

Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT K. WALSH

Reporter for the *Providence* (Rhode Island) *Journal*, 1928-46, and for the Washington, D.C. *Evening Star*, 1946-69.

Washington, D.C.

October 12, 1970

by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: All right, Mr. Walsh, to begin, would you give me a little of your personal background: Where were you born, where were you educated, and tell me a little bit about your early newspaper career.

WALSH: I was born in McAlester, Oklahoma, November 1, 1903. My parents, mother and father, were both natives of St. Louis; in fact, all my relatives are from St. Louis, and that has been more or less our family home. I went to public schools in McAlester. Then I went to St.

Louis University and graduated there in 1924, got an A.B. degree and went immediately into the newspaper business, in the old *St. Louis Star*.

HESS: What year was that?

WALSH: That was 1924. I was on the *Star* just a few months--the *Star* is no longer in existence. I went up to Springfield, Illinois for about a year on the *Illinois*

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State Journal, the morning paper there, worked there, and then I came back to St. Louis on the *Globe Democrat*. This covered a period of almost three years, about a year in each place. Then I had an opportunity to go to New York City. It was not even newspaper business, it was a publicity business, a religious organization, The Society for the Propagation of Faith, the national headquarters, a Catholic organization. They put out a magazine and various publicity publications, and I was the editor.

Then after about two or two and a half years at that, I wanted to get back into the newspaper business, not that I disagreed with it, but I wanted to get back into the newspaper business because I liked that better than publicity. So this was in 1928. That was my first experience in the East, first time I'd ever been East when I left Missouri in 1926. I didn't know any newspapers. I applied to several New York papers, but I really didn't have too much experience when you got down to it, and they kept putting me off: "Come back in six months and we might have something," the *New York Times* and some of the others. The upshot was that I applied to several papers in New England and in New York State and I had an offer right away from the *Providence*

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Journal, Providence, Rhode Island. I went up and I got the job there. And it was surprising in those days, this was in '28, just before the depression, and within a week or two after I went to work for the *Journal*, I had an offer for an interview from a Hartford paper and a Boston paper. Jobs weren't plentiful, but they did need people right after the 1928 election.

So I went up to Providence, having never been in New England in my life, and I thought, "Well, I'll stay there for maybe six months or a year, and then get back to New York, or maybe even go back to St. Louis." I always liked St. Louis. The ambition in those days in St. Louis was to get on the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, you know, because it was a great crusading paper, it's a great newspaper. The *Globe Democrat* is a good paper.

Well, the upshot of the New England thing was that I stayed there for seventeen years. I worked on the *Journal* for seventeen years. I had met my wife there and had married her there. In February 1944 I was sent down here to Washington. They have an afternoon paper, the *Journal* is the morning paper and the *Evening Bulletin* is the afternoon paper published by

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the same company in Providence. There was another man named Fred Collins, we were in the bureau down here. I came here in February of '44, and was with the *Journal* until April 1946. There again, it wasn't that I didn't want to go back to Providence, but I had an opportunity, just by a stroke of luck, to get a job on the *Washington Star*. They had a vacancy at that time. I went on the *Star* in April of 1946, and I retired from the *Star* just about the beginning of 1969. They have an automatic retirement age at 65, although I still do continue with the *Star*. I've been much busier than I thought I would be, in reviewing books and Sunday articles, I've got two or three right here. So that is my newspaper experience in a nutshell.

My experience here in Washington included the *Providence Journal*. The *Journal* is a different operation, of course. You cover Rhode Island, it's a New England story paper, but I used to go over to the White House for the *Journal* very regularly, almost every day when Eben Ayers was there, or before that, when Steve Early, the President's Press Secretary would have a briefing every morning, as they still do, or every afternoon, and I made a point to be over there every day.

HESS: Did you attend any of Roosevelt's press conferences during that time?

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WALSH: Yes, he had a few, yes. The day I met Roosevelt, there was a press conference. I came down in February and I think--that was in the middle of the week, Tuesday or Wednesday I remember--and he had one on Thursday or Friday. Well, within two days I went over to the press conference. I happened to be accredited.

In those days, they had a ceremony for new men who came in for the first time. The Press Secretary, after it was over, would take them up and introduce them to the President. Of course, Roosevelt was sitting down behind the desk.

HESS: In the Oval Room.

WALSH: In the Oval Room, in the White House west extension where the President's office is. Roosevelt shook hands very cordially, all the charm, he really had it, there's no question about it. I had been forewarned he always pretty well knew who was coming, and he knew something about the geographical or political or personal situation in every state in the country.

So he said to me, "Well, Mr. Walsh, welcome to Washington? How is Quonset Point coming along?"

They were building the big naval base up there at Quonset Point, I think it was pretty well completed

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at that time. He knew just all about Rhode Island. So that's when I first met Roosevelt.

Then, I think the next time I saw him was not too long after, it must have been early in March, they had the White House Correspondents Association, they used to--still do--have an annual dinner, and the President was there.

Let me see how many others: That was in '44 and I don't know that he had many press conferences during the election campaign of '44. He must have. I looked through my scrapbook and I can't find any record of having written a story, but that doesn't mean that I wasn't there. He may have had some. I do recall that I went to two or three at least, before the election in '44. I did see him several times before he died. I saw him at the inauguration on the back portico of the White House.

HESS: And you drove to Chicago in 1944 for the convention?

WALSH: Yes.

HESS: What do you recall about that?

WALSH: Well, I recall quite a bit about it. I was working for the *Providence Journal*, and our main concern was to watch the Rhode Island delegation. They were for Truman for Vice President, so that was my chief concern

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there, although I did not even see Truman there except when he accepted the nomination in a speech at the final session.

HESS: What do you recall of the attempt to keep Henry Wallace from getting the vice-presidential nomination?

WALSH: I recall it rather round about. I was looking through my clippings here, and found a story I wrote pretty much on the basis of an interview or talk with Robert Hannegan, Bob Hannegan, whom I knew in St. Louis. He was a graduate of St. Louis University. When I was a student out there he was a football player. He was a very good football player. When I came here I went down to see him. He had become Democratic National Chairman, as I recall, that year, wasn't it '44?

HESS: When he got the post, I'm not sure, but he was chairman during the very important events of the 1944 election.

WALSH: And another man I knew, now these of course, I'm dropping names, because I actually knew them, I knew Bob Hannegan personally, and I knew J. Howard McGrath, who was from Rhode Island. He had been Governor of Rhode Island. My wife knew him since childhood, and I knew him for about twenty-five years, twenty years before I came here, fifteen years. So on the basis of

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talks I had with Hannegan and McGrath in about May 1944--I'd been there only about three or four months then--I remember writing a story for the *Providence Journal* that they were pushing Harry Truman for Vice President. They told me that there was a move to dump Wallace, that's what it amounted to. They weren't so much involved in that--well, they were--were involved, of course, but their idea was that if Wallace was dropped, they were going to get Truman in. They were going to do their darndest to get him in.

HESS: What seemed to be the tenor of their thoughts, was it for Mr. Truman, or was it more anti-Wallace?

WALSH: Well, in Hannegan's case, it was certainly for Truman, because he was from Missouri and he knew him, of course. Now Truman was--this story will refresh my memory too--Truman had made a speech at the Democratic State Convention in Missouri in April or May of 1944, and it made quite an impression. The Vice Presidency wasn't mentioned, Truman himself didn't say anything about it, but Hannegan said, "That's one of the best speeches he's ever made, locally, in Missouri, and it increased his stature quite a bit." But even at that time, I remember distinctly that there were rumors around of reports that Truman was being mentioned.

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You were always getting lists of possible nominees--you know, the move to drop Wallace was over a long period of time, quite a period of time. I don't know the inside of it all--I don't know whether Roosevelt intended to or wanted to, but I rather suspect that he did. Of course, as things came out, he was supposed to have offered it to [James] Byrnes, wasn't it? Not offered it, but Byrnes was turned down, wasn't it Byrnes?

HESS: Byrnes had the impression in a talk with Roosevelt that he had Roosevelt's support. That was his impression.

WALSH: A lot of people get impressions like that when they talk to a President.

HESS: And then also William O. Douglas, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas was mentioned.

There was a very famous Truman-Douglas letter that was given to Robert Hannegan, and he had that with him when Mr. Roosevelt went through town on his way to the West Coast on board the train. Did Mr. Hannegan ever tell you anything about the Truman-Douglas letter?

WALSH: No, but I heard that, well, it was later, by hindsight, later. He went aboard the Roosevelt

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train in the railroad yards in Chicago, but I had no personal knowledge of that, wasn't in on it anyway, and Bob Hannegan never mentioned it later even. As a matter of fact, I don't think I ever asked him. Roosevelt had been elected again and I suppose nobody followed it up until Truman became President, but I certainly never did ask him.

After a while, I didn't see Hannegan too much. Of course, he became Postmaster General, he was national chairman and then he became Postmaster General, and I was down at his swearing in. Then he died. He served several years, though, at that.

HESS: He did.

WALSH: I saw him--I go to St. Matthew's Cathedral here and he used to come there, and I'd just say hello to him, but I don't think I was ever in his office more than once or twice after he became...

HESS: He was replaced by Jesse M. Donaldson, but he was Postmaster General for quite some time.

WALSH: Yes he was. He was there for several years.

HESS: One question we should cover before we move on since you were in the newspaper field in Missouri quite early, did you recall anything about Mr. Truman at the time that you were in Missouri?

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WALSH: No, no. You must remember in the Missouri days I was pretty much of a cub reporter, but even there I was always interested in politics.

HESS: You were in St. Louis at the time?

WALSH: Yes, from '24 to almost the end of '26, in newspaper work for two and a half years, and I never remember Truman being mentioned. Of course, I heard of the Pendergast organization.

HESS: What did you hear?

WALSH: Well, it naturally wasn't very good.

HESS: What was your impression in St. Louis of what was going on in Kansas City, of the political climate of Kansas City?

WALSH: Pretty bad, pretty bad. There again, it's not a personal prejudice. It was probably a local prejudice. There was always that rivalry between St. Louis and Kansas City, and I had been to Kansas City only a few times, I've been there many times since, but I didn't know too much.

I had no particular interest in Kansas City. I thought it was just another city. There was a machine there, and it was rather unsavory, the stuff we heard about it, but I had no direct connection with it, no knowledge of it.

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As a matter of fact, I had more of an interest of what was going on in Chicago as a result of the year I spent in Springfield. That was one of the most interesting years of all. It increased my appreciation of Lincoln, and also decreased my appreciation of the Chicago crowd, the state organization. And of course, it wasn't Democrats or Republicans, they were equally--but to get back to Truman, I never heard of him...

HESS: When did you first hear of Mr. Truman?

WALSH: Well, I first heard of him, I think in Providence, I'm sure, the Truman Committee in the U.S. Senate. I was on the *Providence Journal*, and I covered the statehouse. Practically all my reporting has been covering legislation, except for the U.S. Supreme Court for ten years here. I covered the courts here, too. But for four years in Providence, the last four years before I came here, I was on the editorial staff. They took me out of the statehouse and put me on the editorial staff, mostly writing political editorials, mostly about New England and Rhode Island, but also national sometimes. So, I began to hear about Truman, and with my background in Missouri, naturally, I would sort of

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follow him, although I didn't remember that I had heard of him previously. And I used to follow that committee's investigations and by the time I got down here it was still going, but I don't recall whether he was even chairman of it then. He was succeeded by somebody in 1944, before he became Vice President.

HESS: He resigned as chairman in August, the month after the convention. He received the vice-presidential nomination and then resigned as chairman in August of 1944.

WALSH: Yes, I used to cover some of the committee's work later when Senator [James] Mead was the chairman, and then when Senator Homer Ferguson was chairman, as I remember.

But to get back to Truman. The first time I met Truman, having heard of him just through reading about him, was in early 1944 when I first came down here. The first time I went up to the Capitol, I guess I dropped into his office and just introduced myself to his secretary. They didn't call them Press Secretaries in those days, they had a fellow who handled press liaison, and I can't remember who it was.

Vaughan was there with him, I think, and one or

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two others, but I just don't even remember. He introduced me to Truman. Truman happened to be there, and it was just one of those brief friendly chats.

During the convention, of course, I didn't even see Truman, except at the end. I didn't have much to do with covering the machinations of the Vice Presidency nomination, although I was personally, naturally, kind of glad, you know, from what I knew about Truman. I didn't know whether he was experienced, but I thought as a result of his record he'd be as good as some of the others. Now, there I guess I gave a gratuitous appraisal.

I didn't think too much of Wallace, although I liked him personally. He was a very nice man, very kindly, and very generous and I think personally you couldn't dislike him--I couldn't dislike him. Of course, he was emotional and all that, but as Vice President I think it was fortunate that he didn't succeed Roosevelt.

HESS: What did you see in his character that makes you feel that it was best that he did not become President?

WALSH: Well, maybe the very thing I'm saying. He was maybe too emotional, too--I don't like to say erratic--he wasn't that. I talked to him several times, interviewed him on other things. I hate to use these cliches, visionary and vague, if you know what I mean, that type. Then, well,

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the thing that really soured me on him, and not him personally, was later, I guess, in the '52 campaign, when the Progressive Party...

HESS: '48.

WALSH: Was that '48, sure it was.

HESS: The big year.

WALSH: Oh, of course. I was thinking it was--but that's when he ran. Well, I covered some of their meetings here, and it was the wildest. I didn't see a Communist under every bed, but the way, way out leftwing was pretty much organized. You could see those people organizing, and handling the publicity, but many other very idealistic and liberal persons also were in on it.

Now, Wallace, I think, was being used by those far left people. I'll give him credit, as far as I know, and I don't think that he shared a lot of those wild radical reactions in that sense, way out. He was a liberal and I think he was well meaning. Truman--as things turned out--and this is hindsight again--as things came along, he did as well as probably anybody could have done under the circumstances. Now, if Wallace had succeeded Roosevelt, I don't know how it would have gone. I would have been full of trepidation much more than I was when Truman--I wasn't particularly worried when

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Truman became President. I thought, "Well, it is an awful thing to follow Roosevelt, any man," with Truman's lack of experience Roosevelt never--that was an open secret- Roosevelt never confided in Truman as Vice President or even before that. I don't think there was any animosity, but Roosevelt was just running the show himself, even in those last years.

I remember, and this is backtracking a little bit, but even that first press conference of Roosevelt's that I went to, the first time I met him in February, 1944. I'm no physician, of course, but he didn't look like a dying man. I had seen Roosevelt on several of those campaign trips beginning in '32, I was at the '32 convention, and saw him several times from 1933 on. Roosevelt, you know, in spite of his disability, got around very well. But this time when I first saw him in '44, his hands were shaking and he had a gaunt look and bags and lines under his eyes. He really looked bad. But I didn't realize he was ill. Then there was the inauguration in '45, on the White House back portico. It was a gloomy day, it was raining, it sounded like a good thing and the Roosevelt people wanted to save the money, the war, of course, was going

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on, and they had the inauguration on the back portico.

HESS: He came out on the back porch, did he not, and the crowd was out on the south lawn.

WALSH: Well, yes, of course there was no doubt to me then. He came out on the back porch.

HESS: Was there snow on the ground?

WALSH: Yes, I think it had snowed even the night before. They had cleared it off, but it was very muddy. I don't think it was raining at that time, but the skies were overcast, and thousands of people were down on the ellipse. There was a big crowd there, not like the inauguration up at the Capitol, but there was a big crowd. My wife was there with everybody else. The press, and Government officials were right under in front of the portico. He was up there, and we were right down below. I remember standing near McGrath at the time, and I think Hannegan too. We were all down there, but I do remember standing right next to McGrath. Roosevelt came out and read a very short inaugural speech.

But the pitiful thing was, he came out and he looked bad and Jimmy Roosevelt, and I guess one of the Secret Service men, or one of the ushers, had to lift him up. He occasionally was helped up

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at banquets and meetings. They'd sort of help him up, but this time they really had to lift him up. He was holding on the rail, as I remember, and I said to myself, being no doctor, "Roosevelt is not going to live out his four years." But I had no idea that he would be dead--nobody did, of course--that he'd be dead the next April. But he looked bad. Of course, relaxed in a chair, at a press conference, he certainly didn't look like he was dying. He looked like he was in bad health. He had just come back from Yalta--wasn't that the Yalta Conference?

HESS: He was just getting ready to go.

WALSH: Yes, you're right, he was just getting ready to go, that's right. Because I remember, that's another thing, when he came back from Yalta, that was his last conference, and he came up to Congress

HESS: And addressed a Joint Session.

WALSH: Yes, I was there, in the Gallery. Usually when he addressed the Joint Session, as all Presidents do, he wouldn't try to go up those steps at the rostrum. They would have a little lectern, and he would stand up. I saw him once before at a Joint Session, I don't remember what it was, but he stood up, and then almost

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every picture of course that I saw, he was always standing.

This time he came in, and his first words were, "I know that my friends in the Congress will forgive me if I sit down." So he sat down at the table, and he didn't look too bad. I suppose he was made up. But his hands were shaking and he had that sort of a gaunt look about him. The general public would never get that idea, and I'm sure over television, I didn't see that on TV at that time, but I'm sure on television he probably would have made a pretty good appearance. On the way out, of course, we could see him going out, wheeled out. As at the inauguration, I thought, "He will never last four years." And I think a lot of people thought that. But nobody thought he would die so soon.

HESS: Did you see him again after the time that he was at the Capitol?

WALSH: I saw him again--this was in January, January 20th, when he was inaugurated, then he must have had at least one press conference. I remember going to his office. I'm not sure about that, but maybe in February, or something like that. I don't have any way of checking on that. I have no story that would refresh my memory.

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When I used to cover, you know, for the Providence Journal. I wouldn't write a long story unless he said something about...

HESS: Quonset Point or something.

WALSH: Yes, of course, we were interested in all these big projects, WPA, and other stuff. But the last time I remember seeing him, I'm sure the last time I saw him was on March 4, of '45. It was the White House Correspondents Dinner again, at, I think the Statler. And he came in and he was very chipper. He still looked tired and pretty bad, but nevertheless, he was in a pretty good mood. And we went through the dinner and all this entertainment, and then he made a little talk,

and there again, he was seated. At those dinners, he seldom attempted to get up, so nobody expected him to. But he said, "All right, men," it was all men there. I don't think he said "fellows." "All right, men, take out your pencils, I've got something to announce." So everybody grabbed paper and he said, "I'm leaving tonight for..." it wasn't Warm Springs, but I think he said, "I'm going up to Hyde Park."

HESS: He went up to Hyde Park for a few days before he went to...

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WALSH: "And then I am going down to Warm Springs." Then he made just a few remarks, but he was in a good mood. Much better. He didn't look half as tired as he did at the inauguration, or even at some of these press conferences.

Well, I'll finish this story first. Then after the dinner, as I remember, he seldom stayed around. When we get to Truman's career, the President often would stick around a while afterwards and talk with people.

HESS: Visit a little bit.

WALSH: And Eisenhower did too. But Roosevelt went right back to the White House, I'm sure. He left, as I remember, the next morning. That's the last time I saw him.

I was in the *Providence Journal* that afternoon of April 12, 1945. We were in the Hibbs Building down on 15th, right by the Department of the Treasury. You know where the National Savings and Trust Bank is?

HESS: Cater-cornered across the street. Is that a red brick building?

WALSH: Yes, that's a red brick building. Well, our building--it's still there--was just up the street from that on the east side of 15th Street, between New York Avenue and H.

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Well, we had a teletype in our office. This was about three or four or five o'clock in the afternoon, April 12th. Ordinarily the teletype would be going all the time, and if they had a bulletin, they'd ring the bell, ding, ding, something like that. But all of a sudden--I was there alone--the bell started, ding, ding, ding, ding, like a funeral dirge. And I walked over to it, I couldn't imagine what was the matter, and it said, "President Roosevelt died this afternoon in Warm Springs." I still have that little bulletin.

So, I jumped and ran, really ran, over to the White House, which was only a couple of blocks away. I suppose people wondered what this crazy guy was doing, but I got over there, and certainly I wasn't the first one in the press room who knew of his death. Bob Nixon, I guess, may have been down at Warm Springs.

HESS: Yes, he was.

WALSH: He was, and Doug Cornell. There's a good man. Do you know Douglas Cornell? There would be a very good man to interview. He was down there with Roosevelt. I thought you might be interested in him. He's with the Associated Press, still there. And [Marvin] Arrowsmith, although Arrowsmith, I think, covered mostly during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations.

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Doug Cornell was there quite often.

Well, to get back to the White House. I ran over there, and ran into the Press Room. Most of those there weren't regulars covering the White House. The regulars were down at Warm Springs, and the members of the UP and the INS at that time, and the AP, they're there all the time. At this moment, there couldn't have been more than four or five reporters when I got to the White House, and they, of course, had gotten the news. The press services were alerted first. So we went into Steve Early's office.

Eben Ayers was there at that time. When Truman came to the White House, he came in the other way, we didn't see him. By that time they were gathering all the Cabinet members and others. They had gathered in the Cabinet Room, it still is the Cabinet Room there, and you know the layout--you know where Steve Early's office, where the Press Secretary's office was.

HESS: Is that the West Wing?

WALSH: Yes, the West Wing. The press section is on the West Wing. Although President Nixon has revised it quite a bit, but Early's office had a suite of about two rooms, three rooms, and then there was a corridor going east. They had their news tickers out there.

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This led to the other room down there, another corridor, and toward the Cabinet Room and then going from the Cabinet Room to the President's Office, the Oval Room.

First of all, to get back to Wallace, I remember Henry Wallace coming in, big shots were coming in one by one, or two by two. Wallace was literally crying, weeping.

HESS: He was Secretary of Commerce then.

WALSH: He was Secretary of Commerce, yes, and somebody, I had this in a story I just looked at the other day, and somebody had his arm around him, not holding him up, of course, but sort of comforting him. I can't think who it was. Either some Cabinet associate, or some other friend. Wallace was really in tears. And, you know, it's a terrible thing to see a man crying. And he really meant it. As I said, he was emotional, and in spite of the fact that he had lost the Vice Presidency, and maybe he thought Roosevelt didn't quite do the way he should have...

HESS: He might have been the man in the White House that day.

WALSH: Most of them went in the back. But they left the press, by then there were hundreds of us. May

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Craig and I were practically up in the front of the group in the corridor. But they wouldn't let us go in the Cabinet Room. So we were about, I should say as far as from here to the front door from the Cabinet Room, about 20 feet. The door was a little ajar. You've seen that picture where they're all standing in front of the portrait of someone, George Washington, and I could see Truman and Mrs. Truman and Margaret, who was a young girl then, and Chief Justice Stone.

They all came in that entrance, most of them came in, rather than going through the White House, for some reason. I suppose the fact that Roosevelt had died, and the President wasn't there, so most of these Cabinet officers came through the West Wing. I'm sure some came through the East Wing, too, but Wallace and those people came in where the press went in, you know, the West Wing.

Well, we could see them, but the actual swearing in, I can't claim that I saw that. I did see Truman standing there, and then they sort of closed the door a little more, and you could see a little, but couldn't hear anything. So that's the closest I got.

Then we were bombarding Early if the new President was going to meet the press, you know, we wanted to

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talk to him. So Early apparently went in, or had word sent out, but Truman sent out a message, very grateful, he said, but, "Under the circumstances, I think it would not be appropriate for me to meet the press. I'm sorry to disappoint you." Very nice thing. He didn't brush us off, and I'm sure he said it. It wasn't something that Steve Early cooked up.

HESS: I have a question about those events. As you know, Steve Early had been the Press Secretary until on the trip back from Yalta when Pa [General Edwin M.] Watson died, and then he was made Administrative Assistant, and Jonathan Daniels was officially the Press Secretary, and he was, as I understand it, at the White House at this time. Steve Early and Jonathan Daniels were both there. Do you remember seeing Jonathan Daniels?

WALSH: Yes, that's right. There again, I'm quoting Steve Early. It is quite possible that Jonathan Daniels--they were both there, and Eben Ayers was there. Whether they were all there...

HESS: Who seemed to be taking charge of the press, Early?

WALSH: Yes. In my opinion, at least, from what I saw. Of course, we were just badgering everybody we could get, you know. And Eben was just--well, he was the assistant, he was probably the first assistant.

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Eben and I worked together - I don't know if you knew that. Eben worked on the *Providence Journal*. He was head of the Associated Press in Boston, chief of the bureau there, and he came down to the *Journal*, in the thirties sometime for four or five years, as sort of executive news editor. He had some title, sort of an overall coordinator between the two papers.

