

Oral History Interview
with
ROBERT L. IRVIN

Investigator on the staff of the Truman Committee (Special Senate Committee to Investigate the Defense Program), and later Executive Assistant to the Chairman (Senator James Mead), who succeeded Senator Truman. Served on the staff from February 9, 1942 to September 15, 1945.

Long Beach, California
March 26, 1970

by J. R. Fuchs, Harry S. Truman Library

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FUCHS: Mr. Irvin I wonder if to start, it would be good to have a little background sketch of your career, your education, when and where you were born, and what you did up until the time you first came in touch with the Truman Committee?

IRVIN: I'll start, born in Buffalo, New York, October 1918. Educated in the public schools in New York. Went to the University of Michigan, pre-law, and law. Finished law in 1941, admitted to practice in the Michigan bar. Following law school I took a brief vacation and ended up in Washington, D.C., ostensibly to go to work for the Federal Communications Commission, and found out there wasn't the opportunity I thought there was there. So, I was just looking for employment and ended up in the hands of the Truman Committee

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up on Capitol Hill.

FUCHS: I seem to recall that some of the other members had gone through Michigan Law, or were from Michigan. Do you recall who they were?

IRVIN: Well, the only one I knew was -- I guess there were two men, actually: Hugh Fulton, the Chief Counsel at that point in time, was a Michigan Law School graduate; and later on George Meader, who was subsequently a Congressman from Michigan, was a University of Michigan Law School graduate. I don't recall any others.

FUCHS: What had raised your hopes about the Federal Communications Commission, how did you happen to be going to work for them?

IRVIN: While in law school one of the attorneys for the Commission came through Ann Arbor, seeking applicants for the staff of the Federal Communications Commission, and I had had shortwave radio experience, a ham station -- I enjoyed it -- and it seemed like a happy combination of radio knowledge and legal knowledge, and the desire to be in Washington and do something with the Government.

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So I just assumed when I hit Washington I had a job waiting for me. And it turned out the man who had interviewed me was no longer there, he had gone to some Federal project up in the State of Washington, and the succeeding Chief Counsel, well, didn't see my talents the way I did, so there wasn't an opening.

FUCHS: How did you get the idea of going to work for the Truman Committee?

IRVIN: Well, actually at that point in time, I had applied at several agencies, including the Department of Justice in Washington, and had been told there was an opportunity on the staff of the Truman Committee, the war investigating committee. Not knowing too much about it, and wanting the experience, I went over and applied and probably no one was more surprised than I was that they hired me.

FUCHS: Had you specialized in any particular phase of law, or did you have anything in mind?

IRVIN: No, my dad's an attorney, and still practices law in Buffalo, New York, has a general practice; I'd

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clerked for him in his law offices for two summers and had pretty much made up my mind that the private practice of law wasn't my cup of tea. So, no I didn't have any specialty in law.

FUCHS: What do you recall of your first day at the Truman Committee, or the day you went in to seek a job?

IRVIN: Well, I think the thing that has always stayed with me through all these years: I am a Republican by nature and registration, and although I wasn't registered at that point in time, being sort of transient, I never was asked what my political affiliation was, which was most impressive to me. And at no time in the work of the Committee was I ever asked, "Are you a Republican or a Democrat?" And it was strictly a team effort, and a dedicated effort in the name of the Committee to do the best job possible.

FUCHS: Do you recall anyone being asked, when they came to the Committee, what their political affiliation was?

IRVIN: No, I remember we had some men on the staff who were, I am sure, recommended by certain Senators and employed because of their relationship to certain Senators, whether or not it was a political or a

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friendship relationship.

FUCHS: Can you and would you care to name them?

IRVIN: Well, one I mentioned, Haven Sawyer was a friend of Owen Brewster, a Senator from Maine. And another chap, I think Bill [William S.] Cole was his name, an attorney from Maine, was a friend of Senator Brewster. But just generally, the staff was hired by the Chief Counsel, Hugh Fulton and his subordinate. Generally speaking, and it was generally understood, that the Chief Counsel had control over the staff, that it was not to be a political staff. There were minor exceptions, but on the whole it was the Chief Counsel's policies that governed the hiring of the staff.

FUCHS: Who did you talk to; who hired you?

IRVIN: Well, actually I started with Hugh Fulton. I had an interview with him, he referred me to Charlie [Charles Patrick] Clark, who was listed as Associate Chief Counsel; Charlie referred me to Matt [Matthew J.] Connelly, who was labeled Chief Investigator; and Matt Connelly referred me back to Charlie Clark; and the next thing I knew I had a call from Clark's office

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saying that they wanted to hire me and to come on in and sign up. So, actually the guy who signed me up was Charlie Clark, in terms of the physical signing of the papers and putting me on the payroll, after I had gone through that gamut of guys.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything of Charles Patrick Clark's title? He is listed as...

IRVIN: Yes, at that point in time he had the title of Associate Chief Counsel on the letterhead of the Committee. And one little humorous incident (to me it was humorous anyway), after I was sure I was signed up and on the payroll, I then inquired about specifically what my duties were

going to be. And Charlie looked at me and said, "Well, Robert," he said, "you're free to travel aren't you?"

And I said, "Well, hell yes."

And he said, "Well, all right."

And that was his explanation of the job. A traveling job.

Then I was referred back to Matt Connelly and began to get into the Committee structure and Committee work and the first assignment was to study the hearings and

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reports up to that point in time. This was in February '42 I believe. You had to saturate yourself with the background of the Committee; what it was doing, how it was doing it, how the hearings were conducted, how the reports were written and so on. Then from there you were assigned to actual investigations.

I'll just, as we talk, try to remember some of the major ones that I got into. One was on the shipbuilding program when we were losing so much shipping to Germany (U-boat campaign), and our efforts to produce cargo ships. The efficiency of the various shipyards around the country, and producing them; who were the high cost producers, the low cost producers. Subsequent things happened such as the ship that broke in two up in Portland, I believe, it was one of Henry Kaiser's liberty ships.

FUCHS: Who made the assignments to the various investigations?

IRVIN: Well, I would say on the major -- major investigations, probably most of them came from Hugh Fulton. Minor investigations; Charlie Clark, Matt Connelly. Each of us had certain areas of interest so that as mail was

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channeled through the Committee structure, for example on shipbuilding, any letters of complaint or inquiries would come to me. And if I thought something deserved investigating, I could start the machinery in motion. All the inquiries went out signed in the name of the Chief Counsel of the Committee. This in a way slowed things down because the answers were routed back through his office and back through the machinery of the Committee and they were sometimes a little tardy getting to you if you were in a rush on something.

FUCHS: These areas that each investigator more or less served in, were they based on certain experiences that they had in most cases?

IRVIN: No, I don't think necessarily so. At least not in my case. I had no experience in shipbuilding in the beginning.

Another major investigation early, at that point in time, was converting the civilian production machinery into war production. There was a big question could we have guns and butter too; could we maintain civilian production? So, why I was put into that picture, I had no background in it either. You know this was a

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young guy out of law school and I just assumed they assigned you where they thought your talents fitted best. So, that was a major investigation, enforcing the conversion of major production facilities around the country into war production to do two things: One, save on materials, as they were becoming scarce, raw materials. And two, to take full advantage of the productive capacity that we had, to convert it to war production.

FUCHS: Did you come in touch with the WPB then?

IRVIN: Oh yes, War Production Board, yes. I'm just trying to think of some of the names of the -- who was the man from Sears Roebuck that -- Don

FUCHS: Nelson.

IRVIN: Nelson.

FUCHS: Donald M. Nelson.

IRVIN: Was head of War Production Board around that time.

FUCHS: And -- well, double-headed, what was it OPA, and what did they call it War Production Authority, when [William S.] Knudsen and [Sidney] Hillman, when they

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had that feud, and then they...

IRVIN: I'm trying to think of another chap who was over there, I think his name was Reed. He was a loan executive, I believe from General Electric.

FUCHS: Is this the one that Mr. Truman had a fight about?

IRVIN: We bumped heads with him I think pretty hard, and -- on the speed with which the conversion to war production was taking place, as I recall. Now this is all -- how many years of memories are these?

FUCHS: Brings up the question of the dollar-a-year men.

IRVIN: Right.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything about that?

IRVIN: No. I didn't work particularly on that -- that investigation, although I remember -- I think Robby had quite a bit to do with that at that time as I recall, Harold Robinson.

So, from the beginning I was involved with conversion to war production, shipbuilding, and I'll jump way ahead because a later investigation sprang out of the shipbuilding one when the Kaiser ship broke

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in two. He happened to be testifying in Washington before the Committee on another subject, and in the meantime we had been getting a series of complaints from an employee of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation in Pittsburgh, alleging that faulty steel was being manufactured for the shipbuilding program. And the stories he was telling in writing were so fantastic we couldn't believe them. I mean he had sounded almost like a "crank file." And we always had the policy of never shutting anybody off, so the file accumulated and became sizeable, though we hadn't taken any direct action on it. So, at this particular hearing when Kaiser was testifying, one of the Senators, and I have a hunch it was Owen Brewster, casually asked him what happened to that ship of his that just broke in two and sank at the outfitting dock. And Kaiser said it was the lousy steel that he was getting from Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation. Well then all the bells went off and I was on a plane to Pittsburgh, within hours, to interview this particular chap.

And let's see, Matt Connelly joined us in Pittsburgh as I recall, and I think later Rudy [Rudolph]

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Halley came up. We interviewed this guy in his kitchen and he brought out all the records to show that they were dummied up the contents of the slabs of steel that were later rolled into ship plate, and there was a question of tracing all of these things.

To make a long story short, we prepared subpoenas for all of the records of the plant, and we called the head of the company, Lester Perry I believe his name was, and told him we were in Pittsburgh on another investigation, and while we were there we wanted to visit the steel mill (and it was called Irvin Works, incidentally), and see how they were setting all these steel production records for the shipbuilding program.

We got into the plant, under happy auspices, and were being shown around and we came into the area where the central records were kept. We verified the entries in the records as being what this man said they were, the informant to the Committee. And at that point we subpoenaed the records, and our hospitality period came to an end, and everything turned to ice.

The interesting thing about it -- and this does remind me of something about Truman -- it got pretty bitter in Pittsburgh at that point, and they claimed

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that we could not subpoena these records, that they would have to shut the steel mill down, and it was essential to the war program. I had made arrangements to photocopy the records that night and they were voluminous. It was a huge heat book where they keep track of -- every slab of

steel that would come out of the steel mills would have a number, and accompanying it through this plant would be a parallel piece of paper that said what the contents of the steel were, and as they would test it, they would report the tensile strength and so on. While the situation, factually, I think was that they were so busy setting records, they were satisfied in their own minds that what they were producing was sound, but they weren't able to keep up the paper work, or the accuracy of their records, and consequently they were faking the records, and saying these were the qualities of this particular piece of steel based on their experience as steelmen, rather than having the documentary evidence. We had also information that there were instances where they substituted -- when a Navy inspector would come around, or a Marine inspector -- on their tensile testing machines they would substitute

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what we called a "dummy bar" that they knew was good. When they weren't sure what was going down the line, they had a good bar that allegedly came from the slabs going through the mill. But, as I say, all hell broke loose when we subpoenaed these records and they claimed it would shut the plant down and it would be on our shoulders for having done that in the midst of the war.

We made arrangements to photocopy them and then we yielded to their pleas that they had to have those records and we couldn't even take them overnight. And we got a guarantee from them that they would not be altered, which we had reason to believe later wasn't lived up to. But we had also taken with us a steel expert from the War Production Board (I'd forgotten that, and I can't even remember his name. A tall slender, gray haired gentleman), whose analysis of the steelmaking process was that they were producing "dream steel" as he called it, and nobody could produce it consistently that good. In other words, between the limits set for the quality of the steel, the stuff that they were producing was exactly even between the limits, and with no variations. And he

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said, "That's dream steel and there just ain't no way to do it." But we wanted expert advice that we were not misjudging what was going on.

So we gathered all our evidence and flew back to Washington and in the meantime the U. S. Steel Corporation and its subsidiary Carnegie Steel were exerting all the pressure they could. They had gotten through to Senator Truman before we could get back to Washington by plane, with sort of, I guess you'd call them pressure tactics, and maybe implied threats; and, one of the great things about the guy, he refused to talk to them and said he wouldn't discuss it with them until he talked to his own people who were on their way back to Washington and after he had had our reports, then he'd be very happy to sit down and talk to them; which was great from a staff standpoint, because it was a hundred percent backing.

And that particular investigation turned into a donnybrook in the public hearings, and the follow-up on it. We issued a very critical report as I recall, and hopefully tightened up the quality of the steel producing process. We presented the facts to the Justice Department, believing that there had been a

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crime committed and the individuals involved should be prosecuted. I won't say we got the happiest reception in the Justice Department, but the upshot was that they did file a criminal case against the corporation (as I recall it was criminal), without charging individuals, and I believe, I've forgotten quite what the disposition of the case was. I don't think the corporation was ever convicted either. But I wasn't satisfied either with the Justice Department, or that it had done its homework well enough to win a case of that kind.

FUCHS: Do you know if Mr. Truman was displeased over the Justice Department's reception?

IRVIN: You know I can't remember whether -- Matt Connelly and I went down to the Justice Department jointly, and I can't honestly remember if we reported back together to Truman or whether Matt did. I really don't recall. I just don't remember.

FUCHS: In this case, and in others, would Mr. Truman have been pretty aware of the situation and made the decision to investigate it or would it have been largely the Chief Counsel?

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IRVIN: No, in this case, it was the Chief Counsel who issued the order to go to Pittsburgh and make the investigation. And in my level, functioning under the Chief Counsel, the contacts directly with Truman generally were at the Chief Counsel-Senator level. The staff ordinarily wasn't involved unless there would be a special situation where you have peculiar knowledge.

