'm not sure that it's very meaningful to try and compare speechwriting procedures for some other Government official or someone in private industry, with those of the President. The President's comments, his

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speeches, be they formal addresses or merely press releases, are subject to the kind of scrutiny that nobody else's utterances are. Because of the President's unique role in responsibility, he has to be--ought to be--extraordinarily cautious in what he utters. This means that there is a heavy responsibility on the staff of a President, a far heavier responsibility on a presidential staff than on the staff anyplace else, in being sure that the President isn't provided with inaccurate information, incomplete information, misleading information. The material that came to us for use, even from a responsible agency such as the Department of State, and the Department of Defense, or the Bureau of the Budget, was frequently pleading a selfish point of view, the agency point of view. State and Defense are always in a condition of tension, and State would argue its point of view in material presented to the President, hoping that the President would select it. Defense, Agriculture, Justice, what have you, is in a comparable position. And a presidential staff can't play favorites. A presidential staff has to look at everything that comes, from the point of view of the

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President, the overall, his ultimate responsibilities. And I would say that I was more conscious of, had to be, more conscious of this kind of responsibility to my President than I have ever had to feel in my responsibilities to other officials with whom I have worked. Some of the lapses that characterize the Truman administration, that have characterized various administrations since, has been due to the fact, I think, that in moments of perhaps carelessness or overwork, staff members have allowed the President to be given material that hadn't been subjected to this merciless scrutiny by them to be sure that the one-sided or too narrow point of view has not been put into the President's hands. I may have a triple negative there, I'm not sure if my sentence comes out right, whoever transcribes it will have to edit because I think you'll understand what

I'm saying.

The next three questions I believe we have already covered. The criteria employed in selecting main points, the criteria employed in selecting supporting material, and how material is gathered for the State of the Union and inaugural addresses, I believe have been covered, but if Jack Hopkins or anyone else has further

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questions in this regard, I'll be happy to try and answer them.

Question eighteen asks where files of materials to be used in speeches were kept. I don't believe that we ever kept any files of speech materials for future speeches at the White House. For the reasons that have been alluded to, a presidential speech is made when the occasion requires and what he says is again determined by the force of events. There is no way, other than the routine Christmas tree kind of speech, there's no purpose in trying to anticipate what is to be said, and if you build up a huge pile of reference materials, a large part of that's going to be out of date anyway. And, furthermore, for the most part, we didn't have a large enough White House staff to spend our time keeping up speech files. I can recall a particularly grim period so far as I personally was concerned in the spring of 1947. Charlie Murphy was only brand new at the White House staff. Lloyd and Bell, others who were later to be so enormously helpful, hadn't yet come over the horizon, and Clifford and I -- I should phrase that this way--Mr. Clifford had the principal responsibility, but I, as his assistant, had

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an enormous amount of legwork to do, were dashing from major speech to major speech. A Truman doctrine speech in March was just the first of a series of very important pronouncements that marked the President's utterances in the next few weeks and we would dash from a foreign policy matter to a tax bill, to a Taft-Hartley veto message and radio address. It was impossible to maintain files on all of these. We had to turn to the department or agency concerned, ask for data from them, drafts, if we thought they were competent and capable of producing drafts, take the material, beat it into shape, and move on to the next topic, to the next assignment. So, the idea implied, I believe here, that we might have a reference file of public statements made by the President, and by political leaders, maintaining files of magazine editorials and all that sort of thing. It would have been delightful, but we didn't have the manpower to do it ourselves, nor, frankly would we have time to look at all the stuff if it had been maintained.

Question nineteen: What criteria were employed in selecting the type of proofs, for example rational,

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emotional, etc. used in presidential addresses? I think this question implies a greater degree of sophistication than we possessed. I don't believe we, in fact I know darned well, we didn't sit around and discuss the type of proofs to be used nor, question twenty, did we ever discuss the

type of reasoning, inductive reasoning or deductive reasoning to be used. I'm not sure that if we had tried to talk about those things we would have known what it was we were talking about and I'm quite certain that if any one of us had spoken to Mr. Truman and said, "Do you wish to use inductive reasoning or deductive reasoning," President Truman would have resorted to very simple, very elementary, Missouri farm language in dismissing that kind of question.

These two questions bring to mind an episode that happened, perhaps, about 1950. One of my teachers when I had been an undergraduate at Princeton University was Doctor Hadley Cantril, a social psychologist who was already well-known and who acquired much greater professional reputation in later years. Cantril had written me from time to time, making suggestions about President Truman's speeches and so I invited him to

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come and see me at the White House on his next visit to Washington. He came in and began outlining in social psychologist's jargon some of his thoughts on presidential speeches and how he thought we ought to be using, I cannot now recall what words he might have used, but he might have well of used something like the phrases in these questions, inductive reasoning and so on and so forth. It just so happened that we were hard at work at that point on a speech for President Truman and I introduced Hadley to Dave Bell and to Dave Lloyd, both of whom knew of him by reputation but had never met him before. The speech was not particularly a sensitive one and there were no questions of security or other matters to bother us, so we invited Cantril to have dinner with us that evening and to work with us on the speech. Cantril went through the agonies of working until about 4:30 a.m. in the Cabinet Room with us on the speech. He left to return to Princeton and I never heard from him again. I'm afraid that this was--I was sorry about that because I was fond of the man and my own reason for assuming that I never heard from him again was, that he realized that perhaps, at least I

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hoped he had realized, that some of his more philosophical and esoteric approaches to theories of speechmaking didn't have a heck of a lot of applicability when it came to coping with the hard facts and problems the President of the United States had to cope with and setting those forth in words that would appeal and could be understood to the American public at large.

Question twenty-one asks about humor. What criteria were employed in selecting the type of humor to be used in an address? Anyone reading the Truman speeches, I think, will find very little humor in them. Certainly we did not strive to insert humor in prepared texts. Several reasons for this. I have always felt vigorously, I might say violently, that a joke in a prepared text is not in good taste and falls rather flat. To have a joke in a text, which is handed out to the press hours in advance, seems quite false. Furthermore, President Truman was not very good at reading a joke that was prepared, that appeared in cold type in front of him. Such humor as crept into presidential addresses, would not probably ordinarily be regarded as humor. The Truman style was one of informal, spontaneous, wisecrack,

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or friendly reference to the audience or to people on the platform or around him, or some warm, human reference to the organization or the city or the occasion. That was much more effective, we felt, I certainly felt personally, and I think the others in the staff shared this view, this was much more effective, that was much more natural, it was much more Harry Truman than a prepared joke, comedian or television comedian style, which, as I said, President Truman wasn't very effective in getting off any way. As for joke books and so on, we never relied on those. I can't recall anyone in the White House ever consciously searched around or hunted for jokes for a presidential address.

Question twenty-two takes us back to criteria: What criteria were employed in conscientiously organizing an address in logical, psychological order, and so on and so forth. President Truman is basically a simple, uncomplicated, straightforward man. He approaches a subject in a very direct fashion. This is what we tried to do in speeches and statements we prepared for him. State in the simplest, most direct fashion what we were trying to get across. We were not trying to be overly sophisticated or devious. We did not try to impress

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by grandiloquent language. I'm not sure that I know how to specify the criteria that you're asking about other than to say, perhaps, we ourselves, were so simpleminded that it never occurred to us that there were such criteria.

Question twenty-three I can speak to with some interest and force. What criteria, it reads, were employed in determining the sentence lengths and word sophistication to be used. I believe the first involvement I had with Truman speeches came about precisely because material which was being sent to him or submitted for his use had words which were too sophisticated, too long, too complicated. The sentence structure was too involved, the paragraphs were too long. And Truman found these quite unsatisfactory, difficult to read, awkward to deliver. He was worried about it and had turned to Clifford for comment and suggestions and Clifford, burdened as he was with so many other responsibilities, passed, in each case, this on to me with a request to edit, to sharpen, to rewrite and so on. The problem of sentence structure and word sophistication was bad invariably, if the material came from the

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Department of State. It was bad also if material came from the military, because of military jargon. We had problems with material coming from the economists because they liked to use technical language. Those departments, those areas, were the worst in this regard. But my own files are full of speeches and statements that I chopped and edited, I know in many cases, to the great agony of the original drafters or of the departments concerned because they thought I had turned a very fine prose into very pedestrian language. I'm sure that they were right and I'm sure that I had turned it, in many cases, into pedestrian language. But here, again, the thought was, and now I'm turning to question twenty-four, how to adapt speeches to President Truman's language and personality style.

Truman was no FDR. He was no Jack Kennedy. He didn't pretend to be, and he was the first to know that the speech style written for an FDR would have sounded false coming from him. He was not comfortable with that and since I saw, and heard him, formally and informally, and lived with him in a way that people in the departments, of course, did not do, I think I was able to absorb, I certainly was striving to absorb,

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his manner of expressing himself, his sentence style, his approach to things, and I was--when I had a speech to draft, either to work up from ab initio or taking a draft that originated someplace else, it was to make it sound as much like Harry Truman as I could do.

Question twenty-five is related, if I helped polish the language style of an address, how did I indicate recommended changes, what factors were considered in polishing and so on. I'm inclined to think that the word "polished" is carrying us in the wrong direction. Much of the effort of the White House staff when stuff came from someplace else was to depolish, if you will. But we had a flowery language that was not particularly apt for Mr. Truman. As to how we indicated changes, this is very simple. You simply get to work with a pencil and scratch out and rewrite and send off to the typist for a new draft, there's no problem of that.

Was language polished during the preparation of a draft? Well, you go through four, six, eight drafts, you're constantly changing, you're constantly editing. In that sense, yes, you're polishing. And as we've said earlier, in some of the speech conferences, when we got to the final or the next to the final draft

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with the President himself participating and reading it aloud, that a kind of, of course, that was polishing, in the ultimate sense of adapting it to the President's personal style. We tried all along to do that as staff members but in the last reading the President himself would catch words or simply want to say things a little differently than we had. That was the polishing. But when a word is used such as appears in this question, embellishment, I would say that embellishments were what we were trying to eliminate from Harry Truman's talk.

Question twenty-six: Who had the final word in editing? Of course, the President himself always had the final word in editing.

Question twenty-seven: Was I assigned to aid the President in delivery of addresses? No one was assigned to aid the President in delivery. All of us who worked in any fashion on any of these speeches were always concerned and conscious of problems of delivery and it was because of our concern over delivery that we proceeded in the fashion that we have just been discussing. In the simplification of sentence structure, in the avoidance of too fancy words or complicated ones. Harry Truman was not the kind of fellow that would throw the Latin,

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French and other words around. We struck out foreign phrases, foreign words, when people would propose them, that wasn't characteristic of Truman. And so, we were aiding the President in delivery, more by what we gave him to deliver than in any sense serving as a speech coach or an elocution adviser. He had no such person on the staff.

I did assist the President in delivery in this sense. Television, of course, was not widely used in the Truman period. It was only really elementary--well, technically it was well advanced but television sets were relatively few and far between and confined to major cities in the eastern seaboard. So, television was not a major factor. With Truman we were much more concerned with newsreels and insofar as television was concerned, mainly television got, not live coverage of Truman, but would play on television programs newsreel type film. President Truman had problems with his eyesight, he wore glasses as we all know, with rather thick lenses. He had trouble focusing. If he would look out in a large audience, it was difficult for him to catch his place on the page right away. Bright lights bothered him at times in reading. So, all these factors affected

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the quality and style of newsreels made of presidential speeches. We adopted in the, oh, I'd say about the mid-Truman years, the practice of filming in a room in the East Wing of the White House, advance paragraphs, or "takes" as they are called in the trade, of key sentences and ideas in the Truman speeches for subsequent broadcast on television or in newsreels. And I guess I had as large a hand in devising this scheme and technique as anyone. I would, as we got to the last draft, mark paragraphs that I thought would particularly key paragraphs for newsreels, check them out with Clifford and Charlie Ross, his successor Joe Short, and the President himself, and would have made arrangements some hours in advance, to have a crew at the Department of the Army standing by. We would rush by messenger these excerpts over to the Pentagon and a crew of draftsmen would print on large cardboard sheets, about four by six feet, the sentences or paragraphs the President was going to use in a newsreel. These would then come back over to the White House and in this East Room, which would always be set up with cameras and the necessary lights, the President would read these speech excerpts from the cards standing on large easels. This gave him

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the advantage of being able to look reasonably closely into the lens, camera lens, and was a vast improvement over the circumstances that prevailed the first couple of years of his administration where he would simply read from the typewritten text in a notebook, and that meant that most of the time the camera was catching the top of his head or was catching him while he was looking up at the camera lens and then fumbling around trying to find his place in the text again. This matter of the four by six cards, of course, now sounds terribly primitive with all of the teleprompters and the many devices which have since come into very wide use. But it was a stage in that direction and it's just an evolution in the technique of Truman's presentation of his speeches. In that sense, you could, perhaps, say that I did assist Mr. Truman in the delivery of his addresses. Not before the audiences but before the camera.

Question twenty-eight asks how the staff attempted to cultivate an off-the-cuff style for the President. We didn't cultivate the off-the-cuff style for Truman, he had that off-the-cuff style. He brought it with him to Washington. This was the style that he had used in his

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campaigns for political office in Missouri, in his campaigns for election to the Senate, and in all his public utterances prior to assuming the Presidency. I think, perhaps, the staff, if anything, hindered the President in that we were very, very slow to recognize that Truman did have this quality of a forceful off-the-cuff speech. We tried, I think, perhaps overly hard to confine him, to pin him, to formal and prepared texts in the first couple of years in the White House. We were a little too nervous and a little too jittery about what the President might say in off-the-cuff remarks. He had made, in his early weeks and months in the White House, some off-the-cuff remarks to newsmen and others, which had had sort of a political backfire, and I guess that had made us timorous. He, of course, made those principally because he was still getting on top of the job and was not as thoroughly familiar with all the facts as he later was to become and, I think, perhaps, the staff can be faulted for having discouraged Truman from off-the-cuff. I believe this is now quite well understood and known how Truman really broke the shackles that the staff had imposed on him by his trip to the West in the spring of 1948. His rear platform, informal,

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off-the-cuff remarks, dubbed "whistle stop" speeches by Senator Taft, had such a remarkable impact on the public and were so, for the most part, rousingly successful, that the staff gave up any further concern that this was the wrong approach for Truman to use and he himself was convinced this was the way he ought to go from that point on. I will say in that regard, that even that spring 1948 trip had some unfortunate off-the-cuff remarks. Truman's "I like old Joe" reference to Generalissimo Stalin was regrettable. His dedication of an airport to what he thought was somebody killed in the war; when it turned out to be a teen-age girl who had some kind of an accident, that was the kind of a goof, a mistake, which was embarrassing to all concerned. So, what the spring '48 trip did on the staff, I think, was two things. One: The President ought to be allowed and ought to be encouraged to speak in his off-the-cuff, natural, forceful style. Two: The staff ought to be darned certain that they understood the occasion and had done their work so that the President was properly briefed and informed about the circumstances in which he would speak and that it would be helpful if we would give the President on each off-the-cuff occasion that

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we could foresee, a simple outline, not a text, but an outline of ideas that he could follow. This would in our view, avoid the danger of an "I like old Joe," comment, if not avoid it, it would minimize it, and it would avoid problems of embarrassing erroneous references to people, places, circumstances, so on.

Question twenty-eight A doesn't quite fit into this sequence of ideas. It asks what influence

FDR's speaking had on Truman. I would say probably none. Truman wasn't Roosevelt and knew he wasn't Roosevelt. The only effect it might be said to have had was the fact that Sam Rosenman did remain on for some months after the Roosevelt death and Truman's assumption of the office, and Sam Rosenman's style didn't change any and Sam Rosenman continued to give FDR kind of material to Truman to use, which was just not appropriate.

Question twenty-nine asks if the staff had an advance man and how he analyzed an intended audience prior to the preparation of a speech, analyzed the speech site and so on. No, there was no advance man to analyze an audience. There is no way that I know of to analyze an audience and still prepare a speech. A presidential speech has to be prepared long before

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there is any audience on hand. Now, if by audience one means the occasion, there again, we've covered that in earlier questions. As for analyzing the speech site, arranging for the auditorium's use, preparing the auditorium, no, the White House staff, as such, really had no responsibilities in this regard. There isn't a big enough White House staff to go wandering around the country looking at auditorium and preparing the lectern and so on. The Secret Service does, for security reasons, visit the site. The Secret Service had certain general guidelines and ground rules. They knew how tall the President was and obviously, they would see to it that microphones and so on were placed at an appropriate height, but Truman took an auditorium or a platform as he found it. He did not have a series of hard and fast arbitrary rules that things had to be set up this way or he wouldn't go. Actually, I don't know any politician who can set his conditions of that sort. If you're campaigning for office, you certainly don't have time to worry about that kind of an arrangement. You leave it in the hands of your local people and hope they know how to do the job.

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How much time, question thirty asks, would you estimate the staff had available to prepare the State of the Union and inaugural address. Well, you have all the time in the world. You know you've got twelve months to prepare for the next State of the Union message because you know there's going to be one. That's in theory; in fact, you're lucky if you have a couple of weeks because you're busy in the intervening twelve months, from State of the Union to State of the Union, doing ten thousand and two other things. Normally, as I think we've said earlier in this interview, about the middle of November, the White House staff would prepare a request to departments and agencies asking them for material for the State of the Union and that would ordinarily come in the early days of December. But it really would be a rare occasion when you get around to working intensively on it until about Christmas time. Not because you didn't want to but you just didn't have time to. As for the time on the inaugural, I believe we've already covered that one.

Question thirty-one asks what criteria I personally used in evaluating the effectiveness of a speech. I

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think Jack Hopkins is being just a little bit more academic than any of us ever had the time for. It depended on, once again back to that same old question, what kind of a speech was it? Was it the Christmas tree lighting speech which was an occasion that you simply had to endure and had to go through? In that case, you really didn't give a darn how effective it was, you simply wanted to be sure the President appeared with dignity and had said appropriate things and had in no sense embarrassed himself or the office. But you didn't win the votes and you didn't make any policy and you didn't shape the course of world history in an awfully high percentage of presidential addresses because you weren't trying to. Now, if it was a political speech, either a direct partisan speech, or political in the broader sense of the President trying to mold public opinion or persuade congressional leaders, you would have to rely on the reactions that came back to you from political figures, from politicians, from the subsequent comments of newspapers, newspaper editorials, and so on and so forth. There were no criteria, no yardsticks, no formal measuring devices. President Truman didn't have any particularly high

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regard, and I am understating it, for public opinion polls, and you don't poll after each speech or even series of speeches. And it isn't in Harry Truman's nature to lie awake at night wondering and asking himself how did I do? The President really doesn't have the luxury of time to worry about how he'd done. For every task that's behind him he's got ten staring him in the face that he's got to get on with and it really is the same with the White House staff. Now, bear in mind, I'm speaking of the White House staff as it existed in Harry Truman's day. The White House staff now is many times the size it was in the Truman days. There are all kind of experts, real or self-designated, on all kinds of subjects, and particularly in the more recent administrations, there have been people who take hold and who test and who analyze and assess and judge and weigh and evaluate and write and God knows what all. We didn't have anything like that in the Truman days and it's a mistake to try to take the kind of a structure that Kennedy or Johnson had, and President Nixon is now assembling and try and uncover what the comparable structure was in the Truman period. I can tell you right

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now, it didn't exist.

Question thirty-two really is comparable. What provisions were made by the staff to evaluate the effectiveness of addresses delivered by the President? I don't think we made any provisions other than those I've said. The President himself would hear from his congressional leaders how they thought--how effective they thought he'd been in speaking to Congress, either in whole in a formal address or in smaller groups. Staff of the Democratic committee would report usually through Matt Connelly on straight partisan matters, insofar as an address might be concerned, an address on foreign affairs might be concerned, it's true that we would receive clippings or editorial summaries, precis of foreign press reaction from the State Department. That would all go into the President's reading file, but we took things as they came and we, the relatively-I repeat the small Truman staff concerned with speech preparation didn't have the time to sit around worrying and evaluating the effectiveness of addresses. It might have been better if we

had.

I believe question thirty-three is covered in the answer to the preceding, too.

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Question thirty-four asks for the identification of ideas expressed in the State of the Union message and the inaugural address, which were provided by staff or non-staff members? I trust that that has adequately been covered, if not, and if there are more precise questions of fact, I'll be happy to try and answer them.

Question thirty-five asks if I consider that I or my colleagues when developing addresses ever formed policy, if so could I identify both the policies and the individuals. Here again, I think Jack Hopkins in phrasing the question is perhaps judging recent White House staff behavior and size, structure, function, and assuming that we had a comparable White House situation in the Truman period, we didn't. The White House staff in the Truman days was a very personal staff to President Truman. White House staff members did not seek publicity for themselves. Their jobs, their titles were not widely described, analyzed, publicized, mulled over by the Walter Lippmanns and the Arthur Krocks and other pundits of the day. White House staff members, at that time, did not regard themselves as having functions of their own, policy formulating, policy shaping, jobs of their own. In those days there was only one man in the White House

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who had any authority, any power, any policymaking function of any sort and that was the President himself. Now, today, and in more recent years, a vast amount of machinery has been built up around the White House. There was this extraordinary proliferation of the powers and staff functions of the special assistant to the President for National security affairs. This began in the Eisenhower administration. Bobby Cutler was one of those who held the job. The role was enormously expanded by McGeorge Bundy under Kennedy and by Walt Rostow under Johnson and by Dr. Kissinger under President Nixon. But these men, the public widely believes, and I also believe it to be true, do have a policymaking, policy shaping function of great significance. This was not the case of the Truman staff at all. There weren't such people, there weren't such roles, or there weren't such functions, in foreign affairs or in other matters. I do not mean to say that Dr. John Steelman, The Assistant to the President, or Clifford as Special Counsel, Murphy when Special Counsel, were not important; they were important. But their advice was private advice to the President. The recommendations they made were clearly in recognition of the fact that they had no independent role, they weren't

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expected to have an independent role in shaping policy at all. President Truman, perhaps more than any President in the past three decades, has regarded his Cabinet officers as being his principal policy advisers. Now, it's true that most candidates for the Presidency in recent years have given lip service to this idea, at least in their political campaign, but I'm not so sure that--I don't believe that any of them have actually adhered to this principal to the extent that President

Truman did.

All right, so much by the way of background and principles. Within those broad guidelines, yes, White House staff members would have an influence on policy. One can't be totally objective no matter how much he tries. Perhaps the personal experiences, the personal background, the personal points of view, of the staff members, would be reflected in the advice they would give the President in the information they would choose to pass on as distinct from the information they would think not worthy of passing on. Dr. Steelman, with his very great experience in labor management fields, obviously had a powerful, an eloquent voice, in advising the President on labor matters, labor policy, but neither

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John Steelman nor anybody else would want to say that he shaped or he formed policy in these areas. We were all conscious, at all times, of the fact that we were there to serve the President, not to be the shakers and the doers and the movers of the Government in Washington. I suppose, if one wants to say, do I not think that I formed policy by the episode I described in respect to Ben Hardy and what was to become known as point 4, I suppose in that sense, yes, I had a hand in policy formulation. It's possible that had Ben Hardy not turned to me, he would have turned to somebody else. It's possible that the idea would have emerged in some form. I think it would have, in due course, someplace else, but I certainly did have an effect on policy at that point and there are numerous other examples that could be given of how I, as an individual speechwriter, had a hand in policy matters. But I disassociate myself from any sense of claiming responsibility and credit for point 4 because I accepted the idea as readily as I did because of my knowledge of how Harry Truman felt on foreign policy matters and because of my association, as intimate as it was by that time, my recognition of what he believed in, what he was trying to do, what he

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was seeking, what he was striving for, I recognized something that I thought was appropriate for him, for the time, for the country, and for the world situation. Well, that's just being a good staff member to identify and spot and pass on to the President. That's why I feel a little--why my comments at times can be a little caustic about White House staff members in the more recent period who like to let it be known of the major influence they've had on policy. I reject that kind of thinking.

Question thirty-six asks if I were assigned to a specific policy area. I believe I've already covered that in a general way. No one of us on the small Truman staff was ever limited to a specific policy area. Because of my own personal association with the staff began through the military side of things and moved gradually to foreign affairs, that tended to be a greater area of concentration for me than for other areas, but I was not limited to that. Because David Bell is an economist and came from the Bureau of the Budget, matters of economics, when he joined the White House staff, tended to be his area of concentration, but by no means was he limited to that.

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So, we were generalists who came from different areas of experience and brought, perhaps, a bit of extra perspective or depth of knowledge from our special area but generalists we rapidly became, and generalists we stayed while we were on the Truman staff.

Question thirty-seven asks about the similarity between advanced copies of speeches for the press and final speech manuscripts. These were, in almost all cases, identical. I note, and am acquainted with the fact, both from my experience in the Pentagon and my general knowledge here of events in Washington, there have been times in more recent years when the press is given one copy and the final speech turns out to be something quite different. This just wasn't true in President Truman's case. It was an extraordinary circumstance where he would deviate even by a few words in the delivery of an address from the advance text that had been released to the press. Of course, he would frequently, almost invariably, preface the formal speech by the kind of informal remarks about the audience, the occasion, of friends, associates, or others of his that were present. This, as I've said earlier, was the Truman way of building a friendly rapport with an audience rather than the

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wisecrack or the canned joke, and sometimes towards the end he would have again add some informal remarks but these would not be off course or deviate from the subject matter, the thrust of the speech. The reading copy, of course, was different in physical appearance from the advance copies of the press. It was typed by Miss Rose Conway, his longtime personal secretary, on a somewhat larger type than the White House press release and in a notebook with the pages securely clipped in so that the wind wouldn't blow any of them off the stage. Not that I ever knew it to happen, but people always would tell anecdotes of grim occasions where it was alleged to have happened. But this has nothing to do with, again, with the text or the subject of a speech. The President was always accompanied, almost always accompanied, by a Mr. Jack Romagna, a shorthand expert from the White House. Jack would have a prepared copy in advance, a press advance copy, in front of him as the President would speak and Jack would note any deviation no matter how minor, even the omission of an article, or the addition of an a, a and, or the, or an adjective so that the official record in the President's possession would be as delivered. In

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later years when the White House Signal Corps had developed its expertise, and abilities and equipment, many of the speeches were recorded on tape as well as the Romagna shorthand text so that in the rare occasions where the press would ask Charlie Ross or Joe Short just what the President, what a particular word or phrase was, there was always a record and it could be quickly and properly answered. Now, I'm not speaking, of course, of the off-the-cuff whistlestop style speeches. That's a separate subject and we'll come to that in a moment and I'll amplify what I have said a little later on in this interview.

Question thirty-eight asks if the President conferred with his staff before he delivered an address and how he adapted the address to his own language and personality. I would say to the extent that the President had to himself adapt the address to his own language and personality, we of the

staff had failed to do our job because, as I tried to make clear, those of us who have been there for some time, and knew him, felt that this was a major part of our function, not only just to get the content, the subject matter down on paper, but to get it on paper in a fashion that would

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reflect the Truman language and personality. And, as mentioned earlier, in final speech conferences, the President would, by rehearsing it aloud, would catch those things which we might have failed to catch.

Incidentally, and perhaps I haven't mentioned this before, the President on many occasions would read a speech to Mrs. Truman and to his daughter Margaret. This was never in the staff's presence, never to my knowledge, but would be either in the White House or during the second term in the Blair House, it would be at dinner, after dinner, or in the early morning, though I must say if it was in the early morning, it would not have been to Miss Margaret Truman. And the President would comment at times to us in a final speech session that Mrs. Truman had suggested a word or a different phraseology. Of course, we welcomed this, we were delighted because this was just one more way of perfecting the tone, the style and the text. Mrs. Truman had a sharp ear and a good ear for matters of this sort.

Thirty-eight B asks whether President Truman ever delivered an address without critically reading it over first. I cannot conceive of an occasion when

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that might have happened. This was utterly foreign, and alien to President Truman's personality. He was no puppet and anyone who knew him could never conceive of President Truman being anything other than his own man. That President Truman would have even--back to my favorite Christmas tree lighting episode--not even on that kind of an affair would President Truman have stood up before an audience and read a speech without having gone over it carefully first. Not only was this alien to the Truman personality, he's just not the kind of a fellow who is shoved around or easily handled that way.

This is somewhat off the point but I think pertinent. President Truman had an enormous respect for the institution of the Presidency, he loved it, he revered it. He was widely read as we know, he continued, Lord knows how he found the time but he did, all through his White House years to read books on American history. I don't think a biography of a President or any other major political figure came out during his years in the White House but what he acquired the book and if he didn't have time to read it all he at least absorbed some of it. To him it would have been inconceivable that a man could

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treat the Presidency so casually that you would flip off public utterances without accepting the responsibility for what was in them and the only way to accept responsibility for a speech is to read it critically first.

Question thirty-eight C asks whether staff members in the President's estimation were personally liable for comments made in addresses. I'm not sure that I fully understand just what's meant here. The President regarded himself as being responsible for everything in an address, not his staff. He had had enough familiarity with a speech by the time it was finally delivered so that it was his, he took full responsibility. It wasn't anybody else's. If there were a blunder, a gap, if the policy were wrong, the facts were wrong, the speech was Truman's and he knew it and he'd adapted it to himself, he'd absorbed it, and it was his. It certainly never happened to me personally and I am not aware of it happening to any other staff member, that Truman after a speech that had gone sour or that was badly criticized, or where something was alleged to have been erroneous, I'm not aware of Truman's ever having blamed or charged the staff member with

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failure there. It's true that after some occasions that hadn't gone as well as all of us had wanted them, the President would talk it over but it was not in the sense of pointing the finger of blame at the staff members. It was more in the, how can we do better next time, and the we was all inclusive, himself and the staff together. I suspect that in cases where things haven't gone as well as they might have, we on the staff agonized a great deal more than Mr. Truman because, again, as I said earlier, he was not the kind of man to sit around wasting time feeling sorry for himself.

