

Oral History Interview
with
WILLARD A. EDWARDS

Correspondent for the Chicago *Tribune*, in its Washington, D.C. Bureau, 1933-1973; reported on Capitol Hill and White House activities.

Washington, D.C.
September 17, 1988
by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

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Summary Description: Topics discussed include crime in Chicago in the 1920s, the Washington, D.C. bureau of the Chicago *Tribune* and other newspapers in 1930s and '40s, President Truman in Key West; Chicago *Tribune* headline in 1948 election, Truman's 1948 campaign, Presidential news conferences, Washington, D.C. *Times-Herald*, drinking among Washington, D.C. newspapermen, Chicago newspapers, Chicago *Tribune*'s editorial policy, McCarthyism, the transition to television coverage of White House events, Richard M. Nixon and his foreign policy, and Lyndon B. Johnson and his campaigning techniques.

Names mentioned include Burton K. Wheeler, Arthur Sears Henning, Robert McCormick, Lloyd Norman, Walter Trohan, Harry S. Truman, Charles Ross, Thomas Dewey, Leon Stolz, Philip Warden, Doris Fleeson, May Craig, Edwin A. Lahey, Robert M. Lee, Joseph McCarthy, Joseph Alsop, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard M. Nixon, John F. Kennedy, Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson.

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JOHNSON: Mr. Edwards, as I mentioned, I am going to start by asking you the date and place of your birth, and your parents' names.

EDWARDS: I was born December 7, 1902, and my parents' names were Mary Edwards and Evan Edwards; Welsh background.

I was strictly an accident as a correspondent in Washington; I had worked for the [Chicago] *Tribune* from -- I joined the *Tribune* in 1925 and was covering murders and ordinary things around town when a member of the Washington bureau got sick and they needed a substitute, and I was pretty good on features and so

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forth so apparently they picked me to go down and take his place. So I was to go to Washington for a couple of weeks anyway, and I stayed for about 50 years.

JOHNSON: Maybe I could back up a little bit -- to ask you where you were born and where you were educated.

EDWARDS: I was born in Chicago, on North State Street, very close to the loop, but I didn't stay there long. We moved to Elmhurst and I had my schooling there.

JOHNSON: Did you go to college?

EDWARDS: Didn't go to college.

JOHNSON: Graduated from high school in Elmhurst?

EDWARDS: Graduated from high school at St. Ignatius Academy in Chicago. That's a Jesuit academy. After a year of public high school, my parents decided I was wasting my time, so they transferred me, at considerable cost to them, to this Jesuit academy in Chicago, where I got the equivalent, in my belief, of a college education.

JOHNSON: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

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EDWARDS: I had two brothers, one's living in San Diego now. Both of them are living out on the West Coast.

JOHNSON: What's their names?

EDWARDS: Francis is the youngest one, and Paul is the other.

JOHNSON: I take it this is a Catholic family?

EDWARDS: Yes, it sure is.

JOHNSON: After graduating from St. Ignatius, did you go to work right away?

EDWARDS: I did. I will preface it by a little story. When I was about twelve years old I saw a moving picture, and a newspaper reporter was the hero. So from then on, when company was in and somebody would say, "And what is this little man going to be when he grows up?" I would say, "a newspaperman." And that stuck. So, when I graduated from St. Ignatius I was offered a scholarship at Loyola, but chose instead to go to work for the *Tribune*.

JOHNSON: By the way, what was your father's occupation?

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EDWARDS: He was a manager in a steel company; A.M. Castle & Company.

JOHNSON: So he was white collar?

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: So you started work then?

EDWARDS: I went to work. I'll never forget my first day on police work. We got the call -- this was during the prohibition days, of course, and the gangs were in control of Chicago -- and the call was from a barber shop. I went along with the police on the call, and we came to the barber shop and there was nobody around, except two figures, two bodies, both of them with a bullet hole neatly in the middle of their foreheads, with the blood flowing down and mixing with the lather on their faces. They had been getting shaved and so forth. That was my introduction.

Well, that went on for about seven years, and then this substitution into Washington came.

JOHNSON: What year did that happen?

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EDWARDS: That was '33, the first year of Roosevelt's administration.

JOHNSON: But you started to work for the *Tribune* back in...

EDWARDS: In '25.

JOHNSON: In the middle of the gangster era.

EDWARDS: Right. And I had numerous stories about gangland figures, but you wouldn't be interested in that I think.

JOHNSON: Is that on tape, or on the record somewhere else?

EDWARDS: I don't believe so. I will tell just one story.

JOHNSON: All right.

EDWARDS: It was necessary in those days to have a gangster friend, so you could get some information from his side of the story. I became a friend of a figure known as "Dingbat Oberta;" and he was a jolly, gay, companion. We got together along very well, and I got a little information from him. And then I was awakened to the

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fact that he was not such a good companion after all. We were double-dating and dancing in the rear room of a saloon on the south side of Chicago. I happened to be looking at him. He was dancing with a girl with a bare shouldered dress, and just out of pure whimsy, he put his lighted cigarette into her shoulder. As she screamed, he put his head back and laughed; that was the funniest thing he had ever seen in all his life. I thought, "These are a different breed of men."

JOHNSON: Dingbat.

EDWARDS: Dingbat Oberta. He was found dead about a year later in a ditch, full of holes.

JOHNSON: Was he considered a member of the gang?

EDWARDS: He was a member of the gang, and he apparently offended somebody higher up. He did something that was wrong.

JOHNSON: Was Bugs Moran involved?

EDWARDS: Bugs Moran was a member of the northside mob, in opposition to the Capone gang.

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JOHNSON: You didn't get in on that Valentine's Day massacre?

EDWARDS: I was there, but I got there late. I wish I could say I was there.

JOHNSON: Were you a police reporter, or general features reporter?

EDWARDS: General features. As I say, it got to be known that I could write a good feature story. That was why they sent me to Washington.

JOHNSON: A little Irish flavor to it?

EDWARDS: Could be.

JOHNSON: So then you got the call to Washington in 1933.

EDWARDS: In 1933.

JOHNSON: Were you politically very conscious at this time, or did that kind of grow on you; the political side of things?