HESS: Is that when you first met him?

WALSH: Yes, that's when I first met him. I had heard of him being in Boston, of course, and I may have run into him in Boston. He was in Harrisburg before that, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. But he was in Boston several years, quite a few years. That's when I first got to know of him, then I got to know him very well when I came down here.

That's one of the reasons I used to go over to the White House so often, for these briefings, because very frequently he would handle the announcements at news briefings.

In the Roosevelt days, the days that the press conferences were held, they would never announce in advance as they do today, that, "The President will have a press conference on Friday," and this and that. Roosevelt usually had two a week, one in the morning,

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let's see, on a Tuesday...

HESS: Tuesday and Friday.

WALSH: Tuesday and Friday, something like that, and one in the afternoon, and then the briefings every morning by his Press Secretary or Assistant Secretary, but during the Roosevelt administration, that is the period that year I was there, was familiar with it, we would have to call up on Tuesdays or Fridays, "This is Robert Walsh of the *Providence Journal*. Is the President having a press conference?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'd like to come." You see, tell them that you're coming. It was a security arrangement for some reason. I don't know--well, it would have made a difference. They didn't want a lot of people hanging around, I guess, outside even.

Of course, the minute Truman came in, well, the war was almost over, you know.

HESS: That was probably a wartime security precaution.

WALSH: Of course. When I got down there it was going on, and it must have been on, maybe through most of the war, I don't know. Because the security was very strict, soldiers and everything else, not ostentatiously, but the White House was very well guarded.

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HESS: What would be your evaluation of Mr. Roosevelt's handling of the press conferences? How capable was he at fielding a question, and perhaps not giving a direct answer to a question that was asked?

WALSH: Very capable. To preface the answer to that, the last year, Roosevelt's voice--I forget to mention that--he didn't have a big huge voice, and that was the thing that I noticed first.

HESS: You'd have to be on the first row to hear?

WALSH: You'd have to bend over, he spoke very low, and he was tired, it was a tired low voice.

You know, when you get tired, your voice drops, I think I do it myself, and his voice was very low, but he could speak sharply, and he was the master of ridicule. Well, you've heard many stories about that.

But he was great at dodging a question, evading a question if he didn't want to answer a question.

There's another thing I remember the way press conferences changed. In those days, and I understand even before that, the press conference really didn't, as we know it now, get started until the Hoover--really it was the Roosevelt administration. That's when it got started.

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Hoover had these--things, but there were submitted written questions, and things like that, but Roosevelt really opened it up. But they had this rule--if you asked the President, it was an unwritten rule, but it was understood by every reporter that went there, that if you asked the President a question and he said, "No comment," or declined to comment, that was not to be reported. Do you see what I mean? This was a way of getting around things. "Well, I better not say that." "Well, you wouldn't say that." And, "That's off the record." And they didn't print the full text as they do now so much. I remember that, so a President could pretty much say, "No comment, or "I'd rather not say anything about that right now," you're not supposed to even quote that non-quote. It would give an implication that he was either dodging it or that he's hiding something, or some great disclosure is coming out.

HESS: Was that a wartime precaution, too?

WALSH: It might have been. I don't know. But I remember that distinctly now. I can't say that it applied to every question, maybe some minor little thing, you know. If they were going somewhere, they were very vague on that. You know, now, Nixon, if he's going to

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San Clemente or Kennedy or anybody, we knew--even the news reporters that didn't get over there every day, we knew pretty well when the President was going. Like Truman's famous remark--I remember one day we asked him if he was going--he was going out some place, maybe it was St. Louis, and this isn't much of a trip. And he said, "You know, getting me out of this White House is like putting a circus on the road." And everybody turned to (the poor guy, he died), the transportation man, he was there for years...

HESS: Dewey Long?

WALSH: Long, Dewey Long, yes, and it was a big job but that describes it perfectly.

HESS: I expect Mr. Long agreed with that, didn't he?

WALSH: Yes. But it got even a good deal worse with Roosevelt, to get him on the road. Of course, Truman, well, they couldn't hold him.

But, Roosevelt, they just wouldn't tell you anything about his trips, unless you were going--well, even to Yalta--they'd tell you that he might be going somewhere, but they wouldn't tell you exactly--even a thing like going to church.

Roosevelt didn't go to church like Eisenhower did. Eisenhower used to go almost every Sunday. You'd

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see him down there at the National Presbyterian. And Roosevelt, only once to my knowledge, went up to the St. Thomas Church, you know, that was burned down. You know that church up on 18th Street. It's a beautiful church and it burned just a couple of weeks ago. But when he first came in, I understand, when he first became President in the thirties, he went over there more often, and it got the name of "The President's church."

Like Kennedy used to go down to St. Matthew's Cathedral, or St. Stephen's or Holy Trinity, something like that.

Johnson used to go everywhere, you know.

HESS: He was ecumenical.

WALSH: Yes, he was at the cathedral quite often. The reason I mention the cathedral, I usher down there once in a while, and every President since Grover Cleveland has gone down there for

state occasions, for some high mass, or something like that. Nixon, as Vice President occasionally went there. He went there to Kennedy's funeral. He went to Joe McCarthy's wedding. Senator McCarthy was married there. President Nixon attended Vince Lombardi's memorial, the day he was buried in September 1970. They had a memorial mass with the Cardinal there.

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HESS: At the same time they were holding Lombardi's funeral up at St. Patrick's in New York.

WALSH: Yes. Now, I don't say that disparagingly of Nixon, because he does have Sunday services at the White House. Maybe that's a good idea too, because Johnson, you'd never know where he'd show up. Well, that's a little off the track. But Truman used to go to the Baptist Church.

HESS: First Baptist.

WALSH: First Baptist, yes. And I remember it was St. Matthew's, because they have that red mass, as they call it, mainly for the lawyers. It coincides pretty much with the opening of the courts. It is an old tradition, goes way back to medieval days, and they have a high mass, the vestments are all in red, the Chief Justice and most of the Court is there, and the President usually goes, but not always. Johnson went to every one of those and Kennedy, I think, went to one. Nixon didn't go last year but that's a minor matter. As I remember Truman went to one or two of those.

HESS: Well, going back to 1944, what do you recall about the campaign of that year in 1944? Did you travel?

WALSH: Well, I didn't do much on that campaign. After the convention, as I say, I didn't know anything about this

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maneuvering. Of course, I went to the convention sessions, and I was there, when Truman accepted the nomination. As I remember, he was out there but I have no great recollection. Did he make a speech, accepting the nomination at that convention?

HESS: I would suppose that he did, but I really don't remember.

WALSH: Well, I was there because...

HESS: That was one of the first conventions that I remember listening to on the radio, and the thing that sticks in my mind, were the galleries chanting, "We want Wallace."

WALSH: Oh, yes, they were pretty...

HESS: They were pretty well packed with Wallace supporters, I believe.

WALSH: That was the old Coliseum--what did they call it...

HESS: The Stockyards.

WALSH: That wasn't in the Stockyards, as I remember. It was in the--you know that Cicero section of Chicago, it's not too far from downtown Chicago, directly west of the Loop section, instead of way down south. And it was a big building. I think they called it a coliseum, but it's still there, but it's nowhere as big as the Stockyards arena or anything like that. Roosevelt didn't go to that, did he?

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HESS: No, but he went through town, you know, on his way to the West Coast, and he did not attend the convention itself.

WALSH: That's right.

HESS: And then he went on to Los Angeles. And then his acceptance speech was delivered over the radio as he was in San Diego at the time, at the Marine base.

WALSH: Now Truman, as I say, I have no clear recollection. Was the Republican Convention that year before or after the Democratic Convention? It must have been before.

HESS: Usually the "out" party has their first...

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WALSH: Yes, I remember distinctly, the Republican Convention--that's when Dewey was nominated. That's when I first met Dewey.

HESS: What were your impressions of Mr. Dewey?

WALSH: Well, I hate to use the phrase, oh, he was a brilliant man, but--"The little man on the wedding cake"--you've heard that. And he was very uncomfortable with the press. That's no secret.

HESS: What seemed to be the basis for his lack of popularity?

WALSH: Well, that is personally. I don't want to do the man an injustice. I can't say I know him intimately. I had a great respect for him, in many ways. He's a

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brilliant man.

HESS: His law career attests to that.

WALSH: He was not snooty but you know the type, and something was in his manner that repelled. But he didn't like the press, and the press didn't like him.

Oh, I think he got fair treatment. But "This little man on the wedding cake," and of course, the sound of his voice. He had a remarkable voice. But he liked the sound of that voice. Those things, but that's where our personal prejudices might come in. However, I used to write quite a bit about him, in '48 especially, and I never let that affect my reporting.

HESS: Did you think he would be a serious contender for fir. Roosevelt in 1944?

WALSH: You know, that's a fascinating question. I don't think he would have been elected--he wasn't elected. I thought you meant--in '44. I was thinking--I thought you were going to ask about Truman. I didn't in 1944. I thought Roosevelt would win.

Let me tell you my own history of voting. Maybe it's typical. As you may have gathered, I am not a registered Democrat, but I usually have voted for Democratic candidates for President. I voted for Roosevelt

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in '32 and '36, but I couldn't take the 3rd term. Meanwhile [Wendell] Willkie came up to Rhode Island, had a press conference, and he really impressed me. I thought he would have made a pretty good President. And the war was--well, of course, we weren't going to get in the war, of course. That was the idea. So, I voted for Willkie in 1940. Then in '44, to show my consistency or inconsistency, I just couldn't take Dewey, so I voted for Roosevelt for a 4th term. I think a lot of people - I don't know that Dewey, Dewey wasn't...

HESS: Many old-line Democrats voted for Willkie in 1940. Of course, Willkie had been a Democrat.

WALSH: Willkie had been a Democrat. Of course, he had a business background. He was the corporation type and all that, but he was the executive, he was the management, you know, rather than the tycoon and that sort of thing, and had a lot on the ball. He died within...

HESS: A very short time.

WALSH: He wouldn't have lived out his term. But to answer the question, I thought Roosevelt would be much better than Dewey in 1944, but of course I thought Dewey was a serious contender. You never know on a

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fourth term. But having broken, in my own case, having broken the third term tradition, I had no qualms about voting for Roosevelt for a fourth term. I really should have given more thought to it--suppose he didn't live through it, you know, who the Vice President would be.

HESS: What seemed to be the general tenor of thought among the public at that time? Did they seem to think when they were voting for Mr. Truman as Vice President that they were voting for the next President, or did people just have the idea that "Roosevelt's here, and he's going to stay."

WALSH: I think so. In my case, as I said earlier, I thought he might not live out the four years, but I thought it would be over, you know. I don't want to give the impression that he looked like a dying man. I thought at the inauguration he was really suffering, and he looked it.

To get to Truman, personally, I wonder if I was influenced in any way in that '44 vote, because Truman was running for Vice President, having come from Missouri, and having gotten to know him well enough to like him, and respect him. I didn't know much about him, just that Truman Committee. Was that the year that Earl Warren ran for Vice President?

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HESS: No, that was '48.

WALSH: That was '48, yes.

HESS: [John William] Bricker ran in 1944.

WALSH: Bricker ran. That was another reason. I couldn't see Bricker. But the Truman thing may have subconsciously had something to do with it. Although I think I would have voted for Roosevelt in any event. Then again--you know, I'm getting too introspective. I wonder if I voted for Roosevelt or against Dewey.

HESS: People do that at times.

WALSH: Yes, they do. And I think that in justice to myself, or in justice to Roosevelt, I don't think I wanted a fourth term particularly, but it's like the lesser of two evils.

Then for once, partisanship didn't come into it. You know, in those years, partisanship wasn't so important. Roosevelt was an extreme partisan in his early years, but with the war coming on, the war, of course, was going on then and it would have made a difference.

HESS: In your opinion, did Mr. Truman's handling of the Truman Committee, the Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, play a major role in his

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getting the nomination for Vice President?

WALSH: Well, it certainly played an important role. I think so, yes, because that was the only--that and, of course, the support of fellows like Bob Hannegan and Howard McGrath. I think that was an important thing. Of course, that was the main thing that...

HESS: Really put him in the public eye.

WALSH: Yes. And it certainly would have influenced me, because that's the only thing that I ever heard about, the only thing anybody had ever heard about Truman. I didn't know anything about this Kansas City--you know, as I told you, I knew, I'd heard of Pendergast, but I didn't even know that he had been a county judge out there--well, I guess when I came down here I heard it, but I didn't know anything about his background or his education or his political activity, or what kind of a man he was. Very few people did.

HESS: I think we have touched on this subject just a little bit, but I want to ask again anyway. At the time of Mr. Roosevelt's death when Mr. Truman became President, what kind of a President did you think that he was going to make?

WALSH: Truman?

HESS: Truman. How capable did you think that this man from Missouri was going to be?

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WALSH: Well, at the time, this is not hindsight, but at that time, of course, I had my doubts.

I was pretty confident that he would be honest, and one other important factor, I thought he might try to be a good President, because he had a great respect for the Presidency, and he had a great respect for the Government, honesty in Government.

Now, concerning the Pendergast-Kansas City business, I don't think that he was involved. There is nothing to show that he was ever involved in any crookedness. He was loyal to his friends, and that was one of the things he had trouble with on his own, some of the cronies, but personally, I think Harry Truman was a very honest man and a very dedicated man to the welfare of this country. He frequently used to say it and he meant it.

Those were the two things that I thought, "Well, he'll be competent, not the greatest, I don't think he can replace Roosevelt or take Roosevelt's place, it will be a completely different setup." But I said, to myself, "It depends on the people he gets around him."

You know, this always comes back to what Woodrow Wilson said about when a man comes to Washington and goes into public life, he either grows or swells, and Harry Truman grew. Harry Truman, the last day he left

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here, he was the same fundamentally I think as far as I could tell. But he became--he was very humble at the beginning, there's no question about it, no question about his humility, and he became quite cocky of course at times later on. I think that was his essential nature, a cocky little guy, you know, in the best sense of the word.

HESS: Especially after winning in '48.

WALSH: Well, you could hardly blame him. You know, that famous picture of him holding up the *Chicago Tribune*, but then towards the end of course he wasn't so popular and he sort of fell from grace.

I'll tell you a little story, it may not be too much off the path, this was towards the end of his term.

Eisenhower had been elected in '52, and this was in January, as I recall, January of 1953. Eisenhower was to be inaugurated the 20th. This must have been around the 15th of January, right about then, and one of the days nobody was paying much attention to the White House. Somebody told me about going in to see him, and Harry was sitting in his office or in the Cabinet Room or someplace, all by himself. And this visitor walked in. This wasn't a newspaperman. But he wanted an

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appointment with the President, and he got his appointment.

He walked in and there was Harry sitting over in the Cabinet Room all by himself and said, "Why Mr. President, I expected to see you surrounded by Secret Service men and Cabinet Officers."

And Harry told this man, "Nobody gives a damn about an ex-President." That was Harry.

Well, this ties in with my little story. I went over one day, was filling in for the regular man, the *Evening Star* had a regular man at the White House every day, Joe Fox, at that time. You talked to Joe Fox didn't you? Gannett Horner followed him.

HESS: I have Mr. Horner down on my list, but I have not gotten in touch with him.

WALSH: Well, he was covering the State Department for the *Star* then. He and I pretty much relieved Joe Fox if he was out of town, or on Saturdays or Joe Fox's day off, I would go there; or Horner. Horner went to all the press conferences I remember, to cover diplomatic stuff and I went to cover legislative or district or other matters.

I went over this particular day in January of '53,

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and there were three or four reporters there. Eben or someone came in and said, "The President is going down at noon to Fort McNair, to the Office of Naval War Intelligence, to the officers club, he's going to address some group..." maybe it was Battery D or anyway he was going down there, "and any of you who would like to go down are welcome to go along. So only four of us, well, there couldn't have been more than five or six there, but four of us went down. We got in

one car, Truman was in his own car with the Secret Service, and the two car procession left the White House. The President's car with the presidential flag on I remember went down Constitution Avenue and all the way down to Fort McNair. People would see him, and a few would wave, nobody stopped, and I really felt sorry for the poor guy that day.

But we started marching right after him at the officers club, and we were barred at the door. "No Press." And Harry said, "Well, I guess they don't want press, it's just supposed to be a convivial gathering of some sort, but I'll take care of you fellows." There were only four of us, so he got his Aide and said, "Go down and see that these men get something to eat at least in the non-commissioned

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officers mess or in the enlisted mess." So they took us down to the basement of the same building. And that was Harry. He was kind of thoughtful like that. Then he came out and went back the same way, nobody paid any attention on the way back, so that was the way that he went out.

But I don't think that that reflected on him personally. That would have happened to even Eisenhower, I guess. After you're out...

HESS: You're a lame duck.

WALSH: You're a lame duck, that's right.

HESS: Would you compare and contrast, the way that Mr. Truman handled the press conferences with the way that Mr. Roosevelt handled them?

WALSH: Yes, Roosevelt, as I say, this is just on the basis of one year for me. Roosevelt was certainly on the physical decline. I can't say mental decline. He was just as good at warding off questions, and the questions then, when I first came--well, of course, they were about the war and conferences that he'd gone to in those days. But he reserved any major announcements for Congress.

I can't remember any great big story that was coming. There was a favorite question, these fellows

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would just stay up nights trying to figure out some way to trap Roosevelt into disclosing or even hinting whether he would seek a fourth term. This was in '44. There was a major suspicion, but I kind of thought that he would do it. We all pretty much assumed that he would do it, in spite--but he would never deny it, and he was clever at that. You know, just by changing the subject or saying, "Go over and stand in the corner and put a dunce cap on." He would do that when he was mad. I never heard him say that. But he did that once or twice.

HESS: Tell people to do that.

WALSH: Yes. And that was not the worst. You've heard the story of John O'Donnell, of the New York *Daily News*. Well, he's dead now. This was early in the war. It was before Pearl Harbor anyway. John O'Donnell was very critical of the administration, and lend-lease and all that sort of stuff, not that he was unpatriotic, but it was just that his paper and he didn't want the United States to get involved in this business, certainly not the war, not too deeply involved. He came in one day for this press conference, and Roosevelt had a little box, and he said, "Mr. O'Donnell (as I got the story) I have a little present for you." So he handed the

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box to him, and when he opened it, it was an iron cross, a German iron cross. Now, that's been written often.

Roosevelt, he could be cruel. He could be very sarcastic. He was clever. He was fantastic. But toward the end his voice got so low that many times the AP and UP and INS would--and others, have to get out and compare their notes to be sure that they got the same thing.

And those fellows, they always had priority. They stood right in front of the President's desk. But even from a short distance, from here to there, I had difficulty hearing him. Once in a while, I'd edge up pretty much toward the desk, but you'd have to...

HESS: To get a spot on the first row in the Oval Room would you have to get to the White House and stand in line early?

WALSH: Yes. You know, we'd go in--you know the layout there?

HESS: I've never been in that part of the White House. I've seen drawings of the arrangement however.

WALSH: It would be like this, if this were the front door, you'd come in here, and there was a great big square room, a great big table, and then there was a corridor running down, about where our door was, all the

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way down shut off by guards. There was a partition there at that time, and a corridor which ran right down to the President's office. On the other side would be the corridor which ran into the Press Secretary's office, which also had a corridor running down to the Cabinet Room.

Well, we would come in this way. Say the press conference would be 10 o'clock, and Roosevelt--almost every time I went he was fifteen or twenty minutes late. He'd get to talking to somebody and they were always late. Truman was very punctual. That was one difference right off the bat. Well, the little people would try to make it a point to get there early, perhaps forty-five minutes early to get a place in the front. I remember distinctly waiting at least a half an hour, and

sometimes when I couldn't get over there very early I just didn't get up in front. You'd have to go in, one by one, because the Secret Service, you had your card anyway, your credentials to get in, but they'd spot you as you went in. Roosevelt would be sitting at his desk. He had all sorts of things on his desk, papers and everything, cluttered up.

I'll make these comparisons while I think of them. Truman's desk, as a rule, was very neat, very

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orderly. He had in back of him--each of them, there was a table in back of the President's desk, and I suppose Nixon still has one, but in back of him, Roosevelt had several photographs, as I remember, Mrs. Roosevelt. Now, Truman, the only pictures on his desk back there, were of Margaret and his mother and Mrs. Truman, of course. Those three. I don't think he had anybody else. But Roosevelt had all sorts of junk on his desk, you know, things that people had sent him.

Now, Truman had a little joke he liked to pull. It sounds like Truman so much. He had some matches, little things like this, book matches. We kept looking at them, they looked plain white, didn't have any seal on them, just blank, and so he said as we were leaving, "Want some matches, help yourself." So I reached over, several of us grabbed them, just the people who could get to them, most of them didn't care, you know. So, when you turned it over, on the other side it said, "Stolen from Harry Truman." Well, that was like Mr. Truman.

Then, this is the thing I cannot testify to, but I have a vague recollection that on his desk also was a little inscription, a little block or something

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like a paperweight that said, "The buck stops here." He said that several times. But later I think somebody gave him one, and he had it on his desk. That was one of the big differences, that his desk was much more orderly, much less cluttered.

HESS: Do you recall when you first saw that motto on his desk?

WALSH: Well, it must have been pretty late. It wasn't, certainly not the first year, I don't think. It must have been later, because I don't think he used that expression until later.

HESS: Then they moved out of the Oval Room into the Indian Treaty Room

WALSH: Yes, that's where the last press conference was.

HESS: I think that move was made in 1950.

WALSH: I guess that's right.

HESS: Did you think that was a good thing to move out of the Oval Room over to the Indian Treaty Room?

WALSH: Yes, the size of the press conferences just got out of hand. Even during the Roosevelt administration. There weren't as many newspapermen down here in those years, and there weren't as many newspaperwomen. And it was pretty hard, it was much harder to be accredited to the White House than in the Roosevelt than it was

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later, that is, during the war. I can see that.

HESS: They probably wanted to hold down the number of people who were going in.

WALSH: When Truman came in, and even in the last year, particularly when Truman came in, the crowd just got too big, and the people way in the back couldn't hear. Truman always stood; Roosevelt, of course, always sat. Truman was not very tall, you know, and the people in the back couldn't see, but you could hear him. He spoke rapidly, and very precisely, but that was another big difference, of course. I never remember having not heard Truman, but the move was necessary. There's no question about that.

You remember the famous fight over the balcony of course. That time, he had planners and some of his advisers, some planning group that suggested building not only the White House balcony, but an annex to the West Wing, not to the White House, but the West Wing where the Press Secretary was. Below there was the mailing room and all. And then where all the presidential assistants--now, the presidential assistants, most of them have moved over to the Executive Office Building, which was then the old State Department Building. When I came here, that was the State Department.

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HESS: State, War and Navy Building.

WALSH: Yes, State, War and Navy, years ago. Just amazing, all in one place. But that's where I first met Cordell Hull and Stettinius, they were at press conferences and briefings, quite often, almost every day. But I think Truman--he had the idea of having this annex, with sort of an auditorium, very much like Nixon has done now with the old swimming pool. But that was turned down. Congress laughed it off, you know, so he never got anywhere. I remember when he said to newsmen complaining about the facilities, "Well, we're going to move over to the Treaty Room," that's what he called it.

HESS: The Indian Treaty Room.

WALSH: He said, "You know, I just want to remind you men (I don't think he said "men," he probably said "you all." He used that expression "you all" quite often) he said, "I wanted to remind you all that I tried my best to get a bigger facility, but..." I don't know that he said "That do-nothing Congress" but it was Congress that turned it down, some committee up there wouldn't authorize the money. So we did go over there, and he had a few press conferences. That was

partly to accommodate the TV and the radio people. The radio people used to come in, but there were no cameras in the

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Oval Room. There was just no room. Even the still photographers, if they got any pictures at all like this one out here, it had to be taken pretty much like a posed--one photographer--it was a pool arrangement I think, two or three, one on one side and one on the other, and maybe one on a stepladder. "Smitty" Merriman Smith, ran into one of those photographers and he broke his leg, he sprained his ankle. I remember that distinctly.

HESS: Did he run into a ladder or something?

WALSH: Yes. As soon as the press conference was over, this was even during Roosevelt's administration, we'd open a wide path so the press services, UP and AP, and INA, some of the people who were right on the deadlines, you know, like the afternoon papers. The *Star* had sort of a--we also could run out ahead of the others.

