

Oral History Interview

With

GEORGE L. MCCOLM

Farm Loan Officer, Kansas Rehabilitation Corporation, Kansas State Government, 1935; Assistant County Agent, Kansas Agriculture Extension Service, 1935-36; Soil Surveyor, and Survey Supervisor, Mobile Soil Survey Group, United States Department of Agriculture, 1936-1938; Acting Utah State Soil Scientist, Soil Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture, 1936-42; Management Agronomist, Topaz War Relocation Center, Deseret, Utah, 1942-44; Commissioned as lieutenant (JG), United States Navy, 1944; Chief Agriculture, Joint Army-Navy Planning and Training Staffs, The Presidio, Monterey, California, 1945 (Planning for the invasion and occupation of Japan after World War II), War Department. In charge of Military Government, Ponape Island (Japanese occupied island in the Pacific, liberated by the United States in World War II) 1945-46; Soil Conservation Officer, Navajo Reservation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1946-52; Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Nursery, 1952-57; Director Bolack Experiment Station for Navajo Irrigation Project, Farmington, New Mexico, 1957-61; Agricultural Instructor and in Graduate School, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 1961-64; Water Management Advisor, Department of State for India, 1964-66; Agricultural Program Coordinator, Department of State and Technical Advisor to the International Mekong Project Committee, South Vietnam, 1966-72; part time Agriculture Land Use Consultant, Government of Mexico, 1979-85.

Independence, Missouri
May 20 and 21, 1991

by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

The Harry S. Truman Library
Independence, Missouri
August, 1994.

Harry S. Truman Library
US. Highway 24 and Delaware Street
Independence, Missouri 64050

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Summary Description:

Topics mentioned by Mr. McColm includes his background growing up in Kansas and his father's association with the Forest Service; discussion of Gifford Pinchot and Theodore

Roosevelt in the Conservation movement; his education at the Kansas State Teacher's College, Emporia (now Emporia State University) and at Kansas State University where he received his degree in agricultural science; his experience as a farm loan officer with the Kansas Rehabilitation Corporation, Kansas Department of Agriculture; his experiences as a soil surveyor with the National Soil Survey Program, United States Department of Agriculture; his experience as a soil specialist, Topaz War Relocation Center, Deseret, Utah, War Relocation Authority and his relationship with Dillon Myer and farming techniques used by the Japanese-Americans interned at Topaz; his commission as lieutenant in the United States Navy and his assignment as Chief of Agriculture, Joint Army-Navy Planning Staff, the Presidio, Monterey, California working on the planned invasion of Japan and subsequent occupation after World War II; his experience as military Governor of Ponape Island in the Pacific liberated from the Japanese at end of World War II; his experience as Soil conservationist, Navajo Reservation after returning from service in the Navy and his relationship with Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Dillon Myer, whom he had known earlier when he served as management agronomist at the Topaz War Relocation Center in Utah and Myer's views on termination of Bureau of Indian Affairs; his post-Truman period experiences as agricultural adviser in India, United States Department of State and as Agricultural Program Coordinator and technical adviser to the International Mekong Project Committee, South Vietnam in the 1960's.

Names mentioned include, Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, William Allen White, Dillon Myer, Major John Hildring, Paul Appleby, Harry L. Hopkins, General Douglas MacArthur, Will Rogers, Jr. and Theodore Cohen and Wolf Ladejinsky, both of whom worked with MacArthur in Japan after World War II and had been at the Civil Affairs Staging Area at the Presidio after McColm left for Ponape Island as Military Governor.

Donor: George L. McColm.

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JOHNSON: Mr. McColm, I'm going to start, as I usually do, by asking you to tell us where you were born, what your birthdate is, and what your parents' names are.

McCOLM: I was born at Colby, Kansas, August 2, 1911. My father, Theodore H. McColm, and Jane McColm, his wife, were in western Kansas managing land for an uncle that had gone out there to hunt coyotes and ended up buying a lot of land in that part of the country. It was the period of the first blow-outs [dust storms]. Mother had to keep a wet towel over my crib for the first six months of my life.

JOHNSON: Where is Colby?

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McCOLM: It's in the northwestern corner of Kansas.

JOHNSON: They were having dust storms back then?

McCOLM: They had the first big blow-out in 1910 and '11; that was the first big period of blow-out. You see, those were abandoned farms that had been farmed a little bit and then people left. They had abandoned the farms. Well, my dad had always been kind of a political agitator, he was one of the guys that helped get the Forest Service started. You know, every generation of young people has to have a cause, and his cause was the Forest Service, to get the Forest Service established, to stop the lumber barons from clear cutting all the western forests. Now, they're back to clear cutting them. But they're clear cutting now to keep people from finding out that we've had 80 years of mismanagement of forests. In other words, they're destroying the evidence of 80 years of mismanagement of the National forests; that was the purpose of clear cutting.

JOHNSON: Is there National forest land, though, in that part of Kansas?

McCOLM: No, the point is that [Gifford] Pinchot and [Theodore] Roosevelt, in order to get the law passed, organized the youth of the entire Midwest, as well as the East, and everybody had had a cause. Pinchot was a

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pretty shrewd operator, and he and Roosevelt were going to take the land away from the Interior Department and put it in the Department of Agriculture where Pinchot was in charge of the Forestry Department, but had no forests to manage.

JOHNSON: Did your father work for the Government at all?

McCOLM: No, he never worked for the Government. But I was going to tell you, he had a cousin, Ed Miller, and as soon as the law was passed, he had Ed Miller go into the Forest Service; he just egged him on to go into the Forest Service, and he did. He ended up as Assistant Regional Forester at Albuquerque when he retired. So, we were connected with it, and I read forest journals all my life.

JOHNSON: So, you kind of grew up in this atmosphere of conservation, especially of forests.

McCOLM: The forests and land and all; I grew up with that background, and had forest journals laying on the table right there in Emporia, Kansas, all my life.

JOHNSON: Did they try to plant a shelter belt of trees that far west? Did they plant any trees?

McCOLM: Well, in Kansas my grandfather had planted a big grove of walnut trees; they must have been planted in

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the 1880s or the '90s.

JOHNSON: Out in Colby?

McCOLM: At Emporia.

JOHNSON: How long did you live in Colby?

McCOLM: Until I was about two years old.

JOHNSON: Then you moved from Colby to...

McCOLM: Dad was brought back to manage the home ranch in Emporia.

JOHNSON: At Emporia, Kansas.

McCOLM: We had about 700 acres in Emporia, and granddad wanted him to come back and take over management of the place in Emporia. That's how I came back.

JOHNSON: So now you are back where it wasn't so arid, and you had trees.

McCOLM: They already had this big grove of walnut trees and dad had to sell a lot of walnuts for a very low price to survive during the Depression of the '30s.

JOHNSON: Where were you educated? In Emporia?

McCOLM: I got my high school education and grade school in Emporia, and then went one year to Kansas State

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Teachers College at Emporia.

JOHNSON: What year was that?

McCOLM: That was 1928 and '29.

JOHNSON: Kansas State Teachers, but that's at Manhattan, isn't it?

McCOLM: The Kansas State Teachers's College is now called Emporia State University.

JOHNSON: Oh, I see.

McCOLM: Anyway, they've upgraded the name.

JOHNSON: Then what did you do?

McCOLM: Well, I built the first large-scale irrigation project in Kansas in 1928 and '29 during the summer, of course, when I wasn't going to school. I put in a four-inch centrifical pump. It was a contractors pump with an old Model T motor on it, and that wasn't big enough to pump the water up 30 feet to the elevation I needed to irrigate the place, so I bought an old light-six Studebaker motor, and that was enough power. So as long as we had water in the creek, Allen Creek, I was able to irrigate. I grew everything I could think of, and I found out very soon that water was not the whole answer to production in Kansas. I tried all different

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kinds of vegetables.

JOHNSON: This was on that 700 acre ranch?

McCOLM: No. I tended 28 acres of that for irrigated garden.

JOHNSON: Twenty-eight acres of irrigated garden.

McCOLM: During the period from the summer of '28 through to 1932. By 1932 Kansas was so dry there was no water in the creek, so I had to go back and work my way through college. I went to Kansas State then.

JOHNSON: At Manhattan?

McCOLM: At Manhattan.

JOHNSON: From what years?

McCOLM: From '32 to '35. Graduated in '35. To get a little more of my background, in 1923 I joined the 4-H Club, and we were told that that was the first year 4-H was called 4-H. Before that it was the Extension Youth Clubs.