EDWARDS: I will tell you a story that illustrates how

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little political leanings I had. One of Colonel [Robert] McCormick's favorite "bete noirs" was Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, who was against [the United States] getting into the war. I ran into a committee hearing, by Wheeler, and I was impressed with the way he ran it. I wrote a very favorable story about Wheeler. The boss of the bureau, Arthur Sears Henning, called me in the next day and said, "I got this message on your Wheeler story." It was from McCormick. It just said, "Has Edwards hired out to Wheeler?"

JOHNSON: So he didn't run your story on Wheeler?

EDWARDS: He ran the story. He ran the story. McCormick did not try to censor stuff before it got into the paper; he read the paper when it was out. In this case, I was lucky I wasn't fired, of course.

JOHNSON: In other words, your boss didn't edit it, or rewrite it?

EDWARDS: Well, it was a good story; it was a factual story.

JOHNSON: In fact, I think Harry Truman was on Wheeler's

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committee, in the transportation field.

EDWARDS: Yes, I believe that's right.

JOHNSON: Do you recall when you first saw or met Harry Truman, when you first saw him?

EDWARDS: I'm sorry to say I don't. I've thought about that. He made no impression upon me at all, but then he had this investigating committee, which did a hell of a job.

JOHNSON: I might ask you about the Bureau, the Chicago *Tribune* bureau here in Washington, D.C. Do you remember how many people were working for it, and how did it compare with other newspaper bureaus?

EDWARDS: We had seven men working in the Washington bureau, which compared, for example, with the *New York Times* of about twenty; we were about one-third. But we had one of the biggest. Most of the newspapers had one man in Washington.

JOHNSON: Where were you located?

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EDWARDS: In the Albee Building. That's where the *New York Times* was too. In fact, a lot of newspapers were located in the Albee Building, at 15th and G.

JOHNSON: What floor were you on?

EDWARDS: We were on the 10th floor.

JOHNSON: Do you want to mention some of the other correspondents who got bylines and who were fairly prominent as reporters on Washington or Federal Government affairs?

EDWARDS: It's hard to single them off, you know, one from another. Each one had his specialty. Lloyd Norman, for example, was the Pentagon man, and he handled Defense. Somebody else had the State Department, and I can't...

JOHNSON: You don't remember who dealt with the State Department?

EDWARDS: No, I don't.

JOHNSON: What was your specialty, or did you have an area?

EDWARDS: I covered the Hill; I covered Congress, both houses for a while. It's kind of interesting to recite

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this one, I think. I was introduced to the Senate by [being told], "Go up and cover the Senate." That's the only preparation I had. I had a hell of a time finding out where the Senate Chamber was.

JOHNSON: This was in '33.

EDWARDS: In '33, the first day on the job.

JOHNSON: Who covered the President? Who covered the White House?

EDWARDS: Later, it was Walter Trohan.

JOHNSON: Trohan, yes, I remember that name. In fact, the Truman Library has an interview with him. It is in our oral history collection.

EDWARDS: He later became kind of an Assistant Bureau Chief, and therefore didn't cover the White House. But I covered all the Presidential campaigns, switching off between the candidates.

JOHNSON: Is Walter Trohan deceased?

EDWARDS: He's still around; he's living in Columbia,

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Maryland. You might look him up. He's a talkative guy; he can tell you a million stories, much better than I can.

But let me tell you the one story about Truman that I got a kick out of. Harry used to love to vacation in Key West. I don't know what year it was. We went down there and it was a pure vacation as far as Truman was concerned. He loved to take afternoon automobile rides, and that meant, of course, Secret Service men and the newspapermen, and there would be quite a cortege of say six or seven cars. So we were out riding around the countryside, and Harry saw a big mansion on top of a hill. He said, "What's that?" And nobody apparently who was with him knew. "Let's go up and look and see what it's all about." So the cortege wound that long driveway up there, and we were not there more than three seconds, when suddenly jam! bing! -- everybody took off in a hell of a hurry. Then I later found out that Truman finally found somebody who knew what the house was, and it was only the biggest and best brothel in the county: One addition to this, and it's got an important bearing on it. That story, of Truman, you

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know, accidentally stopping at a whorehouse would have been a real feature in every paper, but that story was never printed. They covered up for it. I don't know whether it was just sort of a decency in those days that realized that it wasn't his fault; but we didn't write those things until later. We do now.

JOHNSON: Now did you cover the Truman committee hearings?

EDWARDS: No, I did not, I'm sorry to say. I apologize for my lack of information about Truman except that I did cover the death watch on him. I had decided to retire. I was 73 years old, and then they gave me as my last assignment to go out and watch Harry Truman die. This, of course, was long after the...

JOHNSON: In '72.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, now back in 1944 or '45 do you recall anything about Truman before he suddenly became President on April 12, 1945? Did you do any coverage at all while he was Vice President, presiding over the Senate?

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EDWARDS: No, I'm just a blank on that one.

JOHNSON: You recall, I suppose, the day that Roosevelt died?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: What was your reaction there to suddenly having new leadership?

EDWARDS: A feeling that this was going to be a terrible flop, that Truman was going to be a bad President, that he didn't know what the hell was going on. And they did not let him know what was going on; yet he turned out well.

JOHNSON: Did you cover the '48 campaign for the *Tribune*?

EDWARDS: I was out there in Independence the night of the election, and heard that my paper was already featuring Dewey's victory. That was the one that Harry used to love to display to all the audiences everywhere he went, "Dewey Defeats Truman."

JOHNSON: Oh yes, that's still one of the most popular, most often asked for...

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EDWARDS: And I can tell you, if you want to know, how that came about.

JOHNSON: Sure.

EDWARDS: We had this same Henning, that I mentioned earlier, in Chicago covering the general election. The returns kept mounting for Truman, the popular returns. But the AP [Associated Press] bulletined the supposed fact that Truman had carried New York State, and then Henning was consulted and he said, "Oh, that's nonsense; that's nonsense. Forget it, the AP is all wrong." And he turned out to be right. That confirmed the official opinion in Chicago that there was no question about this at all.

JOHNSON: Dewey's home state, of course, was New York.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: It shouldn't have been a great surprise for him to win New York. You had a strike going on, I understand, and you had to set everything so far ahead of time.

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EDWARDS: Yes we did, yes.

JOHNSON: Were you on the campaign train in '48, on the Truman campaign train, or the Dewey campaign train, and what were your experiences if you were?

