

Oral History Interview
with
DR. WALLACE H. GRAHAM

President Truman's personal White House physician, 1945-53; Truman family doctor, 1945-82.

Independence, Missouri
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by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

NOTICE

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JOHNSON: Dr. Graham, I'm going to start by asking you when and where you were born, and the names of your parents. Would you give me that?

GRAHAM: Yes. I was born in Highland, Kansas, that's in Doniphan County, on October 9, 1910. My mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Marie Venneman. My father's name was James Walter Graham, M.D. He was born in Tarentum, Pennsylvania. He and his family then settled in Alma, Kansas, which was homesteaded land. (My father, Dr. James W. Graham, was a baby at the time.) They moved again and established a place at Long Island, Kansas. They were in the last Indian raid in that area. The year, I do not recall. The Sioux Indians migrated north near the Cheyennes. The Sac and Fox Indians remained in mid and western Kansas.

JOHNSON: Are you talking about the 1860s?

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GRAHAM: Yes. Then my father's family returned to Tarentum, Pennsylvania, which is just to the outskirts of Pittsburgh. My father was in school at the University of Pittsburgh. Then he entered medical school and graduated with a M.D. degree. He came out west to establish the ground that his mother had homesteaded near Alma, Kansas. He came out to Alma, in

western Kansas, and began raising corn and wheat to make enough money to continue his medical studies. My mother and father later moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, where my older brother, John James, was born in January 1901, nine years prior to my birth on October 9, 1910. My father was associated with Ensworth Hospital in St. Joseph, Missouri at that time. I believe it's called The Sisters Hospital at the present time. My father James W. Graham then did night duty for extra income at the St. Joseph Hospital Number 2. When World War I began, my father left Highland, Kansas for active army service. He enlisted as a First Lieutenant in the Medical Corps, and later returned to Ft. Riley, Kansas, in 1919. From there he was sent for a short time to Camp Funston, Kansas. After World War I he returned and immediately gathered the family-- brother John, my mother, and me--and moved us from Highland, Kansas, to Kansas City, Missouri, which was in his words, "more progressive" and a better place to grow.

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JOHNSON: Again, what was your older brother's name?

GRAHAM: His name was John James Graham, and he was attending the Wentworth Military Academy at the time in 1917. After serving on active duty in World War I my father came back to the Midwest and practiced medicine and surgery for a short time with Dr. McGill and Dr. Breifogel in Kansas City, Kansas. Then my father moved to Kansas City, Missouri, because he thought it was more progressive. He established himself there. We had a home at 5731 Troost Avenue, from 1919 to 1928.

JOHNSON: Did you have just the one brother?

GRAHAM: Yes. I had a sister who died as a baby, with pneumonia, in 1908.

JOHNSON: I see. When your father was practicing in St. Joseph, Missouri, that was before World War I.

GRAHAM: Yes, that was quite a long time back, prior to my birth in October, 1910. My father practiced with a Doctor McGill in St. Joseph, Missouri and there he performed surgery along with the general practice of medicine.

JOHNSON: He might have become acquainted with the Cronkites; you know, Walter Cronkite's father was a dentist, and I think his grandfather was a dentist in St. Joe.

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GRAHAM: Possibly.

JOHNSON: So your father served in the military in World War I.

GRAHAM: As a matter of interest, my paternal grandfather enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War at Ft. Leavenworth. He was in Company D, Kansas Volunteers--8th Regiment,

Infantry, under Captain D.W. Williams. Colonel Robert Graham organized for service along the border.

JOHNSON: Do you know when Truman first became acquainted with your father?

GRAHAM: It was through the Army, probably in 1919 or near that time.

JOHNSON: Was it during the war, or in the Reserves after the war?

GRAHAM: I think it was in the Reserve Officers Association.

JOHNSON: Your father was not in the 129th?

GRAHAM: No.

JOHNSON: He was probably in the 35th Division though?

GRAHAM: I do not believe so. I do not know.

JOHNSON: Your father then was an officer in the Army Reserve after the war?

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GRAHAM: Yes, and my father was on the Army pistol team. Harry Truman could not make the pistol team because his sight was poor.

JOHNSON: And your father attended yearly summer training camps?

GRAHAM: Yes, that's right. He went to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, during the early part of World War II.

JOHNSON: Was it sometime in the 1920s that he became acquainted with Harry Truman?

GRAHAM: Yes. I think so.

JOHNSON: I am trying to establish Harry Truman's relationship with your father. Was your father a family doctor to the Trumans?

GRAHAM: No. Dr. Charles Allen was Truman's doctor at the time. My father and Truman became friends through the Reserve Officers Association.

JOHNSON: Did he ever have any of the Trumans as patients, perhaps in the 1930s?

GRAHAM: Not to my knowledge.

JOHNSON: But Harry Truman talks as if he knew your father pretty well.

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GRAHAM: Yes, they knew each other very well as good friends.

JOHNSON: Are we talking about the '20s and '30s?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Your father then was living in Kansas City, Missouri and having a private medical and surgical practice in Kansas City, Missouri?

GRAHAM: Yes. That is correct.

JOHNSON: But you're not sure whether the Trumans were patients of his?

GRAHAM: No, they were not.

JOHNSON: Did your father ever say anything to you about the Trumans, or did he ever have any stories or anecdotes about the Trumans that he ever told you?

GRAHAM: On several occasions. One in which Truman was standing in the back of a motor boat when it started up suddenly. Truman was thrown out of the boat. He climbed back in, soaking wet. Also President Truman wanted to get on the pistol team, and my father was captain of the pistol team at the time. He wanted Truman on the team, but Truman's eyesight was not good enough; the president was told he had "a flat eyeball" which caused defective vision. Truman

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would drive around at night in the dark thinking that it might help his sight some; however, that had no beneficial effect.

JOHNSON: This would have been at Fort Riley, for instance, this pistol team?

GRAHAM: No. This was in Kansas City, Missouri, in the Reserve Officers Association. Those who won went to Camp Perry. My father was an expert marksman; he would practice by the hour, just bringing that .45 caliber pistol down and holding it straight out many minutes at arms length. He made his own ammunition which he would use for target practice in the field.

JOHNSON: He still had the frontier spirit.

GRAHAM: Yes. He had the will and the powder. I can remember that little granular powder he put together. He would use old shell casings. He would pick them up from the firing range in the Armory, where they fell, and fill them with powder and his own lead by hand, after melting the lead to fit.

JOHNSON: So he said that Harry Truman wanted to be on the pistol team, but his eyesight was not adequate to be a good marksman.

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GRAHAM: Right. Yes, he was not a good marksman; consequently he could not hold a place on the team.

JOHNSON: Yes, I guess Harry Truman had other talents.

GRAHAM: Yes, obviously.

JOHNSON: That brings us up to World War II. You entered the Army before Pearl Harbor, didn't you?

GRAHAM: Yes, I entered the Army through Ft. Leavenworth as a Reserve Officer. I was in advanced ROTC while at the University of Missouri. Every summer, from age 17, I was in the CMTC (Citizens Military Training Camp) in Ft. Snelling, Minnesota.

JOHNSON: When did you go into the Reserve Officers program?

GRAHAM: I was a Reserve Officer--first Lieutenant--immediately upon graduation from the Creighton University School of Medicine in 1936.

JOHNSON: Did you meet Harry Truman as a Reserve Officer?

GRAHAM: No.

JOHNSON: You didn't meet him before . . .

GRAHAM: No, and purposely I didn't. Now, that sounds rather harsh. I did not want to go with my father, at all, when he

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wanted me to meet Senator Truman. I felt like, well, it was like a father taking "little stinky" to meet the Senator, you understand; I just felt that way. I said, "No, he didn't have any interest in me except as a friend of my father's and you understand that, Dad." He said, "Oh, you're a good boy." I remember that. "I want you to know him." I said, "If we happen to meet in our various roads of life, fine; but it's just like taking little stinky up to meet the Senator."

JOHNSON: Was that a nickname?

GRAHAM: Oh, no, no. I just said that to myself, that it would be analogous. "This is my young son, you know, and I want you to meet friend, Senator Truman."

JOHNSON: This was Senator Truman at the time.

GRAHAM: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: But your father's opinions of Senator Truman were very favorable?

GRAHAM: Extremely high as an honest, straight-forward Army officer and gentleman; a splendid leader, the best, and very personable--but not a good marksman.

JOHNSON: He was a real New Deal Democrat?

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GRAHAM: Absolutely, all the way. Very strong. My father was a Republican when he came to the Midwest from Pennsylvania, but he said later, "The Democratic Party is the only party for the general populace." I remember him saying that. He said, "It's the party for the majority of the people; we're Democrats now."

JOHNSON: Do you think the Depression is what converted him?

GRAHAM: Well, actually this was before the Depression, in 1928 and '29.

JOHNSON: Oh, this was before the Depression.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Maybe it could be traced to Woodrow Wilson or even to [William Jennings] Bryan. Would it go back to Bryan?

GRAHAM: The "Cross of Gold" speech was a winner which cinched the victory. Dad thought that was great. My Dad was quite strictly religious. I do not mean he was a fanatic, but he was the kind of man that would be on his knees to pray every morning and every night, asking for proper guidance, wisdom, and power to follow the correct path and help his family and patients ease the suffering of the sick and afflicted.

JOHNSON: What denomination did he belong to?

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GRAHAM: Well, out in Kansas we were Presbyterians. But then when we moved, my father made a study of religious precepts. After we left Highland, Kansas we went to several of the churches in Kansas City, Missouri. He thought the Baptist Church had more to offer. He liked the minister, Dr. Abernathy, at that time, who later was sent to Washington. Dr. Abernathy, who was followed by Dr. A. Ray Petty, and later by Dr. D. J. Evans. Dr. Abernathy was transferred to Washington, D.C. Then there was A. Ray Petty, who was sincere and articulate. When any

young fellow, ten and twelve years of age, enjoys going to church rather than going to Sunday School, that speaks well of the minister. I went to Sunday School as long as I thought was necessary, but I wanted to get to church. In adult church, the lectures were more intellectual; they were superb and enjoyable. The minister would always relate his sermon to everyday life.

JOHNSON: What Baptist Church was that?

GRAHAM: That was the First Baptist.

JOHNSON: In Kansas City, Missouri?

GRAHAM: Yes. On Linwood Boulevard and Park Avenue.

JOHNSON: So your father was a Baptist like Harry Truman?

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GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Very strong for the New Deal?

GRAHAM: Yes, all the way.

JOHNSON: New Deal legislation, and liberalism?

GRAHAM: Yes, absolutely. My father took time and explained it to me very well.

JOHNSON: So they had that in common.

GRAHAM: They had very much in common. My father was a Federal doctor, who would talk to and treat the prisoners. He would go to the Courthouse prisons at least once or twice a week on stipulated days. He would minister to the prisoners; he helped many and financed several to get started--one in a grocery store, and for others he obtained permanent work elsewhere.

JOHNSON: They did not have a Veterans Hospital before World War II?

GRAHAM: No.

JOHNSON: Did your father have a special practice with veterans?

GRAHAM: No, not just for veterans; he just took care of all he possibly could.

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JOHNSON: Just general . . .

GRAHAM: Yes, general care and surgery if and when needed. And he took care and treated the prisoners, both in the city and county jails.

JOHNSON: Your father had a strong social conscience it sounds like.

