

Oral History Interview

with

JUDGE WILLIAM H. HASTIE

Assistant Solicitor, Department of the Interior, 1933-37; Judge of the District Court of the Virgin Islands, 1937-39; Dean, Howard University School of Law, 1939-46; Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, 1940-42; Governor of the Virgin Islands, 1946-49; Judge, 3rd United States Circuit Court of Appeals, 1949-71; and Senior status, 1971-76.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

January 5, 1972

by Jerry N. Hess, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library

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HESS: All right, Judge, to begin this morning, for the record, would you give me a little of your background: Where were you born, where were you raised, and what are a few of the positions that you held?

HASTIE: I was born in Knoxville, Tennessee on November 17, 1904, spent my early boyhood in Knoxville. My family moved to Washington, D.C. when I was about ten, and that actually continued to be the family home until I went to

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the Virgin Islands. I started the practice of law in the early 1930s in the District of Columbia. In 1934 I was appointed an Assistant Solicitor in the Department of the Interior. Secretary [Harold I.] Ickes had appointed Nathan Margold, an extremely outstanding New York lawyer, to be his Solicitor, and had given Margold full discretion to appoint his own staff.

In those early days of the New Deal there were enough new jobs--the Government was expanding very fast, of course--there were enough new jobs so that patronage could be provided and at the same time a considerable number of jobs could be taken out of the patronage routine and appointments made by the Secretary, in this case, on the basis solely of what his Solicitor thought were the needs

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of legal office.

So I served from 1934 until 1937 as Assistant Solicitor in the Interior Department, and it was during that period that I first became acquainted with the Virgin Islands. I didn't visit the Islands, but in the course of assignments of legal problems, from time to time, I was assigned problems of the Virgin Islands, one of them being to work with some other lawyers on the matter of setting up a corporate structure for the purpose of rehabilitating the sugar and rum industry in the Islands. During the course of that, I got to know the then Governor, Governor [Paul Martin] Pearson, fairly well, and also the Lieutenant Governor, Lawrence Cramer, who succeeded Governor Pearson.

While I was in the Department there was a resignation of the then Judge of the District

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Court of the Virgin Islands. At that time the judgeship was a four-year term, as I remember, at a salary of \$7500 a year. I am told that President Roosevelt had been impressed in some contacts he had had with the West Indies in some of the British colonial areas. He had been impressed by the growing extent to which the British were appointing native lawyers in those colonies which were inhabited primarily by blacks, black lawyers to judicial office. He, I am told, inquired of the then Governor Cramer, what he thought about such a possibility in the Virgin Islands. Cramer and his wife, who were both present on something of a social occasion, were good enough to

enthusiastically espouse the idea and also to suggest that they thought I would be a good person for the position. Secretary Ickes, who had gotten to know me somewhat during

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my work on the legal staff of the Interior Department, took the same position, and the result was that I was appointed Judge of the District Court where I remained from--I did not serve out the entire four-year term--I remained from '37 until late '39.

I was then only in my early thirties and I, from the beginning, never thought in terms of making a career in the Virgin Islands as a place off from the mainstream, and my interests were basically on the mainland. However, I would have remained my four-year term except for the fact that in '39 I was offered the post of Dean of the Law School at Howard University. I had always been interested in teaching. I had done some teaching at the Howard Law School during my earlier career in Washington, so I accepted that post and came back to Washington, where I remained from late

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1939 until 1946.

It was during that period that my relationship with Harry Truman started. I did not know Senator Truman personally. Obviously anyone who was interested in public affairs living in Washington knew a good bit of him. I am afraid I was one of those who, at that time, regarded him as just another midwestern Senator. But shortly before President Roosevelt's death, Secretary Ickes, who had supervisory responsibility for the Federal activities in the Virgin Islands, became very dissatisfied with, really very antagonistic towards, the then Governor of the Virgin Islands.

HESS: What was the basis for the disagreement?

HASTIE: Well, the Governor didn't spend enough time running the government of the Virgin Islands. The fact is Governor [Charles]

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Harwood, the Governor in question, was appointed Governor of the Virgin Islands, though he wanted to become a Federal judge. He was a New Yorker, a man of some means, who allegedly had provided some badly-needed financial support at a stage in the 1944 Presidential campaign. Supposedly--of course, this is secondhand--supposedly, he was appointed Governor of the Virgin Islands with the hope, if not the understanding, that there would be an opportunity when he could be appointed to a Federal judgeship. Well, under those circumstances, his interest in the small local problems of the Virgin Islands' government were not very great. What he did was to spend a very large part of his time in Washington lobbying for legislation of interest or value to the Virgin Islands. This, incidentally, was a very important service, and one that I think Governor Harwood performed very

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efficiently. He was responsible for a very major program of Federal subsidy of highways and similar public works in the Virgin Islands. But preoccupied with this, and enjoying the course of life in Washington more than in the Virgin Islands, he really spent relatively little time in the Virgin Islands working on what are primarily the responsibilities of the Governor; and Ickes was very unhappy and very dissatisfied.

So not too long before President Roosevelt's death, Secretary Ickes asked me to come down and talk to him. I did, and he was always, of course, a very blunt person. He knew me. He said he was determined to get rid of the then Governor of the Islands, and that while the President had listened to him, the President had raised the question, "Well, if we got rid of this man, who would be a satisfactory person to take his place?"

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And Ickes explained that he could only get rid of the Governor if he could present a package that included an agreed upon person to succeed the Governor. And he asked me if he might present my name to the President as a person whom he thought would do a good job and would be acceptable to the local community, and the President might appropriately appoint. Of course, by that time, I was rather familiar with the Islands, both from the legal work I had done in the thirties and from my two and a half years as judge.

I said to Secretary Ickes, "I hadn't thought in terms of going back to the Virgin Islands. I'm interested in my work as Dean of the Law School; I like legal education, but I would make no effort to seek the governorship, but I do give you permission to use my

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name as an available person if the President wants to appoint me."

So, six months or more elapsed and I heard not a word from Ickes or anyone else about that conversation. Then one Saturday morning, I was in a meeting of the deans and administrative officers of Howard University. The president of the university had a policy that at those Saturday meetings we weren't to be interrupted by telephone calls or anything except of an emergency nature, and we were incommunicado for the entire morning. When we broke at lunch hour, the president's secretary was waiting and said newspapermen had been trying to get me all morning. She was under orders not to interrupt so they hadn't been able to get me. I called to find out what it was. and I was told. "We'd like to have your

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comment on your appointment as Governor of the Virgin Islands."

This was at a time when there were changes at the top of the administration, both Secretary [Julius A.] Krug succeeding Secretary Ickes as Secretary of the Interior...

HESS: What do you recall about Secretary Ickes' resignation?

HASTIE: I really knew nothing about that, except what appeared in the press. My contacts with Ickes, after I went to the law school, were minimal. I might once in a while see him at some social occasion or some public meeting, and I did not maintain the sort of contact with ranking people in the Interior Department who might talk about things that were going on in the Department. So, I just have nothing

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of my own knowledge that's not already public knowledge with reference to this replacement. I do have very distinct personal recollections of Ickes as a person. He, of course, was a tremendous driver...

HESS: The old curmudgeon, as he liked to call himself.

HASTIE: He was really the old curmudgeon. He was, of course, well-known. He maintained his own bureau of investigation which was apparently a pretty efficient thing. He himself was unquestionably a scrupulously honest person who was managing in the public works agency and other expanding Interior Department, the other activities, an empire, such as no one has ever managed before in the Federal Government, with a perfectly amazing record

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of not a word of scandal in the administration of then unheard of sums of money by a Federal agency. But in the course of that, he was rough to the point of being brutal at times in dealing with people who might not be wrongdoers. He also, personally, I will say, he was a snooper. He would walk down the corridors of the Interior Department and open doors and look in offices to see if people were busy and what they were doing.