JOHNSON: I see.

McCOLM: In other words, they had Extension Youth Clubs long before they had 4-H. But 4-H was a more sexy name for it. It stood for head, heart, hand and health, and

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that was very appropriate. But the 4-H in those years was very competitive. Everybody was competing for the prizes. It isn't nearly so competitive today as it was then.

Well, I was county canning champion when my mother was sick one summer, and I won first prize on a pure bred gilt at the State Fair in 1923. In 1927 I was state crops champion in 4-H.

JOHNSON: By the way, did you have any brothers and sisters?

McCOLM: My younger brother was Ed McColm and he graduated from high school at the age of 15 and went on to college and made straight A's. He stayed out several years and then he got to come to college after I did. He made straight A's in college and then he went out as a county agent and was picked up by the Army because he was on the National Rifle Team, National Large-Bore Rifle Team, and was sent to the Philippines in 1940 as a reserve officer to train the 57th Infantry. He actually ended up training the new 91st, and was killed in the first battle of the Philippines on Christmas Day in 1941.

JOHNSON: Two or three weeks after Pearl Harbor.

McCOLM: Yes, he was an Army captain. They didn't have any equipment larger than a .50 caliber machine gun when

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the Japanese landed with 14 tanks.

JOHNSON: Was he the only brother or sister?

McCOLM: He was my only brother. And my sister, she's now with her husband in the bee business in Purcellville, Virginia. Her husband was another Americus, Kansas, boy -- from near Emporia. He became head of measurement and control, with the General Services Administration, before he retired in Washington.

JOHNSON: You're saying that your father's influence is what helped get you into agriculture, as a career. I suppose your 4-H adviser, or leader, must have been influential, too.

McCOLM: My mother was the 4-H Club Leader -- Fremont 4-H Club. The 4-H work had a lot of other things in it. In 1927 or '28, I think it was '28, John Glass the state engineer, conducted a school, an engineering school for 4-H club boys. It was a summer camp in a beautiful wooded place where we studied engineering problems for two weeks. We learned to lay out broad-based terraces. I helped my dad lay out the first broad-based terraces in Lyon County, Kansas in 1928.

Then my brother and I went out with an old upside down level that dad had gotten during the World War I period. We laid out broad-based terraces and water

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spreading devices...

JOHNSON: Waterways.

McCOLM: And waterways and check dams in gullies. We laid those out for farmers all over that part of the state during the next three or four years when I was out of school. We were working as engineers.

JOHNSON: Were you being paid by the Government?

McCOLM: No, being paid by the farmers.

JOHNSON: By the farmers themselves.

McCOLM: We had a really going soil conservation program in Kansas sponsored by John Glass, the state engineer, long before we had the Soil Conservation Service.

JOHNSON: That was a New Deal program, the Soil Conservation Service.

McCOLM: Yes, we got into that later.

JOHNSON: Well, from '32 to '35, you're at Kansas State. What were you majoring in at that time?

McCOLM: I was majoring in horticulture, and crop-weather was my major project. I started it as a result of my experience with the Kansas climate. I found that you could not grow crops like cauliflower and crops that

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required cooler temperatures in Kansas no matter how much water you have for irrigation.

One time I was looking at a little field of cauliflower I had, and grandad came by. He never stopped running all his life until he got hit by a stump puller and knocked one leg off when he was 81 years old; he had three operations. Finally, they cut it off at the hip and he lived another seven or eight years running around in a wheelchair. But he came running by when I was looking at this cauliflower, and it was a pretty sad mess. It turned red from the heat, and there were bugs all over it. There was not any of it salable, and he said, "Don't worry about it George, the good Lord didn't intend for you to grow any cauliflower."

So I thought I'd better find out what signals the good Lord was putting out with the climate. The next thing to do was to find out why and where and how any area in the world got to be a reliable place to grow a given crop. That was the basic philosophy I started out with. That was even before I got to Kansas State.

In order to do that, I started going up to the offices of the *Kansas City Packer*, it was just outside of Kansas City. I've forgotten now exactly where it's located, but I studied the weather records in relation to the records in the *Kansas City Packer*. The *Kansas*

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City Packer was written by people interested in growing crops for sale in various areas, and so that allowed me to find out exactly where the cauliflower was grown; exactly where the peas were grown; exactly where the sweet corn was grown, and what time of year they were grown.

So, I started developing coordinates. See, this ties in with my work for the Government in World War II, because I started developing coordinates for all the basic food crops of the world, where they were grown and under what temperature conditions they were grown, and under what rainfall conditions they were grown, and when they were planted and when they were harvested. It all shows up in records like the *Kansas City Packer* keeps.

JOHNSON: That was a journal, the *Packer*?

McCOLM: The *Packer* is the trade paper of the produce industry. Since I'd been a truck gardener I was reading that everyday. I developed great respect for everybody in the world growing produce, because it was a big terrific job.

JOHNSON: This got you into geography, and meteorology and biology and botany?

McCOLM: It got me into crop geography. The whole field.

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And my dad and I together, collected over 1500 agricultural bulletins. I had read those by the time I was 14 years old. Every time we'd get a new bulletin, I'd read the bulletin and then file it. I had a file of bulletins, a row of bulletin files this long.

JOHNSON: About a yard long.

McCOLM: Over a yard long.

JOHNSON: You had a kind of a head start by the time you got to Kansas State, as far as knowledge of this field is concerned.

McCOLM: In fact I was teaching some of the courses.

JOHNSON: Is that right.

McCOLM: But it was to my detriment; from the grade standpoint this was a detriment, and not to my advantage. I was telling the professors some theories of my own that weren't quite according to their concept of it. I was telling them that crop rotation wasn't the answer. Crop rotation was the big thing in those days. I told them that what we were actually doing was determining the exact place where a given crop was best suited; and as soon as that was determined, not by science, not by intelligence, but by attrition, then it was wise to grow all major crops where they grow best

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and have the highest percentage of success. And a lot of that success was determined by the climate.

JOHNSON: That also means fertilizing each year?

McCOLM: All those things are capital investments that you should not make unless you know exactly that they're going to be profitable. And they're not going to be profitable if the climate is not suitable.

JOHNSON: And that has to do with temperatures and humidities and so on?

McCOLM: It's all part of the weather record. I had a friend by the name of Isaiah Bowman, who later became the head of Johns Hopkins University. He was the world's best geographer at that time. Isaiah Bowman said, "Facts more valuable than all the gold in the Klondike lie buried in the records of the Weather Bureau."

JOHNSON: The facts that lie buried there.

McCOLM: Yes. I was trying to pursue those in the '30s and I started to get a lot of recognition for it, but I didn't get all recognition. Kansas was growing and shipping potatoes as far as Chicago, maybe New York. They had whole train loads of potatoes going into Chicago, and you could smell those potatoes two miles

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out of Chicago because they were harvested at too warm a time of year, and without refrigerated shipping or refrigerated storage. They were spoiling and they had to sort all the Kansas potatoes over before they could sell them. I pointed this out in my first crop-weather paper written in 1934. At the same time the Kansas potatoes were so-called occupying the market, the Shafter long whites started to come in from California. The Shafter long whites were shipped by refrigerated cars, they were beautiful potatoes, nice long white beautiful potatoes, and they were being grown in a climate that could produce those potatoes every year, in the same quality, and with high yields. They were also being grown in an area with suitable soils and an area where the politicians had got preferential freight rates.

You see, California had an "infant industry" problem. The Government was putting all this money into developing irrigation out there, and spending lots of Government money, so then it was easy to get the Congress to give them preferential freight rates. So you could ship a carload of potatoes from California to Chicago, just as cheap as you could ship it from Lawrence to Chicago.

JOHNSON: The railroads tended to run state politics, I believe, in California too at that time.

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McCOLM: Well, they had very good politicians.

JOHNSON: So then you graduated in '35, got your bachelor's of science degree, BS degree.

McCOLM: In agriculture and horticulture, and had minors in two or three things.

JOHNSON: So what did you do after you had your degree?

McCOLM: Well, before I even got my degree, I didn't have to take any finals in the last year. They let me out two weeks early to go out to Chautauqua County and get all of the farmers off relief, working for the Kansas Rehabilitation program. You've probably heard of that or know something about it. It was the forerunner of the Resettlement Administration.

JOHNSON: So you were getting involved with the New Deal.