GRAHAM: Yes, very much so. As a matter of fact, they didn't know whether he was a doctor or a minister, because he was always preaching the gospel to them and giving welcome and sound advice.

JOHNSON: But he practiced what he preached?

GRAHAM: Yes absolutely; he certainly did. Dad was the one that was on his knees every morning and every evening in prayer. I heard so many patients' names by hearing dad praying, "Oh, Lord, give us strength so we know how to treat poor old Johnny Crump," or this or that one.

JOHNSON: I'll bet he had some tough cases too.

GRAHAM: Certainly, he did, because they did not have much to work with. There were no antibiotics in those days. They had morphine, aspirin, and quinine. It was difficult not having our present choices of medication. The majority of pulmonary diseases were classified as consumption.

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JOHNSON: Okay, about World War II, we could have a separate interview, just on that I'm sure. I notice that you were in that "Operation Market-Garden" where paratroopers were dropped on Nijmegen and other places in Holland.

GRAHAM: Yes, Nijmegen, Hertogenbosch, Eindhoven, and Vechel, Holland.

JOHNSON: Did you parachute with the troops there?

GRAHAM: Yes. I was attached to the 101st Airborne. Our unit was divided between the 101st and the 82nd Airborne.

JOHNSON: And you were wounded there?

GRAHAM: Yes. I was shot in the left thigh and later in the left hand.

JOHNSON: Was that shrapnel?

GRAHAM: The thigh wound was. I was hit in the right leg with a high explosive shell fragment. I was hit by the same gun which struck General Maxwell Taylor. I operated on General Taylor, removing a piece of explosive shell. I was hit the following day by the same gun. Later, I had a frightening experience when I was under constant, heavy fire, and I ran into a

pillbox. There was a German forward observer standing on a parapet. Hearing the shells whine and the snap of bullets overhead, you could name every size and

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caliber.

JOHNSON: This was a German pillbox?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: There were still Germans in there?

GRAHAM: Yes. The German observer was there and I ran in on him in the bunker. I recall that I couldn't see very well coming in front the light because it was a little dim underground, a bit dark. He was looking around. Then I saw him reach up on the parapet and he got this small officer's pistol, a small Walther model. I had the pistol until an employee robbed our house and took it. I grasped the hand and arm of the German and flipped him over. I was shot in the left hand in the encounter. The bullet went down through my left hand and came out the lower part of my hand. I knocked him down with a straight left jab on the chin. Then I sat on him. I didn't know what to do with him. I saw he was an SS trooper by the uniform and tattoo on his upper arm, so they'd shoot him anyway when our troops came through. I talked to him in German, and he said, "Sind sie ein Deutcher?" (Are you a German?) I said, "Nein, ich bin nicht ein Deutscher." "Aber" (But) I told him I had learned the German language in the U.S. school and had been in school in Germany. I studied there. The fact is, I knew

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German before I was sent to Germany, because I studied it and used it in the university. I sat on him and talked to him. I said, "If I allow you to get up, will you try to kill me?" He said, "Ja wohl" ("Certainly I will"). He said in German, "That is my duty." I replied, "Well, you'd better stay very quiet because I'm the officer that will have to sew your head up that I split open." I said, "I'm a doctor, and I have to close the wound in your head." He replied, "Yes, I understand that too." I said, "Yet you'd try to kill me?" He said, "Ja, Ich muz" ("I must"). (It beats the devil out of me.) I said, "Look, I'm trying to save your miserable life; yet I have no reason not to kill you. If you give me any trouble, I will kill you."

JOHNSON: Well, you're lucky to be alive. He had no scruples.

GRAHAM: You are right; he had no compunction about killing. You can see the healed scars in the palm and first finger in my left hand.

JOHNSON: Did he survive?

GRAHAM: No. When the GIs came by, I heard them and I shouted at them. I said, "I'm an American officer and I have a Deutcher here with me." So they came in and they took him out, and he was killed, because he was an SS trooper as seen

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by the lightning tattoo on his upper left arm; they took no prisoners, only killed them as we were advancing.

JOHNSON: The young Germans were thoroughly brainwashed.

GRAHAM: Yes. I have seen them with so much hatred. One wounded German I saw asked for a drink of water; and we'd give them a drink, then he would spit the water in the face of the one who gave it to him. Then he died, following the kindness, just like that. Oh, yes, I've seen so many occurrences similar to that. I know of a German who was rather scared on at least one occasion. His name was Dahl; I'll never forget him. He was in his foxhole; the Americans were coming through and a G.I. stuck his bayonet through his back, and it protruded through the chest. It was right over his heart, and came out the upper left chest. They couldn't get the bayonet out as it stuck on his ribs and scapula bone. So they left the bayonet in and they brought him in as we were moving forward to advance. He was brought in to me and I took care of him. I put him on the table, and laid him on his right side with the bayonet protruding. I was afraid that it was right in his heart. I pulled it out very slowly and didn't lose over a few drops of blood. It was amazing but true.

JOHNSON: He survived then.

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GRAHAM: Yes, he did and was evacuated back to the P.O.W. enclosure. I later heard he was sent to the U.S. and worked on a farm there in Iowa.

JOHNSON: Yes, that's something. So you got your purple heart.

GRAHAM: I should have received three purple hearts; however, my commanding officer, Colonel Karl Rylander, said "You already have one and that is enough for you." The War Department did issue the purple heart with three palms, from my C.O. During the war I was shot several times. I was shot in the right leg, left thigh, and left hand at different times. They couldn't give me any more purple hearts. My C.O., Colonel Rylander, said, "No, you've got one purple heart; that's all you deserve." He was an odd fellow, envious and opinionated. Colonel Rylander, our C.O., was a Nazi in many of his beliefs; he hated Jews and thought the Germans were only fighting to stay alive.

JOHNSON: You mean after this incident with the SS you were shot again?

GRAHAM: When I was first shot, then I got my purple heart recommendation. But I was shot two other times, and I had my leg wounded, and he said, "No, you don't get any more. You've got one; that's enough." So he wouldn't put in for two more.

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While standing on a dike in Holland shouting to a British group in the valley below to move, I was hit with a small fragment in the left thigh that day after Colonel Maxwell Taylor was hit in the left leg by the same gun which struck me.

JOHNSON: You came into Normandy, on Omaha beach, shortly after D-Day, and then you were in combat until about the middle of May?

GRAHAM: I landed on Easy Red, Omaha Beach; we went in from a landing barge, wading through water, while the enemy was still engaged in crossfire. I know the engineers had to cut the barbed wire which were big round rolls of entanglements on the beach and at the edge of the water. Also, there were railroad spikes. They prevented our initial landing boats from getting far on the beach. We went a limited distance on a Liberty ship, and then we transferred into a landing barge. We went in on Easy Red at Omaha Beach, on D plus 2. Some others in our unit were with the airborne, and landed in a swamp. They were given noise clickers to denote their position; however the Germans found them quickly, to our sorrow.

JOHNSON: Was this what we think of now as a MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) unit, or like a MASH unit?

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GRAHAM: To some extent it was a similar operation, but we did not call it a "MASH" unit.

JOHNSON: You were right near the front lines?

GRAHAM: Yes. After getting over the beach we would send two, or three, or at times six medics as needed to the fighting divisions. They were immediately behind and with the fighting division. We were underneath the artillery fire which would go three to five miles back, and we were just beyond the small arms fire, 150 to 200 yards. We were right in that zone where the missiles were generally over our heads, and some of our officers and men were shot by short fire. For example, Captain Guy Meyers from Atlanta, Georgia, was killed while sitting in his foxhole.

It was a miserable occurrence. I had gone to check on my men and officers, and Captain Meyers, our eye surgeon, was in his foxhole. I said, Captain Meyers, you're the eye man, and I've got three who have eye wounds and one man who has been hit and his eyeballs are both out." I said, "They're just hanging here, and I don't know if they can be saved or not. You've got to see him." He says, "Major Graham, I'm the most yellow sonofabitch in the whole United States Army, but," he says, "Sir, I think you're kind of crazy. Don't you hear those things snapping and swishing going over your head?" I said, "Sure, but they're all going

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over us." He says, "I can't move out of here." He says, "Look at my knees; I'm not faking or putting this on." His knees were just shaking grossly, like that. "I can't stop them," he said. I replied, "Look, Captain Meyers, I've got to have these eyes taken care of. You are better off being active and getting the wounded treated." He says, "Do the best you can, but I can't crawl out of here." I said, "You will be okay as soon as you are out and active."

JOHNSON: Were these 88 millimeter shells that he was hearing, or small arms?

GRAHAM: Both 88s and small arms. The small fire would snap. He said, "Pardon me, sir, but I think you're kind of crazy." I said, "We have a duty to do." "Yes, but it isn't to get killed. We ain't no good dead." Guy Meyers was from Atlanta, Georgia. You know, he got hit a little later that afternoon; he never knew what hit him.

JOHNSON: While he was in the tent?

GRAHAM: We never saw a tent and could not use it if we had one; we were dug in and the air was filled with exploding shells. We had no tents; we were on our bellies and digging in while lying flat. I am reminded of a cartoon. One G.I. said to the other, "Get down flat Willy." Willy answered, "Hell, I can't; my buttons are in the way."

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No, he was in a foxhole, but I guess he crawled out and a short burst hit him, killing him instantly. He was an excellent soldier and gentleman, loved by the entire unit.

JOHNSON: As I mentioned before, of course, we have an interview done by William Jewell College students, William Stilley and Jerald Hill, in which you describe in some detail how you were called up to Potsdam.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes; this was after the war was actually over.

JOHNSON: Yes.

GRAHAM: I had volunteered for duty in Japan, because I wanted to stay in active service as long as I believed it was my duty to do so--not to be heroic or a martyr or anything of that type, but I felt compelled to stay with the Army until the war ended. However, I was called to report to Potsdam, to the "Little White House." I didn't even know the President was over there, and so I thought I was being sent to another war zone (possibly to Japan). I picked up my things and went into Potsdam. I don't recall now how we got there.

JOHNSON: Yes, I think that's in the other interview, so I won't go into detail on that. It was quite an experience; you went through Berlin and saw all the devastated buildings and rubble. One of your soldiers went down into the bunker and came out with the last will and testament of Adolph Hitler.

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GRAHAM: Last will and testament . . .

JOHNSON: Of Adolph Hitler?

GRAHAM: Yes, that's right; that was my sergeant who retrieved it.

JOHNSON: And that was the first manuscript, so to speak, or the first record that we got out of the bunker, that the American Army retrieved.

GRAHAM: Well, four people got copies. One went later to the President; the others went to the Secretary of Defense, to General [Harry] Vaughan and to me.

JOHNSON: Didn't Eisenhower get one?

GRAHAM: I don't recall Eisenhower being in the picture at that particular point in time.

JOHNSON: These are photostats you're talking about, aren't they? The original went to the National Archives.

GRAHAM: Yes. Four of them were taken. I received one, and General Vaughan got one also.

JOHNSON: And you still have your photostat?

GRAHAM: Yes--with the Nazi insignia, the swastika, on the cover. It has Hitler's marriage certificate to Eva Braun. I think

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you have a copy.

JOHNSON: We may have. Yes, apparently you saw Hitler earlier.

GRAHAM: Oh, I saw Hitler many times, before the war. You see, I had a scholarship at the University of Vienna. I was there at the plebiscite, and the anschluss, on April 10, 1938 when he said, "Now we're taking in all of Austria and upper Czechoslovakia as Southern Germany."