EDWARDS: No, except I began mixing with the crowds and getting a little dubious about the official opinion, which by the way, you know, is almost universal. Nobody gave Truman a

chance. [That includes] all the experts. There was not a single one -- [except] there was one guy and I can't remember his name, and he took a chance and said that Truman was going to win.

JOHNSON: Did you travel on the Truman train?

EDWARDS: I traveled on the Truman train, and I mixed with the crowds, and I noticed a terrible enthusiasm for Truman. You know, he could give 'em hell; his speeches were popular and I began to get doubtful, but I didn't do anything about it. I could have made myself a hero by phoning Chicago and saying, "Don't go haywire on this; Truman might make it."

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JOHNSON: Were you under any kind of instructions, directly or indirectly, not to say things favorable about Harry Truman?

EDWARDS: No. No, never, never. I'll have to say that; I never got any instructions. As I say, McCormick would read it in the paper and vigorously object, but up until that point he didn't try to...

JOHNSON: No prior censorship?

EDWARDS: No, and perhaps it was just merely laziness on his part that he didn't go down and find out what was going on.

JOHNSON: Well, if you were on the Truman train, who was representing the *Tribune* on the Dewey train? Do you recall?

EDWARDS: I don't recall.

JOHNSON: Well, where was Trohan? Was he staying back here in Washington, D.C. during the travel?

EDWARDS: Yes, and he was pretty mad about it too.

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JOHNSON: So you were the one doing the traveling.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: You were, of course, well acquainted with some of these other newsmen, and probably with some of the White House staff. Who were you acquainted with on the White House staff?

EDWARDS: Well, Charlie Ross was Truman's press secretary, and I watched the returns come in on election night with Charlie Ross. Charlie Ross was the last man to give in. He kept saying, "Oh, the votes will come in later. Just don't pay any attention to this." Finally, along about 2 or 3

in the morning, he said, "Well, maybe we've got a chance." So his own press secretary didn't believe he was going to win.

JOHNSON: Did you ever interview Truman?

EDWARDS: Oh, not in a...

JOHNSON: Not one-on-one.

EDWARDS: Not a one-on-one, no.

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JOHNSON: Were you in a pool, in any pools where there was kind of a group interview with Truman in the oval office, or somewhere else?

EDWARDS: Oh, that was always true, yes.

JOHNSON: You were at the press conferences in the oval Office?

EDWARDS: That's right.

JOHNSON: Did you feel you got a fair shake from Ross and from the President, as far as having your say?

EDWARDS: I never had any feeling about that at all. There was a kind of a jovial atmosphere in the White House press at that time, and is not there today.

JOHNSON: Now they started out in the Oval office, and then later on, a year or two later, they moved over to the Indian Treaty Room, I think, of the State, War and Navy Building, next door. Do you recall the press conferences being moved to a larger room there?

EDWARDS: That detail skipped me.

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JOHNSON: But these were always interesting affairs, I guess.

EDWARDS: Oh, yes, and of course, they were not on the record, you know.

JOHNSON: Now you did get them published, but...

EDWARDS: You could say this: "President Truman is said to feel that..." after he had said, "Yes, this is the way I feel." But you could not quote him directly unless he authorized it.

JOHNSON: And that was observed by all the newsmen?

EDWARDS: Oh, all of them, yes. As I say, it was a different spirit then.

JOHNSON: So you were getting a feeling while you were on the campaign, that maybe Truman had a chance?

EDWARDS: Yes, right.

JOHNSON: From the reaction of the crowds.

EDWARDS: Exactly.

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JOHNSON: Were you out there in Dexter, Iowa at the big plowing match where he talked to 100,000 farmers?

EDWARDS: Well, I don't specifically remember it, no.

JOHNSON: Was there anything that impressed you, or that you can recollect that kind of stands out in the way that Truman communicated with his audiences?

EDWARDS: Oh, he had a knack for it; there's no doubt about it. I mean, you couldn't help but like the guy. I don't think he ever gave much thought to what he was going to say next, but it was...

JOHNSON: You found out that he was more likeable than Dewey?

EDWARDS: Oh God, who could like Dewey?

JOHNSON: Well, McCormick did, I suppose.

EDWARDS: I think even he had to smother his feelings.

JOHNSON: They did promote his candidacy didn't they?

EDWARDS: Yes, oh yes, the *Tribune* did. A majority of the newspapers did.

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JOHNSON: How about Bob Taft, Robert Taft? Wasn't he, Robert Taft, a favorite of McCormick?

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: So Dewey was sort of second choice as far as they are concerned. They would have favored Robert Taft?

EDWARDS: Oh yes, very much so, and incidentally, they would have had a dead President within a year. You know, Taft died [soon after] of cancer or something; if he had been elected, he would have died in office.

JOHNSON: So you never really got instructions or editorializing or slanting your writings?

EDWARDS: I've got to tell you; I'm not covering up at all for the paper, or anything like that; there's no reason for it at all. I do not recall an instance except that one message from McCormick, "Has Edwards hired out to Wheeler?"

JOHNSON: Well, there's the Pendergast connection. I think before we started the interview you were saying that as far as the *Tribune* was concerned, Truman was

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kind of a representative of Pendergast and that stayed part of their message all the way through the Presidency?

EDWARDS: Oh yes, and his failure as a haberdasher and that sort of thing; that was brought up pretty freely.

JOHNSON: And then the cartoons, these anti-Truman cartoons, were often featured right up at the top of the front page, in the middle, and even in color.

EDWARDS: Sure.

JOHNSON: Color cartoons. Orr and McCutcheon. Did they ever talk to you, the cartoonists, about...

EDWARDS: I had no intimacy at all with the cartoonists. They were a breed apart.

JOHNSON: How about the editorial writers for the *Tribune*? Who wrote their editorials?

EDWARDS: Well, the head of the editorial writing staff was Stolz, a Jewish gentleman named Stolz; he was the son of the famous Rabbi Stolz.

JOHNSON: What was his first name, do you remember?

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EDWARDS: I think it was Leon, but I'm not certain.

JOHNSON: Were you ever asked to write any editorials, or was it just straight news?

EDWARDS: Oh, no, I never had any editorials.

JOHNSON: Just straight news?

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: Did your writing about Truman change at all after that '48 election? Did you begin to feel more favorable toward his abilities?

EDWARDS: I suppose I did; I would think it would be natural.