Question thirty-nine asks about procedures not already mentioned that I personally employed in preparing addresses for Mr. Truman. I'd like at this point to speak a bit about the whistlestop campaign of 1948 which has been mentioned only briefly heretofore. I was not a member of the staff that accompanied the President on the trip in the spring of 1948, but I was well aware and followed with the greatest of care and was in touch several times a day with Mr. Clifford who was on that trip and we discussed at length the evolving experience of that trip and the evolving success of the

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President's off-the-cuff approach. We also discussed with total candor between us, the blunders, as we saw them, and we agonized over the mistakes that were made from time to time. Knowing what an enormous burden would be on us during the campaign itself, we had months earlier talked about how we were going to handle the volume and number of speeches that would be required during the campaign, and we of course, recognized that we could not rely upon Government departments as we normally had because it was completely improper, if not illegal to use Government employees for campaign purposes. And so Clifford had, with the President's approval, had prevailed upon the Democratic National Committee to begin recruitment of a research staff and William L. Batt, Jr. had been chosen, I'm sorry I do not recall the date he reported for duty, as director of the Research Division of the Democratic National Committee. And Bill Batt began recruiting a lively group of young men, all of whom who had had a pretty broad exposure to politics and all of whom had the wide acquaintance with the issues of the day, and most of whom were fairly capable writers, writers of political speeches. I began dealing, as soon as the Truman train was back from the West, with Bill

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Batt on the matter of whistlestop speeches because I was convinced that a major part of the campaign was going to have to be whistlestop speeches. We ought not to try to have prepared talks for reasons already mentioned that Truman was very forceful, very effective in off-the-cuff style talks and that we ought to be pursuing or preparing ourselves for a two track approach to the campaign. The first of a series of major, prepared, full-fledged, policy speeches that would be read from a prepared text and that would cover the full range of issues of the campaign. The other track and the one that I foresaw myself having a major role in, after Clifford returned we beat this around pretty thoroughly, was the preparation for the whistlestops and I proposed to Batt that I furnish him, just as quickly as we had any itineraries of any area, of any trip that the President would be taking, with those itineraries, and that he assign some of his Research Division people to preparing brief resumes on each of the cities that would be visited that he further pick or suggest a topic to be addressed by the President in each community and develop a short outline of ideas to amplify that topic. Bill and I spent a lot of time on this whole idea during the

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summer and early fall weeks and finally developed, and had by the time the whistlestop campaign began, what we thought was a very effective pattern. Each day the President's itinerary, as developed, would call for eight, ten, twelve, sometimes as many as fifteen simple, rear platform or whistlestop speeches, in addition to one major address. For the dozen, plus or minus a couple, whistlestop speeches, we would have, we would propose that the President speak on a different topic at each of the Whistlestop speeches so that during the course of a day he would have touched on most of the issues of the campaign in this simple whistlestopping informal off-the-cuff manner. Further, that he not talk on the same subject more than once in any one day and that insofar as was possible to do so we would try to pick a whistlestop topic that was pretty close to the hearts of the people in the community where we were going to be. Obviously, if you're spending a whole day in a farm area and you're going to try to talk on a different subject at each place, you can't continue to speak farm all day long. You get into many other things, some foreign policy, and some prices and some labor and so

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on, but insofar as was possible to do so, we would try and adapt the issue chosen to the audience that we anticipated being there. Thus, by the time that we set out on our first cross country whistlestop campaign tour, September 17, 1948, I was armed with reference material on every community we were going to visit and some background about the town, about the history of it, about the leading personalities, about the congressional incumbent, whether he was Republican or Democrat made no difference, and his challenger of the other party, of course. Of the voting records of the incumbent, the issues that the challenger was making, provided we were able to ascertain that, and weren't always able to do so. And then a topic that we thought the President ought to speak about in this informal fashion. My principal job during that first trip and during all the other trips was to take this material and develop an outline that the President could take to

the rear platform of the train and speak from.

What kind of an outline was it? Well, I would try always to have two or three full sentences that would get him off to a start where he wouldn't have to fumble around

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and then an outline with topic sentences for each new idea, and indented under the topic sentences two, three or four points that would illustrate or amplify or buttress the topic sentence idea. Conclude with three or four sentences that would serve as a wrap-up for the ideas that were contained in that short talk. Now, the virtue of this approach, if it had virtue, and we thought it did, was that the President would have facts, and a theme, and a reasonably logical flow of ideas to develop that theme. By giving him a different subject at each of the whistlestops during the course of a day, he intrigued the newsmen. The newspapermen would pile off the train and go back because they wouldn't know what the President was going to say next and they had to listen to him. And they did listen to him. And all during each of the whistlestop days there would be a continuous flow of traffic from the newsmen and the news media off the train. So, by the time the story was written in the *New York Times* the next day or what have you, the story wouldn't be just about one speech Truman made but would have comments on a half a dozen subjects that he'd covered. There'd be a long story about many issues that the President was addressing.

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Mind you, I'm speaking at this point still, only about the whistlestops.

In addition to this whistlestop exercise that the President would be engaging in each day, there would, and it normally was at night, would be a major address, a full thirty minute address in an auditorium, a stadium, a National Guard Armory or something of that sort. And, of course, this would be a major policy pronouncement, in most cases broadcast regionally, and in a number of instances broadcast nationally. But the whistlestops were not disregarded as being just incidental ways of looking at a crowd and letting a crowd look at him, the whistlestop idea was conceived of being, and was executed as being a very important part of the whole strategy of the campaign. The President, instead of getting out on the rear platform and just talking about platitudes, and how nice it was to be there, and how great America was and so on and so forth, and if you detect any reference here to an opposing candidate, I'll let you draw your own conclusions. Instead these were fighting, forceful talks by a political leader who knew where he was going, knew where he was and knew where he wanted to go. I think

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Irwin Ross and his book *The Loneliest Campaign* and other books have discussed the impact this kind of speech and this kind of campaign had sufficiently so that it is not necessary to go into it any more but I do want to repeat that the range of topics chosen at the whistlestops, the amount of local information the President displayed in a half dozen sentences each place, the fact that he knew where he was, he knew the history of the place, he knew what its principal industry was, he knew that its principal interests were, he knew what the stand of the local political leaders was,

this was no accident, it was all carefully developed, diligently, energetically, incredibly - developed with an incredible amount of hard work by Bill Batt's group from the Democratic National Committee and then put into what I was striving always to make usable form, by me, on the train. Now, why was it done on the train, why couldn't it all be done in Washington? But, it couldn't. To be fresh, to be current, to be up to the minute, to take account of what we were hearing on the train from the Governors and the candidates who would ride with us through their state, to take account of what the papers

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were saying about the other candidate, Mr. Dewey, and what was going on in the world at large, in order to keep them fresh and current, the final outline that would go into the President's hands had to be produced on the train within a matter of hours before delivery. Anything that had been done a week earlier, and two thousand miles away, obviously ran the risk of being a little out of touch and a little out of date. The Batt stuff was incredible in being on target. But it did take this last minute editing, adjusting, polishing and sometimes I would, for reasons no fault of the Democratic committee people, have to junk it and just do a whole outline myself right then and there. There was only one time during the entire campaign when President Truman did not have, in his possession, an outline for a whistlestop speech, and that was when we made an unscheduled stop on the Massachusetts-Connecticut border in late October and I just didn't know the train was going to stop there. We had had no advance information. That was the one time that he didn't have speech material prepared. It was awfully close at times. I can recall that there were a couple of occasions when the brakes were on and the train was slowing down, when

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I would get to the back car and give the President his outline and that was the sort of circumstance that neither he nor I particularly enjoyed.

Now, if one compares the outlines of the material with the actual text as transcribed by Jack Romagna, or recorded by the Army Signal Corps, of course, there are differences. The actual text is several times longer in wordage than the outline. That's to be expected, of course. We weren't giving him a verbatim text to read from. That would have killed, that would have spoiled the whole impression, the whole impact of the structure, and the idea, and the campaign punch, and the statement of the issue. I think in an overwhelming percent of the cases one would find that what was in the outline emerged, a portion of it finally came out in the text. In any case, whether the President deviated from it or stuck very closely to it, the knowledge that he had in front of him, out of sight down on a low lectern not too visible from the crowd, right there, that he always had some materials, some sentences that would lead him onto another thought, some facts and so on, gave him, as he told me a number of times during the campaign, gave him a sense of security and confidence

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so that he never felt that he was at sea or alone or would just have to shoot from the hip. And, even at this late date, I want to thank, again, Bill Batt and his crowd for their contributions in this

regard because this teamwork resulted in that at no time in the campaign did we have any of the kinds of embarrassments that had plagued that spring of '48 trip.

In addition to the whistlestops, again as I said earlier, there were these major addresses, and Clifford's principal concern on the train was sweating out the major speeches, taking the drafts that by and large had been prepared back in Washington under Charlie Murphy's direction and sent along. Charlie came with us on some trips but not all. Charlie was principally responsible for the major addresses. Clifford being sort of next above Charlie and worked more closely with the President in the final editing, the final preparation of those. Sometimes I would sit in on a speech conference on the train, on one of the major addresses. For the most part I did not simply because my hands were full already with the whistlestops.

Section C asks about the preparation of statements and whether there were differences, I believe Jack means,

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in the techniques of preparing speeches and written public statements. Yes, obviously a public statement did not require the degree of personal attention on the part of the President as a speech. Statements were for many purposes, they are for the record, sometimes they are purely formal. Some written statements are, by this I'll include veto messages, they can be, and sometimes are, very long, very legalistic, very formal. When the President vetoed the Taft-Hartley for example, the veto message was a lawyer's paper, a lawyer's brief. The President also went on the air to give his reasons to the public for having vetoed Taft-Hartley, and I would suggest that Jack Hopkins or any one else wishing to analyze the difference might well compare those two and see how they differ. When I say that not as much time and attention went in, this is not to say that the President did not himself, personally go over every written statement. Every statement issued in President Truman's name, I'm confident, was personally approved by President Truman. Nobody, certainly the Press Secretary, ever turned out statements by the President without knowing that the President had approved that particular statement. The public statements to an extent, not true of all speeches,

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were prepared in the departments and accepted with minimal editing at the White House. The matter of style, of delivery, of choice of words, language, did it sound like Harry Truman, that kind of question just was not relevant for the statement and we didn't worry about it.

The second question here asks whether the President reviewed and evaluated the written statements accompanied by his signature prior to their release to the press. Yes, he did review them and okay them. I am inclined to doubt that very often he would go through the formality of signing them. This isn't necessary if it's just a statement by the President to the press. If it's a written statement that goes to the Hill as a formal message to the Congress, yes, that's another matter. By custom, and perhaps by law, I doubt that, I don't think there's any law on the subject, the President does sign a message that he addresses to the Congress. When the President is sending a formal message of greeting to something, let us say like the national convention of the

American Legion, yes, it's customary there for the presidential signature to be affixed. Among other things, it's a nicer souvenir in that case. But frequently

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several times a day, a statement by the President which is handed out by the press office, that would not, I think, require a signature. It would have been meaningless in any case, well it was just unnecessary. But the President went over it.

Section D asks an interesting question: Provide a justification or rationale for the speechwriting practices when the speech is written for another person, and do I regard the practice of speechwriting for others as unethical. I guess this is simply asking about ghostwriting. Is ghostwriting ethical or unethical? It's a simple, obvious fact of life that a President of the United States could not possibly write all of the material that has to be issued in the name of the President. Speeches, letters, statements, there aren't enough hours in the day for the President to do that himself. He must have help. The President cannot take the time to master, to assemble, all the minutiae of facts, the arguments that go into statements that have to come from him and there's nothing deceptive or devious about this. It's a matter of public knowledge and has been for, certainly all of my lifetime, for everyone to know that the President had assistants

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who worked with him on his speeches and statements. Perhaps this isn't quite the same as ghostwriting, I'm the one who implied that label. Ghostwriting, although some of us in the White House staff used to be called ghost-writers, I'm happy to see that that phrase doesn't seem to be current anymore. Ghostwriting perhaps implies that material is written and put in the mouth or in the pen of someone else and the fact that another person has assisted is concealed. Well, as I say, it is not concealed in the President's case. Everyone knows that the President has staff and this is, I think, completely acceptable, honest, and to pretend that it is otherwise, to pretend that the President doesn't have staff, that's the only thing that would be unethical.

In concluding this questionnaire which has originated with Mr. Jack Hopkins, I would like to say both to Jack and for any person who might either hear the tape or read a transcription subsequently, that all the work that I did, in all the years in the White House, speeches, or other matters, I was enormously assisted by Jack's father. William J. Hopkins is the finest kind of civil servant. He was loyal to President Roosevelt, loyal to President Truman, and to each succeeding President. He

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knows more about the White House than any other staff person present. His taste is impeccable, his sense of propriety cannot be challenged and he was tolerant and forbearing of me and others on the White House staff when we came in young and green, at times impetuous, at times using poor taste or poor judgment, and in a gently and kindly fashion, Bill would guide us in the proper direction. He had then, and still does, the respect of all of his colleagues at the White House. Those of us who worked on speeches, I know in the Truman days, and I'm sure it's still true,

were terribly demanding and it was not at all uncommon for us to at a quarter of seven in the evening to phone Bill Hopkins who was, of course, still at his desk, to say that we were going to need about six typists all night long, and Bill would see that we had them. We might, on a Saturday, suddenly decide that we were going to work on a Sunday. We might on a Christmas Eve say that we were going to need help on Christmas Day and no matter what our request was, at any time, Bill Hopkins always managed to see to it that we had the assistance that we needed. And when you're writing speeches the creative juices don't always flow, as a matter of fact they are very

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stubborn juices and they just don't flow between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and allow you to go home at 5. Some of our bright ideas, sometimes our not so bright ideas, came in the wee small hours of the night. Deadlines were hard to meet at times and so those of us who worked on speeches, probably more than just about any other part of the White House staff, were very demanding in our requests of Bill Hopkins. And so, Jack, let me say directly to you, it was a great experience to me and of enormous value to have had the privilege of associating with your father while I worked on Harry Truman's speeches.

HESS: One of the questions that Mr. Hopkins has asked deals with the choice of a subject for a specific speech. And, in the papers of Mr. Clark Clifford, which are at the Truman Library, I found a memo from you to Mr. Clifford dated March the 5th of 1948 on this subject, dealing with what you thought that the President should say in a St. Patrick's day speech. Would you expound upon that just a little bit and tell me how this started, how this worked?

ELSEY; Mr. Hess, I think the memorandum probably explains

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the situation better than at this date, twenty-one years later, I could do. It is a memorandum--Mr. Hess, I think the memorandum in which I outlined to Mr. Clifford on March 5 what I thought the President ought to be saying in a speech which he had agreed to make on March 17th of that year, 1948. This is one of those circumstances where the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, for a variety of political and other reasons, had asked the President to come to New York. He had agreed to come. It was the kind of an occasion where he could have gotten away with simple informalities. He probably wouldn't even have to have a prepared text, just the presence of the President at that kind of a dinner would have been enough. Of course, he would have been expected to say a few things. But he could have gotten away without any formal substantive speech of any importance.

One of the jobs of those of us on the staff, when we were conscious of international or domestic problems of major import, was to seize occasions like the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick dinner and say here's the time and here is an audience, here is the city and so on, that the President could make good use of. That's all I was doing in this March 5th memo to Clifford, pointing out

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that the recent aggression of the Soviets in Czechoslovakia meant that this was a time when something needed to be said and here was a darned good chance to say it, and the rationale why I said this and what my arguments were, why I thought ought to be in the speech, I think can best be covered by our attaching as an annex to this transcript, a copy of the memorandum of March 5 which we're talking about together with a text of the speech that President Truman did deliver at the time.

HESS: One further question on that. The President must have agreed with you on the necessity, because on that same day he made an address to a joint session of Congress on that subject. One question on that: Just when was it decided that the President ought not just make a speech to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick on this topic, but that it was so important that he should go to Congress and make a speech.

ELSEY: I no longer recall and cannot answer that one. I think that sort of thing that one might find by consulting my speech files and Clark Clifford's. There may well be further memoranda in my files that would-memoranda of conversation or notes that I made of

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discussions with Clifford. Perhaps of earlier drafts that I would have annotated in some fashion or another to show when the idea of two speeches came up instead of just one. I, at this point can no longer recall, it is too far back.

HESS: Do you recall if you assisted in the writing of both of these speeches?

ELSEY: It's my recollection that I did. But, again, I would go by what my files show rather than by my recollection at this point.

HESS: All right, fine. Is that all for the day? All for this particular tape, all for Mr. Hopkins?

ELSEY: Let the tape show that I think it's time for lunch.

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Fifth Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at his office, 1616 H Street, NW , Washington, D.C. , July 17, 1969. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: Mr. Elsey, to begin this afternoon, would you tell me about the organization of the White House staff and about some of the duties of some of the various people who served on the staff during the Truman administration?

ELSEY: Before we get to specific individuals, Jerry, and specific jobs, I'd like to make some general comments. First, the White House staff in the Truman administration was never a static institution. It never had a table of organization and precise duties. It varied from, not from month to month, that would be an exaggeration, but certainly, from year to year, and what I

would tell you about the Truman White House staff in 1945 would be very different from what I would tell you about the Truman staff in 1951 or '52. So, time, the calendar, is a factor here in considering the size of the staff, the individuals on the staff, the nature of their duties. Indeed even President Truman's own concept of what his staff was for and what he wanted it to do. A second point that is very important especially now, when we're

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in the late 1960s, looking back over twenty years, we have to be careful not to judge the Truman staff by the kind of a White House staff which more recent Presidents have had. The White House staff now is a big institution. I don't know the current number on President Nixon's staff, but it seems that, in the last week, I've seen announcements of three new people being added to the Nixon White House staff. It was a big place in the Johnson administration; not quite so big in the Kennedy administration, and the Eisenhower staff seemed large to those of us who had been there with Truman. But it seems small when you look back on it from the current time. So, when we discuss the White House, the Truman White House staff, please bear in mind that it was a small group. Don't expect that it was structured, organized, clearly defined, to the way we have, and political scientists, scholars, writers, and others have come to expect White House staffs to be organized.

Well, with those general remarks out of the way, okay, fire away.

HESS: Beginning with the Brownlow Commission, can you tell me about the organization of the White House staff as

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far as the Administrative Assistants are concerned?

ELSEY: Well, I don't know that I need to go all the way back to the Brownlow Commission, and the Administrative Assistants as FDR appointed them and initiated the idea. But, by the time that President Truman took office, in April of '45, it was a well-established practice to have three, four, or five men on the staff bearing the title of Administrative Assistant to the President. Their duties varied. Their duties varied with the individual concerned, with the problems of the moment. James Forrestal, for example, had come down from New York to be an Administrative Assistant to FDR prior to going over to the Navy Department. Most of the Administrative Assistants in the war years, and this held true into the Truman administration, were there for fairly brief periods. There might have been a specific ad hoc task the President wanted done and this was a convenient title and a convenient rank, position, to utilize for that purpose. Administrative Assistants were not expected to have line responsibilities of any sort. The only Administrative Assistant of the late Roosevelt and early Truman period who had a pretty sharply defined function, and who stayed for a long period was

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David K. Niles. Dave Niles continued to do for Truman, what he had for FDR, be an adviser on

civil rights, minority problems, relations with Jewish, Negro, and other racial or religious interests. He's an exception to the practice of Administrative Assistants that I've just mentioned.

I don't believe that at any time Truman ever had on board the full six Administrative Assistants authorized by law. The number went up and down, three, four, five, perhaps he had six for a brief period, but I don't happen to recall when it was. I was named an Administrative Assistant in August of 1949 and remained one for a little over two years. During that period of time, I worked on speeches, legislative matters, relations with State Department, National Security Council in particular, and the many, many questions pertaining to defense matters that arose with the outbreak of the Korean war in January 1950. It was, as a matter of fact, my involvement, my concentration on foreign matters, after the outbreak of the Korean war, that led to my transferring from the immediate White House staff to that of Averell

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Harriman in December '51 when Harriman became Director for Mutual Security. But that's another story and not relevant here. I'm sure you have available from congressional directories and the *Government Manual*, the names and tenure of the individuals who served as Administrative Assistants. Names that come quickly to mind are David Lloyd, David Bell, Dick Neustadt, Charlie Murphy, who came to the White House in the spring of '47 as Administrative Assistant, remained there for three years at which point he became Special Counsel to the President succeeding Clifford. At any given point in time, if you took just a slice of time, and tried to analyze what these men were doing, you'd find quite a different picture from what you would find at, say, six months after that date. The workload ebbed and flowed with the problems of the Administration, with whether or not an election was in the offing, whether the Congress was 80th, Republican dominated, or 81st, Democratic controlled.

HESS: What was the relationship between the Administrative Assistants and the Special Counsel?

ELSEY: Well, this too varied from time to time. Sam Rosenman,

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who had been brought down from New York by Roosevelt in the middle of the war to assist on speech matters and congressional relations, had no particular relationship with Administrative Assistants as I recall it.

Nor did Clark Clifford who succeeded Rosenman for the first year or so that he was Special Counsel. But as Clifford's experience in the Government grew, as his knowledge and prestige, and general expertise, broadened, President Truman began to assign more and more major substantive problems to Clifford to study and advise on, and Clifford needed help, and needed more assistance, and began scouting around. He turned to Charlie Murphy in the spring of '47, when Murphy came to the White House from the Senate Legislative Drafting Service. Because of

Murphy's long association on the Hill and intimate knowledge of congressional procedures,

Clifford found Murphy's advice invaluable and the two of them established a very warm cooperative, effective partnership. Officially and theoretically, at any rate, Administrative Assistants reported directly to the President and were not subordinate to the Special Counsel to the President. As a matter of practice, however, it developed that, beginning with Clifford and Murphy's relationship, one or more of the

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Administrative Assistants were clustered around the Special Counsel and tended, if not to work directly for him, to take his advice and guidance and follow his leadership as they went about their daily tasks and chores. After Clifford left the

White

House in February of 1950 to enter the private practice of law and Murphy succeeded him, Murphy followed the same practice that Clifford had of being the primus inter pares amongst some of the White House staff members. And being the practical, if not the officially designated leader of a team of two or three of the Administrative Assistant.

HESS: What was the relationship between the Special Counsel and Dr. Steelman, The assistant to the President?

ELSEY: This has always been a tough area to define. John Steelman was the incredibly energetic and capable and busy, all around workhorse of the White House staff. It's very easy to overlook the enormous volume of business that the President of the United States has to do in his capacity as Chief Executive, as chief administrator, as chief bureaucrat, if you want to call him that, of the executive branch of the

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Government. The public at large tends to think of the President in his more dramatic, flashy roles, in foreign policy as commander in chief, as a political leader and he is all of those things as we know. But, in addition, he is the head of a department, of a branch of the Government, consisting of many departments, of multiple independent agencies, a couple of million civil servants, and so on and so forth; and the sheer volume of paper work and administrative problems, personnel assignments, so on so forth, all this comes to the White House in a steady stream and an unremitting stream. Well, John Steelman was the man who coped for the President with this area of the President's job. Steelman had a bigger staff than the Special Counsel or anyone else because the sheer volume of work required it. Steelman, if I have to make a generalization, I'm sure I can be challenged on this by others, but as I look back on it, Steelman's job was that of an administrator of the normal, ongoing, every day work of the White House. The Special Counsel in contrast, was more of a trouble-shooter for the President, and speechwriter, drafter of very special bills that had to go to the

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Hill. He would move from hot spot to hot spot, from crisis to crisis, with and for and on behalf of the President. Now, this doesn't mean that John Steelman never became involved in crisis

situations. Because of his long background in Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service; because of his acknowledged reputation as an expert in labor matters, in all major strike situations or other threatened strike situations where labor management problems came to the forefront, John Steelman was very much on the spot. In fact he was the man to whom the President principally looked at times of that sort. But that's an exception to the generalization I've been making about Steelman's normal role and is due less to the job that he held than to his personal background experience and field of expert knowledge. It became a practice, and unfortunate practice in my eyes, amongst some of the White House correspondents and writers of the time, to tend to elevate the Special Counsel over the Steelman role and to think the Special Counsel, because he was front and center in crisis times, was somehow more important than the Steelman job, which was carried out in Steelman's East Wing group

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of offices. That was not the way I saw it then, nor the way I see it now. Each was absolutely essential to the President and Mr. Truman could not have survived in the White House without someone doing what John Steelman did so very well for him. The Steelman role, of course, evolved. Here again, of what I'm speaking about was I suppose, the period '48, '49, '50, '51, in the very early, the first couple of Truman years, the Steelman role was evolving from what had been the job of Jimmy Byrnes during then, was as "Assistant President," as Byrnes loved to be called, moving on into the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion. Looking back on it very quickly, it seemed to me that the sequence went from Byrnes to Fred Vinson, who left when he became Chief Justice, then John Snyder, who held it briefly until he became Secretary of the Treasury, then John Steelman. The first, oh say, eighteen months of the Truman administration that was a war of demobilization, if you will, exercise. The comments I have been making about John Steelman were after the war was well behind us when we were moving into the peacetime period. Now Steelman had, once the Korean War broke out, and by the winter of '50-'51 when wage and prices began to get

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out of hand again, Steelman had a major role in all matters relating to economic stabilization and the President relied on him very, very heavily in that area. Steelman as I recall it, again I would have to go back and look at some records myself, at the very end of the Truman administration, he was serving as Chairman of the National Security Resources Board in addition to being The Assistant to the President.

HESS: If an organizational chart had been drawn up of the White House staff, would one or the other of those gentlemen have been rated somewhat higher or were they considered to be equal?

ELSEY: Oh, they were always considered to be equal. They would not have been rated higher and nobody tried to rate them higher. If anyone had, why, President Truman would have seen to that in a hurry. Their salaries were the same, for whatever that is worth. Their salaries were the highest on the White House staff, next ranking after them were the three secretaries to the President; the Appointments Secretary, the Press Secretary, and the Correspondence Secretary. The third rank after that were the Administrative Assistants to the President.

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HESS: Do you know how Dr. Steelman obtained the title The Assistant to the President?

ELSEY: No, I don't really recall how that came about. Probably, if I had to make a stab in the dark, it was to differentiate the role from that of--well certainly to differentiate it from the Administrative Assistants to the President, and there had been, from time to time, a few people called Special Assistant to the President and those were special in the sense that ordinarily they were very temporary for specific spot jobs. The antecedent the did cause a certain amount of amusement by people who thought that Steelman was trying to make something more of his job than it was. But I didn't see it this way, and certainly John Steelman never tried to do what Justice Byrnes, as I've earlier said, tried so assiduously to do in his informal conversations with the press, namely to foster the idea that he was "Assistant President." Byrnes loved that. Steelman certainly never tried to give anybody that impression and, in fact, very vigorously and actively stepped on the idea whenever anyone tried to use such a phrase.

HESS: I'd like to ask some questions about some of the

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people who worked on the White House staff at the same time that you did. Several of them we have mentioned this afternoon already, but if you could just give me a brief rundown on their responsibilities, perhaps how effective they were in carrying out those duties; their relationship with other members of the staff; perhaps their relationship with the President; and also if you worked with them on any particular project that comes to mind, you might mention that.

Let's start with the first Special Counsel to the President, Samuel I. Rosenman.

ELSEY: I became acquainted with Judge Rosenman when he came to Washington for President Roosevelt. This was during the war. I was then in naval uniform on duty in the White House Map Room. I saw Judge Rosenman many times; provided at his request, and of course, with the authorization of my commanding officer, information for Judge Rosenman that I'd obtained at his request from the War and Navy Departments. He, as we've said earlier, came to Washington primarily to help FDR on speeches and messages to Congress. He frequently wanted background information on military events or military happenings to help him better understand, how to phrase, how to

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write some of the material he was working on for President Roosevelt, so that by the time that President Truman came into office in April 1945, I already knew the Judge quite well. I had no particular--well put it this way, I had no occasion to work with him on messages to the Congress during the Roosevelt period. Among the first jobs that he began doing for President Truman,

were some questions on the postwar organization of the military departments and Judge Rosenman pulled together reports and solicited information from people both within and without the Government on what the most effective postwar organization of the Army and the Navy and Air Force ought to be. This is when I began really a close association with Judge Rosenman on substantive matters and I commented, both orally and in memorandum form, on some of the material he had pertaining to postwar organization of the military. This was all still in rather a preliminary form and quite far removed from what was ultimately to emerge as the National Security Act in 1947.

Judge Rosenman left Washington in the winter of '45-'46 at which time President Truman announced that he would not appoint a successor that he, President

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Truman, regarded the Special Counsel as a wartime job only. However, within a matter of a very few months he found that the role of chief of staff for speeches and messages, was so essential that it really had to be recreated, and at that point President Truman named Clifford to the job. But I think I've departed from your line of questioning so, let's get back to it.

HESS: That's quite all right. One question comparing the two men. Was there any difference, was there any significant difference in the way the two men carried out their role of Special Counsel, Mr. Clifford and Mr. Rosenman?

ELSEY: No. I'd say basically not. In each case it was, both Rosenman and Clifford, were the principal staff members on whom the President relied for--both Presidents Roosevelt and Truman--relied for their major speeches, their major addresses. And the problems of drafting a major presidential address, an important address, are pretty much the same from year to year, President to President, and there's not much--there are only a limited number of ways you can go about doing it. I

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would say that the Rosenman and Clifford patterns were pretty much the same. Bear in mind that the term Special Counsel is completely--in those days--was completely misleading. Counsel implies lawyer, legal advice, a legal adviser. Neither Rosenman nor Clifford served as a legal adviser to the President.

HESS: How did that title come into being?

ELSEY: The Attorney General of the United States is the only official of the executive branch that can render legal advice to the President of the United States.

The title simply happened to fit the individual. Judge Rosenman was a lawyer in New York, he had been a member of the Supreme Court of the State of New York. When he came to Washington to help FDR during the war, he naturally wanted some kind of a title that reflected his profession of which, of course, he was naturally proud. He didn't think it would be right to

be called an Administrative Assistant to the President. He wasn't going to be a Secretary to the President. And so a title was concocted, frankly, that would reflect Sam Rosenman as an individual. Because there had never been a Special Counsel to the President and so he

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dreamed up what he--the title he wanted. And it was a perfectly acceptable and understandable to all concerned. And it was because it was really thought to be a special title for one man in one situation that President Truman, when Rosenman left, said there would never be another one. But, as we said just a few moments ago, the need for somebody to fill that role was so essential that President Truman had to have somebody to do that kind of work for him. He didn't see anybody on the White House staff (we're now up to the spring of 1946), who could fill the role for him quite as well as he thought Clark Clifford could do. Clifford, at the moment, was serving as Naval Aide to the President. He had been a Naval Reserve officer in World War II and had come to the White House in the spring of 1945 as Assistant Naval Aide, brought there by James K. Vardaman, a Missouri acquaintance of President Truman and also a Naval Reserve officer. Clifford, for the first year or so at the White House, was in naval uniform and was serving very efficiently and effectively as Naval Aide. But, he had shown that his abilities and talents were far beyond that, through some writing that he had done,

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and some speeches he had drafted. And so, President Truman thought that Clifford could fill the role that Rosenman had filled admirably. He asked Clifford, thereupon, to take that job, or to assume this new task. Well, obviously, he couldn't do it as a Naval Aide so he had to be something else, and it just came naturally, since he too was a lawyer, to resurrect the title Rosenman had held. It didn't seem to bother anyone particularly. The President had to eat his own words and recreate the position that he had, such a few weeks before, said would not be recreated. This was a minor matter that didn't bother anyone. So, Clifford became Special Counsel mostly because he too was a lawyer. Had he been something else, he might have chosen some other title. When Clifford left, Murphy was the obvious fellow to continue that kind of work for President Truman. He too, was a lawyer so he became Special Counsel. Well, as you know, Jerry, by the time you've had three guys in Washington holding a job with a particular title, it's imbedded almost as firmly as if it were an amendment to the Constitution of the United States. And so, of course, we've had Special Counsels to the President ever since. And the job, has

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varied enormously in later years and it is become, now, quite different from what it was back in the Truman period, but that again is not relevant to our story today.

HESS: What had been the nature of the relationship between Judge Rosenman and President Truman?

ELSEY: I'm not quite sure how to answer that. President Truman found Judge Rosenman, of

course, of invaluable assistance to him. Rosenman had been on President Roosevelt's staff when Roosevelt was Governor of New York and, although he had never been a full-time staff member of Roosevelt until the mid-war period, he had remained in such close touch with the President, had visited Washington so often, had spent so many hours, and days, and at times weeks, in Washington helping the President on matters, President Roosevelt that is, that he was an encyclopedia of knowledge on governmental matters, and as President Truman was first to express, and express it frequently and eloquently, there were vast areas of the Federal Government that he knew darned little about even though he had been a Senator for ten years. He did not know the details of many programs

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administered by executive branch departments that had not been matters of concern to him in the Senate. So, Rosenman was just of incalculable value to President Truman in the early months of the Presidency. He was all the more valuable because Harry Hopkins, who had been the other senior, intimate friend and adviser of President Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins' health was deteriorating at a very rapid rate, and Hopkins was simply not around, or not available, not physically capable of helping President Truman very much, though he would have been willing to do so and wanted to do so. So Rosenman was someone that President Truman used, needed, respected, and valued. Rosenman, however, wanted to go home; go back to New York. He'd come here for what he thought was a brief and temporary assignment for a long valued friend, and he felt that he had done his duty, as indeed he had. So, he requested a release and returned to New York and, in due course, President Truman reluctantly let him go back to New York. However, the two remained on the closest of good terms throughout the Truman administration and many, many times President Truman would call him or invite him down. Judge Rosenman came back to Washington in the 1948 campaign, for example,

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and I can recall a number of occasions when he worked on speeches for President Truman in the '48 campaign. He gave some very useful help and advice on the Truman acceptance speech at the Philadelphia Democratic convention in July '48. He traveled on some, not very many, but some of the campaign trips in the fall of '48 whenever President Truman was in New York during the campaign, of course, Rosenman was with him. And both before and after the '48 campaign, Truman made a point of spending a little time with Judge Rosenman many times when he was in New York City.