JOHNSON: Of course, Freud was living in Vienna, and I think he emigrated to England about that time. Do you recall Freud being there?

GRAHAM: Professor Dr. Freud, yes, absolutely. That was later. I saw Dr. Freud. He was in Vienna. I saw him the day before he left. He left for London; we waved as I called, "Aufwiedersehen."

JOHNSON: You saw him.

GRAHAM: He had a little beard. He seemed to be a very pleasant man. He wanted to know why I was there to meet him, and I said it was because of his writings and my admiration. He wanted to know if I was a psychiatrist. I said, "No more than any doctor should be." And he liked that.

JOHNSON: So you got to talk to him.

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GRAHAM: Oh yes. He liked that. He left either the next day or two days later from Vienna for London.

JOHNSON: These doctors that you were working with there in Vienna and so on, did they tend to be pro-Nazi or did they think, "Well, this is political and we're apolitical?"

GRAHAM: Well, that is difficult to say. I think most of them were probably leaning towards Nazism to a degree. Of course, Professor Dr. Fuchs was Jewish. He committed suicide. And there were several there in the "Allgemeine Krankenhaus" which is the general hospital where I was one of the chief "hospitants" at the time. Some committed suicide. I can remember; one of the German Nazis came over to the Allgemeine Krankenhaus and he said, "We are conscripting so many of you." He said, "All the Jews and dogs line up on this wall, and the white people on that wall." You know, I'm getting things a little mixed up, because it was the time of the Spanish revolution too, and they were going to send some of us down to Spain. I was chosen to go there.

JOHNSON: You didn't go to Spain did you?

GRAHAM: Yes, I went to Barcelona for a short time--two or three days; then I was pulled back. I don't know why I was pulled back.

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Now, in my talking here I can't figure out how I got into concentration camps. But I . . .

JOHNSON: You mean during the war, toward the end?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: I read that you were at Bergen-Belsen.

GRAHAM: Bergen-Belsen, that's right. At Godeslagen, and later, at Auschwitz.

JOHNSON: Did you foresee the possibilities of that sort of thing?

GRAHAM: The war?

JOHNSON: I mean the death camps. I mean the way the Jews were being treated, even before the war.

GRAHAM: No. I knew that many were crowded and jammed together in boxcars on the train tracks. When I saw this, I asked a German officer and he said they were being sent to "work camps."

JOHNSON: You mean you saw this, even before the war, when you were in Austria?

GRAHAM: Yes. I don't think anyone totally realized what was going on. Even if we had been told the truth, I doubt it

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would have been believed because it was so horrible!

JOHNSON: When you were in Austria, in 1937-38, they were already deporting Jews?

GRAHAM: Absolutely. Yes, they were. I don't think anything is written about that, but I've seen entire boxcars of Jews.

JOHNSON: And you didn't see any people objecting to this, or did anybody object?

GRAHAM: No, not in particular. I asked about it. They said, "Well, they're just being transferred for labor battalions."

JOHNSON: But these Jewish doctors who were committing suicide.

GRAHAM: Sure.

JOHNSON: And the rest of the profession didn't come to their defense?

GRAHAM: Well, some didn't believe they were just being transported, and they would kill themselves or try to escape and they were shot then.

JOHNSON: Does that mean the Aryan doctors didn't come to the defense of their colleagues, their Jewish colleagues, as far as you could tell?

GRAHAM: Not that I can recall. The fact is I think they would

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really be afraid to oppose. I mean you were either Nazi or, you know, you got killed.

JOHNSON: That didn't make you feel very comfortable did it?

GRAHAM: No. No. I brought three of them (Jewish people) over here and I don't remember what circumstance it was. Dr. Kurt Tauber, Dr. Kaufman and Dr. Messinger came. I had one who refused to leave, and I understood he was thrown into a fire.

JOHNSON: Oh, you brought three of the Jewish doctors back?

GRAHAM: Oh yes. They were specialists.

JOHNSON: Before the war? You brought them over here when you came back from Vienna?

GRAHAM: Yes, you see, the war was starting. I tried to persuade others to come with me to the U.S. but they did not believe they were in that great a danger.

JOHNSON: September '39 is when it officially started.

GRAHAM: I had a chance to get into the German army. I mean they asked me if I wanted to be in the army of the Duetsches Reich, and I said, "No." They tried to impress me, saying that I had Deutsche blood in my veins.

JOHNSON: Well, Graham, isn't that English or Irish?

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GRAHAM: Scotch. On my mother's side, though, her name was Venneman.

JOHNSON: That was German?

GRAHAM: Yes, German heritage, yes. I believe her maiden name was Elizabeth Marie Reiser and her grandparents I think were from eastern Germany (maybe Magdeburg).

JOHNSON: So you decided it was time to come back to the United States then, from Austria? You came back when, 1940-41?

GRAHAM: We returned to the States in June or July, 1939. Well, I went first to Scotland, because I had the scholarship and I wanted to take advantage of it at the University of Edinburgh. So I stayed there at the Royal College of Surgeons and took classes with Dr. Ian Aird and Dr. John Bruce.

JOHNSON: And then from there you came back to the United States?

GRAHAM: From Scotland. The war was getting quite vigorous and so then I came back over here. A funny thing--I guess they weren't too convinced here that we would really be getting into it, even at that time. I said, "Well, sure we're going to be in the war. And the Germans will tell you that right openly." They had been keeping butter and lard and things like that. They had been storing it for, oh, for a long,

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long time. We all knew that. They wouldn't let the girls wear lipstick. They had cartoons showing it was bad because they needed the oil, the grease and all of that. They said it was disloyalty.

JOHNSON: They were headed for war. That was part of their philosophy?

GRAHAM: Oh yes. And they said they were prepared for eight years of war. It was common knowledge in Germany.

JOHNSON: They didn't know war is hell yet, did they?

GRAHAM: Oh, they hadn't been shot at yet. I can remember. I was up in the second floor of the Allgemeine Krankenhaus and you could see these young people, young people all of them, or teens, just hysterically all of sudden, "Sieg Heil! Ein Reich, Ein Volk, Ein Fuehrer." There was nobody around, nobody to see them, and they were so imbued with this. "One state, one people, one leader"--[that was the slogan].

JOHNSON: I did my dissertation, by the way, on George Sylvester Viereck, who was a pro-German propagandist. Did you ever hear that name, George Sylvester Viereck?

GRAHAM: At the time of Dollfus. I associate him with the time of Dollfus, and Schusnig.

JOHNSON: He was writing articles for the Munich newspaper. He

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ended up in jail. Well, sometime we should focus just on your prewar and wartime experiences, but for now I suppose we will have to move on.

GRAHAM: Even as a youngster, as soon as I could get into the Army, I did. First I went into the CMTC, Citizen's Military Training Corps. I was in Fort Schnelling, Minnesota. I was to go there every summer from the age of 17 on. Then, when I went there [Austria] to study, you know, then I knew we were going to have war, and they did too, the Deutchers did too. But they were afraid of America. They didn't know, and they always asked me, "Do you think America will ...?" I said, "I don't know." I said, "I can't tell what the United States will do, but I will say this: if England gets into it, we're very close to England and I certainly wouldn't bet that they [the United States] wouldn't."

JOHNSON: So you already saw that there was going to be a hard time to stay out of war?

GRAHAM: Oh, yes, the Germans saw it coming on too. And they didn't want America in it. They wanted to know how high up I was. Well, I said, "I'm just a peon, just an American citizen." Actually, I was a first lieutenant in June 1936 and a captain in 1939.

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JOHNSON: Well, the Nazis had the idea that the United States was run by Jews, I guess.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, absolutely.

JOHNSON: And they were fed all kinds of propaganda.

GRAHAM: Oh yes, sure. Somebody would say that Roosevelt was actually a Jew.

JOHNSON: They felt that that meant that we wouldn't rise up against them, I guess.

GRAHAM: I know they would ask me, as a peon, and I'd say, "Hell, I don't know what's going on. But I will venture this, just as my personal opinion, that if England gets into it, we will not see her sink."

JOHNSON: You're right about that. Okay, you reported to the White House in September of 1945.

GRAHAM: That's right, September 5, wasn't it?

JOHNSON: Or the 15th?

GRAHAM: The 15th, yes that's right. That was straight out of

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Germany I think. Actually, I went to Kansas City to gather the family, and then we moved to Washington, D.C. where I was to be the medical doctor for the President of the United States and at the same time to be Chief of Section in surgery at Walter Reed Army Hospital. My family and I lived in a home on the post, right behind the church--at the end of Dogwood Avenue.

JOHNSON: Suddenly from the battlefields of Europe and all that rubble and carnage, here you are in the White House.

GRAHAM: Crazy things happen. Yes, they brought me up; I didn't know what my duties were to be at Potsdam. I thought it was to treat someone. Well, actually I did treat Stalin; he had severe diarrhea, and they wanted that new "penciline" as they pronounced it. What I gave him was paregoric and bismuth and an anti-bacterial. He progressed well without further problems.

JOHNSON: Their own doctors, didn't they have anything?

GRAHAM: Well, yes, but they didn't have penicillin. They didn't use appropriate medication to take care of his problem. They were very nice, very cordial, fun-loving really. I mean, I enjoyed them.

JOHNSON: So you got acquainted with some of the Soviet doctors at Potsdam.

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GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet any of them later on, or hear any more about them.

GRAHAM: Not the same ones, no. But I did meet some that came here to Kansas City. I don't know what it was for now.

JOHNSON: I remember that Stalin before he died came out with this plot, a so-called plot, by Jewish doctors. This was, you know, just before he died, so it didn't get very far. But even Stalin was becoming even more paranoid apparently in his late years.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you get the feeling in 1945 that Stalin was a paranoid type character?

GRAHAM: No, but before I met him, I had thought he was a large man. I thought he would be a great big huge person, but no, he wasn't at all. He and Hitler were about the same height, approximately five feet, eight. I saw Hitler many, many times, and Goering and Goebbels. Stalin was a broad fellow, with a very heavily pock-marked face. I commented that he had had smallpox, and he said, "Yes, how did you know." Well, anybody would know; you don't have to be a doctor to know that.

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JOHNSON: So you got to talk to Stalin.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: You sure talked to some interesting people, Freud and Stalin and . . .

GRAHAM: Who else did I meet there? Oh, Churchill, he was really stumped. What was he was so confused about? He was out giving a talk. Oh, yes, this was very interesting. I don't know if that's down on paper or not. But he had the floor, and I happened to be there at the time. He said, "We could not advance our divisions on this line because the Pope of Rome would not like it." And so then, [V.M.] Pavlov, it was, it wasn't Stalin, but Pavlov, who was his interpreter, waved his hand and said, "How many fighting divisions does the Pope of Rome have?" And not . . .

JOHNSON: Now, this is what the interpreter said, or did Stalin say that?

GRAHAM: No, Stalin said that.

JOHNSON: Through the interpreter.

GRAHAM: Yes; and not thinking about the moral effect, or the world wide reaction.

JOHNSON: I know that came out later as an issue: "Can you trust

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Stalin?" and so on . . .

GRAHAM: Stalin had some sort of an alliance with Hitler, I believe, didn't he?

JOHNSON: The Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939.

GRAHAM: That's right.