JOHNSON: How about this headline that we've mentioned here?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: "Dewey Defeats Truman."

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Do you remember the feedback, the reactions, that occurred here in the Washington bureau and perhaps in Chicago?

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EDWARDS: I can tell you one little story about that that might interest you. They finally realized that they had made a fatal error, and at about 3 o'clock in the morning, with all the papers issued, the order went out, "See if you can go out and buy up every copy of that paper." They almost succeeded; they cleaned the newsstands of that headline, but the opposition, the Chicago *Herald Examiner*, went to the *Tribune* lobby and there, where we had forgotten to check, they bought themselves a copy of that paper, and that's how it got out.

JOHNSON: Well, it was a first edition; but there were thousands of copies that had gone out.

EDWARDS: Hundreds of thousands of copies. It was a terrific job

JOHNSON: We've got a few copies at the Truman Library. Any repercussions beyond this feeling of, I suppose, being a bit mortified? Did anybody get reprimanded or

EDWARDS: I had already arranged to take my vacation the day

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after the election, so I departed that campaign as quickly as possible.

JOHNSON: Let them handle that hot potato, because you had nothing to do with it at that time?

EDWARDS: No. They say I should have given them a little warning but it wouldn't have done any good.

JOHNSON: So you took a vacation then and Truman went down to Key West.

This incident in Key West you were talking about, do you have any idea what year that would have been?

EDWARDS: I was trying to think. It was towards the final year; it must have been the last year he was in office.

JOHNSON: Oh, one of the last trips down there.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: When did you start going to Key West with the President and other newsmen?

EDWARDS: Not very often; I think I took two trips. I took my wife along on the second one.

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JOHNSON: On that last one?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was there anybody else from the *Tribune* that went down to Key West after the...

EDWARDS: Not that I know.

JOHNSON: You don't think Trohan went down there.

EDWARDS: Trohan might have gone on a Key West trip.

JOHNSON: Well, you're the White House correspondent during the Truman years, is that right? You're the one from the *Tribune* that's attending most of the press conferences?

EDWARDS: Well, that's true, yes.

JOHNSON: Did you have anybody else from the *Tribune* that was in attendance?

EDWARDS: No, not usually, one was enough.

JOHNSON: Usually these would be on the front page, wouldn't they, and you'd have your byline?

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EDWARDS: Oh yes.

Another thing, in that you're interested in the possible bias we had. After that McCormick message, I began reading the *Tribune* editorials. I was conscious what our line was, and I didn't violate that line. So in a way, I suppose I submitted to censorship.

JOHNSON: You felt that you kind of had to follow the policy.

EDWARDS: Oh God, yes, yes.

JOHNSON: You never thought of going to another newspaper?

EDWARDS: Never. Never.

JOHNSON: How come you were so loyal to the *Tribune*?

EDWARDS: I don't know. It was 47 years I worked there, so...

JOHNSON: Well, you must have liked the people you worked with.

EDWARDS: Oh, I sure did, yes.

JOHNSON: You mentioned Trohan. Who are the others?

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EDWARDS: Well, I mentioned Lloyd Norman. There was a Philip Warden who is still around by the way. He's living over here in Virginia, and he might be of some good to you.

JOHNSON: Well, they are a tough crew; they are still around.

EDWARDS: That's right.

JOHNSON: There were about seven people, you say, from the *Tribune* working there. And they kept that level pretty much through the '40s, through the Truman years?

EDWARDS: Yes, I can't remember any shifts. A Washington job, of course, was considered the cream of the positions. Everybody wanted to be a Washington correspondent.

JOHNSON: You remember, of course, when Truman finally came out with what is called the Truman Doctrine, aiding Greece and Turkey, and the Marshall plan to help Western Europe recover, and then NATO. Didn't the *Tribune* look favorably on all of those policies, those foreign policies?

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EDWARDS: Damned if I can remember; they must have. They must have.

JOHNSON: If they were to attack Truman, what would they attack him on mainly?

EDWARDS: I don't remember; I just can't remember.

JOHNSON: The Pendergast connection always was there under the surface?

EDWARDS: Yes, that's true.

JOHNSON: Were you a friend of Charlie Ross?

EDWARDS: A very close friend.

JOHNSON: When did you first meet Ross?

EDWARDS: Oh, the first time I went to the White House I suppose I met him.

JOHNSON: He was with the *Post-Dispatch*, but I guess he didn't work in their Washington bureau did he, before he became Press Secretary?

EDWARDS: I don't think so, no.

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JOHNSON: The Washington *Times-Herald*, do you remember that paper?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: That was set up apparently by the McCormicks.

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: In Washington, as a Washington newspaper.

EDWARDS: We bought it; we bought the paper.

JOHNSON: And you converted it into a kind of a stepchild of the Chicago *Tribune*?

EDWARDS: Exactly.

JOHNSON: With the same cartoons.

EDWARDS: Run by a woman named Bazie Tankersley. Haven't you ever heard of her?

JOHNSON: What kind of a person was she?

EDWARDS: She was a puppet.

JOHNSON: A puppet of the McCormicks?

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EDWARDS: Yes, sure.

JOHNSON: Did they run the same editorials that ran in the *Tribune*?

EDWARDS: Yes, often.

JOHNSON: So it was just kind of a Washington branch of the *Tribune*.

EDWARDS: It sure was, and they often said that McCormick, who sold the paper finally to the *Post*, made the greatest mistake he ever did in a businesslike way, to deprive himself of that mouthpiece.

JOHNSON: Did your articles appear in the *Times-Herald* too?

EDWARDS: Yes, they did, both of them, yes.

JOHNSON: They would run concurrently in both papers.

EDWARDS: The same stories, yes.

JOHNSON: And of course, that became one of Truman's villains too, the *Times-Herald*.

EDWARDS: Oh yes, yes indeed.

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JOHNSON: Did you feel that Truman may have had some reason for being so angry with the *Tribune*?

EDWARDS: It never occurred to me to worry about his feelings. I wish I had more personal stuff like that visit to the whorehouse to give you. I spent some time last night thinking about what I would talk to you about, and my God, I know very little about Harry Truman.

JOHNSON: These press conferences that we've talked about, you did get to raise some questions, I suppose, and were answered by the President. Did you feel that he answered you adequately?