HESS: Judge, to keep things in chronological order, before moving on, and getting back into the Virgin Islands, what were your duties as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War? You held that position from '40 to '42. This was in conjunction and along with your job as Dean of the Howard University Law School.

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HASTIE: That is correct. I took leave from my job as Dean though I continued to teach one course in the evening division while I was in the War Department. I took leave in November of 1940 to undertake civilian work in the Secretary's office.

This was at a time when there was tremendous bitterness and vocal expression of dissatisfaction in the black community as to the result of the exclusion of blacks both from rapidly developing defense industrial mobilization, and from the rapidly expanding Army. Secretary Stimson wanted to bring someone onto his staff with a general responsibility to assist in and recommend

and criticize action or non-action by the War Department in this field. So with some reluctance I agreed to take that rather general responsibility. I was reluctant not because of any lack of interest or because it

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was not an important area, but I was rather skeptical as to what a person with no authority of his own whom I was sure the military did not want serving in the Secretary's office. But I did agree to come in and worked for about two years with Secretary Stimson, and more directly with Under Secretary [Robert] Patterson, who was my immediate and day-to-day contact, though from time to time there were occasions, of course, when I was dealing directly with Secretary Stimson.

As I had anticipated, I was not really welcomed by the military. It was first informally understood, later it appeared in a directive, that all policy decisions or projects undertaken that had a racial significance were to be routed through my office for comment and criticism or approval before they became effective.

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Actually that was as much honored in the breach as it was in performance. The immediate cause of my resignation in 1942 was a decision of the Army Air Force to set up a separate training base for black Air Force ground personnel, a project of which I was never informed. I learned about it from the St. Louis papers where the project was about to be initiated. I had the feeling that the time had come by, I guess it was February 1942, when I had accomplished as much as I could from inside the Department.

HESS: What did you feel that you did accomplish?

HASTIE: A number of things were accomplished. We were able to get a substantial amount of unsegregated training in places like officers' candidate schools; we were able to

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get significant numbers of black soldiers admitted to officers' candidate schools, and earning their commissions, who theretofore would have found their application for one reason or another, pigeonholed or rejected. We were able to get in many commands affirmative encouragement of blacks to apply for officer training, when theretofore the attitude would have been either to prevent or effectively discourage them from training. We were able to get a great many improvements in the conditions which blacks experienced on military bases, and some in the civilian communities around the bases. Weather conditions and the availability of land meant that a disproportionately large number of the training centers were in the deep South, and this created, of course, a great number of very serious racial problems; and I think we were able to ameliorate

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conditions. though they remained really very bad throughout the war. The black medical officers were just nonexistent in 1940, and there was a great deal of resistance to taking black medics in to the Army as doctors, and very strong resistance to taking them into Army hospitals for the practice of their specialty in the military hospitals.

So I think there were numbers of worthwhile things accomplished, but the basic resistance of field commanders and of many persons in the general staff in the War Department, never let down. The episode which caused my resignation was just one of the most glaring examples of movement directly counter to the direction in which I was trying to get the Army to move. I know Secretary Patterson was entirely sympathetic with what I was trying to do. Like all civilian heads of defense establishment,

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to some extent he himself was a prisoner of the military. And I must say that I also think that General Marshall was quite sympathetic to the things that I wanted to accomplish.

On the other hand, General [Henry H.] Arnold, who was the head of the creator of the Army Air Force, was unalterably opposed to the type of changes in the Air Force that I sought, and to me the Air Force was the place where we should have made the most progress, because the Army Air Force was essentially new. It did not have the traditions that the older arms of the Service did, and it would have been entirely feasible as it developed and new institutions and new organizations in the Air Force developed, to have planned and organized them differently from the old Army way.

HESS: Did General Arnold ever express to you why

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he thought he should not move in that direction?

HASTIE: Oh, yes. I can remember his telling me that in the Air Force relation of members of the crew of a plane to each other and the relation of flying personnel to the supporting ground personnel, who had to keep their planes in condition, was different from anywhere else. There had to be a relationship of personal confidence and intimacy far greater than in the other services.

HESS: He just didn't feel that a Negro could fit into that.

HASTIE: And a Negro just wouldn't fit into that. If there were blacks in the ground crew and there was mechanical failure of a plane, the plane crashed...

HESS: They'd all know who to blame it on.

HASTIE: ...it would be blamed on the blacks and there would be hell to pay. Therefore, his conclusion was, that any participation of blacks in the Air Force had to be in completely separate units where everybody involved was black. There was activity called Service Pilots at that time. These Service Pilots were actually civilians who were employed by the Air Force. They ferried planes and supplies across the Atlantic to England and so on, and there were a few skilled black civilian pilots who were eager to get into that, but there the argument was, "Well, these men fly in and out of any number of airfields; they don't have a particular base where they are most of the time, and it would create just insoluble problems to have a black pilot unexpectedly show up."

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HESS: They even used a few women for those pilots.

HASTIE: I didn't remember that they used female Service Pilots.

I had bitterly opposed the beginning of the training of black Army pilots in this new segregated installation that was set up at Tuskegee, and I had denounced Tuskegee itself, and its leadership, for putting its selfish interests in getting a remunerative Army contract of what I considered to be the national interest in setting up a quite different pattern, an integrated pattern of training in the Air Force. So by 1942, when this climactic thing arose of planning Tuskegee, up until then it had been the one segregated training installation for the Air Force. Then at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, plans had been completed and all approved for a training center for black ground

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personnel. I resigned and publicly criticized what had been done, and returned to my fulltime activities in teaching.

HESS: You mentioned your efforts with the Army and the Air Force. Did you also have dealings with the Navy?

HASTIE: No, as a matter of fact, there was a story (again whether it was apocryphal or not), that was told to me that President Roosevelt, in the course of a conference with the high Army staff and the high Navy staff, was talking about the increasing number of protests of blacks about the problems of the Defense establishment. He asked somebody on the Army side what they did about it and the person answered. He asked somebody on the Navy side and this person said, "We file them in the wastebasket."

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But the Navy was, at that time, taking a completely different approach; their simple answer was, "No, we are going to continue to do things in the Navy the way we've done them before, except in the mess service. We have no blacks, and that's it."

In fact, this was not something that had to do with race, but there was an informal discussion and informal agreement between Secretary [Henry L.] Stimson and Secretary [William F.] Knox



when the Pentagon Building was planned, that the top staff of the Navy and the top staff of the Army, though independent of each other, would both move into the Pentagon Building, and there would be a corridor on each of two floors, one directly above the other, where the Secretary of the Army would have his office; the Secretary of the Navy would

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have his office; the comparable supporting civilian and military and naval officers would be alongside, with the thought that their proximity itself, though they would really be entirely independent of each other, would make for a greater cooperation than if they were under different roofs. And the plans of the Pentagon Building were actually modified so as to have these twin suites on adjacent floors but before the construction of the building was completed, the Navy (the uniformed staff of the Navy), were able to find so many obstacles that would make that physical move not practical that Secretary Knox had to come to Secretary Stimson and say, "I'm sorry. I'm all for it, but my people just can't work it out," the net result of which was that the Army had twice as many deluxe offices than it

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had planned to have in the Pentagon. That was all the good that came out of it.

HESS: It gave them a lot of good offices. At the time that you were working on these matters for the Secretary of War, did you try to incorporate or get the help of the White House?