Now, when I was on the *Providence Journal*, that was a morning paper, and I didn't have to break my neck getting out to the Press Room and read the notes and try to figure out the stories. That was a good move over there to the Treaty Room. Eisenhower continued it. Personally, I think it was mainly for the convenience of the TV and radio, which was their right.

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Then Kennedy moved down to the State Department most of the time, and Nixon is using the East Room occasionally. The East Room was never even thought of, I guess, by anybody else. I think Harry Truman never would have gone for that. It would have been like a desecration of holy ground. But that isn't a bad setup. It's a nice room. After all, newspapermen don't tear up a place, and the cameras.

I remember Truman's first press conference in 1945, although, to this day I don't remember what Truman said at his first press conference. He was pretty much, you know--he was either about to make his first address to Congress or after, I don't remember whether the press conference was first--remember, he had to address the Joint Session of Congress. I think he probably went up there first, and I heard that.

That was most impressive. And he quoted from the Bible, "All I want is discernment, and to serve my people and..." He said, "You can't imagine what it means to stand before the people with whom I have served for so many years! It was very moving. And he did a good job, none of the rather awkward gestures that he got into later. I think at that time Jonathan Daniels was pretty much running the press show because

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Steve Early, as I remember, seldom went back. I don't remember seeing him at the White House after Roosevelt's funeral.

HESS: I'm not sure who was there the first time, but do you recall the name, J. Leonard Reinsch?

WALSH: Yes, Reinsch was the first man he brought in.

HESS: Was he there that day?

WALSH: I don't know. I doubt very much the first day, at the first press conference. I seem to remember at a later press conference that Truman announced that he was appointing Reinsch to handle pretty much radio and TV stuff. I don't know that he was the overall--Eben Ayers didn't know whether he was going to stay or not, you know. I remember Eben about a week or so later asked me, "What do you think of the new setup?"

He said, "Well, there are going to be some changes made."

He said, "Not just speaking for myself, this Missouri bunch is coming in." Well, that was a natural assumption. Sure enough, Vaughan and the rest of them did come in, but Eben stayed on. Jonathan Daniels, I don't know how long he stayed there. Then I think the first press man he got was Charlie Ross, wasn't it?

HESS: Charles Ross.

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WALSH: They had a reception--well, let me finish this press conference first. The first press conference of Truman. He more or less made himself available after the first press conference, just to shake hands with anybody who wanted to. So a lot of us lined up, I guess practically everybody lined up. I had previously gone into his office, I don't know that he remembered me. But he did. They always say you can remember a short man or a very tall man, and he knew at least that he had seen this little guy somewhere. So I said, "I'm Robert Walsh of the *Providence Journal*, formerly of Missouri." I said, "Congratulations, Mr. President, best wishes," and that sort of thing.

He said, "Thank you very much. How would you like to write a little piece for the Providence paper telling the people of Rhode Island [this is in general] telling the people how sorry I am that I must break an engagement I had. I was to have gone up to Rhode Island this weekend for a Jackson Day Dinner, a Democratic dinner up there." I didn't even know he planned to go up there. See, he had been the Vice President. So, I wrote a little article for the *Journal* and that was the first thing he said to me as President.

Then his last press conference in 1953---before I

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forget, that was in the Treaty Room. After that press conference, which I think that was pretty much just thanking the press--I suppose he meant it--and his relations with the press, to me, were very good, personally. Of course, I'm sure they burned him up many times, there's no question about it, but he never showed any discrimination certainly as far as I saw, towards these kind of opinion people, not like Roosevelt might have, or like John Kennedy; Nixon, I suppose too. They all have their favorites, but Truman handled it well, I think.

After the last press conference was all over--I don't think he announced it--he was about to leave. Vaughan, or one of his people, said, "The President's going back to the White House, but he will be in this little anteroom, right off of the Treaty Room, for any of you who would like to say goodbye." This was just two or three days before Eisenhower was to be inaugurated. So quite a few of us went in, and some didn't. Of course the press people had to run out and send their stuff, but I was surprised how many just didn't go in--didn't exactly turn their back--but they just walked out as they would ordinarily, go back to their offices. And it only took a minute. People didn't exactly stand in long, slow lines either, there weren't that many.

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Quite a few of us went in to say hello to him, just say a word to him. I was talking to somebody in line and turned around and saw that people ahead of me in the line had gone a distance, and there was quite a break. I sort of hurried up, and I can remember President Truman saying, "Don't rush, don't rush."

And you can't help liking the guy--there's another story about the National Press Club, when Charlie Ross became his Press Secretary, I'm pretty sure it must have been this occasion. We had a little reception for Ross over in the lounge. Have you been in the National Press Club, the lounge up on the third floor?

HESS: Yes.

WALSH: And Charlie Ross had been here for years and years, I never knew him, when I worked in St. Louis I used to read his stuff. He was with the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* for many years, and of course, was a classmate of Harry Truman's. Well, anyway, we had this--there were free drinks--great big turnout for Charlie. He was very well respected and very well liked. I suppose the Press Club committee knew it, but Truman showed up, unannounced, walked in and stood as we all lined up to shake hands with him. This

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was late in the afternoon, about five or five thirty. They had a bar at one end, everybody had a drink in his hand, and there again, the line moved much more quickly than I thought. I had a drink in my hand, left hand, I guess, bourbon and water or something. I got right up to the President, and I tried to find a place to put this doggone drink, going up to the President of the United States with this--that was very new then. I couldn't put it on the floor, and there was no

table there. I got up to him and he sort of grinned so I said, "Congratulations, Mr. President, glad to see you," and all that. I said, "I must apologize for having this thing in my hand. "

And as I remember he replied: "What the hell do you think I have in my hand." In back of him there was a little table. He had pulled around and he had a glass in his hand.

HESS: He had a table to put his on.

WALSH: I can still remember, "What the hell do you think I have in my hand." So that's Harry for you.

HESS: How successful was he in fielding questions at a press conference? If something would come up and he didn't want to give a direct answer, how skillful was he at changing the subject?

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WALSH: Not as smooth as Roosevelt, well, nobody was, I guess. But he wasn't as evasive, I don't mean that in a bad sense.

Now the President's under no obligation to answer questions. They know a great deal more of the impact of a situation, especially when it hasn't jelled, but Truman--at the beginning--especially was quite amateurish. He had been a Senator, and he didn't have any innate dislike for the press or mistrust. I think fellows like Hoover and some of those guys, were maybe rather shy men. They just didn't understand the press, and the aggressiveness of the press.

Reporters are there to do a job and get the story. If you don't ask a good question, you're not going to get an answer. You've got to ask embarrassing questions, if they're not unfair, you know. But Truman, at the beginning, I don't think was too successful. When he didn't want to answer, he was very abrupt. He would just say, "No," and turn to somebody else. Roosevelt would say , "Oh, you know better than that," or "You know better than to ask a question like that." Or "Maybe I'll say something about that next week," but Truman I think later on developed much better.

He was the least impressive when he read something.

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He would frequently read too fast. He improved as a speaker, but he never professed to be an orator. But then he seldom read, except messages at Joint Sessions or formal statements such as on V-E Day, that was in May of '45, and then V-J Day in August of 1945. On both of those days he had a special press conference, in the Oval Room. Mrs. Truman and Margaret were there, and he had Secretary of State Byrnes, Admiral [Ernest Joseph] King, and a lot of the big shots. The President read a statement, and it wasn't at all impressive, he just rattled it off, you know. But then when he started talking about it, he said, "You know, this is one of the brightest days in my life." He looked out the window and it was raining, pouring cats and dogs, so he started to grin. I think he said brightest, or lightest, or one of those things, about the prospect of world peace.

HESS: And it was raining outside.

WALSH: Yes, it was raining outside. He kind of chuckled, you know, and he was in a very happy mood, he would be. Later in his term, after he was re-elected in 1948, he became much more confident, well, naturally, he would be.

Joe Fox, the *Star's* regular White House reporter was

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one of the few newspapermen in this city who predicted, and was absolutely confident that Truman was going to be elected in '48. He made small bets all over the *Star* and of course he collected. Fox said, "I never thought he'd do it, I never thought he'd make it until I went out on the campaign trip with him."

I didn't go on any of Truman's campaign trips. I went to the convention, but I didn't do any of the campaign traveling that I did in later years.

Joe said it wasn't only the crowds. When you go on these things, you learn to size up a crowd pretty well, not just the size of them, but their temper. Fox said--not that they had exceptionally big crowds, but they were enthusiastic, not just a bunch of screamers and jumpers like the Kennedy campaign crowds often were. You would get the business element would come down, if only out of curiosity. But they thought, "This fellow must have something. He might be elected." And sure enough, he was.

I remember the same thing with John Kennedy. I am a Catholic, as I said before, and I thought that this Catholic thing would probably be a factor in his defeat, because I lived so long in the South where the Ku Klux Klan was vehement out there when I was a kid. I didn't

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think that would be the main factor, but I thought that was one strike against Kennedy, being Catholic.

Also, I thought the Democrats, in 1960, still had Eisenhower, the father image, to contend with. He hadn't done anything very vast, and sort of muddled through, but he was hard to beat. Then in spite of many things I disagreed with Nixon on, you can't underestimate him, you couldn't even then. I thought when the 1960 campaign started, after the convention, "Well, I kind of think Nixon's going to win this time."

I went on campaign trips and I had an opportunity, fortunately, to be with Kennedy for about three weeks. We went not just to New England, that was natural, that he'd be popular up there, but also to upper New York State which is--now, this wasn't a religious thing--compared to New England there were not as many Catholics up around Buffalo or Rochester and some of those places, and in Ohio and the Middle West, and Illinois, and Missouri. I later went with Lyndon

Johnson to Texas as well as New York State and the Midwest. I could see Kennedy develop, there again, growing rather than swelling. He was a terrible speaker, you know, when he was in the Senate. I shouldn't say terrible, but he was a very unimpressive speaker, I thought.

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HESS: I didn't know that.

WALSH: All these years he was in the House with Nixon, he and Nixon came here the same year, in '47, and I never remember John Kennedy making a speech in the House. I went to the House almost every day then. In the Senate he made speeches--well, of course, speechmaking is not the mark of a legislator by any means, but many times, John McCormack used to blast John Kennedy for missing so many committee meetings and House sessions. He was in the Education and Labor Committee, as was Nixon, so they had a career parallel. John Kennedy knew what he wanted. He had the ability all along.

As a speaker, I shouldn't use the word terrible, he wasn't that bad, but he wasn't an impressive speaker by any means, and the New England accent was much more apparent then than it was in later years. But as he got out, it was not only the size of the crowd, like in the Truman experience and the speeches, he developed confidence from the crowds. He had charisma, there's no question about it. He imparted it, and he got it from the crowds. And shortly before the election, toward the end of the campaign, I would have been ready to bet, although I never bet on elections, it's a fatal thing to do, but I would have bet on Kennedy. Of course, he

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almost lost, it was so...

HESS: Do you recall his speech before the Baptist ministers?

WALSH: I wasn't there, but, yes. That was a very exciting speech. That did as much as anything. Because of my background, I felt, "Well, that was just the thing to say." And those fellows weren't bigots. They had legitimate questions.

HESS: Very few members of the Klan there.

WALSH: But I had a great respect for John Kennedy. I liked him too.

HESS: Did you think that Mr. Truman tried to give an honest, forthright answer to the questions that he was asked?

WALSH: Well, yes, if he wanted to answer.

HESS: If he really wanted to answer.

WALSH: If he wanted to answer yes, I think he was very straight forward. I can't remember any specific questions, but there again, if they asked him, well, he indicated it wasn't pertinent to ask him if he was going to run again although it was obvious that he wanted to run again in '48, but toward the end there was some question of whether he would run again in '52. And he had a perfect right to, even under the new amendment. He was opposed to that two-term limit.

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amendment, but not for his own personal--that's true also with the Eisenhower.

HESS: He was exempted from the provisions of the amendment.

WALSH: But they tried to pin him down on that, and I think that he was evasive there. He'd sort of laugh it off, and then he dropped this bombshell. He spoke down there at the Statler. At the end of the speech, I wasn't there that night, the reporters were just about to close their notebooks and he said, "I will not run in '52." And he got a great kick out of that, too, you know.

HESS: When did you first become aware that he was not going to run in '52?

WALSH: Well, I think it was at that time, whenever that was.

HESS: It was the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner at the National Guard Armory.

WALSH: Oh, was it at the Armory?

HESS: March 29th.

WALSH: Yes, I thought it was at the Statler. Well, that's when I first became aware.

HESS: Did you hear anything before then?

WALSH: No, I don't recall whether he would or would not. I kind of thought just my personal view, that maybe he

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would not, but I don't know where I got that.

HESS: Why?

WALSH: I don't know. I don't know where I got that idea. I know Mrs. Truman, this was no particular secret, didn't want him to.

HESS: She wanted to go back to Missouri?

WALSH: She was a wonderful woman.

HESS: Did you meet her very often?

WALSH: Yes, well, quite often, yes. When did I first meet her now?

My most memorable meeting with her was, oh, early one morning, Margaret had started her concert tour, and I think it was Detroit. She was out in Detroit or Chicago, she had sung the night before, and she was coming home by train. I was down at the *Star* office and made the mistake of going in too early that morning and they said, "Get over to Union Station right away. Margaret Truman is coming back from her concert in Detroit [I think] and maybe Harry will be down to meet her."

Well, I got over there and the President wasn't there, but Mrs. Truman was. There were very few people there. Of course, most people didn't know Margaret, and it wouldn't have created a great sensation anyway.

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But I got over there and there was Mrs. Truman with, as I remember, one Secret Service man. And I was the only reporter there, then. I think others with photographers showed up later. The train was about fifteen or twenty minutes late. So I went over to Mrs. Truman and introduced myself and as I remember, that was the first time I met her except at these White House receptions.

I can tell you about those--Harry had those too. So I started talking to her, and I said, "What do you think of her career?"

She said, "Oh, I'm not bothered about it." There had been a little criticism of Margaret's concert career, you know. She said, "Oh, I'm not bothered about that. The only thing that worries me is that Margaret will not be awake when the train gets in." She was a very--Truman best described her, she was a very homey woman, and she was so typical of so many women of the Midwest and every part of the country, too, but she was a wonderful woman.

Now, at the White House receptions, you know, Roosevelt used to have a press reception--this was before I came, and during the war they didn't have it, but they had a reception once a year for all the

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press, the newspapermen and newspaperwomen, and their wives, or their husbands.

That was a big chance for all the wives to dress up and go down there. It was usually in the evening, and it was formal. You'd wear tuxedos, and the President would stand in line and it would be the same old thing, go in the East Room and get something--he had about three punchbowls, and the trick was to find out which one of the punchbowls in the East Room--not the East Room, but the dining room--which of the ones was spiked. Nobody would get enough to

drink to get obstreperous. But we went to two receptions as I recall. Roosevelt had these things in the thirties, they were generally beer parties, they had beer kegs out in the backyard, but as soon as the war came that all stopped: Truman resumed them for a few years. I think it must have been, not '45, because the country was pretty much still in mourning for a year, so it must have been in--as a matter of fact, I don't think he had any until after '48. He may have had one in '46 or '47.

But at any rate, he had two or three, but that's immaterial. The thing is, he would stand there, an aide would get your name and say, "Mr. President, Mr.

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Walsh," or "Mr. and Mrs. Walsh." When I got up to him, in my case, and in others too, instead of having an aide, and passing on to Mrs. Truman, he would turn and say, I don't think he said, "Dear," or anything like that, but he said, "This is Mrs. Truman." That is how he'd introduce us to his wife.

Now, no other President--as far as I know--did that. As for diplomatic receptions, I don't know how they work that. I don't think they do it. But Truman did that, at least at the ones I remember. In the line they usually want the man to go first because he'd be the newsman and would have to be introduced to the President by the aide. Then I would turn and introduce my wife to the President. The Trumans' were very gracious and friendly.

Mrs. Truman didn't like the job but she was a gracious woman, and she was perfectly at home. This protocol and formality didn't faze her, maybe not the glamour stuff like Jackie Kennedy. Mrs. Eisenhower was a wonderful woman.

HESS: Concerning Mr. Truman's answers at his press conferences, I have read some criticism because of his short answers, that he did not really try to use the press conference as a medium of educating the public.

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Do you think he would have been more effective had he tried to use the press conference in that manner? Would his press conferences have been more effective?

WALSH: Well, I'll tell you that at the beginning he was not effective, his answers were not complete enough, and he didn't offer very much. But, we must remember the circumstances under which he came in. Now, if he had tried, and I don't know whether he did it purposely, maybe he did, if he had tried to be too effective, he would have been criticized even more.

If he had tried to propagandize or educate the public that first year, or even until 1948 when he was re-elected, if he had tried to be too dynamic and too like Roosevelt and some of the others.

I'm sure he was sincere but I can remember after his first two or three press conferences, some of the press people walking out, and they would just say, "Oh, gee, what a guy. He'll never be another Roosevelt." Well, nobody expected him to be.

I remember some fellow, I can't remember who, I didn't even know him, it was one of the financial papers like the *Wall Street Journal*, or the *Journal of Commerce*, or something, asked some question that

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was very complicated even for Wall Street--and Truman gave a very quick answer, "I don't know anything about the stock market," or one of those things, you know. He shouldn't have said it so abruptly. He didn't say, "I don't care about it," but he sort of implied, "Well, what's the stock market." It was either that the stock market had gone up as a result or gone down. He said, "I don't pay any attention to that." And so as newsmen were walking out and I heard him say to somebody, "Well, that man is President of the United States and doesn't understand the stock market." Well, it might have been fair in response to that particular question.

Now, in later years, Truman was more careful, and I'm sure he learned a great deal more about the stock market. He was quite a student, you know. He had books on or near his desk. That's an old gag, perhaps, books that you're supposed to be reading, but Truman loved history, and he often said he always studied it, American history particularly.

He was not a lawyer, although he was a county judge, like the commissioner sort of thing. But he apparently had read quite a bit about the law, and he had Fred Vinson and some of his main Justice Department people, to help him. I think he set some sort of

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a precedent, I was trying to find--I remember writing a story--and I can't find it. But I was covering the Supreme Court when either Vinson or Burton--Senator [Harold] Burton was a pal of his, a Republican, and there was a Republican vacancy or what was considered to be a Republican vacancy. I think Burton was the first, or maybe Vinson was appointed to the Supreme Court. I think it was probably when Vinson was sworn in as Chief Justice, Truman went up to the Supreme Court and just walked in--well, few knew he was coming, of course, and he was seated in the courtroom. And they said that was the first time--maybe not in history, that's a long time--but in many, many years that a President went up to see one of his appointees sworn in either. It was very formal. He made no speech. Well, of course, there was no Chief Justice, Chief Justice Stone had died.

Stone died the day I went on the *Star*--it was the first story I wrote for the *Washington Star*, his obituary--he died that day in '46. Truman nominated Vinson as Chief Justice, to replace Stone.

And whoever opened the Court, it must have been Justice Black, the next ranking man, he recognized, announced that the President had honored the Court by

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being there, and "Welcome, Mr. President." Truman just got up and bowed. He didn't throw his weight around or anything. And he left immediately after the swearing in. He didn't listen to any of the others. But I'm not sure that that's a precedent, but the old-timers said they had never heard of such a thing.

Now it's happenstance. I think Lyndon Johnson went up, and Eisenhower probably went up. So, Truman may have set a precedent there, I don't know. But there again, it was his friend. And Vinson, of course, was a very, very close friend of his. Vinson had been Secretary of the Treasury, and previously a judge and a Congressman on the House Ways and Means Committee. Of course, Truman had a few unfortunate people in his administration.

HESS: Who would you place in that category?

WALSH: Well, you know the only scandal, there was really no major scandal, but they had the deep-freeze episode. I covered those hearings, most of the hearings before the Senate, I think it was the Government Operations Committee. Senator Ferguson, as I remember, was on that committee. Well, Vaughan was a very nice guy, and he was very helpful to us. There was the crony charge. I don't know too much about him.

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Some of Truman's appointments to the commissions were unfortunate. The RFC, Reconstruction Finance Corporation, there was a major scandal there. Do you remember Merle Young. Merle Young's wife worked as one of Truman's secretaries, you know, personal secretaries. She had been with him at the Capitol. Merle was just one of the underlings, and he had to take the rap, but there were several others then. Of course, later one of Truman's secretaries--you know, the fellow from St. Louis was indicted for something or other, what was his name? I ought to know it, I knew him very well.

HESS: After the administration was over Matthew Connelly had a little difficulty.

WALSH: Matt Connelly.

HESS: He was from Massachusetts.

WALSH: I guess , he was, yes.

HESS: The trial was held in St. Louis.

WALSH: That's right. But when I say "unfortunate" I mean unfortunate in the sense that some people like that, they got in trouble later on. And then the McGrath incident. McGrath was a Senator, Solicitor General, and then Attorney General. Of course, I followed that because having known McGrath personally

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for so many years, then he having been Governor when I was in Rhode Island, and I saw him quite frequently and he got into a jam on the Newbold Morris controversy.

HESS: All right, sir, since we had mentioned J. Howard McGrath and the Newbold Morris episode, what do you recall about that?

WALSH: Well, my connection with it was not only through McGrath,, knowing him personally, but I covered the Justice Department for the *Star*. In those days on the *Star* they didn't have the great age of specialization which they have now. I'd covered the Supreme Court for ten years, and the lower courts, too. I covered a lot of the courts like the Court of Appeals, and the District Courts, and I always liked court work, because I did cover the old courthouse in St. Louis, and then, of course, in Providence. But I also liked the legislative, even better. So I covered the Capitol.

You'd go up in the morning to the Capitol and then the Supreme Court. The Court convened at noon and you'd have the decisions only once a week. But in connection with the Supreme Court, I covered the Justice Department, and the *Star* sent me over there mainly because they knew that I knew McGrath, not that I ever got very much, but his was more or less

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a routine administration, except for one or two things like this--the later blowup.

Newbold Morris, as I remember, was a professional reformer, I shouldn't say that, but, you know, he was the "clean government type," and he was always down here, quite often down here testifying before some committee, what ought to be done about government in New York City and all that sort of thing. And he was personable enough, and was very able, I think. But he had that reputation of being do-gooder, which I suppose didn't help him too much.

So he came down here, as I remember Truman picked him, didn't he, to look into some shenanigans, or suspected shenanigans in the Justice Department, or maybe all departments. McGrath, as I remember, refused, among others, McGrath wasn't the only one, but McGrath refused to disclose his own, or some of his associates' financial holdings--was that it? See, I'm a little vague on this.

HESS: Newbold Morris and his associates had developed a rather lengthy questionnaire that they wanted various people in Government to fill out and turn in, and it did not go over very well.

WALSH: I wrote a full page--this was for a Sunday story,

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and they took the whole page in the editorial section on this questionnaire, pointing at all of these things. It was just the whole history of your life and beyond that almost. That's digressing, but that's how I do remember it now.

HESS: Do you remember where you got your copy of that questionnaire?

WALSH: Well, I don't know. You know, I wonder if it was before or after--oh, I remember seeing it, or seeing what it was purported to be. I remember writing the story about it. I wish I could find it for you, but I haven't got a copy of it as such, but I wrote the story about it, listing most of the questions. I don't recall. It's possible that somebody in the office, somebody else might have gotten it. I know McGrath didn't give it to me. As I remember, wherever I got it...

HESS: As I understand the story, none of the questionnaires were actually sent out. They were just run off, people knew about them, but Newbold Morris and his people said, "We are going to send them." But I don't believe that any were officially sent out.

WALSH: And I wasn't the only one. There were several stories at that time. I may be exaggerating this, but I

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do remember that thing and the type of questions. Maybe I didn't have the full text, there again, it's not quibbling, but I remember distinctly in the office that we had the thing and we had something that purported to be a lot of these questions, let's put it that way. At least part of it. There were leaks all over the place, I'm sure there were, and somebody may have gotten a copy, may have picked it up at the White House. I'm sure the White House must have seen it. Maybe a White House man, Joe Fox might have--or maybe I got it. I remember talking to McGrath about it, and he said, "Well, I'm not going to--some of those questions are..." I don't know whether he said irrelevant, "...just have no right subjecting anybody, it's not only me. I have nothing to conceal." I don't know that he did.

Poor Howard, he's dead now. I've always thought that he covered up for a lot of people, perhaps not covered up. I don't think he did anything dishonest. But there was something wrong in that Justice Department, and in the administration or with some of the actions that he either condoned, or maybe if he had spoken up...