HESS: One of the matters that Judge Rosenman worked on before he left the White House was the 21 points message of September the 6th, 1945. Do you recall who in the White House may have helped the Judge on that particular message?

ELSEY: I can't help you much on that. In July and the early part of August I was with President Truman on the trip to the Potsdam Conference and was plunged, by the Japanese surrender and many other military events, attendant on the ending of the war, for the next few weeks after returning from Potsdam I was so tied up with military

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and naval matters with Commodore Vardaman and Captain-Captain as he was then--Captain Clifford, that I had no connection and no involvement with those domestic matters at all. I am inclined to think that that was pretty much Sam Rosenman on his own relying on contacts, general counsels, advisers that he knew through his long association with Washington, in the various executive branch departments. I don't really think there was anybody in the White House staff who was around at that point who was able to help Judge Rosenman. The Truman staff, by and large, was too new to be on top of matters of this sort, and the extent to which Judge Rosenman worked with Fred Vinson in the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, I simply am unable to answer. He may have to some extent but I don't know.

HESS: All right.

Moving on to our next man, Mr. Clifford. How would you evaluate Mr. Clifford as a political adviser?

ELSEY: That's not fair, you're asking me to write a book.

To start with, I think the greatest value and virtue that Clifford had as a political adviser was

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his ability to take a long view of things. He tried not to think about tomorrow morning's headlines or what the radio commentator, or Drew Pearsons, might say next week or so, but what effect it would have on the President, his administration, and the position of the United States over a very much longer time span. It seems to me, and I don't want to be unfair to others, that sometimes other people on the staff were too much concerned by the pressures of the moment or the phone calls they'd just had or this, that, or the other letter or telegram or press conference that someone possibly quite unfriendly to Truman, had held. Clifford was conscious of these things, of course, and tried to take them into account, but didn't let them throw him off balance and throw him off stride. Now, as to the effect, impact, of his advice, I think it would be hard to put your finger on particular pieces of advice that Clifford himself would be willing to say were his. He regarded his relationship with the President as being a very private, very confidential one. He would speak with the utmost candor to the President. Sometimes his advice prevailed, sometimes it did not. But he would not be one to let you know either way whether his advice had been taken

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or whether he had been overruled. Whatever came out of the President's Oval Office was it, that was the decision and he was, of course, completely loyal and darned effective in carrying out the President's wishes. He's been given a lot of credit for some of the strategy of the 1948 campaign and I think he deserves a lot of the credit, but we're now back to the generalization that I made at the beginning. Partly because he was able to separate out what he thought were truly important policies, subjects, areas of long term interest, as distinct from the very short time, and at times

even trivial matters of concern, focus on them, help the President to keep his mind on the bigger and longer range issues. It's not as--that sounds axiomatic, one presumably should always do that, but I can assure you when you're at the White House, subject to the intense pressures that comes from all sources in the White House, it's a heck of a lot easier said than done, to keep your eye on the big issue and forget the little ones.

HESS: As you have mentioned, when Mr. Clifford left, Charles S. Murphy became the President's Special Counsel. I

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have asked you to compare Clifford with his predecessor

Rosenman, so, could you perhaps compare and contrast the way that Charles Murphy and Clark Clifford carried out the duties. Was there any noticeable difference?

ELSEY: I'm not aware of any difference in substance. The two men are quite different in personality and Charlie Murphy is a very modest, a very quiet man, almost shy and retiring. He was not as readily accessible to the press as Clifford became in the last couple of years of his holding office; nor was Murphy then, as articulate in dealing with newspaper correspondents as Clifford had been. I think the press tended to underestimate Charlie's significance and his role at the White House. But I know from observing at the time, and from what I've seen and heard from both President Truman and others closely associated with President Truman, that he held Charlie Murphy in the same high esteem that he had held Clifford and relied on him just as he had relied on Clifford. It's very hard to compare effectiveness or impact, or role of men, as you know, of course, because again, the times have changed. I suppose one might say that Clifford had a greater impact on the

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Truman administration than Murphy. I'm not sure that's so but I suspect it might be. The reason, if I had to ascribe a reason for it, I'd say that it was because Clifford moved into that position when the Truman administration was still young, not completely formed. There were lots of policies and matters that President Truman had not yet had time to think out. He still had a long way to go in shaping up his Cabinet and making his principal appointments in the way he wanted to. Clifford was on hand at a formative stage in the Truman administration. By the time Charlie Murphy became Special Counsel in February of 1950, the Truman administration pattern was pretty set. The election was behind, the program, the Truman program, the Fair Deal, had a clear identity. Truman knew who he was, what he was, what he stood for and what he was fighting for. And so Murphy was on stage at a different period. I suspect, perhaps for this reason, as well as the difference in personalities of the two men, one might say that Murphy had less of an impact. But, I repeat what I said, that in terms of intelligence, advice, steady counseling and guidance, he was just as good as Clifford and certainly, for his time, the period he occupied, President Truman held him in

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the same esteem that he had Clifford in an earlier age.

HESS: How would you evaluate Mr. Murphy as a political adviser?

ELSEY: Well, Murphy didn't have--we're back to this calendar again. President Truman never ran for office while Charlie Murphy was Special Counsel. Charlie had, of course, been on hand during the 1948 campaign and he had worked intimately with Clifford, with the Democratic committee, with other people on the White House staff, with congressional leaders, and I think that had, in some senses Charlie perhaps possessed some attributes that Clifford didn't in that he knew the congressional picture a heck of a lot better than Clifford did. He was a little better in assessing and sizing up how Congress would react to measures than Clifford, just because of his many years of experience there and because he knew so many of the Senators and senior members of the House on a personal basis.

HESS: The following question we've touched on many times, but just how would you rate the three men that held that position: Judge Rosenman, Clark Clifford and Mr. Murphy, in terms of their effectiveness, their political perception,

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their speechwriting and their all around help to President Truman?

ELSEY: I don't think I could make any differentiation between those, among those three, in those regards.

HESS: All right.

The next category of White House staff members was Secretary to the President. The first one was Matthew J. Connelly. What comes to mind when you think of Mr. Connelly?

ELSEY: Before I answer that specific question I'll make a generalization about the Secretaries to the President. You recall that I said that the Administrative Assistants did not have sharply defined roles, those varied from time to time, they were constantly shifting. The Administrative Assistants were generalists who were hurled into whatever the breach at the moment was. Similarly, the Special Counsels had to be generalists capable of dealing with any problem that faced the President. The Secretaries to the President in contrast to the Special Counsel, the Administrative Assistants, various special assistants from time to

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time, had -pretty sharply, clearly defined, areas of responsibility in the Truman administration. Matt Connelly, whose name has been mentioned first, was throughout the administration the Appointments Secretary. The Appointments Secretary is in itself a descriptive title, but descriptive only of the tip of the iceberg. It's true that Matthew Connelly was the fellow who arranged the President's schedule and who received requests from public and political figures for

appointments with the President and who, in consultation with the President, worked out the daily and the weekly programs. But the real job, the significant one that Connelly held, was his relationships with the Democratic National Committee. Connelly was, at all times, the link between the President in his capacity as head of the political party and of the national committee of that party. So, Matt had that role throughout.

HESS: How effective was he in his role as political liaison and, perhaps, political adviser. Was it more liaison than advice?

ELSEY: I really can't answer that because I don't know.

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Matt was pretty closemouthed and it's understandable and proper that he should have been. He was the link between the President and the various, or the successive chairmen of the national committee and he simply didn't open up and gossip to others on the White House staff on matters of concern to the President in his political role. Now, you may find this hard to understand. How could we be involved in a presidential campaign, for example, without staff members, such as myself, without dealing with Connelly all the time? Well, I'll try to explain it this way. Connelly would deal with the committee on patronage matters, on where, and when, and how, the President should put in an appearance to be of maximum effectiveness to others on the Democratic ticket, the junior members of the staff, such as myself, were in effect, told after such decisions had been made. Matt would work with the President and the committee on an itinerary for a presidential swing. We would be given the itinerary after those decisions had been made, and our job then was to produce the kinds of speeches and the kinds of statements that would be effective, under the circumstances. So, that is how it happens that I can be as ignorant as I am on the details and the day by day manner in which

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Matt Connelly worked with the President on political matters. I would give you a more illuminating answer if I knew how to do so.

HESS: The next Secretary to the President was William D. Hassett, the Correspondence Secretary.

ELSEY: Bill Hassett had been at the White House for quite some time when I first became acquainted with him in the early war years. He was then Assistant Press Secretary under Steve Early, FDR's longtime Press Secretary. Most of the Truman period, however, he was as you said, a Correspondence Secretary. This meant that he had general supervision over all those parts of the civil service staff in the White House that handled the voluminous mail from the public at large. He was responsible for the procedures for the handling of public mail, and, the more significant substantive letters from persons whose correspondence should be seen by the President himself. Bill was responsible for the, shall we say, the more formal authorial flourishes that came from the White House, proclamations, letters of greeting to national organizations at the time of their conventions, statements by the President issued in his capacity

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say as the head of state, the formal utterances of the President that were quite apart from his political activities. There's a big volume of this, if one doubts it, he simply has to look at the *Presidential Papers* to find out just how many, what a flow there is of formal kind, stiff or stilted if you will, prose that has to come out of the White House while the President fills his role as head of state. Hassett had a facile pen, he had a fine background, he could quote Latin phrases and many other things with the greatest of ease and it was a delight to listen to him speak and it was usually a pleasure to read what he had to say. The President found him enormously entertaining as a conversationalist and enjoyed Bill Hassett very much. It was an important role. It was a role that Bill Hassett handled so smoothly that one could really be almost unaware that it existed in the White House.

HESS: The next office is the White House Press Office. The first gentleman was press adviser to the President and he was there for just a short time after Mr. Truman took over, was J. Leonard Reinsch. Do you remember Mr. Reinsch?

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ELSEY: Mr. Reinsch, as you say, was there such a few weeks, that while I do recall him, I'm not able to be very specific about his duties. It was a standby, an interim appointment. Steve Early had been the Press Secretary for many years and left a very firm, sharp mark on the office of Press Secretary. He, however, had resigned a few weeks before Roosevelt died. Jonathan Daniels was Steve Early's successor and there was a little confusion in the minds of a great many people as to whether Jonathan Daniels was going to continue to function in the early Truman period as Press Secretary or whether Reinsch was to be the Press Secretary. And so, I can't put any very sharp or precise evaluation of his performance or even a definition of what he did. Reinsch, however, did come back from time to time and he was always available at times of major presidential speaking tours to advise on matters of radio, and radio presentation, the best techniques and approaches for radio speeches, and, subsequently, television. So he remained on good terms with the President. He was very much in evidence and help to the Democratic committee in the '48 campaign. But he was never a full-time staff member after the very early, and very hectic inauguration of

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the Truman Presidency in the spring of '45.

HESS: In the middle of May, Charles G. Ross became Press Secretary.

ELSEY: Ross was an ideal choice for this job. First of all, he had known President Truman nearly all his life. They had been, as is well known, schoolboy acquaintances and then friends. Charlie Ross was a well-known newspaperman with many honors and awards to his credit. He was respected by the White House press corps as one of themselves, and as one of the better

members of their craft or profession. So, he filled all that was needed, friendship and complete trust of the President and had the respect of the press. Charlie Ross, because he was so well-known to the President and Mrs. Truman, had an ability to speak frankly and candidly to the President in a way that really no one else around the White House did, especially in the early days. He had a great knack for bringing the President up short when he thought it was necessary. But his personality was so warm, and so kindly, that he could chide or even admonish the President, if you will, in a way that certainly no one else could do. The President relied on Charlie very much and

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it was a terrible personal tragedy to the President when Ross dropped dead of a heart attack in his White House office in December of 1950.

HESS: Did Mr. Ross help on speechwriting chores?

ELSEY: Not really in speechwriting. In the final stages of editing or polishing of a speech, yes. Because of his fine instinct for the English language, because of his concern over style, Charlie Ross would--the President always wanted Charlie to take a look at the last draft or two of a speech and, usually, in the sessions in the Cabinet Room when the President would read the speech aloud, just to get the sound of it, and to clear up any phrases that were awkward or wouldn't sound right coming from his lips, Charlie Ross was always there and Charlie would frequently be the one to strike out what he thought was clumsy language and suggest phrases that would be appropriate to a man from Missouri. But in terms of the writing, the putting together of speeches, doing the drafting, no. This is not to say he couldn't have done it, and it certainly isn't to say he wouldn't willingly have done it. But the Press Secretary is just too damn busy to have time to do that.

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HESS: Shortly after his death, Joseph Short was appointed Press Secretary. Did he carry out the job in any different manner?

ELSEY: Joe was a younger man than Charlie Ross and, while the President was acquainted with him prior to Joe's being named Press Secretary, it was not my feeling that they had the same--well, they obviously didn't have the same kind of a Personal relationship. Short also had the great virtue of being a widely known and widely respected member of the Washington press corps. This is essential. The Press Secretary in my view, simply has to be someone who is known, respected, and trusted by the White House press. Short certainly had those qualities.

HESS: Charlie Ross' Assistant Press Secretary was Eben Ayers. What do you recall of Mr. Ayers?

ELSEY: Ayers served as an understudy for Ross, substituting for him when Ross was not available or otherwise occupied. Ayers handled an awful lot of the calls and the interviews, the quick questions that the White House press in those days were popping in asking. Usually the chore of, the task, of putting some of the short statements for the

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President into form for the press was handled by Ayers. After Ross died and Short became Press Secretary, Short felt the need of having some assistants who had been more recently involved in affairs of the executive branch than Eben and he pulled in Roger Tubby from the State Department and Irving Perlmeter from the Bureau of Internal Revenue. Eben, at that point, became I think one of the Special Assistants and did a good deal of research and personal writing for President Truman for the balance of the term. He helped organize some of the President's early papers, the pre-White House and even pre-Senate papers, or records, and documents. And did quite a bit of preparatory work for the President looking towards the day of the establishment of the Truman Library in Missouri.

HESS: And upon the death of Joe Short on September the 18th, 1952, Irving Perlmeter and Roger Tubby became Acting Press Secretaries during the campaign. Were you active in the '52 campaign?

ELSEY: Not at all. In 1952 I was associated with Averell Harriman.

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Sixth Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at the National Archives, Washington, D.C., April 9, 1970. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

ELSEY: Jerry, I believe the papers in box one speak for themselves. They are clearly identified by folder, and unless you have questions on any of them, I don't believe any explanatory statement is necessary. If at a later date, someone at the Truman Library wishes further explanations as to the material, of course, I'll be glad to provide it.

HESS: I have no questions on that. My first question comes up in box number two. So, let's just shift boxes here. And box number two is mostly on Roosevelt.

Just to hit them lightly, I found a couple of things of interest in this large manila envelope in box number two and the folder is entitled, "Conference Agreements." The second question I had dealt with Palestine, "see memo on Jews to Palestine in Palestine folder," and this one mentions that on February 14, 1947 in a conversation with Ibn-Saud, President Roosevelt remarked that he would do nothing to assist the Jews against the Arabs, and he would make no move hostile to the Arab

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people. And it speaks that he would not want to move the Jewish people into the Arab lands without the agreement of the Arabs. Was this well known at the time as Mr. Roosevelt's stand?

ELSEY: No, I'm sure none of this was well known at the time. These were all highly classified statements. Incidentally, you mentioned--used the date 1947, I'm sure that was in error, you meant 1945.

HESS: '45, yes.

ELSEY: This memorandum was a summary of papers, highly classified papers, in the White House files and I am sure that everything, at least those items subsequent to April 12, '45 which are referred to here, would all now be in the Truman Library at Independence. Some of them might still be in that highly personal collection of papers of the President.

HESS: Yes, Mr. Truman's private papers.

ELSEY: Yes.

HESS: Did you write this memo?

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ELSEY: Yes, and I gather that at the date, it was completed on April 2, 1945, since that date

appears in longhand here. And here is a transmittal note that I sent it to Admiral Leahy on October 2, '45. This would have-apparently was prepared at Admiral Leahy's request.

HESS: Here is a document on FDR and De Gaulle. It is still marked "Top Secret" and it's by you on President Roosevelt's policy towards De Gaulle. And it says that the President stated his views about De Gaulle very clearly. What do you recall about Roosevelt's statements about De Gaulle?

ELSEY: Well, I think it's best to refer to the memorandum because they are all summarized, paraphrased, or excerpted in this memorandum, and rather than my trying to quote from memory, I think I would simply cite the memorandum itself and as the opening sentence, or sentences, the material here does come from exchanges of messages between FDR and Churchill, most of this does. This is one of the many background papers prepared in preparation for the Potsdam Conference. This is one of the many, all done under Admiral Leahy's direction, or at his request, so

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that Admiral Leahy would have reference material at hand, and so that Admiral Leahy could discuss with President Truman prior to, and enroute to Potsdam, these-some of the more significant political issues that would be coming up at that conference.

HESS: What other political issues do you recall . . .

ELSEY: Here you see is an example. This all started the 7th of June with a note from Frank Pinney, Jr. who was Admiral Leahy's aide. "The Admiral would like a resume of our relations with De Gaulle as revealed in presidential messages." So, this was in compliance with that request and that's typical of the kind of requests, the kind of matters that Leahy was having summarized for the new President's use.

HESS: Well, the other thing that I had on my list and I can't find right now, dealt with Mr. Roosevelt's acceptance of the [Henry, Jr.] Morgenthau plan, and was that well known at the time?

ELSEY: Back to (excuse me, but I'll interrupt), back to the Palestine papers that you asked about. You'll see here

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this longhand note that the documents cited were returned to Miss [Rose] Conway on October 13, 1945, so these various secret memoranda, minutes of conversation, and so on, were borrowed from Miss Conway and put together in this brief five-page synopsis used by Leahy in conversations with the President, and then returned by Leahy to me, and the back-up papers I handed to Miss Conway.

HESS: Are these Leahy's initials?

ELSEY: That's WDL, that's Admiral Leahy. Leahy had—this is again Admiral Leahy's initials.

HESS: What do you recall about the President's views on the Morgenthau plan?

ELSEY: Are you citing a particular memorandum in here?

HESS: Well, yes. It's supposed to be in box two, in a large folder and it's supposed to be "Conference Agreements." Do you see anything in here entitled "Conference Agreements?" We do have folder number two?

ELSEY: "Conference Agreements," yes.

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HESS: Yes, Quebec was where this was brought up of course.

There are several things still marked "Top Secret" here.

ELSEY: Here on page 8 of a memorandum which I sent to Admiral Leahy on May 23, 1945, you'll find a synopsis of what is popularly, and publicly called the Morgenthau plan. The President did agree to it, and this is an excerpt from the minutes of the meeting:

And the President and the Prime Minister agreed on a policy towards Germany.

and here is really the key sentence of what was popularly called the Morgenthau plan:

This program for eliminating the warmaking industries in the Ruhr and the Saar is looking forward to converting Germany into a country primarily agricultural and pastoral in its character. The Prime Minister and the President were in agreement on this program.

HESS: If they were in agreement at that time, why wasn't that carried out, or carried further than it was? Was that sort of impractical in a country that had so much iron and coal and a history of steel making?

ELSEY: Yes. And I think the basic reason why it was not carried out was the fact that within a matter of, oh,

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months after the second Quebec conference, the United States began to be much more concerned about the political aspirations of the Soviet Union on the continent of Europe, and the recognition that if Germany were completely demilitarized and turned into a pastoral country, the whole of Europe would be wide open to take-over by the Soviet Union. That was the principal reason why the Morgenthau plan was not ever carried into effect by the United States and

Britain.

HESS: The remainder of the box consists of six manila envelopes, all with Roosevelt labels. Anything else in this box?

ELSEY: In many of those as you recognize are magazines, newspapers contemporary public statements which I saved for, not knowing what future use might be made of them or might be required of them. There--Admiral [Wilson] Brown who was Roosevelt's Naval Aide most of the war, was very much concerned about having adequate records maintained for President Roosevelt's own use in writing about the war. Of course, this all ended with Roosevelt's death, but I saved all sorts of things for

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that purpose, not having any idea what the ultimate use might be.

We're wasting all of your tape there, Jerry.

HESS: Oh, don't worry about that, tape's cheap.

That's all the specific questions that I have out of box two. Let's get on to box three.

ELSEY: I might make a comment about those memoranda that are in there that were prepared at Leahy's, primarily at Leahy's request, some at Harry Hopkins' request, for President Truman. Many, I'm sure will be found to be incomplete in many respects. Their value lies not so much that they were total and complete stories, but they reveal exactly what information was in the White House at that time. I had total access, unrestricted access, to the files of Admiral Leahy, Harry Hopkins, the Map Room papers of President Roosevelt that were retained in the White House for a very long period after FDR's death, and the papers, the personal papers, of President Truman. So, when I prepared for Leahy, for example some of those files, reports, we were just looking at, briefing papers in preparation for the Potsdam conference, that—

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those do contain accurate, as accurate as I could make them, summaries of everything that was available in the White House. Now, if a scholar finds that they are greatly deficient in key respects, which a scholar may or may not find, I don't know that he will, but if he does, the significance of that would be that that data just simply was not available in the White House to the new administration. That, I think is the principal virtue to having these papers now available. You can check to see whether . . .

HESS: What was missing and what wasn't.

ELSEY: What was missing.

HESS: Decisions had to be made actually....

ELSEY: Decisions had to be made on what was there, present, and that is as accurate as it was possible to make them to reveal what was in the White House at that time.

HESS: Before we go further into that, my eye lands on the file relating to the Yalta Conference and in the latest *Saturday Review of Literature*, there is an article by a doctor who examined Roosevelt in 1944. Have you seen

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that article yet?

ELSEY: Howard Bruenn. I have not seen the article, I saw news stories about that.

HESS: What is your view of Mr. Roosevelt's health in the last year of his life?

ELSEY: I certainly wouldn't attempt to make any medical evaluation, that's obviously out of the question. I had great respect for Bruenn and I know that everyone else around there held him in extremely high regard. I would simply have to accept anything that Dr. Bruenn says, from the medical point of view, as being accurate. I would also say that I would place a higher degree of reliability on what Bruenn writes than on the "quickie" book published in Admiral Ross McIntire's name, oh, fairly soon after FDR's death. McIntire's book I found then gravely deficient, sloppy and full of errors. It was ghostwritten by someone who didn't know the situation very well and I think Ross McIntire did himself and FDR an injustice by painting much too rosy a picture. If you compare McIntire and Bruenn I'm sure you will find wide discrepancies and my chips are on Bruenn, not on

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Ross McIntire.

HESS: It mentioned in the article that I read this morning that they had sort of left it up to McIntire to tell the President about his enlarged heart and his failing health and they are not so sure if he did tell him. They thought that perhaps since he had been giving glowing reports over the years, he just didn't want to.

ELSEY: Whether McIntire did or not, of course, I have no way of knowing.

HESS: All right, the first one in the next box is on the Berlin Conference. I don't have any particular questions on this. It seems to be photographs and some newspapers . . .

ELSEY: Press clippings . . .

HESS: Press clippings . . .

ELSEY: ...copies of releases.

HESS: Press releases and things of that nature.
The surrender of Japan. Anything important there?

ELSEY: I don't think anything here that is not self-explanatory.

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HESS: Now, the next two folders deal with Clark Clifford's Russian report, which I noticed Arthur Krock quotes in total, I believe, in the appendix of his new book.

ELSEY: Right.

HESS: Is that right?

ELSEY: That's right.

HESS: Can you tell me about the writing of that report? Did you assist Mr. Clifford in the writing of that report?

ELSEY: I think you'll find the whole story of that in here including every draft all the way through from my longhand and other typings right on through to the tail end.

HESS: Your longhand. Did you write it?

ELSEY: All you have to do is look at the draft to get the answer to that.

HESS: Well, that looks like it's all in your hand doesn't it? I think you wrote it.

ELSEY: And various memoranda on chapters. But Mr. Clifford

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worked on it. You'll find some of the drafts with his handwriting where he edited it.

HESS: Is this his handwriting?

ELSEY: Yes, that is his handwriting.

HESS: Rather small and precise type of handwriting.

ELSEY: Yes. His changes are shown in here.

I also have, in some of the drafts of the various chapters, points where he questioned, asked further questions or questioned, as I have noted here, one draft of the introduction, the advisability of some of these statements that had appeared in my earliest version. He was out of

the country when much of it was written.

There is a sheet listing all of the various editions and versions of it.

You will see that the report was based on data which came both partly from the various departments and agencies in response to a request from Clifford, and partly on documents already in our possession at the White House, in the FDR files or in the files that had accumulated subsequent to Mr. Truman's becoming President in April;

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papers that were in Admiral Leahy's or Harry Hopkins' office. I had access to all of those.

HESS: Do you think that your views . . .

ELSEY: I might give you the background of how all this started.

HESS: All right.

ELSEY: The President, in July, talked with Clifford and said he was concerned at the fact that the Russians couldn't be trusted and didn't keep agreements that they had made, and he wanted a list of the agreements that the Russians had violated or broken. Clifford asked if I could obtain or work up such a list and, of course, the answer was in the affirmative, yes.

We talked about it a good deal and I said that I thought that that was entirely too narrow a question, that the President seemed to be basing too much of his attitude towards the Russians at that point, on this rather narrow point of whether they did or did not adhere to agreements. I thought the whole question of our relations with the Soviet Union at that point was a much

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more comprehensive, much broader, matter than this technicality of agreement breaking or agreement keeping, that there were far more fundamental issues involved, that the nature of these issues didn't seem to be clearly understood in large parts of the executive branch (witness the fiasco of Henry Wallace) , I recommended, and Clifford did then agree, that it would be much better if he, Clifford, would do a report on the totality, if you will, of U.S.-Soviet relations, and if the President found that report acceptable, it could be used, judiciously, because it would necessarily be highly classified, it could be used judiciously by the President, giving copies to individuals in the executive branch or elsewhere, using it as a basis for discussion with people so that we wouldn't have any more Henry Wallace kind of blowups.

That was the reason why this--that was the genesis of the origin, and the rationale behind this report. I tackled it with a real zeal because I felt very deeply the necessity of this kind of thing. So, I went to work on it and did spend the latter few days of July, all of August, and well into September in assembling material from the departments, in writing the report and going over drafts with Clifford, and then I had the report

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printed by the graphic unit of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a limited, very limited, number of copies.

HESS: It's dated September 24, 1946. That is in the same month that--wasn't Wallace's speech at Madison Square Garden in September of '46?

ELSEY: My recollection is that his speech had been a number of weeks earlier than that.

To carry it another step further, when the report was presented by Clifford to the President in September, the President felt that it was much too explosive a document because it covered so comprehensively, so many issues, and he told Clifford he did not think it advisable to give copies to members of his Cabinet, or to have any distribution of it. So, the President retained a limited number. I do not now recall how many, perhaps two or three, of the printed copies himself, and Admiral Leahy retained one, and Clifford, I guess, retained one. Obviously Krock had access to one someplace. But there was no other distribution to the best of my knowledge. I do not know whether the President handed one or two copies to anyone else, but certainly there was no distribution from Clifford's office or from me as you

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can see.

HESS: Do you think that your report to the President helped shape his views on our attitude and what we should--on our relations to Russia?

ELSEY: Oh, in the first place, it was not my report, it was Clifford's report to the President.

I think it's conceivable that having a synopsis like this, a summary, available to him may have been useful to the President.

You see, it's important not to overemphasize the significance of this. This was a consolidation, a summary of facts, data, opinions, material already available to the President, most of which have had at one time or another been called to his attention by the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of War, or the Secretary of the Navy, or other officials, or Admiral Leahy or Harry Hopkins, in the months before he left the White House, but it's different to have things come to you piecemeal over a period of time, or having them all presented in a consistent form. The impact of having it all drawn together may have had some influence on the President. Again, I don't think one can--you never

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know and neither the President or anyone else is ever able to say exactly what all the influences are that help him make up his mind. The President is getting data all the time orally or in written

form from a wide variety of people. As I say, the report had its origin in this fact that I thought--and felt so keenly that the President's concern with the--that he was judging Russia on too narrow a basis and that he had ought to look at the total picture, and Clifford agreed with that.

HESS: Okay. I see some very important folder titles. I don't have any specific questions about the material that's in them, on "Atomic Energy," on "National Defense," "Strategic Bombing Survey Reports," "Atomic Bomb Tests." As a general question, when did you first become aware of the atomic bomb? Can you recall?

ELSEY: I can't really say. It would have been at least as early as 1943 because of the exchanges of messages between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill on the subject.

HESS: At the time that you were working in the Map Room.

ELSEY: In the Map Room at the White House, yes. So . . .

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HESS: Do you see anything of interest . . .

ELSEY: Well, back in the war, two years as a minimum before the test on July 16th at Alamogordo, New Mexico.

HESS: Okay. Now, there are several folders on Korea, we've skipped a few folders here--several folders on Korea.

ELSEY: Including a number of items which are day by day events in June '50 when the war broke out, memoranda of conferences, records of individual meetings, notes of comments that President Truman made to me.

HESS: Where were you at the time that you first heard about the invasion?

ELSEY: The President was out in Missouri at that time. I was here in Washington. Actually--yes, I was here in Washington that day.

HESS: Did you see him--he came back on Sunday evening

ELSEY: He came back on Sunday evening. I did not see him until Monday morning.

HESS: At a staff conference?

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ELSEY: At a staff conference.

HESS: What was his attitude at the staff conference?

ELSEY: I would hesitate to try and say at this point. I would just have to be imagining what it must have been. I have no specific recollection of attitude at that conference, but these folders are almost hour by hour of those early events, phone calls, messages, what the President was doing on an hour by hour basis through Saturday, June 24, Sunday the 25th, Monday the 26th; messages that were coming back and forth between the White House and the State Department, a minute by minute chronology. Even the dinner that the President had on Sunday evening with Acheson and Louis Johnson, Webb, Pace, etc.; copies of memoranda of conversations that was prepared in the Department of State subsequent to that too, are here.

Then there are a number of folders on messages that went to Congress on the Korean situation, radio addresses to the public, of course they were radio in those days, not TV, drafts in toto and here's one, his first major message to Congress on July 19th. It starts from the beginning and works right on through from the very first

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pencil scrawled notes of some of us on the staff. That I can recognize right away as being David Bell's handwriting, in that version.

HESS: Do you think that it was a tough decision for Mr. Truman to make to go into Korea?

ELSEY: No. Any decision to commit American men to a military action is, of course, a tough decision, but the point of view of his advisers was unanimous.

HESS: Now this folder is "Truman-MacArthur-Matthews Statements August 1950," and this was the speech that Mr. Truman made on September 1, 1950 and on the top of the draft it says: "On Matthews see page 5. On MacArthur see page 5." So, on page five, about MacArthur it mentions, "Fifth: We do not want Formosa or any part of Asia for ourselves." This was something that I believe that MacArthur gave the President a good deal of trouble about.