McCOLM: That was the New Deal program. That was 1935. And I got about 49 farmers off relief. Now, this program was basically a program in which we went to the bank. This farmer had been on relief and drawn money for relief for maybe six months, or a year or more, and was able to live and keep on maybe with a little bit of money from chickens, or cows or something, but he didn't have an economic unit. So he wasn't making a living. In '35 it wasn't too hard to be so you

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couldn't make a living, but our purpose in setting up this program wasn't to just go out and make him a loan. Our program was to make sure that he had the ability to manage a sound economic unit.

Then we went to the bank, and you know why the banks were so willing to work with us don't you? Have you got the story of the Kansas Holiday Association?

JOHNSON: I've heard about the movement, yes.

McCOLM: Well, you know the Oakies [Oklahomans] all went to California, and I explained at the National Academy of Science in 1942 just what happened, why Kansans didn't go to California and Oakies did. The Oakies had a different law. The bankers could literally clean them out.

JOHNSON: In Oklahoma.

McCOLM: In Oklahoma.

JOHNSON: Under state law.

McCOLM: Under state law. And in Kansas the banks were not permitted to bid in. I'm not a lawyer and I don't know the legal aspects of it but my dad tried to explain it to me one time. He was a good street lawyer. I don't know that he was ever connected with the Farmer's Holiday Association, but he certainly knew where all

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their sales were being held. What happened was that when the bank would foreclose on a Kansas farmer, we would have a big picnic at that sale, and we would all go to the sale with whatever money we could scrape up in our pockets, just a little small change, and we would bid in pennies rather than dollars. In other words, if a bull was worth \$100 we'd bid a dollar on him. And if he was worth \$40, we'd bid forty cents. It was the same way with the land, and we never took anything home from a sale.

JOHNSON: But you had to...

McCOLM: We got the title transferred...

JOHNSON: You'd persuade others not to bid against you, though.

McCOLM: We got the title transferred to us on everything we bought. We left the title right with the farmer when we left the sale that day.

JOHNSON: I've heard about that.

McCOLM: That was the Holiday Association.

JOHNSON: Would they sometimes hang a noose from a tree, which was a warning for outsiders not to bid against them?

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McCOLM: I'll tell you a little interesting story in connection with one sale. I never saw any noose hanging up or anything like that, but we went to a sale near Americus one day, and it was a nice big sale. There was quite a lot of stuff around. Along about the time sale was ready to start, in came a farmer in an old Ford car from Cottonwood Falls. The very first item that came up was a cow or a calf or something that they offered up for bid, and he bid \$40 or \$50 on it. I've forgotten the exact amount. But he bid some money on it. We had a big burly guy, the nicest guy in the world, just a great big burly farmer, who weighed about 220, which was huge in those days. He walked up to him and he said, "Friend, you really didn't want to buy that cow did you?" This farmer looked around and everybody was looking at him, and he immediately withdrew his bid, jumped in his flivver and headed out of there. He didn't wait to make another bid on anything.

So then the sale went on and went its merry way, and we completed the whole sale without any trouble. The farmer got title to his land, and he got title to his property, and he went right ahead farming. That was the story of the Kansas Holiday Association.

JOHNSON: They saved a lot of farmers.

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McCOLM: We saved all of them. So, when I got out to this county and was taking farmers off relief, I never paid any banker over 20 percent of what he had loaned to get title to the property, title to the land, and get title to all of the livestock. The Government took title under the program.

And then we went ahead and loaned him enough money to either buy, or rent, additional land that he needed, and enough stock -- if he needed another team of horses, or if he needed anything it took to create a sound economic unit. That is the basic principal of it. If he needed more chickens...

JOHNSON: To support one family on the farm.

McCOLM: Yes, to support the family. We considered the size of his family, and how much labor he had on the family farm, and we had the idea that he should keep all his kids at work. My dad tried to explain one time why I wasn't a very good success in the produce business, in the vegetable growing business. He said, "There's no way you're going to get into this business unless you have a family of five kids."

JOHNSON: You've got to have your own labor force -- like a factory I guess, family factory.

McCOLM: Of course, dad was the guy that was feeding a

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carload of cattle in the spring and a carload in the fall and a carload of pigs in the spring and a carload in the fall. He was selling them for pennies, you know, literally working his fool head off for practically nothing.

JOHNSON: So, it was livestock and truck crops.

McCOLM: Well, I was the truck crops.

JOHNSON: Okay, then your father was in livestock.

McCOLM: He was the livestock man, and the only truck crops that I knew that he had when I was just a little kid was that he always rotated the feed lots with asparagus and rhubarb. If he had a feed lot that he figured...

JOHNSON: They'd be well manured for sure.

McCOLM: Yes, there were two crops that would grow with lots of manure. So he rotated them. And then we also had three acres of grapes, concord grapes on the place. And during the prohibition days I always advertized to sell grapes on night deliveries. I delivered grapes at night all over Emporia during the '20s, and...

JOHNSON: Was that bathtub wine or whatever.

McCOLM: They all bragged about being the best wine makers in town, but they didn't want anybody to know when they

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got their grapes delivered. We always let the grapes stay on the vine about another two weeks longer than anybody else, so that made them more desirable. The reason we were able to keep them on the vine that much longer was that we sprayed them with sulfur compounds, and kept the diseases off the grapes in those days. That was fairly unusual. So we were able to grow grapes...

JOHNSON: Did they wash that sulfur off before they...

McCOLM: It kept the diseases off of the grapes. That also kept them from rotting on the vine.

JOHNSON: But it's also a contaminant isn't it?

McCOLM: Well, nowadays you might call it that.

JOHNSON: After you got out of Kansas State, did you go back to the farm, or did you go with the Government, or...

McCOLM: No, I was telling you, I went to the Government two weeks before I got out of college and I didn't even go back to pick up my diploma. I didn't even have time to go back for the exercise. So, my diploma was mailed to me.

JOHNSON: You began work for what...

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McCOLM: For the Kansas Rehabilitation Corporation.

JOHNSON: Which was a part of the Department of Agriculture.

McCOLM: It was a Kansas organization at that time, but it had...

JOHNSON: Was it a part of state government?

McCOLM: Part of state government. But Federal money was being supplied.

JOHNSON: I see.

McCOLM: It was being run with Federal money, but it was being run by Kansans, with Kansas employees. Before the 1st of July I got transferred to Allen and Neosho Counties. By the fifth of August, all the welfare farmers in these counties were off relief. I was learning how to speed up the paper work. Then on the 10th of August, I was called into Topeka, the head office of the Rehabilitation and was awarded a certificate. They had a ceremony, and I was the outstanding Rehabilitation agent in the state of Kansas and that was great. Two weeks later I got fired for being a Republican, when the Federal Resettlement Administration took over.

JOHNSON: Your family was still Republican.

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McCOLM: Well, I had been a junior delegate to the Republican convention, sponsored by William Allen White in 1928. I was working for William Allan White as an ag reporter at that time.

JOHNSON: For his paper, on his newspaper.

McCOLM: I learned to write from William Allen White.

JOHNSON: That was good training, I'm sure of that.

McCOLM: Well, Julian Fryant was the patronage officer of the Democratic Party, and he was making sure that nobody was ushered into the Civil Service for any new agency that wasn't politically correct. In other words, if they were creating a new agency, then they selected the staff and the staff immediately gained Civil Service status at whatever grade they placed them in.

JOHNSON: So you were at the point where you were going to be entering the Federal Civil Service and that's when you were sort of phased out, so to speak.

McCOLM: I had to be separated because I was a Republican.

JOHNSON: Then what did you do?

McCOLM: Well, I had already passed five Civil Service examinations, you know, for junior jobs.

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JOHNSON: Oh, okay.

McCOLM: For junior jobs and those weren't the ones that the politicians were interested in. I'd have had a higher grade if I had gone in politically, but at the same time the Kansas Extension Service said, "We've got a job for you. Go back to your home city of Colby." So, in 1935 I went back to Colby, and what do you know, they were having another blow-out.

JOHNSON: One of these dust storms?

McCOLM: Another dust storm period. So I dug out the law that my dad had gotten enacted in 1911, and found that it was still on the books. We plowed to control the dust, 48,000 acres of non-resident land in and around Colby that year. So I had charge of that. I was called Assistant County Agent in charge of this erosion program.

The wind erosion control program was just as successful in 1935 as it had been in 1911. Wind erosion of soil was greatly reduced.

JOHNSON: The year 1936 was the worst, wasn't it?