HESS: What seemed to be wrong?

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WALSH: I don't know. I don't know. Who was the fellow from South Carolina or North Carolina, he wasn't in the Justice Department, but it was in the administration. McGrath was pretty much the political man like the Postmaster General used to be. I remember McGrath, this is digressing again, but before the election, he came over to see us at our home. I still remember, him and his wife, just the four of us, sitting in the room in there, and I said, "It looks kind of bad for Truman."

And he said, "No, let me tell you, Harry Truman is going to be elected."

HESS: This was '48?

WALSH: '48. It must have been--it was after the convention, sometime after the convention, maybe in September or October, and he said, "No, Harry's going to be elected."

And I said, "Well, you're..."

And he said, "No, I'm not talking for myself. We have very good reason to believe that he has an excellent chance."

HESS: What reasons did he give?

WALSH: Well, he thought pretty much like Joe Fox said in hindsight, he said, "Harry Truman has the people behind him, and there are so many people who don't like Dewey."

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I think he gave that reason. He also had campaign reports from all over the country.

HESS: Was this during the campaign?

WALSH: Yes, I can't remember quite how he happened to be here, because during the campaign was a very busy time, but it was after the convention--Truman had been re-nominated--and he stopped by and had dinner here.

HESS: The campaign got underway, as they usually do, when Mr. Truman made a speech in Detroit, at Cadillac Square, and then not too long after that were the several trips that Mr. Truman took.

WALSH: Of course, McGrath didn't go on all the trips with him. McGrath was usually here, and McGrath was then--what was he, Solicitor General or was he a Senator?

HESS: He was Senator at that time.

WALSH: He wouldn't be traveling.

HESS: Well, he was Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

WALSH: He was the chairman. And Hannegan had been before him. Not that I ever got much out of them, but those two people, whom I knew better probably than anybody

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else in the administration, personally, they were the Democratic National Chairmen for all those years.

HESS: Did Mr. McGrath say why he agreed to take the post as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee?

WALSH: No, I remember when he took it.

HESS: A lot of people were expecting a downfall of the Democrats that year, in other words, it was not a choice plum.

WALSH: No, no. And Truman, I think, had trouble filling it. That's one thing. Among other things, this is not a religious issue again, but McGrath, of course, was Catholic. Hannegan was a Catholic. Jim Farley was a Catholic.

HESS: Didn't it used to be a sort of an unwritten rule that when the President was Protestant, back in the days when Presidents were Protestants, that the head of the Democratic National Committee, or the head of the committees, had to be Catholic?

WALSH: Well, some of the big cities had large Catholic populations, that was probably one of the big reasons. But Truman, I think, thought he probably would be wise to get McGrath. Now, McGrath was no novice.

HESS: He had been in politics a long time.

WALSH: McGrath started out in politics in the cradle, we used to say.. He had been Democratic state chairman

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in Rhode Island before he was Governor. He was a very young man when he was Governor, he was in his early forties. Then he became Senator. I don't know if that's the greatest mistake he ever made or not, I think he never admitted it, but I think he agreed, a great mistake to leave the Senate. He could have stayed in the rest of his life, what would he be now? Of course, he's dead now.

HESS: He might still be alive too, if he'd stayed in the Senate.

WALSH: Oh, yes, if he'd stayed in the Senate. Another reason I think Truman may have appointed him, had a great influence in this, and I know this from Senator Francis Green, who served for many, many years.

Green had been state chairman for many, many years before McGrath, and McGrath was pretty much his protege. Green lived to about ninety-five or so. He helped Howard along. And McGrath was very loyal to him. And I think Truman and Green were quite friendly. As a matter of fact, when Truman became President or when he made his first address to Congress, Green

who was not very lavish in his compliments of anybody, issued a very flowery statement, praising Truman to the skies: This man has got real promise for peace and this and this and

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this. Green also said he recommended Howard McGrath as national chairman. But as I remember, nobody else wanted the job. Who were you going to get?

HESS: I know they had a very difficult time filling the post of treasurer. They finally got Louis Johnson.

WALSH: But that's the only thing I know about that. Howard never said anything.

HESS: You know, Mr. Truman called him up on the phone and requested his resignation. Did you ever speak to Mr. McGrath after that time?

WALSH: Yes, and he never mentioned it. I never really asked him.

As for Truman calling him up, I heard that story that Truman called him on the phone. And Truman held a press conference that same afternoon he fired him. McGrath refused to resign, wasn't it, or something? He fired him anyway. He demanded it.

HESS: McGrath preferred not to resign.

WALSH: Well, of course, when a President wants the resignation of a Cabinet officer, you've got to. Truman had this press conference, and right off the bat he said, "The only reason I have called this is to announce that I have accepted (as I remember) the resignation of J. Howard McGrath." Then there were a million questions.

HESS: Were you there at that press conference?

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WALSH: As I remember, he didn't give any further reasons at the press conference. I don't remember any.

Yes, I was there. I'll tell you why. I was over at the Capitol and having covered that Newbold Morris blowup and also the Justice Department, the *Star* called me or had me go down to the White House when they knew Truman...Joe Fox may have been there too, but I was just supposed to watch this Newbold Morris thing. I remember writing a story.

I remember talking to Howard later, I did ask him in later years, "Do you still get along with Mr. Truman?" This was after Truman was out. Well, it was within the last--Howard's been dead about two years now, I guess. This may have been five or six years ago.

And he said, "Truman and I were always personal friends. He may have looked mad at times." And in later years, they did have some sort of a public reconciliation, didn't they?

HESS: Yes.

WALSH: McGrath was kind of pathetic. He was a millionaire, you know. He made a lot of money, and honestly, I think. He was tied in with a lot of Rhode Island industrial people.

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HESS: Savings and loan.

WALSH: Savings and loan, that's where he got his start, yes. But he was always itching to get back into national politics, after, of course, he was out completely. In the 1956 campaign, that's when Kefauver was nominated, for Vice President with Stevenson. I remember traveling around with Kefauver, and as pretty much his principal adviser, but J. Howard McGrath, who, of course, had been close to Kefauver--they had been Senators together. And they were very much alike.

Kefauver was quite a liberal, and McGrath was. His credentials were liberal, and he just went down the line for him pretty well, so it wasn't any break with Truman on that, or with the party either.

And I think that thankless job as national chairman, he did it as well as anybody could. As a matter of fact, they said he did it too doggone well.

HESS: Is that one of the hazards of the news field, getting too close to the people that you are trying to report on?

WALSH: Well, it is a danger sometimes.

HESS: Losing your standard of objectivity.

WALSH: You either get to like--that's what they used to say

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of Dewey, I shouldn't talk so much about Dewey, because I really didn't know him too well, but we had a little newspaper cliché there, "To know Dewey is to hate him." You know, you used to say, "To know Joe Doakes is to love him."

Dewey got an unfriendly reputation among the press, from what I hear, when he was Governor of New York, and even before that when he was District Attorney in Manhattan. He had what they call a dossier on people he didn't like, not just newspapermen, he had a filing system of people he didn't like, and he'd keep this stuff. I think this was probably the way Dewey worked. Now that's not particularly bad. I'm sure Johnson--I'm sure others do. But this is sort of a vindictive thing, to get something on somebody.

One or two of the fellows, it could have been Pete Brandt, I don't want to quote anybody particularly, my recollection of it, he said, "If that Dewey ever gets in the White House he's going to have a dossier on every newspaperman in this town, and he's going to get something on your personal life, or something like that. He might not use it. But it's too critical." Now, I think that might have been unfair. I don't know that Dewey would have stooped to that. But instead of being

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an FBI or storm trooper, that was the big thing, operation. But Dewey was that type. He was a prosecutor in a good sense, probably, in a legitimate sense. But he might have--he was too tough. And that's one of the reasons, I think, for his unpopularity.

Now, Truman was just the opposite. He didn't talk enough at the beginning, and then he talked too much I think toward the end.

But to get back to your other question. If you get to like a person too much, or if you get to disliking, even more so, I think it does influence you, subconsciously if you are not careful. You're trying your darndest.

Now, I've been reading my clippings, my heirlooms here, I didn't keep too many, but I can't see in there anything overly favorable that I wrote about Truman. That's the material I've been looking through the last day or two. Anything that was glorifying him.

The most favorable story I wrote was the one in May of '44 on the basis of the talk with Hannegan and McGrath, not with Truman, because I hardly even knew Truman then, just met him in his office that one time. It was that Harry Truman had to be considered as a possible contender, or a real possibility for Vice President. His name not only was included among the

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first ten that you always heard in speculation, but he was being backed by Hannegan and McGrath, two of the most influential in the political part of it. Of course, in the last analysis it would be up to Roosevelt, Truman did everything for Roosevelt. His record in the Senate, well, that's what I mentioned in that story. He had a very good record as far as Roosevelt was concerned, and in this Truman Committee. That was a pretty good--that was before I came down here--but from all I hear, that was a pretty good outfit as congressional committees stood, very good. They were very fair. They did apparently save a lot of money, prevented grave mistakes in contracts and thing like that, prevented maybe criminal negligence if nothing else. The committee did a whole lot, and they made claims later that they saved billions of dollars, or you know, paved the way for savings. And they credited Truman. Burton was on that committee. Who knows now, to this day, who else was on that committee.

I think it was a good committee to begin with. And they said he was a good chairman, he was dedicated to that one thing, and he didn't pose as a global expert or as a military expert like Roosevelt. Roosevelt was

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an expert on everything, unfortunately. But Truman, that's why I think he was--and then when he did get into the Presidency, like Woodrow Wilson said, he grew with it. Oh, you could see it, you could see it. Yet, as much as I like the guy there are many things I disagree with him on.

HESS: Pick one that you disagree with him on.

WALSH: Well, one of the things that comes to mind, one of the biggest, was the steel seizure.

HESS: In 1952.

WALSH: In 1952. Now, I covered that from the Supreme Court angle. I don't think I was down to the White House, I may have gone down, I was up to the Supreme Court all through those arguments on that.

HESS: What do you recall about that?

WALSH: First of all, I thought just when he seized it, I didn't like the idea of presidential seizure. I didn't know the inside or anything, but I thought it was a pretty drastic move under the circumstances, I could see in a war or something. Of course, well, this was '52, was that it?

HESS: Yes.

WALSH: Well, the Korean war was still going. That was part of it. That was a big justification from his viewpoint.

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But I didn't like the idea of him seizing the steel industry. Why not seize the railroads? It's been done, of course, but in this case, the Supreme Court overruled. I got into it in the United States District Court...

HESS: David A. Pine.

WALSH: Judge Pine. I covered several trials in his court in years past, and I was sent to cover the arguments before him, and he had a bombshell. He ruled against Truman. He was a U.S. District Court Judge, he wasn't by any means obscure, he was a good judge. He later became chief judge. I think he died just recently, didn't he?

HESS: I think so.

WALSH: He was a wonderful man and he was a good judge.

HESS: You will recall that the Government's representative in court at that time was Holmes Baldrige.

WALSH: Yes.

HESS: Do you recall that?

WALSH: I didn't know him too well. I'd gone to the Justice Department, but I didn't cover it every day, in that sense, but I remember his arguments before the Supreme Court. I think the case went directly from Pine to the Supreme Court. It was one of those things

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that they took right away. And Vinson, of course, was on the court.

Vinson upheld with Truman, which was legitimate. He got stymied, you know. There are two sides to everything. But it was something like eight to one or seven to two and an awful rebuff for the President. It may have been close, I don't recall what it was, but that's how I remember. I had nothing to do with the background of the seizure itself. I knew why Truman said he did it. And, as I say, there are two sides of it. I disagree with the seizure. You asked for something I disagreed with him about. I disagreed with him on that.

Then I disagreed with him on--well, another case, Alger Hiss. You probably know what I'm leading up to, the "red herring."

I'll give you a little more on my legislative history. When I was on the *Providence Journal*, I'd go up to the Capitol off and on to cover committee hearings or things like that that were of particular interest to Rhode Island. One of my first jobs on the *Star*, and I went there in April of '46 the day Chief Justice Stone died, and having done that, you know, it's like the government, you do something, and you're typed

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thereafter. I was assigned to cover the Supreme Court. So, I kept going over to go to the Supreme Court, then cases on the racial property covenants and on racial segregation. I was there the day of the 1954 decision on school segregation, which was the most historic of all.

To get back to the Congress, I would go over to the Congress to cover hearings and other stories in the morning. Well, Elizabeth Bentley started and then Whittaker Chambers. It got to be a bombshell.

Whittaker Chambers, whoever heard of him, except that he was *Time* magazine senior editor. Even then I didn't know who he was. He started dropping names all over the place, and we were

trying to write all these names down, people he said had been Communists in the 1930s. He mentioned Alger Hiss and that rang a bell.

I didn't know Alger Hiss, but when I first came down here and had been here about a year, there was a preliminary session at Dumbarton Oaks for the United Nations organization meeting in San Francisco. There was a very nice young fellow, a sort of a contact man with the press, Alger Hiss.

He was a young lawyer. He was a man who was going

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places, you could spot it even then. He was a nice looking fellow, and a very nice person. Well, anyway, he was one of those named by Chambers. So I said, "This is a smear." And of course, Nixon was on that committee.

To go back even farther, in 1947, we had a custom on the *Star*, it was an awful headache, each of us at the Capitol, four of us, would have to go in and interview new members of Congress. In order to parcel the work out, one of us would take from A to G and so on. I had from H to M, so I walked in an office and found a young fellow sitting at the desk. It was just a day or two after Congress convened, and I said, "Is Mr. Kennedy in?" This man was one of Kennedy's staff men and he later became very prominent.

He was sitting there, with not a paper, apparently nothing to do. I said, 'I've got this assignment to have a little talk, a little background, I know enough about the Kennedy family, but I would like to see the Congressman and just ask him a few questions; 'Are you in favor of home rule for the District,'" and so forth. And I said, "I used to work in Providence. I was up there fifteen years," and I know of the Kennedys, I had heard of the Kennedys, everybody up there had,

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but I never met any of them.

So he said, "Would you like to see him?"

I said, "Is he here?"

He said, "Sure, he's in the office." The door was open, he took me in, and there was John Kennedy sitting at his desk, a young fellow. He always looked young, but he looked like a kid, and he was just getting over one of his many illnesses. He was very friendly. So, we just sat around and talked mostly about New England. And I walked out and wrote a little paragraph: "John Kennedy is in favor of home rule for the District of Columbia," never knowing, never even suspecting. He was running for President, I'm sure, even then.

I used to see Kennedy and Nixon on the House Education and Labor Committee, but Kennedy was seldom there. Nixon was always there. He is a very effective Congressman. He was hard

working and he made his weight felt as a newcomer. He dashed right on. You could see why he was picked for the Un-American Activities Committee. Chambers seemed to have no proof, he was making all these charges. Before Hiss was called to testify several others took the Fifth Amendment or denied everything. There were admissions

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that there had been little circles, little cells, but there was nothing there, no spies, or anything like that. So, I thought it was just a smear. It was the 80th Congress, it was a Republican controlled committee. The investigation would have died overnight if it hadn't been for Nixon. [Karl] Mundt also was on that committee, and [Felix Edward] Hebert, from Louisiana, was on it. Hebert was a Democrat, but those three kept it going and Nixon particularly. Then they got Alger Hiss up for questioning. This is long-winded but it will get to the point.

Hiss got on the stand, was very evasive, too legalistic; he didn't deny everything but didn't admit much. He was sort of, not exactly sneering, but very much like Roosevelt at times.

I thought of Roosevelt's, "You know better than to ask a question like that." That fellow's Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Then Hiss became contradictory, some things he just couldn't answer or wouldn't answer. I remember spending a whole day visiting automobile places. You remember the famous old automobile that was supposed to have been given by Hiss to Chambers. All of a sudden the records stopped, what happened to this automobile?

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And my gosh, it began to tie in with what Chambers had said. Then I went over to an apartment house.

Hiss had lived in about six different places, and Chambers was supposed to have lived in that house with him for a few months in the late 1930s. Two or three people who lived there at that time said: "Well, we seem to remember something, but as far as I know the Hisses were always alone over there." But there was just enough doubt. So I came to doubt myself. "I wonder if Hiss is telling the truth?" Chambers was very unimpressive, although he was very articulate. But, you know, the handsome young Galahad stuff, and then the dumpy Chambers.

Well, anyway, they had the trial and I went over to cover both the trials in New York. If I had been on the jury, in all honesty, I would have had to convict Hiss of perjury, because they had not only the "Pumpkin Papers" but the FBI did a job, oh, they did a job with handwriting and typing. So, that's the Hiss business, and Truman, in the course of that--I'm going to try to get back to Truman, I was not at that press conference, I'm sorry to say. I've tried to wishfully think that I was, but I just have no recollection of it. Somebody as an afterthought asked him, "What do you think about

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this committee hearing about Hiss?"

And he said, "It's a red herring."

Well, there's a perfect example of shooting from the hip. I could see what he meant, in all justice to Harry, but I don't agree with him. He never should have said it. But, I'm just assuming what he meant, but I think what he meant was, he viewed everything politically, naturally, and from a partisan standpoint. Here was a Republican controlled House committee, and at that time Nixon didn't mean anything to him. Later, they had a real brawl. But at that time it wasn't Nixon as a person. It was just this group up here, and Speaker Joe Martin and the rest of them. You know, some were trying to get something on this administration, and to reflect not only on the Truman administration, but to go way back to Roosevelt. These things happened during the Roosevelt administration, in the thirties, '36 and those years. And Truman said, "Oh, that's just a red herring." I think that's what he meant. But nevertheless, that's one of the things I disagree with him on. It wasn't a red herring. Of course, it was partisan. Naturally Nixon--he was out to build himself up and you can hardly blame him. Hebert was a pretty high-type fellow, a former newspaperman.

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That wasn't why he was high type, but he was a former city editor and a good Congressman. And I think he tried to be fair. He was, in many ways, the most effective member and the fairest. And Hebert must have felt very much like I did. He said, "Mr. Hiss, I sympathize with you, I know that these are charges, blank charges, there's not much proof, but you are not helping us at all by what I consider to be evasive answers."

"I'm answering to the best of my recollection." You know, like they always do in a trial, "To the best of my recollection."

There were other things, there were a lot of things that I disagreed with President Truman, I'd like to set the record straight. I am not upholding Truman on everything by any means. That's why you have to be so careful if you like a person, respect a person. But I had a real respect for him too. I liked Eisenhower in many ways. Eisenhower was tough. Eisenhower had the damndest temper. He could blow up. Not so much at press conferences. I saw him get mad a couple of times. His eyes would just get cold, icy at...

HESS: At press conferences?

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WALSH: At press conferences. He'd look at a guy and he'd freeze him. Now Truman would get mad. May Craig would needle the life out of him, but he got to enjoy that. He sort of kidded her along, like John Kennedy did.

Truman didn't have the wit. He had a sort of a, you know, a down to earth wit, but not the rapier stuff like Kennedy. He was far better at press conferences than Eisenhower, and he handled his questions much better than Eisenhower.

Eisenhower was well briefed. Eisenhower was no dope. He was an intelligent man. A lot of people tried to give that impression that Ike didn't know what it was all about. Well, he did. Ike went through channels, he had the military background, he was briefed on everything. But he had a good mind.

HESS: Do you think that after he had his heart attacks, that he had more difficulty expressing himself?

WALSH: Yes. I'll tell you when I first noticed it. It wasn't so bad, but if you saw him often enough, you could see the difference. After this ileitis attack--he had one heart attack, then it was the ileitis and he had another one after that. We were watching for it, you know, like birds of prey. We were watching to see

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if we could detect any difference.

I'm not sure that they didn't with Roosevelt, too, the fellows that had been there in the '30s. They'd tell us in 1944 that "Roosevelt's nothing like he used to be." And there was no question about it. The man was dying, some had no doubt about it. There were so many things wrong with him, I don't exactly know what the cause of death was--hemorrhage. It might have been any number of things. Roosevelt, many times, seemed to be somewhat in pain. You know, that's a terrible thing. One of the books I reviewed just recently dealt with statesmen who had serious illnesses, of one kind or another, Churchill, Kennedy, and all these people, and here the fate of the world hangs on them, you know. Truman was blessed with pretty good health. Did he ever go to a hospital? I don't think he did. Well, he went out for checkups, I'm sure, or something like that.

HESS: He's been in the hospital a time or two since he's left the White House.

WALSH: Yes, but he's getting along in years now. But when he was President, I don't remember, or when he was Senator.

HESS: I guess all that early morning walking might have

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paid off.

WALSH: That's another thing. I met him several times. I was going to town reading a newspaper. In those days I had to be in pretty early, 7 o'clock in the morning, and I'd start walking from here. I'd get downtown--that's one of the advantages of living here, one of the few.

You can walk downtown in ,about fifteen minutes. I was walking down reading the paper, and I looked up and right in front of me was Harry Truman with the Secret Service men. So I said, "Oh, pardon me, Mr. President,"--well, I wasn't that close. He was about ten feet away and he had two guys on each side. I looked out and there was a car driving along. Fellows with shotguns and everything, I'm sure. So, if I had pulled anything. I looked up so startled that he laughed and he said, "Good morning."

Another morning, I had heard on the radio just as I was about to leave, some driver had run his car into the side of a building down about 19th or 20th near the Avenue, and had broken off the whole edge of the building. So I thought I would walk down and see for myself. So I got down there, and who's standing looking at the wreckage but Harry Truman. I said, "Good morning, quite a crash."

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He said, "Sure was." Then he walked on. Those are only two of the times I saw him on walks. You never knew where he was going or when he was going. But people were getting on to it. Then he'd get in the car and they'd drive him out to a park somewhere so he could walk around.

The story I thought Mrs. Walsh was going to tell you earlier this morning happened either the day before, or only a few days before Roosevelt died and Truman became President. At that time, during the war, she worked at the Red Cross, and had to be there about 8:30. She was walking down 17th Street crossing Pennsylvania Avenue near where the Executive Office Building is, and was caught right in the middle of the street. The light changed, and a car was coming down the street, a big car, big limousine, and she held up her hand. The car wasn't speeding, going fast, and it was only the car by itself. She held up her hand, and the car stops. She turned around and waved, and who was there but Bess and Harry. He had a big grin on his face. She waved and said, "Thank you very much." He took off his hat, and Mrs. Truman bowed. Well, that was nice of them. Somebody else, I won't mention any other names, but some politician would

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be mad, here was this little woman holding up the wheels. We have often wondered where Truman was going.

Of course, Roosevelt wasn't at the White House that morning. He was at Warm Springs. Anne thinks it might have been that same day Roosevelt died, although we just don't know, but it was certainly within a day or two. I think Truman was on the way to the Capitol, and maybe one of those early morning brunches, because Bess was with him. He had that great big straw hat, you know. He didn't have a straw hat that day, I'm sure, that was April. But in the summer he would wear those Panama hats and the cane. Very jolly and jaunty.

HESS: I'd like to ask some questions about some of the men who worked in the White House office. Now, we've mentioned Charlie Ross. How effective was he as press officer?

WALSH: Well, I think he was a good press officer, a good adviser in that sense. That's the primary job, to advise the President. I think Truman relied on him a great deal, I'm sure he did. He said so, and I think he did. And in his relations with the press, Charlie was a very reserved man. I never really knew him very

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well. He was one of the--not old men, well, even then I think he was in his sixties, I guess, he was as old as Truman practically. So, he was in his late fifties or sixties

HESS: They were in the same class in high school.

WALSH: Either he or Mrs. Truman, which one was it? Well, anyway, they knew each other as children, and boys.

Ross didn't handle these daily briefings so much. He'd leave it to--well, Eben Ayers. There was somebody there before Eben Ayers. Of course, Eben didn't go over there until '45, wasn't it. Shortly before, he hadn't been there very long before Roosevelt died. He had been there under Roosevelt for a while, and then he--I'm trying to think when Eben came down there. He came down there in '39 or '40, wasn't it, did he tell you?

HESS: He told me, and it has slipped my mind.

WALSH: But he had been here several years before I came down. I know as soon as he left the *Journal* he came down here, and he got a job in the State Department with the Latin American Affairs Office when Rockefeller was there. As I remember when I first came here, Eben was still there.

HESS: He was actually still on that payroll at the

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time he was first at the White House.