ELSEY: Right. And I have marked here on the carbon, "Reply to MacArthur." MacArthur had been making statements about Formosa, other parts of Asia, and this was the President's

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effort to make it very clear that this was not United States Government policy, Secretary of the Navy, and a little farther down on that page there's the longhand annotation "Reply to Secretary Matthews." Of course, this was not publicly identified by Truman as being a reply to MacArthur or to [Francis P.] Matthews but it was. Secretary Matthews had spoken about the possibility of preventive war, he had talked about the atom bomb, and Truman was making it very clear here that that was not government policy. He was disowning the Secretary of the Navy.

HESS: Not long after that Mr. Matthews left for--to be Ambassador to Ireland. Is that correct?

ELSEY: That is correct.

HESS: Was this statement his exit ticket? Was that why he was moved to Ireland?

ELSEY: That was part of it. He was not the most effective Secretary of the Navy.

This folder has a number of clippings and various other annotations about the White House reaction to both

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the MacArthur and Matthews statements. This really was the beginning of the period of extreme tension, vis-a-vis General MacArthur, which culminated in the General's dismissal the following spring. Some of these news clippings you may wonder why they're here but--this is an interesting one here; the Doris Fleeson story in the *Evening Star* of April 30, 1950. The interesting part I think for--it is my comment in the margin. "This is a full and accurate story based on much research," that is much research by Doris Fleeson, "and on interviews with Steven Early," who was a Deputy Secretary of Defense, "and Charles Ross," who was, of course, still the President's Press Secretary, this was an effort to try and get the Formosa-MacArthur statement put in its proper perspective. And it was because these situations were so tense, and so fraught with potential trouble, that I was keeping clippings, I was annotating them. I was talking myself with correspondents when directed and when approved.

HESS: At this time General MacArthur was writing several articles for magazines, he wrote several Congressmen, with his views on what should be done and not directly

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sending his communications to the Pentagon. Do you think he had a political motive in mind?

ELSEY: I would hesitate to answer. I would not attempt to assess the General's motivations.

HESS: All right.

ELSEY: Here's a memorandum of October 2, 1950, that explains the genesis of one of the Truman messages to MacArthur; why it was sent, how it was sent.

HESS: We have several more questions on MacArthur, but they come from a different folder. Now, to keep things in chronological order, which -you have done very nicely here, in September

Louis Johnson was replaced as Secretary of Defense by General Marshall and that is the next folder "Johnson's Resignation." What do you recall about that and why did President Truman replace Louis Johnson?

ELSEY: I think it's better to let the notes and memoranda in here speak for themselves. There are numerous contemporary memoranda for this period, that is 1950, reporting the Johnson point of view, the Johnson comments on other

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men in the administration. The opinion . . .

HESS: Principally Acheson?

ELSEY: Acheson and the State Department, right.

There is a memorandum here that I dictated on September 13, 1950, of a lengthy report that Charles Ross gave me as to the circumstances as he understood them.

HESS: Another article by Doris Fleeson.

ELSEY: And you will note that the memoranda of my conversation (or Charlie Ross' really monologued me), on the circumstances, a copy was given to the President. Then here on September 16th is my memorandum for the files of President Truman's reaction to, and his okay, of this memorandum with a verbatim quote of some of the President's language about Johnson.

HESS: The difficulty that he had had right at the time of the resignation. He says, "Maybe if I get time I'll write down the whole story." So, Johnson took it rather hard. Why was General Marshall selected at this time?

ELSEY: Well, I think that story is pretty well a matter of

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public knowledge and record. The President had an enormous respect for General Marshall, had had for many, many years.

HESS: All right, this folder is "Hawaii-Wake-San Francisco, October 1950." Now ' I believe that you went to San Francisco during this time, is that correct?

ELSEY: I went to Hawaii. I did not go on to Wake Island. I went out in advance of the presidential party, a day or so, with a contingent of Secret Service men and others to make arrangements with Admiral [Arthur W.] Radford who was Commander in Chief of the Pacific fleet, and with his staff, for the presidential party, for the stopover at Hawaii and for the conferences which the President was to have with Radford and others in Hawaii. I remained in Honolulu that day that the President flew out to Wake and back and then I flew in the President's-with the White House party to San Francisco and worked enroute as the notes and files will show, enroute from Hawaii to San Francisco on the speech that the President made in San Francisco about the Wake Island conference.

HESS: When did you first find out that there was going to be a meeting between President Truman and General

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MacArthur?

ELSEY: Well, my recollection is that this was decided on a weekend cruise on the *Williamsburg* with a number of White House staff members on the cruise. It was very shortly before, perhaps not more than a week before the trip took place.

HESS: The meeting was on the 15th, October the 15th.

ELSEY: Yes, and here's a note which I drafted for Charles Murphy to send to the President and which Charlie did on October 9 and you see the opening sentence, "It appears to me highly desirable the following steps should be taken as soon as possible if the President meets the schedule as discussed on the *Williamsburg*." We had been spending that weekend, preceding weekend, on the *Williamsburg* talking about this and here are the recommended Procedures to be followed. At this point, you see, General MacArthur hadn't even been consulted yet.

HESS: Marshall?

ELSEY: He didn't even know about it. Well, no, MacArthur—

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MacArthur didn't even know, you

see. Secretary of Defense General Marshall and Acheson were to send a telegram, I was recommending, and Murphy recommended, to the President that the telegram be sent to MacArthur expressing the President's desire to meet MacArthur in Hawaii on Saturday the 14th, but MacArthur, as we know from later, in other reports, didn't want to go as far as Hawaii, didn't like to fly at night, only wanted to go fly as far as Wake because he could make a daytime journey.

HESS: Under your item number one it says:

If the President has not already told Secretary Acheson and General Marshall of his intention to leave Washington at the end of this week for Hawaii.....

Does that mean that these men did not know about President Truman's intention of meeting with MacArthur?

ELSEY: That's right. This was a White House staff conference and a White House staff discussion on the *Williamsburg*. And when I wrote this for Charlie I suspect that you will find that that's probably a Monday, October 9 is probably Monday, that on a Monday morning when my appointment was, if we didn't--if he

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hadn't told them then that he had ought to do so right away.

HESS: Do you recall their reactions?

ELSEY: I do not.

HESS: Okay. Now, also under number four you mention who the President should take, or let's see, "The President should indicate to Marshall and Acheson that he wished to be accompanied by a very small number of advisers and that he has in mind the following persons as principal members. Averell Harriman," who did go; "Frank Pace," who did go; "Dean Rusk," who did go. And then the recommendation for "the Joint Chiefs of Staff." They did not go. Was this debated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should go?

ELSEY: I have no recollection now. I simply can't remember at this point.

HESS: I thought that was an interesting point. And these are your initials on the last page of the memo, correct?

ELSEY: Right.

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HESS: All right.

Okay now, getting on a little further, after the time of the replacement of General MacArthur, on April 21, 1951, Anthony Leviero, writing in the *New York Times* has an article in which he has quoted several documents. Do you know where he got those documents?

ELSEY: Excuse me just a moment, I'm looking through some of the other items in the file here.

HESS: The photographs.

ELSEY: The photographs.

HESS: Is this the Ambassador?

ELSEY: That's the Governor of Hawaii, Governor [Ingram M.] Stainback.

HESS: Oh.

ELSEY: Admiral Radford had not been scheduled to go. You see, Bradley was chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Admiral Radford had not been scheduled to go on to Wake Island. I personally felt, I guess that was my Navy prejudice showing through, that it was unfortunate if the Commander

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in Chief of the Pacific were not to accompany the President, since the President was there in Hawaii, and was going on to Wake, which was a part of the jurisdiction of Admiral Radford, and that it would be better in all respects; military relationships and everything else, if the President were to include Admiral Radford in the party. Almost from the moment that the presidential party did arrive in Hawaii (you recall I said I had gotten out there early, I began lobbying, if you will, with Harriman and Murphy, and probably others saying, "Shouldn't the President invite Admiral Radford to accompany him?" he did and I was gratified in that. I think it helped some in the relationships with the military, with the Navy in particular, but that's just a minor footnote. It does not have much significance.

HESS: Now, the article about Mr. Leviero. I believe he won a Pulitzer Prize for that article on April 21, 1950-'51.

ELSEY: Yes, it had to be '51, it was several months later. It was after the dismissal by the President of . . .

HESS: Where did he receive the information to use in that

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article? Come on now.

ELSEY: I don't think I have any comment on that.

HESS: All right. One other thing that I did notice of interest . . .

ELSEY: Turn that off.

HESS: All right.

ELSEY: Ask your question again.

HESS: All right. Where did Mr. Anthony Leviero receive his information and the documents that he used in his article of April 21, 1951?

ELSEY: I can't be precise on the exact time sequence here, but within a few days prior to the publication, perhaps three or four days prior to the publication, I returned to my apartment one evening and found messages, two or three messages, which were reported to be urgent, that I call Anthony Leviero. These had been taken by the apartment house switchboard. This was a little unusual. White House correspondents did not normally call me. They certainly did not call me at home very often, nor did they allege that the purpose of their call was urgent.

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I went ahead and returned the call to Leviero and Leviero said that the purpose of the call was--

had been overtaken by events because he, in not being able to reach me had talked with John Steelman. Leviero said he was doing a story for the *Times* on Wake Island and all the background and circumstances of General MacArthur's relief from command by President Truman and he was particularly trying to get the full story of what had actually happened at Wake since there were so many conflicting versions of what MacArthur had said, the promises that MacArthur was alleged to have made to President Truman and so on and so forth, but Leviero repeated he had talked with Steelman on the subject, and that ended it so far as I was concerned.

The next morning I attended, as usual, the President's morning staff conference. And as we were going in, John Steelman said he would like me to remain behind, with him, to talk briefly with the President after the conference was over. And I said, "Does this have anything to do with the call that I got from Tony Leviero last night?"

And Steelman said, "Yes, that's it," or words to

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that effect. Of course, I can't quote and don't mean to be quoting as though this is the exact phraseology.

So, as the morning staff conference broke up, Dr. Steelman said to the President that he had a matter to take up and held like me to remain behind. This was common. Various staff members would frequently ask for the opportunity of staying behind and talking with the President on a matter that would not necessarily involve the total staff. And of course, the President assented. Steelman told the President that Leviero was at work on this subject, this story, appeared to have talked to a great many people, already knew a lot, and was exceedingly eager to consult or see the--whatever written memorandum or record there was of the Wake Island conference. And the President thought this over briefly, and asked Steelman if Steelman had the record of the conference and Steelman said no he didn't but that I either had, or had access to things of that sort. The President asked if I had a copy in my files. I said I did, and the President said, "Okay, go ahead and tell Tony he can have it." So, this is what happened. I did thereupon talk to Leviero and say he should come to my office later

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that morning and he could have access to the Wake Island minutes. That's all there is to the story.

HESS: Sometime after that you were transferred to the Mutual Security Agency, do you think that this had any part in that?

ELSEY: No. I went to Mutual Security when the--actually it was Office of the Director for Mutual Security, Averell Harriman. That was many, many months later and I had....

HESS: When was that, early November?

ELSEY: Oh, I guess so, November of '51 and I had been working closely with Harriman from the time that Harriman returned to Washington from his Marshall plan job at the end of June 1950. Harriman came back to be on the President's staff with the outbreak of the Korean war, and so Harriman had already been back in Washington close to a year by then, by now, and I had been working with Harriman throughout that period. No, I do not attribute a cause and effect, a causal relationship here to carrying out a presidential directive. Needless to say, I did not reveal at that time, and do not think--Jerry, I think I

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better make a specific request here that this portion of the transcript of the interview regarding the access to the Wake Island . . .

HESS: The Anthony Leviero . . .

ELSEY: The Anthony Leviero episode, I think that I have to request that it be sealed and not made available to scholars in Truman's lifetime.

HESS: All right.

ELSEY: I think the access to the--the turning over of the minutes to Anthony Leviero was as a direct order or instruction from the President to me. So far as I know he has never--this has never been ascribed to him. It's been assumed that there was a leak some place in Washington and I would not want to put the finger on President Truman for this. So, for his lifetime, any interview or any of my comments on this ought to remain under seal. After President Truman's death I see no need for any restriction.

HESS: Okay. No problem at all.

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One general question: Do you think that the dismissal of General MacArthur was handled in the correct manner?

ELSEY: No, I think that, thought then, and I've always thought, that the administration could have avoided a lot of the emotionalism that arose over the dismissal of General MacArthur by giving a greater attention to the details of the handling. I think that it--it looked like panic on the part of the White House and the Pentagon and I think that was unfortunate. It gave instead of--it was not handled in a dignified manner as was befitting the action of the President and Commander in Chief.

There was a degree of panic, there was some concern that MacArthur might get some wind of this and might make some grandstand gesture of his own. There were rumors flying around that he was going on a world-wide broadcast, network, and there was some suspicion that maybe he was going to resign with a grandstand announcement. And in effect, the White House was I'm

afraid, I'm sorry to say it, was panicked by fear that MacArthur might get the jump.

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HESS: Wasn't there a rumor . . .

ELSEY: It still, I think, was badly handled and there is such a concern on the part of Joe Short (the Press Secretary), to give a lot of documents out to the newspapers, that--and it just took hours to transcribe documents, and to mimeograph them, actually to release them to the press. The press could have been so informed some hours earlier if Joe Short hadn't been so concerned about handing out a lot of documents and a lot of papers. This meant that the press was called into the White House sometime after midnight. I've now forgotten, what, 1 a.m. or something like that, and so they accurately said that MacArthur was fired in the dead of night. Well, it was in the dead of night in Washington, of course, it was the middle of the afternoon out there in Tokyo, but there were just--it was something of a panic reaction which chagrined me at the time and has always embarrassed me, subsequently, that the White House sort of lost control of itself at that point.

HESS: Even though it was handled rather poorly, do you think it was necessary?

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ELSEY: Oh, no question but what it was necessary. Oh, I'm only addressing the - just the mechanics of it. As to the wisdom of the decision, or the necessity for the decision, absolutely no question in my mind. I think that President Truman's stature as President was enhanced. It was necessary. He had to do it. No President could tolerate that kind of behavior on the part of a subordinate military commander.

No, my criticism is only of just the mechanics and the faulty mechanics were those of the press office, more than anything else.

HESS: Now, the last things in there are newspapers and I think most of them have to do with--this of course is just about the time that he was thinking of . . .

ELSEY: Wake Island.

HESS: Yes, Wake Island.

ELSEY: I don't know why those were--quite frankly I don't (quickly glancing at them) , I don't see why those were saved.

HESS: Maybe background.

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ELSEY: Probably background for the climate prevailing at the time of the Wake Island matter.

HESS: Well, that finishes the box number three. What time are you going to have to leave?

ELSEY: Oh, a half an hour from now.

HESS: Okay.

ELSEY: We can always get together again.

HESS: Good. Now, I don't have anything specific in box four as I noticed. What does our list show for box four?

ELSEY: Box four is a pretty important time period. It's the Korean crisis, I call it that, from November to December 1950, that's the time when the Chinese came in and a great many important actions had to be taken, military decisions had to be taken, and because of the greatly stepped-up pace of weapons procurement, armament, and so on we had the whole problem of inflation and the questions relating to wage, price controls, other economic measures of that sort, and at the President's specific direction--and I tried to keep very careful

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records and minutes of these meetings. I have minutes of the meetings he held with Congressmen, with members of committees and congressional leaders, with other officials of the executive branch, and drafts of the radio addresses, the messages to Congress and so on, that took place during this November-December period. It was also at this time that Eisenhower had a long session with the President. Here is the full minutes of the session, some fifteen pages, sixteen pages, of minutes of an Eisenhower presidential meeting. Churchill came over, there are notes here on the Churchill conference.

HESS: What do you recall about President Truman's reaction when the Chinese entered the war and crossed the Yalu river? Anything in particular?

ELSEY: I would think here again, Jerry, I would hesitate to try this many years after the event to remember a reaction. We'll have to rely on contemporary documents to say how he felt. I think we can imagine what the reaction was, but I'm afraid if I tried now, it would be imagination rather than positive memory.

Here are the questions of the National Emergency

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Proclamation and speech of December 15, 1950. All of this brought about, as a result of a crisis produced by the sudden entry of the Chinese into the war.

These drafts--these folders on the speeches, are - may be of some interest simply in showing how presidential statements on that subject were, in those days, were being put together, who did it,

what the genesis of ideas was. This one relates to MacArthur.

HESS: Do you recall who worked on that speech?

ELSEY: Oh, I think the folder will show the longhand notes. Here it is. DDL is David D. Lloyd.

HESS: David D. Lloyd.

ELSEY: Here is draft three by Elsey and Lloyd. These are all annotated, I think you will find.

There's a DB, David Bell. You'll find the drafts annotated and I think the handwriting will be readily identifiable to anyone who is familiar with that period.

Here's one for example, I can recognize, as you can, right away, with Clifford comments on that one.

HESS: How good were David Lloyd and David Bell as speechwriters?

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ELSEY: Excellent! They were by all odds the best that had come on the scene up to that point, bar none.

HESS: Were they also involved in policy decisions?

ELSEY: Well, it's a little hard to say what is a policy decision and what is not. If you're asking if they were involved in decision making at the highest level of the President, no. In those days they were not seeing the President, except perhaps in large staff conferences, but insofar as their thinking was absorbed or would prevail on Charlie Murphy, and Charlie in turn could affect a presidential decision, yes. They were in the decision making line, in the machinery, in the staff discussions and talks and conferences that went on.

There are here, as you have noted, a couple of Beverly Smith folders. Folders labeled "Beverly Smith." Beverly Smith was the Washington editor of the *Saturday Evening Post* and the stories here torn out, were very accurate, as accurate as it was possible to make them. I assisted, at the President's direction, Beverly Smith in preparing, in assembling the material.

HESS: For these articles.

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ELSEY: For these articles. I made arrangements for Smith to see the President, and for Smith to see the senior officials at State and Defense. I would personally call the Secretary of State or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and say that Beverly Smith is doing this, and that the President requested that an interview be granted to Smith. So, these were authorized Government stories,

as accurate as it was possible to make them in those days. Because Beverly Smith did not have all the top secret clearances, naturally, I did not turn over to him the documents, but I would read or would cite facts in messages and memorandas for him. Then the articles, the draft of his articles, were cleared for security to make sure that there were no inadvertent security violations affecting military matters.

HESS: The other day when I was going through the speech at the time that he dismissed MacArthur, I noticed that in the speech he had not mentioned Matthew Ridgway, the man who was going to take over the job. I believe that you put that in at the last minute. Do you recall that?

ELSEY: I do not recall that, Jerry. If you find an annotation to that effect, that undoubtedly is what happened,

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but I do not at this stage of the game recall that.

HESS: I'm positive that it's in here but you know it's like a needle in the haystack as thick as they are.

ELSEY: No, I have no recollection now, Jerry as to--I think we'll simply have to let the file and the drafts speak for themselves.

HESS: They can find it very easily because I'm quite sure that it is there, but right now my eye doesn't land on it. I believe that that was right here.

Okay, that pretty well goes through box four? I'll get box five.

ELSEY: I think these memoranda, these minutes of meetings, will be fairly interesting and fairly significant, because I would doubt that these are going to be available anyplace else.

HESS: May and June, this was just after the dismissal. During the time of the MacArthur hearings up on the Hill, was there any special effort by the White House staff to build the White House's case?

ELSEY: This was done. The burden was carried by State and

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Defense, not by the White House staff.

HESS: All right, box number five.

ELSEY: Well, now we're going back to a different time period, aren't we?

HESS: We sure are.

ELSEY: We are now going more to domestic matters.

HESS: Yes, and the first one is the Truman Doctrine speech.

ELSEY: Yes, well this is March 12, 1947 with (I'm afraid that it's been sort of scrambled up because various people have looked at it from time to time), various drafts and versions of the speech, drafts as they come over from the State Department and the changes that were made at the White House with annotations, I guess, in the margin pretty clearly as to who made what changes and why.

Such miscellaneous items as an article by a newspaper or magazine writer, oh, many years later, 1964, Mr. [John Jay] Iselin, went through and wrote a draft or a piece on the origin of the message.

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HESS: I see he turned that in as a Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard.

ELSEY: Really?

HESS: Yes.

ELSEY: I had no record of what he did with his article.

HESS: And I've been trying to get ahold of it, but I haven't been able to, but that was his Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard.

ELSEY: I have a minor gripe about scholars and others who come in to look through papers. You never heard from them again, they never say "thank you," and you never know whether they ever do anything with the interview or with all the pawing through of your papers that they've done.

HESS: Well, now you know, you've helped this young man through Harvard.

ELSEY: You might put that in large letters emblazed in gold in the reading room out there at the Independence library.

HESS: Show a little appreciation.

ELSEY: Show a little appreciation. For God's sake tell the

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people who go out of their way to help what you do with your . . .

HESS: Did you help in the writing of the Truman Doctrine?

ELSEY: Oh, yes, certainly. And Iselin, I think Iselin was the writer who spotted these interesting sentences or what he thought were interesting. The credo--the "I believe it must be." This is where this appeared, it was not in what came over from the State Department. It was what I did here in my, you know, Sunday the 9th of March where I broke it down into short sentences and put in three "I believes" because I thought it would have much more impact and much more meaning. Also, it would be more helpful to the President.

For example, look Jerry, this matter of style. Now, I know Joe [Joseph M.] Jones who then was of the State Department, wrote a book later mostly for which he patted himself on the back for the great speech he had written, and for his fine style that he thought the White House staff had messed up. But look at his beautiful prose. Here's a sentence:

It is essential to our security that we assist free peoples to work out
their own destiny in

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their own way and our help must be primarily in the form of that
economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and
orderly political processes.

Now, I submit, is that the kind of a sentence that President Truman could have delivered effectively, and with force, to the Congress? No, it simply is not his style, it's not a good sentence for anybody, not even a Dean Acheson could have done well with a sentence like that.

HESS: By the time you get to the end you've forgot what was at the beginning.

ELSEY: If you can ever get to the end without collapsing. That's the sort of thing that I would take on many occasions, and in this instance did, and break down into short, sharp sentences with a degree of punch to them and you can see how I rewrote it in that draft.

Well, this is the--these are the drafts of what was done at the White House on that one.

HESS: Now, the background of the 1949 inaugural address.

ELSEY: The same sort of thing. I'm afraid this has been pawed through by so many people so many times that it's sort of a hopeless jumble, but I'm sure...

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HESS: I think we pretty well covered that in our interview when we were talking about speeches.

ELSEY: I think we did. I think we've done so.

HESS: Now, the next thing is this.

ELSEY: That's some more material on the '48 State of the Union, actually all of these are out of chronological sequence.

HESS: All right, the next thing is the Jefferson speech at the Library of Congress on May 17, of 1950. Tell me about the background of that speech.

ELSEY: Well, we I d been out on the West Coast on a speaking tour, and my recollection is that when we got back, just about the day we got back, Charlie Ross called me over to the West Wing to his office, and told me the President would be going up the next day to the Library of Congress to a ceremony to accept Volume I of the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* which were being published by Princeton University, under the editorship of Julian Boyd. Would I please think up some remarks for the President to make on the occasion.

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I had been vaguely aware of the fact that the President would be going up, but I must say that I had forgotten all about it because of the press of that trip out to the West. Yes, here's the letter from Dr. [Harold W.] Dodds and the President to me, written a number of months earlier, so I was aware of it, but I had forgotten about it or hadn't been giving much thought to it.

Well, this was sort of grim, I was tired, everybody else was, Charlie Ross' request was grim. The thought of having to do a speech. But I went to work and as you can see from these absolutely illegible longhand notes, did a short, ten minutes at most, kind of remarks that I thought would be appropriate for the President on that occasion. I did not know whether he would want to read a text or just use the outline of the notes I'd given him for background for off-the-cuff.

I saw Charlie and the President the first thing the next morning, the day he was to go up, and outlined what I had in mind and it sounded okay to them. We transcribed it, Ross decided that he would--the President decided he would -read it and Ross decided that he would turn it out as a full advance text. At first he said he would speak

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briefly from notes, and then later Ross changed his mind and gave out the full story.

The remarks about the National Historical Publications Commission, and the request the President was making to the National Historical Publications Commission to look into the matter of collecting and publishing the writings of a wide variety of men and women who had made contributions to our society, that was one of those spur of the moment things when you're grasping for straws trying to get some substance into a speech. And that struck me as being necessary and useful and I had only time to--I was unable to reach Wayne Grover, who was then

the Archivist, until the speech was already being transcribed before I got to Wayne and read it to him, and he made some suggestions, and we thought those up, or incorporated those, his suggestions. And so it went.

HESS: Now, is this your writing down at the bottom, "The whole proposal was..."

ELSEY: "G. M. E."

HESS: G.M.E.".... thought up in bed on the night of the 16th..."

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ELSEY: "...and cleared orally with the President at 0900 on the morning of the 17th, while the speech was still in pencil draft."

HESS: Now, what did Dr. Grover think of the idea of saying something about the National Historical Publications Commission, was he all for it?

ELSEY: Thought it was a great idea. The National Historical Publications was dormant and had been doing practically nothing in those days and he was completely in support, and as you undoubtedly know, this turned into a major activity. It was a rejuvenation of the National Historical Publications Commission, and the commission has done a superb job in this area in the two decades since then.

HESS: What made you think of the National Historical Publications Commission? What brought this to mind?

ELSEY: Well, I of course, knew Wayne Grover well. We had talked over the years on many aspects of papers and presidential archives, so I was vaguely aware that there was such a thing as the National Historical Publications Commission, and I suppose at some prior time, Dr. Grover

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must have mentioned its existence to me, and the fact that it wasn't amounting to very much, and that someday, somebody had ought to do something about it, and so this was a good occasion to do something about it.

HESS: You later served on the commission.

ELSEY: I served on the commission for a year, as it was getting reorganized to be sure it started down this direction. I had a great deal of kidding from my colleagues in the White House staff who knew that I had had historical training and graduate work, and they accused me of this being "Elsey's boondoggle." Bell and Lloyd and Ken Hechler, Steve Spingarn, Roger Tubby and the others had a lot of fun teasing me that this was a WPA for historians, thought up by Elsey. This was a good gag, and I went along with this kidding.

HESS: Something for historians, by a historian.

ELSEY: Something for historians, by a historian. So, they teased me for a long time, and that was just fine with me because I believed in what we were doing.

I didn't want to serve more than the one year just

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to sort of held be sure that the thing got started, and I was named to a one year term, and when the year was coming to an end, the President said he would reappoint me and I asked not to be reappointed and recommended instead a former professor of mine at Harvard, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr. Dr. Schlesinger was appointed to a full three year term which was fine.

HESS: How do you think that the National Historical Publications Commission has worked out to this time?

ELSEY: Great! I think it's doing exactly--it's doing all I hoped and a heck of a lot more than I had hoped would be possible. I don't think that there's anything further to say on that, unless you have some question.

HESS: No. That was it on this.

ELSEY: "Speech Clearance." There was a period, especially in the White House (changing now subjects rather drastically), after the problems of Louis Johnson, Secretary of the Navy Matthews, MacArthur and so on, there was a period when we were requiring departments and agencies to submit speeches that had anything to do with foreign or military policy, to the White House for clearance. That's what this

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folder on "Speech Clearance" is. A number of speeches to be given, or proposed to be given, by various people came over and they usually ended up on my desk for clearance.

I must say (backing up now a bit to MacArthur's dismissal), the actual technicality on which he was dismissed was his violation of a presidential order, edict, that speeches relating to foreign policy be cleared in Washington. That was something that--that little memorandum, and I'm sure you will find that in the files there someplace was a directive that was concocted in Charlie Murphy's office at the White House and my recollection is early in December 1950, shortly after the Chinese had come in and there were all these multiple crises.

Ed Barrett (Edward W. Barrett), was then the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. Barrett and I had worked closely on many, many things and we were much concerned about the shooting off of the mouth by so many people in the Government on the implications of the Chinese entry into the war, what our foreign policy and military developments were likely to be. So, Ed and I prepared, drafted, and it was very

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quickly cleared, all in a matter of an hour or more, a directive from the White House which required clearances on speeches dealing with military and foreign policy. It was primarily intended to keep the military from talking about foreign policy, but so that it wouldn't appear to be aimed solely at the military, we double-barreled it and said that diplomatic and State Department people couldn't talk about military events without Pentagon clearance, and military people couldn't talk about foreign matters without State Department clearance. The aim was solely at the military, but so that it wouldn't appear to be so critical of them, we as I say, we tried to balance it.

Months later when people were trying to find something to accuse MacArthur of violating, that was the only piece of paper that you could show that he actually violated, a presidential order. It might be interesting to try and track that down in my December '50 papers.

HESS: What about the meeting between Truman and Eisenhower after the election of 1952? It's in the folder "Truman and Eisenhower Meeting November 18, 1952." Do you recall offhand very much about the meeting? Was it cordial,

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uncordial?

ELSEY: No, I do not really recall very much about that at all.

HESS: Do you recall what aides Eisenhower brought?

ELSEY: I'm sorry to say I do not now recall. I can't, no. This folder actually has a few other things in it too, it's the transition and most of what I see in here really relates to--or much of it I see in here relates to Harriman's turning over the responsibility for the Mutual Security Program to Governor [Harold] Stassen.

I do have--well, you'll find here a draft of a memorandum on notes of the meeting of the President and General Eisenhower, which were dictated by Averell Harriman and then I see changes in the draft both in Harriman's handwriting and in my handwriting. I don't have a final draft of it, and other -papers relating to it such as the press -release which came out.

HESS: How did the transition go? Did it go smoothly in the Mutual Security Agency?

ELSEY: In the Mutual Security Agency it went very smoothly.

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Harriman phoned Stassen within minutes after Stassen's appointment was announced from General Eisenhower's office in

New York; pledged all support to him. Governor Stassen came down quite early, Harriman introduced him to all the senior members of his staff. I was designated to be the liaison with Governor Stassen and we prepared briefing books for Stassen. He came down quite often from Philadelphia. (He was then president of the University of Pennsylvania). He spent a lot of time with us and went at his work very seriously and very diligently. There were very cordial relationships between Harriman and Stassen and they would dine together in the evening. It was Harriman's intent to make every scrap of information available to Governor Stassen that he was interested in seeing and also making all people available to him. This was a model, I think, of transition. It was rare because, you see, this really was the first time in our modern history that there had been any serious effort at transition preparation. Now, it's a well-accepted practice, but it was not then, and I think Harriman's pioneering efforts with Stassen were about--were among the best.

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HESS: It's getting pretty close to twelve and we're about to run out of tape.

ELSEY: Clippings and speeches, that's all. I think the rest of this particular box number . . .

HESS: Five.

ELSEY: . . . five, is largely public material, unclassified material, which I doubt if it has any great significance that can't be readily--isn't readily apparent just by looking at the folders of material itself.

Okay Jerry, will that do it for now?

HESS: We have boxes six and seven that look fairly self-explanatory. Want me to drag them out?

ELSEY: No, I don't think it's necessary. Box six--I think these are all self-explanatory.

There was this very serious question which was in the minds of lawyers and FDR's family and the U.S. Government in 1945, at the time of his death, all kinds of matters had to be taken up regarding the transfer of his papers to the FDR Library. There were legal questions about whether they were the property of the FDR estate, or the property of the United States Government. There were questions about access to them, security, and so

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on and so forth, and these manila envelopes which are labeled by me "Roosevelt, FDR Library," have memoranda, letters, notes of conversations on those topics.

There is this whole question of figuring out what kind of regulations would be promulgated by the Government for the use of presidential papers, this had not been done before. You will recall that by the time we got around to this, when the papers were up there at Hyde Park, we were

already in a hot political climate. The 80th Congress was controlled by the opposition party; there was concern on the part of some people that the Republicans might engage in "fishing expeditions" in the Roosevelt Library to see what they could dig out that would be embarrassing to the Democratic administration. All these facts and factors came into play in the drafting of regulations.