HASTIE: No, I think that would have been entirely inappropriate. I was a subordinate of the Secretary of the Army, responsible to him, and I think it would have been entirely inappropriate for me to go over his head to the White House. At that time, there were several Negroes who were in advisory positions to the heads of departments and independent agencies: Robert Weaver was in Interior and Housing; Mrs. Mary Bethune was an immediate deputy in the National Youth Administration, and there were a handful here and there. We used to talk about

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our common problems or our separate problems from time to time, and perhaps the most effective channel to the White House was Mrs. Bethune, who was a good friend of Mrs. Roosevelt. You've heard the story that, from time to time, Mrs. Roosevelt would put a memoranda on the President's night table or wherever things were put that would come to his attention, and there were many things that in an informal way were brought to the President's attention, which I'm sure originated with some of us who were working in line positions in the...

HESS: Did you ever try to bring any of your problems to Mrs. Roosevelt's attention through this manner?

HASTIE: No specific problems, no. Frankly, I always thought that particularly Secretary Patterson

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was working as hard and diligently as he could to move the military.

HESS: How receptive was Mr. Stimson?

HASTIE: Well, Mr. Stimson was concerned but he, in my judgment, had no feel for, no real perception of the problems of race in America, or their impact, or the relation of the military to them. He was a most honest and dedicated man, a patriot in the best and the highest sense of the word, but he was a man whose whole life in his practice of law, in his social contacts, his whole background, had isolated him from the areas, the problems, of which I was basically concerned.

I can give one example of that: I was talking to him at one time about something that I'm sure had to do with the Air Force that

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troubled me from the beginning to the end of the period that I was there, because, as I say, I thought it was a place where it was practical to make the most progress, and in fact, we were making the least progress. I'm sure that General [Henry H.] Arnold and others had talked to him about their point of view. In the course of the conversation, I will always remember one sentence, both what he said and the words he used, which to me reflected the problem of getting him to move in this area. He said, "Mr. Hastie, is it not true that your people are basically agriculturalists?"

HESS: Any other illustrations?

HASTIE: No, I think that one is both simple enough and dramatic enough to indicate that though

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Mr. Stimson was entirely well meaning and I have no reason that he was in any way a prejudiced person, I always felt that he was basically uncomprehending as to the realities of the problems of race in the Army and in the American society generally. Secretary Patterson, a much younger man, was much more perceptive and I think did whatever he could, but, as I said, I think even more than today, perhaps, or as much then as today, the civilian leadership in the War Department was a captive of the military

HESS: One brief question about Mr. Truman. Do you recall anything in particular about Mr. Truman's handling of the Truman Committee? That was the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program.

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HASTIE: No, I don't. No. I had no contact with and have no recollection of that.

HESS: Did you attend the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1944?

HASTIE: No, I was completely out of politics by legal residence in the District of Columbia, and I was not in partisan politics at all. In fact, when I was appointed Governor of the Virgin Islands I remember at the hearings, I was questioned about my politics, and I pointed out that I had no party affiliation and had had no participation in politics.

HESS: Were you at all surprised when Mr. Truman was selected as the Vice Presidential nominee in 1944? As you recall, Henry Wallace wanted to stay on the ticket.

HASTIE: I really don't remember whether I was or not.

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I was never a great Wallace enthusiast, and this, of course, is before Wallace ran in '48, but I never regarded Wallace as one of the most effective liberals in the New Deal. On race relations, I never had the feeling that the Department of Agriculture was one of those that was moving forward in a very significant way. I may have been biased because I had been in the Interior Department and in that sense was perhaps an Ickes man. The rivalry of Wallace and Ickes for power was pretty well-known.

HESS: And continued for quite some time.

HASTIE: And continued for quite some time.

HESS: When did you first become aware that President Roosevelt's health was failing seriously? Do you recall when you noticed that?

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HASTIE: Well, no I don't. I think that anyone who over a period of time saw pictures of the President's public appearances realized that his health was deteriorating, but the news of his death came to me, as I'm sure to the great majority of people, as a great surprise as well as a shock.

HESS: Where were you when you heard of the death of President Roosevelt?

HASTIE: I think it was in the afternoon. Whether I was in my office or on the campus at Howard University--I do remember I was at the university when the news came. I suppose, like many people, I was worried and concerned as to whether Mr. Truman would be a strong and effective President, and would carry forward the programs that President Roosevelt had espoused. As a matter of fact, I had never had a conversation with

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President Truman until after my nomination to be Governor of the Virgin Islands.

HESS: When was that? When did you first see Mr. Truman, when did you first speak with Mr. Truman? Was that after your nomination?

HASTIE: Yes, I can't remember whether it was a matter of a few weeks or a month or what after my nomination.

HESS: Did you go to the White House at that time?

HASTIE: Yes, and that first contact was more or less a formal routine sort of thing. After there was a rather vigorous fight before the committee against my confirmation.

HESS: Who was fighting?

HASTIE: Well, I'm not sure.

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HESS: What were their reasons?

HASTIE: One of them was that the Virgin Islands were a military outpost of the Panama Canal, and to have a dangerous radical like Hastie in there as Governor--oh, that's in the record of the committee hearings--would weaken our defense posture. In the Virgin Islands themselves, the whites were divided. There were many whom I knew and who were my friends; some whom I knew who weren't particularly my social friends who were not displeased, or some indicated affirmative pleasure with my nomination. Some openly opposed it. Some of the members of the Senate, particularly some of the southern members were quite hostile to the nomination. But I don't think in retrospect that the nomination was ever in very serious trouble. Cap Krug, Secretary Krug, actually made his first appearance

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as Secretary before a Senate committee to speak in support of the nomination, and while opposition was expressed in the committee, and there were hearings intermittently over a period of a couple of weeks, I think when the matter came to the floor that there was no organized opposition to it.

Now, before I went to the Virgin Islands to assume my duties, I had a relatively long talk with the President. The most significant thing, I think, was that he said, "Of course, your normal channel of communication, the person whom you'll normally turn to for assistance is Secretary Krug and other members of the Interior Department. But," he said, "I leave it to you to decide whether you think anything is of such a nature, such importance, that you should bring it directly to me. Instructions

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will be given that when you ever send word that you want to talk to me that you're to be given an appointment as quickly as my schedule permits."

That was the fact. I think there were not more than three occasions when I felt a matter was of such nature that I should appeal directly to the President for his intervention and assistance.

HESS: What were those three occasions?

HASTIE: I knew you'd ask that, and I can only remember specifically now what one of them was.

The harbor of St. Thomas is vital to the economic life of the Island. It's the best, relatively small, landlocked harbor in the West Indies. The Danes had dredged it just shortly before World War I. Nothing had been

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done since that time, and being surrounded by rather steep hills, there's even more than the normal amount of silt coming down, and every year it is filling up a little bit. So for at least thirty years or more the harbor had been filling without any dredging. The Army Engineers had repeatedly recommended a dredging project, but that particular appropriations bill, of course, is the great pork barrel, and there are always many more projects recommended than those that are going to be approved. So Congress after Congress, the Virgin Islands' project was actually set aside in the Bureau of the Budget as one for later consideration. After one experience with the Bureau of the Budget shelving the dredging project and feeling that it was really vital to the economy of the Islands, I went to the President and

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told him the story. He acquiesced without hesitation and said he would direct the Bureau of the Budget to include the Virgin Islands' dredging project in the next appropriation bill, which he did, which they did.

Well, in my naive way I felt I had won, or the Virgin Islands had won. What I think happened was that in the process that goes on before an appropriations committee with various members of the Congress and others insisting that this project added and something had to be taken out, and the Virgin Islands' project was taken out and we never got the harbor dredged. In fact, it must have been six or eight or ten years after I left before they really did get around to dredging the harbor.

Well, I found the President completely a man of his word in that personal contact that

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I had with him. He had expressed the desire to visit the Virgin Islands, and in 1947...

HESS: 1948.

HASTIE: Was it February of '48 that he made his visit to the Virgin Islands?

HESS: Yes.

HASTIE: He came down.