EDWARDS: Usually, yes. Don't forget that business about "this is not on the record." That contribution to freedom of expression. Then, later on when he was asked "Let's pin this down, what did you say?" some agreement would be made on what he had said and that would be in quotes. But there weren't many quotes.

JOHNSON: There was a White House newspapermen's association. Did you belong to that?

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EDWARDS: I resigned for some damn reason, I forget what. But I remember they thought I had resigned in protest against the paper's policies, which I indignantly denied.

JOHNSON: Was that before or after Truman left the Presidency that you resigned?

EDWARDS: I can't recall the date.

JOHNSON: Were you there at the National Press Club when they had some of these annual banquets, or affairs, that the Trumans attended?

EDWARDS: Oh yes, I used to go to those.

JOHNSON: You say there was a different feeling in those days about newspaper coverage of the President. There were some gentlemen's agreements.

EDWARDS: Very much so. Very much so. I'm sometimes horrified at the stuff I read these days quoting "un-named anonymous White House aides." And you know that half of it is a fabrication of the reporter himself. I had a little trick of my own when I was writing -- usually when covering Congress. I'd think of a good

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line, and I'd think, "You ought to quote somebody on this." I'd finally quote "a veteran Washington observer;" that was me.

JOHNSON: That was you.

EDWARDS: I fulfilled that part; I was a veteran all right.

JOHNSON: So you had some good quotes that originated...

EDWARDS: That were my own.

JOHNSON: Of course, in those days there weren't many women reporters, were there, like there are now?

EDWARDS: No.

JOHNSON: Do you remember some of the women reporters then? There was Doris Fleeson, I think, who was especially prominent.

EDWARDS: Doris Fleeson was one, of course. She was quite a gal. May Craig was another one.

JOHNSON: I remember her, yes. She started under Truman I guess.

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EDWARDS: Oh way back, way back. She, I think, predated me.

JOHNSON: She had quite a bit of respect, did she, among the others?

EDWARDS: Yes she did, although she would bring up little items, local items, and there would be a groan when she'd ask the question.

JOHNSON: How about coverage of the family, Bess and Margaret? Did you ever write anything about the family and living in the White House, or in Independence?

EDWARDS: No, I didn't. I can't remember anyway.

JOHNSON: You didn't do any features just on the personal side of Truman?

EDWARDS: No. There were the famous things Truman said about the music critic, do you remember?

JOHNSON: Oh yes, Paul Hume.

EDWARDS: Paul Hume criticized Margaret's singing and

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Truman threatened to kill him if he ever met him or something like that.

JOHNSON: Well, he was going to do bodily damage at least.

EDWARDS: And that was on the record too.

JOHNSON: Did that kind of surprise you? What were the reactions of...

EDWARDS: The likeable thing about Harry Truman was his honesty of expression.

JOHNSON: He didn't fudge?

EDWARDS: No. You had to like that.

JOHNSON: How does that compare with today, with this year's campaigning?

EDWARDS: Well, departing now from the subject, I never knew a campaign that has attracted less interest. I don't think there will be a 30 percent vote in November on this, because I think people just don't give a damn. Dukakis and Bush, well, so what?

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EDWARDS: Yes, I guess it's that.

JOHNSON: Wasn't that Dewey's problem though back in '48? Do you recall any criticism of Dewey's campaign tactics? You know, he's been faulted for going around and uttering these platitudes and glittering generalities. Did you feel that that was the problem that he had in his campaign, or did that concern you at all?

EDWARDS: I think his problem was -- I think it was Claire Booth Luce who said, "He looks like the little man on the wedding cake." Do you remember that?

JOHNSON: Yes.

EDWARDS: You don't mind my smoking do you?

JOHNSON: No, go ahead.

EDWARDS: About the time I asked him, I lit a cigar.

JOHNSON: It looks like you've overpowered the cigars, rather than vice versa. You've been a cigar smoker from the days you were a newspaperman?

EDWARDS: The day I quit drinking. I had an alcoholic

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problem when I was in my -- well, you had to have one in Chicago in the '20s.

JOHNSON: Did all newspapermen kind of live up to the stereotype of smoking and drinking too much? Especially drinking maybe?

EDWARDS: *The Front Page*, by Ben Hecht and Charles McArthur, had a very true picture of the newspapers of those days; that is the '20's of course.

JOHNSON: That was pretty close to true?

EDWARDS: That's true. And too much drinking. Well, hell's bells, you had to drink. For a while I covered the County Building in Chicago, and the day went like this: About 11 o'clock in the morning the morning newspapermen would get together, about three or four of us, and we'd go touring the building, floor by floor. And every place we went the first gesture made by the official being interviewed was to pull open a drawer and bring out a bottle of whiskey.

JOHNSON: Pretty high proof.

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EDWARDS: Yes. And by the time the day was over, things were rosey.

JOHNSON: How about Washington? Do you think there was as much or less drinking and that kind of problem here in Washington, or did it just seem to be a continuation?

EDWARDS: I think it was a little higher class here.

JOHNSON: But there was some alcoholism, though?

EDWARDS: Oh, yes. Let's see, I was an alcoholic until I was 45, and then I quit.

JOHNSON: Went cold turkey; took up cigars.

EDWARDS: I have to credit Alcoholics Anonymous for that.

JOHNSON: Of course, this is something you don't read, and maybe the only way we can get it would be through interviews -- concerning problems that might have occurred among the press corps in Washington in regard to some of these personal habits. Was anyone ever intoxicated as far as you know, who was at the press conferences?

EDWARDS: Oh yes, yes. Not obviously so. The best newspaperman

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I ever knew was Edwin A. Lahey, of the Chicago *Daily News*. He was an alcoholic, but he was a whiz.

JOHNSON: What did the *Tribune* consider to be its main competition for readership?

EDWARDS: Well, in Chicago it had total contempt for all of the other newspapers. I used to watch our editor, our day editor, named Robert M. Lee, as he would look at the first edition of the *Examiner*, as it came to him. He would glance at the first page and toss it into the wastebasket. He wouldn't even look through the rest of the paper. We didn't feel we had any competition.

JOHNSON: Wasn't there a *Sun-Times*?

EDWARDS: *Sun-Times*, with the money and all that sort of thing, did a pretty good job...

JOHNSON: But the Marshal Field family didn't buy into that until later on though did they? They didn't own it at that time did they?

EDWARDS: I thought they did.