In the Archives the professional staff of the Archives was, of course, very concerned that everything be done in a professional manner and that they, that the Archives, which had responsibility for these papers, not be caught in the middle of partisan political fights and feuds. They regarded themselves as scholars

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and archivists, librarians, and they wanted to treat these papers with the highest of professional standards. So, this was terribly important and this, incidentally, was the way that Harry, President Truman, felt. He was very keen on this matter that he wanted to make sure that neither FDR's nor any other President's or political figure's papers that came into the possession of the Government were treated with any other than a professional manner with the highest ethical and archival and historical standards.

HESS: After Mr. Truman left office did he think that the Republicans were going to go into a "fishing expedition" in his papers if they were opened forthwith?

ELSEY: I'm not conscious of that feeling on his part. I think we recognized in the regulation both drafted by Justice and published in the *Federal Register* that those regulations regarding FDR papers, would very likely set a precedent and there had been no effort by the Republicans or others to raid the FDR Library. There was a recognition by responsible people on the Hill that these papers were official U.S. Government records and ought to be treated as such, and I think by the time

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President Truman left office, this kind of fear had pretty much subsided all the way around. I'm not conscious of any worry on his part.

There are other folders here, background on various questions of responses, requests of congressional committees, and others, regarding not only papers of FDR, but of the Truman administration. I think you'll find those self-explanatory.

Do you have any questions regarding Forrestal? Why I happened to have some--a folder on James Forrestal?

HESS: What was your involvement there?

ELSEY: Forrestal, you know, left office a pretty distraught man at the beginning of 1949. He had no confidence in Louis Johnson, his successor as Secretary of Defense, and was particularly

concerned at the prospect of Secretary Johnson's having access to Forrestal's most personal and private memoranda of conversations, personal papers and so on. So, Forrestal sent one four or five drawer file safe with his "diary," which was not really a diary, but it was called that, over to the office of the Naval Aide to the President, Rear Admiral [Robert L.]

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Dennison, for safekeeping. This was frankly to prevent any fishing expedition by Louis Johnson in his personal papers. He didn't take them with him to his home because much of the material was very highly classified, and he did not want to run any security risks by taking that material out of the hands of the Government.

Then, as we recall, Forrestal died very suddenly and totally unexpectedly in, I think it was, mid-April 1949. So, the papers remained in the Naval Aide's office at the White House for some time thereafter while Mrs. Forrestal and Forrestal's attorneys considered what to do with them.

Quite a while later, and I would have to look at the file to refresh my memory on the dates, Mrs. Forrestal and the estate arranged for the publication of the so called *Forrestal Diary*. This meant that they wanted access, or they wanted the writer to have access, to, among other things, the material there at the White House. Because of the concern for security matters, it was agreed that before we released these papers to Walter Millis, who was to be the editor, they would be reviewed by a representative of the Department of

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Defense and by a representative of the White House. I think by this time Louis Johnson was gone and General Marshall was the Secretary of Defense. Marshall designated Mr. Marx Leva to be his representative, and I was designated to be the White House representative.

In company with Walter Millis and Eugene Duffield who had worked in the Pentagon with Forrestal and who was I think by now an attorney in private practice representing the estate, Duffield and Millis, Leva and I went through the Forrestal papers that were at the White House. Leva's and my concern were solely security. We felt that we had no basis for making any judgments other than on a security basis. The propriety of personal comments and so on, this was not in our concern. Marx found some papers, which in his judgment, to release would clearly endanger national security, and there was no argument on any of those. There were a few papers I found that had foreign policy implications, or that affected, or where President Truman was quoted by Forrestal in memoranda or letters he wrote as having certain views and I thought and expressed the opinions that some of these would be prejudicial to the President

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if they were to be printed and published at that time.

It all boiled down to a very, very few cases where perhaps, not more than eight or ten, where

there was some question amongst the group of us as to the propriety of releasing. These issues were all resolved amicably after a thorough discussion. The result was the printing of the book *Forrestal Diary* which did no harm to national security, caused no embarrassment to the President in his relations with foreign nations or others. But that's just the background of why the devil I had anything to do with the Forrestal papers.

HESS: One general question concerning Secretary Forrestal. Before his suicide did you see any evidence of mental degeneration on his part?

ELSEY: I think the last time I saw him was early January '49 when I participated in a meeting regarding the proposed amendments to the National Security Act. I'm not conscious of having noted then any change in his manner or behavior. A book has been written, I think, by a psychiatrist on Forrestal. Lots of other people have

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made comments about it, but I was not aware the last time I saw him of any significant change in his--well, delete the word "significant"--of any change in his manner or conduct. Others who were intimately associated with him almost on an around the clock basis, have had different views and have written them and so on. I don't deny that they may be accurate, I just say I don't have any information of that sort.

HESS: Do you know why he was picked as the first Secretary of Defense?

ELSEY: Oh, yes. His views on the "merger" of the Army and the Navy (as a word that was widely used), were well known. He was a strong opponent of any thought of merging the Army and the Navy to have a single unified armed force as some people were advocating. Secretary of War Patterson felt that a "merged" military force was the answer. (We're now back at the closing months of World War II, in the first few months of peace, '45, '46.)

Forrestal was quick to admit that there had been many inadequacies in the coordination of Army and Navy during the war, and more particularly coordination of the military effort with the State Department with foreign policy objectives. He was very quick to recognize that and admit it, but his remedy was not a merger of the Army and Navy

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but rather devising much more effective and sophisticated machinery than the informal working committees. SWNCC was one of them (State, War, and Navy Coordinating Committee).

Forrestal thought devices like this were utterly inadequate and that we needed what in due course was to be called the National Security Council. We also needed something that ultimately became the NSRB (National Security Resources Board), so that all the civilian aspects of our economy which are necessary to support the armed forces were organized in a coordinated fashion.

Forrestal's views, in other words, rose above the mere question of how the Army and Navy got along, to the much more important question of how the military effort was related to the rest of the United States Government. And so, because Forrestal had negative reactions to actual "merger," but very positive and constructive attitudes on other issues, he was naturally thought

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about by the President as a strong possibility.

Furthermore, if you will, perhaps he was "bought off" in his opposition to any kind of unification because the President said in effect, "You come along with our plan for reorganization of the armed forces and I'll make you the first Secretary of Defense." Forrestal certainly couldn't object to that, nor could Forrestal have any views that the Navy would be sabotaged or done away with

HESS: Not while he was there.

ELSEY: . . . or that it would lose the Marine Corps to the Army, or lose Naval Aviation to the newly proposed United States Air Force as long as he were Secretary of Defense. This was a case of everybody's interests being served. He could see to it that the Navy and the Marine Corps and the Naval Air Forces, to which he was passionately devoted, and for which he had unbounded admiration, he could ensure that their attributes and assets were properly recognized and properly protected. At the same time he could work for these other things in which he so strongly believed. I can't think of another man who would

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have been a better choice, or nearly as good a choice, as Forrestal for the first Secretary of Defense. And when I say his opposition was "bought off" by the offer of the job, I don't mean that to sound that there was any--I don't mean it to imply that there was anything cheap or sinister about this. Not at all. The whole thing was a positive, constructive approach to the situation by President Truman and by Forrestal.

HESS: Did there seem to be, during the Truman administration, an undue rivalry between the State Department and the Department of Defense as to who would be the President's prime adviser?

ELSEY: Well, there never was in President Truman's mind! To President Truman, the Secretary of State was number one. The State Department was the senior department. There may have been in Louis Johnson's mind, or a few other people's minds, but there sure was never any doubt in President Truman's mind on that score.

And President Truman and Johnson and just anybody who had anything to do with the Government knew that the State Department had been sadly neglected, badly left out of things in especially the latter part of World War II,

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that President Roosevelt by leaving Cordell Hull there, a tired, elderly man. By downgrading State, by not having State participants in most of his most important conferences, the State Department suffered in prestige and influence and, I think, the United States Government suffered because many decisions were made without foreign policy consideration having come into play. And I think that was very short-sighted and damned unfortunate, and Truman believed this.

I might mention (this is an incidental footnote), that Admiral William D. Leahy, who was as crusty an old sailor as ever existed, and was President Roosevelt's chief of staff from July 1942 on, personally believed this very strongly. Instead of being an anti-State Department man, as some people assumed that an old sailor automatically would be, Admiral Leahy was the one man around the White House who kept constantly saying, "But the State Department ought to be consulted." As the war went further and further along and as decisions began to be more and more political and less and less military, it was Leahy who insisted that there be a relationship with the State Department. It was Leahy who arranged to have "Chip" Bohlen (Charles E. Bohlen),

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named as his, Leahy's, personal liaison with the State Department. So, in the last year of the Roosevelt administration, Bohlen would come over to the White House every day to see Admiral Leahy and Leahy would bring Bohlen up to date on the Roosevelt-Churchill, Roosevelt-Stalin messages, what the thinking of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were. This was invaluable.

We're off the point of what you were talking about, Jerry, but I feel very keenly that this is an aspect of things that is not widely recognized, perhaps not recognized at all, and anyone--and occasionally I have seen or been conscious of, or had questions asked, "Wasn't Leahy detrimental? Didn't he exaggerate the military influence?" And my answer is, of course, precisely the reverse, "Not at all." Admiral Leahy was perhaps the one strong man in the White House during the war who was trying to keep political and foreign policy matters in some sort of perspective with President Roosevelt.

HESS: Very good. Box number seven.

ELSEY: Junk.

HESS: Oh, now!

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ELSEY: Some of it purely incidental, personal correspondence, or so on, that . . .

HESS: Files on individuals.

ELSEY: General files on individuals. I think mostly personal correspondence. I don't know

that there's much there of great value to anybody. There are a couple of folders on "White House Social Seasons, '45, '46, '47," somebody might find some tidbits of information.

HESS: And four loose-leaf notebooks.

ELSEY: Well, those four loose-leaf notebooks of President Truman's messages to Congress, were steady working documents and working files for me at the time. There was no publication, as there is now, of the weekly presidential documents. There was no ready or convenient access to the President's messages of even a few months earlier, and so those were constant working papers on my part. They have no Special value now because, of course, the Archives has very admirably edited the Truman papers.

HESS: Is that all for one morning?

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ELSEY: That's all I have.

HESS: Thank you very much.

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Seventh Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at the National Headquarters of the American Red Cross, Washington, D.C., July 7, 1970. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: All right, Mr. Elsey, to begin with this morning let's discuss foreign aid and foreign affairs. And for our first question let's just compare the way that the White House staff is used and is instrumental in the establishment of foreign policy today, and the way that it was in Mr. Truman's administration.

ELSEY: The first point to bear in mind is that the White House staff is very much larger now than it was in the Truman administration, and particularly in this matter of foreign affairs. As every reader of the press, and every observer of the White House scene knows, Dr. [Henry A.] Kissinger has a large staff, thirty to forty professionals, working for him in the field of foreign policy. In the closing days of the Johnson administration, Dr. Walt Rostow had the comparable job, and in the Kennedy administration and early Johnson days, it was McGeorge Bundy. There was no operation, no group, in any way resembling this in the Truman administration.

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As I think we've said in earlier interviews, the White House staff was a very small group throughout most of the Truman administration. It did grow slowly through the seven years, but it was a fraction in numbers of what today's White House staff is.

There were no "experts" on foreign affairs in the White House. There were a few of us on the White House staff who dealt on a pretty regular basis with the Department of State and the Department of Defense. I was one of them, but we did not purport to be foreign policy makers or foreign policy experts. The President looked to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for the advice, the opinions, the information, and the recommendations that he needed in formulating foreign policy decisions. The National Security Council was organized as a result of passage of the National Security Act of 1947 and the NSC from the time it was created and through the remaining years of the Truman administration, was the focus of the major foreign policy discussions within the administration.

Dean Acheson's book tells, books tell as well as any single source that I can think of, of the relationship

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between Mr. Truman and his Secretary of State, and the Department of State in those days. There was no--nothing in any way that compares with the, say, the last ten years in the White House structure, whereby foreign policy matters flowed through a large White House staff, were sifted, pulled apart, examined, put back together again, before being presented to the President. Nothing like that.

I can recall a couple of years ago I was asked by an interviewer, whose full biography at that time I did not know, how I accounted for the golden age of the State Department. And I asked him what he meant by the golden age of the State Department and he said he was referring to that period of '46, '47, '48, when such fundamental matters as the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall plan, the Berlin airlift, many very critical, crucial decisions were made. Why couldn't the State Department be as innovative and brave and decisive today as it was then? He asked the question in 1968 and my answer was: "Because in those days there was no Walt Rostow." I was referring to the fact that there was a sizeable staff of people **at** the White

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House who tended then, and I believe the tendency still exists, to smother, to blanket, the State Department. My answer was not very tactful because the man who was asking me the question was an alumnus of the Rostow staff at the White House, and he didn't think there was anything funny about the answer. I didn't intend to be funny, but I do think that when the President is--any President, is surrounded by a large White House staff which figures, which assumes, that it knows more than the responsible department of Government about the area of responsibility of that department, the department is bound to suffer. The President doesn't get the best thinking that the department is capable of, and as a result he may not always come out with the best decisions. But these are generalizations, and perhaps the generalizations will have more meaning if we move on, Jerry, to specific points.

HESS: One point that I would like to cover deals with the fact that you mentioned that the State Department was in charge of foreign policy during that time. Wasn't the State Department against the recognition of the State of Israel? Weren't there elements, major elements,

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within the State Department against the recognition of the State of Israel and weren't they overruled by Mr. Truman and his advisers?

ELSEY: Yes, there were foreign service officers who had very serious questions about the recognition of the State of Israel. Not just in the State Department. A number of people in the Department of Defense felt the same way. James Forrestal was particularly concerned about American policy as regards the Palestinian problem because, having been Secretary of the Navy, he was much concerned about the availability of Middle Eastern oil, for not only at our military establishment, but for our industrial economy, and he was pretty jittery about any actions which would so disturb the Middle East that it might cut off access of the United States to oil in the Arab countries.

So, it's not just the Department of State, there were a number of people both in and out of Government who questioned the advisability of the United States' recognition of an independent Israel.

It was a tough question, views were strongly and sharply held in the Congress, in the press, in the

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executive branch and throughout the United States. The President took all the factors into account. When he decided to recognize Israel, the critics who had taken the opposite position, of course, cried politics. Regardless of what decision he might have made, those that didn't like the decision would have cried politics, because it was a question in which there never has been a unanimity of opinion in this country.

HESS: On that matter, who do you think were the President's principal advisers? Who were the most important people to advise him to go ahead with the recognition of the State of Israel?

ELSEY: I'm not sure that I can name any two, three, or four individuals, and I'm not sure that it would serve any purpose even if I were to name individuals, because as I said a few moments ago, the question of Israel, whether or not there should be an independent Israel, whether it should be recognized by the United States, those were matters that had been in the forefront of public debate for a number of years. And the President, as a former member of the Senate, as a, briefly, Vice President, and then as President since April of '45, was

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fully conscious of the divergent opinions. He had heard from Zionist leaders, he had heard from Arab groups, pro-Arab groups, he just took advice and counsel and listened patiently, and I suppose at times impatiently, to conflicting points of view, and made up his mind on the basis of, I suppose hundreds of conversations over a period of many years. I don't, I really can't put my finger on a name and say, "This is the man who advised Harry Truman and whose advice was

accepted."

HESS: Do you recall what recommendation Dave Niles, the man who was in charge of such matters, perhaps in charge of Jewish matters, gave in this matter?

ELSEY: Dave Niles was a most secretive individual who slunk rather furtively around the corridors of the White House and the Executive Office Building and Dave Niles rarely, if ever, confided to his White House colleagues as to what he said to the President or what his recommendations were. Part of the influence that Niles liked to have people feel he had on the President was his, was this secretiveness. I don't believe he saw the President nearly as often as Niles would lead his

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friends on the outside to believe that he saw him. Niles had many Zionist friends, but he did try to maintain contacts with, at least for a number of years, with non-Zionists as well. I suppose Dave Niles was a--well, I shouldn't say I suppose, I'm confident that he would have urged the recognition of Israel, but you tend to discount the recommendations of a man whose position is so well-known.

Dave Niles had been regarded for many years in the Roosevelt administration, and on into the Truman administration, as a representative of, or spokesman for, I should say rather than of, spokesman for various minority groups in the United States and as the Zionist clamor grew louder and louder, David Niles, who was Jewish, was just expected to be setting forth their point of view. Well, when you know what position a man is going to present, it doesn't have any particularly outstanding merit or weight. You don't give it any special treatment.

HESS: Do you recall what recommendations Clark Clifford gave to the President in this matter?

ELSEY: I think it's best to ask Mr. Clifford on that. If

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you haven't already talked to him about it, I'd go ahead and ask him.

HESS: We will, but now we are asking his principal assistant.

ELSEY: I was not privileged with Clifford's conversations with the President on this subject.

HESS: Did Eddie Jacobson play any part in the President's recognition of the State of Israel?

ELSEY: I'll answer that the same way that I did, or at least a part of my answer, about Dave Niles.

Eddie Jacobson was very well-known as an ardent Zionist, an ardent proponent of the

recognition of the State of Israel. He was a longtime friend of the President's. The President had known him since World War I and, as we all know, the two had briefly been business partners. The President liked Jacobson, he respected him, and he also was the President of the whole United States and not just the President of--not just the representative of one group that had very strong views. I'm sure he listened to Eddie Jacobson, but because Jacobson's position was so well-known, and one might almost say was an extreme position, I don't

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think it had any special, or undue, influence on the President. The President had, obviously had, to take a much broader look at an issue as critical as this, and not just listen to somebody whom he had known for thirty or more years.

HESS: All right. Let's go back in time just a bit. In our last interview you mentioned Admiral Leahy, and in the book, *White House Sailor* by Commander William Rigdon, Commander Rigdon quoted a letter from Admiral Wilson Brown to you. And in the letter it states, more or less, that Leahy favored Russian entry into the war, and then after the war, after the difficulties began to arise with Russia, Admiral Leahy said he had not been in favor of Russians entry into the fighting. Do you recall anything at all about that matter?

ELSEY: I recently had occasion to look at Commander Rigdon's book again, and will have to confess that I do--was surprised at seeing a reference to a letter from Admiral Brown to me. I do not now at this date, recall such a letter. I'm sure if Bill Rigdon cites it, quotes it, that there was such a letter. Indeed, the chances are that the Admiral dictated it to Bill and Bill transcribed

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it, so I'm not attempting to deny the letter, it's just that I don't recall it. As for those views of Admiral Leahy, I think we're talking about a Leahy attitude on the Soviet entry into the war against Japan not the war against Germany.

HESS: The Asian war.

ELSEY: The Asian war. Admiral Leahy was a pretty crusty and salty old fellow. I don't think Admiral Leahy ever really trusted anybody other than the United States, and had it been possible, he would have liked to have fought all wars without allies because he knew that you invariably had difficulties and difference of opinion with allies, and frequently your differences--the fact that you have been allies during a war, led to great problems after a war.

I think that Admiral Brown is right in saying that--in raising, in being perplexed at this, Leahy's postwar assertions that he had not favored the entry of Russia into the war against Japan. I think Brown is right in being perplexed because he'd never heard, and I don't remember ever having heard Admiral Leahy say, while the war was still on, that he did not want

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the Russians to enter the war against Japan. He may privately have hoped that in some fashion the war could end without their getting into it, but I don't recall, and obviously neither did Admiral Brown recall, that he ever took a stand against their being involved in the war.

Actually, it wouldn't have done any good for us to have said one way or the other, "We don't want the Russians in the war against Japan." If the Russians wanted to get in they would get in regardless of what our views were. The Russians would act in their own self-interest, and if they thought their self-interest would be served by their declaring war against Japan, they would do it, regardless of whether we wanted them to or not. Conversely if they thought their self-interest would not be served by their entering the Far Eastern war, they wouldn't have entered it regardless of how much pressure we might have tried to put on to induce them to enter. And I think Admiral Leahy was enough of a realist during the war to know that. I suspect, in whatever he wrote and said after the war was a bit of wishful thinking. Just sort of wishing that

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they hadn't gotten in, but knowing perfectly well that there wasn't anything that we could do about it one way or another.

HESS: Do you recall anything about the nature of the relationship between Admirals Brown and Leahy? Anything of interest in that line of thought?

ELSEY: Well, first of all we should recognize the fact that the two men had known one another for very, very many years. They had been naval colleagues. Admiral Leahy was the senior by about five years. Leahy graduated from the Academy in '97 and then Brown in 1902, I believe, maybe the class of '01, I think it was 1902. And having been Regular naval officers, lifelong naval officers, their relationship was colored a bit by the fact that one was five years senior to the other, and Admiral Brown accorded Admiral Leahy the kind of respect and deferential treatment that he had all his life, all his professional life, accorded his senior officer. They had mutual respect for one another. During the period that Leahy, for example, was Chief of Naval Operations, he had recommended the appointment of Admiral Brown as superintendent of the Naval Academy, that every time

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that Leahy had a senior, or responsible -position in the Navy Department, he had recommended Brown for promotion, or for a post of responsibility in the Navy. So, the two men had much respect for one another's ability.

I think there was a bit of, I'm not quite sure what phrase to use, a little bit of protocol problem at times during the war. Admiral Brown had served twice before as a Naval Aide to the President and in those peacetime years, the Naval Aides to the President, just like a Military Aide to the President, had a very intimate, very personal relationship with the Commander in Chief. There had been no post comparable to Admiral Leahy's prior to the war.

When Admiral Leahy became Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief in the summer of 1942,

that was a brand new position without any precedent whatsoever. Leahy being a senior officer, being in fact the senior officer of the total United States military establishment, naturally felt that he outranked all other military personnel, whatever their position, and that he should be accorded a position closest to the President, and this is a little bit contrary to the feelings of "Pa"

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[Edwin M.] Watson and Admiral Brown, who through their long experience as military naval aides to the President, sort of felt that they should be closest to the President. This was never a serious matter. It sometimes caused a bit of elbowing, or jockeying for position, when somebody was going to take a photograph, but to those of us who were very junior officers, we were just mildly amused at this hanky-panky on the part of such senior "old men," as they seemed to us at the time. But that's pretty superficial and I don't mean to exaggerate or stress, or overstress, or emphasize it, but it has been exaggerated in my opinion by some people who write about that period, and who try to imply that Leahy and Brown didn't get along, or that Leahy and "Pa" Watson didn't get along. It's too superficial to dwell on and I've dwelled on it really longer than it merits, but just to try to put it in what I think was the proper light.

HESS: On the subject of the Yalta Conference, did you have any duties dealing with that conference?

ELSEY: I was on the staff of Admiral Brown, the Naval Aide at that time, and had, at Admiral Brown's request, prepared some background papers, some briefing memorandas,

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some factual or historical synopses of points that were to be discussed at Yalta. But that was all. I did not go to the Yalta Conference.

During the Yalta Conference I was on duty in the Map Room as one of the regular duty officers there. I had no other responsibility other than some of the background, or preparatory work and serving in the Map Room during the conference. The Map Room officers who were assigned to the trip, to the team, and who did go were Lt. Robert W. Bogue, USNR, and Captain Henry W. Putnam, U.S. Army, those were the two Map Room officers. Commander Rigdon went along as the Assistant to the Naval Aide, and Warrant Officer Albert Cornelius accompanied the group to serve as cipher officer and extra clerical staff for the White House group.

HESS: After Mr. Roosevelt died and Mr. Truman became President, his first major conference was the Potsdam Conference. I do believe that you went along on that trip. Is that correct?

ELSEY: That's correct.

HESS: What do you recall of those days, and what were your

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duties?

ELSEY: Because of the change of administration, the fact that President Truman was new to the office, and as he himself has testified in writing and orally on numerous occasions, he had very little background in many of these matters. He had not been informed as a Senator, and had not been informed on these matters by President Roosevelt during the brief time that he, Mr. Truman, was Vice President. He had an enormous amount of homework to do to catch up on the political, military and diplomatic questions that were to be discussed at Potsdam. Also he had inherited a Secretary of State, in whom he had little confidence, and whom he intended to replace by Mr. Justice [James F.] Byrnes. He had other new White House staff and advisers, so my principal work preparatory to the Potsdam Conference, was comparable to what I had done for Yalta, but in a much greater scale. Numerous papers, some just two or three pages, some much longer, summarizing the topics that we anticipated would be discussed at Potsdam and on which the Map Room or other White House files had extensive background data. Of course the State Department was preparing papers and

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the Joint Chiefs of Staff were too, but some of these topics were more completely covered in White House files than anyplace else and we wanted to be certain that all of that data was in the President's hands.

I suggested some matters to Admiral Brown, who concurred. Admiral Brown, however, had left the White House before we had gotten very far on this, his successor was Captain James K. Vardaman, USNR, and so I reviewed these matters with Vardaman. He told me to go full speed ahead. Admiral Leahy and Harry Hopkins also suggested topics that they thought I should prepare background briefing papers on.

In the material which you and I recently looked at at the National Archives, Jerry, and which has now been sent out to Independence, I think we found lists of these background papers, copies of them, and occasional notes from Leahy, Hopkins, and others about the matters that should be covered, and that's pretty extensively handled in my material that is there in the Truman Library.

As for the conference itself, I don't believe there is really anything that I can add to what is really pretty well documented and pretty well publicized. The hour by hour chronology of what the President and his staff did

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is covered by the log of the trip, prepared as usual by Commander Rigdon, and points of view of participants of the conference have been handled in such books as those of Mr. Justice Byrnes, Admiral Leahy and others; Stimson and so on.

While at Potsdam my role was that of one of the Map Room officers. As you will recall from our earlier discussions, that the Map Room staff had special cryptographic equipment and we would communicate, on the President's behalf, back to the White House using our own ciphers,

our own codes, and Government agencies in Washington that had anything of a security nature to send to the President, their only channel was through the Map Room in Washington, and those of the itinerant Map Room staff either on ship when we were enroute, or on the ground when we were there in Germany. So, those of us who were there, were busy pretty much of the day and night handling the traffic, reports from military commanders on events in the Far East, reports from the civilian staff at the White House and from Government agencies, congressional leaders, and others, matters that needed the President's attention, or matters that the President in turn wanted to comment on or refer back to Washington.

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A great deal of our traffic at that time related to such matters as the Potsdam ultimatum. You may recall that about the 27th of July a statement was issued, from Potsdam, calling on the Japanese to surrender. The text of this document was a lengthy one and there were various changes. It bounced back and forth between Washington and Germany, changes were made, words were added, phrases were deleted. We spent a lot of time on sending drafts of that, and commentaries on it back and forth.

Another item that we handled in the Map Room was recognizing, and of course knowing its significance, were reports that came from Washington about the success of the first atom bomb, the one exploded at Alamogordo, New Mexico on July 16th. The reports that came through us, the President used to brief, or mention, the bomb to Stalin. The circumstances of that conversation have been widely reported in various books. It was through us that the President gave the authorization back to the War Department to drop the first bomb, the one on Hiroshima. I recall vividly because he wrote it out in longhand and handed it to me for transmission, that he gave authority for the first bomb to be dropped, at

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the discretion of the military commanders on the scene, because they--weather and other factors had to be taken into account. But in no circumstance did he want the bomb to be dropped until after he had left Potsdam. He wanted to be away from the Russians and on his way home before the actual dropping of the first bomb. You may recall that the bomb was dropped a couple of days after we left Potsdam. We were actually in the Atlantic on the U.S.S. *Augusta* when word came to us of the Hiroshima drop.

HESS: August the 6th, I believe.

ELSEY: I think that that's about right, yes. But these are--this is the kind of traffic that we were handling back and forth. There was also some extremely high-level, and very secret traffic, which we were getting from Washington, and the President of course, was receiving almost instantly, relating to the peace talks that were going on--some of the peace moves that were being made by the Japanese behind the scenes and that in which the Russians and others were involved. So, it was a busy time, but I simply cite these to show you the kinds of things we were handling. The facts, the

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substance of the messages, their impact, can best be evaluated by reference to the scholarly works that have been published regarding the surrender of Japan, for example, and the memoirs of the principals of the time.

HESS: As a personal opinion, do you think that the atomic bomb should have been dropped on Japan?

ELSEY: I have never had any reason to disagree with the summary of this subject that appears in Henry Stimson's memoirs. Stimson went into the whole question at great length, published an article a year or two after the war, and that chapter, that article, was reprinted verbatim in his memoirs, *On Active Service in Peace and War*. The point of view, Stimson there summarized the pros and cons and gave the reasons why he believed it was the right recommendation to make to the President that the bomb be used, and why he believed the President made the right decision in authorizing the dropping of the bomb. I agree with that position.

While we knew that the Japanese were having troubles, we knew that various peace talks, or peace feelers, were under way, there was absolutely no assurance that

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those who were for peace in Japan would succeed. In fact, evidence and past history would lead us to believe that they probably would not have succeeded. We were losing tragically large numbers of soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen in the Pacific. We had been through those bitter struggles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. We knew the ferocity which the Japanese would defend every square yard of territory that they held. We had seen the effects of the Kamikaze raids. We were proceeding with plans for the invasion of Japan in the fall, and the casualty estimates which the Army and Navy were making were heartsickening. Not only would Americans have lost their lives in great numbers, so would the Japanese; the Japanese civilians as well as Japanese military. And while the bomb was a horrible thing, the number of lives lost by the dropping of those two bombs, was a fraction of the number of lives that would have been lost had the war proceeded to go on to the mainland of Japan. Yes, I think that all facts considered, I have no reason to question, have never had any reason to question, the correctness of that decision. It was a tough decision, and it was a hard one, and nobody likes to authorize that kind of action.

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HESS: Shortly after V-J Day, lend-lease was terminated and some people, some of these recipient countries, thought it was terminated too abruptly. What is your view, and did you have any dealings with that?

ELSEY: As to the dealings, no. Absolutely none. Nor did I know of anyone on the White House staff who had any dealings with, or on, that subject.

I suspect it was too abrupt. As we review now, in retrospect, the decision, I'm sure it was a mistake. But one has to remember the mood of the country and the mood of the Congress. The Congress and the country were hell-bent to get out of Europe, get home, get the war over with. We had the same sort of a reaction after World War I, it was intensified after World War II. It was a mistake.

HESS: Did the White House staff play any role in the formulation of postwar policy towards Germany and Japan?

ELSEY: A bare minimum.

The State Department early in the war had established some postwar planning groups; groups that concerned themselves with occupied Europe, with an international

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organization which, as we know, in due course came into being and is called the United Nations.

The military, in great detail planned, made plans for the occupation of the captured zones, because it was to be their job to govern, to administer them. So planning for the postwar occupied territories, had gone on for two or three years before the war came to an end.

Since in the case of Germany, other countries were involved too, there was a commission. I think it was the EAC, the European Advisory Commission, meeting more or less regularly in London, consisting of ourselves, the British, and the Russians, so that all three countries consulted with one another on their plans for the occupation of Germany. And it was at the meetings of the EAC in London where the decisions on the zones for occupation were decided, and these recommendations were in due course, ratified by their governments. The White House staff had had general awareness, but that's about all, of these plans.

The one area where the White House, where the President was particularly involved in postwar plans for Germany, was in the question of which zone in Germany the United States would occupy. This was a matter that interested

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President Roosevelt personally very much, so much that he engaged in a long haggling with Churchill over which zone. The arguments related as to which zone of Germany would be occupied by the United States and which zone would be occupied by Britain. I don't recall that we ever, the two governments, ever much concerned themselves with what the Russians were going to occupy. It had been agreed that they would have the area which they subsequently took over, so that was that. But FDR wanted the Americans to be in the northern zone of Germany and the British in the southern, because this would give access to ports for us and we would be able to move our men and supplies in and out more quickly. The British argued, successfully and with much logic, that this would mean a crossing of the lines of communication between us and the British, and it would cause all sorts of logistic problems.