I remember interviewing Henry Kaiser and his ship production staff in Senator Truman's office one day. There was kind of a humorous situation, too. I remember it now. I had been striving to get accurate cost figures from the Kaiser people on their man-hour costs per ship and we were trying to get levels of judgments to evaluate the efficiency of the various yards and point out which ones could stand improving, and develop standards for this tremendous shipbuilding program. I never had been able to get precise figures, such as the highest cost ship, the lowest cost ship, out of this particular shipyard that Kaiser had. And in the course of this interview, or meeting, in Truman's office, Henry Kaiser made a statement as I recall, that -- or one of his subordinates made the statement that they had the best

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record and he had figures proving this. And this was, in my opinion at that point in time, a public relations move, and fortunately in my files I had a letter from the same guy saying they couldn't produce this information, it was, accounting-wise, impossible to provide, which we put on the conference table and at that point Mr. Kaiser told his subordinate to be quiet please and go by the written record. So, this was just an interesting sidelight of the thing.

FUCHS: This would be, then, the normal procedure that most decisions to investigate would be through the Chief Counsel and then Mr. Truman would come into it later on.

IRVIN: Yes. The Chief Counsel and the Chairman of the Committee, I am sure, met regularly and had regular meeting times at which point they would analyze or decide the major directions

in which investigations should go, and then it would be up to the Chief Counsel to execute through the staff what they had

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decided. As a matter of fact, I don't think I recall any instance in which a direct assignment came from the Senator. I had been told that there was a clear understanding between Hugh Fulton and Harry Truman that Fulton had control of the staff and the investigative procedures, and that -- whenever a report was written on an investigation, the investigator in charge would do his draft on the things he knew and could document, and his conclusions; and then the Chief Counsel, who had conducted the hearings, would incorporate that into his draft of what the report should be, and then this in turn would be submitted to the ten members, the ten Senators on the Committee. They in turn would decide what the final report would be, and what was released to the Senate and to the public.

FUCHS: Now, if there had been more than one investigator on a particular investigation

IRVIN: You'd divide it up as to what you had the best knowledge on, or the part that you had worked on, and the two of you could work together and block out what the report should cover. Then you would probably go

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over each other's work, too, in preparing the report to make sure it was accurate and complete, before it was submitted to the Chief Counsel.

FUCHS: The two of you would submit one report to the Chief Counsel, as a general rule?

IRVIN: As a general rule, yes. Although oftentimes in the rush of those days, both reports would go side by side and the Chief Counsel would put them together the way he wanted them. They'd come back in galley form and then we'd all crack at them again to be sure they were accurate, as best we could make them.

FUCHS: Did it ever come to your attention that Charles Patrick Clark might have been self-appointed Associate Chief Counsel?

IRVIN: Yes, I heard this story and chuckled over it for years. I'll give you my version of what I heard.

FUCHS: That I'd like.

IRVIN: Because I got a boot out of Charlie. I thought he was quite a character.

The story I heard was that Truman introduced a

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resolution to create the Committee which carried in the Senate, and that Charlie was on Capitol Hill and went over to Mr. Truman's office and said that he understood that he had organized this

Committee and that he, Charlie, had quite a bit of experience on the Hill with committees. If he could be helpful in any way getting office space for secretaries or so on and so on, why just call on him and he would be very happy to help.

Truman said, "No," that he had made a deal with Hugh Fulton, an attorney from New York City, who was going to be in charge of all of this, and that Charlie should see Hugh for he had complete charge of staffing. Hugh was packing his briefcase getting ready to fly back to New York City or go back on the train, and Charlie introduced himself and said Truman had asked him to come up and help Hugh to get the Committee organized. While he was back in New York if Fulton would like it, he, Charlie, knowing his way around the Hill, would get some offices and equipment, and hire some secretaries, and get the stationery, and do the housekeeping chores so Fulton wouldn't have to worry about that. Now this was all secondhand. I never heard

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it directly from Hugh Fulton or Charlie. But when Hugh returned to Washington to set up shop and to do business as Chief Counsel, the stationery was printed and Charlie Clark had an office, and a couple of secretaries, and was listed on the letterhead as Associate Chief Counsel.

And later stories that circulated around were that, oh, on some major investigation, I can't even remember what the subject was at this point in time, but apparently there were some leaks. And the Committee was very zealous in trying to avoid leaks and Senators of both parties were pretty darn good about this because there was an awful lot of classified information. Quite a few heated discussions were going on, Truman and Fulton got their heads together and Fulton was upset that Charlie Clark had done something or other and said to Truman, "I don't know why the hell you ever hired this guy."

Truman said, "I didn't hire him, I've often wondered why the hell you hired him."

This allegedly is the story of how Charlie got to be Associate Chief Counsel.

FUCHS: What did...

IRVIN: And knowing Charlie the way that I did, it wouldn't

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surprise me if that was the way that it came about, because Charlie had an awful lot of audacity.

FUCHS: What were his duties, at least as they seemed to be?

IRVIN: Well, as I say, he was the first guy Fulton sent me to see. This would have been early '42, or late '41. And my introduction to Charlie from Fulton, or the description of Charlie by Fulton was that he had an Associate Chief Counsel who handled staff matters, hiring and personnel things, and that I should go be interviewed by him. So, so far as I knew at that point in time, he was legitimately the Associate Chief Counsel of the Committee and recognized as such as Hugh Fulton. It wasn't until much later when things kind of exploded around the place that this other story came out, and shortly after that Charlie was drafted.

FUCHS: I believe he entered the Army and (or at least his Committee service dates that we have are from March 15, '41 to October 31, '42), and here is something else. Fulton's are from 3/31/41, which would be what, about two weeks later.

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IRVIN: Two weeks later. That would put it pretty close, yes. Do you happen to have the date that I started? My recollection was mid-February of '42, but I'm not sure.

FUCHS: I have February 9, '42 to September 15, 1945.

IRVIN: '45, that's right.

FUCHS: Most of these people served concurrently with you, the majority of them either being there when you got there and then leaving before, or coming after you joined the staff, and many of them leaving before you did then, although a few went on up into '46. But I was wondering about this, Clark, what his duties over the -- well, of course, he only served roughly a year and a half.

IRVIN: He did handle in Fulton's absence, one investigation in which I was concerned. I believe it was the conversion to war production investigation. And we had a public hearing and Charlie conducted the questioning, and Matt Connelly and I spent a good many hours with Charlie prior to the hearing, day and night, going over what the evidence was, what questions would elicit

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the evidence, and when they should be asked. And the hearing was a big disappointment to us because it wasn't a penetrating type hearing that would have produced the case we thought we had. But, nevertheless, enough evidence came out and there was -- the report itself when it did come out, was strong enough to speed up the conversion to war production that we were seeking. But Charlie was -- I wouldn't say a great cross-examiner, and Hugh Fulton was brilliant at it. He was a brilliant man. Probably one of the finest examiners I think I've ever seen bar none. So that was Charlie's capacity as far as I knew it.

FUCHS: Do you recall Fred Canfil?

IRVIN: I remember the name and I can kind of picture the guy, but I had very little contact with him. And as I recall -- was he a friend of Bill Boyle's?

FUCHS: I imagine he was, although he's normally thought of as a friend of Mr. Truman's who worshipped Mr. Truman, and no one knows quite how the relationship came about.

IRVIN: I couldn't even answer if he was on the Committee payroll. Was he?

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FUCHS: Well, we have it that he was an investigator from 6/1/42 to January 31, '44 when he resigned; but there's different stories about how much he was around there and how much he was back in Kansas City, and he's somewhat of a man of mystery.

IRVIN: In fact I hadn't even thought of his name and probably if somebody just said to me casually, I wouldn't even have remembered the name, but in this context I can remember a Fred Canfil and he was close to Truman.

FUCHS: A big man.

IRVIN: Yes.

FUCHS: I don't know whether he was tall or what he was.

IRVIN: Pretty stocky guy and...

FUCHS: Nothing else comes to mind about him?

IRVIN: No.

FUCHS: Very good.

What do you recall of Boyle, who was supposed to have started as an investigator in May of '41 and then his service ran until March, the first part of March of '44?

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IRVIN: Well, Bill was a -- again I wouldn't call him a -- I won't say an intense investigator. A very likeable guy, a very gentle guy, very friendly guy; but I never saw any real evidence that Bill was, what I would call a good investigator. And I always had the feeling that Bill's capacity was more of a political friendship with Truman and political adviser possibly to Truman. But I don't recall, frankly, having been in any key investigations with Bill. Now that doesn't mean that he wasn't involved in any, but I don't recall that I was involved in any with him. I think my relationships with him were primarily social ones, rather than work.

FUCHS: Connelly has often been called the Chief Investigator. What do you recall of that, especially in relationship to one of the earliest investigators, perhaps, Harold Robinson?

IRVIN: Well, when I was hired, I was presented to Connelly by Clark, with Connelly being introduced as the Chief Investigator and he occupied the number one desk in the large room, 160, in the Old Senate Office Building. And he was in the back of the room overseeing the whole operation. Robby had a desk in the middle of the room.

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So I just had assumed, as I indicated to you before we started taping this, that Matt was the Chief Investigator; and he acted as such, and signed mail as such, and issued orders as such to the staff.

It wasn't until a good many months later that I (and I've forgotten what the specific deal was, whether it was a -- it was an investigation involving the landing craft program of the Navy's, the tanklighters), and I had gone down to Hampton Roads to witness some comparative tests on, I think the Higgins lighter and the Bureau of Ships design; and while there had done something, or executed something, or, I've forgotten the details, at the direction of Matt Connelly. And on returning to Washington, in filing a report, an oral report with the Chief Counsel, Hugh Fulton, he wanted to know in pretty strong language how I happened to do that particular thing, whatever it was. And I said, "Well, I did it because the Chief Investigator Matt Connelly, told me to."

And this is the first I heard from the mouth of the Chief Counsel that Matt Connelly was not Chief Investigator, and was told in no uncertain terms that he was not. Well, I had functioned in the office, and

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in the staff operation for a good many months under an erroneous belief that Matt was. So, I guess that there was some see-sawing inside the Committee structure as to who the heck was Chief Investigator.

FUCHS: Was Fulton implying that there was no Chief Investigator, or that someone else was? If so who did he feel was Chief Investigator?

IRVIN: I think he and Robby probably visualized Robby as the Chief Investigator, and I'm trying to remember if there are any specific instances where Robby acted as such, and issued orders as such. And there may have been. Robby was just a fantastic investigator. Well, you know his background as an FBI agent and so on. He was a top-flight investigator.

FUCHS: Do you recall any specific examples of things he was involved in that seem to indicate your feelings?

IRVIN: Well, as to his abilities?

FUCHS: Yes.

IRVIN: Oh, sure. Gee, there were just dozens of them, and I tend to remember the humorous ones.

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FUCHS: Well, that's good.

IRVIN: Anything like that draws the cranks, you know. We got all kinds of crazy mail. And, oh, during the rubber shortage there was one clown who happened to land in Robby's bailiwick, who had an invention to save rubber, to reclaim rubber, by scraping all the highways in the country, all the rubber that had worn off the tires. And he had a buddy who came in the office one day, had invented a machinegun that would end the war almost instantaneously with such a

miraculous weapon. And Robby was interviewing him, and Robby casually asked him, "Well, where do you have this weapon?"

The guy patted his pocket and said, "I've got it right here."

And Robby edged away a little, and the guy pulled out a piece of pipe, just ordinary plumbing pipe, and he explained it to Robby that you hook an air hose on one end of the pipe and there is this little hole on top that you drop the bullets in and this compressed air, just fires these through the tube just as fast as you can drop them in the slot, you know. Well, we had an awfully lot of crazy things like that that were a source of great laughter to us, you know, things that lightened

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the day, a serious day.

But Robby, as I remember, let's see, one of the first investigations he was working on when I was there was, I think it was called the Basic Magnesium investigation, and one of the critical materials for the war effort. And I remember hearing from him about Las Vegas at that point in time, which -- I guess the Basic Magnesium plant was located somewhere in that area, and Las Vegas was getting its first start as a gambling resort.

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...there was a guy who was his cellmate in jail by the name of Fuller (I think that's the man's last name), who was so influential that he maintained an office at the Mayflower Hotel. He said each morning the Police Department took Fuller from his cell and delivered him to the Mayflower and then each evening, at the end of the day's work, picked him up and brought him back to jail. And in his jail cell he had telephones, file cabinets, all the newspapers delivered, and radio. He had quite a few privileges in jail. And that he was helping people get defense contracts and I think in the housing area, and I've forgotten what other areas. In fact, ultimately, he had purchased an office building in Washington. This incidentally, led to the ultimate conviction of Mayor (James Michael) Curley of Boston for mail fraud, I believe was the charge, I can't remember now what the upshot of this thing was. But in this suite at the Mayflower, this guy, among others, had Congressmen, who seemingly were his friends and when he was entertaining would-be defense contractors, who wanted defense contracts, why, Congressmen would drop in and, as I recall (and again this is memory now), Curley was one of them, giving

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the appearance of the sanction of members' of Congress to his endeavors. So, we were after this guy and he had gotten wind of our investigation and disappeared.

I think Rudy Halley was Chief Counsel now, Fulton had left. Rudy Halley was Chief Counsel by then, and we got an anonymous phone call one day that Fuller was in the Roosevelt Hotel if we wanted him.

So, I think we sent (and I try to keep track in my mind who all was fired up to New York, I was one of them), there were about six or seven investigators sent to New York City, wham, to subpoena this man at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City.

So we -- Robby was in charge of the group that went up, and being an ex-FBI man, knew how you set up a hotel, case the joint and arrange all this. So, we verified -- we got hold of the hotel manager and verified that, yes, this man was registered there. We also had New York detectives assigned to us and we had a plant in the room next to this man. We had the elevator operators all geared to let us know if he moved in or out of the hotel. We had investigators scattered throughout the lobby -- no sign of the man. After the theater crowd started to filter into the hotel we had

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a bellboy paging Mr. Fuller. We had an investigator down in the center of the lobby behind a newspaper with a subpoena in his hot little hand. Sure enough a guy answered the page and Robinson was on the mezzanine floor surveying all this. It was just like in a movie, they all converged on this poor guy and handed the subpoena to him and he said that was his name. He read the subpoena over and he was trembling and he said, "But that ain't me." He said, "I don't have any knowledge of this or any connection with it. I don't even know what you're talking about." And he ultimately produced identification which proved that he couldn't be this guy. But here was this man with the same name registered in the hotel.

FUCHS: Well, I'll be damned.