McCOLM: Yes, it got dryer even then, but by then you see, one of these Civil Service examiners called me in the spring of '36, so I left the county agent job and took a junior soil surveyor job. In those days, they didn't

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ask you whether you were a horticulturist or an animal science man, or what. You asked the question, "What do you need?" And then you said, "That I am."

I had passed all of these exams. When they called me for soils, I became a soil scientist by government decree all of a sudden. I'd made good grades in soils and I knew a little about soils because I had been involved in it all my life. But I was not a soils man. I went to Springfield, Missouri and we got kicked out of the survey in Springfield because the real estate people thought we were classifying the land too low. We were marking everything "rough, stony land" and they said it was the best strawberry land in the country and would grow the best small fruit and all. They were selling it to people from Illinois and declaring it was so fertile.

JOHNSON: The soil survey, is that part of the...

McCOLM: It is the National Soil Survey program.

JOHNSON: What department was that in?

McCOLM: The Department of Agriculture.

JOHNSON: Within the Department of Agriculture.

McCOLM: It was called the Mobile Soil Survey Group.

JOHNSON: Okay, within the Department of Agriculture.

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McCOLM: They had a Bureau of Plant Industry surveys that had been running the soil surveys up to then. All of our inspectors were old Bureau of Plant Industry people that had been transferred over into the new organization, in the Soil Conservation Service, that was going to run the soil surveys from now on.

So, E.A. Norton, head of the Soils Department in Washington under Hugh Bennett, became head of soil surveys in the United States. He had these mobile surveyors running around from one county to the other making soil surveys for the new districts that were being formed.

JOHNSON: Soil conservation districts.

McCOLM: Since we weren't going to be permitted to survey in Springfield, we went then to Winona County, Minnesota, and I was put in charge of the survey there. Because I had had two weeks training, I was well qualified to head a party. We went up there and we surveyed some of

the best land in the United States in Winona County, Minnesota. We made it with aerial photographs that they had furnished us.

So when A.T. Strayhorn, the inspector, came along and saw the survey made with aerial photographs, he said, "This is the best soil survey I have ever seen, and I am recommending to Norton that he not survey

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anymore with plane tables." Before that we were surveying with plane tables on our shoulders and we were using any kind of a base map that we could get to survey the county. They were not very good when they had to make it with a plane table because you couldn't figure out just exactly where all the draws were, and where all the good land was located. With the soil survey made on an aerial photograph, we knew the edges of every field and we had everything just the way it should be. So it was determined in 1936 that no soil survey would be started until aerial maps were available for the District or the County. So you see, we became a very mobile organization because they didn't have very many counties flown at that time. On my next project, I got transferred to Atlanta, Georgia, and got to survey Gwinnett County, Georgia, the winter of 1936 and '37. Stone Mountain was part of it, and we had several surveyors on the job. My block included Stone Mountain, and so I had enough acreage to be ahead of everybody very soon, when I got through mapping Stone Mountain.

JOHNSON: Were you still single?

McCOLM: Well, I married the daughter of the head of the milling departments of General Mills in Minneapolis, while I was in Minnesota.

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JOHNSON: The daughter of the head of the milling department. What was her name?

McCOLM: Davis.

JOHNSON: Her first name?

McCOLM: Emma Davis.

JOHNSON: Okay, so now you're married while you're in Georgia.

McCOLM: I married in Minnesota and her dad was the fellow that brought the patent for Gold Medal Flour from Sweden when he was a kid. He grew up in the milling business in Sweden, and when he came to the mill at Northfield, Minnesota, he started making the best flour that has ever been made in the United States. It was recognized by the General Mills people and they brought him in to make the flour for General Mills, and it became known as Gold Medal Flour.

JOHNSON: And what was his name?

McCOLM: Charlie Davis. His name was Davidson in Sweden. When he got to the United States he called it Davis.

JOHNSON: So now you have, you might say, agriculture on your wife's side of the family too. I mean it's all agriculture.

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McCOLM: She was involved in it indirectly. Of course, she was a local socialite in Minneapolis.

JOHNSON: Yes. So now, you're in Georgia.

McCOLM: So we went to Georgia that winter and it was quite an experience for a girl from Minneapolis. We lived in an apartment -- an upstairs apartment. She was a very devout Lutheran and she could look down into a church and see people were dancing in the basement of the church. It just happened to be a Mormon Church. She also learned something else about the South. In other words, there's more about the South you're going to learn when you go south. One morning we woke up early. A very loud high pitched voice was shouting below our upstairs apartment window. It said, "Nice fat 'possum! Nice fat 'possum! Nice fat 'possum!" Em rushed to the window and looked out, here was this colored boy with a 'possum, with the 'possum's tail hanging over his finger, walking down the alley selling a nice fat 'possum.

So she became quite fascinated with the difference between the south and the north, and she insulted all the neighbors because she had to hang out my long-handled underwear which I insisted on wearing because Georgia really wasn't that warm. So she hung the long-handled underwear out on the line every morning while I

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was surveying in Georgia...for one survey period from the fall of 1936 to the spring of 1937.

The next survey was on the project at North Ogden where the Pine River Dam [was located]; North Ogden had to have a soil survey of the land that was going to be irrigated.

JOHNSON: What state was that?

McCOLM: That was in Utah. So I got to move to North Ogden, Utah from Georgia. That was my first experience of working in the West, at North Ogden, Utah. The first thing I noticed there was their cherry trees; in the finest sweet cherry growing area they had in Utah, they had zinc deficiency.

JOHNSON: Had what?

McCOLM: Had zinc deficiency. I recognized the zinc deficiency because my father had discovered zinc deficiency on potatoes in Kansas in about 1924. He went to town one day to buy some arsenate of lead. Now, in those days we really knew how to kill people with our spray materials. Nowadays we have very safe sprays. With due respect to everything that we're hearing

about how bad we are, what terrible people we are to be spraying anything, we spray very safely nowadays and we're very carefully controlled. In those

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days we used the most deadly poisons in the world to spray almost anything to kill almost anything that we needed to kill; whether it was grasshoppers or cabbage worms or what, we sprayed.

Now, we got away pretty well with killing all the cabbage worms, because when we cut the cabbage head, we peeled it all back and then we washed it all off and we didn't kill anybody with our cabbage. Nevertheless, we were spraying with arsenate of lead in the '20s and '30s.

So he, father, went to town to buy some arsenate of lead to spray the apple orchard. We had about three acres of fruit. He went to town to buy the arsenate of lead to spray the apple orchard and spray the potato plants to kill the potato bugs. They told him they didn't have any arsenate of lead, but they had some arsenate of zinc. So he sprayed the potatoes with the arsenate of zinc, and about two weeks later he noticed that half the field was green and the other half had a little yellow tinge. So, he said, "What's going on here?" So he found his old bags; you know, the farmers always threw the bags away right in the field in those days, and nowadays you're supposed to pick them up and burn them.

Well, he found the bags all right. The bags with the arsenate of zinc were right where the green

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potatoes started. And so we sprayed the potatoes with arsenate of zinc from then on and we didn't have any zinc deficiencies and we grew more potatoes to the acre.

Well, at the same time we noticed that there was a certain yellowing and curling of apple leaves that couldn't be explained. And also of cherry and peach and pears. We couldn't really tell on the peaches. But on the apples and some of the pears and the cherries particularly, we could learn to identify zinc deficiency and we could correct it by spraying with arsenate of zinc. We never told the college anything about it, but we went right ahead doing it.

Well, when I started surveying the cherry trees, the area with the cherry trees in North Ogden, I spotted the zinc deficiency. So, I just put it in the report, and Dr. Jennings up at the state college said, "There cannot be any deficiency of any minor nutrients in that formation of soil, because that soil is a bed of mix outwash that has all the nutrient elements for life, and that's why we're so prosperous in Utah. The Mormon farmers are doing very well because the minor nutrient problems had already been solved by mother nature.

Well, he wouldn't let us put anything in the soils report about a zinc deficiency in Utah. But there was

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a young boy that was just through with college, and he was ready to start graduate work, and I took him down to these orchards. I explained to him how to spot zinc deficiency.

Well, by 1944 he not only got his master's degree, he got his Ph.D. degree by working on zinc deficiency in Utah. You can find his dissertations in the records. So then another thing, while I was surveying the soil in Utah, I discovered that the Cicada channeling had -- I wasn't a soil scientist, I was just becoming a soil scientist. I was really a horticulturalist. Maybe I was an agronomist, I don't know what I was.