WALSH: During the war, they'd frequently do that. Yes, he was. So he must have come over in late '44 or around there somewhere, but he was certainly there when Roosevelt died. Then he stayed on under Truman. But Charlie Ross had these morning briefings and very frequently delegate it to somebody else. There was a fellow named Tom Blake, does that name sound familiar to you?

HESS: Yes, but...

WALSH: At the press office Ross was always there, but was rather reserved. I never had much occasion to ask him anything.

I knew Jonathan Daniels better than Charlie Ross. Steve Early, everybody knew Steve Early.

HESS: Who would you rate as the best press officer, Steve Early?

WALSH: In my recollection, yes. I think so. I don't want to do anybody an injustice. That's an awful job. A guy who has been a newspaperman himself and has worked with the very people--you have to put on a different hat--and you have to be reserved. Some do play favorites, and I don't mean Arthur Krock because Arthur Krock and fellows like Marquis Childs, and some of those, they

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were in a position that they could almost demand. That's legitimate enough. Many times those stories are really not scoops or exclusives. Of course, a man like Krock would get--most of the times in the Walter Lippman era and before that, those would be background things.

It's valuable for a man like Krock or Lippman to see a President very often, just sit down and talk to him, knowing it would be off the record. It would be useful some of these days, not to write a book, but for background. He wouldn't go off half-cocked in some column. That's why Krock was so quoted--and the *New York Times*, of course, the prestige gets it. Well, during the Eisenhower administration, of course, the *New York Herald Tribune*, and some of those, were very close to Eisenhower. Some of the Republicans--and the *Chicago Tribune* group, although I think Eisenhower--well, they all had favorites. Naturally, they were going to be good to a friend. But they're pretty square.

Kennedy got mad at the *Herald Tribune*, remember, cancelled his subscription but I never noticed it at the press conferences.

Of course, the press conferences have gotten so big now. With Roosevelt it was so small, the room was

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so small that it looked like it was mobbed, but never more than a hundred there. Now you get, two or three hundred, and then these cameras. So, the President can discriminate or differentiate. The press services, naturally, have the first call. But he picks out people he likes, and if he doesn't like you he won't give you much of a chance.

I don't remember Mr. Truman holding any obvious hostility towards any particular person. Sure, if there was somebody he didn't like he'd show it. Truman, I'm sure, had a temper. I'm sure Truman used to blow up, but I never saw any sign of it. He'd get mad, you could see he was mad, he'd just say, "No." And he'd turn to somebody else. Roosevelt would get mad, and he'd say, "Oh, put on a dunce cap and sit in the corner. You know that's a silly question." He'd say something like that, even at a press conference. But I can't say that about Truman. This is my rather limited experience.

HESS: Mr. Ross died on December 5, 1950, and then Steve Early came back for a few days.

WALSH: Who succeeded him then?

HESS: Joseph Short.

WALSH: Joseph Short, yes.

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HESS: Do you know why Joe Short was chosen?

WALSH: No, no I don't. There again, it was some personal friendship. Joe Short's wife--she's still living. She married again, I think.

Well, Joe Short was from Missouri, wasn't he? Or he went to Missouri journalism school.

HESS: Many people do attend that school.

WALSH: They go there.

HESS: He worked for the *Baltimore Sun* at the time.

WALSH: Yes, he did. But I always heard about Mrs. Short. She was a newspaperwomen in her own right, and she was from Missouri, I'm pretty sure. Maybe Joe was, I don't know. Of course I knew Joe better. We had more or less worked together when he was with the Baltimore paper and I used to see him at the White House.

Joe changed, but he had to when he became Press Secretary. He was never a hail-fellow-well-met anyway, but he became quite reserved. Again, he wasn't as smooth as Charlie Ross, as I remember.

I remember getting into quite an argument with Joe Short on something. He refused to answer some questions, which I--this was a personal thing. I went over for some particular story, I can't even

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remember what it was. It wasn't embarrassing to anybody, and he just refused to--he said, "I'm not going to talk about that to you or anybody else." He got quite mad. I wish I could remember what it was.

I said, "This means nothing to me."

He said, "That's our business." He got quite mad. I don't know if that was typical. But I liked Joe. Of course, I had great respect for him. He was a great newspaperman. But I don't think he was--how long did he last?

HESS: He died on September 18, 1952, during the campaign, and then Roger Tubby and Irving Perlmeter, who had been his assistants, took over as Acting Press Secretaries.

WALSH: That's how I happened to meet Tubby. Tubby practically ran--that's an injustice to Joe. Joe ran the office, there's no doubt about it. But these briefings every morning that I still used to go to, as often as I could, Tubby pretty much handled them.

If I called in, of course, I was with the *Star* then. I didn't have to go over as often. If I wanted a routine question--you know, we used to frequently call in the course of the week, you'd always have to go through the Press Secretary, and I could seldom, if ever, get Joe Short. And I would usually talk to Tubby.

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So I got to know him very well. I ran into him later, he was on the campaign with Stevenson. He was with various candidates. But that's all I can remember about Joe Short.

He was quite a bit different from Charlie Ross. Ross was probably a better newspaperman. I'll say that Tubby or Perimeter were no slouches, but Ross had the prestige which they didn't have.

Tubby was a good organizer. Still is. He's a very good writer, a good newspaperman, but he'd be good on a campaign. He did prove it later. He was one of the press men for the Stevenson campaign. He may have even gotten in on the Kefauver campaign. He was going up until Johnson's time. You'd go out on some campaign, and there he was. But when the Johnson bunch came along, those old-timers--I don't know where he is now. I'm sure he's not starving. Those guys get good...

HESS: He's with the State Department, has a very fine office, a very fine job.

WALSH: That's right. I do remember that now. He went over to the State Department. Do you remember

HESS: He's in charge of the Foreign Service Institute.

WALSH: Is that so? Well, he's a good man. I wonder if

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Truman helped him get that. What year, I wonder--you know darn well, naturally, they take care of them, which is fair enough. I don't know where Perlmeter is. I should remember that, because I do know that he went to the...

HESS: To what extent were the other members of the White House staff, other than the press office people, approachable for news information?

WALSH: Well, from what I hear, it was not very much, not for me personally, I never got very far beyond the Press Secretary. The people who were there regularly, like Merriman Smith, and the *New York Times*, they have a man there pretty much like the press services, and our *Star* man, and the *Post* man, Eddie Folliard. They would be there every day, and they got to know people, some of the assistants. I never was that close to it.

I was trying to think of the Truman--I did know Vaughan, and I remember talking to him. Vaughan was quite approachable. But of course, he was busy. I. didn't approach him often but it was usually some background question, the political part of it.

Truman had--well, Matt Connelly. I remember Matt Connelly, of course. Matt Connelly was the Appointments Secretary. My only contact with Matt

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Connelly was once in a while he would come up to the Capitol. I suppose it was sort of a lobbying job, and we'd talk to him and ask him what he was doing, that sort of thing. It was in those ways that I would talk to him. You know, John Sparkman--remember John Sparkman?

HESS: Yes, Adlai Stevenson's first running mate.

WALSH: No, no, that's a different one. Not John Sparkman.

HESS: John Steelman.

WALSH: Steelman, you're right. Sparkman was a Senator. Steelman. There was somebody I used to see more frequently. He was with Truman, wasn't he?

HESS: He certainly was. He had the title of The Assistant to the President.

WALSH: The Assistant. That surprised me--it comes back to me now--I talked to him personally if I had some particular story. I had to go through channels, of course. Even though we were not on a first name basis, I could call him up. I remember talking to him a few times, I can't remember the occasions.

HESS: He seemed to handle labor matters.

WALSH: Labor matters, and I was trying to think if it had anything to do with the steel crisis. I wonder if it did. Because I was supposed to have kept in touch with

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him, although I don't know what caused Truman to do this. I wonder if I might well have talked to Steelman about that? Or he might have had some sort of a briefing. That's what he used to have a whole lot. Johnson did it all the time. He had his aides do the briefing, the guy who was the movie--Jack Valenti and those fellows, they would have briefings, if you're interested, like

the civil rights bill, that's one of the things I remember. Ramsey Clark, I remember, came over to the White House, and just three or four of us, the fellows who were covering it, this was special. It was a background, and he would explain these things. I went to Bobby Kennedy's office when he was Attorney General, two or three times. I knew Bobby fairly well. I went in alone. They were talking about civil rights, or some particular thing. There was never any looking for a big story, it was always some. Steelman was a very nice man, and a very able guy. I don't know how I could forget him, because when I mentioned Vaughan, that was the first name that came to me.

Vaughan was always there, always available--that's better than "approachable,"--and he was very helpful if you wanted to ask if the President was doing this or that.

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HESS: Did you ever have occasion to speak to Mr. Truman's Special Counsel, Clark Clifford or Charles Murphy?

WALSH: Clifford more than Murphy, but not too directly. Clifford was very influential, of course, and still is. My gosh, he's still going. I used to see him. He was up at the Capitol, and I had to transfer my base of operations up to the Capitol because I was at the Capitol every day. I would go to the White House maybe once or twice a week, usually on Saturdays, for one thing. It was our man's day off--just to fill in--the President was always there. But I remember seeing Clifford, but always on some legislative story. If they were pushing some bill--I used to cover the foreign aid bills a whole lot. Of course, that was usually the State Department, but I can't think of anything that Clifford might have been in on.

Truman had a--well, you remember that Universal Military Training bill. I remember talking to--well, I don't think Clifford was in on that, but Truman was pushing that thing like nobody's business. I remember I talked to somebody several times at the White House about that, some assistant. And then they brought over someone from the Pentagon, some assistant secretary. Naturally, they wanted a story on this. I was writing

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a feature background story at one time, so I wanted all this information. It was to their advantage as much as mine, or mine as much as theirs.

But I don't recall getting anything particular from Clifford. I had great respect for him as a lawyer. Of course, he had that reputation anyway. He is smooth, handsome and very articulate, and I think he was a great help to Truman. That's why I got more confidence as time went on in the Truman administration. He got people like Clifford and Steelman, then you could forget the...Matt Connelly, there again, I knew Matt fairly well. He was with Truman at the Capitol, when Truman was Vice President, that short period. That's when I first met Matt, somewhere along the line. I always thought on his indictment that although I'm not the judge and jury, he probably did try to help somebody, but I wonder if he got a fair shake on that thing, whether he alone--like Howard McGrath--whether he was covering up for somebody else, or helping

somebody else. Those scandals in administrations, they go much deeper probably than one or two men. You're either protecting somebody, if not the President, because that's their main job.

HESS: On that point, Matthew Connelly took an overcoat and

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went to prison; Sherman took a coat and nothing happened to him.

WALSH: No, nothing happened to him. No, that's right. Even on the Truman years, the deep-freeze scandal, Mrs. Truman is supposed to have, they sent her something, she didn't keep it, but they're supposed to have sent her something. I can't recall, but her name was mentioned. But even the committee dropped that. But those things...

HESS: At the time that you were on the Hill, how did it seem to you that the Truman administration was trying to influence congressional action. This brings up the matter of House-Congressional liaison, and at that time there was no Larry [Lawrence F.] O'Brien, but when the White House would want to have a certain bill passed, what action would they take?

WALSH: Well, I'll tell you, I think of Vinson, before he became Chief Justice. He became Chief Justice pretty quickly, '46, so there was just about a year there...

HESS: June or July.

WALSH: He was Secretary of the Treasury just about a year. I remember several times he was up at the Capitol, not only to testify before the Ways and Means Committee, but in

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to see Wilbur Mills' predecessor. Wilbur was a big shot even then, he was about the third ranking man. We got the impression that Vinson was one of the lobbyists for the administration. Of course, he had been in Congress. I wrote a story when Vinson became Chief Justice, having been more familiar with it than most of the people at the *Star*, not intimately, but at least I knew of him on the committee. I remember when he later was the Stabilization Director, wasn't he?

HESS: He was chief of the OWMR.

WALSH: Well, I, remember my article that I just re-read the other day, and I'm sure I got it from other people at the time, that Vinson was the most effective, if not the principal liaison man or contact man between Truman and Congress during that particular period, just that one year, because when he became Chief Justice, the Chief Justices aren't supposed to lobby.

I think Vinson had that reputation which was perfectly legitimate and perfectly proper and appropriate, because he had been a member of Congress, a very prominent member of Congress, and he had been on the Ways and Means Committee. And he was a great friend of Rayburn, who

was, of course, a great friend of Truman. That builds up your contact right there, Sam Rayburn and

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Harry Truman. I should have thought of that even before Vinson.

But you were asking about the White House people, and Clark Clifford, as I say, used to come up quite often. I think they worked--let me see, of course, they testified a great deal. Secretary of State Acheson was up there very often testifying. These committees just badgered the life out of them all the time. The Republican as well as Democratic. Acheson went up, and generally on foreign aid and the Korean situation. They operate behind the scenes. They sent people up. Besides Clifford and Vinson, Harry Vaughan, I'm sure.

Vaughan was up at the Capitol very often. You'd see him around. God knows what he was doing, but he was frequently there. Matt Connelly, once in a while I used to see there. But I think that's the way he operated.

I think the main contact was with Harry Truman and with Sam Rayburn. Sam dominated Congress. Even during the 80th Congress, when Sam was the Minority Leader, he had more to say. And I think he helped legislatively. He helped Truman more than any single person. Just the same way that Eisenhower was helped more by Lyndon Johnson more than almost anybody else, in a good way.

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Eisenhower wouldn't have gotten to first base with the Senate if he had somebody else besides Lyndon. Lyndon, of course, was building his own. He was dynamic, he was a wonderful leader.

HESS: Was Leslie Biffle influential in any way on the Senate side?

WALSH: Yes. When you mention these names, yes, he was a very close, personal friend of Truman's. They had a lot in common. They always--I don't say drinking, like poker playing. Truman, I don't think, drank very much. They had a few drinks, but Biffle--they had these parties.

Harry liked to play poker, from what I used to hear, in the Senate days, but not the Harding type. Or at least there was no indication of that. Truman wouldn't go for that sort of thing anyway. Truman was rather straight-laced from what I understand, and as you said, particularly in his respect for women. He was just rabid on the subject, any slight insult to his wife or daughter--well, he showed it often. That letter to Paul Hume. Well, there's a thing I didn't agree with either. I didn't like it. A President should never write a letter like that on anything. How he got the thing in the mailbox I don't know.

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HESS: That took place the day after Charles Ross died.

WALSH: Is that so.

HESS: Margaret sang at Constitution Hall on the same night that Charles Ross died and they kept it a secret from her until after the concert, so Mr. Truman was under pressure--losing one of his best friends and Margaret's concert, then getting up the next morning and reading the review.

WALSH: Oh, I can understand it.

HESS: In 1949, to try to grease the wheels of congressional liaison, two men were put on the White House staff with the title, Legislative Assistants to the President. There had been no one with that title until that time.

WALSH: Who were they?

HESS: Joseph Feeney and Charles Maylon. Either name ring a bell?

WALSH: That's all. I have just heard the names.

HESS: Did you ever see them?

WALSH: I don't know, I wouldn't know them if I saw them. But I do remember that they set up something like that. Whether Truman personally did I don't know. Of course, a lot of these came at these briefings, you know, whoever was the Press Secretary would announce it.

HESS: That was done in an effort to try to improve congressional liaison.

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WALSH: That was in '49.

HESS: That was in '49.

WALSH: Of course, the Democrats came back into power after the 80th Congress. Truman seemed to progressively get weaker with Congress. It wasn't only during the 80th Congress, because he had that bunch against him anyway, and they had Taft. He was a great man, Robert Taft. I think that would have been an interesting thing, if Taft had been nominated instead of Eisenhower. I wonder if he would have been elected?

HESS: What do you think?

WALSH: Well, I kind of think he might have because those were--not Republican years, but those were years of relative prosperity and halfway peaceful. In the Eisenhower administration, things seemed to be rolling along pretty well, but economically it wasn't too well.

But Stevenson, I just don't know. What I'm trying to say is, I don't think the country was fed up with the Republicans right then, maybe later. Eisenhower hadn't done anything particular, like he "Did nothing in particular, but he could do it very well"--to paraphrase Gilbert and Sullivan.

The Eisenhower administration, in spite of the vicuna coat stuff, I don't think did anything to

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particularly antagonize the country. Of course they did to the liberals, but there was no question about it, there were more Democrats. There was, not hangover, but a residue from the New Deal days, that whole generation of young people that had grown up and were middle aged--my generation. There were just more Democrats in the country. I don't know how Stevenson might have done--I wouldn't guess.

Few really knew Taft unless they were intimate with him, but most people respected him, everybody in the Capitol. He was like Truman in some ways. You asked him a question and he'd tell you. He could be very abrupt. It was sort of a shyness. He was a shy man, much like Bobby Kennedy in that sense but a different type and Taft wasn't as dynamic.

Bobby was very shy in many ways. You'd never think so, would you? Unless he put it on, but I think he was. When he was out for some cause--but Taft was much more reserved and he didn't come across.

If Taft were running today I don't think he'd have a chance in the world, because like his son, Robert Taft, who is a very able man, I think, the personality was against him. TV has changed many a conception of candidates. You've got to have charisma, be

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glamorous, to some extent. Now, Bob Taft--that's what I say it would have been an interesting thing. That was the most interesting of all elections.

HESS: '52.

WALSH: '52, Taft and Eisenhower. That was right down to the line, you know. But Truman had Taft to contend with, and Taft was very partisan, he was very fair, but he wouldn't give up his convictions. Truman wouldn't either. He had great odds up at the Capitol, much more so than Eisenhower did, even with the Republicans in the minority, with Robert Taft, Sr.

HESS: Even with Robert Taft, Sr., there was a particular bill that the President and Mr. Taft both tried to get through. The Taft-Ellender-Wagner housing bill. There was quite a history behind that.

WALSH: I don't know very much about that. I was covering the House mostly. I remember just reading about it.

HESS: So there were two issues where the two were on the same side.

WALSH: The Taft-Hartley Act, Truman...

HESS: They were not on the same side then, were they?

WALSH: No, Truman vetoed that. I remember Truman saying about the Taft-Hartley Act--well, it was there was always some--I remember some question at some press

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conference, "Mr. President, this Taft-Hartley thing which has been in effect all these years, why hasn't it been repealed if it's so bad? Why haven't Democratic Congresses..." And that's been an argument ever since, you know. Of course, the law has been sort of sweetened up.

And Truman came back with something like, "Well, they don't know any better." I forget his exact answer. But he really just couldn't answer. That's the sort of thing he just couldn't answer if he really wanted to, or if the Democrats really didn't like this law, or if labor itself didn't like it, or if labor was strong against it, why didn't labor appeal the darn thing. Not just that one time. I can see why he was overridden at that particular time. But ten years later I don't see why they didn't appeal it, if they had wanted to.

HESS: Jumping back a little bit to 1948, what do you recall about the convention in Philadelphia, and to get into that, what do you recall about the possibility that the Democrats might have picked someone other than Mr. Truman to head the ticket that year?

WALSH: Unfortunately, I wasn't at the last session of that when Truman made his speech. You know how he

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sat there in the backroom, waiting.

But the speculation. I don't know, this is based on talking to Joe Fox more than anybody else. I don't remember any serious talk that Truman might be dumped.

Fulbright wanted him to resign, you know. And you remember what Truman said about this, "Overeducated Oxford so and so." But I don't know if there was any real move at all. One of the objections that we just talked over among ourselves, was who would you get in place of Truman.

HESS: There was a movement afoot by the ADA to try to get General Eisenhower to run.

WALSH: Yes, and Truman himself. I don't know if that is an apocryphal story, that Truman himself thought at one time that Eisenhower should be his successor.

Of course, he talked to Ike at the time, and maybe Roosevelt years before. Roosevelt didn't enter into it. I don't think anybody took it too seriously, but by the time of the convention, I don't think there was much question about Truman being re-nominated. There was a lot of opposition, yes. There was that defeatist, "Oh, gee, what's the use?" And the answer was, "Well, suppose you do get somebody else, who could you get?" I don't

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remember Eisenhower being mentioned in that connection.

Of course, if they could have gotten Eisenhower, they might well have done it. But I can't think of anybody else, certainly not Wallace or Byrnes of that generation, that crowd, had pretty well faded out by '48.

HESS: Did you think Mr. Truman was going to win in 1948?

WALSH: No. I told you about Howard McGrath. I didn't argue with him, I just thought it was in his line of business. I didn't think Truman would win.

HESS: Where were you on election night?

WALSH: I was in the *Star* office, and my assignment was the congressional elections, an awful headache. But I watched the returns coming in. Joe Fox was out with Truman. He was out of town. Where was Truman?

HESS: He was in the Kansas City area.

WALSH: Kansas City. Joe probably told you. This is the funniest story. Joe probably wouldn't remember it himself, but the publisher of the *Star* was, I think--Frank Noyes had died by then, and Fleming Newbold, one of the Noyes family, was president of the company then. Fleming Newbold was pretty much convinced, and most of the rest of us were convinced that Truman didn't have much of a chance, very little chance. My opinion

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was just one of many. But Fleming Newbold and Joe made a little bet, just a token thing, and Joe said, "I'll bet a dollar on Truman," or maybe five dollars. So the night of the election, or the next morning, because as I remember that thing dragged on--we went in at seven or eight o'clock, and we worked all night, and were still going--at least on the congressional returns the next afternoon, but as I remember the presidential election wasn't settled until the morning.

HESS: Dewey didn't concede until quite late.

WALSH: That was it. A telegram came in from Joe Fox in Kansas City (now that you mention it), to Mr. Newbold, Fleming Newbold, and it said one word, "Sorry." Fleming Newbold was mad, but not mad at the telegram. Fleming Newbold, in all justice to him, was just crushed by the

result, but--and (I can still see it), he brought the telegram out and pasted it up on the bulletin board, tacked it up on the bulletin board to let us all see it. "Mr. Fleming Newbold, Publisher, *Washington Star*, Sorry. Joe Fox."

Joe, I think he had reason to believe and was the only one of my immediate associates and among forty or fifty in the *Star* newsroom who thought that Truman had a chance. I had no particular--I certainly was not

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an expert on it--but I guess I had just been indoctrinated by all this and all we were hearing. My feeling is that Truman's followers did blame it on newspapers particularly, but that wasn't the main factor. There was not a majority of newspapers against Roosevelt. That didn't make any difference. The press hasn't got that much influence--they have in some certain cases but there were so many other factors.

And then Dewey might well have been elected. It was a mismanaged campaign or it was too well managed, that was the trouble from what I hear. I didn't travel in that campaign. But they tell me that Dewey was better than Nixon in campaigning. That was one of Nixon's troubles in that 1960 campaign. I did travel on that. And the Kennedy campaign--my gosh, we didn't know from one minute to the next where Kennedy was going to end up. But it worked. And in Lyndon Johnson's campaign it was the most--not haphazard, of course, but was not too well organized.

Nixon learned a lot from that 1960 campaign. They had the same split-second polish and all that in 1968, but they had much more contact. In 1960, I wasn't with them very long. He remembers me from Congress. His favorite remark is every time I see him, often is: "Is the *Star* still coming out?" He learned

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a great deal about dealing with the press. He's much more approachable.

Truman never changed basically but I could see some in his relations with the press. He was very humble at the beginning, and he was scared. I'm sure he was scared, not scared in the physical sense, and knowing the burden. Roosevelt never took him into his confidence. I believe that implicitly, not just from what I've been told. I know darned well. I saw Roosevelt and Truman in the White House the day after the '44 election, or shortly thereafter--Roosevelt had been in New York. He wasn't there election night of '44. Hyde Park, I think he must have been at Hyde Park. But he came back here a day or two after. They had a great big reception, and it was right at noon. There was a parade on Pennsylvania Avenue and all this. And it was a terrible day, rainy, worse than the 1945 inauguration day. There were hundreds of thousands of people lining the avenue. Truman and Roosevelt, rather Roosevelt and Truman, came down in an open car with the whole motorcade. They were in the front, and they both had raincoats, and Roosevelt had his slouch hat on. Truman had a--it must have been a good hat, but it was ruined. They were sitting there waving

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at people. I wasn't down on the Avenue, I was up at the White House. My job was just to stand out in front of the north portico. We were standing there, the cars came around and Truman--I could hear him saying to Roosevelt, "This is amazing. This is amazing." He said it over and over. The reception that they got. And of course, it was for Roosevelt, not for Truman. They were mostly Government employees, but a lot of other people turned out. That was after being elected.