HESS: And during that visit in a speech that he made in St. Thomas, part of it he said:

I am particularly glad to come here to call upon my friend, Governor Hastie, and to see the many fine things he is doing for you and for all of us. He is a very unusual Governor. I wonder how many governors have drafted an Organic Act, then served as Federal judge interpreting the act and finally serving as Governor administering the act.

Now that brings up a whole lot of subjects.

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HASTIE: To say that I drafted the act is somewhat fulsome. When I was working as a lawyer in the Department of Interior, I was the lawyer of the Interior Department staff who worked with others, including legal and legislative people of the Virgin Islands, and some of the staff of the Senate legislative drafting and the Senate territorial committees, in getting something together that would be hopefully a good and workable new charter for the Islands and that would get acceptance in the Congress. So I was an active participant in that process. But to describe me as the draftsman, nobody was the draftsman of the act, though I think and hope that my influence and my ideas may have had some importance in getting a reasonably satisfactory Organic Act drafted.

HESS: And at the time that you were a judge down

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there did you have to interpret the act? As much as any judge does.

HASTIE: Yes, though I don't think of any really extremely important decision on the meaning of the act. I guess the most shocking decision under that act was one rendered by the Supreme Court of the United States, since I have been a judge up here, holding that the provision giving the local legislature plenary jurisdiction to legislate over matters of local significance, the Supreme Court held that that was not broad enough to enable the legislature to adopt the statute providing for migratory divorce, somewhat after the Nevada or the Florida pattern. But I really had no occasion to decide any case that I remember which was an important decision on some doubtful question as to the meaning or reach of the Organic Act.

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I did have occasion--no, no, I didn't. I was thinking of something that arose while I was Governor.

HESS: What was that?

HASTIE: All of the Governors, my predecessors and I, all agreed that the act incorporated the constitutional concept of separation of powers under which the legislature could not exercise executive functions. The legislature, following what had been a model under Denmark where there was no separation of powers, the legislature insisted on passing acts which provided that members of the legislature should serve by appointment of the legislature on various administrative boards and tribunals. And Governors protested about it, but I was the first Governor who carried the protest further and filed suit in

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the District Court, challenging the authority of the members of legislature to serve on a particular administrative board. It was a foregone conclusion what the result would be once it was challenged in court. The court held that they had no authority to serve, but there was not a great deal of litigation on issues as to the effect and the reach of the Organic Act.

HESS: What do you recall about President Truman's visit to the Virgin Islands?

HASTIE: Well, I recall it very vividly. First of all, one of his very marked characteristics is that he is at home in the small town environment. He reacts to people of such communities, and they react to him. Whenever you see him in the environment you realize he feels, "I'm one

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of you," and the people feel that "He is one of us." He was with us for three days, as I remember. That was the most impressive thing throughout his public appearances. Before he came down--this is rather of no public consequence, but I think it's always amused and interested me--the usual routine of Secret Service and other people making the arrangements for his visit. In the course of conversation with me, someone said, "Of course, the chauffeur will be brought down from Washington to drive the car in which the President rides."

I said, "Oh, no, my driver will drive the President's car."

He said, "Oh, no."

I said, "Oh yes he will. The reason I am so confident that he will is that I am going to take you over the route that the President

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is going to travel in his grand tour of the Island."

So I took them--these narrow roads, blind curves and so on, and of course, traffic would be diverted so there would be no occasion to meet anyone. I explained to them that my driver had been driver for every Governor since the early 1920s and he routinely took visitors on this drive, and he probably knew the road better than any living human being, and was an excellent driver. And they agreed that he would be permitted to drive.

HESS: They changed the rule.

HASTIE: Well, getting to different types of things. The President flew down to Puerto Rico. The Presidential yacht was sailed down and he boarded it there and came over to the Virgin Islands on his yacht.

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HESS: The *Williamsburg*.

HASTIE: Yes. The yacht was tied up at the dock and he used it as his hotel during his stay, and, of course, that had the further advantage that by radio and telephone that could be a communications center. In those days the President didn't bring anything like the staff along with him, but it was adequate enough to house all the staff. Admiral Leahy was with him, and various other senior members of the staff.

Well, I don't know how many hours I spent with the President during that period of time. Obviously at the times of his public appearances when he was driving around, I was at his side. He and I had numerous opportunities to talk both about the Virgin Islands' matters and socially, just the two of us. My regard for

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Harry Truman, both as a human being and as the head of our Government, grew tremendously during that three-day experience of being with him a great number of hours in an informal way where he relaxed and pretty obviously, to me, felt he could be Harry Truman the human being, and not have to be as reserved as the President, and as much on his guard as to what he said as he would ordinarily be.

HESS: What did he talk about?

HASTIE: Well, he talked about his own life and experiences. There's no particular thing that sticks out in my mind.

HESS: Did he say anything in particular about the up-coming events? This was in 1948, and the convention was coming up in July and the election the following November. Did he say



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anything about that?

HASTIE: No, no he did not, and obviously I didn't open any subject that he had not seen fit to open up. He wanted to know a lot more about the Virgin Islands, historically and currently, than otherwise he would have known, and of course, this to me was an opportunity, without trespassing on the President's time, to inform him much more than he would have been otherwise, about what really are the small problems of our smallest possession.

We had a big reception for him with the usual problems with the Secret Service, who should be invited--not who should be invited--but clearance of people that should be invited. Nothing like I'm sure as serious or as difficult as it would be here. My wife and I and he and

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Admiral Leahy, I guess it was, received the people as they came in. Incidentally, there was some columnist afterwards, who had a snide column to the effect that President Truman was careful not to have any social appearance with the black Governor and in the black community while he was in the Virgin Islands, which was just a simple lie. I think, I'm sure, I still have somewhere photographs that were taken of this reception, of the receiving line and so on.

At any rate, after that, I'm sure I felt much closer to the President than I had before. And of course I followed from a distance with a great deal of interest the work of his Civil Rights Commission, and his action in endorsing and adopting the program of that Commission.

HESS: They submitted their report the previous

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October. The title of that was...

HASTIE: "To Secure These Rights." And I'm not sure but my recollection is that the President's public, affirmative endorsement of it came shortly after--it may have been shortly before--he was in the Virgin Islands. I don't have my chronology clearly in mind.

HESS: He sent a ten-point message to Congress in February. I believe February 5th. What's the date he was down there?

HASTIE: Well, this was February 22nd, so it must have been just before that. And I'm sure then that we talked about that, if it was something that had very currently happened.

HESS: In your opinion, what was Mr. Truman's view of individual human rights and the Negro striving for a place in society?

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HASTIE: Well, there's no question in my mind that this was a deep personal commitment as distinguished from a political maneuver. This is not just an impression from talking with him. It's perfectly clear, I think, that many of his advisers counseled him against this position on the grounds that it would be politically catastrophic, that it would alienate the southern leadership and a lot of the southern electorate, and might well cost him re-election. I'm sure he went into it with his eyes open, that there was that danger in it. And it was largely because of that, as well as because of the way he had helped and supported me in the work of the Virgin Islands, that with the election coming up, during the summer of '48, I went up to Washington. I had asked for an appointment with him, and I told him that, as he knew, I had

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never participated in party politics, but it seemed to me that what he had done in this particular regard was of the greatest importance to the country, because I felt that once a President had taken the position that he did, both in endorsing the report of the Commission, and in the program that he sent to Congress, that no President thereafter would be able, that as a matter of political reality, to repudiate that, that a President might drag his feet, might not move vigorously, but that he had dramatically and in a very important way, taken new and higher ground for the Federal Government that would not be lost.

HESS: How would you compare his views on civil rights matters with those of his predecessor, President Roosevelt? In other words...