IRVIN: So, we all put our tails between our legs and climbed on the train and went back to Washington. As we were coming into Union Station in Washington, all at once Robinson, you could see a light go on in his head, said, "You guys go ahead, I'll catch up to you in a few minutes. I've got an errand to run."

He came in the office about thirty minutes later

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with a big grin on his face. The Roosevelt Hotel in Washington was where the guy we wanted was, and Robinson had just gone over and knocked on his door, he answered it and he handed him the subpoena.

And it was just absolute coincidence that there was a man by that name registered at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City and we sent a flock of guys up there. I thought it was a waste personally. Just one of those nutty things that could happen and did happen. And even Robby felt kind of abashed I think that we thought New York and not Washington when the hotel name was mentioned.

I'd have to get out the old Committee reports and hearings to try and remember the ones Robby worked on.

FUCHS: This little record we have of Committee staff and the dates shows that Robinson was investigator starting in April 24, '41, anti appointed Chief Investigator April 1, '44. Then he resigned in November of '44.

IRVIN: Those are the official Committee records?

FUCHS: Well, this is just a booklet that was gotten up

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and, I wondered about the date of '44, that he was appointed Chief Investigator, and apparently he had...

IRVIN: I'll try to remember the year that I made that Navy tanklighter investigation. I thought it was in '43 that I was told that Connelly was not Chief Investigator, but that's pretty fuzzy you know. Whatever -- it was at the time, and before the Committee issued its report on the Navy tanklighter program, that I was informed Connelly was not Chief Investigator.

FUCHS: Well, this same booklet says Connelly was an investigator starting in March, the middle of March '41, but then in '42, October, he was appointed Executive Assistant to the Chairman, which would have been -- was after the time that Charlie Clark entered the Army, but Clark had, of course, the Associate Chief Counsel title, so there's some...

IRVIN: Well, frankly, it wasn't clear to the staff people either at that point in time, at least it wasn't to me. I think there was some infighting and jockeying for position, but I don't think that's unusual actually.

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FUCHS: No. Do you recall any particular, well, you might call them feuds, but any individuals who differed rather frequently with another, or seemed to have less respect for another individual...

IRVIN: No, well really the only one that I can think of and I wouldn't even call it a feud, I would just classify as maybe more professional jealousy, but I don't think Robby and Matt were close in the sense of being close friends. They worked together all right, but generally they both kind of went their own ways and Robby seemed to answer directly to Hugh Fulton and I think, I can't remember, I think Robby was there when I came on the staff, and I think he was brought in by Fulton. And Matt, I don't know who brought Matt in or whether Matt was a friend of Truman's beforehand or a friend of Bill Boyle's or what or how Matt actually got with the Committee. I honestly don't know.

FUCHS: Did he seem to be close to Boyle?

IRVIN: Yes, they seemed to be very good friends -- and Truman thought very highly of Matt, and most of the guys on the staff thought highly of Matt, liked him very much, very likeable guy.

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FUCHS: Now as you know, he resigned in December of '44, of course, but then Mr. Truman had resigned, but this record showed that he had been on four months leave of absence, prior to his resignation, which would have been August through November. Do you know anything of that?

IRVIN: No. I just remember as you bring it up now, that that's right, he was gone, and I never did understand or I don't think anybody on the staff did, at least nobody on the staff ever talked to me about why. Whether it was a personality conflict, or a jurisdictional conflict within the Committee or if he had some other assignment outside the Committee, I don't know. I really don't know. Generally speaking, the staff members were a pretty cohesive group. The younger guys all had about the same background, I would say, or the same age group interests, and enjoyed each other's social company as well. There was a lot of socializing outside Committee activities and it was a pretty happy family generally. And you could count on other guys, to get help from them if you had a problem in trying to solve a certain part of an investigation or a -- anybody and everybody would be

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helpful with an idea for you, yes. That was a great, great group of people. I thought, a wonderful experience.

FUCHS: Well, up until the time that Clark left, and Connelly, according to one record, became Executive Assistant to the Chairman, did you have any feeling that Connelly was closer to Mr. Truman than let's say, Fulton or others?

IRVIN: I would think in a -- let's put it this way, in a political sense, yes. I never thought of Hugh Fulton as being a political expert, and I don't think Hugh ever professed to be. Hugh was a brilliant attorney. He had a tremendous, tremendous capacity to see the big picture and to see how all the pieces fit together, and the ability to get right to the heart of issues as they came up. But Hugh was so -- such an intense individual and so, let's say oblivious, to others in getting the job done, that he was not what you would call a politic person. I think he enjoyed, all my observations were that he enjoyed the complete confidence of Harry Truman. And had complete respect for Truman's integrity and ability, too. He thought very highly of him. But I think as far as being a politic type person, Hugh was not; Matt Connelly was.

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So that would be my recollection of how that situation came about. I know Truman thought very highly of Matt, too.

FUCHS: What about Rudolph Halley, who came with the Committee as Executive Assistant to the Chief Counsel in June of '42 and subsequently became Chief Counsel in September '44?

IRVIN: Right. Rudy, again another brilliant guy, Hugh brought him down from New York City, very aggressive, very intelligent; and made quite a record for himself later as Chief Counsel for the Kefauver Committee. And my experiences with Rudy were -- well, let's see how I would describe this. Weren't the jolliest I would say, because he and I kind of crossed -- I won't say crossed each other, either, but we didn't get along possibly as well as I got along say with Hugh Fulton prior to that time. And, as an example of the things I was critical of, were things like sending so damn many investigators to New York City to get one guy and finding out that he wasn't even there, he was in Washington, which I thought was a waste of manpower and money; but that doesn't detract from the man's

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brilliance and his dedication to the job. He was a dedicated man. We didn't see eye-to-eye on how things should be done inside the Committee. I remember shortly after he became Chief Counsel, he called a -- our first staff meeting. I had mentioned to you earlier the delays in getting information in an investigation because the mail was signed by the Chief Counsel, and routed back to his office, and then down to the staff level. Consequently sometimes documents were lost or seemed to be. Sometimes a week or ten days would go by before you'd get your hands on a reply from say the War Department, or the Navy Department, or whatever. Highly embarrassing because if you hadn't heard from them and you couldn't find it in our pipeline, why, you'd call up and say, "Where the hell is the answer to our inquiry?" And they'd say, "Check your own office, buddy, we sent it to you a week ago."

So, in this first staff meeting Rudy was gung ho to build a team effort and he asked for ideas on how to make the Committee more efficient and do the job better. At which time I opened my big mouth and said I thought on investigations, that the investigators should sign their own inquiries to expedite

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getting the information back. Well, that was the last staff meeting we ever had and the idea was never accepted. Because there was a certain prestige in getting your name, I assume, before all agencies, and being the focal point for the power of the Committee. I just assumed at that point in time that it was a -- oh, a way of building personal power and, maybe I was looking at the other side of the coin, it's probably a more effective inquiry if it is signed by the Chief Counsel, rather than by a more lowly staff man. But the procedure didn't change and the problems continued in the terms of getting information as expeditiously as possible.

FUCHS: Yes.

IRVIN: But Rudy -- Rudy was a very, very bright guy and energetic as hell. And he later went on I guess, to become president of the New York City Council. I believe he was elected...

FUCHS: Well, didn't he become associated with [Averell] Harriman?

IRVIN: This I don't know, when I left the Committee -- as

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a matter of fact, one of the reasons I left the Committee, eventually, was because of my own personal inability to do what I thought was a satisfactory job with Rudy. When Truman left and Senator Mead of New York State succeeded him, I was given the assignment of being Executive Assistant to the new Chairman. And again here, you talk about titles, there was a little bit of -- the issue was a little bit foggy at points of time as to whether I was or wasn't, but I was set up in a special office and occupied the office and the title for a while; but there again, it's the same situation between Halley and myself as there was between Fulton and Matt Connelly, in that I was being put into a position of advising with the Chairman separately from the Chief Counsel. And things could, I suppose, in the Chief Counsel's mind, occur about which he would not know,

and which he wanted to know, and it was just – organization-wise it probably wasn't the right way to organize the thing. The conditions of working in that situation were just not conducive to being satisfied, so at some point in time there, why I pulled up stakes and left.

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FUCHS: And interestingly enough, Halley apparently resigned about two weeks after you did. Did you know at the time that he was going to do that?

IRVIN: No. No, I'll tell you something else funny if you -- I don't know whether you want this kind of stuff or not, but this knocked me out.

Under the setup on the Senate payroll, as I recall, I think the man's name was Oco Thompson, who was the disbursing agent for the Senate. He was dating a gal who had been connected with the Committee; and during the war none of us took vacations to speak of. I guess the phrase would be "accumulated annual leave." So, when I had decided I was going to leave, and resign, I got digging into how much accumulated annual leave I might have, and checked the law, and checked Oco Thompson, the disbursing agent, and nobody had ever raised the question before in the way of credit and so I was able to legally and properly convince the disbursing agent that I was entitled to much more than what they thought the rule said. Now there was a difference of six or eight weeks or ten weeks of pay or something, I've forgotten what the amount was, to get as a lump sum compensation for leave not taken

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during the course of my employment there. I think the only thing that nettled me about it, when Rudy resigned two weeks later, lo and behold, he did the same damn thing, and collected quite a substantial chunk of cash, because I had pioneered it two weeks before. No, I didn't know he was leaving when I left.

FUCHS: Do you know approximately when you became Executive Assistant to the Chairman?

IRVIN: It wouldn't have been too long after Mead took over the chairmanship. Now, I can't remember. He was a senior Democratic member of the Committee. In the normal course of events, then, as your records will show, they began to call it the Mead Committee. I think he picked me probably because I was from New York State, Buffalo, New York, and we had gotten along well on investigations where I had been with him out of the city on Committee matters, yes.

Another chap who was there, and he may still be around, Fripp Flanagan, who I understand later had the title Executive Assistant to the Chairman, or Chief Investigator to the Committee in the subsequent

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evolution.

FUCHS: What about Fripp Flanagan, anything else that would be of interest? We don't even have him on our initial list, but I have since...

IRVIN: The last time I was in Washington, which would have been '53, I went up on the Hill and found Frip and he was with some committee. It might be, if the successor committee to the old Truman Committee was still functioning, it might have been the same committee, I'm not sure. I remember he introduced me to Bobby [Robert] Kennedy one day and Pierre Salinger who were with -- or maybe Frip was with that Committee. Was that -- I think it was McClelland's committee at that time.

FUCHS: So, about when did Mr. Flanagan come with the Committee?

IRVIN: Boy, I can't remember. It was toward the -- toward the end of my time there I think.

FUCHS: Was Mr. Truman still Chairman of the Committee?

IRVIN: No, I can't remember whether Frip came on the staff before Truman left or not. I really don't recall.

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FUCHS: Was he simply an investigator initially?

IRVIN: I think so, I think so. I used to tease him a lot when we would be in the Federal Building somewhere on an investigation. I told him you could spot the FBI men anyplace in the USA, you know, and I always liked to needle him on that subject.

FUCHS: Why was that?

IRVIN: Well, because -- well, at that point in time and some of my buddies who were gone out of law school and into the Bureau, were told how to dress, and you could almost see them, you know, especially in the Federal Building. You would see these guys with their hats at a certain angle and dressed in just a certain way. And I'd always elbow Frip and say, "There are two of your buddies Frip, there are two agents."

FUCHS: Where did he get the name Frip?

IRVIN: I don't know. Francis I think was his real name. But he was from New York State somewhere because he was a friend of Senator Mead's, too. In fact, I think somewhere in my collection of pictures I've got a picture of the three of us.

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FUCHS: Boyle, who was investigator according to this list I've referred to several times, had a write-up in *Who's Who* in which he was described as, "'41 an Assistant Counsel," and then "'42 to '44 Executive Assistant to Chairman." Do you have any comments on that or did you ever feel that Boyle was something more than just an investigator or not?

IRVIN: Well, he had open access to Truman's office and knew the staff in Truman's senatorial office, and I just never really paid much attention to Bill except as a friend and didn't, as I say,

didn't ever really work on any investigations with him specifically that I recall. I always just assumed in my own mind he was a personal friend of the Senator's, and was familiar with Missouri politics. That -- and his ready access in and out of Truman's office, and he was there more than he was in the Committee staff office, as I recall. I very seldom bumped into Bill in terms of Committee work. I'd see him more at parties than I would in the working day, but that's only because I was in a different section

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of the building and different area of activity than he was.

FUCHS: On July 1, '43, according to the record, George Meader became Assistant Counsel, that was assistant to Fulton. What do you recall of him; how did he happen to come with the Committee?

IRVIN: Well, again, he was -- my introduction to him was that George was a University of Michigan graduate and I think maybe a classmate of Hugh's, I think maybe, I'm not sure, but it seems to me he was a classmate. He was introduced as the Assistant Counsel as I recall. I couldn't even tell you now what investigations George handled when he came with the Committee.

FUCHS: Some of the others that were there when you started would have been -- Walter Hehmeyer.

IRVIN: Walter, yes. I can try to give you the names of the ones I recall. There was Walter Hehmeyer, Herb Malletz, Wilbur Sparks, Frank Parks, Robinson, Connelly, and there was another chap, and I'll be darned if I can think of his name, a Jewish boy. I think his last name began with an L.

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FUCHS: Donald M. Lathrom?

IRVIN: No, not Don Lathrom, no. Now, Don was there too, I'd forgotten all about Don. Don is deceased now I believe. What the heck was this guy's name? [Morris Lasker, per Robert Irvin] But he didn't stay too long after I had arrived on the staff. I want to say Lazarus, but that isn't it. Those are the principal guys that I remember, the names I just ticked off.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything of Lathrom and his background, and what he

IRVIN: Well, let's see. Don was a big, heavy-set guy, easy going. As I recall, his wife was, oh, what was the big moving company, storage and transfer company in Washington, his wife...

FUCHS: Smith?

IRVIN: You know, I don't remember even the name of the company now.

FUCHS: Well, "You don't make a move without calling Smith."