The British argument, and Britain was supported by General Eisenhower, won out just on the question of logistics and lines of communication and ease of maintenance of troops. But this was not a matter in which White House staff per se was involved. This was

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more of a FDR's own personal concern and he was beaten down.

HESS: Do you know if it was seen at that time, that placing Berlin in the Russian sector without actually having adequate overland routes, corridors, to Berlin would subsequently turn into a problem?

ELSEY: This was not foreseen at all. It was not foreseen by anybody, at least anybody on the U.S.-British side. The Russians may have been smart enough to have foreseen the implications of Berlin being a tripartite city inside the Russian zone, but it was not noted by Ambassador [John G.] Winant, or by any of the staff of the U.S.-British, it was never called to the attention of the President. Later on at the time when the Russians clamped down on the access and really caused trouble, when the Berlin airlift had to be established, this was in 1948, there was a great deal of mad scrambling through the records by State, by the Army, by just about everybody who had had anything to do with it or had any access to any documents, and there was just no evidence that could ever be found that anyone had had the foresight to see the implications of the placing of Berlin, and the

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lack of a written guarantee by the Russians that the British, the French, and the U.S. would have unrestricted access to Berlin.

Now, I just mentioned the word "French" for the first time, and before that I had been talking about the tripartite zone. In the discussions of '43, '44, everything was on the basis of three countries occupying Germany: Russia, Britain and the United States.

[Charles] De Gaulle began to be pretty noisy, pretty clamorous, and pretty insistent that the French should have a role also and I do not recall now the dates. To placate the French, Britain and the United States carved out of their respective sectors, a portion, a fourth area of occupancy for which the French would be given responsibility, similarly Berlin. The British and American sectors each gave up a portion of their zones to create a fourth sector for France. This was not part of the original planning, but came into being, oh, I guess in the fall of '44 or early '45 as the war was coming to an end, as France had been largely liberated, and as the French under De Gaulle were beginning to assert their postwar intentions and aspirations pretty vigorously.

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HESS: On the subject of the Truman Doctrine

ELSEY: Excuse me, if I--let me interrupt and back up again on this question of Berlin. One reason why I am fairly dogmatic on the question of nobody really having the foresight and for that reason it was impossible to pin the blame on anybody for Berlin. In '48 there was a certain amount of partisan, in fact there was a lot of partisan argument over this. Some people were trying to blame General Eisenhower for not having seen to it that unrestricted access to Berlin was guaranteed. This was completely unfair. General Eisenhower had had no responsibility for deciding these matters on postwar occupancy of Germany. It was not a Democratic or a Republican issue. Some people tried to make it one, but that was stretching pretty far and there was no basis, no pretext for it.

HESS: On the subject of the Truman Doctrine, could you tell me a little about the background of the decisions to aid Greece and Turkey?

ELSEY: Well, Jerry, so much has been written on that I don't know that there is anything I could add. The most recent

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book I have read was Dean Acheson's, the second volume of his memoirs. Numerous other studies of foreign policy papers have been written.

The basic facts are pretty clear. The British, with very little warning to us, simply told our Government that they were not going to be able to stay, maintain their presence in the Eastern Mediterranean in the force in which they had before, for budgetary, political reasons at home, and they were going to have to get out. And they hoped that we would be able to replace them because if we didn't they very much feared that Russian influence would prevail and that indigenous, or Communist forces, supported by the Russians, would almost certainly cause Greece and Turkey to collapse and fall behind the Iron Curtain. And we responded. We accepted and agreed with the British evaluation of what would probably be the outcome if they pulled out and we did not move in in a massive way to give military and economic help and we did.

HESS: Do you know how the President arrived at the decision to act with such vigor on this problem as he did? Why did he take a hold of this with the vigor that he did?

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ELSEY: Time was of the essence. The British gave us very short notice, and the President was very well informed of what the Soviets were up to in the Eastern Europe. He had no illusions whatsoever about their interests, their activities, and what they were up to in Poland, Hungary, Romania, their zone of Austria, Bulgaria. He knew, our whole Government knew that they were trying to subvert the governments of Greece and Turkey and I think he accepted without question the assessment of the British and our own State Department and military departments of what would happen if he didn't act, and if you were going to act, you had to act fast because the time was then. It was not something you could sit around and debate for weeks or months.

HESS: Did the White House staff think that there were any particular foreign leaders that were the most important in developing such a plan?

ELSEY: Well, I don't think so. Let's go all the way back to the subject we opened this discussion with: The White House staff.

There was no group of White House staff members

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who were regarded as foreign policy experts or who were expected to be foreign policy experts, and there was no--the White House staff simply didn't have the role, the function, the knowledge, the responsibility, the resources, or anything else, to make such assessments as to who the principal foreign leaders were that should be consulted at a time like this. That was the responsibility of the Department of State. And the President dealt directly with the Secretary and the Under Secretary of State on matters of this sort, not through the White House staff.

The White House staff got into the act on the Truman Doctrine, as it did on various other key foreign policy measures of that sort, when the President was at the point of, or approaching the point of making a speech, or sending a message to the Congress, or preparing to recommend legislation, when a foreign policy matter was going to be--foreign policy decision was going to be promulgated by the President orally or in writing, that's when the President's staff got into the picture. Then was the time for them to do their stuff, or to use 1970 language, do their "thing," I suppose I should

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say. Their thing being casting a State Department paper, or draft, in the language and in the form, the President would adopt as his own.

HESS: The following is a quote from the book *United States Foreign Policy 1945-55*, by William Reitzel, Morton A. Kaplan and Constance G. Coblenz:

Much was made at the time of the way in which the proposed action dismissed the United Nations as an effective instrument for the conduct of state relations. The best reasoned objections to the proposal were based on the argument that the United States was abandoning a principal of collective security under international control and turning to the outworn practices of 'power politics'. On the face of it, this was a substantive criticism. In effect, the proposal was the first action after the war in which American opposition to the Soviet Union was put into a channel other than the United Nations.

What's your reaction to that quote?

ELSEY: We had already by this time experienced a number of vetoes by the Soviet Union in the U.N. Putting it in the U.N. would have been totally fruitless. The U.N. would not have acted,

could not have acted.

The people who criticized Truman and his administration for not acting in the Greek-Turkish matter through the United Nations, I think were still laboring under

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the illusion that the United Nations would be able to solve all kinds of postwar problems. They were forgetting, or overlooking the fact that the whole premise on which the United Nations was organized, and in which we had invested such high hopes, was that the big powers would be able to act in concert, would be able to act together, would see eye-to-eye on the necessity of maintaining peace, stability, and orderly relations among nations. But as we very quickly came to realize, this was not a realistic premise, not a realistic assumption, it was not the basis on which the Soviet Union intended to behave after World War II. We had been perhaps naive in ever thinking that so idealistic a premise would prevail, but we had been completely educated, our illusions swept away by Soviet action in that first two years after the war in Europe had ended.

You see the war in Europe had ended in May of '45, it was by now February or March of 1947. We had had two years of seeing the Soviets in their actions in Poland and in the other Eastern European countries that we've just mentioned. We'd seen what they had tried to do in Iran and elsewhere and so if President Truman had simply said to the U.N., "Here, this is your

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problem to save Greece and Turkey," it would have resulted in no action at all. We would have in effect been watching from the sidelines as Greece and Turkey slipped behind the Iron Curtain. I think people who criticized at that point, most of them I think probably were well-intentioned, perhaps too idealistic and too naive in thinking that the U.N. really had any power in a situation of this sort.

Now the President did recognize that there was an enormous amount of faith, hope, in the American public, in the United Nations. He did make some references to the United Nations in the Greek-Turkish message.

I recall--this is an instance where the White House staff was involved. I can recall very late in the day, very late in the game, we were practically in the last hour when any changes could be made in the message, I was so concerned about this U.N. point and foresaw criticism that I talked with Clifford about it, and called Carlisle Humelsine, who was then the executive secretary of the Department and begged, urged (you can use whatever verb you want), that Humelsine get over to us a few sentences on the United Nations that we could have

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in the address that would help placate the critics that we were certain we would be having because we were going a non-U.N. route. I think in my folder on the drafts of the Truman

Doctrine speech, you will find the language that Humelsine provided, by phone, and that we did squeeze into the message on this point.

But the President did the only thing that would have been effective, and that would have been to go the non-U.N. route. The critics who disliked this, I don't disparage them at all, I just think that perhaps they were a little naive in indulging in wishful thinking and believing that the U.N. could have been effective.

Now let's jump a moment, three years ahead. Why did we go the U.N. route in Korea in June of 1950? Why were we able to get the U.N. sanction to act in Korea? Why do I say we couldn't have got it in 1947? The circumstances were different. In 1947 the Russians were on hand monitoring every action of the U.N. jumping on everything they didn't like. You recall that three years later in June of 1950 the Russians were boycotting sessions of the U.N. Security Council and boycotting the U.N. for reasons of their own. And the action of

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endorsement that the United States got for resistance to Communist aggression in Korea came at a time, and only because, the Russians were boycotting the U.N. The Russians were asleep at the switch; had they been smart, Johnny-on-the-spot, they would have returned overnight to the U.N. in June of 1950, and would have put sand in the gears and kept the U.N. from acting to endorse resistance to the Communist aggression to South Korea. That's not the point you're talking about, but I think it's pertinent to show why the U.S. Government went one route in '47 and went another route in 1950.

HESS: Also on the Korean matter, is there any significance to the fact that Mr. Truman did not try to get legislative approval for the action from Congress on the Korean matter, such as a Senate resolution? Was this discussed?

ELSEY: It was discussed from time to time in the first few days after the June 25th initial assault, and in fact a draft resolution was even prepared in the Department of Defense and sent over to the White House, but

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the President, and my recollection on this is probably not as complete as it ought to be, my recollection is that the President was talked out of a resolution by congressional leadership who did not think it advisable for him to send such a resolution, or for one to be introduced on behalf of the administration. The timing never seemed to be right. So we dragged on week, after week, after week, without one and then it really was too late.

In retrospect I think it was unfortunate that there was not a resolution authorizing U.S. action in the very early days of the Korean episode. In other words, it ought to have been within the first week or ten days. By the time the question was seriously addressed, and the implications of not having a congressional resolution on the books were faced, it was just too late. I think it's unfortunate.

HESS: Were there any particular problems

ELSEY: I believe, incidentally, on that point, in those folders that we sent out to Independence not long ago, you'll find some notes on this, and probably, I'm certain, even the text of the resolution that was drafted

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over in the Department of Defense.

I talked with Marx Leva, who was then the General Counsel of the Department, numerous times on this and I think you'll probably find Marx's draft and notes of mine on this subject in my folders that are now in the Truman Library.

HESS: Were there any particular problems that arose in the administration of the Truman Doctrine? Anything that the White House staff had to monitor or keep their eye on?

ELSEY: No, the execution of the Truman Doctrine, in if by that we mean military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey, this was completely a matter of the responsibility of the departments, not the White House staff. We did not monitor, could not monitor, that, or subsequently the Marshall plan, or any other major government program, be it domestic or foreign. We weren't that kind of a staff. We weren't that big, we didn't have that capability, nor was it thought at that time to be the responsibility of the White House staff. Any monitoring was done by the agencies and the President's general

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staff assistants in this area, namely the Bureau of the Budget.

HESS: What is your evaluation on how well the program worked; the success of the Truman Doctrine?

ELSEY: Well, the proof of this, as in every other pudding, is in the eating. It did preserve the independence of Greece and Turkey, it kept the Soviet influence in the Mediterranean, it minimized it. I doubt very much that Yugoslavia would have been able to pull out of the direct Soviet orbit had it not been for the aid to Greece and Turkey. If those two countries had succumbed, I suspect that Yugoslavia would not have been able to pull away and reassert its independence.

We're being terribly speculative now, but Italy went through a number of crises in '47, '48 and '49 when the Communists came very close to gaining control of Italy. What the effects of a fall of Greece and Turkey might have been on the Italian electorate and the position of Italy, again it's impossible for us to know. But the fact that the United States was willing and furthermore was capable of making a very strong stand in opposition

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to any further spread of Communist hegemony undoubtedly had an impact on the Western European countries. I don't believe we would have had a successful Marshall plan or NATO if the Soviets had started to roll over additional countries in Europe. Now we could not do, and never have been able, to do anything about those countries which they liberated from Nazi armies and in which they established themselves firmly, but what we were able to do through the stand initially taken in Greece and Turkey, was prevent their extending their influence over those countries that they had not conquered or captured from the Nazis and maintained their military presence.

HESS: On the subject of the Marshall plan, where, or with whom did the idea for the Marshall plan originate?

ELSEY: Well, you best consider that subject by reading the-by referring to the numerous histories and memoirs that have been written about it, and by participants in it, certainly not the White House staff.

HESS: Could you tell me about William Clayton's participation in that?

ELSEY: No, I don't think I can. I simply don't know.

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HESS: Do you know of any particular European leaders who were notified on the contents of what Mr. Acheson's speech in Cleveland, Mississippi was going to be; and Mr. Marshall's at Harvard?

ELSEY: No, I have no knowledge. Again, one must turn to the records of the Department of State, and the writings of the State Department officials and others, who have since written about the Marshall plan and the whole European Recovery effort. The President was kept informed by oral briefings and by occasional memoranda from the Department of the developments in this regard, but he was not an active participant in the sense of day by day involvement. He was necessarily aware and he was obviously in favor of this kind of planning, and this kind of exercise, and obviously in favor of the policy projected by General Marshall at Harvard, alluded to by Dean Acheson, and projected by General Marshall. But the White House staff itself was not involved, did not play a role in the planning, shaping, developing, writing or anything else, of the Marshall plan.

HESS: Did the White House staff play any particular role in the passage of the act setting up the Economic

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Cooperation Administration?

ELSEY: No. No.

HESS: Who handled most of that?

ELSEY: The Department of State. You know, only the role of the White House, the White House staff was involved in the President's message to Congress in the--I guess it was December, about the 20th of December or so, 1947, in which the President recommended the adoption by the Congress of legislation for the Marshall plan, the European Recovery Program. You may recall that shortly after the Marshall speech and the initial favorable European reaction, several committees were set up. One, for example, under Averell Harriman. There were other committees to study various aspects of the proposed European Recovery Program and when these commissions, or committee reports, were submitted to the President, and the whole subject was thoroughly thrashed out by the Department of State and other departments that were concerned (Agriculture for example had a big stake in this), then the President's message went to the Hill. So the White House staff was involved in the final

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drafting and shaping of the President's message, but here again as I have said a number of other times in this series of discussions, we were the carpenters. The planks would be prepared, we would take the lumber, if you will, that came from the department concerned and hammer the planks into the message or the legislation that the President proposed, but the responsibility for all the preparatory work and the basic substance of the programs came from the responsible departments, not from the White House staff.

HESS: Do you know why Paul Hoffman was appointed as the first administrator?

ELSEY: I have no special insight on that, a very capable man with a high reputation. The fact that he was a Republican, prominent Republican, was obviously a very great asset. There was nothing partisan about the European Recovery Program or the Marshall plan. If it had ever been tagged with a partisan label it would have immediately lost much of its effectiveness, and would have greatly--its chances of support from Congress would have been greatly impaired. So, it was a very fortunate thing, which President Truman was among the first to

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recognize, that it was called the Marshall plan, and was enunciated by as distinguished and non-political a figure as General Marshall, and that the key figures, many of the key figures, in shaping the program and in advocating it on the hill, and then putting it into practice were either Republicans, or if Democrats, they were not a particularly controversial kind of Democrat. They were men whose activities in this field would be regarded as above party politics. It was the only possible way to make it work. The only possible chance of success was to keep it in this posture.

The best politics in a situation like this is to play no politics, because if you start letting party politics get into it, you just wreck everything.

HESS: The support that Senator [Arthur H.] Vandenberg lent to the Marshall plan was one of the reasons for its success. Is that right?

ELSEY: Oh, of course, since Senator Vandenberg was a figure of towering strength in American foreign policy through all of this period; Marshall plan, and Truman Doctrine.

The success or whatever success American foreign

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policy had in that period was due to the fact that the Republican leadership on the Hill was a highly responsible leadership, and the Democrats in the minority in the 80th Congress were also behaving responsibly in the foreign policy field. As we know, President Truman made a great point in 1948 campaigning about the "Do nothing, good for nothing, 80th Republican Congress." That was fine for election purposes and campaign purposes, but of course, not at all justified in terms of the foreign policy actions taken by that Congress.

HESS: Why the divergence? Why did the Congress act so forward-looking, so favorably, on the administration's requests on foreign policy and not on domestic policy?

ELSEY: I suppose--well, we could talk all day on this and lots of people have, and lots of people will.

Responsible leaders on the Hill were well enough informed as to the magnitude and nature of the Communist efforts so that they recognized the kinds of measures the administration was proposing were indeed necessary to the--in the national interest, in the national security.

We, at that point, Republicans and Democrats alike, for the most part, had a unanimity of opinion as to the

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nature of the threats and challenges to the United States from abroad. This of course, was not universally true, there were those of the Henry Wallace frame of mind who disagreed as to the seriousness, or nature, or even existence, of a Communist threat, but as we know from the support he was later able to muster, Henry Wallace was supported by only a relatively few people.

I think it was the common perspective, the consensus, by Republican leadership, in the Congress, and out of the Congress. A man like Governor Dewey of New York, for example, and his principal foreign policy adviser, John Foster Dulles, they understood and agreed with the assessment of the international situation held by the Truman administration, and hence there was not disagreements on these major foreign policy initiatives and matters that we were talking about.

There were not universal agreements on foreign policy matters. You've already cited Israel and

certainly there was sharp controversy on Israel, but the sharp controversy on Israel really was not so much Republican versus Democrat, but disagreements all over the place. There were just as many Democrats against

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Israel as there were for and ditto Republicans. It wasn't a partisan issue, per se.

On domestic matters, here again it's in the nature of the beast in the American political scene, that parties will take sides on domestic issues and lock horns over them. The Republicans, having won control of the Congress in November 1946, and having been out of office for a number of years, naturally were very, very eager to bring their party back to power, and were trying to take the necessary actions on the Hill and create the kind of a record that would appeal to the electorate and result in a total across the board Republican victory in November 1948. This is a part of the normal American political process that I don't think should surprise us. Furthermore, there were valid, honest differences of opinion on matters.

There were very sharp differences of opinion on the matter of organized labor. The Taft-Hartley Act was passed by the Congress over President Truman's veto as a result of widespread opinion that organized labor had needed its wings clipped a bit. So there were--there are lots of reasons why there were differences of opinion on domestic matters. We had the kind of consensus on the

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international scene which we unfortunately, all too rarely, had since then.

HESS: Was it difficult to obtain the support of Senator Vandenberg?

ELSEY: No. No, not that I am aware of. Again this was not a matter that the White House staff per se was involved in. The President, President Truman, maintained a close working relationship with Senator Vandenberg, he consulted him, he saw to it that he was informed. He sought, and he satisfied himself that the Department of State was keeping Senator Vandenberg well informed. The Senator's requests for information and consultation were honored fully and promptly.

Senator Vandenberg, you will recall, had made a, what for him was regarded as quite a turn around, some time before Truman became President. try recollection, I may be wrong, is that sometime in January, what-January '45, that he made a declaration of conscience, that kind of speech on the floor of the Senate, about the necessity of the United States working in an internationalist frame of mind, rather than an isolationist frame of mind after the war.

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Senator Vandenberg was a--I don't mean to say was a pushover and completely easy to get along

with at all times, but Senator Vandenberg was of a mind to cooperate with the executive branch when he believed the executive branch was on the right track, and fortunately most of the time he and the State Department did see eye-to-eye on the things that counted.

HESS: How would you evaluate the success or failure of the Marshall plan, something similar to the Truman Doctrine?

ELSEY: Oh, I think overwhelmingly successful. It was ended sooner than expected, and at less cost to the United States than expected, and the industrial renaissance of Western Europe is proof of the success of the Marshall plan.

HESS: On the subject of point 4, I think we pretty well covered it when you were answering the questionnaire of John E. Hopkins on speeches, and we brought up the name of Benjamin Hardy.

ELSEY: Yes.

HESS: And we talked quite a bit about point 4, but one thing

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that I have noticed in Dean Acheson's book, *Present at the Creation*, which has been out now just for a little while, he speaks of the fact that he did not know anything about this and he says, in *Present at the Creation* on page 254:

For instance, my first knowledge of the famous Point Four Program, which I was to carry out, came on the platform in front of the Capitol listening to the President expound it in his inaugural address.

Isn't it a little unusual that a Secretary of State would not be informed on something of this nature? Or the man who was to be the Secretary of State.

ELSEY: Oh, I don't think that that's so unusual. After all there are lots of other problems commanding his attention. He had not known very long he was going to be Secretary of State, he had an awful lot of other matters to attend to. There was no particular reason for the President to have "cleared," if you will, the text of his inaugural address with all his current or prospective Cabinet members. The President took great pride in his inaugural address. This was probably to be his only inaugural address, and he was not eager to have it scooped or leaked or printed, or alluded to,

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in advance. And copies had not been scattered about town. No, it doesn't--I don't find it surprising.

HESS: All right, one question on the general strategy of containment. George F. Kennan, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, 1947, the famous article by "X", "The Sources of Soviet

Conduct," proposed the strategy of containment. Did this particular article, when this came out, did this make any impact on the White House staff or the people who paid particular attention to foreign affairs on the White House staff?

ELSEY: We were all, of course, aware of the public attention, comments in newspapers, editorial writers, columnists, others about the article, but I can't speak for others. I was not surprised by anything I saw in that article because Kennan's views were already well-known.

Kennan is an exceedingly able, articulate, and literate man who had written, spoken, extensively within the executive branch, and what he said there were the views that he was known to have had and indeed were largely shared by the administration. It wasn't as though he was proposing something brand new, a new course. As I recall it, my reaction was, "Fine, this is

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exactly what our foreign policy is, the way we're going." This is just simply expressing publicly what, in a somewhat blunter fashion than was normal, what the . . .

HESS: You did not see it as anything new?

ELSEY: No.

HESS: All right, concerning Central and South America. Although Mr. Truman took trips to both Brazil and Mexico during his administration, Latin America played only a minor role in foreign policy matters. Was this an oversight or was this a natural development of things?

ELSEY: Well, I'm not sure that I would agree that it played really a minor role in foreign policy. What do we mean by foreign policy? A minor role perhaps in terms of foreign crises. There wasn't a war there, there wasn't a Marshall plan for Central and South America.

HESS: Should there have been?

ELSEY: No. The Marshall plan was to help a highly industrialized intricate economy get back on its feet. South America did not have a highly industrialized,

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intricate economy comparable to that of Western Europe. The Marshall plan could not have been imposed on South America, there was not the basis to accept it. It was not there--there weren't the roads, the factories, the distribution system, the technology, the skilled labor, the entrepreneurs, etc. , etc. , etc. One could no more impose a Marshall plan on Central America than you could pick up Detroit and put it down in the middle of a Brazilian jungle. The basis for it wasn't there.

Now, as I say, their foreign policy--I'm afraid your question implies foreign crises rather than

foreign policy. There was interest, there was attention. Point 4 for example was very largely directed to the kinds of problems that Central and South America have. Point 4 was a response to the needs of the economies of that type as distinct from the Western European or Japanese economy. There were some crises during the Truman administration. [Juan] Peron, the Peron problem in Argentina commanded a great deal of attention.

But there's another point that I have to make about Central and South America. There has been too great a tendency on the part of too many people to think that the United States can run the rest of the world, or knows what's

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best for the rest of the world, or ought to make its presence very much felt in the other parts of the world. This feeling, this tendency, has caused us a hell of a lot of trouble. The South Americans do not want now, and they make it very apparent now, they do not want to be dominated by the colossus of the North. They don't want the "gringos" telling them what to do or how to do it. They didn't want it there in the '40s, or the '50s or the '60s any more than they want it here in the '70s. And when people say, "Oh, we ought to have been doing more for South America," I think perhaps it would be well to take time to go ask the South Americans whether indeed they wanted us there.

South American governments are, as they develop, are urging us to get out. They are expropriating American investments there. They are pressuring us in various ways to, using a current jargon phrase, to lower our profile, so I think the question is a little bit confused when one says we weren't in South America the way we were in other parts of the world. Why should we have been there? Who wanted us there? What good could we have done if we had been there and weren't we doing the kinds of things that were the most effective,

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namely the technical assistance, the educational assistance, the investment through international banks and so on, to improve the roads, the highways, water, public health facilities ... we've invested a great deal of money in the infrastructure of South America largely through international agencies which I think is the right way to do it, more so than bilaterally where you immediately arouse this hostility to too much Yankeeism.

HESS: One other question on this subject: Was there ever a plan during the Truman administration for the recognition of Red China?

ELSEY: Certainly not to my recollection. I think it most unlikely that there was ever a plan. You recall that there was a great deal of political turmoil over the question of who lost China. Why was China lost? I think the question itself was a little bit phony because China was never ours to lose. We never had it therefore we couldn't lose it. But be that as it may, there was a lot of concern in the United States over the fact that Chiang Kai-shek was forced out of mainland China by Communist forces and had to retreat to Formosa. The entry of the Chinese into the war in Korea in December 1950

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certainly ruled out any thought, or any possibility of recognition. Then the Truman Administration ended before, I think, there was any serious thought of the recognition of Red China. I'm sure the question was examined. Questions of this sort are constantly being thought about. Would any useful purpose be served by our recognition of China and I suspect that the answer was always overwhelmingly in the negative, no, not--surely there was no--could not have been the circumstances being what they were, any serious plans for the recognition of Red China.

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Eighth Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at the National headquarters of the American Red Cross, Washington, D.C. , July 7, 1970. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: To begin this morning, Mr. Elsey, let me congratulate you on your recent election as president of the American Red Cross.

ELSEY: Thank you very much, Jerry. President Truman took a great interest in the Red Cross while he was President of the United States. Under the congressional charter of the organization, the President of the United States is the honorary president of the Red Cross. President Truman took more than a passing interest in the work of the Red Cross. He appointed General Marshall as president when Basil O'Connor retired, and subsequently appointed Mr. E. Roland Harriman as General Marshall's successor in 1950. Mr. Harriman is still, twenty years later, the principal officer of the Red Cross although the organization's structure, administrative structure, has been changed, and Mr. Harriman's title is now chairman, rather than president.

I can recall traveling with President Truman out to Kansas City at the time of Missouri River floods and

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in--my recollection now is the fall of 1950--and while we were out there I can recall the President was keen on getting reports from the Red Cross staff as to the nature of the disaster and the relief work that was going on. But I think that's not what you came to talk to me about this morning.

HESS: That's quite all right. I think historians of the future will be interested to know that one of Mr. Truman's White House staff members has risen to such heights.

Before we begin this morning, our last interview was on foreign affairs, and I found one other thing that I want to call to your attention. It is on page 186 of Mr. Rigdon's book, *White House Sailor*, and he's talking about the Atlantic Charter, and he mentions in a footnote that you had the, how does he put it, "the communique" that was issued by President Roosevelt and Mr.

Churchill, and I believe he said it was signed. He says that that is still in your possession, do you recall that?

ELSEY: That's right, Jerry, it is. And my copy is the only copy of the Atlantic Charter bearing the signatures of

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both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. This really doesn't have anything at all to do with the Truman Presidency, but if you wish a digression, I will explain how I happened to have it.

HESS: Let's have a digression. That's marvelous. Actually information pertinent to the Roosevelt administration is not a digression from the Truman administration.

ELSEY: Well, as a one time historian, I am glad to hear you say that the Roosevelt administration is not a digression.

I have always been interested in typography and in printing and the attractive presentation of public documents in broadside form and so on.

In late '42 or early '43 I noted the fact that a broadside had just been published of the Atlantic Charter, that statement of joint aims that had been agreed upon by FDR and Churchill in Argentina, Newfoundland in August of 1941. This particular broadside was designed by Bruce Rogers, who was one of the most famous designers and typographers of his day. It was attractively done, special typeface, handmade paper,

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and a very distinguished document in appearance. Because, as I mentioned earlier, I was interested in this type of thing, I ordered a copy of this special printing of the Atlantic Charter from the rare book dealer that my family had known well in New York for many years.

Just a few weeks after I acquired this copy, we learned in the Map Room that Prime Minister Churchill would be coming to visit FDR in May of 1943. Well, bright lights went on in my head and I decided that I would be brazen enough to ask for the Prime Minister's signature on this document. Toward the end of that visit in May of '43, I spoke to Captain Richard Pim who was the head of the Prime Minister's traveling Map Room, that the PM had brought along with him. And in a sense Captain Pim was my, although senior in rank and older than I, was my opposite number in this Map Room exercise. I asked Captain Pim if he thought the Prime Minister would be willing to sign this copy of the Atlantic Charter that I had. Pim said he saw no reason why not, and suggested that I might give it to him because he would be able to catch the Prime Minister more easily than I, at a moment of leisure.

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The final morning of the Prime Minister's stay in Washington, just as he was about to take off for England, Pim handed me back the Charter with the signature "Winston S. Churchill" at the bottom. A few moments later the Prime Minister came to the Map Room for a last quick look-see at the situation and to bid us farewell. I thanked him at that occasion for having signed my copy of the Charter. He mumbled something, only semi-intelligible, to the effect that that was the first time he had ever signed it. I didn't really understand what he meant by "first" time he had signed it. And a day or two later as I was walking along the White House corridor from the Map Room back to his office with Harry Hopkins, I mentioned this to Mr. Hopkins and said, "What in the world did the PM mean by saying he had never signed the Charter before?"

Hopkins thought that over for a few paces and said, "Well, he's probably right. I don't think they ever did sign anything up there on that boat."

This got me to thinking even more and so not long thereafter I took my copy of the Charter with the one signature on it over to Miss Grace Tully, who was FDR's personal secretary, and asked if Miss Tully would be kind

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enough to have the President to add his signature to the PM's sometime at his convenience.

Miss Tully in her spacious office adjoining the President's oval one, had a large table on which she would pile documents, books, incoming stamps, all sorts of things that FDR might be interested in and that would want to wile away an idle hour or two late in an afternoon or on a weekend. When he was in a relaxed mood, he'd ask Miss Tully to bring in an armload of stuff from her table and she'd take it in. My Charter was added to that collection of stuff on the table.

Weeks went by. I assumed that something had happened, the Charter had been lost, I'd never see it again. But one day, while I was on duty in the Map Room, there was a tap on the door and one of the White House messengers when I answered it, handed me the copy of the Charter simply rolled up with a rubber band around it and said, "Miss Tully said this was yours." I opened it and sure enough there was FDR's name alongside Winston S. Churchill's.

I still didn't really accept as a fact, the statement that neither had ever signed the document before, the full impact of that hadn't yet sunk in on me. I was just pleased to have, what to me was going to be an

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interesting souvenir and memento of my fortuitous circumstance with these two men. I put the document away in a safe place for storage.