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HASTIE: I know just what you're interested in; I'm hesitating because I want to phrase my thinking as accurately as I can. I am sure that President Roosevelt was sincerely concerned, both to better the condition of the American Negro and to alleviate discrimination and segregation, but I think there is no doubt that President Roosevelt had made a calculated determination that in foreign affairs, in the prosecution of the war, he considered it crucial to hold the support of the southern Democratic leadership, including the most reactionary and prejudiced of that leadership; and that he was, himself, going to take no action that would so alienate that part of the Party and the congressional leadership that he would jeopardize essential support from foreign affairs and other domestic affairs.

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So the result of that was that Roosevelt would move only very cautiously, almost marginally, in this whole area.

Truman was an entirely different sort of person. I think one of the many remarkable things about him was that though he had been brought up and his public career back in Missouri had developed in machine politics, he was a person who had very firm convictions, and when he reduced an issue in his own mind to a position that, "This is right; and that is wrong," he would not allow political considerations to cause him to disavow the position that he regarded as morally wrong. And I think in his mind the positions taken in the report of his Commission and

in his message to Congress, represented something that he had become convinced was right and that the contrary position was wrong, and political considerations were not going to

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budge in front of him.

I said very much what I just said to you in the summer of '48 when I went up and talked to him. I said that it seemed to me that not only was what he had done important, but it was also important that the people, who like myself, believed that this was a critical development in American national policy, should support him politically, and that therefore, I wanted to take a month or six weeks' leave from my work in the Virgin Islands and come up and do whatever I could to help in the campaign for his re-election.

HESS: Did you speak to him before the convention or after?

HASTIE: I think it was after the convention. My recollection is that it was after the convention,

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probably very shortly after. Do you remember the month?

HESS: It was late in July when the convention was held.

HASTIE: Probably it was in August. He also, of course, was a person who was tremendously sensitive to and appreciative of personal loyalty. He, of course, thanked me and said, of course he was sure there were useful things that I could do, and to talk to McGrath, and maybe he mentioned one or two others in that connection.

HESS: This was after the walkout of the southern states at the convention?

HASTIE: Yes. So sometime after the middle of September, I came to Washington with the thought of remaining in the mainland until the election

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to do whatever I could. I had a very disillusioning experience the first couple of weeks I was in Washington.

HESS: What happened?

HASTIE: Rightly or not, I got the impression that most of--at least a substantial part of--the party leadership was really rather perfunctorily going through the motions of organizing a campaign.

HESS: You didn't think they thought Mr. Truman was going to win?

HASTIE: I'm sure they were convinced that he was going to lose.

I was quite convinced that by and large, the organization and planning of the campaign was perfunctory. I was unable to get any suggestions or proposals of things that I might do or ways in which I might fit

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constructively into the enterprise, and I did not regard that as any affront to me or disparagement of me, but rather just no vigorous hopeful campaign was being developed. I didn't want to go to the President and say that, but I had gotten to know Cap Krug, Secretary of the Interior Krug, rather well, and I went to Cap and told him my experience with those who were responsible for the organization of the campaign. He listened to me and chuckled and said, "Well, don't you think you're being discriminated against, because I've had the same experience." He said that he himself was not a politician or a spellbinder. He, of course, was a civil engineer, and that he had advised the national committee leadership that he was available to do whatever would be most useful, but that they knew better than he how a person of his sort could work, whether organization work in

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headquarters or whatever he could do.

HESS: But nevertheless he had offered his assistance.

HASTIE: He had offered his assistance and he said he had gotten no response to indicate any particular thing in which they thought he would be useful.

I persisted, and finally it was suggested that Bill [William Levi] Dawson, Congressman Dawson from Chicago, I'm not sure whether he was then vice chairman of the national committee, but he had some responsibility, and his people would work out something that I might do that would be useful. So finally a speaking tour was organized for me, which carried me into most of the states of the Middle Atlantic and out as far west as Chicago and St. Louis. That tour, including the one-night stands throughout

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October, and right up to the tour including the climactic rally which the President or the Democratic candidate always is the featured speaker in Madison Square Garden, ending up, I think, in Buffalo the Sunday night immediately preceding the Tuesday election. I don't think I've ever been as tired physically as I was after five weeks on the road, because it involved daytime activities around in the community and going to places where people gather and talking with people.

HESS: How did it seem to be going?

HASTIE: I'm coming to that, I'm coming to that. Usually a meeting large or small in the evenings then with spirits, helping to build up the spirits of the faithful after the meeting, sitting around. I found something

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that I had not expected to find. Going around during the daytime talking with individuals and groups who were strangers to me, and not political leaders, the so-called "man in the street," I had an experience that was repeated again and again and again. I talked to people about the campaign. I'd say to them, "Well, how do you think it's going to come out?"

And the answer with just amazing consistency was, "Well, I guess Mr. Dewey's going to win, but I'm going to vote for Mr. Truman."

This was so persistent. After it happened a few times I would deliberately ask the question more often at every opportunity, and I got the answer so consistently that by, say the third week in October, I was convinced that there was something radically wrong with the polls and all of the reports. There was only one

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reason that I myself was doubtful about the President's winning. I felt that analytically it was just impossible for him to carry the State of New York with the vote that Wallace was going to get--he inevitably was going to win in New York, and when one begins counting electoral votes for a Democratic candidate with New York out, it's awfully hard to find and to judge. Of course, I did not go into the Midwest across the Mississippi, except for Missouri--St. Louis--and I had no idea of the sweep he was going to make in the plains states in the Republican heartland there.

HESS: He even carried Ohio.

HASTIE: Right. I spent a good bit of time in Ohio and many of the Ohio places where there was that same reaction, of the people at

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factories, the people gathered in a restaurant or a bar, I particularly say that, not the people who came to Democratic rallies.

HESS: Did you see any pattern as to, one, why they thought Dewey was going to win, and two, as to why they were going to vote for Mr. Truman? Anything in what they would tell you?

HASTIE: I deliberately never pursued that. The answer is "No." One could only assume that Dewey was going to win and they accepted that as to what was in prospect.

One final thing about that. In Connecticut, it appeared that the local Democratic organization had given up on Truman, to the extent that their approach to people was, "Even though you're going to vote for Dewey, split your ticket and vote for Chester Bowles for Governor." At best

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Connecticut would have been a difficult state to win, and with my knowledge that that was what was being said throughout the state, that was the one state--well, Connecticut and New York were the two states that I had been in that I felt the President could not carry.

So, election night I was back in St. Thomas, and after having gone to the place where they were counting the ballots and the local election for members of the local legislature, I returned to Government House and turned on my long-range radio, and I guess that was about 9:30 or so, it would have been 10:30 Eastern Standard Time. You'll remember Connecticut is one of the first states that sends in significant returns, there are no extremely large cities, and so on. They get their vote counted pretty fast. And I remember so vividly the first

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returns that we heard from Connecticut. The results showed, I guess not more than a thousand votes separating the two, and I'm not sure which was in the lead at that time. As the night went along, each return showed Connecticut close, and finally that Truman was inching ahead. I said to the people in the room with me--oh, Kaltenborn, of course, and the others, were making their statements on these early returns--I said to the people in the room, "You know, Truman's re-elected."

And of course they said, "I don't see how you can say that."

I said, "Connecticut is a state--I know what's going on in Connecticut, and if he can carry Connecticut without any real work being done for him, these people being encouraged to split their vote. Even in New York I think

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he can come through," which of course he did.

So the only time I saw him during the campaign was in Madison Square Garden on the Friday night rally.

HESS: What do you recall particularly about the type of reception that he received there?