IRVIN: Yeah, it must have been. I think his wife was Smith's daughter or something like that. Don's

*Morris Lasker--Robert Irvin
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principal investigations at that time were -- involved the aircraft industry and when I had just come with the Committee, they had just issued a blockbuster of a report charging that our aircraft were inferior to the Japanese planes in performance, the ones that we were trying to fight the war with. And this was Don's baby at that time. I worked with him in some later investigations. I was on an investigation involving the quality of engines being installed in some of our combat airplanes, and the company was in Ohio. I don't want to say Curtiss-Wright -- now maybe it was.

FUCHS: There was a Curtiss-Wright investigation now.

IRVIN: Well, that was it. This involved faulty engines where there seemed to be an excessive number of crashes of a certain type aircraft and which were mechanical and not pilot failures, pilot error, So -- but Don's bailiwick was principally aviation:

FUCHS: Do you know why he resigned on August 31, '44?

IRVIN: No, I remember that he did leave. Don had some pretty bad times. In fact, out here in California one time a good many years later, I got a phone call

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from Don. He was up in LA in some hotel and on his uppers, broke. Don needed money and had set fire to his hotel room and was being charged for the cost of that.

FUCHS: Too bad.

IRVIN: Yes, it was very sad to see a guy go like that. I think he's dead. It seems to me somebody told me he died. But he was a kind of an easy-going guy, very thoughtful. I think he smoked a pipe or cigars and pondered questions very carefully, nice guy, just a nice guy. No, I don't recall why Don left, no.

FUCHS: Well, I was wondering if it might have been something to do with the campaign; or maybe just -- Mr. Truman was leaving at that time.

IRVIN: It could be. Or he may have had another opportunity. I'm trying to think where he did go and my memory is very hazy on this. If I would have to guess, I would guess that he had another opportunity, whether it was with another governmental agency, or Civil Aeronautics Board, or Civil Aeronautics Administration, I just really don't remember what happened to him.

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FUCHS: Do you recall a Harry S. Magee?

IRVIN: Magee, I thought of him right after I had named off those names, two other names, Russ Searle and Harry Magee.

FUCHS: Searle was who?

IRVIN: Searle. He was an investigator. Later on I think George Meader brought him in.

FUCHS: Oh, that was after the Truman period?

IRVIN: I think so. Yes, I remember Harry Magee.

FUCHS: He served from April 1943 to April 31st, '45 according to one list.

IRVIN: Yes, he was a character. Very loquacious and given to big words. His reports on his investigations were a thrill to read because they were the wordiest that -- he had the bureaucratic jargon down pat and would never say it simply if it could be said in a complicated way. And I can't remember what the heck Harry worked on. But he was kind of a kick to talk to.

FUCHS: How about Haven Sawyer? Anything special about him?

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IRVIN: Just that he was a very nice old gentleman. I never had the feeling that Haven was hired for his investigative ability. I always had the feeling that he was accommodated because he was a friend of Senator Brewster's, but he obviously had investigations, but what they were I don't think I paid enough attention to.

Walter Hehmeyer, you asked about him. Walter was probably one of my closest friends on the Committee and Walter and I roomed together for a while until I got married and he got married. And actually the reason why I went into the public relations business in California was because I was so fascinated by what he was doing for the Truman Committee. I probably looked over his shoulder and was as interested in how he did his job as I was my own; and always thought to myself that at some point in time I'm going to get into the public relations business. So, here in California about twenty years ago I did. I've been at it ever since.

FUCHS: You have?

The Truman Committee generally had a good press and good public relations, do you think much of this was due to him?

IRVIN: Very much. Walter was a very able guy and understood

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the workings of the press, understood their problems and their deadlines and how to present material to them and get it out and be available to answer their questions. He did an excellent job. In fact, I've always credited Walter with a great deal of Truman's popularity with the

Truman Committee and its -- the image that it built up through Walter's efforts in handling the press for the Committee.

FUCHS: Were there many problems with leaks other than you just mentioned that you recall?

IRVIN: Yeah, but I can't remember that they were ever traceable. In fact one, I mentioned this tanklighter investigation. I had written the basic report and it involved the ordering of, oh, I've forgotten, twelve hundred tanklighters, which obviously meant an invasion was coming in the timetable, and so it was highly classified information. We kept it under lock and key in the Committee offices, and when the report was prepared, the copies were numbered and signed out to the member Senators on the Committee. And this was in the procedure of preparing the report, and before it was finally issued all Senators would have the

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opportunity to see the whole report, agree or disagree, or modify, or make recommendations for changes if they didn't agree with something, or thought something should be emphasized more than it was.

So, this was a confidential draft for Committee use only and it had a lot of classified information in it. And lo and behold it appeared in Drew Pearson's column, and all hell broke loose again and the only copies out were those in Senator's hands that I know of, and the Chief Counsel's hands. But it seemed either there was a leak in the Government Printing Office, where the report was printed or -- well you couldn't pinpoint where the leak could occur. I guess it could start with the investigator and through the secretary that typed up the copy, or through the printing office when the galleys were made, or when the draft was submitted to a Senator or -- there's just no way to know. But my assumption was that a Senator, without knowing which one, had leaked it to Drew Pearson. That's kind of a -- it's a shock, too, for a young guy to be working on something so confidential and pick up the *Washington Post* and there it is.

But generally, I don't think there were many leaks

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out of the Committee. I don't -- that was the only one that really stuck in my mind, but that is not the one that I thought of in connection with Charlie Clark's problem, but -- and I still don't remember what that investigation was. I guess you'd have to say those were two leaks that I was aware of.

FUCHS: In the same area of military security, do you have any recollections of the atomic energy, Hanford in particular?

IRVIN: Yes. Now you bring up something that you -- reminds me -- that was Robby's investigation; Robinson's. And we -- and as I wasn't directly involved in this and only knew about it in the normal flow of information inside the office between investigators; but we knew there was this tremendous investment being made in this mysterious plant, and huge quantities of material going in and "nothing coming out but bubble gum" was the phrase at that point in time.

And no, I don't think we ever did find out. I don't think anybody on the Committee knew, or at least it didn't filter down to the staff level while I was there, that this was an atomic plant.

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FUCHS: Did you know anything of the -- well, "the calling off of the dogs," so to speak, the investigation -- by way of a visit of the Secretary of War Stimson to Mr. Truman?

IRVIN: I have a vague recollection that, yes, there was something like that happened, but this was a little above my level in the Committee structure. This would filter back, you know.

FUCHS: I thought there might have been something said about it, you know, you never know.

IRVIN: Yes, vaguely. Yes, because -- Robby, particularly, was a bulldog in an investigation, and he was determined, to find out what was going on. I guess the military were just as determined that nobody was going to find out. That wouldn't surprise me and I would assume that if that representation were made to Truman, that he would call off the dogs.

FUCHS: You never heard anything about Fred Canfil in this respect?

IRVIN: No. No, I didn't.

FUCHS: What's your first recollection of Mr. Truman? When

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did you meet him?

IRVIN: Boy, you know I can't honestly say when I first met him. I was introduced to him not too long, I'm sure, after I started on the staff. And I think my first impression is still my impression, just a very likeable, decent, straightforward guy. He had tremendous personal charm, and no airs, he was just an old shoe type person. I remember occasions sitting around -- he had what he called the "Doghouse" which was a little room off of his Senate Office Building room where he kept a refrigerator and where the newsmen, if they wanted a drink during the day and couldn't get one, would know they could walk in there and help themselves.

And I remember reminiscing, or sitting in a meeting where he and Bill Boyle, and I don't know who else was there, just reminiscing at the end of the day about what was going on and we were having a drink. He himself brought up the Pendergast charges, or situation, and I can still remember him saying, "Well, he never asked me," (and this was just, you know, end of the day bull-session type conversation). I still remember Mr. Truman saying, "Well, he never asked me to do a

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dishonest thing, ever. And he knew if he did, I wouldn't do it anyway." And this to me was most impressive as a young guy, because I'm sure it was an honest and sincere statement coming from this man. Now, I always had just tremendous respect for him.

He was nice enough when he accepted the Democratic nomination for the vice presidency, to come down and call the staff together and come around and shake hands with each one. At first he got us all together and gave us a little explanation of what he was about to do, or what he had agreed to do; and he indicated to us he did it with kind of a heavy heart because his real love was the Senate and in the Senate his first love was this committee. But that his party had called him and he was obligated to accept the call, and therefore, he was resigning as Chairman. Then he was nice enough to come around to each one of us and shake hands and make some personal reference to our participation in the work of the Committee. And it was a very touching and a very -- that was quite a measure of the man. I told you earlier, he then, later, gave us each a copy of his resignation speech on the Senate floor in which he was kind enough to refer to us all by name and

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inscribe a little personal message on the speech, which is one of the treasures I've kept over these years.

I do remember one other thing that tickled me, and again, marks the size of the man to me. After he became Vice President, my dad, who is a rock-ribbed Republican, and who thought President Roosevelt was insane, happened to come through Washington. I asked him what he would like to see and what he would like to do, and he said, oh, he didn't know. I said, "Would you like to meet the Vice President?"

"Oh, sure, could I do that?"

And I said, "Well, I think you can. I'll try to arrange a meeting if you would like to do that."

Yes, he'd love to do that. So Harry Vaughan was in Truman's Capitol office and was his aide, so to speak. So I called Harry and explained my father was in town and would like very much to meet the Vice President if it could be arranged, and would an appointment be possible.

Harry said, "Why, sure," and he'd let me know. So, he called back, as I remember, and gave us a time certain, and we went up to the Vice President's office in the Capitol building. Truman was presiding over the

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Senate and Harry Vaughan -- well, my dad's eyes were just bugging you know, at seeing the Congress and seeing the Capitol building and being in the Vice President's office. Harry Vaughan met us and was very gracious to my dad and said Truman was presiding over the Senate, but he'd send a message in that Mr. Irvin was here and get him off the Senate rostrum. And my father protested, "Oh, now, don't interrupt the business of the Senate."

Vaughan did, and Truman came back in and he couldn't have been nicer to my dad. He was just most hospitable, courteous, praised my work for the Committee, you know, which was -- made my dad feel real good. Then when we finished the meeting (my dad's wife was with him too), Truman asked if there was anything that they would like to do that he could do for them. And

they were tongue-tied at the situation, and couldn't think of anything. And he said, "Well, would you like to see the Senate in session?"

"Oh, we'd love to," you know, "love to go see it."

So, he called Vaughan over and scribbled out a personal pass for my dad and said, "Please take Mr. and Mrs. Irvin to my box in the gallery," the Vice

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President's reserved portion of the gallery. I would assume my dad still has that little personally signed pass to the Senate gallery.

To me it was just such a nice thing for him to do, no call for him to do it, and he went out of his way to be hospitable. So, my dad, a rock-ribbed Republican thought he was a pretty fine person. And a week later he was President. This just happened a week before Roosevelt died. So, those are the little things that, well, they just mark the kind of a man he is. I don't know how else to say it.

FUCHS: Very good.

There was a General Lowe who was assigned by the War Department...

IRVIN: Right. Yes.

FUCHS: ...to the Committee, what do you recall of...

IRVIN: I had forgotten him. He was -- and I have been on some investigative trips out of town where he was in charge for the military. I never was quite sure what his capacity was. He was rather -- he was a large man, and I always thought a little pompous and a little

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overbearing, and maybe, in my judgment, that covered up his lack of abilities in some areas; but he was an impressive man and he believed in, well throwing his weight around isn't the word or phrase really, in establishing his position forcefully in whatever he was doing. I've forgotten what he went on to do after that. Didn't he...

FUCHS: I believe he did go on one special mission for President Truman.

IRVIN: I think so and I think I remember being a little bit surprised that he was sent, because I just didn't think he measured up to it and -- this is now -- my contacts weren't sufficient to really pass an opinion but this was the judgment of him I had of him at that time. I had forgotten all about him until you mentioned him.

FUCHS: He had the title "Executive." What do you think would be the meaning of that title?

IRVIN: Well, I just assessed that the way I described the guy that this was the idea, that because of his rank in the military he had the prestige and authority

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to order things done or to get at the situation. I think maybe this was the theory behind his position with the Committee, to give the Committee a top-level entree into the military level so that we could speak with some authority and know whether or not we were getting factual information and getting it quickly. Because there was always this -- Tolan probably told you there was always a lot of -- a lot of jockeying where if we were hot on the trail of something they didn't want us to know about, or where there had been an error of some kind that we wanted to expose, and they wanted to conceal, there was always a jockeying of wits and strategies to either conceal the fact or disguise them or divert you into other directions. This was always the battle that went on.

FUCHS: Does the term "Paul Revering" the investigation mean anything to you?

IRVIN: Not that particular one. I can remember Tolan had -- he had a whole list of -- and he used to just knock me out. He had a whole list of descriptions for various tactics they used in a hearing. One was called a "Statue of Liberty play," where the officer being -- have you heard all these?

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FUCHS: No, I haven't. I'm just glad to hear what you...

IRVIN: Well, one was the Statue of Liberty play, where say there was a General testifying, or an Admiral, and if he didn't know the answer to that question, he'd raise his hand and say, "Well, I have Captain so and so in the room who will be glad to answer this question later," and Captain so and so again would raise his hand and say, "Well, Lieutenant so and so has the answer to that question and will be happy to provide you. It's the old -- the handoff of the hot question, they didn't want to answer. I mean this was inside the Navy, too, for example, or the Army. They kidded about these things, too. They had -- another one was the "doctrine of apparent frankness," where the witness would say, "Senator, I'm glad you asked that question and I want to explain it to you in complete detail. And then he'd launch into such a complicated, endless explanation that by the time he finished, everyone would be so confused, the original question would be lost. It was just like a red herring. They called it the doctrine of apparent frankness. You could just see the play work when it would start.

There was a lot of horseplay on the outside, you

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know, of wisecracking about what the jockeying was that went on in these things.

I was trying to think if there were any others that -- another one -- what the heck, I can't remember what he called this, but if a question were asked that the guy didn't want to answer, because it was a hot question, he would say, "Senator, I'm going to cover that later in my testimony if you don't mind, and with your permission I would like to defer answering that point

until the proper part of my testimony comes along." And of course, the testimony would go on and on and on and on and Senators would start to leave, and pretty soon the hearing was adjourned and that question was never answered. It was a great battle of wits. And everybody on -- everyone on both sides thought he was doing the best job he could do for the war effort.