JOHNSON: Interdisciplinary.

McCOLM: Maybe I was a vegetable crop specialist. But anyway, I discovered that the cicada channeling had completely obliterated the normal process of consolidation of the "B" horizon of all the soils that was covered by the sage brush in eastern Utah and western Colorado. And [I discovered] that if you dig down into the soil you could not only determine the soil structure influenced by the cicada channeling, but you could also determine the rainfall that had occurred in the area, because when you got up just above the 18 inch rainfall zone, the cicada channeling disappeared.

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JOHNSON: The cicada channeling, what is that?

McCOLM: Well, you've heard the cicada making a noise.

JOHNSON: Yes, the locust.

McCOLM: Well, they spend six or seven years, sometimes they call them two-year locusts and all that.

JOHNSON: Seventeen years.

McCOLM: Seventeen-year locust. We had the seventeen-year locust here; they had the seven- or eight-year locust in parts of Utah. Anyway, it doesn't make any difference how long they stay in the ground, but they never look back; they always leave a channel of soil back of them. The world's authority on cicada was Dr. Beemer over here at Lawrence, Kansas. So Dr. Beemer and I worked on that, and we studied two things. The amount of alkali in relation to the amount of cicada channeling in the soil; and the rainfall range of cicada channeling. The amount of lime and it's location in the soil profile determined a crop zone, because where the lime was on the surface, it was too alkaline and too arid, to grow beans, or some dry weather crop. But if you were within an area where soil was leached down to cicada channels; by mapping the soils you could determine where you could grow

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beans and where you could grow other crops, small green crops, grass crops that are tolerant to drought, big tall wheat grass, and short wheat grass, and crested wheat grass. They all grew in that zone, and that could all be determined by examining the soil. So that became part of soil science.

JOHNSON: Did you write this up in reports then?

McCOLM: Well, I had another group of boys from the college that were following up on that. Another thing I accomplished on soils in Utah, was that I was selected to be the Region 8 representative on the National Committee that set up land-use capability tables. That was in 1938. I was transferred to Utah, and became attached to the Utah survey group.

JOHNSON: You're still talking about the soil survey group in the Department of Agriculture.

McCOLM: In the Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service located in Salt Lake City. I was logically the one that they sent to help in Washington, in negotiation. I was in Washington part of the time, and in Salt Lake City part of the time, working on the committee that developed land use capability tables. I had a big battle with the easterners over the classification, because they just wanted "one, two,

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three, four, five and we're through classifying soil because everything else is too bad to be [classified]." And I said, "Now, look, we have soils all over the West that's very good forest lands." There again, I came into this forest business because we recognize in forestry certain lands that have a very high sustained yield potential. In other words, there was enough productivity, enough rainfall, enough of everything, but maybe too steep a slope or too much rock. But still [you might] have high fertility and we wanted a classification that we could put those lands in. Then when they got to be a little more erosive on the steeper slopes, we needed another class for the tree slopes where you shouldn't really clear cut or do any intensive management of the forest.

Now, we had in mind that sooner or later the Forest Service would start to manage the forest. They never did, but we had in mind at that time that sooner or later the Forest Service would become the organization that Pinchot envisioned. Pinchot, you know, got fired. Do you know why he got fired? Have you ever heard the story of Pinchot?

JOHNSON: What was the story? Well, he was Teddy Roosevelt's favorite wasn't he for awhile, and then he got on the outs with President Taft, didn't he?

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McCOLM: You see, Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt succeeded in getting the law passed to have the Forest Service. Amongst other things they got, they had to make peace with the politicians in California so they gave them 25 percent. The Congress didn't want to give this money to Pinchot, to [let him] manage the money that he got out of the forest to create a sustained-yield forest or anything like that. What they wanted was to get the money turned into the national treasury like it had been under the Interior Department. But the politicians in the West said, "If you're going to transfer anything out here, you're going to have to give us 25 percent of the income before we'll vote for it."

So they made a little deal that all the counties in California and the other timber-producing parts of the West would get 25 percent of the revenue. The rest of the revenue went to the treasury.

Well, then the Congress had to vote money to run the Forest Service, and they were very stingy about money to run the Forest Service, because all they wanted them to do was to watch trees grow. They didn't want to create an organization to grow trees, and they never have yet. They wanted to create an organization to watch the trees grow. And so that's the point.

JOHNSON: That's when Gifford Pinchot kind of parted

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company?

McCOLM: Gifford Pinchot got his forests; he got all these forest lands, and he got control of them. Then he started out to try to develop an organization for sustained yield of forests. Well, he only got to grow [forests for] two or three years because up in Alaska all of the mining claims had been issued on land that later became his forest land. They, the mining interests, went in and started clear cutting and messing around and destroying his forest. He issued a cease and desist order. He said, "You cease and desist."

JOHNSON: Did he get by with that?

McCOLM: No, he didn't get by with it, because these mining interests went to the Secretary of Interior. They said, "We have prior rights. We can cut these trees any time we please, and we can do anything we want to do with these trees because we have the mineral rights on this tract of land."

Well, the Secretary of Interior agreed with them. So he went to Taft. He didn't go to the Secretary of Agriculture, he went to Taft himself...

JOHNSON: Who was President at the time.

McCOLM: Taft was President at the time. Roosevelt had

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big ordnance depot.

JOHNSON: Was that Tooele?

McCOLM: No, I have another story about Tooele. Out at Tooele I built the camouflage and the plantings for all the bunkers, and they worked fine until they got a real drought and then they looked greener than the rest of the country.

JOHNSON: What ordnance depot is there you say, out by Salt Lake? What was the name of that?

McCOLM: It was called the Utah General Supply Depot. The ordnance depot was the dumps where they had them in bunkers.

JOHNSON: At Tooele?

McCOLM: Tooele.

JOHNSON: Ammunition?

McCOLM: That was a big ammunition dump up there. There I got a chance to meet the world's greatest hydraulic engineer. My first wife died (1959). While I was in Vietnam (1966), I kept visiting with him and I met his daughter. I married her after...

JOHNSON: This is 1970.

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McCOLM: ...America would not take action.

JOHNSON: I see.

McCOLM: All those years he was keeping us out of war, but, we finally had to go to war anyway.

JOHNSON: Was your dad for intervention before that time?

McCOLM: He was for intervention just as soon as the Kaiser started to move, and of course, Teddy Roosevelt was too.

JOHNSON: Was your dad still living in 1937 and '38?

McCOLM: Yes, he lived until about 1960.

JOHNSON: So he saw World War II as well. You were in Utah until when?

McCOLM: Well, what happened was that I stayed on the staff of the Soil Conservation Service and I became acting state soil scientist in about 1939.

JOHNSON: In Utah?

McCOLM: In Utah, and I was holding that job when the Army started to develop their plants in Utah. The first thing I came in touch with was the big ordnance depot they tried to build in North Ogden. They bought a big block of land leading back from the Great Salt Lake, to

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build an ordnance depot. When they got the engineers out on it they found out that the farmers had abandoned it and had been willing to sell it to them because the water table was 18 inches. It was from 18 inches to three feet on the entire area they had bought for an ordnance depot, and they had planned to run railroad cars through it.

JOHNSON: So that would make it kind of spongy ground?

McCOLM: It was a little bit spongy. You couldn't even run a truck on it.

So they came to me to find out what they could do about it since I was the state soils representative.

The state soil scientist was a World War I gassed veteran that couldn't work in the field, so we just left him in the office. I did all the field work. So I looked at it and said, "Well, you're not going to build anything here until you get this drained." They said, "Well, can we drain it?" I said, "I don't know, but you're going to be able to find out, because I want you to run a line from your property clear to the Bear River where it enters Salt Lake. Right to the point where the Bear River enters the Great Salt Lake, you run me a line on that and give me the elevations at that point where it enters the Great Salt Lake and right on back to this land, and I'll tell you whether

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you can drain it or not."

JOHNSON: Was this pipe you mean? Were they going to lay pipe, or tile?

McCOLM: Well, they would have to in order to drain that land. I told them, that's what I need to know. They had all the engineers out there; running that line, and in less than a week they gave me the readings on all the elevations up to that point. I looked at it and I said, "Well, you can drain it all, but you'll need to put down about a seven foot deep line right here. You'll be able to run a seven-foot deep line right through the main part of your property and that will drain into Salt Lake."