JOHNSON: They both occupied Poland in September 1939.

GRAHAM: That's exactly right, yes. And Stalin okayed it.

JOHNSON: They divided it up between them. The Soviets argued, I suppose, that this was their way of eventually defending themselves against Hitler.

GRAHAM: You know, something else came up also that I've never seen in history. That had to do with Yugoslavia, and Trieste.

JOHNSON: Yes, Trieste was an issue after the war.

GRAHAM: Yes, and President Truman said, "No." He said, "I'll have gun boats in your harbor."

JOHNSON: At Trieste?

GRAHAM: That's right.

JOHNSON: There was a joint occupation there after the war.

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GRAHAM: I remember when he said that.

JOHNSON: Tito wanted to take it over unilaterally.

GRAHAM: That's right.

JOHNSON: But Truman stood up to Tito, you're saying? That brings me to the next question. Apparently in 1946 you were in conversation with a Mr. Bonderenko, of the Soviet purchasing commission, who invited you to visit the Soviet Union.

GRAHAM: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: This caused a little confusion as to whether he had the authority to extend such an invitation, and there is a letter from Jimmy Byrnes about this. Do you remember the episode?

GRAHAM: Yes, and Jimmy Byrnes, I think, thought it would be a good idea, but I'm not just too sure on that either.

JOHNSON: But you do remember an invitation.

GRAHAM: Oh yes, very definitely. I thought it was a very good idea; I wanted to see it anyway.

JOHNSON: But then I think the Soviet Embassy said that Bonderenko didn't have the authority to invite you to the Soviet Union. Did you ever talk to Truman about this? Did

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Harry Truman ever express an opinion?

GRAHAM: Oh, he must have.

JOHNSON: . . . about you possibly visiting the Soviet Union? Was he necessarily opposed to this?

GRAHAM: No. No, he wasn't opposed to it, but I think he referred me to Jimmy Byrnes, who was Secretary of State. I used to treat Jimmy Byrnes. He'd come over to the White House to my medical office. He would say, "Have you got any free pills?" I'd say, "Yes, come on." I liked him.

JOHNSON: You know Jimmy Byrnes had said that he always felt that he should have been President.

GRAHAM: Oh, I know, absolutely.

JOHNSON: Did he give you that feeling, or impression?

GRAHAM: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: Did he ever say anything that would have indicated that?

GRAHAM: Yes. He said it was very close, something like that, but I don't recall the wording or anything of that type.

JOHNSON: Did he ever seem to be condescending toward Harry Truman?

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GRAHAM: At this moment I don't recall, but it seems that he was, yes. I know he was. I know that he felt that he should have been there, and that I know too, but I don't remember the verbiage that took place. I liked Jimmy Byrnes; he was very affable.

JOHNSON: He apparently came back and gave a report to the American people on a Foreign Ministers conference without checking with Truman, and that got him into hot water.

GRAHAM: Yes, that's right. That's exactly right. I remember; I was someplace where Truman, where President Truman was talking to Jimmy Byrnes and he said, "You tell that sonofabitch to go to hell." He said, "You tell him I said so in those same words."

JOHNSON: Now, he's telling Jimmy Byrnes to . . .

GRAHAM: President Truman said that to Jimmy Byrnes.

JOHNSON: Oh, he's using those words against a third party, not . . .

GRAHAM: Against the Russians.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see.

GRAHAM: You tell that sonofabitch I said to go to hell.

JOHNSON: The cold war had started, hadn't it.

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GRAHAM: It must have. Oh yes, oh yes.

JOHNSON: Well, what was your feeling when we began to get into this friction with the Soviet Union? Since you'd met Stalin and had some feeling for it, did you think they were really being deceitful and two-faced? What was your feeling toward the Soviet Union?

GRAHAM: Frankly, I didn't have a whole lot of feeling one way or the other that I can recall. I know Stalin was very affable, but he looked very stolid, just like his build was.

JOHNSON: Of course, you knew by this time about the purges and what he had done to the leadership of the Bolsheviks.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes, wiped them out. I don't think that I thought too much along political lines. I really didn't.

JOHNSON: Even though you were in a political atmosphere.

GRAHAM: That is true.

JOHNSON: But medicine was . . .

GRAHAM: Number one. And I treated him, just like anybody else. The Soviet doctors questioned me, of course, and they'd take the medication first and things like that.

JOHNSON: Even though they didn't have diarrhea, they would take the medicine?

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GRAHAM: Yes. I never minded those things. I said, "I'm a doctor, number one." As far as that's concerned, I've treated many wounded Germans as well as wounded Americans. The Americans naturally came first, that's true. And we'd have wards where the Germans were.

JOHNSON: They weren't SS or ingrained Nazis were they, these German soldiers that you treated? Were they decent people?

GRAHAM: Oh, yes, they were fine soldiers. I remember one morning--it was early frosty morning--and the mist was rising off the ground. It was near 6 o'clock and there was a Deutscher there. He was dying. We had stopped the bleeding. So I went out in the kitchen to get some coffee for him, and something to eat or drink. The kitchen was about, oh, I'd say, fifty yards away from our tents. While I was on my way I ran into a Deutscher there, and so I said, "Gut morgen." He said, "dank" and I remember that very, very well. He had many cans of food in his arms and hands. I said, "You don't need to bring those in; I'll bring them in for you, or one of our GIs will bring them in for you." Then I said, "You've got your pistol on you!" I said, "You forgot and should have checked that in." He says, "Ich werde das nicht" (I should not). He wanted to know if I was a Deutscher in intelligence or something like that. And I said I was not German, "but you've got no business with that

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pistol; you're liable to get hit with it."

JOHNSON: This is a prisoner of war?

GRAHAM: No. I found out there was a battalion of Germans who were surrounded up in the hills, across the Moselle River, and he just came down to get food for them. I said, "Man, you're crazier than hell." I said, "The Belgians are going to kill you off to a man. Turn yourself in here." I said, "I don't care if you're a German, a Chinaman, or what you are. Turn yourself in here and you'll save your lives." Well, I don't know; he evidently didn't pay any attention to it,

because the "Belgiques," they didn't have any compassion for any of them. They shot the whole battalion. They killed them right off. He said, "You wouldn't save a German's life." I said, "Hell, go in my hospital there, as you have. I've got almost as many Germans as I have Americans. It is my job to do what I can to save lives. I don't care if you're Chinese or what you are." I don't know whether he believed me or not, but it was true.

JOHNSON: And he walked off with his food?

GRAHAM: Yes, but they were killed off. The Belgians, hell, they wouldn't . . .

JOHNSON: Not after how they were treated.

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GRAHAM: Oh, you're right. They didn't take prisoners.

JOHNSON: I guess we could say that Harry Truman was kind of innately a healthy person, wasn't he?

GRAHAM: Oh, yes. To a degree--yes, sure he was, absolutely. But I remember Admiral Calver, a Navy M.D. from the Senate. He called me, talked to me, and said, "Young man, I don't envy you in your position. You've got a miserable position because the man you're to take care of will not live through the Presidency." "Now," I said, "what do you have on him that I don't?" Well, he said that he [Truman] had pulmonary edema, and he had this, and he had that. He said, "Just believe me; I know all about him." I said, "Well, you know, I don't believe that, but I will take it in my stride." So I went over, and very carefully examined the President. It wasn't emphysema, but whenever President Truman would get into tight pinches, or really clutched up, he would have a little bubbling in the lungs, and he would have a little rale at the base of his lungs. And the x-rays, I don't believe they really brought it out. So I told him about it, and he felt it was just an "old ladies reaction" in him. So I said, "Well, . . .

JOHNSON: An old person's reaction?

GRAHAM: You know, like an old ladies complaint that he had.

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But, I said, "Well, it's a good thing to know. I didn't know that whenever you get up to your heights of tension and you're under a lot of stress, that your lungs are producing a little more fluid than usual." I said, "I don't notice it in your feet, or your legs; they don't swell, or anything of that type, but it's in the base of your lungs." And he said, "All right, we'll go with that." And I gave him a little diuretic, I think, occasionally, and that's all there was to it. It seemed like when he recognized the fact he wouldn't allow himself to get all keyed up or tense.

JOHNSON: He managed to care for himself rather well, didn't he?

GRAHAM: Oh yes. I said, "You know, you're captain of your own ship, Mr. President." He replied, "Well, I guess you've got to be, don't you?" I said, "Yes, and you've got a good doctor too." He said, "I sure have," and he said, "That's the reason I hired you."

JOHNSON: This sort of reminds me of a story about Truman after he left the Presidency. It was here in the Library and he had been in the auditorium speaking to students and a few others.

GRAHAM: Yes. Yes, he used to do that.

JOHNSON: Some little boy held up his hand, and the President asked him what he wanted to ask. But he couldn't talk, and

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the one next to him said, "He wanted to ask you if you get nervous when you have to talk in public. He gets so nervous he can't even ask you the question." Truman said something to this effect, "Young man, if you don't get nervous before a speech, then you probably don't have anything important to say." So, apparently, he could get tense also.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: But it didn't show.

GRAHAM: No, it didn't actually. It did at first, but when he knew what was happening, he would control himself. Then he'd get his hands going like that, you know.

JOHNSON: Just a chopping motion.

GRAHAM: Yes, that's right. I said, "That sort of stabilizes you doesn't it?" He said, "Yes, that's it."

JOHNSON: I guess he was concerned that being a President he couldn't display too much emotion in his speaking, and so was he kind of consciously restrained, would you say?

GRAHAM: No, not in his speech at all. He said exactly what he thought, I know that. But, oh yes, did he feel it inside? Yes, he did react, particularly when I first met him. I'd check him then, and he would very definitely have a fluid reaction in the lungs. But when he knew what was taking

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place, then after a while I didn't hear it at all. It was not necessary to give him lasix as a diuretic. I did not give him anything. He said, "You mean you're not going to give me those damn pills?" I said, "No, I don't think you need it, Mr. President." I said, "You control that with your mind." He said, "Are you a psychiatrist?" I said, "Yes, I'm that too, when necessary."

JOHNSON: Well, he certainly had a few crises there to deal with.

GRAHAM: Yes, he certainly did.

JOHNSON: The Soviet troops remaining in Iran, you know, was one of the first things that got him somewhat disturbed.

GRAHAM: That's exactly right. I recall that. Isn't that the time when he said, "I'll have a couple of gunboats at Trieste, and you get the hell out of there."

JOHNSON: There's been a question about an ultimatum to Stalin, and I think you were given as a source. Was this an ultimatum involving Trieste? Is that the one we're talking about rather than Iran?

GRAHAM: We were talking about Trieste at that time, I know that. Now, I think it probably was, but the troops were someplace else. I think they were in Yugoslavia.

JOHNSON: Well, Trieste, is, of course, right at the tip of

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Yugoslavia.

GRAHAM: Yes, I know.

JOHNSON: So the ultimatum that you're talking about, is this an ultimatum to Stalin about Trieste?

GRAHAM: That's right, yes. Now, I don't know if he was talking to Jimmy Byrnes or to Stalin at that time, but he said, "You see that they get the hell out of there within 24 hours." They were out in 12 hours.

JOHNSON: Okay, in other words, he assumed that Tito was sort of a puppet, a puppet of Stalin? That Tito would take orders from Stalin?

GRAHAM: I understood that.

JOHNSON: So if he gave the order to Stalin, then he would give the order to Tito.