Another man who was assigned to the Committee at one time was Miles Knowles. I don't know whether you -- he was a special assistant to the Secretary of War, an attorney from Detroit. I don't know whether Miles is still alive or not.

FUCHS: What do you recall of him?

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IRVIN: Well, I became associated with him when I resigned from the Committee. He was a very able trial lawyer in Michigan. And his job, like Tolan's job, his job was to facilitate Committee inquiries to the War Department. In other words he was the conduit through which information came back to the Committee and he accepted the inquiries from the Committee. And again he was doing the job he thought best for the War Department, and again, there were lots of battles of wits.

FUCHS: Did you become associated with him in law or in public relations?

IRVIN: No, strangely enough it was a firm called Washington Business Services and he and a man by the name of Allen Dean, also from Detroit who had been with the Detroit Chamber of Commerce, set up a partnership with offices in Detroit and offices in Washington, to do all kinds of governmental services for private businesses, some lobbying and generally representation for business from governmental agencies. They labeled it a public relations firm, and asked me to establish and manage the Washington office, which I did until I left Washington. So, that's

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how I became acquainted with Knowles, he was the War Department liaison officer with the Committee. He left, I assume, I've forgotten when he left the War -- I guess he must have left before I resigned from the Committee because he was established in this business.

FUCHS: Was there an Amsberg or something?

IRVIN: Peter Amsberg.

FUCHS: Ansberry.

IRVIN: Ansberry, yes, that's -- I'd forgotten all about Peter. Yes, a good lawyer.

FUCHS: What was his position?

IRVIN: He was an investigator as I recall. I don't know how long Pete stayed with it, but a great big guy, again a very likeable guy, a socially prominent guy as I recall in Washington. I don't think he was with the Committee too long. Do you have his record? I would be curious to know.

FUCHS: I don't have him on this list, but Walter Hehmeyer mentioned him and I believe Harold Robinson mentioned him. Unfortunately my memory isn't too good to remember

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just what he did say if he did give it to me.

IRVIN: I think he was there when I was hired and he was kind of a--well, he'd get to be--he'd be intense on what he was doing and not really communicative in the normal business sense or the social sense of the way a big office ran. And then Pete would have an idea in his mind and he'd be oblivious to anybody else being around. I never got to know him very well.

Another man, I think his first name was Norm, and he was a very, very sharp young man.

FUCHS: Norm Lasker. [Actually the Morris E. Lasker referred to by Mr. Irvin on page 50 above.]

IRVIN: I'm quite sure his last name was Lasker. Now, what his first name was I don't recall now, but it seems to me to be Norm. I can picture the guy, but that's...

FUCHS: Anything interesting about him?

IRVIN: No, just that he was an investigator, very, very intelligent young guy, and, I've forgotten where he went to law school. I believe he was a lawyer and a very able guy, but he -- I forgot, maybe he -- maybe he was drafted, I can't -- I think he did go in the Army.

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FUCHS: We might go over a couple of these who were really nothing more than names, and in some cases incomplete dates to me. William S. Cole was an investigator beginning in April '43 and apparently ran up to around '46.

IRVIN: Yes.

FUCHS: What was his background?

IRVIN: Well, Bill was kind of -- I always thought of him as a country lawyer, very commonsense type guy. He had a delightful New England accent. He was a friend of Senator Brewster's, and I worked on a couple of things with Bill. I'm trying to remember what they were. It seems to me one involved housing. As a matter of fact, I think Bill was the attorney who moved my admission to the Supreme Court Bar in Washington. I'd have to check the -- check my certificate of acceptance to the Supreme Court Bar, but I think that Bill did that for me. Very nice man, very fine family man. But more a country lawyer type with lots of stories and very slow measured approach to things.

FUCHS: When would you have been admitted to the Supreme Court Bar?

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IRVIN: Well, it would have been in that period when I was on the Committee staff. I think Senator Ferguson of Michigan -- I've forgotten now what the requirements were, but you had to have certain sponsors who attested your application for admission, and Senator Ferguson, Homer Ferguson was one of them I recall. I've forgotten who the other one was, if there was another one, I can't remember. And I'm pretty sure Bill Cole made the motion for my admission there.

FUCHS: What about Joe Martinez?

IRVIN: Well, Joe was a good friend of mine and had worked for Senator Chavez of New Mexico; had been his secretary I believe over in the House side. Joe enjoyed life immensely, he's a lot of fun, and he got around quite a bit, and he knew Capitol Hill extremely well. Humorous fellow. I remember humorous things again. The Senators had a little swimming pool and a steam room and a massage room down, oh, I forgot, I think it was on the first level of the building, down below the main entrance. And one day Joe said, "Hey, do you want a steam bath?"

And I said, "What do you mean?"

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He said, "Well, we'll go down to the Senators' steam room and get a steam bath and a rub."

I said, "Oh, come on Joe," because I think somebody, I think Bill Boyle got into trouble. This was an exclusive club for the Senators. It seems to me it was Bill Boyle who got trapped in there by some Senator who raised hell because, you know, somebody from a staff position was in a senatorial club or private preserve. And I said, "Joe," I said, "come on, man," I said, "you're liable to get us both canned."

"Oh, hell no," he said, "no, we'll go get a rub."

So, he went over to a liquor store and bought a pint and put it in a paper bag, and we trudged on down. And he opened the door and there were some colored boys in there that ran the show and the colored guy waved us off and indicated come back in five minutes. So, we marched around the Senate Office Building and came back in five minutes and he waved us in and rushed us into these little dressing cubicles. They had a little separate cubicles that had a bed, you know, and a chair, and a place to hang your clothes and take a nap or whatever. And the colored guy said, "Well, strip down," he said, "wrap a sheet around

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you and put it over your head and I'll come back and get you. Don't move or don't say anything."

So, I'm wondering if this is my last day on the job, and pretty soon he came back in and hustled me out through the locker room and into the steam room and sat me down and said, "Stay there." So, I stayed in the steam room and I guess Joe was in there too. Steam flowing all around, you can't tell who's in there. He said, "You stay here until I come get you." And pretty soon he came in and gave me a glass of ice water and I still remember this; the first steam bath I think I'd ever had. And then pretty soon he came and got me and took me out into a massage room where they

had these big marble tables with hot and cold running water and gave you a scrub-down and a rub, and I forget whether we got a salt rub or not. This is all for a pint of liquor.

And then he said, "Stay here until I come get you." And pretty soon he came dashing back in and threw a sheet over me and whisked me into one of these little cubicles and said, "Go ahead, take a nap." You know after a steam bath and a rub you're just completely relaxed. So, I'm in there stretched out very comfortably

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and my hands behind my head and I hear the door open out in the entrance, and I hear a real cheery whistle marching into the room, and I thought, "Well, I wonder who that is." And pretty soon the door to my cubicle opened and in marched Senator Mead of New York who was on our Committee. And he looked at me and I said, "Hi, Senator," I'm stretched out on this bed, and I thought that was the end of my employment, you know. And old Senator Mead just said, "I'm sorry, Bob, you just stay right there, don't let me disturb you." And with that he went on to someplace else and I never heard any more about it. But I never went back there again, either.

Just sidelights, some funny little things.

FUCHS: Pretty good.

IRVIN: They stick with you over the years.

FUCHS: Martinez came to the Committee, why, do you think?"

IRVIN: Well, let's see, I can't answer you that. I think my first awareness of Joe was the fact he had been hired as an investigator just like the rest of us, assigned a desk and given some investigations to work on. I assumed it was because of his close relationship with

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Senator Chavez of New Mexico.

FUCHS: I was just wondering if he had been in the Senator's office as a principal assistant; why he would leave to become a...

IRVIN: Well, I can't remember the time. You'd have to check the records as to when Chavez left the House and came over to the Senate side. And I think Joe was his secretary on the Senate side. Whether or not he had a position with Chavez on the Senate side I don't know.

FUCHS: You spoke of Mr. Truman's senatorial office and the "Doghouse," what about the Committee offices? Did he have a desk there? What was the physical arrangement there?

IRVIN: No. No, he operated out of his own office. And the physical setup as I recall, Hugh Fulton's office was on the fourth floor, and I think it was 449; Charlie Clark was on the third floor and he had a small suite of offices I think it was 315 in the Old Senate Office Building. The

staff room was room 160 , and it was a large room in the basement of the building, below ground level. The windows were about at ground level. And

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almost all of the staff, as such, the investigating staff was in that room. It would have held secretaries and investigators, I don't know, a huge room. There would have been, four, eight, maybe ten, ten desks in there for investigators as I remember, plus secretarial desks, plus a lot of file cabinets. A lot of files along one wall of that room. No, Truman didn't have a special office as Chairman of the Committee, that I knew of in any event, because anytime he had any occasion to contact him, why, we would go up to his office.

FUCHS: He didn't come down to the staff offices much?

IRVIN: Very rarely. Very rarely. No, the staff would come to him.

FUCHS: Yeah.

IRVIN: Including Fulton would go to his office I'm sure. I'm trying to remember if I ever saw Harry Truman in Hugh Fulton's office. I don't recall an instance when I did.

Which reminds me of another man who worked for the Committee who is in California; you may have looked him up in San Francisco, Sam Stewart?

FUCHS: I didn't have time.

IRVIN: Sam is a wheel with the Bank of America. Sam was brought in as a Special Counsel on the renegotiation of war contracts and that was an investigation I was assigned to. I worked with Sam for a good many months on that.

FUCHS: You did?

IRVIN: Yes. I've seen Sam, oh, two or three times out here in California since.

FUCHS: Any particular problems you recall in connection with the renegotiations?

IRVIN: Well, that was a tough one and I think a lot of it was over my head, too. The way we tried to get at the problem was just by taking every contract that had been renegotiated, and analyzing it mathematically to see precisely what percentage of the contract price was renegotiated, and then more or less graph these to get the maximum and minimum standards and find out -- we were trying to find out how the different

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services approached this particular problem. And there was -- I'd have to go back and read the reports that Sam wrote. There were variations. In other words, one department might be treating its contractors in a different way from the way another department was. And what we were

trying to get, of course, was uniformity in the treatment of defense contractors, and to get the departments to justify what they were doing, which was kind of difficult at times.

FUCHS: Did you have any contacts with Eddie Locke?

IRVIN: Eddie Locke.

FUCHS: He was an assistant to Donald Nelson at WPB and I just...

IRVIN: Yes, I did and I'm trying to remember what it might be. I remember the name and I know I must have, because I was involved in that War Production Board investigation. I'm trying to think of the guy's name from GE that was a special something or other over in that agency. I think his name was Reed, Leonard Reed. I think he was an officer of General Electric Corporation. Yes, I remember, I remember the name Locke and I'm

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trying to put a face together with it and I don't remember specifically what...

FUCHS: He was a tall, very slender, good looking man who more or less took over where Nelson left off as a special assistant and ambassador and so forth over the years for Mr. Truman. Became a special assistant in the White House.

IRVIN: I think probably my contact with him would have been minimal and I might have sat in some meetings with him and maybe saw him at hearings that were conducted by the Committee, but I don't recall any direct, specific contacts with him. I remember the name, though, now that you bring it up.

FUCHS: You've mentioned John Tolan and I'm wondering if you have any other remarks or reminiscences about Tolan and also John Abbott, who was a Navy liaison.

IRVIN: Yes, I didn't get to know Abbott as well as I did Tolan. I wouldn't say I knew Tolan well. I enjoyed him immensely because he had a delightful sense of humor. Always gulping vitamin pills to restore his energies. Enjoyed partying when we were out of town

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on investigations after the day's work was over, but beyond that, just that he was a very quick, witty guy, a very likeable guy.

FUCHS: Nothing that stands out in particular about the Navy liaison operation?

IRVIN: Well, in the beginning it was damn poor, because -- and I think it improved as time went on and I think Tolan helped to improve it, too. But I think specifically now of the investigation on tanklighters. The issue was -- had the Navy, through its own Bureau of Ships, with its Annapolis graduates, designed a seaworthy vessel to move tanks from ship to shore for invasion? Andrew Higgins in New Orleans said, "Hell, no, they haven't designed a seaworthy vessel and I have," and as I recall the situation at that point in time, the Navy had ordered eleven

or twelve hundred lighters for one of the initial invasions of the Pacific whether it was Guadalcanal or what it was, I don't remember now. And Higgins said it would be suicide to send our boys ashore in these vessels, and protested so strongly -- and I think the Truman Committee itself (this was one of the early things I got into), the Truman Committee I

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believe forced a comparative test of the respective boats, I guess you'd call them, lighters. And the upshot of the test was the Navy cancelled out, overnight, I think all but twenty-eight lighters, and converted over to the Higgins design. But I'm talking from memory which is fuzzy.

They later tried to prove to us that their design was seaworthy, by actually using them in one of the invasions in the Pacific, and claiming that the casualties were no greater than, or something to this effect, but it was never very convincing testimony.

And the thing, when you asked about the degree of cooperation, I recite this because getting information out of the Navy at that point in time was extremely difficult. And I always had the belief that the Annapolis grads had a very close-knit club inside the Navy, and if one made a mistake the others protected him. Because it was very, very rough and tough to get accurate information or get responsibility pinpointed for these decisions that were being made. It wasn't pleasant either. I mean it was -- you had to be pretty aggressive and you just had to throw your weight around, throw the weight of the Senate around, too,

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and having the backing, too. This was the great thing about Truman and the way he had his Committee organized. You always got one hundred percent backing. Of course, you had to be right, too. But that improved as the years went on. Both the War Department and the Navy improved that liaison setup, and I think I mentioned Miles Knowles as one, and Tolan for the Navy. We got a hell of a lot better cooperation as time went on because the Committee also, as you no doubt know, when it issued a critical report, as a matter of policy always submitted it in advance to the agency criticized. They had the opportunity to correct it or challenge it or point out factual errors, and the Committee always wanted to be certain that it was factually correct, and this was impressive to me out of law school, seeing how government functioned, and the insistence of the Committee on accuracy in its reports.

FUCHS: Now this was already in process, this method of advance notice, when you joined the Committee.

IRVIN: As far as I know, yes.