JOHNSON: Maybe they did.

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EDWARDS: I think they did.

JOHNSON: But that was your main competition?

EDWARDS: That was our main competition.

JOHNSON: And there was a *Herald-American* wasn't there in Chicago?

EDWARDS: Yes, that was an afternoon paper.

JOHNSON: These would be the two...

EDWARDS: The two Hearst papers -- the *Herald-Examiner* and the *Herald-American* were the two Hearst papers. The *Sun-Times* was the other. Of course, we had a lot of little papers like the *Inter-Ocean*. As a matter of fact, one of the main papers in Chicago when I went there was a German-language newspaper. Oh hell, I can't think of the name of it -- the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, or something like that.

JOHNSON: Yes, the *Zeitung*. Well, you weren't the only Republican newspaper, though, in Chicago. The other newspapers in Chicago, did they tend to favor the

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Republican Party line as you recall? Were there any Democrat newspapers in Chicago?

EDWARDS: I think the *Sun-Times* was a Democratic newspaper. It took that line; it had to take something opposite to the *Tribune*.

JOHNSON: But you say Roosevelt was a constant target, too, of the McCormick newspapers?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: They hated the New Deal?

EDWARDS: Just with a loathing that can't be described.

JOHNSON: But they didn't see the New Deal as bringing us out of Depression, or helping at least to alleviate the Depression?

EDWARDS: No. Social Security was "socialized medicine."

JOHNSON: Well, in '48 socialized medicine, that was a big issue.

EDWARDS: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Well, so-called socialized medicine; what Truman called "National Health Insurance."

EDWARDS: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: And then, raising the minimum wage; I suppose they tended to oppose that.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: And public housing.

EDWARDS: Anything that the...

JOHNSON: Truman was expanding Social Security, and the *Tribune* opposed that. But did you necessarily personally oppose those things?

EDWARDS: I didn't give it much thought.

JOHNSON: But you wrote about these things didn't you?

EDWARDS: Sure. I can't take that back; I didn't give it much thought.

Of course, Social Security, you've got to remember, started out paying \$40 a month or something like that. It was pretty small for a good many years.

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JOHNSON: The McCormick family still owns the *Tribune*, is that correct?

EDWARDS: He gave it, it seems to me, to his chief editors. It became a trust, that's it...

JOHNSON: I see.

EDWARDS: ..in charge of the editors.

JOHNSON: Did it become employee-owned?

EDWARDS: In a way. In a way, except that the trust really owned it.

JOHNSON: In the Truman years and the Roosevelt years, did it remain consistent in its policy, editorial policy?

EDWARDS: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: Against the Fair Deal as well as the New Deal. Intervention in Korea, of course, was a major issue after June of '50. Did you cover that at all?

EDWARDS: Doesn't click. Doesn't click in my mind at all.

JOHNSON: What fields did you tend to emphasize or cover in your write-ups?

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EDWARDS: I just covered what was being said in the Senate and in the House, and the Presidential elections.

JOHNSON: How about the 1952 election, when Adlai Stevenson became the candidate? What was your role in the '52 election?

EDWARDS: I didn't cover Stevenson. I know what it was. Fifty-two was the year that Joe McCarthy began to appear.

JOHNSON: Well, yes, in '50 he actually made his first charges about Communists in Government.

EDWARDS: Fifty to '54 was the Joe McCarthy era.

JOHNSON: Right.

EDWARDS: And I switched to McCarthy. I covered McCarthy almost completely.

JOHNSON: What was your position on that? How did you cover that?

EDWARDS: I liked Joe McCarthy, most people did, personally. But I finally realized that it was impossible for him to modify anything he said. I'll tell a little story

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that proves it. His staff came to me and said, "We've discovered evidence showing Communist leanings in the National Labor Relations Board. We want Joe to make a speech on it, but we're afraid of what he'll do with it. Would you write the speech for him?"

So I wrote a speech, the lead of which was "Mr. President, I rise in the Senate to outline evidence showing Communist leanings among members of the National Labor Relations Board." Time passed, and I said, "What happened to the speech I wrote?" They said, "Joe's working on it." He got up and made it one day: "Mr. President, I arise to reveal indisputable evidence that the National Labor Relations Board is honeycombed with members of the Communist Party." I said, "I give up." I kind of left Joe McCarthy that day. I realized that there was no holding him back.

JOHNSON: Did the Chicago *Tribune* ever challenge McCarthy in any of his charges?

EDWARDS: Never. Never did. They asked me once at a dinner in Chicago why I hadn't warned them about McCarthy's excesses, and I said, "I did, several times, but

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they never paid any attention to them."

JOHNSON: The chief of the bureau here was Trohan?

EDWARDS: He became chief, yes.

JOHNSON: Was he chief during the McCarthy years?

EDWARDS: No. No, Henning, I think, was still around.

JOHNSON: What was Henning's attitude towards McCarthy?

EDWARDS: Henning lived above the rest of us. Henning was the kind of a guy that used a cane when he didn't need one.

JOHNSON: Do you think he was a puppet of McCormick?

EDWARDS: In a way. In a way.

JOHNSON: A mouthpiece for him?

EDWARDS: Yes. He wouldn't have thought of violating any of the [rules].

JOHNSON: Perhaps that is something the *Tribune* isn't so proud of nowadays, the favorable treatment they gave McCarthy?

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EDWARDS: I shouldn't think so, no. I don't think so, no.

JOHNSON: Do you recall if they ever turned against him, when he attacked the Army and so forth?

EDWARDS: No, I don't think they did that.

JOHNSON: But have they mellowed? Have you followed the *Tribune* since the Truman years? Have they mellowed?

EDWARDS: You've hit me on a delicate spot. I haven't read a copy of the *Tribune* for 10 years.

JOHNSON: They seemed to have mellowed some. We have an etching the *Tribune* sent the Library of that headline; a copper etching with a little plaque on it with "Greetings to President Truman who helped make the most famous headline in *Tribune* history." So they've taken a kind of philosophical view of that.

EDWARDS: Well, we presented that to him in person, you know.

JOHNSON: Oh, you were there when they did that?

EDWARDS: I wasn't there, but I heard about it.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get to see Truman after he left the

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White House, or did you ever go to the Truman Library?

EDWARDS: No, no, I wasn't in the Library.

JOHNSON: When was the last time you got to see Truman?