After Truman was nominated, he went to the White House one day, and I happened to be there. He came over for lunch. Newsmen didn't go to the luncheon, Roosevelt and Truman lunched alone. You've probably seen that picture, it's been reproduced several times, of he and Roosevelt sitting out--it must have been a beautiful day--in the back in their shirtsleeves. To my knowledge, that was the only time--I may well be wrong on this--that Truman was there, after he was nominated--from August until November. It's incredible. He must have talked to Roosevelt once in a while, but I'm sure Roosevelt didn't tell him anything about the--Truman didn't know anything about the Manhattan Project. He didn't know anything about Potsdam--well, of course that was pretty well in the

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future. That's the first thing that Truman had to get into, as President, that Potsdam Conference. He didn't know anything about "good ole' Joe" Stalin. So everybody felt sorry for him. I really did. I really felt compassion for the man. And you wondered if he'd be able to do it. But then my confidence, I guess, increased with his. He looked like he took control but not right away, even after he came back from Potsdam, he was a little unsteady, even at the time of the--German and Japanese surrenders. All he did was go through the motions of announcing, he didn't make any wild statements there of what we were going to do. When he came back from Potsdam, I believe at the time of the atomic bomb business, he wasn't exactly unsure of himself, but he never volunteered anything. Well, Roosevelt never volunteered anything, but he gave the impression of volunteering.

Did Eben tell you a story, not with Truman personally, how one day I went to the White House in '45. I was still with the *Providence Journal* then, went over there for a briefing. There were, I think, Merriman Smith and maybe Doug Cornell, and a few--maybe ten at the most were there. The war was still going on. Truman wasn't at the White House: Eben gave

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out an announcement and said, the President announced today that a bomb with the so many equivalent tons of TNT, a hundred thousand or whatever it was, had been dropped on Hiroshima. "And it's the first atomic bomb in history and it's been developed as the result of this Manhattan Project," which hadn't been disclosed. It was just two or three paragraphs. We took it and we started looking at it. Eben didn't say anything except that this might be of interest to you--I don't know that we immediately realized the real significance of this. "Say this is something isn't it?" That was the announcement of the dropping of the atomic bomb. I was trying to think where Truman was. I know he wasn't there.

HESS: They were still on their way back from Potsdam.

WALSH: He must have been away.

HESS: The bombs were dropped when they were on route crossing the Atlantic

WALSH: Eben was alone in the White House. That's another thing. Whoever was the Press Secretary--Joe Short--no, not Joe Short then.

HESS: Well, it was Charlie Ross at that time.

WALSH: Sure, Charlie Ross. Eben was alone, and few reporters were over there. I just went over because

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our office was just a couple of blocks away, and I still have my copy of that announcement. It's just a mimeographed sheet.

HESS: On that subject, what is your opinion, do you think that that bomb should have been dropped?

WALSH: Well, I can't be quite objective on that. At the time I did, because my brother (I've showed you his picture), had been killed at the Battle of the Bulge.

HESS: He hadn't been killed?

WALSH: No, wait, he had been killed. He was killed before January 5th, '45.

HESS: And this was in August of '45.

WALSH: Yes.

HESS: This was after the war was over in Europe.

WALSH: Yes, that's right. He had been killed. I remember distinctly now, because I remember how gloomy it was for me particularly that V-E Day in May.

HESS: He had been dead about six months at the end of the war.

WALSH: Yes. Just toward the end. He was trapped in Bastogne. He was with the 10th Armored Division, but they went up to try to relieve Bastogne and they were caught in there. Agnew was in the 10th Armored Division. Of course they didn't know each other. Agnew was an officer.

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On the campaign trip I found that out, and I knew he was in the 10th Armored. He had some recollections about the same places, but he was in a different unit. I think it wasn't the whole division that went up there. But my brother was killed. So, that was one of the reasons.

I thought, if this bomb had not been dropped, that would have meant an invasion of Japan, and there would have been a hundred thousand or more casualties, many, many more. But the thing I questioned even then, and I question now, was it necessary to drop two bombs, and was it necessary to drop them just where they did. I think they could have had just as much effect--if you had dropped them at all. Now, of course, we're against it. You don't want to drop it anywhere. And looking back I don't know that it was so good. Why drop it on Nagasaki, why drop it on Hiroshima, big cities like that, when they're bound to kill just hundreds of thousands of people and maim people like that. So, in that sense I think it was wrong. I don't go into the morality of it, but at that time, I remember saying, "Well, this will shorten the war." And I may have been influenced by my brother's death, you see. I think that was the trouble.

I didn't hear many refute it--Robert Taft, who was

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outspoken, I think he questioned it, didn't he? He questioned the Nuremberg Trial. I have a lot of misgivings about the Nuremberg Trials, not because of my so-called background covering from the Supreme Court, but I thought, "You know, this is an awful precedent." Hitler and those guys, nothing can serve them better--and Goering., This is really a dangerous thing for the government that wins the war, or any combination of governments winning the war. Are they going to try--if we had lost, would Roosevelt have been tried, or some future President, or Churchill? And they would have been, they could have been.

And then the other thing about the Nuremberg Trial was that among the prosecutors was Joe Stalin's bunch. Judging people for crimes that they themselves did. You talk about genocide and everything else. But that's something else. I think Truman--he had asked about the bomb. I think he had said that it would shorten the war. But I never liked it, even at the time I remember, I didn't like the idea of dropping them on a city like that. Why not drop it out--the Japanese would have gotten the idea. Drop it on some little island over there. Of course, they didn't know whether it was going to work. It's awfully hard to defend, you

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know, twenty-five years later.

HESS: On the subject of trips with the President, did you ever take any trips with the President?

WALSH: Truman?

HESS: Yes.

WALSH: Let's see. No campaign trips. As I say, I didn't go on the '48 campaign trips. I took several trips with him, short trips. Where did he go? I think I went to New York with him on something or other, but no campaign trips. I don't remember any. The only kind of campaign connection I can remember with Truman--this was in 1956--he had been long out, or several years out of office. I was assigned first to the Kefauver campaign trips. I would usually wait until Congress adjourned, then I was assigned to pick up Kefauver and go with his campaign for a while, and then pick up Stevenson. What I said about either liking a man too much or not liking him too much, the papers very wisely don't keep the same reporter on the same campaign trip, because you either get sick of the fellow or you get to like him too much. So, I was with Kefauver for about two weeks or so. I was supposed to meet him in Waterloo, Iowa. So I got a plane here to go to St. Louis, then had to transfer there to Ozark Airlines.

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I got on the plane here and sat down, no reserved seats in those days. Not across the aisle but one row up was Harry Truman. What's the man who wrote Truman's history--Hillman?

HESS: William Hillman.

WALSH: William Hillman, he was with him. Well, I knew him to see, but I didn't know him personally. They were just sitting there and talking. Harry had been here for some reason and was going back to Kansas City and Independence. As the plane went on, in those days you didn't get out to St. Louis as fast as you do now. So, I screwed up my courage and the funny thing--a passenger sitting next to me--this is not to digress--at one time he had been a stenotype operator at the Capitol, and remembered Truman. He took some of the hearings when Truman was on the Truman Committee. He said Truman was a very good commanding officer. He said, "Well, I'm not just giving my own opinion." He said, "Why don't you go and talk to him?" He said, "Do you know him?"

I said, "Well, I think he'd remember me, just to see me. After all, he's still 'Mr. President,' you know."

But this man kept goading me, and there seemed to

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be no particular story. You knew Truman was for Stevenson, reluctantly. But toward the end of the flight I went up ostensibly to get a drink of water, and I stopped and I said, "How do you do, Mr. President."

So he stood halfway up. He's a real gentleman. Sitting down on a plane, who's going to stand? So, I said, "I'm just passing by." He asked me what I was doing. I said I was going out to join Kefauver. I asked, "What do you think of Senator Kefauver's campaign?" You know, he and Kefauver didn't get along too well at one time. There must have been something personal, I don't know. I liked Kefauver in many ways, but he was a strange man. He must have had a disagreement in the Senate at one time, but even with Truman as President--Truman said, "Well,

you know, I think he's probably a pretty good choice for Vice President. I think he'll do Stevenson some good. You're going up there tomorrow?"

He said, "That area, the Middle West and the South, Tennessee, in through there, that's where Kefauver ought to concentrate his campaign." So we talked and he said, "I think Kefauver will help Stevenson, it's not the other way around. This wasn't just a blind choice." He didn't use that expression, but he made it clear. I

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should have asked him about John Kennedy at the time, but it didn't occur to me. That was the close convention when Kefauver defeated Kennedy for the 1956 vice presidential nomination. It would have been interesting to see what Truman thought of John Kennedy even then. He had never said much about Kennedy you know, before that, but whether he--maybe he meant to imply by this that he thought Kefauver would do better, or was a better vice-presidential candidate than John Kennedy, and I think probably he was in '56.

Well, anyway, then I went back and sat down. My fellow passenger remarked: "I see you got your nerve up. Did you get your story?"

I said, "Yes, I think I--now that you mention it--I think I did. I think I'll write a little story just about what Truman said, because I don't remember him saying anything about the campaign. He, more or less, not reluctantly, but half-heartedly endorsed Stevenson." But he didn't go out of his way to campaign as I remember, for Stevenson.

When I got off the plane, I started having second thoughts. I said, "Well, doggone, I wonder if he knew he was talking on the record." And that's the thing most politicians know, that when they're talking

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to a reporter, if they're talking to them at all, they make that mistake in the first place. Most know it's understood that it's on the record unless they say it isn't. Even Presidents say that now. In fact, they always did: "This is off the record." And you better keep it off the record too, Senators and everybody else. That's the way you build trust and confidence, and if you ever break a confidence you're done, on a major thing.

So, when we got out of the plane--Truman, of course, got out with Hillman, and were walking across to the terminal in St. Louis. I hurried after them. I said, "Pardon me, Mr. President." He didn't seem to be annoyed.

He said, "Yes?"

I said, "I just wanted to be sure that what you said was on the record and you don't mind being published. I didn't want to break any confidence."

He said, "Oh, no, I wouldn't have told you if I didn't believe it." Very firmly. He said, "Well, good luck," and walked off.

You know, that's an unusual thing. Newspapermen, as a rule and I don't do it myself, it's not a good idea, if you once get a quote, don't go back and ask again. But in this case I didn't want to do him an

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injustice; I didn't want to get him in trouble. After all, it turned out to be a pretty good little story. He not only endorsed Kefauver, which he might have done anyway, being a Democrat, but he went on--I had four or five paragraphs there, that "Kefauver will do some good in Iowa and Missouri." As a matter of fact, Kefauver was in Kansas City later.

But that's the kind of man Truman is. He was straightforward, in my opinion. Now there are others, I'm sure, who have run-ins with him, and I don't know that he--I never had much occasion, as I say, no personal interviews or exclusive interviews while he was President, but he never did give me a bum steer or anything like that.

HESS: When you were along on the trip to New York, what was the occasion?

WALSH: I can't think--I'm not sure it was New York. It was a train trip.

HESS: Did he go up to give a speech?

WALSH: It wasn't the presidential train, either. Several of us went. He was in one car, we weren't in the same car with him, and I don't remember what it was. I don't remember when it was, either. It must have been toward the end of the term, maybe '52--well, it couldn't

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have been '53. I just don't remember, and I don't remember even talking to him. That's the only time--there was one other. There were a lot of automobile trips around, you know, like that famous thing to Fort McNair, little things like that, but I don't recall any. Did he go to the '52 convention? Do you have any recollection of that? I don't recall. I think he spoke out there. Do you recall if he did, or at the '56 convention. I was at both of those. At the '48, I don't remember him. As I say, I wasn't there that night of his speech. I was at the '44 convention, the Republican and the Democratic both, but I don't remember Truman very well then. Truman must have made an acceptance speech in 1944.

No, to tell you the truth, I can't remember any other trip, and I can't remember--it might have been Philadelphia. It seems like we got on the train and went that way, but it couldn't have been very--I covered him quite often here. He'd go to these Jackson Day dinners here and the Jefferson Day dinners. There was one particular dinner I remember. I'm not sure--I wasn't able to find anything on it, but the Board of Trade or one of those, it was a purely local story, the *Star* sent me down to cover it at night.

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The president of a bank here, I think it was the old Union Trust Company, the bank on 14th Street near G Street, was an honored guest. After a reception, this man was being lauded at the dinner as one of the greatest bankers in the world and all that and who should come in but Harry Truman with two or three of his colleagues. I think it was purely personal, I don't think there were any Cabinet officers. So, they came in, and Harry, of course, sat at the head table, but ducked the dinner. As I remember he didn't stay for the whole dinner, but he made a little talk. He said he just wanted to drop in to pay a personal tribute and express an expression of gratitude for "My friend"...I can't remember this banker's name. Truman said, "I will never forget how good Mr. So and So was to me when he handled some paper for me when I needed it." In other words, he apparently had gotten a loan years before when he first came to Washington. He said, "That's one of the reasons why I always bank at that bank, since I came to Washington. That's not a plug for the bank [a big laugh] but I always did my business there." He said, "This man did me a favor financially." Gave him a loan when he needed it. Nobody went beyond that.

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I can remember shortly after he became President, it was within a week or so, he went over to that bank to cash a check or something. It wasn't to cash a check, it was more important, he apparently had an account there, and he either wanted it changed or maybe--I don't know where the President keeps his money--but he went over to the bank. Just drove over in a White House car. I wasn't there but I remember hearing about it. It was one of his first appearances outside since he had been President. The place, you know, 14th Street, and all those people were just jammed, traffic jammed, and he came out and he said, "You know, I had no idea that a President going to the bank..."

And then when he moved--another example of that--remember when he moved over to Blair House in 1950 for the reconstruction of the White House. They really rebuilt the whole thing, the piano was sinking through, and Truman went over and the Truman's lived in the Blair House for almost a year. For the first two or three days--of course, his office was still in the Oval Office--so for the first two or three nights he worked long and he'd be there at the crack of dawn, you know. He was always in, they tell me in the office he was always at his desk around 8 o'clock or some ungodly

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hour like that, and the poor--you know, Merriman Smith and those guys had to be down there. Then unless there was some emergency, he'd usually leave maybe at 5:30 or 6 or 7 or 7:30, and in daylight savings time, many times he'd leave around 7. Then he started walking with the Secret Service men across to the Blair House, right across the street. And the tourists got onto that, and he'd block traffic. It wasn't so much the tourists, but they'd shut off the street. And these horns were honking. "Who's that so and so that's blocking traffic?" And it was Harry walking across the street.

Well, he finally said, "Gee, I didn't know I was creating all that traffic hazard." This I got secondhand, but that was pretty much the expression. He did mention this at one of his press conferences, somebody said, "Is it true that you're going to ride over in a car instead of walking over?"

He said, "Yes." I think I did remember him saying that. He said, "I don't want to be a traffic hazard any longer." He said, "You know, it is kind of silly just to ride a block to go home."

And I was there after the assassination attempt. I was at the Capitol the day a Puerto Rican bunch shot

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up at the House. I got in there just after some of the Congressmen were lying on the floor. It was the same group, the same nationalist party that tried to assassinate Truman. I wasn't there.

My wife was in a taxi, going down to 17th Street to the Red Cross, about the middle of the afternoon, and she saw a bullet, no, she saw a bullet hole in the drugstore window down there. The shot had just been fired. She wasn't in danger. They had been shooting a minute or two before. She saw the police but she thought there was just a little traffic problem so she went on.

HESS: November 1, 1950.

WALSH: That was my birthday, so I'll always remember 1950. I remember going up there to the White House, the press people were still in the press room there. But I didn't see Truman that day.

HESS: Did you ever hear him comment on that?

WALSH: No, I don't think I did. He probably was asked about it, I'm sure. I don't recall that he said anything. He is supposed to have taken pretty much of a fatalistic view that Lincoln and all the rest of them did, that if a guy wants to kill a President, there's no absolute protection. He's supposed to have been taking a nap.

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This is what I got from reporters. He was about to take a nap on the second floor there when he heard the commotion and stuck his head--not his head, but looked out the window. The Secret Service said, "Get back there." After that, they got--not bulletproof, but much stronger screens and windows. But there was Harry. He wasn't going to miss the excitement.

HESS: He wanted to know what was going on.

All right, sir, what else comes to mind about Mr. Truman?

WALSH: Well, I did recall that just a day or two before, or certainly the week of the inauguration in January 1945, he was to be sworn in as Vice President, I met him in the subway. I was down in the Senate subway, going over to the Capitol, and Mr. Truman came along, then Senator and Vice President-elect Truman came along. As you know, the Senators have priority on the front two seats, or any seat. If the place is crowded and a bunch of Senators come along, people have to get out and let the Senators ride, but as I remember there were very few people there at the time. I can't remember whether I was alone or perhaps maybe one other newspaperman was with me, Truman said, "Get on."

We said, "Oh, you go first, Mr. Vice President."

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He said, "No, get on."

So we got on, he put us on first, then he sat down with us. And we mistakenly asked him (this is on the basis of a story which I wrote at the time), we asked him, well, what do you intend to do as Vice President, you know, that conspicuous office. I was kidding, I hope.

And he said, "I don't expect to set the world on fire, or to burn up the Senate, especially not burn it up by election as some Vice Presidents have done in the past." But he said, "I will try to strengthen a closer procedural relationship between the White House and Congress." Better liaison in other words, between the White House and Congress. He said, "I see an especially pressing need for a closer relationship between the White House and Congress, particularly because of the war and the postwar problems." That's the extent of my recollections there. That was in a story I wrote at the time.

Now, he may well have said that to many other people, he may have issued a statement at the time, he probably did when he was inaugurated. I just don't remember. That's what he told us. I'd like to take sole credit for that but I think there was at least one other

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newspaperman. We just happened to be there. I do remember him telling us to get on first. Ceremony didn't mean anything to him, but some other Senator, Senator Green, if he saw a newspaperman on the Senator's elevator, oh, you had to get off. Well, maybe that's a good idea. You wouldn't want to clutter it up.

There was a funny story I remember about Truman at one of the Gridiron dinners. This was in '45, April of '45. You know, they had these dinners. It must have been the spring of '45, April. It was supposed to have been in April and because of Roosevelt's death, I think they--no, it wasn't '45, it was '46. I'm sorry. He had been President longer than that. It must have been '46. It was a Gridiron dinner. I remember distinctly now because it was just about a week before I left the *Providence Journal* to go over to the *Washington Star*. I left on a Saturday and started in on Monday. No vacation. So I went to this Gridiron dinner.

The elderly Ashmun Brown had been emeritus Washington correspondent on the *Journal* for about fifteen years, and he was one of the founders of the Gridiron Club and all that. He invited me as his guest. I don't belong. That was the first Gridiron dinner I had been to. Truman was there, and the Cabinet, everybody was there. He

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spoke for the Democrats, as I remember, and Harold Stassen, as I remember, spoke for the Republicans. They had these two speeches. Truman made a very good speech and outclassed Stassen not so much as an orator, but it was very funny. Who wrote the speech, I don't know. But I remember him turning to Stassen and he said, "Now, young fellow, let me tell you something"--you know, Stassen was a perennial candidate. "Now, young fellow, let me tell you something about practical politics." It was all supposed to have been off-the-record. After the dinner Truman was in that mezzanine section of the Senate, the men's room was there. I was in there with others all dressed up--that was full dress, white tie and tails--well, I was just coming out of the little anteroom and opened the door, and there was Truman coming in with the Secret Service men. Well, not that I expected these Secret Service men to brush me aside, but he gave a big laugh when I said, "Pardon me, Mr. President, come on in."

So he just laughed, he didn't say anything, but it was kind of embarrassing what with the block of traffic: He reportedly told the Gridiron committee that arranged the party and also the committee for the White House correspondent's dinner, which was also held there in those years: "Why don't you fellows give

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a little more consideration to Presidents, and put a restroom in the little anteroom right off the rostrum." Well, that was a good idea, and they did. So, Harry revolutionized the Gridiron Club. But I always remember meeting him in that place. But that didn't faze him.

HESS: In 1952, after he had taken himself out of the race, who did you see at that time as the best standard-bearer for the Democratic Party?

WALSH: Well, I personally was in favor of Stevenson. I had heard about him.

HESS: What did you know about Stevenson?

WALSH: Not a great deal. No, I had never met him, and I don't think that was my Illinois background--you know, the one year that I spent at Springfield. I generally followed mid-western politics, Missouri politics, although not closely, and Illinois too when Governor Green was there. He was a Republican. I knew him pretty well. I didn't know Stevenson at all. But when he became Governor I used to hear about him, and the speeches. He was very literate then. And there was a prejudice, not from my standpoint, I was perhaps biased in his favor.

There again, of the candidates, I knew, I couldn't see Kefauver for President, as much as I liked him. We

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had a lot of fun on these campaign trips, but I couldn't see him for President. He was a principal contender, as I remember, at the 1952 Democratic convention.

Who else did they have? Well, Bob Kerr, Senator from Oklahoma. He was immensely wealthy, one of the richest men in the country, had half the oil in Oklahoma, but his great slogan at the convention, I remember he had this up in the mezzanine of the Conrad Hilton Hotel, a big log cabin, "I was born in a log cabin." Well, maybe he was. I was born in Oklahoma, but not in a log cabin.

Well, Kerr would never have made the Presidency. I guess that's one reason I was for Stevenson. I voted for Stevenson, not against Eisenhower. When Eisenhower came in, nobody quite knew what he'd be like either. It was a much different reaction than when Truman came in.

I had a very fortunate thing--this is not to change the subject from '52--all I remember about that is that Stevenson was my choice and I thought he was the best available. For a while I thought he might be elected, but then when I saw Ike, the father image, there was no beating him. And Stevenson knew it too. Stevenson, with a little different luck, might have

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made it in '56. People were getting fed up, not with Ike, but with the administration, sort of muddling along. And then Ike had had one heart attack. I think with a little bit of luck, if the Democrats had had somebody besides Stevenson in '56, but who? I don't know. It was too early for Kennedy. But that's something else. The Republican convention, pretty well dominated the scene in '52 and '56 both, well, except for the Democratic convention in '56--Kefauver vs Kennedy for Vice President.

HESS: Did you travel on any of the campaign trains in '52?

WALSH: '52. I was with Eisenhower. Well, my main Eisenhower trip was after the election and before inauguration in 1953. That's an interesting thing, after the election. Let me see, in '52, yes I did. Well, I went with Stevenson somewhere. I think it was in part of the East, it was mostly trains then. I don't recall--I'm sure he flew some places, but the flying really didn't start in a big way until '56.

HESS: How did Stevenson seem to be accepted by the public?

WALSH: Well, as I say, he was in the East here. As I remember it was right around here. I didn't go very far, maybe as far as New York. It was one of those things where the candidates got together towards the end of the

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campaign, always in Madison Square Garden, although it wasn't there. In '52 I also was in Springfield, Illinois, of all places. Of course, he got a whale of a reception in Springfield, Illinois, and I remember we had been to Chicago and we came down to Springfield.

I hadn't been in Springfield in about--I had worked there--it had been almost thirty years since I had even been in Springfield. It's changed, but not a great deal. It's a nice city. And the Lincoln atmosphere is still there. Stevenson had one of his brilliant speeches. He was sort of a different--you heard him, of course, and it took people a while to catch on, but apparently in Illinois they were used to it. They were accustomed to him, and it was wonderful. He got a big turnout in Springfield. Springfield, even then, was pretty much Republican. Southern Illinois way down, is Democratic and Chicago, of course, is pretty much Democratic, but the rest of the state, quite a bit is Republican. But he got good reception all the way.

But I was trying to think of the reception around here. From what I hear--I'll have to quote other people--maybe Joe Fox has told you this too. Stevenson was a fellow that had to grow on you as a speaker. He was a very

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nice man, a very kindly man. I just can't remember the reaction. He didn't get the big crowds, the enthusiastic crowds like John Kennedy in 1960. He and Kennedy were completely different types of men. Kennedy was very witty, but Kennedy was also very aloof. Kennedy was very reserved, John Kennedy, as long as I knew him. You just couldn't take liberties.

You know, Bobby was much more outspoken in spite of his shyness, as he got to know you or got to half-way trust you. John Kennedy had a lot on the ball. That's a great tragedy. He was just getting started. I don't know what kind of a President--I think he would have made a great President if he had lived, but he got off to a bad start, in 1961.