FUCHS: The idea was to...

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IRVIN: Well, I'm reasonably sure it was Hugh Fulton's idea. Because this was just the way Hugh would operate. He would have wanted to be absolutely certain of his facts and when he was he wasn't afraid to defend his conclusions. A very logical man, and so they always got advance notice.

I remember one instance that came out, not too long after I was there, when the rubber shortage occurred. And I think Robinson worked on this investigation too, come to think of it, when there just wasn't enough rubber for the war machine and the civilian vehicles. So, the Committee had prepared a very drastic report, and if I remember, the conclusions in it were a national speed limit of, let's say 40 miles an hour, to conserve the rubber on vehicles. The rationing of tires, accelerating the synthetic rubber plants, accelerating the construction and production from them. And this report, as all of them were, was submitted to the White House, and in advance of its release to the Senate. And I remember the shock waves that went through. We had been told in the hearings, "This is no problem. There is no problem. There is no shortage, there are ample facilities and

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blah, blah, blah." So, the Committee came out with quite a stringent report, but before it was released to the Senate and to the public, the White House scooped the Committee and came out with its own program. And I think the only difference in the White House plan, was a difference of five miles an hour in the national speed limit. And, of course, the headlines and the credit for having done this accrued to the White House. I think [Bernard] Baruch was assigned...

FUCHS: Yes.

IRVIN: ...czar of that program or some such thing.

FUCHS: The Baruch report on rubber.

IRVIN: Yeah. But that's an example where the Committee did the job and called attention to the problem and pointed out the solution; and it was effective; and as far as the credit goes, why, that's a political matter, I suppose, so the job was done anyway. But it's an example of how they did submit things in advance and ran that risk, and for politicians that's a big risk.

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FUCHS: It's frequently been remarked that the Committee reports were all unanimous, there were no dissenting reports. To what do you ascribe this?

IRVIN: I think this generally is a combination of Truman and Fulton and this was always impressive to me because there were political differences, obviously, as there always are between the two parties in representation on the Committee. I think it was their policy of making certain every Senator on the Committee had a complete and full opportunity to have all the facts, had a complete and full opportunity to edit the reports, and to make his position known; and I think probably on the level of the Senators on the Committee when they were deciding a critical issue as to what would be said publicly. I'm sure there were major concessions from both parties. I think they are all pretty damn patriotic guys and they were determined to do a job.

This -- again, I come back -- I keep saying these dumb things, but this was very inspiring to me fresh out of law school, to see these men who were there because of their political ability, putting

the interest of the nation ahead of their own political positions, and not jockeying for position inside the Committee, or

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using the Committee to jockey for position. A very, very inspiring thing for a young guy. I think old Senator Connally, who was on the Committee at that time, and he was a pretty strong-willed guy, and had his own fixed opinions on the way things should be said and done, and somehow Truman and Fulton were able to reach a unanimity of opinion among these different personalities. I think a lot of it again is Hugh Fulton's tremendous capacity to acquire facts and to present them in such a logical way that you just couldn't argue about the conclusions; and always making sure that if you didn't have the facts right, that somebody had them, they had the opportunity to present them.

FUCHS: Did you ever have occasion to observe Senator Truman's relations with the other Senators on the Committee?

IRVIN: Only in -- no, the staff was never privy to those sessions where they finally settled a report -- things were settled on what would be finally said in a report, that was something that was done by the Senators and Hugh Fulton and Truman. But in the hearings, and in -- just in the general meetings of Senators on the

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Senate floor, or off the Senate floor, or in corridors, or in offices, Harry Truman was very well-liked by all of them that I could see. The only guy who was ever -- ever maybe looked with a jaundiced eye or was more skeptical than any of the rest was Owen Brewster. And I can remember on many occasions being called up to Brewster's office to justify or explain the facts of, whatever the investigation was as I found them. And again I'm sure from this standpoint he didn't want any distortion of the facts either. I never remember an instance in which he tried to slant anything coming out of the Committee, but he was -- he was very cautious and very -- I won't say overly cautious, but he just wanted to be damned sure in his own mind that it was as it -- I mean it was being told the way it was. So, he was, maybe, more skeptical than the other Senators, but this was never evident to my awareness in any of the Committee hearings, you know, that that attitude on his part existed, because when they ran a hearing, just pretty generally they were a team. They were a team.

FUCHS: Were there any Senators who seemed to carry a big part of the load, to you, of the work of the Committee?

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IRVIN: Yes, one in particular was Homer Ferguson of Michigan, who was a district attorney, I guess, before he came to the Senate, and he was a crackerjack investigator and he enjoyed it. He was a pleasure to work with because he was very thorough, and very -- a real bulldog, he would just stay with it, you know, he worked very hard.

Let me think, I'll try to remember who the rest were. Carl Hatch was on it, Jim Tunnen of Delaware was on it. Boy, I hadn't tried to think who the guys were who were on the Committee

at that point in time. Magnuson -- not Magnuson, [Mon] Walgren, the Senator from Washington was on it as I recall. Joe Ball of Minnesota was on it. There was another -- he was a former newsman, I guess, and another guy who was very good at analyzing a situation quickly and getting to the heart of the issue. Harley Kilgore of West Virginia. He was energetic, but I never felt that he was as sharp as some of the other Senators in being able to really pinpoint what the issues were, but nonetheless, he was a strong and active participant in the Committee.

FUCHS: What about Harold Burton?

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IRVIN: I never felt that he was as active as some of the other Senators, perhaps, in the functioning of the Committee. A complete gentleman, and just a very nice guy; and he and Truman were good, good friends. I think he was Republican from Ohio, wasn't he? Truman later appointed him to the Supreme Court. Just a very fine gentleman, but not as active as some of the others.

FUCHS: When they ironed out their reports, was that generally in a meeting in Mr. Truman's office?

IRVIN: I can't tell you whether they had a bigger meeting room. I'm sure some of them were thrashed out in the so-called "Doghouse," or -- we weren't -- the staff guys didn't parti -- our job was done by the time the Senators reached that stage.

FUCHS: Yes.

IRVIN: And so, I never sat in on any of those. So, I can't answer you.

FUCHS: Did you sit in on hearings?

IRVIN: Oh yes, sure. The procedure on hearings would be

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that you would prepare a pretty elaborate brief of what the facts were, what questions should be asked. Usually we -- particularly with Charlie Clark -- we enumerated the questions and exactly how they should be phrased, and then after the question would be a summary of what the facts were and what the witness should testify to. Then sometimes there would be alternate routes to be followed, you know, if he said this, well then you go down this line of questioning and if he said that, you go down this line of questioning. That was more true with Charlie and with Rudy than it was with Hugh Fulton! Hugh had the capacity to just take the raw reports of the investigation and do his own outlining of how the hearing should go. But always in a hearing, an investigation that the investigator was involved in, he was there, both for handling the files, for -- and also it was just a kind of a reward in a way to see the culmination of your work, too; but also in the event that the questioning wasn't proceeding, or that he saw something that maybe the Senators and the Chief Counsel did not see that should be asked, or disclosed, to pass the question up in writing to the Chief Counsel or to a

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Senator.

FUCHS: I believe Mr. Truman said somewhere in his *Memoirs* that there were maybe one or two occasions when Senators, I believe Brewster and Connally, would have -- or had a tendency more to make it a Committee on the Conduct of the War. Do you recall anything of that?

IRVIN: If they did, you know, again looking at my own point in time, that would be above and beyond my comprehension. I was so wrapped up in the things I was assigned to do. I don't recall any particular -- now there may have been attempts because I do remember Truman saying things to that effect that we weren't going to get back into that sort of an investigation.

FUCHS: I believe it was, rather, Brewster and Vandenberg and Vandenberg wasn't a Committee member -- it must have been...

IRVIN: He was what -- he was the minority leader wasn't he in the Senate?

FUCHS: That must have been it. Working with Brewster, the two of them that tended to try to make another Committee on the Conduct of the War. But he did say that...

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IRVIN: Well, I was trying to remember what Truman referred back to. Was it the Civil War where there was a committee -- a committee of that kind?

FUCHS: Yes.

IRVIN: My knowledge of history is limited.

FUCHS: Traditionally what was said, when he started the Committee, he was not going to make it a Committee on the Conduct of the War as in the Civil War which was supposed to have been worth so many divisions to the enemy; Robert E. Lee, because they were always investigating Lincoln's conduct and the generals' conduct.

IRVIN: Yes.

FUCHS: But he made this statement in his *Memoirs* and it's never been elucidated any further.

IRVIN: Well, he may have used that, too, in case some Senators, I suppose in their questions, seemed to be leaning in that direction, to get it back on the track.

FUCHS: Yeah. What about Franklin Parks? What do you

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recall of him?

IRVIN: Well, Frank had the desk right in front of mine, and Frank and I became close personal friends. Very able -- let's see, would he have accounting training and legal training? I think he did have some accounting training as well. Very quiet, very thorough guy, very thorough guy. And a complete gentleman. In fact he married one of the girls on the Committee staff, Marge, what the heck was her last name? In fact the last time I was in Washington I went out and visited them at their home and had dinner with them. That was a long time ago, now. And I'm trying to remember what investigations Frank had. I know he was here in Long Beach investigating the Howard Hughes flying boat, but this was after I had left the Committee.

FUCHS: Oh, I see.

IRVIN: I think it was before I came to Long Beach, in fact.

FUCHS: What about Wilbur D. Sparks?

IRVIN: Wilbur, another great guy and a lot of fun and a very serious guy. And we used to have an awful lot

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of fun picking on Wilbur. He was always good natured about it, and Walter Hehmeyer and I, in particular, kidded Wilbur an awful lot.

FUCHS: Simply because he was too serious?

IRVIN: Yeah. Yeah, but an energetic guy and very thorough guy and -- we enjoyed the byplay that went on on the side, you know, but we did pick on Wilbur quite a bit.

FUCHS: He was an investigator starting in October '41, and this little source book that I referred to before said that he -- I assume that's where this information came from -- that he was put in charge of the Committee staff in April '44. Do you recall anything of that? What is the connotation of that?

IRVIN: When did Rudy take over the staff?

FUCHS: Rudy Halley?

IRVIN: Yes.

FUCHS: He became Chief Counsel in September of '44.

IRVIN: You know, I vaguely remember something to this effect, that Wilbur was in charge of the staff, and I think as a practical matter, we all knew him so

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damn well that it was just impractical. I didn't take it seriously then, and I still don't, apparently, because I don't remember any big change in the way anything was done, except maybe he

assigned the secretaries to various investigators. I don't really know. You know, we kidded him about it more than anything else. I don't even remember what the background was. He became very close friends with Rudy, and I'm not sure what happened after I left the Committee, whether he assumed any other titles or not. I just don't recall.

FUCHS: Do you recall a Hendrick R. Suydam?

IRVIN: Yeah, only that isn't how he pronounced his name. S-u-y-d-a-m wasn't it? Hank.

FUCHS: He spelled it S-u-y-d-a-m. I don't know how you pronounce it.

IRVIN: I don't remember how we pronounced it either. Yeah, I remember him, and I don't remember what his origin was or what the hell he did, frankly; and I hadn't thought of the man until you mentioned his name. I don't think he was there too long was he?

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FUCHS: November '42 to July '44.

IRVIN: Well, he was, yes.

FUCHS: A year and a half, I believe.

IRVIN: I don't know whence he came or where he went or really what he did.

FUCHS: He didn't make a big impression on you?

IRVIN: No. Well, I suppose -- those were all big offices. The younger guys had their own -- he was an older man and the younger guys sort of had their camaraderie and fell in together, so to speak, in their own social relationships. So I don't know, I don't know what Hank did. He must have done something.

FUCHS: Do you remember a Marion G. Toomey?

IRVIN: Yep. Now, she was a gal, she was -- I couldn't think of her name, I could picture her when I was talking about this Lasker. She was Hugh Fulton's secretary, one of his secretaries, and she and Lasker were dating at that point in time. I don't know whether they ever got married or not. I just don't know.

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FUCHS: You never thought of her as an investigator, did you?

IRVIN: No.

FUCHS: She might have been listed as an investigator for salary purposes. This booklet, that's the source of these notes, that I got from my colleague, had her as an investigator from 5/12/41 to 10/8/44. What about Agnes Straus Wolf?

IRVIN: Now she did have, you know -- I can see a picture of a gal -- and I think she was an investigator; but I don't remember her being there very long or of making very much of an impression on me.

FUCHS: She apparently started there in November '43 and then her memos in the records of the Committee went up to January 24, '48. Can that be right?

IRVIN: It could be, I just don't know, you know; and I can see the gal, but I'll be damned if I know what she did.

FUCHS: Well, no, that's supposed to be -- yes, she was supposed to have gone there on November 1, '43. And there are memos in the records of the Committee running

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from January '44 to January 24, 1948.

IRVIN: Could be. She was a nice gal.

FUCHS: Did Captain Kennedy ever come to the Committee offices or did he handle everything through John Abbott or John Tolan?

IRVIN: I would say yes, he did come to the Committee offices, but I couldn't give you a specific -- but not often. Maybe somebody of that level would be dealing with the Chief Counsel or maybe with the Senator directly, too.

FUCHS: Yes.

IRVIN: Well, as I think back on the way the Committee functioned, oftentimes the staff was in the dark as to what was going on at the senatorial level. Even though you would do a report and make a recommendation, it was kind of like dropping it down a well until the output came out in final action. And oftentimes things -- well, like General Lowe's appointment as Executive came as quite a start to everybody on the staff level as I remember.

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FUCHS: Were these things subjects of conversation that was bothersome at times, too; because you didn't know what was going on?

IRVIN: No, because in those conditions -- and by the nature of the structure of things -- no, the wartime conditions and number two, the prestige of a United States Senator. I don't think the guys questioned it -- I know we didn't question it. We were curious as the devil, which is normal, but no, there wasn't any, no basis for upset or dissension, not that I recall.

FUCHS: Did you ever hear that Mr. Truman was seeing President Roosevelt frequently, or on occasion, or remember any scuttlebutt or talk about it?

IRVIN: You mean prior to his nomination as Vice President?

FUCHS: Yes. In other words on Committee matters, as a Senator.