EDWARDS: I was in the hospital writing about his death, his dying days.

JOHNSON: That's right, yes. But you didn't actually see him there, I suppose.

EDWARDS: No.

JOHNSON: Were you fairly regular in your attendance at Truman's press conferences?

EDWARDS: Oh yes. Yes, I was present.

JOHNSON: They were at least weekly weren't they?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: What's happened to the press conferences since the Truman days?

EDWARDS: Well, you know better than that; you don't have to ask that question.

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JOHNSON: Well, what do you think about the value of the press conferences in those days and the kind of value that's given to it now? Now they've got television as a competitor, I suppose, for the press conference, but you know in general, the news, the straight news about the President and the White House, was it better expressed, and disseminated, and published in those days, than it has been since?

EDWARDS: It was better in those days. The rule about not putting it on the record was the main reason for that, but it was much better covered I thought. That's probably an old man just talking.

JOHNSON: Were you there through the Eisenhower years?

EDWARDS: Oh yes, I liked Eisenhower.

JOHNSON: You attended his press conferences? What did you think of his press conferences as compared to Truman's?

EDWARDS: Well, another little story. The time came after Joe McCarthy had attacked the Army and so forth, when

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word spread through Washington that Eisenhower at his next press conference would give Joe "holy hell," and just tear him to pieces. So I went to that press conference. I couldn't miss it, and I sat beside Joe Alsop whom you've heard of.

JOHNSON: Who Truman called "Alslop."

EDWARDS: Eisenhower began talking, and he finally came to a line where he said that this administration will never seek to restrain any member of Congress from saying what he wants to say. Joe [Alsop] yelled at the top of his voice, heard through the whole amphitheatre, "The yellow son of a bitch." He was referring to Eisenhower. I thought, "This is Joe McCarthy's chance to get back on the wagon." I left that press conference and I hurried up to the Hill and found that he was already talking to the Associated Press. He had already issued his famous statement starting, "Too many men in high places," -- he was referring to Eisenhower. He thought that what everybody had rumored was going to happen. He thought that Ike was down there tearing him apart, so he said, "Too many men in high places are defending Communists these days."

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JOHNSON: This is what McCarthy said.

EDWARDS: This is what McCarthy said. I said to him, "Cancel that; try and get out of it." He said, "It's too late." And he didn't want to anyway.

JOHNSON: Well now, Joe Alsop, is he the one that said, "yellow son of a bitch?"

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: And that was in reference to...

EDWARDS: To Ike. To Ike for not tearing McCarthy to pieces.

JOHNSON: The press conferences with Eisenhower were not quite as frequent, but they were at least once a week I believe. Did you feel that he was pretty open with the press?

EDWARDS: Well, I guess so.

JOHNSON: As open as Truman?

EDWARDS: Well, the words are now on the record, you understand, so everything he says is there.

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JOHNSON: Was it the same rules? Was it the same rules about no direct attribution?

EDWARDS: Oh, no, no. Now the man was talking on television.

JOHNSON: On television, I see.

Well, he combined the TV with the press conferences?

EDWARDS: Right, right.

JOHNSON: Did you have some conferences where television wasn't a part of it?

EDWARDS: I can't remember any.

JOHNSON: In other words, now you're competing with TV newsmen. Did that change your approach and your attitude?

EDWARDS: Changed the attitude. The whole picture in Washington of news reporting changed with the advent of TV. We found this out when we would be waiting around outside a secret meeting.

A group of newspapermen would be waiting outside

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a closed committee hearing. As the members left we questioned them, and we all agreed not to talk about this -- [that is] until the TV men approached. As soon as they saw that little red light going on, the secrecy vanished and they talked. I realized then that we haven't got a chance against these people.

JOHNSON: Now, during the Truman years, when you got a good piece of news, right after a conference everybody would rush out to the phones. They were outside the Oval Office in the press room.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: You'd try to get to a phone, get the news to your editor, either here or in Chicago.

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: You probably would call your bureau here?

EDWARDS: Well, I didn't do the calling. This was done mostly by the press associations, the AP and the UPI and so forth.

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JOHNSON: But you didn't rush out necessarily to get to a phone?

EDWARDS: I didn't do any rushing.

JOHNSON: With television I suppose there wasn't as much point to that, was there?

EDWARDS: Well, no point at all.

JOHNSON: Because everything was instant. And the newspaper is just kind of following up.

EDWARDS: Somebody should do a job on the change provoked -- I suppose it has been done -- by television on [coverage of the White House].

JOHNSON: And that occurred during the Eisenhower years, those eight years?

EDWARDS: Yes, it did.

JOHNSON: When Kennedy came in, did he change that at all?

EDWARDS: Well, he was so attractive that you couldn't have shut him up anyway.

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JOHNSON: But it's still television.

EDWARDS: Yes, oh yes.

JOHNSON: And he didn't have any press conferences without a TV camera as far as you know?

EDWARDS: I don't remember any, no.

JOHNSON: But did you cover Kennedy?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: How long were you with the Washington bureau then of the *Tribune*?

EDWARDS: I quit in '73 and went to work in '25, so right close to 47 years.

JOHNSON: You were there in the Johnson years, and Nixon?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Right up to Watergate.

EDWARDS: Don't ask me about Nixon; I got to be very palsy-walsy with him.

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JOHNSON: The *Tribune*, I suppose, favored the candidacy of Nixon in '68 and '72?

EDWARDS: Sure did.

JOHNSON: By this time news conferences were getting fewer and farther between, were they not?

EDWARDS: I don't believe there was any regular schedule.

JOHNSON: Did Johnson begin to avoid regular news conferences?

EDWARDS: He didn't like them, I know that.

JOHNSON: How did these Presidents handle their conferences in comparison with each other? Who do you think was the best in handling news conferences of all the Presidents?

EDWARDS: Well, Jack Kennedy, of course, was a master. He somehow was kind of a newspaperman himself. He liked just what they liked. Bobby Kennedy and I were very close friends.

JOHNSON: Well, how about Roosevelt? He used to have very good rapport.

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EDWARDS: Yes, as far as I was concerned, and I was part of it. He would make a joking remark in reply to something I said.

JOHNSON: He had good humor?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: And Truman had pretty good humor?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did Eisenhower have that kind of...

EDWARDS: Well, Ike was a different kind of a guy. Ike didn't want to run in the first place, you know.