Stevenson--it's a bad comparison--I've had some second thoughts about Stevenson in later years. At the time I thought he probably would have been a pretty good President, if he had been elected in '52. Maybe we needed somebody like that, more so than Eisenhower. I don't know. In John Kennedy's case, in 1960, even when Johnson was in, or right now, I might vote for him, it would depend on who else they had, but I don't know that Stevenson would have been the best man. He was a brilliant man but, this has been said before, he was a sort of a Hamlet type. He wanted to weigh

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everything, and this was leading right up to Harry Truman.

Harry Truman was decisive. As I told you, I'm not a violent type, but the most heated argument I got into in my life, I think, was with a friend of ours from Italy. He was with the Italian delegation here, speaks English very well, educated in England, and he's back in Rome now. He was a pacifist and I certainly respected his opinion, but the Sunday in June of '50, was it, the Korean move...

HESS: It was over a weekend.

WALSH: It was over a weekend, yes, Saturday and Sunday, we were right down the street here, and so our friend was blasting Truman for starting a third world war. He said, "He's going in without any backing at all, without even consulting Congress," well, of course he did. He got the United Nations as sort of an afterthought. Congress sort of backed him up later. But Harry went right in there. Now that's one time that I agreed with his precipitous action. I think he was absolutely right, and I admired him for making the decision.

I've often thought if Stevenson had been President what he would have done. He might not have done anything and Korea would have been overrun. The next thing

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you know they would be down in Vietnam. Well, Vietnam is something else. You can't make a comparison, but it might have changed the whole course of history for better or worse, I don't know.

But I think Harry Truman, that's why he will go down in my opinion, at least, as one of our--not greatest Presidents by all means--but as one of our very good, excellent Presidents. There have only been four or five who are really great. But Harry Truman will be up among the top level--in my opinion, at least, and for that quality of decisiveness.

He did shoot from the hip sometimes. But when it came to a thing like the Truman Doctrine, although he doesn't deserve all the credit, or for the Marshall plan, that sort of thing, he stood behind them. I don't think he was the great innovator, of course, I'm pretty sure he wasn't, but he was a decisive man. He decided things when they had to be decided, and not sit around and say, "Well, on the one hand," you know try to--you've got to negotiate, of course. He wasn't against that.

You can't hold the Potsdam outcome against him. He didn't know what it was all about. Secretary of State Byrnes, wasn't it, who went over with him. They

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were all new. And others, too. Atlee who had succeeded Churchill. They were comparatively new, and Stalin, of course, was running the works. I don't know that anybody--what would Roosevelt have done I wonder if he had lived. I never subscribed that Roosevelt sold out, he certainly didn't. But Roosevelt was a sick man in his last year. Roosevelt never should have gone to some of those conferences or made concessions he did. Well, that's hindsight. But that's the way the Russians play ball and they got away with it, and the peace thing.

I have always thought that Patton should have--well, the 10th Armored Division was actually in Germany at the time of Bastogne. And then Eisenhower, of course, for political reasons, we couldn't take over. But it leads up to what I say about Truman. He was decisive and a President

has to be, not just to shoot off, you have to know what you're doing, you have to weigh alternatives. But you do have to be...

In some things I'm wary about Nixon. But he has grown, he's giving indications of it. He has been decisive for better or worse I don't know. I don't mean to say that he ought to go into Cambodia or Laos or drop a bomb in Cuba, that sort of thing. John

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Kennedy came up decisively when the showdown came. I wonder what Stevenson would have done on the missile crisis. I'm sure he was right. We had to call their bluff there. Nixon on this latest report--maybe he is starting--the report about Russia building a submarine base down in Cuba. Well, maybe they are and maybe they aren't. Maybe we should have kept absolutely quiet about that until we were absolutely sure. But that's something else.

Truman--you have to judge a man in the context in which he lives, the period in which he lives. You can't say, "What would George Washington have done in the present day." Well, George Washington might have been a pretty good President. At times, Thomas Jefferson would have been a great President today. Lincoln would have been a great President, I think, at almost any time. He was just that type of man.

Now, Harry Truman, what little I know about him, I think would have been a pretty good President at almost any time in our history. I wonder about the Civil War--but, there again, you can't judge what people would be like. But his character. Truman has a strong character, from all you see. All you can do is judge him from the outside. I don't know what he's like

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alone. You cannot bluff your way through life--certainly you can't bluff your way through as President, it catches up with you.

HESS: Not too long after the Korean war started Mr. Truman went to Wake Island to meet with General MacArthur, What do you recall about that?

WALSH: Well, I don't recall so much about that. The only thing I remember is when MacArthur came back.

HESS: The dismissal.

WALSH: Yes, I agreed with Truman on that. I think many of the others did too, not all, not all.

There were partisan slants there. MacArthur wrote a letter to Joe Martin. That's where I first heard about it. Joe Martin announced it at the Capitol. It was made public at the Capitol, and that's what burned up Truman, too, of course, writing a letter. MacArthur was a great man in many ways, but he was getting out of hand and you have to have civilian control. MacArthur could have cleaned out North Korea. I'm sure, but it might well have started another war. That's

not being inconsistent with what I said before about the Korean war. I think if we had the invaded China the war would have been really big--I think Truman was probably right--many, many of the fellows that we talked to at the time seemed to.

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There again, Truman acted.

HESS: How would you evaluate the Presidents of recent years, from Roosevelt to the present day, just in terms of their administrative ability, political ability, as Presidents and as men, starting with Roosevelt?

WALSH: Roosevelt. Well, I'm just beginning to learn something about Roosevelt. After it's all over, we get a better perspective than we did at the time. He was a great man in many ways, but he had one of the faults which was the downfall of Lyndon Johnson, vanity, egotistical vanity.

He wasn't particularly snobbish in that sense, he was to the manor born and all that; he could be charming, but he could also be very vindictive from what I hear. I think he had this supreme overconfidence that he felt he could settle the problems of everything. He sometimes acted as if he were an expert on everything. Well, he wasn't. He is not responsible for the bombing of Pearl Harbor, I never could go for that theory. But I think a lot of those things could have been handled a great deal better. We would have been in that war no matter what happened. Just like in Vietnam, bad as it is, we're not calling the shots, you know. We always have to make a move or react and then see what the other side does, and that sort of thing.

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Now, Roosevelt in many ways was a great man except for those things. Domestically, I think, he wasn't at all as great as many of his admirers at the time felt, including myself, thought he was. I think they made a lot of the New Deal record and Roosevelt was all in favor of it. I can remember some of the "Social Security is socialism" and similar attacks in the 1930s--but it wasn't.

My father was a Jeffersonian Democrat type from Missouri, very much like Truman. He had a great admiration for Truman. They were about the same age. He always said that Roosevelt reminded him of an old-timer who said that in order to be a leader and lead the people down the road you have to run like the devil and put your ear to the ground, then run as fast as you can to keep ahead of the people. Hear what the people want first, and then run ahead of them, get ahead of them. In other words, don't stir them up too much. And Roosevelt, I think, was like that.

Roosevelt I well remember in '33, on that little radio, little two-bit radio set, his inaugural address. I was in Rhode Island at that time. The banks were closed. I was covering the statehouse. People were losing their fortunes, they were losing their homes and

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much else. I can remember the tone of his voice, "The only thing to fear is fear itself."

That's what made Roosevelt from the beginning. He was a remarkable orator. He was not only a good speaker, his voice and all that, but he knew how to handle people, crowds, and the ridicule! He said, "I don't mind the Republicans blasting me or criticizing Eleanor but when they say bad things about my little dog Fala." I can still hear him saying that in a "Fireside Chat." They all had different qualities.

Truman was next. Truman I think will go down in history probably as one of our better Presidents in international issues. Not so good in domestic affairs, but there's a thing that I was very much impressed by Truman. I used to cover--one of my various headaches--the Ways and Means, although I have trouble making out my own little income tax, but I was supposed to be an expert on taxes. But I got interested in and covered the budget. Truman would have a briefing session for the press. Truman and Johnson did it, and we'd go to the White House about two or three days before the great big budget came out, just newspapermen. Usually the Secretary of the Treasury

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or somebody would explain these various things, and then representatives from major departments like Defense, would. have separate briefings. Well, I think of Truman's first budget.

Now, this would be a year after he came in, it would be in '46, really, where they were preparing the budget for the next fiscal year. It was usually submitted about February or January, when Congress first came in. We'd go into this Treaty Room, and there was a great big blackboard up there, and we expected Treasury Secretary Snyder or whoever was going to do it.

Maurice Stans was the one who did it for Eisenhower. He now is the Secretary of Commerce.

But who should walk in but Harry Truman in 1946. He walked like a schoolteacher with his big glasses on, and he gets hold of a long stick and starts pointing out on the charts. He had a great familiarity--he knew what he was talking about. It wasn't just an act. He said, "I must admit, I don't know about every nickel in the Government, but when I was in Congress in the Senate, I liked this sort of stuff. I used to take the budget home and read it," for bedtime reading. And I can believe it.

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I think he had a good grasp--he may not have been the greatest administrator in the world but he knew a great deal about the operation of the Government, you know what I mean, the administrative setup, the structural setup in the Government, and where. Maybe it wasn't always spent wisely--that's a policy matter but he knew where money was and where it wasn't, and if you had to get something, you could get it from this and that. I think he knew the federal budget far better than Eisenhower, and better than Roosevelt. This is hearsay again, but Roosevelt they said was the sloppiest administrator. He just didn't give a darn. I don't mean he didn't give a darn, he didn't want the country to go bankrupt but, you know, he was more concerned with policy and

politics. Well, that was Roosevelt. That court packing, of course, almost turned me against Roosevelt.

HESS: When he tried to pack the court in '37.

WALSH: I was in Providence then. I just couldn't see that and goodness knows that the court needed--but it changed considerably later. Now Truman wasn't so strong on the administration end of it, domestically, I should say. He was a good politician. Roosevelt, of course, was supreme on this. There's no question

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about that. I would rate him and Lyndon Johnson, before his downfall, I would rate those two--maybe John Kennedy. John Kennedy was coming along. It's kind of hard to judge him. And Nixon, too, so early as President. Ike was no politician.

I would say Roosevelt was a great President internationally, and he was probably the right man at the right time. Like George Washington was the right man at the right time, Thomas Jefferson, and Lincoln. But I don't rank Roosevelt with Lincoln or Jefferson or any of them. In fact I don't rank any of the recent ones that high, hardly anybody does. Grover Cleveland was probably one of the--Grover Cleveland must have been something like Truman. My father used to have great admiration for him. You know, the way they used to criticize him--Cleveland was very outspoken, very dynamic, and a great big man, you know, but he must have been--of course he had everything against him in those days. That was a tough time. And what did Cleveland do when he was the President of the United States.

Well, to get back to Truman, there was the domestic front, I don't think he was so great. He was ordinary, you know almost routine. The country didn't go to pot as almost in the depression period. I think

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Truman was weak--he might have been pretty good on budget matters, but he was weak on finance as such. This incident I told you about, the Wall Street question, I don't think he was aware; maybe he never did. Maybe he just didn't care much. Roosevelt certainly seldom seemed to.

Now, Eisenhower was the father figure. He wasn't the greatest President, but he wasn't the worst. You know, some partisans, the New Dealers and Fair Dealers, say Eisenhower was one of the worst Presidents we ever had. Well, he wasn't. He was far better than Coolidge from what I hear.

Coolidge was the first President I ever met. I came down here--when I was in New York in 1927--this is digressing a moment, but talking about how times have changed. You could get one of these five dollar excursions, round trip, from New York. You could come down on a weekend, over New Year's Day, come down at night, stay all day, and come back the next night, no sleep at all, you'd be up all the time, for five dollars, from New York, round trip. So I came down here.

I'd never been to Washington in my life, and I thought, "Well, I bet I'll never get to Washington again. This is my last chance." So I took a sightseeing bus ride--for five dollars, too, you could get one to

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Arlington, Mt. Vernon, everywhere. Now it's about twenty dollars. Well, to get to the point of the story, I was near the White House, was before I took my bus trip, and at noon I saw a long line of people going in and I said, "What's going on?"

The policeman said, "The President every New Year's Day receives the public, shakes hands with everybody."

So I said, "This is something." You know they used to do that. I don't know if all of them did, but Coolidge did and I think Harding and way back, and Wilson when he was in good health. So I stood in line and got in there and Coolidge was just inside. He was taller than I thought. You're about six feet I guess. He wasn't as tall as you, but he was taller than I thought and sandy-haired, and he wasn't quite as innocuous looking as some of his pictures. Well, he didn't look so bad unless he put on one of these ten gallon hats.

HESS: He didn't have his Indian bonnet on then.

WALSH: I think Coolidge wasn't as silent as they said he was apparently, but he let things drift. Now Eisenhower, in justice to him, I don't think he did that but he didn't want to muddy the waters, his administration

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didn't.

And I don't think he knew much about the operation of Government except the military, of course. He was willing and eager to go through channels, the military system, that's all been said before. He would be briefed, and some of his harsher critics in the press room said he never read a newspaper in his life. Well, I know he did because if you said something about it, you'd hear about it fast enough.

Then we come to Kennedy. The tragedy was not only his assassination but also that he was President such a short time. I think Kennedy was a superb politician and he grew with the job. He had the following, not only the young, but many others. He was a shrewd man, and his organization was just--well, that's the Kennedy method, not only money. They had Kennedy organizations in every state.

Then to Nixon now. Nixon is a sort of a miracle man. When I first met him on this Alger Hiss case he was very partisan, quite reactionary. He was extremely partisan. I can't remember many great issues in the 80th Congress. They did have the Taft-Hartley, some issues like that in those days.

HESS: 80th Congress

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WALSH: It must have been, sure, because that was the only chance he would have had to put it through. But I'm sure he voted--of course he did. But the education and labor committee on which he served, I didn't cover at that time. He was very conservative. And then when Ike became President, and he became Vice President, he sort of adapted himself very much to the middle of the road. Opportunist was the word that was often used.

HESS: Do you think it's an apt word?

WALSH: Yes, yes. Even now. But I was going on to say he was a Senator only one term. That was sort of a transition period before he became Vice President. Then he became Vice President, he had a good break as Vice President.

Ike was about the first President who gave the Vice President really anything to do. Now, if Harry Truman had had something like that, of course, there wasn't time as it was, but Harry Truman as Vice President for a few years, might have been an even better President, I think he probably would have. He would have gotten more experience in the operation of government and policymaking. Where Harry was a complete novice, of course, was in the policies, in other words, the high echelon stuff, you know. He had

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to learn. He had to start from scratch, I guess. If he had been Vice President for a few years, and if Roosevelt--Roosevelt didn't exactly distrust him, I guess he didn't exactly ignore him, but he did the same thing with Wallace. You know, he trusted Wallace a great deal more at the beginning. Of course with Garner, his first Vice President, they seldom spoke to each other. They were on the outs almost from the very beginning because Garner wouldn't go for all of the New Deal. Roosevelt was sympathetic to Wallace because Wallace would go for all the New Deal. Perhaps Truman would not have in the 1930s. He would have gone for Social Security, but I mean the NRA, court packing and so forth.

But to get back to Nixon. He never should have run for Governor of California, but that was the turning point; that was the low point of his day.

HESS: He told the newsmen that they were going to have to find somebody else to kick around.

WALSH: I guess he learned a lesson because he hasn't said that again. In the 1968 campaign you could see it. I really saw him then. I used to see him quite often in his interim years, at the Capitol. He'd come down from New York. He was practicing law and he would

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come down there quite often. He was building up his fences even then. And I'd run into him in the Capitol. His greeting would always be, "Is the *Star* still coming out?" It was a stock phrase. You'd ask him how he was getting along, when he was coming back to Washington, and that sort of business, never knowing he'd ever try to make it.

During the '60 campaign, I think he was the victim of his advisers in his policies. He and Kennedy weren't very far apart on many issues. Of course, what they say in the campaign is something else. But now that he's President, this is what he'll be judged on by history, and I think his first two years have been a pleasant surprise. I won't get into partisanship.

I'll get back to Lyndon Johnson in a minute, because that's the key to Nixon to a great extent.

But to finish with Nixon, I don't know how it will turn out. He's still an opportunist, you can see that. I do not question about his sincerity, anybody would want to get out of Vietnam, anyone would want to stop the war and have peace. He has learned a great deal. He may be running around too much, but he is now showing himself, not only to his own countrymen, but to other countries, a great deal more than Kennedy or anybody else did. Now, maybe he'll overdo it. I kind of like

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him personally. You know, this old business, "Would you buy a used car from this man?" Well, I didn't regard him like that. There were many things I disagreed with. I didn't vote for him either time. I voted for Lyndon Johnson in 1964. It was a struggle, but I did. I think we ought to give him a little chance here, but he might come out better in the final history.

HESS: What would be your appraisal of Johnson?

WALSH: Johnson's the other way. I think Johnson at any other time, almost any other time, if he had been President when Eisenhower was President, or even when Roosevelt was President, given that time and given the age and everything else, and if it would have been possible for a Southerner to be President at that time, or a Southwesterner, he would have been one of our great Presidents, Lyndon Johnson. I think during the Second World War, he probably would have handled that superbly, because that was the thing we had to win.

Domestically, I think he would rank as one of our better Presidents, better administrators. He had a real grasp on administrative matters and was an expert administrator. Many of the policies--you can always differ with them--but I think he knew what was going on

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in this Government. Now whether his appointments were always wise, and many times you can't control those as well as you'd like to. The Cabinet--that's one of his things illustrating vanity. He didn't want a strong Cabinet. Eisenhower did. Eisenhower had to have a man like Dulles, because Ike knew little about foreign affairs. As for Johnson, to sum him up, I think, his vanity was his downfall, and his pigheadedness anyway. But he was a genius on--in one field and like

Howard McGrath, he should have stayed in the Senate. He was by far the best--he and Robert Taft were the best parliamentary leaders, the best operators too, in a legitimate way, that I have ever seen.

HESS: Were you surprised when Senator Lyndon Johnson agreed to take the slot of Vice President nominee?

WALSH: I was out there, standing out in the hotel hall when they were having all these huddles. Yeah, I was a bit surprised. Of course I was misled. A couple of us were talking to Rayburn a day or two before that. It was evident the day they got out in Los Angeles, you knew that Kennedy was going to be nominated, because he had it. And the speculation was all on who would--and Johnson had always been mentioned, you know, as an outside possibility. You mention everybody, so you're

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bound to get somebody right. But they were always thinking of somebody like, well, Scoop Jackson, or some of the more or less close associates of Kennedy. Nobody gave Johnson much thought, consideration, at least, much chance. And Rayburn, I remember saying that he'd be opposed. He supported Johnson for President at the convention. He had a press conference at the Capitol before the convention started, in which he announced his support of Johnson. I remember we said, "Well, what about this idea that Johnson might conceivably wind up as Vice President if Kennedy is nominated?"

He said, "Oh, I'd be against that." He sort of brushed it off. He had a very abrupt way: And from what the biographers say, Rayburn opposed that until the very last minute. Johnson and Lady Bird--they decided to accept it. So I was surprised. Maybe some say they expected it, but I did not.

HESS: There's an argument as to whether the Kennedy brothers, John and Bob, really wanted Lyndon Johnson on the ticket or not. What is your opinion?

WALSH: I think John more than Bobby, from what I suspected. But as things turned out, you can just judge it by hindsight again, I think it was a smart move. I think Johnson probably...

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HESS: Helped pull in the South?

WALSH: I was with Johnson in the last--I was with Kennedy on the first part of the campaign, about the first part of October, about this time of year. Then I was with Johnson for about two weeks at the very end. We were in Dallas, I don't know if you remember that a crowd of people--Bruce Alger and that crowd, the Republicans ganged up--mobbed the Johnsons. It was terrible, in front of his Dallas hotel--it wasn't really violent, it was like an Oklahoma-Texas football game crowd, but maybe rougher, it was a little more than that because they were pushing and shoving. Mobs are usually pretty rough. I was a little worried about myself. I was carrying a typewriter

and was pushed around a bit with the others. But Johnson really helped in Texas. He carried Texas.

And Johnson surprised me. Johnson, of course, was no great shakes as a speaker either, not as good as Kennedy, but Johnson did very well in New York State, up in Rochester and Buffalo and Syracuse and those places. He got good crowds out. It was unusual for a vice-presidential candidate to get as many: He did well in Missouri and Illinois; Chicago, St. Louis; I don't think we went to Kansas City, yes we did, sure.

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We stayed overnight at a hotel, and Johnson called Truman. We expected to go out to see Truman. He did go out to see Truman. He gave us the slip. He said he was going to phone so we didn't pay any--he got in his car and just sped off out there. It wouldn't have been much point in us going. He said he just said hello to Truman.

I don't know whether Kennedy wanted Johnson or not. I don't think Kennedy would have taken him unless he thought that he needed him. I think it wasn't any personal...

HESS: It wasn't necessarily that he wanted him but he saw that it was necessary, saw that he needed him.

WALSH: I think that's right, and as things turned out he did. Kennedy--I don't think he would have been elected without Johnson.

HESS: It was a pretty close election as it was.

WALSH: It sure was.

HESS: It is sometimes said that a majority of the working press is inclined toward the Democratic Party. What is your opinion of that?

WALSH: Well, there's some truth in that. I'll tell you, the explanation usually given is that--I think I used the phrase--there's a whole generation, or really two

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generations of press people who are now in their forties, fifties, and sixties. When I was going to school, of course, Coolidge was President. I remember Wilson.. I was a boy and I remember the end of World War I. I remember seeing Woodrow Wilson. It was just about a week before he had his stroke. He was going out on this trip and we were going to school in St. Louis. We saw Woodrow Wilson riding up the street--he was gray-haired then and he was waving at everybody. The next week out in Wichita or someplace--rizona--he had a stroke and they had to bring him back. Harding and Coolidge were the first administrations that I really followed. And then the Hoover administration. The scandals of the Harding administration burned me up on the Coolidge administration. As a college student and then in my first years in newspaper work.

Coolidge did absolutely nothing, didn't raise a finger either way, he was playing it cautious, "Cautious Cal," to go after those crooks in the Harding administration. Poor Harding, I guess didn't know what it was all about.

You know that was one of the most terrible times in the history of this country. Because it was in high places. And Coolidge, and some of the others in that administration seemed to do so little about it. That

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sort of soured me.

I suppose I would have been a Democrat anyway, although I voted for Willkie, but that was the generation of the New Deal era, that didn't remember any other President but Roosevelt. He was President for twelve years, yes. And he would have gone on. There was a whole generation of young people who were then in college, or the idealistic young people of that era, which in their own way were just very much like--if I say so myself--we were very much like a lot of these kids today. That's why you can understand some of this youth, but not the way out business. They got, if not a Democratic Party--I don't think it's fair to use the word Democratic, with a capital D. They're not partisan Democrats. If there is a bias or a tendency rather than a bias among the working press, it might be subconscious. I think it is true that most have a liberal, not a radical liberal, as Agnew would say, but a liberal slant, the younger people especially. I'm talking here--I say younger people--but this has been going on for some time. Undoubtedly today, I think, many of the younger, that is, the young newspaper people in their late twenties or early thirties, from what I see are mostly liberally inclined, and they would tend to

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support a Democratic candidate for President. That is, many are against Nixon almost instinctively.

HESS: What about Agnew?

WALSH: Well, now, Agnew is a character. Agnew has done a lot of harm, unfortunately, and I think it's too bad, because he often has been quoted out of context. I was with him for three weeks and I've heard some of these things. He says what comes from the top of his head, but he's toned down quite a bit.

But he's not a vicious man in that sense, and he's not as reactionary as pictured. I don't think he is. Of course, he's conservative (I hate to use these words liberal and conservative), but he's not in that sense. He's naturally partisan and he's conservative. He's more conservative, there's no doubt about it, than Nixon, if you know where Nixon stands. That's the problem. Nixon--I guess he's trying. to be middle ground, but Agnew is to the right of that.

Agnew is not like John Birch and George Wallace, he's not that. I wouldn't classify him with them. But he has done a great deal of harm with the young people. And no matter what he would

say, and he could say that the earth is round, a lot of young people now just wouldn't believe him, and it's too bad. You know,

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when you get uptight like that.

Henry Wallace was something--in a different way, and Hubert Humphrey. Henry Wallace was always so, well, emotional and visionary. He got people uptight, the younger crowd in my era, but then I was much younger. "Well, that guy's kind of vague, you know. I wouldn't want him." And Stevenson was typed, I'm sure. Although he was a Democrat he played right in with what many young people liked, the liberalism, the idealism, though he was a little too much like Hamlet.