In the winter of 1944, well over a year later, the allied war effort had moved ahead very considerably, British troops had entered Greece, the Germans were out, there was a good deal of controversy over the political situation in Greece, and the British were alleged to be supporting a reactionary regime in Greece. There was a good deal of hubbub in London, particularly in the

Parliament, over the policy of the British government vis-a-vis the various factions in Greece. The Prime Minister was asked one Thursday morning, in the traditional weekly question hour of the House of Commons, whether the policies of the British government in Greece were not in contravention of the principles of the Atlantic Charter. I can't at the moment quote you, but I do have in my files, the exact exchange between the questioner and the Prime Minister, but Mr. Churchill flashed back and somewhat sharply that, to the effect, that the actions of his Majesty's government were not in contravention of the Charter. Furthermore, the Charter

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had no binding effect, and indeed he, the Prime Minister, had never signed the Charter. Now, of course, my interest really did begin to perk up and I took pains to attend as I usually did, but not invariably, President Roosevelt's next press conference. Sure enough a question came from the floor from one of the reporters crowded around the President's desk, "Mr. President, the Prime Minister said a few days ago that he had never signed the Charter, how about that?"

And the President, leaning back in his chair, said, "Well, I guess that's right. I've never signed it either."

Well, now I knew that my copy of the Charter indeed was of greater interest to me than I had ever before realized. I kept quiet, of course, and never said anything to anybody that I had something that both men denied ever having signed. But Miss Tully and some others were amused by all this, and the word did get out in the press that this statement wasn't exactly true because at least one copy of the Charter was known to exist in possession of a member of the White House staff who had the signatures of both men on it.

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Well, not everybody in the White House staff knew of my copy of the Charter. There was a good deal of scurrying and flurrying around and the White House files were searched, and lo and behold, the President's papers that had been in the files ever since the Argentia conference were examined and there was found to be a copy of the Charter, with the names of both men appended to it. The interesting part of it was that both names, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston S. Churchill, were in Franklin D. Roosevelt's handwriting. He had put both names on; Churchill had not. Bill Hassett who was then the Assistant Press Secretary was a little perplexed by this and had to waddle his way through various questionings from his curious reporters, but the subject was a minor one and in all the press and events of the war, particularly the Battle of the Bulge, which erupted some days later, this whole matter was quickly forgotten.

Well, that's all there is to the story, it's minor. I don't have the Atlantic Charter, of course, all I have is a version, a very handsome version, of the Charter which was signed by both men and is to the best of my

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knowledge and belief, and to the best knowledge of the staffs of the two men, Roosevelt and

Churchill, the only existing copy of the documents which bears the authentic signatures of both statesmen.

HESS: It's probably, very, very, valuable, but if you would ever want to give it away, either Hyde Park or Independence would like to have it.

ELSEY: I'll take that under advisement.

HESS: All right. And in our . . .

ELSEY: A friend of mine at Harvard University's library has suggested that Harvard had ought to get it inasmuch as it is the one institution which conferred degrees upon Roosevelt, Churchill, and me. I also have taken that comment under advisement.

HESS: Well, that may be true.

Also one other point on foreign affairs. The Berlin airlift took place in June of 1948, or the...

ELSEY: The airlift commenced then.

HESS: Right, it commenced then. The Russian blockade of

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Berlin, and we did not discuss that last time. Does anything particular come to mind about Mr. Truman's decision to act as he did in that way and have an airlift. What was the thinking around the White House at the time of the Berlin blockade?

ELSEY: I have no special insight or comments to offer on that. By that time the National Security Council mechanism was operating and operating well and efficiently and effectively, although of course, it was a very simple structure compared to the very elaborate staffing that the NSC has built up in more recent years. The intelligence and information and the military and diplomatic evaluation of the significance of the Soviet action, we're conveyed to the President through the staff of the NSC, and by conferences between him and the Secretaries of State and Defense. The White House staff, to the best of my knowledge, had no direct role whatsoever in any decisions or in the execution of any of the carrying out of the airlift.

HESS: All right, moving on to another topic, that of White House congressional liaison. And in your second interview that you held with Charles Morrissey, you

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touched on this subject, but I have a few more questions I'd like to cover on it.

In the files of Philleo Nash at the Library I found a memo, [see appendix] of which we have a

copy. It's from you to Charles Murphy and it's dated July 6th, 1950 and deals with a meeting that was held in Jack K. McFall's office that afternoon, and as the memo says the meeting was held to lay plans "in the fight to restore Point Four appropriations to the full amount . . ." Working from this memo, could you tell me a little about how such matters were handled? The part that Jack K. McFall who was congressional . . .

ELSEY: He was Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations.

HESS: That's right. The part that he may have played in such matters. I see several interesting names in the memo; Averell Harriman--point number seven is that "Averill (sic) Harriman will exert his own good offices wherever he can." Basically, just how was congressional liaison handled, using this as a guide, or as a basis for discussion.

* See appendix

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ELSEY: I think this is probably a pretty good document to use as evidence here. You will note that the meeting was at the Department of State. It was in the office of the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations. This illustrates, I think, something that I have mentioned to you in times passed and probably did to Charlie Morrissey, that in that period, the principal responsibility for congressional liaison was vested in the department or agency concerned with the subject matter.

Point 4 was a Department of State responsibility, a Department of State activity, and the matter of fighting for appropriations, for pressing for the appropriate legislation, was vested in the Department of State and its congressional liaison. It was not handled by any special unit or group of people in the White House. You will note that most of the--well the opening sentence, "Leadership in the fight to restore Point Four appropriations to the full amount will be in the Department of State." And that really is the essence of the whole thing. From there on there are a list of eight or ten other items on individuals who will be asked to do various things and some of the White House staff,

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of course, would cooperate where appropriate, and would reach out and talk with some--well, labor groups and other elements of both the executive branch and outsiders. But the point, and I repeat, was that in the Truman administration there was no congressional liaison organization. There was no group of staff people that either determined strategy, or tactics, or was expected to execute them. Responsibility was that of the department concerned.

HESS: One question on that point: In 1949 two men were brought in and given the specific title of Legislative Assistants to the President; Joseph Feeney and Charles Maylon. Do you recall those gentlemen?

ELSEY: Yes, I had hope that you . . .

HESS: How did this work?

ELSEY: I hope that either you or Charlie Morrissey had a chance to interview both of them.

HESS: I interviewed Mr. Feeney just before his death, and Mr. Maylon died before we had a chance to interview him.

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ELSEY: Well, you do have Joe Feeney's statement of what he did and how he worked. There was plenty to do, but there is just a heavy volume of relation, personal-maintaining good personal relationship between the President and his principal staff, the White House generally, with people on the Hill. Feeney and Maylon did not participate in the kind of meeting that we're talking about here in point 4. They were not involved with basic matters of legislation, presidential program, they worked directly for, and under, the supervision of Matthew Connelly, the President's Appointments Secretary, and the President's liaison with the Democratic National Committee. They were more in the partisan, and political arena, than in the substance of legislation or presidential program or administration of the executive branch.

In the preparation let's say of the State of the Union message, or a message on legislation, or perhaps of drafting of a veto message on a highly controversial matter, the staff did not work with either Joe or Charlie. This was not their area of responsibility or concern. They weren't deliberately excluded, it just

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wasn't what they were there for, nor did they expect to be, or wish to be involved in legislative and program matters.

HESS: Did you feel that they were effective in carrying out the duties that they were assigned? Were they effective in what they were supposed to do?

ELSEY: I don't think I'm in any position to judge. I would have no way of evaluating their effectiveness in the matter as they did.

HESS: Did you work with Mr. McFall very often?

ELSEY: Oh, yes, since I was as much concerned, or more concerned, than anyone else on the White House staff, in the latter part of the Truman administration, on matters relating to the Department of State, I necessarily dealt with Mr. McFall and his colleagues on--I can recall particularly point 4, the whole voice of America, and I use that phrase very broadly, not the specific program that is now called "Voice of America;" all matters pertaining to U.S. information abroad; foreign aid legislation, very broadly considered, yes.

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HESS: Was he effective? He a good man to work with?

ELSEY: I would rather not try and pass judgment on the abilities or the effectiveness of individuals. Here again, time, this is now twenty years later, and I'm not sure that my comments along these lines this many years after the event would be valid and accurate. I don't trust my own memory in that regard, and I'm not sure it would be in good taste or proper. Furthermore, I really wasn't the one to--I'm not the one to evaluate these fellows anyway. The man to evaluate McFall would be the Secretary of State, or the Under Secretary of State for whom he worked. We worked with him, he did not work for us.

HESS: Did you work with him very often?

ELSEY: Yes, but as I recall at this point, I suspect probably I worked more often and more closely with Edward W. Barrett the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at State than with McFall. I recall Eddie Barrett much more vividly than I do Jack McFall. Perhaps the key man, the principal person I dealt with on a continuing basis, was Carl [Carlisle] Humelsine, the executive

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secretary of the Department, and then such personal assistants to Secretary of State Acheson, during the second Truman administration, as Luke Battle, Lucius D. Battle, and Marshall Shulman. Battle was Acheson's personal assistant and Shulman was his principal speechwriter.

HESS: Do you recall any particular project, do you recall anything of interest that we might put down about any of the projects that you worked on with those men?

ELSEY: I think we perhaps have a cross reference here to one episode that I recall particularly vividly regarding Eddie Barrett. I believe, Jerry, we put down on an earlier tape, my recollections of working out with Barrett one Sunday afternoon at the White House, a directive. This would have been let's say, December 1950, about the first week in December 1950, a directive regarding the clearance of speeches on foreign policy and speeches on military policy, the requirement that they be cleared. The directive, this particular directive, was the one later used to pin General MacArthur because it was the one specific directive emanating from the President that could be cited as proof that he had

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violated a presidential edict. Didn't we cover that?

HESS: We sure did.

ELSEY: I think we had the papers in question in hand.

HESS: What is your general evaluation of the relations between Congress and the White House

during the Truman administration? Was White House-congressional liaison a success or not? If not, why not; if so, why?

ELSEY: It, I think, is impossible to give one answer that covers the entire Truman Presidency, because the situation varied so markedly. The 79th, 80th, 81st and 82nd Congresses each had a character of its own. We know, of course, that the 80th Congress was controlled by--the Republicans had a majority, and obviously that had--the President's relation with the 80th Congress were very different from his relations with the other three Congresses when the Democratic Party had a majority. So the degree with which his administration was able to make any hay on the Hill in terms of getting his program through presents a very jagged up and down line on the chart.

With respect to the President's personal relationships with congressional leadership, the President

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personally, I believe was known, trusted, respected, as a man, as an individual, as a former colleague, by men on both sides of the aisle. Of course there were certain exceptions, exceptions like Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, but the senior Senators and the senior Representatives of both parties understood him, knew him, just as he understood and knew them. They were longtime political figures who understood the ground rules of politics as it exists in our country.

Even during the 80th Congress the President was able to maintain open lines of communications to leaders of the Republican Party as well, of course, as his own. It was his custom to have regular meetings of the congressional leadership, which he personally, and usually only with Matt Connelly in attendance, would talk over in a very candid, very frank fashion, the situation on the Hill. The President liked that kind of face to face exchange. It personally meant a great deal to him. That kind of firsthand obtaining of the feelings, the attitudes, reactions, the dos and the don'ts from the congressional leadership coming straight to him, were, at least for him, by far the most effective way to do business. A staff, no matter how competent, no matter how numerous,

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couldn't possibly have given Harry Truman the kind of insight into congressional interests, attitudes, that his face to face meetings with them gave him.

Other Presidents choose to work differently. Other Presidents who have not had congressional experience, want to work differently. I can quite understand why General Eisenhower would have preferred a different pattern of congressional relations. He had never been on the Hill as we know, he had always dealt with the Congress through intermediaries. He had grown up in the military where you had your separate liaison staff. He carried that pattern on into the White House with him. This is understandable and proper. Each President has to develop his own method of relationship with the Hill. Now I don't know how you're going to judge whether a President's relations with a Congress are satisfactory or not. This is a subjective judgment. I don't know how you measure it objectively unless you do it just on the . . .

HESS: Number of bills passed.

ELSEY: Number of bills passed, number of bills vetoed, number of vetoes overridden. You can, if you want to,

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try it that way. But back to what we were saying about the President's relationship with the Republicans during the 80th Congress. We spoke in our last interview about foreign affairs, and the remarkable landmark actions that were taken by the United States of America in the 1947-1948 period in international relations. That was the period of the 80th Congress. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall plan, and various other measures were enacted at that time, because the President did have this kind of relationship of trust and candor with the leadership of both parties on the Hill, even though we were fighting with long knives, short knives, and everything else in the domestic arena.

HESS: Did you ever set in on any of the meetings of the Big Four, as you mentioned when they...

ELSEY: No.

HESS: Congressional leaders would come down

ELSEY: No, no.

HESS: Every Monday morning wasn't it?

ELSEY: Every Monday morning. No, no...

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HESS: You mentioned that Matt Connelly did.

ELSEY: Matt Connelly did. Occasionally the President would have Mr. Steelman or Mr. Clifford on hand if there were particular matters that were topics on the agenda, and my recollection, and this is one that you could check easily, is that Charlie Murphy, as time went on, was more and more frequently in attendance. This is understandable because Charlie had spent ten years on the Hill in the Senate legislative drafting service and knew, and was known by, the Senate leaders even if not by the House leadership, but this might be a very good point. This would be a very good point to check out with Mr. Murphy and get his comments. I never did. None of the younger staff members to my knowledge, ever participated in any of these meetings.

HESS: Do you recall anything in particular about the relationship between President Truman and Sam Rayburn? Were they particularly close or not?

ELSEY: They were very close, but I have nothing to add on this point to what has been so widely and frequently cited in the public record about the warmth of their

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personal relationship. I do recall in the 1948 "whistle-stop" campaign, how the President directed that we be certain that when we scheduled and planned the Texas tour, that we include Bonham, Texas, because he particularly wanted to make a stop in "Mr. Sam's" home town, make a speech in praise of Mr. Sam, the Speaker, and be able to call and pay his respects at the Speaker's house. We did have a buffet supper at the Speaker's house with his sisters as hostesses, and the warmth of the President's feelings towards Mr. Rayburn and his family was certainly evident on that occasion.

HESS: How instrumental was Leslie Biffle in congressional liaison matters?

ELSEY: I'm in no position to judge that. I simply don't know. The President liked Les Biffle, they had--again, this was a matter of warm personal relationship, trust, mutual trust and confidence, and Les Biffle was very helpful in keeping the White House, keeping Matt Connelly and the President informed of the sentiments and attitudes of Senators, and developments on the Hill. But, while I knew Mr. Biffle, I--the relationship between him and the President and Matt Connelly was so close that we on the

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staff were not in the line of communication. It was a direct communication between the President and Biffle and Matt and Biffle.

HESS: Would you recall if Mr. Biffle might have had more influence in Mr. Truman's first administration up until 1948 than he had after Mr. Truman was elected?

ELSEY: Jerry, I simply have no knowledge. I'm not able to comment.

HESS: All right.

ELSEY: I don't know.

HESS: All right.

ELSEY: I'm not aware--at this point in time I can't recall any reason to draw a line between the earlier and the later period.

HESS: All right. Any other thoughts on congressional-White House liaison?

ELSEY: No, none.

HESS: Our next subject is the trip of June 1948 and you

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stated in interviews number three and four that you did not go on that trip, and also you gave a very good summary of the success of the trip and your remarks to Kenneth Hechler's class at Princeton University in January 1949, but I have a couple of more questions. Do you know where the idea for that trip originated?

ELSEY: I suppose I knew at one time, but I certainly can't at this point recall.

HESS: There was some criticism in the press because the President was out of town so near the end of the regular session of Congress. Do you recall if that question came up in any of the discussions before the trip? Should we not take this trip at this time because Congress is in session?

ELSEY: Oh, I don't attach any regard to that kind of criticism. You find it even today. Today it is popular among some people to criticize President [Richard M.] Nixon for spending so much time at San Clemente or Key Biscayne. This is par for the course. There are always a few people of the press, or a few men on the Hill of the opposition party, who will criticize the President for being out of

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town. President Eisenhower used to be criticized for going to the farm at Gettysburg. I'm sure that if the President spent all of his time at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue the same kind of people would be criticizing the man for staying locked up behind the iron fence and not getting out and finding out what's going on in the country. I dismiss this kind of criticism as being really very trivial, and it's almost a space filler kind of thing.

HESS: Do you recall if David Lilienthal helped write any of the speeches for that particular trip?

ELSEY: No, I have no recollection. As a matter of fact, I don't recall David Lilienthal as ever having participated in the writing of any speeches for President Truman. Material may-- background material might have been requested from him on matters, some matters pertaining to natural resources of conservation and so on, but I don't recall that he ever did anything in terms of drafting, or writing a speech.

HESS: The incident in Omaha at the Ak-sar-ben, however you pronounce it (Nebraska spelled backwards), at the auditorium

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is well-known, when there was only a small crowd when the President spoke at the 35th Division reunion, that is fairly well-known, but did you ever hear the President speak of that occasion?

ELSEY: I have no recollection of ever hearing him talk about it. I'll make the generalization

that he rarely looked backwards. If something hadn't gone right, too bad, he'll try and do better next time, but he was not one to agonize on or dwell on disappointments, or situations where he felt he might not have done as well as he could or where he felt that his staff or others might not have performed up to expectation. This just wasn't in the man's character. I do not have, to be specific on your question, any recollection of him ever referring to that.

HESS: Did you ever hear him refer to the incident in Carey, Idaho where he dedicated the airfield to the wrong person?

ELSEY: Never.

HESS: Okay.

ELSEY: Plenty of other people cited it, but I never heard him speak about it.

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HESS: All right. Do you recall if Oscar Chapman acted as an advance man for that trip?

ELSEY: Well, I think he did. He certainly was active as an advance man later on in the other trips of 1948 and I'm--my recollection is that he did act, on at least some of it if not all of it, no one person can act as an advance man for a trip as long as that. It takes several advance men just because of the length of the trip and the amount of time. I really don't know how much Chapman had to do with that. He certainly was not as intimately involved and not as closely concerned with all details as he was later on in 148. There wouldn't be any Idaho or Nebraska episodes if Oscar Chapman had been responsible for those particular arrangements.

HESS: Do you recall who else worked as advance men either in June or in the regular campaign of September to November?

ELSEY: Well, Don Dawson did on some. Mostly I think it was a staff from the National Committee.

HESS: Do you recall who?

ELSEY: No. Again, the White House staff (to repeat what

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you've heard me say so many times), the White House staff was a small staff. We didn't have, we simply didn't have bodies that you could dispose and send out on matters of this sort. The few of us who were clustered generally around Clifford and later Murphy, had our hands full when it came to long trips of this sort, with getting ready on the speeches, not going out making advance plans. And the staff men generally clustered around John Steelman had their hands full with the day by day operations of the executive branch. Matt Connelly, of course, was intimately concerned with all the political arrangements of a trip, but he couldn't leave the White

House to go out and beat the bushes himself. He kept in touch with what was going on by nearly continuous telephone conversations throughout the country, but he wasn't available to go on out and make advance arrangements. It had to be done by the committee, Democratic National Committee, and a few carefully selected individuals borrowed from elsewhere in Government.

HESS: Such as Oscar Chapman?

ELSEY: Yes.

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HESS: Do you recall if Judge Sam Rosenman helped write any of the speeches for that June trip?

ELSEY: I do not recall.

HESS: Do you recall if he went along on that trip?

ELSEY: I do not recall that. I don't think he did.

HESS: I believe he helped write an outline for the President's acceptance speech at the convention, is that correct? Do you recall anything about that? We may have covered this before, but what do you recall about President Truman's acceptance speech in Philadelphia and do you recall Sam Rosenman having anything to do with that?

ELSEY: Well, I do think, yes, I do think Sam Rosenman came down from New York to help on the acceptance speech. It seems to me I recall some meetings in the Cabinet Room with Rosenman in attendance. I think, Jerry, we probably could cite . . .

HESS: Did we cover this?

ELSEY: I'm not sure that we did cover that, but I think if one

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would look at my folder on the acceptance speech, which I guess by now is in Independence, one would find drafts, various drafts, with probably marginal or other annotations by me as to persons who participated in the various drafts, and who sat in on the editing and revision conferences.

HESS: Judge Rosenman did not go along on any of the campaign trips and his services were not used. Do you know why his services were not used during the campaign?

ELSEY: No, I don't. He, of course, had long since left Washington, was back in New York practicing law, the head of a very large law firm. I know that the President respected Judge Rosenman, valued his opinions, and I think Judge Rosenman, my recollection is that he was

pretty heavily involved in New York in the fall campaign. Certainly the President sought out his advice on matters pertaining to the campaign in New York City and New York State.

HESS: All right, moving on into the events of the 1948 election, which has been covered to a degree by yourself and Mr. Morrissey, but in the book, *The Truman Presidency*,

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by Cabell Phillips, this is on -page 196 and 197, Mr. Phillips states that in the fall of 1947, President Truman offered to step aside for General Eisenhower, if the General would accept the Democratic nomination for President while he, Mr. Truman, would take the number two position on the ticket as Vice President. Do you believe the incident as related by Phillips is correct?

ELSEY: I have no knowledge at all of the instance. I've heard it--I've read it in Phillips and I've heard others assert that, but I have no reason to--I have neither reason to believe it or disbelieve it, I simply have no knowledge on the score.

HESS: And moving on further, in Cabell Phillips' book on page 197, he makes reference to a report that was given by Clark Clifford to the President and he says:

Late In November of 1947, Clifford put in the President's hands a 40-page analysis of the status of Truman on the Democratic party that should rank as one of the great dissertations of the art of politics. It did not promise Mr. Truman that he could win. What it did was to cut down to size some of the mountainous imponderables of his situation and to suggest that **he** did not have to lose.

Did you assist Mr. Clifford in the preparation of that memo and what do you recall about that memo?

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ELSEY: I did not. I did not write it, I did not assist him in it. I did see some drafts of it. I read portions of it from time to time, but I was not--well, I was more of a casual observer of the process at work than a participant in it. I would say that the thought that Clifford was expressing there, were as I understood it then, and have no reason to change my opinion since, were pretty much the outcome of those discussions that he was having on a fairly regular basis with the Oscar Ewing group. And I think you know what I mean there. The group of people who would meet from time to time in Oscar Ewing's apartment at the Sheraton Park and talk over political matters. Also Mr. Clifford had the benefit of memoranda that other keen observers on the political scene around town had written and had sent to him. He took all of this material and considered it, and studied it, material both written and oral, and consolidated it in a fashion that he thought would be meaningful and helpful to President Truman.

HESS: Were there any particular observers that you had reference to who might have submitted memos to Mr. Clifford?

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ELSEY: Well, I do recall that James Rowe had sent one memorandum to Mr. Clifford which he found particularly impressive.

HESS: All right, our next subject deals with the President's decision to call Congress back into special session. And in your second interview with Morrissey, you mentioned that you could not remember the source of who suggested that the President call Congress back. Is that right? Do you recall that?

ELSEY: I don't remember that particular conversation with Charlie Morrissey, but I have been asked this question by a number of people from time to time. My response, generally, is that I don't know there's much point in trying to say--trying to give the credit to a single individual for proposing the idea at a specific moment in time. The thought of Congress being called back into a special session is not unique, not extraordinary. The President, Mr. Truman, had been on the Hill, he had these constant contacts with congressional leadership, with these advisers in the political scene. The matter of calling Congress back into session had been alluded

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to over a period of weeks, if not months, by columnists, editorial writers, and others. It was just something that was in the air, in the atmosphere.

A memorandum which Charlie may have cited to me, if not others have, I've been shown a copy of a memorandum that came out of the files of the Independence library and asked if I could remember who wrote it. There is a memorandum, I think, from Bill Batt and his group on this subject, and I've been asked if I thought Batt was responsible for it. I think my answer there again is the same. The Batt memorandum was probably just one of a number of pieces of paper that are strewn through the files discussing the subject. Batt gave some pros and some cons, this was sort of a summary of the pros and cons that were pretty much in people's minds at that time. The President had called Congress back into session the preceding autumn. So, then when people say, "Who gave him the idea of calling back in the summer of '48?" I think they tend to overlook the fact that only six months before he called Congress back into special session. So it's not that extraordinary or unique an idea.

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HESS: Now the memo we have this morning is, "Should the President call Congress back?" and it's really unsigned but do you know, is this the one from the Research Division, is this the one from Batt?*

ELSEY: I think this is the one from the Research Division.

HESS: Have you ever seen a copy of this that was signed? This is a copy of one that is in Sam Rosenman's papers at the Truman Library, it's dated June 29, 1948, entitled, "Should the President call Congress back?". Have you ever seen something like this that was signed by Batt

or the Research Division people? Do you recall?

ELSEY: No, I don't. I think the reason I cite, or refer, to Batt's name now is that some of the other people who from time to time in recent years have asked me about it, have said that they've been told that Batt wrote such a memorandum, or that Batt recalls having written such a memorandum. I do not, at this point, recall ever having seen one signed by him, nor has anybody ever shown me a copy of one actually signed by him. But, again, oh, I guess I've already said it, people were talking about it, the White House staff was talking about it. If one

* See appendix

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simply refers to the newspapers and the columnists I'm sure that you will find that lots of people were talking about this possibility.

HESS: Fine. All right, now moving on, I think that we have adequately covered your duties on the train in 1948, in times past.

ELSEY: I think so.

HESS: I think so.

ELSEY: Irwin Ross' book also has . . .

HESS: *The Loneliest Campaign*.

ELSEY: . . . covers that. I do not think I have anything to add to what Irwin Ross has said.

HESS: Moving on to the trip that the President took in May of 1950. We referred to this slightly during our interview at the National Archives in April when we were going through the papers, but there we were principally discussing the speech that you wrote for the President at the Library of Congress just after the completion of this trip, but we did not really discuss

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the trip itself. The main address during that trip was at the dedication of the Grand Coulee Dam on the 11th of May. Just why was this trip made, other than to dedicate a dam that had already been dedicated several times?

ELSEY: I don't know that I have the answer to that.

HESS: To give the President a chance to get out of town or something? Maybe?

ELSEY: I simply don't know, Jerry, why the trip was made at that time, or that area. He liked the trip, he enjoyed traveling by train as we know, he liked to get out and do the "whistle-stop"

routine, but I don't now remember any particular motivating factor that inspired that trip.

HESS: Who were a few of the staff members that went on that trip? This will be down in some of the logs, but who comes to mind?

ELSEY: It will be down in the logs, or my trip files there where I have all of the itineraries and everything else. Oh, Matt Connelly, Charlie Murphy. Of course Clifford had by now retired from the White House and Charlie Murphy was Special Counsel. The regular group from the press office. Dave Bell I know was along. He and I were together a great deal of the time. But, let's refer to the file. Everyone's name will be listed.

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HESS: I found a memo in your papers at the National Archives from David Bell to Charles Murphy which indicated that the President did not want to go into California on that trip because of the primary fight there between Senator [Sheridan] Downey and Mrs. [Helen Gahagan] Douglas and there were no stops in California. Do you recall anything about that?

ELSEY: No, I think the Dave Bell memorandum probably covers the subject adequately.

HESS: All right, and in your papers at the Archives I found a four-page memo to you and David Bell from Walter S. Salant, dated May 2, 1950 and the subject: "Comments on fourth draft for Fargo." Did Mr. Salant help out very often on matters of this nature; going over drafts and . . .

ELSEY: No, not often. But we valued his knowledge and from time to time would ask him to react to matters, but it was unusual for him to respond in a lengthy memorandum. He was a particularly close friend of Dave Bell's and Dave would call on Salant for facts, quick opinions, and interpretations, rather than reactions to full speech drafts.

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HESS: In Kenneth Hechler's very good analysis of the trip, and a copy of that analysis is in your papers, he mentions that when David Lloyd became ill in April the services of Donald B. MacPhail and James L. Sundquist were obtained from the Bureau of the Budget to assist in drafting the major speeches. Could you tell me a little about those two men and were they called in by the White House at any other time than this? Donald B. MacPhail and James Sundquist?

ELSEY: I don't recall MacPhails having been involved at any other time; Sundquist had on earlier occasions been lent to us by the Bureau of the Budget. Sundquist, for example worked on the Truman State of the Union message of January 1947. Jim and I were the two staff members who put together the earliest drafts of that January 1947 State of the Union, and Jim helped on other speeches from time to time. I don't recall MacPhails participation on any other occasion, however.

HESS: On that trip the President spoke in Chicago on May 15th at the National Democratic Conference and Jefferson Jubilee, and in that speech Mr. Truman made reference to the fact

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that on the trip he had been followed around the country by a representative of the Republican politicians. Mr. Truman said that the way that he showed up reminded him of a little poem:

I have a little shadow
That goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him
Is more than I can see.

And the man who was following the President around was identified as Victor A. Johnston, who was an employee of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. Did you see, or possibly talk, to Mr. Johnston during that trip?

ELSEY: Oh, I remember, certainly we all saw Vic Johnston, he flew--sometimes would charter a small plane and fly around. It got to be a great joke on the part of those of us on the train and it was a matter of considerable amusement to the press. When they had little else to write about they'd tease and refer to Vic Johnston.

I have another even more vivid recollection than of Vic, and that was of Philip Willkie, the son of the Republican presidential candidate in 1940, Wendell L. Willkie. I had known Phil Willkie since undergraduate

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days in college, and had known him later as a fellow graduate student at Harvard, and still later as a fellow Naval Reserve officer during the war.

Phil accompanied Vic Johnston on most, even perhaps all, of the trips and Phil and I would frequently engage in banter at the "whistle-stop" or rear platform appearances. And to the amusement of all, I invited Phil several times to come aboard the Truman train, and I would introduce him around to members of the press and to my colleagues on the White House staff.

The Truman treatment here was simply to ridicule the Republican effort, poke fun at it and treat it lightly, not treat it as any serious, or ominous, or sinister effort of any sort. We just laughed at it and thought it was funny, but it was Phil Willkie that I saw more of than Vic--although I met Vic Johnston, we could all readily identify him. My recollection of him is that he always wore a large white, or very light tan, cowboy style hat, so you could pick him out of any crowd quickly and easily.

HESS: He wasn't hard to see.

ELSEY: He wasn't hard to see.

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It was pretty silly exercise. Phil later on had a career of his own in Indiana politics, holding various state offices in Indiana.

HESS: In your papers at the National Archives--that were at the National Archives, and are now in the Truman Library--in the folder, "Western Trip - May 1950" I found a memo regarding the speech at Madison, Wisconsin, and you were transmitting a draft that you had been given, you were transmitting it to Charles Murphy and you said, "I am attaching the Ben Hardy draft for Madison, Wisconsin." Well, now we have discussed Mr. Hardy several times, and we know his relationship to point 4, but did he often contribute ideas or speech drafts?

ELSEY: No, not often, simply because he had a full-time job in the Department of State and was much too busy. I had forgotten this. My surmise is that we perhaps asked Ben for some ideas on that occasion because the President was going to dedicate the, what, CUNA, Credit Union National Association headquarters there at Madison?

HESS: A dedication of the Filene House, and that was named

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in honor of Edward Filene, who
was founder of the credit union movement.

ELSEY: Yes.

HESS: The Credit Union National Association.

ELSEY: Yes, CUNA, right. And among other ideas that had been thought about, discussed, and considered, as in the broad point 4 area, how could we help other countries, or developing countries, acquire pools of capital, indigenously, and acquire some of the types of credit and savings and loan, and other associations that we have, other institutions that we have in the United States. The credit union movement was one that was talked about, and my recollection is that the officials of the whole credit union movement were much interested in point 4 and the point 4 concept and wanted to help out. I think that's why we thought that Ben might appropriately give us some ideas for a speech on that occasion. Obviously we did not turn to full-time civil servants, career officers, for partisan or political speeches, but this was not a partisan or a political occasion, or a partisan or political speech. CUNA is a non-partisan activity and public service

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and the President was there as the President of the United States, not as a campaigning political figure. So, we certainly never asked Ben Hardy, or anyone else for that matter, at the State Department to participate in any political speech writing exercise.

HESS: We may have covered this before, but was the first time you met Ben Hardy when he

came to see you about point 4?