HASTIE: Oh, it was really tremendous. And he seemed as relaxed and fresh, and that impressed me, because I, a person considerably his junior, could barely drag myself to the meeting, and I was way down, I mean, physically and emotionally, just exhausted from the campaign. He, of course, had really been carrying the campaign on his shoulders almost completely. But he was

ebullient, he was full of enthusiasm, the people responded to him. It surprised me that during one lull he, when things were pretty

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informal on the platform, pictures were being taken and people were walking around, a large group of people on the platform, and he walked over to me and he said, "Governor, I haven't seen you for several months now, but I know where you've been and I know what you've been doing. I just want to say thank you."

Some months later Congress passed the first of the so-called Omnibus Judgeship bills creating a large number of new judgeships, what was then a large number, all over the country, including the one judgeship for the Third Circuit. It's my understanding he either personally told, personally or had someone else talk to Senator [Francis John] Myers from Pennsylvania, who was the Democratic leader in the Senate at the time, and told him that this new judgeship which was for the Third Circuit--

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normally it might be anticipated that Pennsylvania, the largest state in the Circuit, would get the judgeship, but the President wanted to appoint me as from the Virgin Islands part of the Circuit, and he hoped it would be agreeable to Myers, and that Myers would not insist upon having this new position for Pennsylvania, and Myers was gracious enough to say, "All right, if that's what you want, I'll support it." So I got appointed and here I am twenty years later.

HESS: Did you ever speak to the President about that?

HASTIE: No, I never did. The President never spoke to me about it. The first time I talked to him after the election, he asked me, told me that he would appreciate any ideas that I might have about things that he might do that would be advantageous and pleasing to the

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black community. I only remember one thing that I said to him then--I guess that was the first thing--I said that I thought it would not only be pleasing to the black community, but helpful to him and to the country if he would appoint Ralph Bunche as Assistant Secretary of State.

He said, "I already have that in mind. Now, what else?"

And of course, Bunche was offered the sub-Cabinet position but declined it on the grounds, first, that he was unwilling to bring his family back to Washington in the rigid racial segregation that up until that time had existed in Washington, and also his feeling that he might be more useful in the multinational United Nations than working in the State Department of his own Government.

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HESS: At the time that you offered your assistance to the Democratic National Committee, did you speak to or were you directed to Michael Cieplinski, the gentleman who was in charge of relations with minority or ethnic groups?

HASTIE: I don't remember so. I believe my first talk was with McGrath. I'm not sure, I may be wrong. I may have some notes.

HESS: During that period of time, did you work any with David Niles or Philleo Nash on the White House staff?

HASTIE: I knew David and Philleo very well personally, I use their first names only to indicate that I was on a first name basis with them.

HESS: Did you let them know that you had offered assistance?

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HASTIE: I am reasonably sure that I did, though I don't remember a conversation with either of them about it. My personal impression is that the work particularly directed at the black community, was ultimately made the responsibility of Bill Dawson. In fact, Dawson--the campaign headquarters were at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, and Dawson had an office and a little organization, one of the units of the campaign, that was situated there. Also the campaign was being run out of New York rather than out of Washington.

HESS: How important did you think the so-called Negro vote was going to be in that year?

HASTIE: Oh, I thought it was important, because of the fact that the Wallace people were making a big pitch. As I said, long before that

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campaign, I had not been a Wallace enthusiast, and I remember one of the things that caused people to react with surprise in the black community that I repeatedly pointed out during the campaign was that the Department of Commerce (I think Wallace's most recent post had been Secretary of Commerce), that the Department of Commerce under Averell Harriman, who succeeded Wallace...

HESS: September of '46.

HASTIE: ...was much more aggressive and effective in the field of race relations as the Department of Commerce had to deal with it, than it had been under Wallace. I remember I was able to point out chapter and verse in some cases. One particularly comes to mind. The National Airport was the facility of which the Department

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of Commerce, I think, let contracts having to do with the airport. When Wallace was Secretary the position was taken that though they regretted segregation in the dining room and whatnot, at National Airport, they didn't feel there was anything they could do about it. Harriman broke it up but quick once he had set his hands to it.

There were other things in Wallace's record in the Department of Agriculture, and the impression that the Wallace people had tried to create--Wallace's whole career as an affective advocate of better race relations and better treatment of the Negro, I found that that was a rather widespread impression and that people were quite interested to hear that the record just didn't bear that out.

HESS: As you know, the votes that Wallace did get, prevented the Democrats from winning New York,

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which enabled Dewey to win. Now, many historians use the Wallace vote in New York as a liberal vote--by liberal I mean Jewish as well as Negro--did you feel that Wallace garnered a good number of Negro votes in New York as well?

HASTIE: I just don't remember what the picture was in the Harlem area, and those areas where the vote was very largely Negro. I think basically what happened was--let's see, the left wing, as such was much more organized, and had been over a number of years, at least in New York City more than anywhere else. You see, under proportional representation you had a couple of Communist members who ran as the Communist Party candidates in the city council in New York. Persons like Congressman Marcantonio, Vito Marcantonio, had really been taken in, I

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don't mean fooled, I mean they had been surrounded and captured by the left wing organizations, and there was an effectively functioning organization left, which was not black or Jewish or any other particular ethnic group, but embraced some of all, that was much more effective in New York than anyplace else in the country. And it was the power and strength of that organized effort in New York that I felt, I think rightly so, would take enough votes away from Truman and put into the Wallace camp, so that with Dewey getting both the normal Republican vote, and as the Governor of New York, and with the added strength that he had in New York, it just wasn't possible it seemed to me for Truman to win.

HESS: Mr. Truman made a speech in Harlem, I believe the day before the Madison Square Garden, but

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anyway, it was during that same period of time in New York. The people who attended always point out as one of the highlights of the campaign. Did you ever hear anything about this?

HASTIE: I was not there. I don't remember where--I flew in from someplace in New York on the Friday, on the day after. But I do remember the talk of the enthusiastic response to him. Certainly there is no doubt that throughout the country, the black population came to appreciate, and I think then did appreciate, that he had done something important and sensational in the interests of the advancement of the Negro.

HESS: Just a general question, at this time, just what should President Truman or the Truman

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administration have done that it did not do to advance the position of the Negro? Did he try hard enough? Did Mr. Truman try hard enough? Should he have appointed more blacks to high office?

HASTIE: Well, certainly in comparison with what Presidents Kennedy and Johnson did, the number of blacks appointed to high office was relatively small. I suppose that breaking a taboo has a significance in itself, and it's hard to compare that with the quantitatively larger things that were done after this taboo was broken. In that sense, I think my appointment to this bench twenty-two years ago, had a value and importance, perhaps greater than the appointment of several Negroes later. Truman was very much concerned, of course,

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with what, at that time, was of particular concern to the Negro, and a great irritant, and that was the segregation policies in the Armed Forces. And there he moved very positively and effectively. So, I think my answer would be, "He, like I think everyone else, could really do more than he does," in this and so many other things. And yet, his accomplishments in the field of race relations and the treatment of the Negro by the Government were in my view precedent-making; they paved the way for, and made very much easier the things that the President that succeeded him did.

HESS: One thing that Mr. Truman worked through were Executive orders. Just after the convention, this was on July 26 of '48, he signed two very important Executive orders: 9980, and that called for the end of discrimination in Government

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hiring practices; and 9981, which established the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services.

HASTIE: Right. And that Committee led to the decisions, somewhat later, to do away with the "racial as separate" units in the Army, the Gavin Committee.

HESS: It's been pointed out here that Mr. Truman worked through these Executive orders, and one of the reasons was because he was unable to get congressional legislation.

HASTIE: Oh, surely.

HESS: What was the holdup on congressional legislation? Was it that Mr. Truman's administration did not try hard enough, that it was too early in time, that there were too many southern Senators and Representatives?