JOHNSON: So he didn't say any more than he had to say. They said he also got kind of complicated, his syntax did.

EDWARDS: Oh, that's true; they kidded him a lot about that.

JOHNSON: Did you try to smooth that out a little bit for him?

EDWARDS: No.

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JOHNSON: Did you try to quote directly as much as possible?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: It had to be an exact quote if you quoted, right? Errors and all -- grammatical errors and all?

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: How about Nixon?

EDWARDS: Nixon was good. He didn't have as many. It's hard to explain Nixon. When I first heard that Nixon was nominated to be Ike's Vice President, I was riding in a plane with him once and I said, "You know, when I heard that news that you were to be his running mate, I shuddered and thought, 'God, I hope Ike has a long life.'" That was an insult if there ever was one, but he just took it without a comment. He had said, "What was your reaction, what did you do?" Then, he said, "Why did you change your mind?" I told him the truth.

About a year after he became Vice President, he had a press conference, off-the-record, to which he invited all his friends and enemies alike. There were about 40 or 50 of us in a hotel downtown somewhere.

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And for one hour, Nixon spoke about foreign policy, without notes, and he sold me completely. I said, "My God, this is the guy we want." That is when I changed my mind. I think that that is, in fact, true. I think the general agreement is that Nixon would have made a great President on the foreign policy end of it anyway.

JOHNSON: Were you aware that there was a feud between Truman and Nixon going way back to '46 probably?

EDWARDS: I guess I vaguely remember that, yes.

JOHNSON: That Truman thought he was very unscrupulous and would try to obtain power by any means?

EDWARDS: Yes, that's true.

JOHNSON: Do you think this was a problem with Nixon, that his desire for power sometimes overwhelmed his good judgment?

EDWARDS: I think so, yes. I think so.

JOHNSON: How about the election of 1960 with Kennedy running? Did you feel a certain sympathy or empathy

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for Kennedy, and did you have kind of mixed feelings in that campaign?

EDWARDS: I did. I covered the closing speech made by Kennedy, his acceptance speech, at the nomination, and I really went overboard on it.

JOHNSON: You were out at Los Angeles at the convention?

EDWARDS: Yes, I tried to make it as favorable as I could, and I got away with it.

JOHNSON: You know Truman refused to attend that convention. He said the Kennedy's had rigged it with the "pop's" money.

EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: But then he became friendly to Kennedy after they got better acquainted after the election. But the *Tribune* was still promoting the Republicans, period, is that true?

EDWARDS: They sure were.

JOHNSON: You considered yourself Republican?

EDWARDS: Yes. Yes, I was born a Republican. My father was a Republican.

JOHNSON: An Irish Republican?

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EDWARDS: Right.

JOHNSON: There were not an awful lot of them, were there?

EDWARDS: I don't know.

JOHNSON: Most of the Irishmen you've met were Democrats, I suppose.

EDWARDS: That was true.

JOHNSON: But that still didn't sway you?

EDWARDS: No.

JOHNSON: So you were at the Democratic convention in 1960. Were you at the Democratic convention in '56?

EDWARDS: I was to all of the Democratic conventions; all the conventions, both the Republican and the Democratic, from '36 until I retired.

JOHNSON: Truman came to the '56 convention; it was in Chicago. He turned against Adlai Stevenson -- didn't think he ran a good campaign -- and he was promoting Harriman.

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EDWARDS: Yes, that's true.

JOHNSON: Do you remember that?

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you do any coverage of that?

EDWARDS: No. No, that was somebody else.

JOHNSON: Do you remember seeing Truman at that convention in Chicago in '56?

EDWARDS: Oh yes, yes, I did.

JOHNSON: And he made quite a splash, according to the papers.

EDWARDS: He sure did, yes.

JOHNSON: I guess that was the last convention he attended. He wasn't at the '60 convention and in '64 I'm not sure that he went to that. I suppose the paper was supporting Goldwater. Did you cover Goldwater in '64?

EDWARDS: Yes. Goldwater was another character. He just didn't give a damn. In the heat of the campaign we

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found out that Goldwater was piloting the plane in which we were on and engaging in racing with the other plane carrying the others. That was his sole interest.

Let me give you one sample of Lyndon Johnson's campaign tactics. We were riding in a southern state somewhere in an automobile cortege, and everywhere where there were schools, the schools had been excused for the day. The kids were out in the lawn and listening, watching the President go by. Well, we noticed that Johnson was stopping, while Goldwater breezed through. They were both on the same road. Especially where there were Catholic high schools with hundreds of kids out, Johnson would stop there. And I said, "I've got to find out what this guy is saying." So I got up close enough and I think I had an exclusive on this. Johnson was telling the sisters, "Sisters, I am trying to be as good a President as Jack Kennedy was," and that was all. He left votes behind him.

JOHNSON: So then the paper sent you out in '72 to cover the last days of Harry Truman.

EDWARDS: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Do you remember why they sent you?

EDWARDS: I think it was just by chance. They didn't know I was going to quit; I decided I was going to resign.

JOHNSON: That was going to be one of your last jobs.

EDWARDS: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet Bess or Margaret?

EDWARDS: Yes, you know, casually.

JOHNSON: Your feelings towards Truman did change apparently.

EDWARDS: Oh yes, very much so, sure.

JOHNSON: When did they begin to change?

EDWARDS: Well, my God, all these things, the Greek-Turkish thing and the NATO thing.

JOHNSON: Marshall plan, NATO.

EDWARDS: He did a good job.

JOHNSON: Did you write an obituary, then, on Truman for the *Tribune*?

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EDWARDS: What I wrote that day when I was out there in the hospital -- he lived a few days longer -- I said, "We usually wait until after the death of a person to write the nice things about him. I'm going to write the nice things about Harry Truman now, while he can perhaps read them." I wrote a long story and they put it on page one.

JOHNSON: Page one. So, the *Tribune* had mellowed.

EDWARDS: Yes. Oh yes. The *Tribune* is not the paper it was. After McCormick died, it changed.

JOHNSON: It was good to talk to you. This is the first time I have talked to a *Tribune* correspondent. Since the *Tribune* was on Truman's mind at times, I think it's well for us to talk to a writer from the *Tribune*.

EDWARDS: I think you're right.

JOHNSON: I want to thank you.

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