IRVIN: I can't recall a specific instance. I have a vague recollection that maybe, yes, on a rare occasion, but I don't think it was a constant relationship. I mean I think it would be only very occasionally, but this

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is just my very vague recollection. Again, that's so far above the staff level of the Committee.

FUCHS: I thought there might have been some...

IRVIN: My recollection of the circumstances even around his nomination as Vice President, and this again was hearsay, with all the other candidates who were being considered for the post, that the relationship wasn't particularly close. In fact, Truman's criticism, through the Committee, of the war effort, could possibly have nettled Roosevelt, I don't know. I would assume they would.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything of the *American Magazine* article and that episode?

IRVIN: No. It doesn't even -- the name of the magazine and whatever article you're thinking about, don't ring a bell or anything in my mind.

FUCHS: I should have the name of the article, but I don't. It was an article written, well, I'm not quite certain who wrote it, but signed by Mr. Truman, and to be published. And parts of it were quite critical and went beyond what was thought desirable.

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IRVIN: Totally unaware of it even.

FUCHS: He was supposed to have taken the money -- he didn't want any money, but they insisted -- the editor -- and he had taken it and used the money, according to one story I have heard, to throw a party for the Committee on...

IRVIN: Oh boy, I'm trying to think. We had a party at Lathrom's place one night, sort of a farewell party for Truman, but my recollection is that we all kicked in, and it seems to me I...

FUCHS: This was earlier, I believe. He gave a party, from some of the proceeds from this article which...

IRVIN: He may have, he may have. Hugh Fulton was very generous in this respect, entertaining the staff outside the Committee activity. It was a partying staff, they worked out their own parties, too. We had a lot of fun, tremendous lot of fun, yeah. It was kind of a -- I can't -- and I don't think I can explain the camaraderie and the esprit de corps in that group, but they all respected each other, generally speaking; and they were all dedicated to doing a good job, and took a great deal of pride in who they were, and what they were

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doing, and you know the spirit was great.

FUCHS: Do you recall any conversation about Mr. Truman as a candidate for Vice President specifically, prior to his nomination?

IRVIN: No, I think we were all as surprised as anyone else, at least I was. And again, I wasn't paying particular attention to politics at that point in time. I was disappointed when I heard he was going to resign. I didn't think he had ought to resign from the Committee. Everybody didn't want -- I mean most of the guys didn't want to see him go because he was just such a great guy, a great guy to work for.

FUCHS: Do you recall was there any feeling that whoever did become Vice President would probably succeed Roosevelt before the term ended?

IRVIN: Oh, yeah, this was discussed, you know, in the bull sessions, over coffee. It was pretty apparent when Roosevelt came back from Yalta that time was running. And that probably Harry, we called him destiny's tot, that was a nickname we had behind the scenes for him.

FUCHS: Did you have confidence in his ability to take over,

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or were there some who voiced other opinions?

IRVIN: Oh, there were all kinds of opinions. Now, I think the -- the attitude of the guys, at least the guys I worked with, was they had complete confidence in his integrity and his dedication, and the attitude wasn't one of questioning whether he could do the job. The attitude was, is there some way I can help? No, I talked particularly to Matt and even Bill Boyle, I am sure before Roosevelt died, that just my assessment of what was going to happen, that Harry Truman was going to be The President, and that they should be thinking in those terms because to me it was inevitable. And, as a matter of fact, one of the things I was hopeful I would achieve in my lifetime, was a spot on the White House staff, which did not come to pass. The day that Roosevelt died my first instinct was to -- and I did. I happened to be home babysitting our daughter at that moment in time so my wife could go shopping, at lunchtime I think it was, and the bulletin came over the radio that Roosevelt had died; and my instinct immediately was to call the office. And I think I talked to Loretta Young and said, "Is there anything of any kind I can do," you know because

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of the cataclysmic thing that happened.

She said, "They are all in the office now, Bob, and I don't know of anything you can do."

And I said, "Well, as soon as my wife gets back I will be down there and if there is anything I can do, tell Matt and tell the Senator, that -- or the Vice President -- or the President by then, I

guess." So, I got there as soon as I could and the entourage had already left for the White House, and there wasn't much that could be done at that point because the machinery of the White House had enveloped Truman. I didn't talk to Matt, I guess, for a couple of weeks after that because of the hectic times. They were just frantic down there reorganizing. I don't think anybody had -- I think most of the guys had such confidence in the man and the way he ran that Committee that those qualities would carry him through the Presidency in good shape. I don't think anybody regarded him as a genius or a brilliant man in the sense of that we think of, or intellectual, let's put it that way. But they thought of him as a very, very able guy and a very honest guy, and a very dedicated guy. He was as patriotic as they come and there just was a great feeling of assurance that this man had

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the qualities to do the job well and to do it safely. And no, I know I never, never encountered it at least amongst the guys I worked with, or ever felt it, you know, that there would be a question that he couldn't do the job.

I have to admit later on some of the things that he did puzzled me, but that's -- for example, as a Senator he was very careful to keep the control of war production in civilian hands. Even though he was a military man by background himself, he believed in having civilian control of the economy. This was one of the issues that was fought out I think even behind the scenes, and I think the Committee strengthened Donald Nelson's hands very much in keeping civilian control.

So, I was always puzzled later on when he relied on military officers to do certain assignments that just seemed to me to be just a little bit beyond their ken. And I think the -- George Marshall's mission to China. Or what I mean, I had better back up, I'm not quite sure what I'm saying in terms of who did what, but I felt very strongly that the loss of China was due to the military minds inability to grasp the

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political situation. And I was astonished at the credence placed on the military's or the military officers' position in a situation like that. But that's neither here nor there. That has nothing to do with the old Truman Committee.

FUCHS: Well, that's all right, we're interested in that, too.

IRVIN: These are just personal -- personal opinions of mine.

FUCHS: Well, we like to get individual's comments, and different ways of looking at these matters.

IRVIN: Now, when that report came out, I've forgotten where the heck I was at that point in time, and I read the conclusions on how China should be treated, and it was just the handwriting on the wall. I mean we just handed China to the Communists. And I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything of the relations between the Committee and General [B.B.] Somervell?

IRVIN: Not specifically enough to -- this had to do with the Alaskan pipeline?

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FUCHS: I don't know. Well, one thing, the Canol project.

IRVIN: The Canol project. That was one of Robby's investigations, too. I think I was relatively new there and I was kind of wide-eyed at all of this stuff, but I would say that they were pretty critical. My recollection of the attitude was that they were pretty critical. But that's, you know, a vague recollection because I wasn't a party to the investigation.

FUCHS: You say you didn't have staff meetings?

IRVIN: Not as -- well, certainly there were not regular staff meetings. There would be memos come down from Hugh Fulton to the staff, and you would be assigned responsibilities by Fulton on major investigations; but as far as the staff as a whole getting together and deciding what's the best way to approach a problem, as a matter of staff operation, no, not under Fulton. In fact under Halley we had just the one that I remember and that was the only one that was ever called. But there again, the guys worked so closely together and in non-business hours socialized together, that, you know, there wasn't any need to have a staff meeting, because everybody was yakking at everybody

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all the time about what's going on and what are you doing and so on. So, I mean the staff was actually well-informed and I would say well-coordinated, and Fulton steered it the way he wanted to steer it.

FUCHS: Were you ever involved in any speechwriting, or who wrote the speeches for Committee members if they were to make a speech?

IRVIN: Oh, I think probably I did some portions of some speeches on areas where I had particular knowledge; but there again, it would go to Fulton for the final draft, and again Walter Hehmeyer would be involved in phraseology and in the way to present an idea or a conclusion of -- and I think most of the Senators probably had their own assistants who helped with their particular speeches. Now, in Truman's speeches, possibly Fulton would be of great assistance to him. Certainly in a report that went from the Committee and was presented on the Senate floor and what was said in that, why, Hehmeyer would do the press release on what the reports said. In other words picking out the highlights and the order of their importance and see that the press received them in time. And I would think the speeches would

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be governed a lot by some of the press releases, too. Hard to say. I wasn't very often involved or consulted on that.

FUCHS: Admitting that the conditions were somewhat different, can you contrast in any significant way the two Chairmen that you knew, Truman and Mead?

IRVIN: And Mead.

FUCHS: The way they handled the Committee or anything else that comes to mind.

IRVIN: Of course, when Mead took over we were nearing the end of the war, weren't we? Let's see.

FUCHS: Yes, it wasn't but another, you know, five months, almost six.

IRVIN: As far as the functioning of the staff was concerned it wasn't much different really. I would say there might be a, I don't know how you would describe it, whether -- you had a different personality at the head. I think a lot of the guys might have kind of felt peculiar switching from the name Truman Committee to the then Mead Committee, because there had been a

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certain identity built up, you know, around the name Truman. Then again I was switched into a little different capacity then with this theoretical executive assistant to the Chairman bit; and moved into a different office, Harry Vaughan and I shared an office for a while at that point in time I remember.

FUCHS: Do you recall a Julius Amsberg, who...

IRVIN: I remember the name.

FUCHS: ...was sort of a liaison from the Pentagon or the Army.

IRVIN: I remember the name and I can see the name in typewritten form, but I don't remember much about him, or the personality, no. Was he a special assistant to the Secretary of War or some darned thing?

FUCHS: I just have the name myself.

IRVIN: I just .can't remember. I remember the name, but that's all.

FUCHS: Did you ever notice that Senator Truman favored the Army, say, more than the Navy or...

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IRVIN: No. Not at all. No, I don't -- I didn't -- it's funny you would say that, because I don't think he ever had that -- that question had never even entered my mind. So, as far as I was concerned I never saw any evidence of that kind.

One comment I meant to make a little while back when we were talking about the degree of cooperation by these agencies, I kind of rated them in my own mind this way: That the Navy was the most difficult at that point in time, and then the Army, and the easiest of all to deal with, and the most forthright, was the Marine Corps. And I was always impressed, the Marine Corps, their top officers, if there had been a mistake, they were the first ones to admit it and the ones to want to correct it before anybody else did. But there was never any apparent attempt to cover up anything in the Marine Corps, or to be oblique about anything, or obtuse about anything. They are pretty straightforward guys. So, when you say did he favor any particular group, why, not to my knowledge. I knew I enjoyed dealing with the Marine Corps better than the Army and the Navy.

FUCHS: Was there a Thomas Flynn?

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IRVIN: Yes, a good guy. And I had forgotten Tom.

FUCHS: Was he an investigator?

IRVIN: Yes. Tom was an investigator. I think he had gone to Notre Dame, he was a Catholic boy. And, good Lord, I had forgotten all about Tom. I think Tom went in the Army. I just can't remember.

FUCHS: Do you know anything about why Hugh Fulton didn't go on with Mr. Truman then when he became Vice President -- President?

IRVIN: Yes, there was scuttlebutt about that. And this is where the power politics of -- and the personality conflicts of the people who were involved on the Committee, I think, began to surface. I mean where there was some bloodletting actually. I only heard stories and I don't have anything except hearsay, but I think the group that went to the White House with Truman and became part of his staff, probably blocked Hugh out of the picture, if that were possible. Again, I just don't know. I knew what I had heard, but I didn't know whether it was true or false. The fact remained, I guess, that Hugh never did assume any position of prominence. Although I

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think Truman did consult with him on a couple of occasions. But I heard snide little things like, "Yeah, he was down there, but he didn't come in the front door," you know, "we brought him in the side door," and stuff like that. Picayune and penny ante.

FUCHS: Did you -- I don't know whether you can make overtures or have to be tapped, but did you try to get on the staff, either to...

IRVIN: Well, it was kind of interesting when you asked about the premonition, or was there a feeling that Truman would be President. I mentioned that I had talked to Matt and to Bill Boyle about the fact I thought this was going to happen at some point in time soon. And yet, looking ahead as a young guy, and knowing that I wasn't going to be on the Hill all my life, and that I had pretty much had the quantity of experience I wanted there, I told Matt, I said, "If that ever

does happen," I said, "I would like to be on the White House staff." I said, "I don't care if I empty wastepaper baskets, I'd like it on my record." I was called the "Wallstreet lawyer" in the Committee

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even though I hadn't formed any party affiliations, but they treated me as an arch conservative in my viewpoints. Well I just gravitated that way I guess because I had not affiliated with either party at that point in time, but my leanings were to the Republican side. But I thought I could be of service down there and be of value, that I understood how Truman functioned and the guys, some of the guys around, you know, that it would be a thrilling thing for me to have the opportunity. But, as I say, it never came to pass.

I have a very brief story on that. I finally did go down and see Matt after things shook down and they began to create their own program, and brought up the fact that this was something I still would like if it were possible. And he explained to me that they were reorganizing and whereas Roosevelt had drawn into the White House structure so many people and so many functions, Truman was pushing it back into the Cabinet level and they were reducing the staff. And as of that moment in time, when they were doing that, it was impossible to add anybody, and that seemed reasonable to me. I think the next time I was down to the White House and discussed it with Matt he said, "Well, if we can't work

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this out, where would you like to light next. What is your next choice?"

Well, that told me volumes right there. So, that's when I made up my mind that I was on my way out of the government service.

FUCHS: Did you ever have any contacts with Victor Messall?

IRVIN: Gee, now that name...

FUCHS: He left Mr. Truman after the second senatorial election which would have been in about March '41, but he had been what would be now an administrative assistant. He was a secretary then to Senator Truman. I just wondered...

IRVIN: I didn't have much. I remember the name and I can see a, you know, a physical appearance of the guy, but I...

FUCHS: He would have been gone from his office, but he went into more or less counseling work, you know, lobbying work in Washington. I just wondered if you were ever in touch with him.

IRVIN: No, that was—no...

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FUCHS: I wondered how much he was back around the...

IRVIN: My contacts with him were nil, really. I mean I just remember the name now.

FUCHS: Well, now unless you have something else that's -- that's about all I can think of right now.

IRVIN: No, I've thought of more and said more than I've said probably since I left the Committee and I haven't thought of these things in so darned long.

FUCHS: When was the last time you saw Mr. Truman then?