So, they did. They had drag lines out running clear to Great Salt Lake. You never saw so many drag lines in your life as they had out there running water down to Great Salt Lake. When they got through, they ran tile lines in, and I showed them how to lay the tile in there. Even the best Army engineers didn't know how to lay tile. I'd shown Kansas farmers how to lay tile back in '28, in training from John Glass.

JOHNSON: Yes, it all adds up. They drained that land and they were able to build...

McCOLM: They drained it all and they were able to build the

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big ordnance depot.

JOHNSON: Was that Tooele?

McCOLM: No, I have another story about Tooele. Out at Tooele I built the camouflage for all the bunkers. I designed the camouflage and the plantings for all the bunkers, and they worked fine until they got a real drought and then they looked greener than the rest of the country.

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McCOLM: Tooele.

JOHNSON: Ammunition?

McCOLM: That was a big ammunition dump up there. There I got a chance to meet the world's greatest hydraulic engineer. Then after my first wife died (1959), while I was in Vietnam, I kept visiting with him and I met his daughter. I married her after...

JOHNSON: This is 1970.

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McCOLM: No, in 1967 I married the daughter of this engineer.

JOHNSON: What's her name?

McCOLM: Her name was Constance Lee. Charlie Lee was called the father of earthquake engineering. Charlie Lee carried a notebook; he was a young man just out of hydraulic engineering and had a degree in hydraulic engineering. He walked all the streets of San Francisco right after the earthquake and made notes on what buildings stood and what buildings didn't. So he developed all the theories in regard to earthquake engineering, and he was the first guy to drive pilings to build buildings on in the United States.

At the ordnance depot, I got in touch with him, because the Army had hired him and sent him out to work with me on camouflaging the depots. Well, that really wasn't his thing, but I had a chance to get acquainted with him.

JOHNSON: Now, what years are we talking about?

McCOLM: That was 1940, along in '40 and '41. See, the Army started a big build-up long before we got into the war.

JOHNSON: But you're still in the Soil Conservation Service.

McCOLM: I'm still in the Soil Conservation Service.

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JOHNSON: You did some work for the Army to prepare the land for these depots and the ordnance depot, and in '41, of course, December, we have Pearl Harbor. You're still a civilian, right?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: And you're still in Utah with the Soil Conservation Service? How long did you stay in that position?

McCOLM: Well, in 1941, you see, Pearl Harbor occurred. In 1942 we were faced with the problem of getting the Japanese out of California in order to protect them. In other words, the state police, the city or state police and everyone else, came to the Government and said, "We cannot protect the Japanese people in California."

JOHNSON: Did they really see them in danger from neighbors?

McCOLM: Yes. They were in danger from the terrorist elements that were building in California as a result of Pearl Harbor.

JOHNSON: Did you know General [Karl] Bendetsen, by the way? He was one of the Army generals in charge of transferring Japanese-Americans.

McCOLM: I knew where he was. I didn't get to meet him. I

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knew Dillon Myer, I knew...

JOHNSON: Dillon Myer?

McCOLM: I knew the fellow that was ahead of Dillon, the one that was in charge before Dillon took over. Dr. Milton Eisenhower.

JOHNSON: What involvement did you have with that Japanese relocation?

McCOLM: Well, as soon as they bought the land, they did exactly the same thing they had done with the ordnance depot.

JOHNSON: This was for the relocation?

McCOLM: The relocation.

JOHNSON: In Utah?

McCOLM: In Utah. They bought all the land west of Deseret, Utah that had been abandoned by the farmers when they couldn't grow sugar beets out there. And even the Mormon Church had a \$350,000 project, and they lost that money. They never lost money in anything except that. They

lost the money because they had based their studies of sugar beets on trials conducted at nearby Oak City, which was a very good sugar beet growing area. But when you got out on the desert, it was too

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cold at night, and the sugar beets were delayed in their growth. They left them in the ground too long, and the sugar beets froze before they could get them into the sugar plant, before they could get high enough sugar content. So they lost that area.

By then they had the alkali so high in that whole area that nobody could grow anything else. They couldn't even get a new stand of alfalfa started.

JOHNSON: Do you know how much acreage or square miles we are talking about?

McCOLM: They bought three thousand acres for the Japanese.

JOHNSON: Three thousand acres for relocation.

McCOLM: For the relocation center.

JOHNSON: And that was near...

McCOLM: West of Deseret, Utah. And so then they asked me to come down and see if you they could grow any crops on any of this land. Well, since I had had a lot of experience with alkali soils by then, I had become quite a specialist in alkali soils. I had experience with the Mormons over irrigating in all kinds of places, and we had to put in drainage and we had to use excess water and we had to do all kinds of things to get production again. But I didn't have time to do

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that at Topaz. I had to go in there and take this alkali ground and grow crops on it immediately with a bunch of people from California that had never seen an alkali field before.

JOHNSON: Topaz, is that the name of the...

McCOLM: That was the name of the relocation center.

JOHNSON: So this was for the Japanese Americans to grow their own crops?

McCOLM: To grow their own food to feed themselves. That was the idea.

JOHNSON: So you...

McCOLM: And the first thing I did when I got down there, I saw them building the center and they were piling up a lot of lumber to burn. I said, "Don't burn any lumber. I'm a conservationist so far as lumber is concerned and these Japanese will find something to build with this, so we don't want to burn any lumber here. Don't even stack it up, just pile it out there and I'll let the

Japanese stack it up when they get here. Don't destroy any materials that you have left over when you finish building this camp." That was the contractors out there.

It was an interesting time for any contractor,

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too, because the contractors had to work with local farmers, working as carpenters that had never seen a carpenter hammer in their life. So that's the way that Topaz was built. We had a chief carpenter, and I got to attend the big going-away celebration. The chief carpenter was the big "kenacky" from Hawaii; he was a tremendously efficient carpenter and he had all his crews buffaloed. They'd just work for him like tigers. He had to teach every one of them how to use a hammer and a saw, but he succeeded in getting the center built real quick.

When they had the final meeting there at Topaz, they asked him to make a speech. He got up and said, "You know, when I came in here Topaz was a ghost town. We had 300 pairs of overalls walking around, and there wasn't a carpenter in any of them."

JOHNSON: What a change.

McCOLM: Yes. But Topaz got built, and I was there before they ever moved the Japanese in there. I was looking it all over and I was running a soil survey on it, trying to decide if there was any land they could grow anything on. I finally decided that since they had plenty of water, that we would grow anything they needed to grow out there, but I would have to teach the Japanese how to do it. Everybody assumed that we were

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bringing in people that knew all about how to grow crops. Well, when we brought them in we found that we had only 200 out of the 8,000 that had ever lived on a farm.

JOHNSON: So they weren't all truck farmers, were they?

McCOLM: Well, we had about a dozen or two. We had a few landscape gardeners, and we had quite a few greenhouse men. The minute the greenhouse men landed, they wanted to build a greenhouse and grow the plants for us. So, I said, "Great, there's the lumber pile out here. You guys get to work and build yourself your greenhouse, and then I'll show you how to grow these plants." Their response was, "Oh, no, we know how to grow the plants. We're all professional greenhouse men. We know how to grow the plants." Well, the trouble was that what they didn't know about the greenhouse was we had to irrigate that greenhouse with well water, not the good water used to irrigate the fields, but with water used for the interior of the center, which was 7.6 ph water.

JOHNSON: So you're talking about alkaline...

McCOLM: Alkaline water. High alkaline water. The doctors passed it okay. It was suitable for human consumption. Anyway, this was the water they were going to irrigate

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with, to grow their plants.

I let them build the whole thing. To build flats we had the Army bring in all the ammunition boxes they could find; we cut the ammunition boxes in half and made flats. I had a lot of experience growing greenhouse crops because as soon as I got my high school diploma, I rented a 300-foot greenhouse at Emporia. It was the only greenhouse in town. I had been working part time for this greenhouse man, so I rented the house when he decided to leave. In 1928 and '29 I grew three million vegetable plants. I had a half acre of cold frames, and I had all Mexican kid labor because they couldn't work for the railroad. Their dads all worked for the railroad and the kids worked for me. I learned quite a bit of Spanish but I didn't use it at all. I insisted on them learning English. But anyway that was another story.