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HASTIE: Well, it was a combination of the latter two. It was too early in time and because there was not the overall support in the American community that would have made it possible for the President to push through Congress, despite the implacable opposition of the southern leadership. He couldn't have gotten any of those things out of a committee of Congress, much less gotten a favorable action on the floor. I mention this, though it's personal, my nomination in 1949 to be a Judge of this Court was almost beaten. It almost did not come out for eight months. It was very doubtful whether it would ever come out of the Senate committee. So, compare that with something of so much larger effect with one of these Executive orders, and would never have come out.

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HESS: A general question on civil rights groups, such as the NAACP, the Urban League, and things of that nature. How much influence at that time, back in the Truman administration, did such organizations have on Mr. Truman's thinking--this, of course, is just asking for your opinion--and how much influence did they have on moving things through the Federal Government themselves?

HASTIE: I'm not sure when you say the organization--I think that men like Walter White and Channing Tobias were men whose views the President did seriously consider and respected. Wasn't Tobias chairman of the committee or was he just a member of the committee?

HESS: He was a member.

HASTIE: He was a member of the committee. He was

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one of the most influential members of the committee that came out with "To Secure These Rights," and these men and Philip Randolph had access to the White House, how frequently they had access to the President I don't know. Of course, Dave Niles and Philleo Nash were people that they were constantly in touch with. I have every reason to believe that the President respected and considered the views of those men, and by and large, sought to implement.

HESS: Let's go back to the Virgin Islands just a little bit. This is on page 3. At the time that you were there, Cap Krug was Secretary of the Interior, and how would you characterize the type of support you received from Mr. Krug when you were Governor of the Virgin Islands?

HASTIE: I had no complaints at all. I found that

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he and the people immediately under him who had responsibility for territorial matters were always eager to be helpful.

HESS: Skipping over to page 4, what was done to improve the living standards of the citizens of the Virgin Islands at the time you were there?

HASTIE: Nothing like as much as I would have wanted.

HESS: What would you have liked to have done, found difficult to get implemented? Question number 2 on that page.

HASTIE: The economy of the Island was still very stagnant. We were just beginning to get any development of tourism large enough to become a major factor in the economy. While I was there we were able to get the entrepreneurs to undertake and actually start construction of

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the first large, still the largest, tourist hotel, for example, now the Virgin Islands Hilton, it was then the Virgin Isle Hotel. We were just beginning to be able to interest the emerging cruise business into making St. Thomas an important port of call. There's a provision in the tariff law--well, the Virgin Islands are outside of the tariff law--well, the Virgin Islands are outside of the tariff wall, so that foreign goods are brought into the Virgin Islands without paying duty. There's a provision that if less than fifty percent of the value of goods brought into the United States, the mainland, from the Virgin Islands, that less than 50 percent of the value is represented by the foreign raw material or the foreign material, that they can come in duty free. We were just at the beginning of trying to persuade enterprises on the mainland that

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there would be an economic advantage in doing such a thing as bringing the shells, or the pearl, or whatever they call it, from the Orient into the Virgin Islands, and manufacturing that into buttons; or the thing that has since developed, the watchmaking, bringing some of the parts from Europe or the Orient to the Virgin Islands, combining them with parts from the United States and making the assembly there into watches, which has become in more recent years, a pretty substantial thing in the economy.

Basically it's not until you develop the economy much more than it was then, and have much more employment, much more revenue coming into the public treasuries than could be produced at that time that you could do things of real importance. The local funds for the support of the indigent aged, for

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example, I think at that time we were only able to pay only about \$12 a month. Our schoolteachers we couldn't pay more than about \$60 or \$75 a month when I went down there. We may have increased it a little. The policeman even less. It was still almost a starvation economy. I think we got started at a slow rate on the developments of tourism, of small industry and so on, that happily now have burgeoned to the point where, relatively speaking, it's a very flourishing economy.

HESS: I can attest to the fact that I was there last month. It's a marvelous place to go. St. Croix...

HASTIE: You get overcharged for everything but that seems to be...

HESS: When you're on a vacation one expects those

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things.

HASTIE: I suppose so.

HESS: What do you foresee as the future of the Virgin Islands? Will they remain in their present relationship to the United States?

HASTIE: For the calculable future, yes. I think the people, by and large, both the sophisticated and the unsophisticated, realize that the Islands are obviously too small and too inadequate as an economic unit for independence. They do not want to be politically joined to Puerto Rico, which would be about the only other alternative of changing the basic structure. So far as I know there is no real sentiment for statehood, again, because it is not a feasible thing for a unit that small. They now elect their own Governor; they now have control over their own

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legislature and so on. I understand there is some discussion now of some changes in the Organic Act. I'm not even familiar with what changes are being considered.

HESS: In Puerto Rico there seems to be quite a movement, quite a feeling of wanting to break away. We have had the Puerto Rican Nationalists for quite some time.

HASTIE: We've had them ever since I can remember. We had them back in the twenties and thirties.

HESS: Is there a similar feeling in the Virgin Islands?

HASTIE: No. The Independistas, the National Party in Puerto Rico, did become in the thirties a pretty important group, and I would suspect in the thirties that if there had been a plebiscite the majority of the people would

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have voted for independence. Today I would guess it wouldn't be more than 10 or 15 percent, though I don't pretend to be very conversant with Puerto Rican politics. There are now two major groups in Puerto Rico. One headed by the present government, want statehood. The other, the Popular Democratic Party, wants to retain substantially the relationship that now exists, what we call an "associated free state."

HESS: Of course, as you well recall, it was the Puerto Rican Nationalists who shot at Mr. Truman on November 1, 1952, and then later shot into the House gallery.

HASTIE: On the other hand, I remember Mr. Truman went down to Puerto Rico. There was understandably great concern about his safety, and

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that the old airport, when he arrived, he was going to speak to the people from a platform with amplifiers and with the audience restrained by ropes and police guarded, at some considerable distance. When he came out and he saw the arrangements, to the horror of his guards, instead of walking to his platform, he walked all the way over to where the people were restrained, and started walking along and shaking hands. And don't think the Puerto Ricans didn't recognize the gesture, and in the papers and so on, "The President knows that the people of Puerto Rico are his friends; he has no fear of the people in Puerto Rico."

HESS: You served as a member of the Caribbean Commission. Perhaps we should spend a moment on that. What were your duties and what do you recall about that Commission?

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HASTIE: This was essentially a Roosevelt project, though it was continued during the Truman administration. What was the man's name who was president of the Commission? It was [Charles William] Taussig, who was president of the American Molasses Company, a New Yorker, who, along with Adolf Berle and a number of the New Yorkers, were among the few leaders of business who were strong supporters of Roosevelt from the very beginning. Taussig because of his position as president of the American Molasses Company (I think that was the name of the corporation) had interest in and was knowledgeable about the Caribbean, and was one of Roosevelt's informal advisers about Caribbean matters. I think it was he who persuaded Roosevelt that it would be useful to have a coordinated, some formal (not too formal) but somewhat formal, coordination of

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the British-French-Dutch and American activities, and the sharing of ideas about economic and social development in the Caribbean. Roosevelt and Churchill first agreed that there would be an Anglo-American Caribbean Commission, which would meet and then advise the respective

governments of the ideas of the Commission, as to things that should be done by the individual governments or the governments in cooperation with each other for a betterment of conditions in the Caribbean. This was set up and it went along on a small scale until the war broke out, and the Caribbean was faced with starvation. The ships weren't available, and ships were being sunk (those that were made available).

Then there was formed--I'm not sure whether it was just before or after the war had started--the Caribbean Commission which the French and

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Dutch came in, and there were four members from each government. The Commission had a secretary and a small staff and periodic meetings, and recommendations to the government. Their major responsibility during the war was to work out plans for getting essential supplies to the Caribbean.