GRAHAM: That's right.

JOHNSON: Are you saying that this was not an ultimatum involving getting troops out of Iran, Russian troops?

GRAHAM: Well, I don't remember the word Iran at all.

JOHNSON: Okay.

GRAHAM: Because I thought they were in Yugoslavia.

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JOHNSON: Yes, that's the Trieste crisis. Then, of course, there was this Iranian situation which was dealt with by the United Nations, and the Soviets did eventually take their troops out.

GRAHAM: I never heard anything about that conversation, or I never read about it or anything else, but I know that the President gave the ultimatum.

JOHNSON: But that involved Trieste; you're talking about Trieste?

GRAHAM: Yes. Trieste, Yugoslavia.

JOHNSON: The same thing, yes. Yugoslavia was trying to take Trieste away from Italy.

GRAHAM: Yes, that's right. And then Truman replied, "You tell them to get the hell out of there."

JOHNSON: Apparently Tito thought it should be a spoils of war or something.

GRAHAM: Something comparable. Did Truman threaten to drop a big one on them? He did somebody, some time.

JOHNSON: Well, during the Korean war, you know, he was asked if he would rule out the atomic bomb, and he said he wouldn't rule out the use of any weapon. Well, then things got kind

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of hot, and that's when Prime Minister Attlee came to Washington to discuss this matter with him. This was during the crisis of the Korean War, after the Chinese intervention and offensive in December of 1950. That was a terrible month for President Truman, a terrible month because that's when . . .

GRAHAM: He didn't want to embroil China, I know that.

JOHNSON: He was having problems with MacArthur; he was having problems with the Chinese, of course, moving, forcing our troops back.

GRAHAM: That's right, because MacArthur wanted to push them back; I think that was it.

JOHNSON: That was the month when Charlie Ross died at his desk and that's when Paul Hume wrote that scathing critique of Margaret, so you know all that came about the same time.

GRAHAM: Well, I know Truman did not want to get embroiled in the war with China, because I remember he said they have this idea of saving face, and this I will respect. If we encroach upon China's territory--well, he put it in certain words that I don't recall now--but he said, "We cannot follow them back into China, that's all there is to it." And General MacArthur apparently wanted to. President Truman said, "Absolutely no, not under any circumstances."

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I remember he said, "You know, that sonofabitch would get us embroiled in a war with China." There were three times he verbally hit General MacArthur. I remember him saying, "We better wake him up. He is a splendid commander; however, he too must follow orders."

JOHNSON: Well, of course, he fired MacArthur in April of '51.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: When this thing was building up, did that seem to affect his health at all, the tensions of Korea and MacArthur?

GRAHAM: I know he thought it was most unfortunate, because he said, "MacArthur is the greatest general that I could have in that section of the world." Now, I heard him say that directly, but he said, "Certain things have to be done, and that's all there is to it." Oh, he knew he was going to catch hell for that, because, see, MacArthur had the will of the people.

JOHNSON: But, you know, Truman referred to him, sarcastically, as "God." Did you ever hear him refer to MacArthur as God?

GRAHAM: I know he said he (MacArthur) thought he was God, yes.

JOHNSON: And a lot of other people seemed to think so too.

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GRAHAM: He said, "But I think he's a sonofabitch."

JOHNSON: Was there a time when you ever withheld information from the media about any particular health problem of the President?

GRAHAM: Oh, yes. You mean from the papers?

JOHNSON: Yes.

GRAHAM: Oh sure. I've sat up with the President all night long.

JOHNSON: And this never got publicized.

GRAHAM: No, I didn't want it publicized.

JOHNSON: Well, do you remember what you would consider the most serious health problem you had to deal with? You sat up with him all night long. What kind of a problem was that?

GRAHAM: Oh yes, trying to dry his lungs up and all. I had him sitting up, and coughing.

JOHNSON: This is a lung-pneumonia type problem?

GRAHAM: It was pneumonitis.

JOHNSON: I've had that; I know about that.

GRAHAM: It's going to be rough if you don't get ahead of it.

JOHNSON: It just hangs on.

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GRAHAM: But he never objected to pills; he never objected to anything.

JOHNSON: Was pneumonitis the worst problem that he had?

GRAHAM: Probably so.

JOHNSON: Now, he had an ear infection at one point didn't he?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Was that the first time he ever had a bad ear?

GRAHAM: Yes, that cleared up well, treating through the nose and throat. I had him using a spray there very sparingly for a while to shrink up the excess mucus. The President appreciated the treatment.

JOHNSON: What kind of a spray . . .

GRAHAM: Well, it was a preparation of my father's. It had a small amount of ephedrine which would shrink up the mucous membrane of the eustachian tube between the ear, the throat and the nose, because of congestion and excessive mucus.

JOHNSON: I guess it worked pretty well.

GRAHAM: Oh yes, very well.

JOHNSON: So this was a recipe of your father's?

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GRAHAM: Yes, it was my dad's. The President would say, "Going to give me more of that damn snake oil?"

JOHNSON: This was your own mixture; you didn't go downtown and get this? This was not a prescription drug or a standard, generic type?

GRAHAM: No, my dad made it. I'm not as smart as he was nor as ingenious.

JOHNSON: So this helped keep his lungs, nose, throat and ears clear?

GRAHAM: Yes. Sometimes, while on the train, he would get congested, choked up, and cough a little and I'd spray a very small amount, and he'd say, "You got that damn snake oil to give me? It works."

JOHNSON: I think it was out in Idaho, you know, where he was becoming hoarse.

GRAHAM: That's right.

JOHNSON: And they asked him about it and he said, "Well, it's because I'm going around the country with my mouth open." There's some truth in that I suppose.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Whenever he was traveling, did you go with him?

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GRAHAM: Yes, always.

JOHNSON: Whenever he was outside the White House you would go with him.

GRAHAM: Yes, generally. Occasionally Major [Ray L.] Miller or Captain [Thomas J.] Burns would accompany the President if I was on special duty at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

JOHNSON: Now, on these motorcades, where would you ordinarily ride? If you were in a motorcade.

GRAHAM: One car behind the President and the Secret Service, not in a conspicuous place. I had my medical emergency bag there all the time, too.

JOHNSON: But you were in a White House car.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: In a Lincoln like we have in the museum?

GRAHAM: Yes. Frankly, I didn't pay any attention to what I was riding in except to be in a position for immediate action if necessary.

JOHNSON: Just so you had something to ride in.

GRAHAM: That's right, and as noted, where I could get to the President in event of immediate necessity.

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JOHNSON: Were you by yourself in this car, or did you have someone riding with you?

GRAHAM: I was not alone. There were others present, usually a Secret Service man or someone the President would desire.

JOHNSON: From the White House staff.

GRAHAM: Yes, generally. I was just one of the necessary individuals.

JOHNSON: Who usually rode with you in the car?

GRAHAM: I remember Charlie Murphy, the President's advisor, rode with me sometimes. Occasionally, there was Charles Ross, rarely General Harry H. Vaughan, and either Admiral [James H.] Fosslett, Commodore Jake Vardaman, or Clark Clifford when they were the Naval Aides.

JOHNSON: So Clark Clifford, when he was Naval Aide, rode with you.

GRAHAM: Yes. Clark Clifford; was quite a showman, wasn't he. I'll never forget; whenever I was at the movie in the White House or elsewhere, Clark would always come in late just prior to dimming of the lights. He would come to his seat, and would stand and acknowledge his friends and acquaintances. He would nod and bow, and smile. He was an attractive showman--affable, attractably handsome, and debonair. He

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complemented any gathering.

JOHNSON: I guess he could have been in the movies; he looked the part.

GRAHAM: Yes, he was a handsome gentleman, impeccably well-groomed, and carried himself well with dignity.

JOHNSON: Like a stage actor, perhaps.

GRAHAM: Yes. I enjoyed him very much though; he was never obtrusive. The one who was really sincere and right down to earth was Charlie Murphy. He had no affectation.

JOHNSON: Oh yes. Did you treat just about anybody who wanted treatment in the White House?

GRAHAM: Generally, anybody who wanted treatment, yes. That's how it ran. Jimmy Byrnes would come in occasionally. The Secretary of Agriculture, Clinton Anderson, would come in occasionally, and Lord Halifax on occasion when in the city. All very pleasant and affable gentlemen.

JOHNSON: Charlie Brannan?

GRAHAM: Yes, a pleasant, sincere Secretary of Agriculture, loved by all. Many I would advise and suggest that they see their family or home-town doctor.

JOHNSON: Which brings up some issues--well they probably weren't

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great issues then--like smoking, and drinking. There were smokers in the White House. The press secretary Charlie Ross was known to be a heavy smoker.

GRAHAM: Oh yes, an inveterate cigarette chain-smoker.

JOHNSON: And he of course, died on the job.

GRAHAM: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: Did you treat Charlie Ross?

GRAHAM: Only on emergency, and by request. I told him I didn't want to treat him unless he quit smoking. He was a bit irritated at me, but he called me a few times and I gave him medical help. I said, "Look, all this is hogwash, giving you this just to dilate your bronchia." I said, "You can do anything in the world you want to do, but I wish you'd quit smoking." I told him at least to try it, and he might live longer to help the President.

JOHNSON: So you were very conscious and sensitive about the deleterious effects of smoking then?

GRAHAM: Goodness yes, emphatically. Oh, my father imbued me with that, when I was a child. You see, I was an intern-resident at General Hospital first where all who died were autopsied. Even before then he'd show me a smoker's lung and would say, "Stunk like hell," in the autopsy.

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JOHNSON: But the medical profession wasn't really lobbying that much, were they against smoking in those days?

GRAHAM: No. However, my father was vitriolic in the condemnation of tobacco in any form for personal consumption.

JOHNSON: The AMA was not lobbying against it, was it?

GRAHAM: No, it is my understanding the medical lobby was receiving large sums of money from tobacco companies.

JOHNSON: Well, I think Joseph Short followed Charlie Ross. Was he a heavy smoker, do you remember, or was Roger Tubby, who also served as a press secretary?

GRAHAM: I don't think Tubby was.

JOHNSON: Okay, but you don't recall if Short was.

GRAHAM: No, I never knew him very well, nor was I close to him.

JOHNSON: You know, there's a report that near the end of the administration that Matt Connelly was at a party and had had too much to drink. We don't have to get into personalities so much, but did you notice any problems with drinking among staff people in the White House?

GRAHAM: Not that I can recall. Now, see I'm going through them in my mind--Dave Niles, Charlie Ross, and on down through

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the list, but I don't recall any major health problems.

JOHNSON: You didn't have to treat anybody ever for alcoholism?

GRAHAM: Well, I don't know if I treated him, but I just told him to discontinue all alcohol for a while. That was Bill Hassett; he complied and we had a confidential talk. He tended to be a bit depressed at times.

JOHNSON: Some of the newspapermen I've talked to comment on this sort of thing, too, and they say that at some of these news conferences there were some newsmen who weren't entirely sober. Did you attend any of the press conferences?

GRAHAM: Yes, but not regularly. I attended just to hear how they were conducted.

JOHNSON: Did they seem to be a sober group as far as you were concerned?

GRAHAM: Yes. The one that was the noisiest was the one who said, "Thank you, Mr. President." That was Merriman Smith, an excellent reporter.

JOHNSON: He's the one that was supposed to finish it off.