ELSEY: The first time I met Ben Hardy, or had even heard the name, was when he phoned my office at the White House in December of 1948 and asked for an appointment to come over and talk with me about an idea he had that he was having trouble getting accepted in the Department of State; the idea which we subsequently came to know as point 4.

HESS: All right, moving on to the campaign of 1950. Now, Mr. Truman did not campaign very much. He made only one political address, and that was delivered at what might be considered Mr. Truman's favorite place, Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis, on November the 4th of 1950. Was there any decision made to restrict President Truman's participation in that campaign that year?

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ELSEY: He thought it would be completely inappropriate in view of the Korean conflict which had begun on June 25th. He simply did not think he ought to be out engaging in the kind of political endeavor he had two years earlier when we were in the midst of active hostilities. The war, although we were careful at that point to avoid calling it formally a war, was in his--uppermost in his mind, and the minds of everybody, and he did not think that he had ought to be out campaigning for individual members of the Senate and the House under those circumstances.

HESS: A few days after his address in St. Louis, he was in Independence, Missouri at the dedication of the Liberty bell. This was on November the 7th. That was the Liberty bell that is now out in the front lawn of the Truman Library. Did you go along on that trip to Independence in 1950?

ELSEY: No, I'm sure I did not. No, I didn't.

HESS: All right, just before the President left for that trip, on November 1st, 1950, there had been an attempt on his life. What do you recall about that? Where were

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you when you first heard about that attempt?

ELSEY: I was in my office at the Executive Office Building at the time, and of course, heard about it as we all did, everybody in that building, everybody in that part of town did in a matter of moments, but I have no knowledge of the matter other than what has appeared so copiously in the public press. I was in my office, my office overlooked the White House, overlooked West Executive Avenue and the White House, so I could not see Blair House and saw nothing, either before, during, or after.

HESS: Did you hear any shots?

ELSEY: No.

HESS: Did you every hear the President speak of those events after that time; of that particular assassination attempt, or assassination attempts in general?

ELSEY: I have no recollection of his discussing assassination attempts. The only time that I recall--there must have been other occasions--but the only one I now recall twenty years later, the only time that I recall him discussing

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particular assassination attempt, was when John Steelman, some weeks thereafter, presented President Truman with a photograph of Leslie Coffelt, the White House policeman who lost his life in that assassination attempt.

I don't remember why Steelman thought it appropriate to give the President a copy of that print. Perhaps because it was a good portrait of Coffelt, all of us had known him. He was a fine, very friendly officer, and Steelman had known him because he had been on duty over near Dr. Steelman's office for a long time. That might have been why Steelman handed the President a copy of the print at one of our morning staff meetings. The President took it and tears came to his eyes, and his voice broke, and for a few moments he was unable to speak. He mumbled a few words about a man doing his duty and giving up his life to protect him, but he was so moved by seeing the portrait of Coffelt and his recollection of the episode that he simply was unable for a little while to carry on, carry on a conversation, or carry on the meeting. But that was the only time that I remember ever hearing him or any of us discussing the assassination attempt in his presence. Of course,

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the matter of his personal protection, the protection of Mrs. Truman and Miss Margaret Truman were matters that he discussed, or were discussed with him by the Secret Service and other officials concerned with security, but those of us on the staff whose duties did not relate to security, didn't get into that matter.

HESS: On the subject of Mr. Truman's trips to Key West: During the Truman administration would you go to Key West when he did?

ELSEY: I don't remember how many times I went to Key West, five or six perhaps in all. I did not go in the early part of the administration. I was not that closely associated with him, or one of the principal members of the staff. In 1949, '50, '51 I went down several times.

HESS: How was it decided who would accompany the President?

ELSEY: The President decided that.

HESS: How was staff work carried on in Key West?

ELSEY: Bill Rigdon's logs give a pretty complete account of what the President's day was like

and what the staff members did there at Key West, that gives you the chronology

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and the time.

The offices were established in one of the office buildings of the naval base, just a few yards from the so-called "Little White House." Rigdon and two or three other staff members, clerical help, would come down from Washington and they would be supplemented as necessary by yeomen made available by the base commander.

There were regular mail pouches down from the White House, at least one a day, and other occasions two a day. They were flown down. Papers requiring the President's signature would come from Bill Hopkins, the executive clerk. Bill Rigdon was responsible for handling them, seeing they were properly signed, all the necessary mechanics attended to and they would be bundled up and sent back to the White House.

The President used these Key West occasions for opportunities for relaxed discussion, think sessions, with his staff. Sometimes there would be a luncheon out on the lawn, and the President would sit around a semi-circle and talk over matters in a quiet and unhurried fashion.

Usually members of the Cabinet, or occasionally a

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political leader, would be on hand for a portion of the trip. Sometimes a Secretary of State, or a Secretary of Defense, or Secretary of the Treasury would fly down in the morning and have lunch session with the President on a matter that he wanted to talk about and would fly on home. There was a pretty steady stream of visitors down from Washington, official leaders, down from Washington. A small White House staff would stay through continuously with the President, but he was not isolated by the White House staff. He was in regular contact with Cabinet and congressional leaders.

I remember one particular occasion where we sat around on the lawn and the President hashed out a whole series of decisions, most of which he thought through before. But he got all his ducks in a row and this involved, oh, half a dozen changes in personnel in the executive branch, the pros and cons of who could best do the job and the timing of the transfer. I would

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prefer not--since personalities were very much involved in that discussion, I remember it very carefully and I took, at his request, kept track of decisions as they were reached in respect to persons, positions and timing and so on, I would--as I say personalities were a large part of discussion. I would prefer not to be any more specific at this point.

HESS: All right. In checking Mr. Rigdon's logs, I believe you were present on the trip to Key

West just after the election in 1948. Do you recall if the President was able to relax? Just what was his frame of mind, just after his big upset in 1948, do you recall?

ELSEY: Well, I don't think it takes much imagination to figure out what he felt like on that occasion.

HESS: What did you enjoy most while at Key West? What did you enjoy doing? What was your favorite recreation; tennis, poker, swimming, fishing--not hiking in the mountains, that's for sure.

ELSEY: No, no hiking in the mountains there. Oh, just the mornings over at the very small swimming beach doing a little exploring. Two or three times we would go over to--several of us would go over to Havana for the day, shopping and sightseeing there. The opportunity to relax with the President, to see him unwind and enjoy himself, and the joshing and the banter with him and other members of the White House staff. Yes, there were card games,

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poker games, but they didn't last into late at night or anything of that sort. They were always very mild and modest in their stakes so that nobody would get hurt if his luck or his skill were particularly bad.

HESS: Do you recall if the President's announcement at Key West that he was not going to run for re-election in 1952 was in March of '51 as Mr. Truman has in his *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, page 489, or on November the 19th, 1951 as William Rigdon has in his book, *White House Sailor*, page 267? Do you know when that announcement was made?

ELSEY: What do you mean by announcement, Jerry? There was no announcement by him until the spring of '52 at a dinner at the National Guard Armory. Do you mean private discussion with the staff?

HESS: That's right, a private discussion with certain members of his staff, with a few members of his staff.

ELSEY: I was not present on any occasion when he made such a remark to any members of the staff.

HESS: When did you first learn that he was not going to run? Was it at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner or did you know

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before then?

ELSEY: Well, the first time I officially, or publicly, heard him say he was not going to run was at that National Guard Armory dinner, in March, the end of March '52.

HESS: I think the 29th.

ELSEY: The 29th or thereabouts, '52. My personal feeling, not based on conversation with him, and not based on any private information from any member of the staff, I had simply not felt in my own bones, for a long time, that he would run again, but that was a feeling on my part, it was not based on anything he had said to me or anything anyone had said to me that purported to have come from him. I was unaware until these later books came out that he had made any statement to the staff on any occasion at Key West. I do not recall that any staff member ever told me that he had said any such thing to them. So, I guess we have two things here--three things: One, I'm not aware of any statements he made to the staff at Key West meetings. However although I was not, was not aware of such statements, I personally had not felt that he would run again, but finally, third,

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I did not hear any public statement to that effect until he, himself, publicly said so at the Armory meeting.

HESS: Do you recall anything of interest about any other of Mr. Truman's vacations that he may have taken on the *Williamsburg* or Shangri-La? Did you go aboard the *Williamsburg* very often?

ELSEY: Yes, I was on the *Williamsburg* a number of times.

HESS: Do you recall anything of interest that may have transpired?

ELSEY: I was on the *Williamsburg* in the early part of his administration. I was then still in uniform, and was on board in my capacity as Assistant to the Naval Aide, not present. Sometimes the Naval Aide would be elsewhere on duty, or not go, and I would be the naval officer present.

No the pattern was the same, Mr. Truman and Mrs. Truman and Margaret were, in the privacy of the *Williamsburg*, just as in any other private occasion with that family, they were warm, friendly, and relaxed, and treated their staff members with respect and courtesy and friendliness. I think I must have said on other

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occasions that Mrs. Truman had almost a maternal attitude towards the younger members of the staff. She was solicitous about their welfare, she was--and as a result was respected and liked and admired by us.

I can recall just a few vignettes of life on the *Williamsburg*. I recall on one occasion, I can't date it now, I think it probably was fairly early, I might have still been in uniform. I went up to the President's cabin with a message that had come in over the radio, and I took it up and tapped on the door. President and Mrs. Truman said, "Come in," and I went in and the two of them were playing double solitaire. I apologized for interrupting the game and the President said, "Oh,

that's all right, I'm ahead anyway."

And Mrs. Truman laughingly bantered and said, "Yes, he's ahead and he's ahead because he cheats."

And this was just a nice relaxed teasing, friendly kind of relationship that they had with each other, and that they had with staff members who came in. I was--no matter how young or in uniform or later out of uniform, you never went in and stood at attention, rigidly. That is, you would go in that way, but the

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very first thing that President Truman or Mrs. Truman would say, "Sit down," ask you to sit down and be seated and you were put at your ease at once with them. I don't think this is very significant historical point of view, Jerry, I'm not sure what you want here, but I'm giving you my recollections and my feelings.

This has been true throughout. And then when I took my thirteen year old boy out to Independence last summer, he had never met the Trumans, they had left Washington long before he was born. By prearrangement we went to see the President and Mrs. Truman at their house in Independence. I was--we were greeted, and my son was treated with the same warmth and the same friendliness by the President and Mrs. Truman that I had been twenty-five years earlier. They don't change in that regard. I'm sure you've found the same thing yourself. My son was placed between the President and Mrs. Truman. My son was a little abashed by this proximity to a former President and a former First Lady. Mrs. Truman put him at ease right away. As she said to me, "I know what to do with boys, I've got four grandsons," and we were off and running and had a great

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time. I had trouble getting away because I didn't think we should stay too long. Several times I tried to get up and Mrs. Truman would say, "Oh, stay a while longer and visit some more." But that was just the same way it had been in '46, '47, '48, '49, '50 and '51.

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Ninth Oral History Interview with George M. Elsey, held at the National Headquarters of the American Red Cross, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1970. By Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library.

HESS: All right, Mr. Elsey, to begin this morning, let's discuss your duties at the office of the Director of Mutual Security. I believe that you went over there in about November of 1951. Is that correct?

ELSEY: Yes.

HESS: Why was that transfer made from the regular--as a staff member of the regular White House staff, to Mr. Harriman's staff?

ELSEY: Mr. Harriman returned to Washington a few days after the outbreak of the Korean war, in the later part of June or the first day or two of July 1950, at the President's personal request, because he thought it would be extremely useful, helpful to him to have Harriman close at hand. With the outbreak of the Korean conflict, there was much uncertainty as to the long-range intentions of the Soviet Union, just what might be brewing in other parts of the Communist world, and Mr. Harriman had more firsthand experience and a better knowledge of the Soviet leadership,

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Soviet mentality, the Soviet outlook, than any of the other senior diplomats and the President thought it would be very helpful, highly desirable to have Harriman on hand to help the White House, the State Department, the military, analyze and--in the course of events that would be unfolding.

I had known Mr. Harriman only very casually from fairly frequent meetings during when he would be back in Washington during the war years and the postwar when he was Secretary of Commerce, but I certainly did not know him at all intimately. However, very quickly I began working with him in the--as he assumed his new role as a Special Assistant to the President in the summer, fall of 1950, and increasingly closely with him and the small staff that he assembled.

In the middle of 1951 the foreign aid bill, which was slowly working its way through the Congress, contained a provision establishing an office, a new post, that had not previously existed, Director for Mutual Security, and that director was to be placed in the Executive Office of the President. The role of the man, the role of the office, was to coordinate the old Marshall plan, which had now broadened to a world-wide basis; of point 4, which

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was being administered within the State Department as the Technical Cooperation Administration, and the Military Assistance which was over in the Pentagon. So, we had three related, but not too well coordinated foreign aid activities. The military didn't want Military Assistance put in State, nor the Marshall plan. The ECA was much too large to be absorbed within State. It wanted, everybody agreed that it ought to remain independent. So, it seemed that the only way to coordinate all of these activities was from the White House with a legally authorized, constituted person. And the job description--the law I think was actually written with Averell Harriman in mind.

When the Mutual Security Act of '51 did become a law in the final few weeks of '51, Harriman was sworn in as Director for Mutual Security and for quite some time during the autumn of that year he had asked, in fact sort of assumed, that I would join him in that newly established office.

And so I did. The transfer was a lateral transfer, if you will, from the immediate White House office to Harriman's. I had been working as I said before, increasingly closely with him and his

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staff for well over a year, so this was about almost an official recognition of a status already existing.

HESS: There was some speculation in the press at that time that you were moved there it was a sign of President Truman's support for Averell Harriman in the 1952 election. I found a clipping from the Chicago *Sun-Times* of November the 25th, 1951 and I don't read it all, but it says in part:

. . . The speculation has become pretty wild, in fact, W. Averell Harriman, the Truman goldbraid jack-of-all-trades is mentioned as the Man Who.

Basis for this bit of guessing is that Mr. Truman last week agreed to let Harriman have young George Elsey, one of the White House administrative assistants, for his new mutual European defense setup. Elsey wrote a lot of the so successful Truman 'whistlestop' speeches in 1948, and is thus figured to be a builder-upper of presidential candidates . . .

Do you recall any of that speculation at that time?

ELSEY: I had completely forgotten that story. I suppose somebody called it to my attention at the time, but I had forgotten it, Jerry. Well, this is just more of some reporter whiling away the idle hours by putting some speculation down on his typewriter and filling up space.

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Certainly I did not go to the Harriman staff with any intention or expectation of working, supporting him, or boosting him for the Democratic nomination in '52; that was just not a part of it in any way, shape, or form.

HESS: What were your duties on that job? Just what did you do?

ELSEY: Well, I was the, I forgot just what I was called, the Assistant to the Director, or the Special Assistant to the Director, I'm not sure just what. Anyway, I was in charge of his immediate office, his staff, and a right-hand man, I suppose you'd say. Keeping track of just everything he was supposed to be attending to.

HESS: How would you assess the efficiency of the agency at the time that Mr. Harriman was running it?

ELSEY: Well, I think the point here is there wasn't an agency that he was running. He was a coordinator of three programs, the Economic Recovery Program, the point 4 or Technical Assistance Program, and the military program, and each of these programs had its own

immediate administrator. It was Harriman's job to see that the

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three programs, which had developed under different legislation with different emphasis at different times, and for somewhat different purposes, was to see that they were meshed together and that we didn't inadvertently find ourselves working at cross-purposes in a country, or region, or a part of the world just through lack of coordination.

Harriman participated in the National Security Council discussions and worked very closely with the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. He had access to those levels and counsels at the White House more easily than the men who were doing the day by day operation of the programs. He could function at a higher level than the administrator of any--than the administrator to the three separate programs. Had a broader perspective, a broader overview of our total national interest than was available to them.

HESS: Were there times when it seemed that the agencies were working at cross-purposes? Were there times when he had to step in and straighten things out?

ELSEY: I don't think there's any point in our trying to dwell in detail on that. Sure, this always happened

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in anything as big as a governmental organization. You'll find the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing. This has always happened and always will continue to happen and the purpose of a government administrator at that level is to minimize the frequency of those occurrences, avoid as many as you can and rectify the problems when they come to the surface.

HESS: What was the relationship of the agency and its staff members with the White House staff?

ELSEY: I repeat, there was no agency. There was the Office of the Director, but it was not an operating governmental agency. The immediate associates of Harriman in the office of the Director for Mutual Security were physically intermingled with members of the White House staff in the Executive Office Building, and until the establishment of the Office of the Director by the Mutual Security Act, all of us had been on the White House staff, so, the finest of relations. Everybody knew one another. We all had worked together, we all continued to work together.

HESS: Did you have any duties in the 1952 campaign?

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ELSEY: None. None whatsoever. I was in the Harriman office and we, by the Hatch Act and everything else, were precluded from participation and did not participate. I had no role of any

sort in the '52 campaign.

HESS: Mr. Harriman did go out to Chicago and establish an office in Chicago at that time. In other words he made a definite bid for the candidacy. Do you recall anything about that in particular?

ELSEY: Yes. He threw his hat in the ring some weeks before the Democratic convention. Before, you recall, Governor Stevenson was very coy about his availability, and several men just let it be known that they would be willing to run if nominated, and Harriman indicated his availability and set up a small office here in Washington, completely removed from his governmental office, on private space, the rent privately paid, the staff privately paid, and so on. It had no role, no part whatsoever with his governmental duties, and there was some exploration by that group as to delegate sentiment (delegates that is to the forthcoming Democratic convention), as to delegate sentiment and the attitudes toward Harriman,

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but those of us in the office of the Director for Mutual Security were not in any way a part of that activity.

We knew of it of course, obviously, we were aware of it, but as I repeat, that was a totally separate off-limits enterprise so far as those of us in the foreign aid activities were concerned.

HESS: Who served on that staff, do you recall?

ELSEY: I think you had better get these details from Mr. Harriman because any recollections I have are going to be incomplete and inadequate, and further would tend to confuse people into thinking that I knew a lot about it whereas I don't; I didn't then and I don't now.

HESS: What do you recall about the relations between President Truman and Governor Stevenson at that time?

ELSEY: I have no knowledge on that subject at all, other than the published record.

HESS: All right, in your opinion would President Truman have preferred to have seen someone other than Governor Stevenson as the Democratic standard-bearer in 1952?

ELSEY: I have no basis of answering that.

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HESS: Okay. Anything else about your duties with Mr. Harriman?

ELSEY: No, I don't think so.

HESS: All right, back to Mr. Truman and just some general questions about Mr. Truman. In your opinion how successful was Mr. Truman in separating his individual views from the views he thought he should take because he was President, or did that, do you think that that came up? What I have in mind here were probably his views and pronouncements on the field of civil rights. Do you think this would come into this category?

ELSEY: I don't know how I can answer the question. You can't separate a man from himself. Harry Truman was one individual, one person, at all times. You don't split him up the middle and say this is Truman and then this is the President. Truman was the President; the President was Truman. That I realize is probably not answering your question.

On the matter of civil rights, I think that President's perspective and outlook evolved over a period of time. His outlook on civil rights, just as on many other questions, was

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not fixed and constant and as he grew in responsibilities through his political career in the State of Missouri, and in the decade in the Senate, then the White House years, the country was changing, times were changing, attitudes amongst the American people were changing, he himself was becoming broader in his understanding and concern, responsibilities, and outlook, and so his civil rights stance was a constantly evolving, one; too, I think he probably had a much broader outlook on these matters after he became President than he had before. I certainly think he meant absolutely everything he said in his well-known civil rights message of February 2nd, 1948. I don't think there was anything phoney about that at all. It wasn't a sham, it wasn't a pretense, it wasn't a lot of hot air just for political purposes. I believe that he believed what he was advocating there.

HESS: Regarding the general charges made against individuals at that time, it came to be known as "McCarthyism," was there any response among the White House staff members to protect themselves from that sort of thing that they become secretive or . . .

ELSEY: You mean about the White House staff members concerned

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over their own individual situation?

HESS: That's right.

ELSEY: I don't think so. I'm not aware that any White House staff member felt that he had anything to hide or that he was personally in any kind of jeopardy at this period. Those of us who were quite young at the time as well as those who were a good deal older, were proud of what we had done in our past, and had absolutely nothing to conceal and no reason to think that McCarthy or anyone else had any basis to accuse us of anything.

HESS: There were two staff members who were named by McCarthy: David Lloyd and Philleo

Nash, do you recall that matter?

ELSEY: Were they actually named by name by Senator McCarthy?

HESS: Yes.

ELSEY: I did not recall that they had been.

HESS: All right. What do you recall about the transition from the Truman administration to the Eisenhower administration?

ELSEY: Very little, because as we were saying just a few

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moments ago, I was with Harriman at that time, not in the immediate White House office. Insofar as the Harriman transition to his successor who was Governor Harold Stassen, I recall that very well indeed, because I was involved in it very, very deeply.

Harriman telephoned Stassen within a matter of minutes after President-elect Eisenhower announced that Stassen would be the Director for Mutual Security, Harriman telephoned Stassen who was then the president of the University of Pennsylvania; congratulated him, offered every assistance, invited him to come down to Washington at his earliest convenience and said that he would make himself and his staff--put them completely at the disposal of Governor Stassen and this is pretty much what happened.

The staff members, the Harriman staff members, prepared briefs, prepared reports of what they had been doing, on what their responsibilities were, what the issues facing the office were as they saw them, and Stassen did come down. Stassen spent a great deal of time, part of the time using my office, going through highly classified materials. He spent, I can't now

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recall how many times he came or how many hours he spent, but it was a very impressive amount of time that Stassen devoted to educating himself in the responsibilities of his job.

Harriman made it clear to everyone of us that we were to answer any question Stassen asked without any reservation of any sort and we were to give him everything we could that we felt he needed or that he expressed the desire to have. This was the case of a transition where the offer was made, and sincerely made, and very sincerely accepted by Stassen. And in the last few, last, oh, couple of weeks before January 20th, when Stassen already knew who some of his subordinates were going to be, the same kind of cooperation was extended to them.

HESS: Did President Truman ever express in your presence any viewpoints about the operation of the Presidency or on government organization, how he thought the government could better be organized or be more efficiently run?

ELSEY: Jerry, I don't now, at this date, recall any specifics

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in that regard. I'm sure he must from time to time have talked about this. Well, of course he did, we had the Hoover Commission, there were various presidential advisory commissions, some public and some just informal ad hoc working groups. The organization for more effective management was--has been a lifelong concern of James E. Webb.

Webb was Bureau of the Budget Director for Truman, later became Under Secretary of State. Both in the Budget and over into State, Webb continued this interest in the effective management. In fact he is internationally known for his work in this field. Others in the Budget Bureau before and after Webb discussed the matter with Truman.

Truman sent up a number of reorganization plans, the establishment of the National Security Council was an effort for more effective management in the defense and the foreign policy field. The establishment of the National Security Resources Board was a step in that direction. Sure, it was--the matter of how do you run the Federal Government is something that a President is concerned with 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. But

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now, at this date, to try and quote a particular, remark that Mr. Truman might have made on the subject, I'm afraid is more than I can do.

HESS: You have been associated with a number of Presidents, is there a way that the government could be made more efficient? We don't want to go too far into this, but are there a few things that, should be done to make the Government more efficient? Do you think that there are things that demand too much of a President's time? Is he pinned down too much, for instance, on social matters?

ELSEY: The President is the boss of his own time. He can be pinned down any place that he wants to be pinned down or he can be totally free wherever he wants to be free. Each President is organizing his own staff in the White House the way he feels most comfortable and the way he wants to operate.

You can take the Chief of Staff concept as President Eisenhower did with Sherman Adams, and have a Chief of Staff who pretty much runs the White House, the immediate White House, control of the matters that go to or for the President. You can play it differently as President Truman did, where eight or ten White House staff members

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had direct access to him at any time they felt they had something that the President ought to know about, or ought to be aware of, or ought to attend to. The White House was operated

differently with Presidents Johnson, Kennedy and now President Nixon.

There is no single way of managing, and then again, the government isn't static. There are new pressures, there are new demands from the public on the government. We're aware right now, today's papers are full of environment and ecology, well that's an area that was not a matter of public concern, or governmental interest in a major fashion, a few years ago, but then probably other things will take its place a few years from now. Maybe even a few months from now.

It's a terrible mistake to think that there is a perfect way or a good way to organize the White House or organize the Federal establishment and that that way, once you discover it, or once you succeed in putting it into effect, is going to be the best way a few years later, it won't be.

HESS: Times change.

ELSEY: Times change and people change. And the executive

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branch, the relations of the executive branch to the legislative has a hell of a lot to do with how you want to organize or how you can administer or whether indeed you have much control over the executive branch. You don't have as much control when your own party is out of control on the Hill. You lose control over the bureaucracy and your own political leaders have much less potency. You also obviously lose power, a President does, as he approaches the latter part of his second term in office. So, here we are just an endless number of intangibles, imponderables, fluid, changing pressures. What is the situation abroad?

We've talked in earlier interviews of how the United States was given, in Truman's time, very short warning by one of its allies (we're referring now to the British withdrawal from Greece and Turkey), the United States had to make an almost overnight decision, that is to replace British military and economic power in a very sensitive part of the world. That decision has had enormous consequences all through the years. The Cuban missile crisis that President John F. Kennedy faced.

The way a President reacts at a time like this determines for a good long time to come what kind of a

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power he's going to have in his own country and how the White House, and how the whole government is going to have to be managed, or how it's going to be--how responsive it's going to be to the White House direction. Now the President's a conductor of a symphony orchestra for which the score has not as yet been composed.

HESS: And sometimes you hear some blue notes.

ELSEY: Yes, and he composes as he conducts.

HESS: What were the sources of your ideas on administration, policy making and presidential power during the Truman administration, and just how important were the writings of political scientists and your knowledge of the techniques employed by other Presidents before Mr. Truman? Just some of your own sources of ideas?

ELSEY: My undergraduate and graduate fields of study were history, and in graduate school my major was American history, so I had some probably broader background in terms of previous administrations than many people who go to the White House staff. Also I have had the three years there during the war on the FDR staff prior to

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Mr. Truman's becoming President.

I don't think when you actually find yourself on the White House staff coping with the day to day problems you have much time to sit back and reflect and analyze and read political scientists. You're too busy trying to keep your head above water.

Obviously my formal education and my military experience in the Map Room, in the Naval Aide's office, all contributed to the way I responded and reacted when things came my way and to the recommendations that I would have to--for my bosses in the White House, but I don't think I can be any more specific than that.

HESS: Do you recall if President Truman ever considered relieving J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI? Did that ever come up?

ELSEY: It never came up in any conversation in my presence.

I do recall the President had a personal acquaintance, one could call him I guess a personal friend, Mr. Max Lowenthal, a New York attorney who had been a staff member, oh, on some committee for which the President--I guess it was President Truman, that was on the War I

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nvestigating Committee, although I'm not too clear, I'm not certain that that's the first time Lowenthal was associated with Senator Truman, it might have been earlier.

Lowenthal had a passionate dislike of the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover in particular, and Lowenthal would come to Washington from time to time, and would drop in to see some of the younger staff members, and invariably his pet peeve of Hoover and the FBI would come out.

Lowenthal wrote a book on the FBI and I was asked if I would read the galley proofs of the book and comment on it. I did and my recommendation to the President was that he ought to try and persuade Lowenthal to drop the project because the book was so unfair, so grossly biased, so sloppily done in every respect that it couldn't possibly influence anybody about the FBI. Any

serious reader would just lay the thing aside in disgust. This is probably the only occasion, the only circumstance, in which I ever had any serious discussion with President Truman over the FBI and Mr. Hoover.

The President was just tolerant, shrugged his shoulder, tended to laugh it off and say, "Oh, Max is that way," and the President did not agree with him. He recognized that

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Lowenthal was a little absurd on this subject. Despite the fact that he'd known Lowenthal for many years and people assumed they were close, the Lowenthal point of view about J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI most certainly was not shared in that extreme fashion by President Truman.

Let's see this brings to mind another subject though. When the Federal employee loyalty program was first being established, President Truman was very much concerned about any actions which would vest too much power, too much authority, in the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He wanted to be certain that no single unit or agency of the Federal Government would have so much power that we would find ourselves, perhaps inadvertently, slipping in the direction of, to use a phrase then quite common, a police state. I recall that he thought for a long time and talked with the Bureau of the Budget and others about the Civil Service Commission. Wouldn't it be possible to develop the investigative and security role within the Civil Service Commission, not because he was antagonistic of the FBI so much as just wanting to avoid having any single element in our society be the all encompassing, all powerful security agency. He felt a dispersal, several

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units, like Civil Service, FBI, possibly military, and maybe some as yet uncreated agency for this purpose would be better than letting too much power gravitate to one source.

But back to Mr. Hoover, I certainly do not recall any time in which he said anything in my presence about firing Hoover, retiring Hoover, pushing him aside, or anything of that sort. He may have to others, I don't know, just certainly not to me.

HESS: Do you recall anything that was not put out in the press about the Newbold Morris matter?

ELSEY: No, nothing.

HESS: Did you ever see one of Mr. Morris' questionnaires that he was planning to send around the government?

ELSEY: No.

HESS: Okay. What in your opinion were Mr. Truman's major contributions during his career? How about that, there goes another hour or two.

ELSEY: I'll just drop the question, I just can't answer that. I'd have to sit on a desert island and...

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HESS: And think about that.

ELSEY: And think about that one in order to give you an answer that would have any meaning at all.

HESS: Okay. What is your estimation of Mr. Truman's place in history. In one or two hundred years how do you think he will be regarded by historians and members of the general public?

ELSEY: Come back and ask me one hundred years from now.

HESS: All right, I'll see your secretary, we'll make a date for that?

And just briefly, how would you rate the Presidents of recent years. Since you worked with President Roosevelt, let's start with him, but how would you rate the Presidents of recent years concerning their effectiveness in office?

ELSEY: I don't want to talk . . .

HESS: Don't want to get into that one.

ELSEY: No, don't want to say.

HESS: All right, fine. That covers anything that I have.

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Now, I just have a general question: You've known me for quite a while and you've heard all of my questions and all of my subjects. What question should I have asked you that I did not? What subjects should I have broached with you that I did not?

ELSEY: Jerry, after these last two or three tapes that have not yet been transcribed, have been transcribed, I will go through all of the nine, I think it is, transcriptions at one time for the purpose of editing, because my sentences haven't always been complete and I have tripped and tangled in my syntax, and as I read them all I may find some responses which might appear to contradict responses I gave in other interviews. Sometimes it inadvertently turns out that way when they appear in print, so I'll go through the whole nine together and I think I'll bear this question you just put to me in mind. I think I can respond to that better when we've laid all nine end to end and I've been through them than I can at this point because you and I first talked, and I talked to Charlie Morrissey I guess several years ago, so I think we can do a better job on this final point at that time.

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HESS: I believe it was in 1964 when you first spoke to Mr. Morrissey. At that time perhaps we could cover anything that you have of a very sensitive nature that you would want to keep closed for a long period of time. Surely a person who was in the White House under Roosevelt and Truman may have heard things, may have seen things, may know things that they think are extra sensitive that they might want to keep closed for a great length of time. We could place any restriction on it that you want. Would you have anything of that nature?

ELSEY: I have tried to be responsive where I thought my answers would have any use or interest. And I'm not conscious now at this moment of anything of a sensitive nature that we haven't already covered.

HESS: You've been quite responsive to my questions, but there can be no response to a question not asked.

ELSEY: You're right and that's one reason why I'm suggesting that you have these last couple of tapes transcribed and then I'll look at all nine together, and possibly in that exercise something will come to mind that I think we ought to record.

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HESS: All right, fine, everything for today?

ELSEY: That's it.

HESS: Okay.

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