Their greatest undertaking was the organization of the schooner pool. Throughout the Caribbean, there are lots of schooners, small vessels. It's characteristic of the Caribbean that there are lots of individually owned schooners and small vessels supplying commerce from island to island, and it had never been a very profitable business, I think largely because so often though the vessel may have large cargo going one way, it will have almost nothing coming back to its home base. So the

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governments through the Commission made enough capital available for a small project of organizing all the schooners and having them sail under the direction of the schooner pool, up and down, all the way from Cuba, down through the Antilles as far as Trinidad and back. It would be easy to get supplies part of the way, and then with the small schooners carrying them the rest of the way, it made possible a very considerable organized commerce with the vessels loaded both going and coming. It's one of the few government projects, I know of, that is that actually yielded a profit. The schooners made money and, at the end of the war, more money was returned to the treasuries than the treasuries had put out at the beginning.

But apart from that, the Commission continued to make recommendation to the governments separately and jointly for projects of social and

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economic improvement in the Island.

HESS: Mr. Ward M. Canaday was co-chairman of the Commission. Do you have any recollections of Mr. Canaday?

HASTIE: Oh, sure, I remember him well. He was, of course, the president of Willy's Overland Corporation that developed the jeep, which became a major vehicle during the war.

HESS: He owned some land, did he not, on the Islands?

HASTIE: Yes. President Truman came to have a high regard for Canaday during the war years. Canaday was one of the group of businessmen who I understand would assemble informally in Washington from time to time, and were helpful to the administration, and probably to the Truman

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Committee. So there did develop a strong friendship between the two men, and Canaday purchased a large acreage down in the Virgin Islands and built a house, and I think had hoped to spend a good bit of his life down there. He liked the place very well. His wife didn't particularly like it, and he never, I think for that reason, moved his domestic base down there to the extent that he wanted to. But with his relation to the President, and the fact that he was a major landowner, and he was trying a lot of experimental agriculture which he could afford to do out of his own purse, he tried new strains of cattle and various things down there. As many businessmen feel, if they get in agriculture, "If people have the skills that I have, they can make agriculture go too." So he had

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a very genuine interest in the economic welfare of the Caribbean, and the President made him the American chairman--I served with him, of course, for some time. The one thing that the President said he wanted to do when he came to the Virgin Islands was to visit Ward Canaday at his place. He wanted to go out to Canaday's. So when he went over to St. Croix, Canaday had arranged a luncheon for the President, and we had a very delightful outing at his place.

HESS: What in your opinion were Mr. Truman's major contributions during his career, the last two questions on page 6?

HASTIE: Obviously, it's awfully hard to have a judgment. Anyone would have to say that the Marshall plan has to be one of the greatest contributions that he made. I'm not sure there's

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any other single thing that I would rate as high as that, though I do think that, though this is a generality rather than a specific, I've always regarded him as a person who probably made a great number of small mistakes, but rarely made a big one. The only one big one that I have my doubts about, and in hindsight I suppose they will always ask about, was the decision to drop the bomb.

HESS: What was your view at the time the bomb was dropped? Do you recall? This is thinking back to August of '45. Has your view changed?



HASTIE: I was not in Government at that time at all. I was a schoolteacher. I remember having the question in mind, "Was this necessary?" and hearing or reading that the only alternative was a terribly bloody island-by-island assault

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on up till one attacked the Japanese heartland with countless uncounted loss of lives and treasury and so on. Yet, from what one now hears and reads, one doubts as to whether the President was accurately informed about that, and whether or not the capitulation could not have been obtained without that.

At the time, I remember asking myself the question which now seems to me even more questionable, "Was Nagasaki necessary?" Even assuming that the demonstration of the destructive power of the bomb was necessary, and that the first one did that, what was the need for the second one? Let's say this is the one thing that he did or authorized, or decision that he made, that worried me some then, and has worried me even more as the years have passed.

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HESS: What is your estimation of Mr. Truman's place in history, one or two hundred years from now? How will he be regarded?

HASTIE: Well, the small mistakes, however numerous they may be, don't go down in history, and I think properly so; they're not remembered in history. The major things are remembered, and I think even now, and I suspect more so as the generations go on, I'm convinced that he will be remembered and recorded as one of the great Presidents, one of the outstanding Presidents of the United States.

HESS: When you mention the small mistakes, could you give me an illustration? This was a saying about Mr. Truman: "So right in so many of the big things; so wrong in so many of the little things." But what sticks in

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your mind?

HASTIE: Well, his appreciation of loyalty and his own sense of loyalty I think caused him to support and stand by some pretty unworthy people, whether in his administration, or outside of his administration. The tendency toward cronyism, I think is the word that is used, I think is a weakness in a President. I think it is better for a President to be able to be more objective about people than he was. Of course, he was given to intemperate outbursts from time to time, which I guess the public by and large loved him for...

HESS: Made him seem a bit more human.

HASTIE: ...made them feel that he was human, as certainly he has been throughout his career. I'll tell you one other thing, and I

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really must go--one thing I think I do want to record: I don't remember the year, but maybe it was ten years ago, give or take a few, when the struggle of Negroes began taking the form of more and more demonstrations, and the sit-in technique began to be used, sitting-in in restaurants and such places. Mr. Truman was quoted in the press as denouncing this tactic, and also saying that he understood it was Communist-inspired.

Well, I was greatly disturbed about that, and many other Negroes who felt warmly toward him. So I learned that he was going to be in New York. I think he and Mrs. Truman were babysitting for Margaret or something of the sort. I said, "Well, I'm going to try to get through to him." So I called the Carlyle, and I won't go through the details, but I did eventually get

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to his suite and talked to some member of his staff, and said if it were possible, convenient, at some time while the President were in New York, I'd like to come and have a short chat with him, and he agreed. I went up and I guess we talked for about a half an hour. I indicated that beyond always enjoying the opportunity to see him and talk with him, that the principal thing I wanted to talk to him about was this statement. And on the matter of the Communist inspiration, he said, "Well, I'm convinced from what you have said that I was misinformed about that, and I will correct it," which he did, though it never got the publicity of course of the original statement.

HESS: It never does.

HASTIE: But he said, "As far as the sit-in is

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concerned, it is a firm conviction that that is wrong," He said, "You know how strongly I've supported organized labor, but when the auto workers sat in and physically took over the plants, I thought that was wrong, and that is not a justifiable tactic, and I didn't hesitate to say so. And I think it is wrong when Negroes use this tactic."

Well, before he made that definite conclusion, I had expressed my views and explanations as to why I thought this was a justifiable tactic, and I tried to indicate that I thought a restaurant was a public place in a sense that the General Motors Plant was not a public place. But I'm sure that, as with so many things, the man who had his own ship, there was very much of a feeling that, "This is mine," that he could not, did not, at any time,

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convince himself that a man's shop, anymore than his home, was a place where people were entitled to come in and remain after the proprietor has said, "Now, I don't want you in my place of business." I respected, and I think I understood his point of view, though I disagreed with him.

So he did, as I said, make a retraction later, a correction of his statement about the Communist inspiration, but he indicated that he still felt that this was not a permissible tactic in social struggle, to physically take over a person's place of business. As a matter of fact, I think that was the last--I know it was the last--extended conversation I have had with him, though the last year or so, the meeting out in Independence, I wasn't able to get there. I hope I will this year, and I don't know whether his condition is such that it's

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feasible to talk with him or not.

HESS: Do you have anything else to add on Mr. Truman or on your activities in Government?

HASTIE: No, I don't. It may well be that when I see the draft and read it, beyond editing it, there may be something else that it seems to me is worthwhile adding.

HESS: Also on that subject, I'll leave the list of questions that I have, because I didn't get to ask all of them, but some of them are rather minor questions, but if at the time that you are editing the draft, if you feel that one of the questions should be answered, just write it out in longhand, slip it in and say, "Insert," and we'll have it typed in final form.

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Thank you, Judge.

HASTIE: Very good.

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