I knew how to grow vegetable plants in a greenhouse and I also knew how to grow vegetable plants with 7.6 ph water. Well, the first crop of plants in that greenhouse all withered up and died for the Japanese. After that was the first time they would let me in the greenhouse; well, they'd let me walk through before, you know, but this was the first time I could tell them anything. In other words, here were the best professional greenhouse men in the United States, and

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I, being a soil scientist out there, they didn't know I had had any greenhouse experience at all. They weren't about to let me run the greenhouse. Their first planting came up and grew just real well for about two weeks, and then all withered over and died. Then they said, "Well we're going to have to bring in other water; we can't grow anything with this water." And I said, "Now, look, you can grow anything you want to with this water and I'll show you how to do it. You use the same flats and I'll show you how to do it."

They had some plants that had just come up, some later plants that had just come up. So I took their sprinkler off the hose and I started walking through the greenhouse and I filled every box clear full of water, at least an inch over the top of the plants that they had there. Well, this water had to drain down through the soil they had in the box, and we ended up growing all their plants at 7.6 ph, because we didn't allow any salt to accumulate due to evaporation in the boxes.

JOHNSON: That's what the problem was.

McCOLM: See why that solved the problem?

JOHNSON: So, it was the accumulation of alkali on top.

McCOLM: It was the salt. All one had to do was wait two

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weeks until this accumulation of salt on the surface of those boxes killed the plants; by then it was 8.5.

JOHNSON: Did you notice any resentment by the Japanese-Americans over their fate, over their being forced to move to these camps?

McCOLM: Oh, that resentment came later. The resentment all came later. At the time they were all very glad to get out of California.

JOHNSON: They did perceive a threat to their safety while they were in California?

McCOLM: Yes, they knew exactly why they were there at the time, and they also knew what the plan was. The plan was to allow them a chance to relocate in any other part of the United States they wanted to go to, just as quickly as arrangements could be made for them to do it. Two weeks after we got to the relocation center, my wife had already made arrangements for one family to go to Minneapolis and be sponsored by her family. They went to Minneapolis and they all made great grades and they all became very successful in Minneapolis. I sent another big group to Minneapolis that helped form the Chung King food company. They couldn't call it Japanese, so they became a Chinese organization.

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JOHNSON: But it was Japanese-founded and Japanese-operated?

McCOLM: Well, I don't know what the origin of it was, but our Japanese went up there to work, and also to Seabrook Farm in New Jersey. My best man, I hated to lose him, one of the best Japanese helpers I had went to Seabrook Farm.

My very best young man that showed the greatest ability with vegetable crops was a 15 year old by the name of Bob Sakata. Bob Sakata became my right-hand man. The head man that I had was T. Hase. Hase owned about 1,100 acres around San Jose, and he had been a tenant farmer in Japan. We may have had some Japanese in the center that had been landlords in Japan, but they showed no interest in the Topaz farm.

JOHNSON: They're absentee landlords?

McCOLM: They're all absentee landowners. That's the reason the land reform program succeeded in Japan, tenant farmers were experience farm operators.

JOHNSON: Did this acquaint you then with some of the Japanese methods of farming?

McCOLM: Yes. And another thing I found out from the Japanese farmers, when we started looking through the

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seed catalog they would say, "Now, this is very good to sell, no good to eat. We don't want to grow that." So they picked out of the seed catalog only those varieties that were good to eat. They rejected the varieties they grew for market, eggplant, was a good example.

JOHNSON: What would sell would be good for somebody else to eat, but not for them.

McCOLM: They grow it for somebody else to eat, but they didn't eat that themselves. So I learned a lot about what would be found in Japan when our troops got to Japan, what their attitude would be if we tried to help them by bringing in our seed. That wasn't going to go at all. So I learned a lot about that right at the relocation center.

JOHNSON: How long were you involved with that kind of thing.

McCOLM: Well, almost two years.

JOHNSON: '42 to '44.

McCOLM: To the spring of '44. In '42 we grew a small crop.

JOHNSON: That was the first crop.

McCOLM: The first year. In '43 they grew a tremendous

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crop.

JOHNSON: Was this all greenhouse, or would they grow outside too.

McCOLM: Not just greenhouse. I showed them how to grow it in the field, too. They had pretty good water in the field. We took advantage of the fact that they had good water from the Seviere River in the field, reasonable ph, down to 7 or just a little over. It was good water. By using good water and using a technology that would allow all of the alkali to go to the top of the ridge, we could grow the plants along the side. You see, instead of building little furrows like they have in California and little ridges and growing the crop on top like they do in Salinas, we had great big ridges...

JOHNSON: Like terraces?

McCOLM: Like terraces, almost looked like a Kansas terrace.

JOHNSON: How about the Japanese, didn't they have a lot of terrace farming?

McCOLM: They knew all about terrace farming, but we had absolutely level land at Topaz. We had absolutely level, flat land, and what we did was make great big berms there and run the water in the middle; then plant

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the plants at the level of the water in the furrow, and make the alkali go up to the top of the furrow.

JOHNSON: By capillary action.

McCOLM: By capillary action. We had fields of cantaloupes with all the cantaloupes laying up in that alkali. You'd pick one up and dust the alkali off of it, and it was a great cantaloupe.

JOHNSON: The roots were down below the alkali.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: The roots were actually down below.

McCOLM: The roots were all down in good growing condition furnished by the change [in alkaline levels] that the water was able to make in that given year. We changed the ph of the soil in the root zone every year.

JOHNSON: Just by the way you furrowed the soil?

McCOLM: The way we furrowed the fields.

JOHNSON: And then using capillary action to move the alkali up.

McCOLM: To move the alkali up. You see, I wasn't caring about who farmed it after I left. I was there to grow crops for the Japanese and help the Japanese grow all

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they could eat.

JOHNSON: You still worked for the Soil Conservation Service, or had they transferred you...

McCOLM: No, I was transferred to the War Relocation Authority.

JOHNSON: So, you're with the War Relocation Authority, in '42?

McCOLM: In '42, '43, until the spring of '44.

JOHNSON: Who was your immediate boss then in the War Relocation Authority? Who did you report to?

McCOLM: Roscoe Bell. He was the politician of the group.

JOHNSON: So in the spring of '44...

McCOLM: In the spring of '44 I got a telephone call from the Navy Department. They said, "Would you like to have a commission in the Navy? We're able to offer you a Junior JG commission as a lieutenant in the Navy, for a special assignment?" They didn't say Japan, they never mentioned the word Japan. They didn't want to mention Japan.

JOHNSON: So you got a call from where?

McCOLM: Apparently it was from Washington. I never knew.

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I never knew where it came from. They just asked a question and I said, "Yes." So the next thing I knew I had the forms to fill out. They sent me all the forms to apply for a Navy commission. I applied and immediately got the commission approved and was sent to the finest place to learn about the Navy in the world, and that was Tucson, Arizona.

JOHNSON: Where were you living during this time?

McCOLM: I was living at Topaz.

JOHNSON: With your family.

McCOLM: With the family.

JOHNSON: In Government housing probably.

McCOLM: In Government housing.

JOHNSON: So now you're going to go to Tucson.

McCOLM: Well, my wife couldn't be in Tucson. I took her back to my parents in Kansas, and got my daughter started fishing for catfish in the Allen Creek, so she'd be...

JOHNSON: What's her name, by the way?

McCOLM: Carol. Carol McColm.

JOHNSON: And so now you immediately got a commission?

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McCOLM: I had a commission and was sent...

JOHNSON: What was the grade?

McCOLM: A lieutenant junior grade (jg) and had to report to Beardown. That is the big gymnasium on the campus of the University of Arizona. All 1200 of us were living on the gymnasium floor while we took basic officer training in the Navy. That was in 1944.

And just as soon as that was completed, I was sent, during the early fall of 1944, to the Navy Military Government School at Princeton University.

JOHNSON: In New Jersey.

McCOLM: In New Jersey. My wife could go along there but she couldn't live on campus, so she spent a miserable winter season. That was while I was at Princeton, barracked on the campus. I graduated with all these so-called sociologists and every other specialty you could imagine they had assembled to learn how to do military government.

JOHNSON: Okay. What outfit was this?

McCOLM: That was the Navy Military Government School at Princeton University. All the records of that have been transferred back to the Navy, so that Princeton doesn't have any records left of our...

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JOHNSON: They're in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.?

McCOLM: Well, somewhere.

JOHNSON: With the records of the Navy.

McCOLM: Yes, they're with the Navy records.

I think the statement was that out of a class of 200 and some, I ranked 11th in grades and I would have been probably one or two, except that I had the wrong answer on the final exam. They said, "When this war is over, do you think they'll make the same mistake they made before the end of the World War, that they'll go in and subdivide Germany or will we know better?" The answer was that we were supposed to know better, and I said, "No, we'll do the same thing." That's exactly what they did; it was the same thing.