GRAHAM: Yes, a dubious honor. "Now, thank you Mr. President." That was his prerogative.

JOHNSON: He knew his cue very well.

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GRAHAM: Yes. There was a woman that would irritate the President just slightly; however it never was obvious.

JOHNSON: Was that May Craig?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: May Craig. I guess she galled Kennedy a little bit too, but he sort of turned it around to make everyone happy.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did the President ever say anything to you about any particular news people, such as Arthur Krock or Tony Laviero from the *New York Times*? Drew Pearson, of course, got under his skin quite a bit.

GRAHAM: Yes. Drew Pearson drew the most fire. I think the President took a lot of that as that's just their job, that's their duty, you know, and they may be irritating factors, which may or may not deserve recognition or comment.

JOHNSON: I notice in '47 you were called on to treat Margaret for a sore throat, even bronchial pneumonia, before a concert.

GRAHAM: Yes, she had a few rales in the lungs, relevant to minor pulmonary congestion. The condition cleared with treatment,

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rest, and heat.

JOHNSON: Were Margaret or Bess ever hospitalized while they were in the White House, during the White House years?

GRAHAM: Bess Truman's mother, Mrs. Madge Wallace--I did not hospitalize her; I treated her there in the White House.

JOHNSON: Bess' mother?

GRAHAM: Yes, she was quite ill there for a short time.

JOHNSON: But Bess never went to the hospital while she was in the White House? Was she ever hospitalized?

GRAHAM: No. I would treat her in the White House. She didn't want it known to anyone.

JOHNSON: In regard to Bess' mother, of course the story is that she was rather condescending toward her son-in-law, the President.

GRAHAM: Yes, the President would always knock on the door. He'd say, "Mother Wallace?" "Yes," she would answer. "May I come in?" She would reply, "Is this a social visit, or just what is it?" She was not always cordial as you may deduce. She was living in the President's house and the President treated her with royal respect at all times.

JOHNSON: I understand he was living in her house when they were

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in Independence.

GRAHAM: Yes. You're right. So he'd say, "I'll come back later, Mother."

JOHNSON: You never heard her say a humorous thing nor ever smile?

GRAHAM: No, I used to crack jokes with her, but she was stolid and stoic.

JOHNSON: Always serious, is that right?

GRAHAM: Yes. Oh, I'd get a little humor out of her, but you couldn't tell it was humor.

JOHNSON: Was she pretty much by herself then? Was she sort of reclusive?

GRAHAM: Somebody sat with her quite a bit of the time, one of the White House help or maids.

JOHNSON: But she didn't circulate much then with the family?

GRAHAM: No. I don't think she was overly fond of the President, or she acted like she wasn't. She was, in a manner, giving the cold shoulder. I know personally she respected him considerably.

JOHNSON: Did you ever have dinner with the family at the White

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House?

GRAHAM: Yes, several times; lovely mostly.

JOHNSON: Would his mother-in-law be at the table too, or was she served separately?

GRAHAM: Generally she was served alone. As a rule, when I was there, she preferred this.

JOHNSON: I see.

GRAHAM: I ate with them when my mother and father were there on one or two occasions. We all ate together. Another time was with my Uncle Wallace and Aunt Blanche, my father's brother and sister-in-law (from Lancaster, Ohio), and my wife Velma.

JOHNSON: Your mother and father were there, too, you say.

GRAHAM: Yes, they came to the White House to visit by request of the President, and he had them come in for a visit and chat. The President had my children Wallace Scott and Heather Ellen to visit also; they came down to see a movie two or three times in the White House. Heather and Wally would play the accordion for him, which he enjoyed, and he requested them to return. Bruce was not born until January 1, 1951, while we were still in the White House.

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JOHNSON: Was there an emergency medical room of any kind at the White House?

GRAHAM: Yes. There was an emergency room but I rarely used that facility. I would only treat those patients in my own office in the White House.

JOHNSON: Where was your office in the White House?

GRAHAM: On the ground level floor with windows looking over the south lawn. [According to a diagram in the Washington *Times-Herald*, April 5, 1952, Dr. Graham's office was under the State Dining Room on the west side of the White House mansion.] The President could come out of his door on the west side near where the swimming pool was. Unfortunately, President Richard M. Nixon had the pool filled in with cement. One of his friends said, "I will have a hell of a time diving in there, won't I?" The great majority of those who saw this arrangement were of the opinion it should have remained a pool as it was planned, to help keep Presidents in good health.

Presidents Roosevelt and Truman enjoyed the pool very much. President Truman would swim almost every evening. A rubdown and massage would be given after his swim before going to

the house. I would swim with the President frequently. We would then kibitz over many of the daily questions and problems while he relaxed sitting in his sauna

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(a heated box that had a canvas zippered up to his neck).

There were several rooms at the end of the pool, one of which was a small gymnasium with a high ceiling and wood floor and walls. Some of the equipment included an electric bicycle that when switched on the handle bars would move in and out while you pedaled. (I got squashed in it one day.) There were leather medicine balls and various weights and pulleys. I also remember thick cylindrical wooden rungs built into the wall for climbing exercises.

The gym was at the west end of the pool. Adjacent to it was a dressing room. I would examine him in this room, or while he was getting his rubdown I would talk with him.

JOHNSON: But you never had to use the emergency room?

GRAHAM: Yes, however never for the President; only seldom for visitors of the President or examination and treatment by presidential request. The Secretary of State James Byrnes would on occasion be seen or treated in my office.

JOHNSON: All right, here's the West Wing, and here's the Oval Office right here. Here was Rose Conway's office, the Cabinet Room, the Fish Room, and the Press Secretary's office right here.

Were you in an area between the President's office and his living quarters?

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GRAHAM: Yes, that is correct.

JOHNSON: Secretary of Labor John Steelman's group was over in the East Wing.

GRAHAM: I was rarely ever in the East Wing at any time. I rarely went over there, except by request or personal question.

JOHNSON: Did you have a plan? Did you have a prescribed plan on what to do in case the President collapsed in his office?

GRAHAM: Yes. I recall that I discussed this thoroughly with him when we thought of an invasion. I do not recall whether we were apprehensive or just using precautionary measures. All avenues of possible attack or invasion were considered and escape or defensive plans made.

JOHNSON: It was one of these evacuation plans, to get the President to a safe place?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you have to work with the Pentagon? When he was traveling some military courier, or maybe it was a military aide, would have, I suppose, some kind of instructions. He'd have this black briefcase or whatever it was. But you never had to get involved in how he would be protected?

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GRAHAM: No, I had a plan, and I had that all written out, every detail and direction with alternatives were written and always in my mind.

JOHNSON: For the White House evacuation?

GRAHAM: Yes. And there was a military group there, a Signal Corps unit for communications.

JOHNSON: Evacuation plans, I suppose, had to be handled by the military.

GRAHAM: You know, General [Harry] Vaughan was an unusual sort of a character at times. He was always digging up "spies." He made me let a real fine girl go. It broke her heart; she was a superb help and an excellent typist.

JOHNSON: Harry Vaughan did?

GRAHAM: Yes, because he thought she was a spy; he would never tell me any facts about why he accused her. I asked, "Why do you think that?" I never received any information to explain his action.

JOHNSON: How many people did you have working with you there in the White House?

GRAHAM: Two; not all the time though. Captain Miller stayed out at Walter Reed. I said, "Whenever I leave, then you cover,

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or take my place."

JOHNSON: Oh, there was always a medical doctor in the White House? I mean when you were at Walter Reed . . .

GRAHAM: No, not a doctor. The nurse (R.N.) was always there or on call. Mrs. Harrell was the nurse who was always there.

JOHNSON: Do you remember what her first name was?

GRAHAM: Genevieve. Genevieve Harrell. And Vaughan was witch hunting, trying to impress other personnel he was finding spies.

JOHNSON: He got a little paranoid or "carried away" with his enthusiasm?

GRAHAM: Deep down he had, I don't know, a spy complex or something.

JOHNSON: Is that after McCarthy started his crusade?

GRAHAM: Yes, but I never really put the two together.

JOHNSON: You did say something in the previous interview about being an emissary to the AMA (American Medical Association). One of the big issues in 1948 was the National Health Insurance plan, which the AMA branded as "socialized medicine."

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GRAHAM: That's right.

JOHNSON: Were you a member of the American Medical Association in 1948?

GRAHAM: Yes, I have always been a member of the American Medical Association and voiced my opinions.

JOHNSON: You spoke out in favor of the national health insurance, and you didn't mind being put on record that that was your position?

GRAHAM: Absolutely. Some thought I was a socialist. I suppose at the time I was labeled as that, but I don't know what a true socialist is.

JOHNSON: The AMA leadership said they thought you were . . .

GRAHAM: Yes, they asked, "Are you a socialist, Doctor?" I said, "I'm a social fellow; I'm very sociable whatever the hell I am." I said, "I don't think I'm a communist, but I don't know what the hell I am other than a hundred percent good American."

JOHNSON: Did you find, though, some supporters in the AMA?

GRAHAM: Absolutely, yes. Magnuson was a splendid gentleman. Yes, he was a firm supporter of mine.

JOHNSON: Who was that?

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GRAHAM: [Paul B.] Magnuson, M.D. He was later head of the Veterans Administration.

JOHNSON: You're talking about a doctor?

GRAHAM: A medical doctor, yes.

JOHNSON: Doctor Magnuson. Was he an official in the AMA?

GRAHAM: Yes, he was.

JOHNSON: But he was one of the few that came to your support?

GRAHAM: Yes. I would talk with him and we supported each other.

JOHNSON: He was sort of your liaison with the AMA?

GRAHAM: Yes, but I remember him saying, "I don't know why you ask me because you really don't give much care." I said, "Yes, I really do." I said, "I want to have good relationships." He said, "Well, that President you work for down there is all for socialized medicine." I said, "Well, he wants national coverage." The American Medical Association seemed to be firmly against that at that time. He asked what I was for. I said, "Whatever the President is for, that's for me."

JOHNSON: Well, now, this Magnuson, was he . . .

GRAHAM: He was later head of the Veterans Administration. It

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was more or less official duty when he came to see me or to talk about my opinion on various subjects. We had a little luncheon group in the White House. I remember John Pye, a very congenial black man employed by the White House for kitchen duties. When lunch was ready to be served he would always stand at attention, and announce, "Gennemans, de President of de United States of America." He was a good man. That's when the President would come down and join us for lunch. Our luncheon group consisted of General Harry Vaughan, Bill Hassett--Correspondence Secretary to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, Robert B. Landry (occasionally), a few times the Naval Aide Rear Admiral Robert L. Dennison, and Clark Clifford on rare occasions.

JOHNSON: Well, there was also [Rear Admiral James H.] Foskett who served as Naval Aide.

GRAHAM: Rear Admiral Foskett, yes, he would occasionally be present. The naval group, as a rule, kept to themselves, and at their own table.

JOHNSON: Did you ever make any speeches on behalf of the President, regarding national health insurance or some other issue?

GRAHAM: Yes, several times. I was before a woman's group on two

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occasions and I would take questions. I said, "I am not an authority on the subject, and should not be considered one." "Well, what do you tell the President?" "I don't tell the President anything. If he asks me certain questions I give him my personal opinion. But," I said, "you don't tell a President of the United States...only if your opinion is requested."

JOHNSON: What kind of groups did you talk to?