IRVIN: I was back there for the City of Long Beach in 1950, was it? This was prior to the Korean war, I guess, so it's in around in there somewhere. They had gone into a curtailment program and shut down the shipyard here -- the Navy shipyard, and there was quite a campaign on to keep it open because of the employment factor. I had gone back as part of the team that left Long Beach to go back and present Long Beach's case and see if we couldn't keep this thing open. And while I was there I didn't have any plan to see Truman. I had called up Matt Connelly and told him I was in town and he said, "Come on down." So, I went down to the

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White House and we shot the breeze for a while.

Oh, I know what it was, it was the day Truman was going to make his state of the Union message to the Congress and Matt said, "Just a minute," he said, "I'll be right back." And he went into Truman's office and came back out and left the door open, and I'm sitting there and he said, "Well, aren't you going in and say hello to the boss?"

I said, "Well, Matt," I said, "he's going up and give his state of the Union message, hell, I'm not going to bother him."

He said, "Well, he's expecting you to come in."

So, I went in and chatted with him for a while and he wanted to know if I was going to go up and listen to his state of the Union address and I said no I didn't have a pass and he said, "Would you like to go?"

And I said, "I sure would."

So, he called somebody and made arrangements and I rode up in Bess Truman's limousine, all by myself, up to Capitol Hill: I felt silly as the devil, one guy in this huge old limousine going up there. Then he asked me, incidentally, he said, "What are you

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doing in Washington?"

And I said, "As a matter of fact, we're back here to convince your administration not to close our shipyard in Long Beach."

And he laughed and he said, well he wasn't familiar with the details of it, that Dr. Steelman, I think, was in charge of this at that time, and we had a meeting scheduled with him. And he said, "It's a tough problem," he said, "when you have to economize, you've got to cut somewhere and somebody's going to get hurt and somebody's going to yell," and he said, "I don't know the specific details or what's involved with your shipyard, but," and I told him we had a meeting scheduled with Steelman and he said he was sure that Steelman would give us a fair hearing and fair treatment. I think that was the last time I saw him, as I remember.

FUCHS: Where did you meet with Steelman?

IRVIN: In the executive wing, or whatever it was over on the -- I can't even remember directions now, that would have been the east side of the White House.

FUCHS: East Wing of the White House.

IRVIN: Yeah.

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FUCHS: Were you with the city of...

IRVIN: No, I said city, I really should say, at that point in time, it was a delegation. I think I was back representing the Chamber of Commerce then, and later was a lobbyist for the City Harbor Commission back in Washington on the tidelands issue when we were opposing Mr. Truman, who vetoed our quit claim bill. Yeah, let's see, I was back there, commuting back and forth from Long Beach, for about two and a half years representing the city through its Harbor Commission, and trying to get this quit claim legislation through.

FUCHS: Are you still in that work now or are you...

IRVIN: No, I haven't been retained by the city since -- well, I -- as soon as we got that legislation through and signed in Washington, that'd have been '53, Eisenhower signed it, I cancelled my contract with the Harbor Commission.

Then later, I don't know if you know anything about this hassle, this is where the tidelands battle began over the billion dollar oil field that sits offshore here. The State of California then tried to do the same thing, and succeeded pretty much, but I was a lobbyist in Sacramento for the city then, trying to

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save the day, which we didn't do, too well.

FUCHS: What did the state do? What was -- I'm not quite certain of the principle here.

IRVIN: Well, historically, the states as they came into the Union, claimed ownership to the three mile limit; and this was basically accepted in the law as being the law. And in 1947 -- well in -- let me back up. In '39 Long Beach became aware that they had this oil field here. Nobody knew how big it was, and through our Harbor Commission, where the oil happened to be, in their jurisdiction, we amended our charter and set up an oil drilling program here to produce this oil. And as the size of the oil field became apparent, and the quantity of money involved, why, covetous eyes were cast on it and, whereas Harold Ickes had ruled in the past -- when people had tried to claim that it was Federal property that they should have a Federal lease to these oil rights -- he had ruled in writing that these lands, submerged lands, belonged to the states and the Federal Government had no jurisdiction. But there was the school of thought, that yes they did have jurisdiction, and ultimately the U. S. Government sued California,

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and to make a long story as short as I can, in '47 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that under a doctrine of paramount power and paramount rights, the state did not own these lands and the Government did have the power to take the oil, which would have stripped Long Beach of its harbor and its waterfront and all of its oil production. So -- and we were building our harbor with the oil proceeds then.

So, there was quite a battle, and they subsequently sued Texas and Louisiana, based on the precedent of the California case. The Supreme Court ruled the same way, ruled that the states never had title to the land. They never went the other direction and ruled that the Federal Government had title. They invoked the paramount power doctrine which said we have to defend it, therefore, we can take anything of value that's in it, because war has historically come to the nation over the seas and it's Uncle Sam's job to defend, not the states. But it's a pretty lousy law and unjust and historically inaccurate. So out of Long Beach, and because we had the resources, we launched a national campaign and worked with Texas and Louisiana and a host of other states as we could, and ultimately passed the submerged lands act, which said the states do own these lands

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and always have.

So, Long Beach thought it was off the hook then and could proceed to develop this oil. Well, the State of California then attacked Long Beach, and our State Supreme Court did precisely the same thing; rewrote history and rewrote the law to enable the State of California to have control over these resources.

So, we have paid the state something like eight hundred million dollars out of this oil field already, or will have before we are through. And the city's share now is whittled down to a grand total of about two hundred and fifty million dollars out of it. This is what the Queen Mary was -- this kind of money was used to buy the Queen Mary and to develop that program, develop our harbor and develop our shoreline.

FUCHS: You mean the two hundred and fifty is what they'll realize out of it?

IRVIN: Grand total now. Under the last -- what happened, the state, when it came into the Union, acquired the ownership of the three mile belt. And the state, to develop this coastline, began the practice way back, not too long after the state was created, of granting

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these lands to municipalities to develop them. And the reasoning behind it was that the cities being on the spot and having an immediate economic interest in seeing them developed would do the best job of developing, so that the state began to make tidelands grants to all of the cities along the coastline, including Long Beach. And in 1911 they gave us everything within the state boundaries, within the three mile limit, within our city boundaries. In other words where our city boundaries projected into the sea. Everything inside that they gave us, for a certain purpose, to be used for harbor, commerce, fisheries, and navigation.

Nobody knew about oil in those days, and all of the law indicated they gave fee title to the land and held nothing back. Subsequent to the discovery of oil in the '30s, the late '30s, there was an attempt made to claim a share of the oil for the state and our State Supreme Court as it was constituted then, said, "No. The state held nothing back, they gave fee title to the City of Long Beach and Long Beach has the exclusive power and rights and ownership for the development of that oil."

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So, that issue at that point in time, as far as the state was concerned, was settled and Long Beach was proceeding, and full blast, to develop this oil field and use the dough itself for those purposes: Harbor, commerce, fisheries and navigation. Then Uncle Sam entered the picture and said, "No, that's our oil," and Harold Ickes had at first said no and then later the Justice Department filed a law suit and we lost it again.

Well, because of the cloud of that litigation and that decision, the city wasn't spending, it was just accumulating. I think there were a couple of hundred million bucks in the kitty and that kind of money is appealing to anybody. So, we won the Federal battle and then the state came right back at us again. As a matter of fact they used a bill that we'd put through the legislature -- I don't know whether you want all this stuff, but it's kind of fascinating.

FUCHS: Well, it's background because as you know Mr. Truman made these Naval Reserves when he left, by executive proclamation and then, of course, Eisenhower's Congress changed the law, but also the fact that there has been confusion between the term tidelands and submerged

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lands. I believe the Federal Government claimed that yes the states did have jurisdiction out to the low tide point, but it was beyond there. Isn't there something to that effect, the Navy...

IRVIN: No, I've heard this argument so many times. No, that to me is semantics. The three mile limit originated because that was how far a cannon could shoot in those days. That was what we could defend.

FUCHS: Oh. Well, but didn't the Government use some argument though that they weren't contesting the states rights to the tidelands, but to the -- out of the three mile limit. I may be wrong, but

IRVIN: No, you were correct in stating what they were saying.

FUCHS: Oh.

IRVIN: Sure we heard this argument in Washington.

FUCHS: Well, I'd like your ideas about this then.

IRVIN: What happened I think, just for convenience, and it's typical in newspaper treatment of an issue to get a short punchy name, and "tidelands" was shorter

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and allegedly descriptive, than "submerged lands," or "tide and submerged lands." Factually speaking, we were talking about tide and submerged lands. But no, I heard Senator Clinton Anderson and Paul Douglas and Hubert Humphrey and Wayne Morse and all of those guys who believed in Federal ownership, wax eloquent on the difference between tidelands and submerged lands to the point I wanted to throw up, because it wasn't an issue really. It was just a tactic.

But to make a long story short, if I can, about what happened to us on the state level. While I was in Washington and it looked like we were going to come out of this thing and get our quit claim legislation through, our city wanted to spend portions of this money on things other than shoreline development. So, they drafted a piece of legislation which would have freed fifty percent of the income from the oil from these so-called trusts, tidelands trusts, that the state had imposed for harbor, commerce, fisheries and navigation and there was precedent for this. In order to drill for oil they would have to use a piece of land as a drill site in our harbor and not use it for harbor purposes. So, they tested out in the

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courts that, yes you could declare a portion of the lands free from the trust, use them for other purposes such as producing oil. And this is how the oil field was developed.

So, the reasoning of our city attorney was, and our legislators who represented us up there, was if you can free a portion of the land from the trust as no longer necessary for the execution of the trust, certainly you can free the income, or a portion of the income, from that land. So, this was the reasoning.

So, we put through the legislature ourselves, a bill freeing fifty percent of that dough for use on other things such as airports, hospitals, parks, fire stations, you know, whatever the civic endeavors were. And we wrote it and we put it through. We conferred with the Governor, Earl Warren, and when he signed it he understood precisely what our intent was, and there were no statements in Sacramento, "Gee, what a windfall."

Well, in the subsequent litigation our State Supreme Court said, "Well, that could not be the intent of the legislature since that would be unconstitutional. Therefore, we find the intent of the legislature was to free that money for the State of California." And

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this is exactly what they did. They rewrote the law and they rewrote the legislative intent. They also rewrote legislative history at that point. And further than that, they added some dictum in the decision which said that the state never did part with title, that we were merely trustees in the normal sense of the word, and that at any time the state wanted to take the whole damned thing back they could.

So, instead of having fee title to these submerged lands (we'll call them that), we ended up as just the ordinary trustees at the whim of the legislature. So, they took fifty percent initially, and put the legislation through to do that, and we had our backs to the wall. And then a couple of years later they took eighty-five percent and left us with fifteen percent. And now they are using the expenditure -- maybe -- I don't know whether you care about this -- but the guys who want the fifteen percent for the state are attacking us on the Queen Mary program as being, you know, beyond the purposes, and wasteful, and blah, blah, blah, and therefore, they should take the whole damned thing back. But they do have the power under that decision, which is called the Mallon case, to take back any

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city's tidelands. But it doesn't -- I mean the law now applies to all coastal cities, but it's been enforced only against Long Beach because this is where the easy money is. It's just as raw as it can be. Just raw.

FUCHS: A lot of money made. The history then changed the intent.

IRVIN: So, it's been a revelation. Yeah, and I was -- I was opposing Truman. He was vetoing the legislation I was seeking in Washington.

I never did discuss that subject with him though, ever. And I remember his, as one of his last official acts, declaring it a Naval Reserve; and I remember the guys in the Justice Department who cooked it up. And I remember it also, as one of the first things we wanted to undo. As a matter of fact, our Congressman threw a bill in the hopper away ahead of schedule to revoke that Executive order. He jumped the gun on us.

FUCHS: What have you been involved in since you left the employ of the City?

IRVIN: Well, generally, let's see, what have I been doing?

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I was a lobbyist for the City, in Washington, primarily for a while, and after I opened my offices -- well, I came out here in '47. My first job was with the Chamber of Commerce; something I didn't know a damn thing about. And I managed their so-called governmental affairs department for three years. But I always had in the back of my mind what Walter Hehmeyer used to do and

how I was fascinated by him. And I just suddenly decided by God, I wanted my own office, so about -- just twenty years ago, I opened my shop. And I got into, because of my background in Washington, the lobbying activity, I handled some of the public relations out here for the Harbor Commission. Subsequent to that, when the State came after the town, why, the City Council hired me. We've got two legislative agencies here. We have our City Council which governs most of the city, and we have a special harbor district with five harbor commissioners who are appointed by the City Manager and confirmed by the City Council. But they are their own City Council in the harbor area. In other words, they run the port and have complete jurisdiction over it. So, there are two legislative bodies in town. I was retained then by the City to try and stem this avalanche

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up in Sacramento, but the desire of all the other California cities for a piece of that Long Beach dough was just impossible to overcome.

And later on, let's see, who else have I -- oh, my biggest client for a long period of time up until last year was the newspapers. In fact, I was their lobbyist in Sacramento for a while on some issues that they were concerned about.

FUCHS: The newspapers?

IRVIN: Of Long Beach. We've got -- we used to have two dailies here and in 1952, I believe, the Ridder Publications bought both newspapers and merged them, and...

FUCHS: That's known as what now?

IRVIN: The *Independent, Press-Telegram*. Yes, they put out a morning paper the *Independent*, and the evening will be the *Press-Telegram* and then on Sunday it's all one, it's the *Independent, Press-Telegram*.

FUCHS: They get married on Sundays.

IRVIN: Yes.

FUCHS: Somebody said.

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IRVIN: Saturdays and Sundays now. But they, under the preceding publisher, who died last fall, they were pretty aggressive in doing things, and they have been probably my biggest account over the years.

FUCHS: You would have been in public relations work now for twenty...

IRVIN: About twenty years, yes. I think it's kind of a kick. I don't think I'm qualified for it, I just like it you know.

FUCHS: Like it better than practicing law.

IRVIN: Yes, I never was cut out to be a lawyer, honestly. I learned that in my dad's law office. But I'll tell you, the legal training, and the training in Washington with the Truman Committee, have been absolutely invaluable to me in the things I have been able to do in this role.

FUCHS: Well, I guess that's all.

IRVIN: Yes.

FUCHS: Thank you very much.

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IRVIN: Thank you very much. I've enjoyed it.

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