The other thing, I think there's no question about this, but I wouldn't say it's a bias. I was searching around for a word. I certainly wouldn't attempt to classify all newspaper people, young or old. There are many on both sides. The *Chicago Tribune* bureau, if you would talk to them--and that's not a doctrine of faith, either--are all convinced Republicans, of the very conservative--every one of them, Walter Trohan--you talk to Trohan. And most of them in that bureau, that's an excellent bureau. Every one of them is a topnotch man. They always had, as long as I can remember.

Now the *New York Times* crowd, Krock, of course,

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[James B.] Reston, well, even he has moved on, up or on. They've pretty much got a new crowd in the *New York Times*--Tom [Thomas G.] Wicker, and some of those fellows back in my era--Wicker's a little younger, but some of those people there, they grew up about the same time I did. They went through the Roosevelt era and remember Harding and Coolidge and the Eisenhower business, how everything seemed to muddle along.

Eisenhower was never unpopular personally with the working press. They weren't biased against him, as such, but I think a lot were sore, or disappointed, that there wasn't more news.

Well, naturally, we're after the news, and that's one of the troubles, it is so often a "Man bites dog," business. Unfortunately that's often played up, the scandals or the colorful quotes. Harry Truman had such a big press. It wasn't always a good press, but he was quoted, he was picturesque, and people liked him and sort of respected him.

But there are many Republican newspaper people. One of my colleagues on the *Star* was a Democrat, way back. He started traveling around with Nixon in the 1960 campaign. In that campaign I spent more time with Kennedy and the Democratic ticket, although I was

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with Nixon for a little while. My colleague got to like Nixon very much, and he never told me, but I'm sure he voted for him, both times. Now he is working for Senator Bob Griffin, Republican of Michigan. He's his chief administrative assistant, about \$30,000 a year and he's a good man. He's an excellent help, Senator Griffin. There's an example.

On the *Star*, I know that there are some of the others who are in their forties and fifties, I know several who are Republicans. Joe Fox is a Democrat, there's no doubt about that. We try not to be cynical, but you have to be, we try--believe it or not--we try to be objective. You've got to be otherwise you'd just go crazy.

We have two or three columnists on the *Star*, and two or three others, who are just so down on Nixon, or let me put it the other way around, they're just so sold on Kennedy, or on Gene McCarthy, and that campaign, that type, that idealism, that they just cannot say a good word about Nixon, or any Republican, any President. Senate Republican Leader Hugh Scott, who is moderate, is disliked by some people.

I used to write a column once in a while, but I didn't like to be called a pundit. After all, they are

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in a way, after years of experience and all that, like Arthur Krock was, with off-the-record interviews, and you do get a certain perspective and background. That is fine and the more I think of it, I think it's not a bad idea. It gives some of these people a chance to shoot off their biases, either way, as well as genuinely inform readers.

A *Star* columnist, James Kilpatrick, do you know him, he's a good man. He's a conservative. That's the type of conservative I like. I like him personally very much. I myself agree with so many things, but not always.

And then Carl Rowan, I know him, he was a newspaperman here years ago. He's liberal, and yet he's moderate. He's not as far out as some others.

Then you've got David Lawrence. There's an interesting story. They tell me, and I've known him a long time, but he started out as a Democrat in the newspaper business in the Woodrow Wilson administration. He was a great admirer of Woodrow Wilson. I think he's written books about him. He's written a great deal about Woodrow Wilson, and he's sold on Woodrow Wilson. He was a Democrat, but then somewhere along the line, he became--well, I don't know if he's a Republican, I think it's

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hard to classify what he is, but he certainly is very, very conservative. David Lawrence must be in his eighties now, but he goes back to the era--well, when I was a little boy and used to ask my father, "Are we ever going to get a Democratic President?" I was born in the Theodore Roosevelt administration. One of my earliest memories--this was the 1912 campaign--he came by the train...

HESS: The Bull Moose campaign.

WALSH: The Bull Moose campaign. The train was going from St. Louis to Dallas, and didn't even stop at McAlester--oh, there were several hundred people, the whole town turned out to see Teddy Roosevelt. The train slowed down, and I have a vague recollection of seeing Teddy up there, you know, giving the high sign to everybody and the train kept right on going. So that was my first view of a presidential candidate.

My father, who was not a rabid Democrat, he was a Jeffersonian, voted for [Charles Evans] Hughes against Wilson in 1916. I can remember that very well. He thought that we were getting in the war, for one thing. And he wasn't a pacifist. With his Irish ancestry he didn't like England, but that didn't enter mainly into it. He thought Wilson was getting us into too much hot water, and that Hughes was a better--Hughes was

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a good man. And he might have made a great President. I wonder how that would have turned out. Isn't it a fascinating thing, what might have been, like if Robert Taft had been President.

HESS: Did it cause any particular difficulty for a reporter when his political viewpoints are different from those of the owner and publisher of the newspaper for which he is working?

WALSH: Well, I can only speak for myself. I'm sure it does in some cases, but never in my case.

HESS: Have you ever had any pressure brought to bear by an owner or a publisher?

WALSH: I don't think so. I can't recall--certainly in no major case that I disagreed with, or anything else. Let's take my own history.

The old *St. Louis Star* was Republican--of course I was just a cub reporter, you know, covering the city hospital and city courts, so that really doesn't go into it. The next paper, the *Illinois State Journal* in Springfield was a Republican paper, and so much Republican that it supported--who was that, the Big Bill Thompson crowd, not the machine, about the crookedest at that time. It was awful. I went to the statehouse occasionally, pretty much of a cub reporter,

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I had only about a year and a half of experience, and they sent me up to sit on the desk while the regular reporters went out to get a cup of coffee, the press section. Back to St. Louis was the first time that I did any political reporting, on the *Globe Democrat*. That was a Republican paper. The *Post* was a Democratic, independent Democratic, but they were very much Democratic. It's a great paper. And the *Globe Democrat* in those days was a good paper. It was the only big morning paper there. St. Louis is a morning newspaper town. The *Globe* then had the biggest circulation--I don't know how it is now.

In St. Louis, my work there was just covering city hall and places like that. There was a Republican mayor there in one of the campaigns, a very popular Democrat ran for mayor and I had to cover some of that. *Globe Democrat* opposed him. I can't remember his name. I had to write about the rallies and stories like that, and there would be no reason--I didn't write it either way, for or against. I just wrote the story and there was no pressure. When I got to Providence, there was quite a different situation. The *Providence Journal* was decidedly Republican. In those days, in 1929 , just

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before the depression, I went up to just spend a little while and go back to New York, but I stayed fifteen years. I was lucky that I went up there, because if I had gotten a job in New York, I would have been out in no time. It was better to hang on in Providence, because many newspapermen, much older, much more experienced, were let out. That was a terrible period, the depression era, in the thirties.

To get back to Rhode Island, for years and years they had had Republican governors, and Republican mayors and everything else, and they had their own way. The *Journal* was a good paper, well run, well edited, but I didn't agree with everything they wrote editorially, and a lot of other topics they opposed--social welfare, social security, similar policies. I'm not biting the hand that fed me. Of course, I had happy years up there, and I learned a great deal, but I just want to emphasize that I often disagreed with the *Journal* policy. In 1932, the New Deal with Roosevelt, [Theodore Francis] Green was elected Governor, first Democratic Governor in about twenty years, and the *Journal* really went to work on him all through his administration. And who do you suppose they sent up to cover the statehouse? Me. They sent me up, not because I was the best man.

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Another reporter had covered the statehouse for some years, a young fellow about my age--I was very young then, I was in my twenties. He had worked in Fall River, Massachusetts, came over to the *Journal*, he was a very good man. And they had him up to the statehouse for about a year or two, during the previous administration, Governor Case. Case later came on the Federal Communications Commission here. The other reporter didn't like Green personally--I think that was it--and it was quite evident in some of the stories he wrote. I don't think--in justice--I don't think he distorted anything, but even I could see, "Well, he doesn't like Green." I knew Green. He had been state chairman, but I never was very close to him.. I came to like him very much, but at the time I could see if you didn't like him you didn't like him. Something like Tom Dewey.

The other reporter all of a sudden was just transferred, it wasn't any demotion of any kind, they just sent him somewhere else, which he probably liked more. They sent me there then, and I was there for about five years, all through the Green administration, all through those New Deal years. I never worked so hard in my life. Those were really exciting years.

This alphabet soup, the NRA, the WPA and the PWA

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and then the depression, the banks closed and all that, and I was right in the middle of it. And during all that time, to answer your question, finally. I must have written, oh, thousands of stories. Many were interpretative--the paper gave me quite a bit of leeway. Not trying to be a pundit, I'd get background stories, every week we'd have to have a roundup of the administration, what might come up, and what was behind this, or what we thought was behind it. And I wrote it as I saw it, and I tried to be objective, or if there was something I didn't like about Green, if I thought he was pushing things too fast, sometimes, and I would say, "Some people think on the one hand and on the other hand," I never said "I ." Of course, I wasn't writing a column so nobody knew whether it was my opinion or not.

That was one of the things that they used to say on the *Star*, they could seldom tell whether I was a Democrat or a Republican. And there are a lot of newspaper people like that. I was on the editorial staff for four years. I wrote not national, mostly state, because I had been at the statehouse, the state and local political editorials and anything else, including, "We want clean fish." Even then they had

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pollution in the bay. But the editorial comments, I was knocked down in there once in a while, I expressed my opinion, which I interpreted as an honest difference of opinion.

After all, it's their paper, the editorial columns, the editorial page, I never object to the right of the *Post* or the *Chicago Tribune* to write editorial views even if I think they're outrageous. The *Post* burns me up a lot, as liberal as I try to be, and I often disagree with the *Post*, especially someone like Nick [Nicholas] von Hoffman. I'm putting too many names in here. Now, I can't say, I can't remember anything I had to write that was against my beliefs.

I never remember being called in by the editors saying, "You write this story this way." Many times, I'll tell you what we did do, and this maybe gives people a wrong impression. In an editorial conference, for instance, where the editors get together at a conference from say ten in the morning until two in the afternoon, they discuss the editorial page for the next day, every issue, for every editorial, and every body expresses an opinion. And then one man, as a rule, will be assigned to write it, and then it's passed around--as in the Supreme Court. But unlike the Supreme

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Court, these things are not signed, and it's a good idea not to sign, because in the first place, even though one man might write an editorial, he is not entirely really the author of that, unless it's some specialized case.

It's somewhat the same way in the news department. Many times at the Capitol, I would call in most stories. Working for an afternoon paper is rugged because of frequent deadlines. On the

morning paper, you've got all afternoon to worry about it, then you could write your story at night or late in the afternoon. And the TV is difficult. You've got instant deadlines, but you often don't have time to sit down and write a little story, you just go with bulletins. That's why TV makes so many--well, not errors, but they shoot off the cuff, they sometimes go on the air without really double-checking.

But many times I would dictate stories by phone, or if I were in the office and something would happen, or if an election--an election was a good example--we would have to work under great pressure--but we were not pressured to slant stories. Suppose I'd be covering the congressional elections, working all night getting those stories together. Then the time comes, about 7 o'clock in the morning, for the first lead, you've written a

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great deal of the background and now must write a lead. "The Republicans today got control of the House," or something like that. Well, they don't want just a flat thing like that. In the last election, the last story I wrote in '68, the lead of the congressional story was on how the next Congress would continue to be Democratic, how will it get along with Nixon who has been elected President. We knew that Nixon was President. We discussed in general what the lead should be, but it wasn't anything like an editor saying, "Well, now, you go and you say that Nixon is going to be--", the *Star* supported Nixon but was pretty cagey. I think they may have supported--they did support Stevenson one time, the first time. They never used to support specific candidates previously. But to get back to the lead business, I, at least, was never told, "You write the story that 'President Nixon faces insurmountable difficulties.'" Or the other hand, "Nixon is doggone lucky. He won't have a Republican Congress that he has to fight with," or something like that. Undoubtedly there have been instances of such editorial influencing of reporters, but fortunately not in my case. There is one other influence which is not political but I have been fortunate to avoid most of it. Every newspaper has,

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what we call, "Sacred Cows," some relative of the family, or some big shot in town. This is particularly true in smaller cities. I noticed in Springfield, even in my cub reporter days, that certain people were almost untouchable.

The first thing I ran into like that was a very prominent man in Providence. He had obviously committed suicide, there was no question about it. I didn't cover the police story, but I remember the discussion. The police reporters, two or three of them had been there, and every policeman who investigated said there was no question about it. So the story came out that the cause of death was undetermined. Well, it wasn't undetermined, but I guess in deference to his family they--now, suicide is treated differently. That isn't quite suppression.

At one time, a lot of newspapers didn't even use that word, just like "cancer," or things like that. The word cancer was never used in newspapers years ago. Nor were so-called social diseases. That word was never used thirty or forty years ago. Now, of course, it may be going to the other extreme now. But in my case, I don't remember anything like that. Maybe I've been fortunate.

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I've heard of cases where I'm sure there are some papers that do, but there is great virtue in competition. Lack of newspaper competition in most communities is one of the dangers we're facing. When there are four or five papers in a city you don't dare distort too much of you get a bad reputation. There are so many ways of distorting and suppressing, and even slanting news. That's what's being done now if at all. Very little is completely suppressed. But some stories can be one-sided or incomplete, or written with too much personal involvement.

A paper can have only so many pages, and so many inches of type, and three quarters of that may be advertising. Now, the general public will get the idea that the advertisers dominate the paper. Well, they don't. I think there are cases undoubtedly where some advertisers could exert influence, mainly on smaller papers, and where competition is not too keen, or where the publisher knows the manufacturer or something. In the textile industry in the old days, I'm sure they used to do that in Rhode Island where they had poor working conditions.

I can remember how shocked I was when I went to Rhode Island, I'd get off about 5 o'clock in the morning (this was a morning paper). We'd see women and

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even children, going to work in those textile mills. And they would work perhaps until night. Now, that's the sort of thing...I didn't blame that on the Republicans, that was a way of life.

But I wouldn't mislead you on newspaper pressures. I'm sure there is some influence, I'm sure there is some bias, some deliberate bias by some reporters, but they can't last long. In Washington, they can't last long. I'm convinced of that. There are some politicians I didn't like, and I got along with them all right. Some of them I liked very much, although not their opinions or activities. They paid me quite a little tribute when I left the press gallery. They said, "Go on in there, there's a good speech, Carl Albert, the Democratic leader, is going to make a speech. I'm sure you'd want to hear it."

I thought it was some news. He started off by announcing that after covering the Capitol for twenty years, or something, that I was retiring.

You know, the Speaker, Carl Albert, was born in McAlester, Oklahoma. He's a younger man. I didn't know him at that time. He went to Oklahoma University and I went to St. Louis, but my father knew his family. But Carl made the speech. I thought it was one of

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these perfunctory things, they frequently do it for an oldtimer who is going out. Nothing to lose. But then Gerry [Gerald] Ford gets up, a Republican, and Gerry said, "The thing I like about Bob Walsh," now, he's said this about others too, "is the objectivity. He has criticized us very severely..." He said, "Us." Now, I think he may have meant--I don't know whether he meant

Republicans, I think he meant legislators as a rule, but he said, "His objectivity, his fairness. He hit us pretty hard sometimes when he didn't agree, but on the other hand, he was very high in his praise of Congress and us." He kept saying "Us." Now, that's the best tribute you can get, and I've heard it so many times. Of course, there are a few other newspapermen of unfavorable repute. If you break a confidence and if you repeatedly do that, the public gets on to you. You cannot be a phony. But it doesn't last too long.

The same way with being President. We'll get back to Harry. They'll catch up with you. That's the tragedy of Lyndon Johnson. He got that image. Lyndon wasn't known--I say Lyndon, but everybody calls everybody by their first names here. Johnson wasn't particularly known around the country. We knew him.

That's the trouble with living in Washington. It's

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just too darn close. That's why I like to go out to California once in a while and just sit on the beach or San Francisco somewhere, where I don't know anyone, far enough away. The reverse of that, when we go up to New England, friends up there, interview me. They all think I know all the answers. They say, "Well, you're there..."

"I don't know any more than..."

"Well, yes you do."

HESS: A real insider there.

WALSH: Right. Well, they imagine that I'm sitting at the White House desk. That sometimes is a little embarrassing when you ask me these questions. Here and I'm holding forth myself.

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

WALSH: No, I don't know. I think we've pretty well covered the waterfront.

HESS: All right. Anything else on your list?

WALSH: Well, let me see. I had some things here, just on Mrs. Truman.

HESS: What's that?

WALSH: Well, the business about how gracious she was. She reminded me so much of the women I knew out in Missouri and everywhere else.

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Oh, there's a thing, another little example of Truman. Stuart Symington, the present Senator from Missouri, he brought him here from St. Louis. He had been with the Emerson Electric Company. To show you the way fate goes, well, I was still in college, I was looking for a job, I wanted to get in the newspaper business, but I had to get a job right away, so I went to the Emerson Electric Company and applied for a job. There was an opening of some kind in their public relations--they didn't call it public relations then--but, writing their advertising. I didn't have any experience, but I applied for the job. I was on the school paper and I thought, "I'll be a great literary figure, some day." Meanwhile, in 1924 I got the job on the *Star* then I got a little letter from Emerson. Symington was an official there I believe it was from Symington. The letter said, "Come in to see me, I think we may have an opening for you here," starting at twenty dollars a week. My starting salary in the newspaper business, fifteen dollars a week. That was the starting salary in St. Louis in those days, 1924.

HESS: Fifty?

WALSH: Fifteen. That's one of the reasons I went to Springfield. I doubled my salary overnight. I got thirty

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dollars up there. But I managed to live on it. Of course, I wasn't married then. But those days are gone. Newspapers pay pretty well now. But about Stuart Symington. He came to Washington as the Surplus Property Administrator, before he got into the RFC. Truman at one of his press conferences announced that "I'm appointing Stuart Symington of St. Louis to be this"--there was trouble in that agency too, inefficiency more than anything else. "So, I'm bringing in this great organizer and great administrator and key businessman..." A big buildup--Stuart Symington. So somebody said, "How do you spell Stuart?"

"That's a good question," Truman said, "S-T-U-A-R-T. That's the only way to spell Stuart. "Of course, he knew that there were other ways to spell it, but the Stuarts of England, you know. Harry spelled it out. There was one other thing I didn't tell you about the transition to the Eisenhower administration. It is pertinent in a way. After Eisenhower was elected I didn't travel with him much during that campaign. It was more with Stevenson. This was '52. After Eisenhower was elected, he had no base of operations here in Washington, or anywhere else as a matter of fact. He opened up

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headquarters, sort of a pre-inaugural headquarters in the Commodore Hotel in New York. That's where first met Jim Hagerty who had been Dewey's press man, and Dewey lent him to Eisenhower. So Hagerty set up this press section in the Commodore.

There were a lot of reporters; we lived in the Commodore, and I was up about a week after the election until January. Eisenhower, I think, left before that though. Eisenhower had had a big hotel suite, and people would come in to see him, people looking for jobs, and toward the end of December, he started announcing members of the Cabinet.

I remember John Foster Dulles was in there all the time, and I remember Eisenhower announcing the appointment as Secretary of State. He came out and had a little press conference in the hall. Dulles said only: "I can't say anything, I haven't been confirmed."

The whole Cabinet was designated about that time. Sometimes you don't know until a day or two before the inauguration who is going to be in the Cabinet, well, maybe a week or two, but in this case, Eisenhower had his whole Cabinet picked out well in advance--well, I suppose Kennedy did too. That was a very interesting experience, but no nightlife in New York, we didn't

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dare leave.

Ike was there all day and all night, he practically lived there. Of course, his residence was on Morningside Heights where he was president of Columbia at that time. We even had to go to church with him, the Riverside Chapel.

I'm trying to think of his campaign trip. I went to church with him somewhere. We had to report on the hymn books, too. It was a little church, it was very picturesque, a beautiful place. It was in 1956 in Carmel, that's the most beautiful part of California, between Los Angeles and San Francisco, and Carmel, where the Franciscan Monastery, Father Junipero Serra, founded Catholic missions all up and down the state. He's buried in that little mission church. Up the street there's an Episcopalian Church. It's not quite as old, but it goes back to the early days of California, 1840 and those years. This other thing goes back to 1776.

Ike was going to church, and they had a little chapel there, too, and so we thought he was going to the Franciscan place, to the mass there, but he didn't. He went down there, and he and Mrs. Eisenhower went into the church and looked around. There were a lot of nuns

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there, and they came over, and Ike was very nice. And, you know, that big grin, you couldn't resist it. And Mamie, she went over big. She went over very well with the women, everywhere. They got in the car again and went to this little Episcopal Church, just a few blocks away, and he stayed for that service. We were absolutely unprepared, that is, the press people. There was so little news. He wasn't making any speech, but we had to get something on his going to church. We had to take notes on the sermon, what hymns were sung and out of what hymn book. And being a Catholic, I didn't know what the hymns were. I can remember Merriman Smith cussing even to this day. "Son-of-a-gun, why didn't he stay home."

HESS: Instead of going to church.

WALSH: Yes. That was after the '56 convention. It was so certain that Ike would be nominated, that they really didn't have to have a convention. This was in San Francisco. The only question was, would Nixon get it again. He had been Vice President, and there was still some holdover

from that earlier slush fund charge against Nixon. In order to keep people in San Francisco, to keep the delegates there, on their own expenses, Ike agreed to come out and make a speech, accept the

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nomination out there. That was about the only thing that prevented the convention from falling apart from the very first day. But they held that out until the last day, so the people had to hang on. Ike decided to go down to Cypress Point, near Monterey. It's beautiful. Thirty or forty newspaper people accompanied him. The *Star* sent me. I think they wanted to give me a little rest, and it was the nicest campaign trip I ever had.

He went by train from San Francisco to Monterey, only an hour or so, then he went into seclusion and we didn't see him again for about a week. Meanwhile, Hagerty and we stayed in a hotel at Pebble Beach. It's luxurious at this Pebble Beach place, and everybody would go out and play golf in the morning, although I don't play golf. We never saw Ike and we were wondering if he had had a heart attack or what. Hagerty would have briefings every morning, "The President today announced that he is going to appoint this and this and this," or, "He will make a campaign speech at Carmel," and so forth.

The rumor was around that Ike was sick, that he had another heart attack. It got to Hagerty and he got us all together one morning and he said, "Get in the

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busses, we're going over to the Cypress Point Golf Course. Eisenhower is going to play golf." We went over and saw Ike tee off. Although not a golfer, I could see he wasn't very professional. It must have been embarrassing. He was good enough, he had played enough, but the ball sliced off and went way down on the beach. We didn't hear what he said. But we were allowed to go around with him about an hour and we finally got tired of the whole business. He rode around in a little cart, of course. Hagerty just wanted us to know that the President was in good physical shape, and I'm sure he was all right. He was just getting a rest. I don't blame him.

That was the nicest trip I ever took with him. But I just can't remember any speeches. I went to New York with Ike by train too, once when he was President, during the '56 campaign. He went to the annual Al Smith dinner. They have that every year in New York, and traditionally the Democratic and Republican candidates would meet there, Dewey and Al Smith, and then Dewey, and I don't think Truman and Dewey ever met in '48. I'm almost sure they didn't. I went to two or three of them. I may have gone to that dinner with Truman. That's

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probably it in that campaign of '48. They had it every year, because Johnson and Nixon were added--Johnson, Nixon and Humphrey, they were all at dinner in 1968.

HESS: That dinner is held each year and during the campaign years the presidential opponents might meet. Humphrey and Nixon attended in 1968, but Mr. Truman and Dewey did not in 1948. President Johnson was also in attendance in 1968 along with Humphrey and Nixon.

WALSH: Well, that was it, that was it. And I think--that jibes with my recollection--I think that's the time I went. But you can't call that a campaign. In a way it's a campaign trip.

HESS: Was that at the Waldorf that night?

WALSH: Yes. Johnson was very clever. Johnson, had already announced he wouldn't run again, and the conventions were all over. Johnson said with sort of a sly grin, "Well, you all won't have much chance to kick me around anymore." Then he looked at Nixon and Nixon almost fell out of his chair laughing, because those were almost the same words that Nixon had used in California in 1962.

You've brought back more than I could possibly remember by myself.

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HESS: Once we start talking, one thing leads to another. Is that about all for one day?

WALSH: I think so.

HESS: We thank you very much for your time.

WALSH: All right, thank you very much for your patience in listening.

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