GRAHAM: Oh, one large group was the Garden Club of America, "Women of the World."

JOHNSON: Would you talk to them in the White House?

GRAHAM: No, this time I was at home; I lived in Kansas City. The DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] wanted me to give a talk, but I said, "I've heard enough about the DAR; they are wonderful people, but I don't think they and I have anything in common." I said, "I'm all for the [American] Revolution and all that past history; however, I am not a recognized authority on the politics of medical care."

JOHNSON: That '48 campaign, of course, turned out to be successful, but there must have been some strains and stresses.

GRAHAM: Yes, the President would get clouded up where his voice

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would not be audible or clear. On one occasion I had to put a little, very weak solution of silver nitrate on his chords to straighten them out. Oh yes, the result was excellent.

JOHNSON: Silver nitrate on the vocal chords?

GRAHAM: Yes. A very weak solution of it, because he just could not speak for a while.

JOHNSON: Did he ever ask you for any of your advice on what the AMA called "socialized medicine," the national health insurance plan; did he ever ask you for your input, or your advice on that plan?

GRAHAM: Yes, we talked about it. I remember there were 14 points that he talked over, but I said, "I have no input one way or the other." I did say about the American Medical Association, "They are more interested in what your reaction is and which way the wind blows as far as you're concerned, but they don't want socialization per se."

JOHNSON: But there were millions and millions--there still are--of Americans without any medical health insurance. Were they supposed to be treated as charity cases then? Was that the idea?

GRAHAM: There is no adequate medical plan to date; I mean that's the attitude of most doctors even now, although almost

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everybody has Medicare or some type of medical coverage now.

JOHNSON: But this was kind of a predecessor for Medicare.

GRAHAM: Yes. And President Truman said, "There's no reason why you should continue to treat all these people for nothing." But frankly I never did know in my own practice who paid and who did not.

JOHNSON: But you may not have been typical.

GRAHAM: No, I suppose that's correct. My secretary and my office nurse would get disturbed about it. They would say, "You know it's wonderful, all this free medicine and everything, but you know you've got bills here too."

JOHNSON: Were you following your father's example to some extent here, your father's influence?

GRAHAM: Yes, I did subconsciously, but he never told me to practice one way or the other.

JOHNSON: As far as President Truman and his personality are concerned and his self-control and so on, do you think that his mother really did have a very strong, and positive influence on his personality and his self-image, self-esteem?

GRAHAM: Very much so. Yes.

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JOHNSON: As far as you could tell was she always supportive of her son Harry and whatever he wanted to do?

GRAHAM: Yes, and she usually let her thoughts be known in straight-forward assertions. Oh yes. I remember once she said, "Harry Vaughan is going up to Leavenworth soon. You tell him to look around; our family silverware's up there. Those damn 'red leg' so and sos got a hold of it."

JOHNSON: She never forgot the Civil War did she?

GRAHAM: No. "Damn red legs."

JOHNSON: You met her I suppose when she visited the White House. She came to the White House not too long after he became President. Her daughter Mary Jane came with her.

GRAHAM: Yes, I treated Mary Jane; she had an upper respiratory problem. I treated her mother also. I was flown out to Kansas City-Independence a few times to treat them.

JOHNSON: Yes. In 1947 he came out and signed the Truman Doctrine here and then his mother's health improved with treatment. He then returned to the White House. So you were in Grandview quite a bit there at that point.

GRAHAM: Yes, whenever necessary.

JOHNSON: She was tough. She was a tough lady, wasn't she?

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GRAHAM: Yes, and she'd say, "Why are you trying to keep me alive?" I said, "Probably selfishness, trying to protect my reputation and I don't want you to ruin it." She got a happy reaction out of that; the reaction helped her the entire day. "I am staying alive to keep Doctor Graham happy."

JOHNSON: She was pretty philosophical.

GRAHAM: Oh yes. Oh yes.

JOHNSON: She didn't get rattled about anything?

GRAHAM: No--with the exception of the bad feelings about the red legs stealing her silverware. She was pleasant about everything else. She also told of the red legs cutting hams from her hogs.

JOHNSON: In January, 1949--this is after the election, after he gets elected on his own right--Truman sent a rather strong letter to General Raymond W. Bliss, Surgeon General of the Army, saying, "I understand that my physician, General Wallace Graham is being penalized by the American College of Surgeons because he is my physician. I don't like it."

GRAHAM: I didn't know that he had that thought. He simply took an arbitrary stand.

JOHNSON: And he added a handwritten note, "Dr. Graham knows

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nothing of this letter, but I know the surgeon's union very well," referring to the AMA I guess. The AMA stuck in his craw, didn't it.

GRAHAM: Yes, it did.

JOHNSON: The AMA really irritated him?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: And here he was accusing them of having something to do with, I guess, a delay in your getting certification or whatever. Well, Dr. Bliss then replied with a diplomatic letter and Truman then said, "I was afraid that the American Medical Association would try to take out their spleen of me on him. I really didn't want that to happen."

GRAHAM: No. I wouldn't give a thought one way or the other. If I have a duty, if I have a job, there is nothing to prevail against it. Really, I'm serious about that, because the Presidents was "the Chief" as we called him, and whatever he said were orders to be followed.

JOHNSON: Of course, at this point, Dr. Rusk, Howard Rusk, said to him that a residency was being established at Walter Reed to help you meet the requirements.

GRAHAM: Well, I did that myself. I talked to the President

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about additional training. He said, "You run your business, sure absolutely." I said, "See, if I keep attuned to the medical profession and medicine by treating at Walter Reed, it's going to help you too." He moved right along with it, fine.

JOHNSON: Apparently he got the idea that they were stalling a little bit, and he thought maybe they were stalling because they were trying to irritate him for pushing the so-called socialized medicine. But did you ever feel any pressure at the White House from the professional medical organizations?

GRAHAM: I never allowed that, because I voiced my opinion pretty strongly and they knew how I felt at all times.

JOHNSON: Well, you probably had quite a bit of support at Walter Reed Hospital too, didn't you?

GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Yes, absolutely. They were splendid and under excellent command.

JOHNSON: And they were treating a lot of people free because they were Government officials, or they were veterans, or they were eligible for free medical care, or tax-supported medical care. I guess there you had a kind of example of the . . .

GRAHAM: Socialized medicine.

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JOHNSON: Yes.

GRAHAM: You see, Mamie Eisenhower, she made a clown of herself. She was roaring drunk one day, just roaring drunk. She came staggering down the halls and voicing her opinion on many subjects in a loud voice.

JOHNSON: Oh, you mean in Walter Reed?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: She was being treated for . . .

GRAHAM: I don't know what she was being treated for.

JOHNSON: An alcohol problem maybe?

GRAHAM: Yes, she was there for a while.

JOHNSON: Of course, nowadays we've learned about this because, you know, there's Betty Ford, and Michael Dukakis' wife and so on. But in those days did they go out of their way to conceal anything like this?

GRAHAM: Yes. There was discretion and diplomacy.

JOHNSON: Even with President Roosevelt, there was a gentleman's agreement that they wouldn't take pictures that would show crutches and braces on his legs. You know, early in the Truman administration, the President proposed to create a

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foundation like the one at Warm Springs, apparently, which dealt with polio.

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: But he wanted this one to coordinate cancer research, and he apparently told you that it was necessary to overcome "prima donnas" in the profession before this could be done. I suppose this is kind of a predecessor to his ideas for national health insurance. Do you recall him trying to promote a government-sponsored cancer research center?

GRAHAM: No, but he asked me once what certain organizations were doing, and there was a group in Boston and in New York City--it's slipped my mind now what the foundation was--and I remember I spoke with a group at Leahy Clinic about it. It's a little vague to me right now, and I don't recall it other than I am acquainted with the splendid work of the Sloan-Kettering Foundation which is world renown.

JOHNSON: I suppose you carried a medical kit when you were with the President?

GRAHAM: Yes, always. Emergency medication, you know, things that would be essential for the event if he was shot or injured traumatically, and immediate care would be necessary. I had prepared for longstanding problems also.

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JOHNSON: In the shoot-out in 1950, with the Puerto Ricans, a policeman, Leslie Coffelt was killed.

GRAHAM: This occurrence was on Sixteenth Street just off Independence Avenue, obliquely across from the White House.

Yes. He was a patient and friend of mine; it was essential to have emergency care. He was a wonderful gentleman and officer, Coffelt and . . .

JOHNSON: There was a police officer [Donald T.] Birdzell that was wounded. Floyd Boring of the Secret Service was the one who shot the Puerto Rican. Now, his impression is that you had recommended that they sew Coffelt up right away instead of doing all this transfusing or something. He got the impression that because you had dealt with so much of this during the war, this sort of thing, that your procedure might have been a little different from what was followed, that you would have got in there right away and sewed up inside and so on. Was there any chance that he could have been saved as far as you recall?

GRAHAM: No, I don't believe so because a major artery was hit. No, I don't believe so. He was a superb officer and everyone's friend.

JOHNSON: Yes, that's what I have heard; and his widow, it just ruined her life.

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GRAHAM: He was just a genuinely all around good fellow.

JOHNSON: We have had some inquiries about Truman's dental history. I know you weren't his dentist, but do you think if he had a weakness it might have been dental, or do you know if he had any unusual dental problems?

GRAHAM: He had some fillings, gold fillings. No, we had him checked on routinely.

JOHNSON: Were his teeth subject to decay more than average maybe, or just average?

GRAHAM: No, I wouldn't say so, any more than the average. I mean what he had he had before he came to the White House. That was about it.

JOHNSON: Walking and swimming, were those the only two exercises that he practiced?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: You mentioned the Turkish bath, the sweatbox . . .

GRAHAM: Yes, the hot bath, yes. He sat in the steam box here.

JOHNSON: Walking and swimming, those were the two exercises that helped keep him healthy.

GRAHAM: Oh, I would talk to him occasionally on his exercise. I

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would say, "You're not going to be a prize fighter, anyway; just keep in good physical condition. I will see to that."

JOHNSON: Did you have one of these . . .

GRAHAM: One of these pullies against the wall?

JOHNSON: And you'd have him work on them.

GRAHAM: Yes, a little bit. He'd do it just to please me, I know.

JOHNSON: Were you on the *Williamsburg* when he was taking cruises, and he would swim off . . .

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Would that make you a little nervous to see him swimming in the ocean there off the *Williamsburg*?

GRAHAM: I just took it in my stride. If I had to jump in I would do my duty. You do what is necessary. I know we talked about that. I said, "Don't you try drowning yourself."

JOHNSON: You had your reputation to uphold. He probably got a kick out of that.

GRAHAM: Yes, he did.

JOHNSON: And he apparently followed your instructions pretty

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closely, didn't he?

GRAHAM: Oh, he did, yes.

JOHNSON: Even when he didn't want to.

GRAHAM: Well, I would explain everything to him; that's the whole thing. You know, what certain pills were for, what it contained, the whole business, and told him what reaction it would have on him, etc. Oh yes, I . . .

JOHNSON: Did you treat the Shah of Iran? Were you ever asked to treat the Shah of Iran at any time?

GRAHAM: I saw him for some reason, but I don't know what it was for.

JOHNSON: Perhaps when he was on his visit over here. Did you ever go to Iran to treat the Shah?

GRAHAM: No.

JOHNSON: You went to Saudi Arabia.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Was that the only foreign country you went to, to treat a foreign leader?

GRAHAM: Well, I don't know whether I was ordered to by him, or what, but I went to Peru and I treated President [Manuel]

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Odria, and operated on his hand. He had dupatrens contracture (palmer fasciatus). He didn't want anybody to know it. I treated it by first infiltrating it with local novocaine, and cutting the fibers in the palmar space between the palmar skin and the underlying fascia.

JOHNSON: That was during the presidency, during Truman's presidency?

GRAHAM: Yes, because otherwise I wouldn't have gone down.

JOHNSON: How about Saudi Arabia, the prince, or the king himself?

GRAHAM: Yes, the king [Ibn Saud] himself. Yes, he would walk across the room and everyone would hear his bones grinding. He had free loose bones in the knee joints and he had loose, hard, cartilage and broken-off pieces of bone in there.

JOHNSON: Bone chips?

GRAHAM: Yes, and actual round pieces of bone. Yes, and frankly I was afraid to operate on him. I told him I'd like for him to see an orthopedic doctor or accompany me back to the U.S., and a doctor would just flip those things out of there. He brought up the most pertinent thing; he said, "Can I walk afterwards?" I said, "Yes, you will be able to walk, but you might walk with a stiff leg, I don't know."

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We did not know how old he was because their years don't coincide with ours. But I wanted to get those pieces of bone out of the knee joint because they were causing him severe pain.

JOHNSON: It was very painful for him to walk?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did he have a tumor or anything like that?

GRAHAM: How do you know all of this, because I didn't make an issue of it, I don't think. I don't know where you got that, but yes. He did not have a tumor in his knee but he had a tumor on the vocal chord. He didn't want anybody to know about that, so I didn't take him to the operating room. I looked down his throat with a bronchoscope in the x-ray area. We took the x-ray over there. Yes, and I touched that up with silver nitrate and then removed the tumor.

JOHNSON: Did you get the bone chips out of the joints?

GRAHAM: Knee? No, I was afraid to and I didn't push it. It may have been the way that I presented it, because he didn't want it done either. I said I'd rather have an orthopedic doctor either in consultation or to do it with me, and he said, "No, if you don't do it, that's it." I said, "Well, you've got to keep walking and I don't want you to be stiff-

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legged." I don't know about his age; I think it was about 80 or something like that then, and a knee is a hard thing to heal, because it would just keep draining, and draining, and if you get an infection in the knee you've really got a terrible thing. But it should have been done.

JOHNSON: He was up in age, wasn't he.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Of course, this was before these hip replacements.

GRAHAM: They just don't heal well. And I don't think we had the antibiotics that we have now either.

JOHNSON: And didn't have these artificial joints that we could replace them with.

GRAHAM: Oh, no. No, not at all. But he was at the age that you are not able to tolerate too much. He was a powerful man, six foot four, and he weighed about 300 pounds. He wasn't really fat; he was just muscular, as was his son, the crown prince.

JOHNSON: On another subject, there has been some controversy, I guess conflicting reports, on the visit with MacArthur, you know, at Wake Island.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes. Yes, I can understand that. You mean what

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took place in the air?

JOHNSON: Yes.

GRAHAM: Yes, I was right there at the time. Let's see, MacArthur . . .

JOHNSON: He was supposed to have landed several hours earlier, that's where the problem . . .

GRAHAM: Yes, and see, he was staying up there, and wouldn't land. He wanted the President to land first.

JOHNSON: But that's what's in dispute, because . . .

GRAHAM: Oh, it's very definite. Very definite, I was there.

JOHNSON: You're very clear on it?

GRAHAM: Absolutely. And so then they next radioed again after the President told him to land first. Then he said, "Well we're having a little engine trouble and so the President will have to land first." And so the President said, "That's a damn show." He said, "You tell him to get the hell out of the air." And he did! He came right on down. Landry found out that they didn't have any engine trouble, I mean through their own code or whatever, and they came right on down. MacArthur's idea was to stage a shining star entrance. The President would be there looking toward the

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sky waiting for him. It was nothing but a bunch of childish play. Little things like that took place.

JOHNSON: I guess it kind of irritated Truman when . . .

GRAHAM: Yes. He was irritated there.

JOHNSON: Well, at the inauguration, too, in '52 he had to wait for Eisenhower. Eisenhower waited for them to come out to the car, instead of coming into the White House.

GRAHAM: Yes, and that got to him, yes indeed, it sure did. The thing about the hats too.

JOHNSON: Oh, yes, Ike said they were going to wear the Homburg instead of the top hat this time.

GRAHAM: I don't think the President was too enamored with Eisenhower.

JOHNSON: I guess not.

GRAHAM: I remember when Eisenhower was there one time. The President, or Clark Clifford, or Vaughan--one of the three--asked, "Would you be interested in the Presidency yourself?" "Oh, certainly not. I wouldn't ... yak yak yak;" he made quite a speech on that you know. So, I think the President remembered what the saying was for that, "I think, he ... too much."

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JOHNSON: "He doth protest too much."

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Out of Shakespeare, I guess.

GRAHAM: Yes. President Truman knew people. He had an uncanny sense about a person's true character. He was amazingly accurate.

JOHNSON: Sort of like when Lloyd Stark came into his office in 1940 and said he wouldn't run against him for the Senate. He said, "I won't run against you." As soon as he left, Truman said, "That so and so's going to run against me."

GRAHAM: Yes. You're right.

JOHNSON: He just did the opposite. There was a little publicity about some investments, I guess, in some grain futures, that probably didn't amount to very much.

GRAHAM: Yes, they made a big issue out of that. I was asked if I was in commodities. Well, hell, I didn't even know what commodities were. This started out when the banks were going broke, so I got my money out; it was \$800. I got it out of the Kansas State something or other savings and loan and I had had it there because they were getting 6 percent. I got it out, and I didn't know what to do with it, and

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somebody said, "You could put it in stocks if you want to." So I did. American Rolling Mill is what I got, what \$800 would buy. Then something came up at the White House, and they said, "Oh, yes, the stocks all went pretty darn low; pretty flat they were."

So a fellow with the name of Briska, a broker, said, "Do you have any holdings of stock?" I said, "Yes, I've got some." "Well, are you going to sell them?" "Hell, no, I'm not going to sell them."

He said, "You've lost pretty heavy." And I said, "Well, I had \$800." He said, "Well, you've got a lot less than that now." I said, "Can I make it back some way?" He said, "Yes, if you go into commodities." I said, "What are commodities?" So he told me. I said, "Okay, go ahead; get it into anything so I can get it back." So, he put it in something; I don't even know what he put it in. I didn't pay any attention to it. Then, somebody later said, "Are you in commodities?" I said, "Hell, I don't know. I've got a man here, Briska, that I traded with and I did have the money in Kansas City. I just traded in one of the stock exchange places, Bashon Company. So I told him to do whatever he wanted to with it. I said, "Hell, I'll lose it anyway, because I don't know a damn thing about it." And so he did.

The next thing I knew there was a headline, "The White House is Dealing in Commodities." Well, I didn't even know

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who they were talking about. I said, "I don't know, maybe and maybe not; I don't know but what the hell's the difference." So they got me up before an investigation. They asked me if I had any stock. I said, "Well, you know yourself if I've got them; look at it, find out when I had them all like that, because I don't know. I hope I still have them." "Are you going to sell them?" "No, I'm not going to sell them." "Well, don't you know it's against policy?" "No, and I'm not going to sell them whether it is or not unless the President tells me to." "Did the President tell you to buy them?" "No." "Did anybody at the White House tell you to buy them?" "No." But it came out, "White House Dealing in Stocks." Good God! It was safer than having it in the bank. Hell, the bank went broke.

JOHNSON: And then it blew over and . . .

GRAHAM: That was [Harold] Stassen that wanted to make a big issue out of that. He said, "It says down here you've got a million dollars in it." Whatever he said, that was fine, that was just wonderful, but that M doesn't stand for a million. I asked about that myself, but the M means something else; I think it means a thousand or a hundred. I don't know what the hell it is.

JOHNSON: They were kind of off base.

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GRAHAM: Oh, they just wanted to make a big issue of it.

JOHNSON: I notice in '54, after Truman left the White House, he had a gall bladder attack and he apparently was operated on for gall bladder.

GRAHAM: Oh, yes.

JOHNSON: Was that the first surgery that you ever had to do on Harry Truman, on the gall bladder?

GRAHAM: I took his gall bladder and appendix both out, because his appendix was close to his gall bladder and both were infected.

JOHNSON: But that was the first surgery that you had to do on him, is that right?

GRAHAM: I think so, unless I did a hernia on him.

JOHNSON: Do you think there might have been a hernia operation during the White House years?

GRAHAM: No, I don't think I did. I think it was after he was out.

JOHNSON: Then, of course, he was on this tour, you know, to raise money for the Library and he was giving a lot of talks and a lot of traveling, and so on. You finally spoke up, and you wrote Paul Butler of the DNC--this is 1955--that

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"the President must forego a speaking trip to California." Apparently Truman wanted to go out there badly, to California, but you said, "We must realize his limitations and conserve his strength and energy for other well-planned endeavors." And I think he did give up that trip to California, didn't he? So you had to help slow him down a little bit during the years 1954-55 when he was campaigning for the Library here?

GRAHAM: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you remained his physician all the way up to the time of his death?

GRAHAM: Yes, sure.

JOHNSON: In 1959 Truman wrote to Congressman Wright Patman saying you were eager to set up a clinic in Kansas City to give the poor people better medical attention, and he wanted Patman to help prepare the way for a Small Business Administration loan. Truman commented in this letter that "The AMA doesn't approve of anything of that kind."

GRAHAM: No, they didn't.

JOHNSON: And Patman then replied that clinics were not eligible for small business loans if they were not for profit. Do

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you recall anything about setting up a clinic in Kansas City?

GRAHAM: Well, I wanted to, and I had the place there that I later lost, but they were against clinics at that time, and they didn't want to support them. The AMA told me that too.

JOHNSON: Oh, the AMA did discourage you from setting up a clinic to deal with . . .

GRAHAM: Yes, they said there would be so much involvement and all, and they gave me all the reasons why, so rather than buck the issue, to hell with it.

JOHNSON: But now, in the meantime there have been some clinics set up, have there not?

GRAHAM: Oh, yes, there are some fine clinics.

JOHNSON: Have you worked with any of these clinics in the recent years?

GRAHAM: No.

JOHNSON: So you maintained a regular practice, out of your office in the Argyle Building?

GRAHAM: I was in the Argyle Building, and then later I moved to a building out at 63rd.

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JOHNSON: That's where you are now?

GRAHAM: No, I'm not practicing now.

JOHNSON: You're retired. When did you retire?

GRAHAM: In 1987, April 1st. I was getting a little forgetful; I didn't feel it, but my wife said I was. So, I thought well, I had better watch that, and I wrote everything down. I wasn't getting in trouble with it, but she thought I should retire.

JOHNSON: But surgery, that was your specialty all through the years?

GRAHAM: Oh yes. Yes, I was trained in that, and had excellent training. I had the best training in Hungary actually.

JOHNSON: Did you ever get into heart surgery or . . .

GRAHAM: No, I've done heart surgery, but just as an emergency. It was a stab wound. Then, I had another wound; this was during the war though, a shot, and I closed it and they both lived.

JOHNSON: Well thank you, Dr. Graham.

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