JOHNSON: Were they referring to the division of Germany into zones?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, when was it you took this final exam?

McCOLM: Along about Christmas time in 1944.

JOHNSON: So we already knew about the zones that were to be established in Germany, the division?

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McCOLM: No, that hadn't come yet. It was at Yalta when that happened.

JOHNSON: So that was still in the future.

McCOLM: I was right, and the head that was teaching this was wrong. But it hurt my grade.

JOHNSON: Which raises a question. Do you know the name Major General John Hildring?

McCOLM: Yes, Hildring was the guy that put together the whole Military Government unit proposition. He was the guy that established the Charlotte School and he...

JOHNSON: That's the school in Charlotte, Virginia.

McCOLM: For the Army. The Navy was at Princeton.

JOHNSON: Okay.

McCOLM: All of us in Charlotte and from Princeton were sent to the Presidio in Monterey. From there we were to be transferred to Japan when the war was over. We were sent out there, to the Presidio, ostensibly to study Japanese.

JOHNSON: After you finished at Princeton, you were sent out to the Presidio.

McCOLM: To study Japanese. At the Presidio they were

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forming teams. In other words, this was the first detailed pre-planned operation the United States ever did in connection with Military Government. It was a highly planned operation.

Theoretically we were going to study Japanese, right up to the time we went to Japan. All of the teams that were supposed to go to each of the prefectures were formed there. We had our agricultural officers, we had a fisheries officer (if it was a coastal area), we had an economics officer, and we had a courts officer, and a legal officer. We had a whole team that was supposed to go into Japan and go to a certain prefecture.

Now, when MacArthur finally set it up, he used a lot of these people, but he spread around a different kind of organization than we were planning. But a lot of those people did get sent to the same place they were trained for.

JOHNSON: What was the date? When were you sent to the Presidio?

McCOLM: I've got copies of my orders here. You could make copies.

JOHNSON: You're talking about early '45?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Okay. I'm going to mention some things from a

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book by Theodore Cohen, Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal (edited by Herbert Passin; New York: The Free Press, 1987).

McCOLM: Theodore Cohen, and [Wolf] Ladejinsky came in to the Presidio almost the same day I left the Presidio. Wolf Ladejinsky was sent in to take my place.

JOHNSON: Okay.

McCOLM: That's where he comes in. He was sent in to take my place at the Presidio in Monterey.

JOHNSON: Does the name Leo Pasvolsky ring any bells with you?

McCOLM: No.

JOHNSON: How about Hugh Borton?

McCOLM: Hugh Borton was one of the officers that did this preplanning. You see, when we got to the Presidio in Monterey in the spring of 1945, all of the basic policy in regard to what was going to happen to Military Government when we got to Japan had already been decided. It had to have been decided before I was ever selected, because the day I got there, they called me in and they said, "You're not going to study any Japanese here. Your primary official job is [to be] chief of agriculture of the joint Army-Navy staff

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preparing for the occupation of Japan. Your unofficial job is chief of agriculture on the joint Army-Navy planning staff for the invasion and the occupation of Japan. You have two hats, in other words. You're not going to study Japanese because this second job is going to take all your time. In fact, that is the thing you're going to do first, and you're going to be introduced to all of these Ag men as their chief of agriculture. You can use all of these people." They said, "You can use all of these people that you need and send them on any assignment that you want to send them on, but they're not to be told anything about the purpose of it, other than a training exercise for the Military Government of Japan."

JOHNSON: Was this under the War Department or the State Department?

McCOLM: Under the War Department. You see, we're at the Presidio at Monterey.

JOHNSON: Was this under the Military Government division?

McCOLM: Under the Military Government Division, under Hildring. It was Hildring's organization, but we didn't have a general yet. We got a general later. When all the fun was over we got a general. But Colonel Dillard was head of our particular unit at the

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time I first got there.

JOHNSON: Cohen says on page 22, that there was a Military Government Division in the Provost Marshal Section of the War Department, but it did not have the confidence of President

Roosevelt, because apparently it wasn't staffed with New Dealers. So Roosevelt put Paul Appleby, from the Agriculture Department into the State Department to report only to the Secretary of State."

McCOLM: Do you know who Paul Appleby was? I can show you some letters. He was a friend of mine.

JOHNSON: When did you first meet Paul Appleby? How did you know him?

McCOLM: Well, only through correspondence, but I knew him in the Department of Agriculture in the '30s. He was interested in this crop weather business I was doing.

JOHNSON: So he was a very competent...

McCOLM: Along with Henry Wallace, who wrote articles about me. I can show you some of those. So Appleby and Wallace and another character, Isaiah Bowman, also got mixed up in that preplanning. This preplanning was the basis. This preplanning for the occupation of Japan started long before I was ever recruited, and I started to put these things together to know what actually

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happened.

JOHNSON: Now, Cohen says for instance [p. 25], that Hildring organized a committee on Civil Affairs Studies, to include representatives from State, War and Navy Departments, the OSS, the Treasury and Agriculture Departments, and the FEA [Foreign Economic Administration], and they were to review the guides. I see you have a guide here.

McCOLM: I suspected that the fellow that wrote this had had a lot of training in Russian or might be a Russian. I suspected it, because he was able to translate Russian literature.

JOHNSON: Oh, Ladejinsky?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: He was an immigrant, I think, from Russia.

McCOLM: Well, I found out all about him later, but he wrote this manual.

JOHNSON: It is *Army Service Forces Manual M354-7*, titled *Civil Affairs Handbook: Japan; Section 7, Agriculture*. Headquarters Army Service Forces, April 1, 1944. So this was already available. [This document is on file in the Truman Library's Miscellaneous Historical Documents Collection, Item #698.]

McCOLM: This was handed to me as my text book to teach the course in agriculture of Japan.

JOHNSON: At what point?

McCOLM: At the Presidio, Monterey. The very day I got there.

JOHNSON: So it was in January of '45 you were given this manual.

McCOLM: Yes, in January '45 I received copies. We didn't have too many of them, but we had enough that I could pass them out. For example, you can see in the back, where reference material is listed, I've got certain things marked CL?

JOHNSON: Yes.

McCOLM: Well, I sent a fellow up to the California Library to go through all the literature available in the State of California. He went through the California Library and marked anything that was available for reading matter that we could send people to study. So when you see CL, that's California Library.

JOHNSON: I see. So these things you could go to the library and read.

McCOLM: We could go to the library and read it ourselves.

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JOHNSON: There in San Francisco?

McCOLM: In Berkeley. That was the library in Berkeley, not in Davis. See, this fellow initialed it; he put in what it was he found. Now, one suspicious thing about it was he didn't find a single thing that Wolf Ladejinsky had used himself for reference, and we didn't find a single thing that he had written in the library there.

JOHNSON: That Ladejinsky had written?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: He had written U.S. Department of Agriculture bulletins, I guess.

McCOLM: Yes. So he, naturally, was using his own material.

JOHNSON: I think he did his masters at Columbia University.

McCOLM: Yes, and I really think that from the way he handles this, and the things he mentions in this, that probably some of his relatives were killed in the [Bolshevik] revolution as landlords. [See research paper by Steven Schwartzberg, "Wolf Ladejinsky, The Japan Hands and the Political Background of the Japanese Land Reform," in Truman Library MHDC #698.]

JOHNSON: That could be, yes.

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McCOLM: I think that's why he was so anxious...

JOHNSON: Did you find that a well-done manual, a helpful manual?

McCOLM: This was the most complete, probably the best manual that was available to us. This is the best of the Hildring manuals as far as I was ever able to determine.

There is another one that was pretty good because the author of that was right there on the staff. And that was written on fisheries and it was written by a guy that owned fish canneries in Japan, and he was a member of our staff.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

McCOLM: I've been trying to remember that. You see, I didn't meet these people except when they had staff meetings.

JOHNSON: Do you have any idea how many people received this manual, or how many American agricultural specialists received this?

McCOLM: I had one for myself, and I may have had a half a dozen of them, but I don't think I had enough for the whole 72 officers. But every one of them had to read it.

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JOHNSON: Were there 72 officers that were going to be involved in agriculture...

McCOLM: In Japan.

JOHNSON: In the occupation.

McCOLM: In the occupation. They were mostly Army officers, but I had charge of them.

JOHNSON: Okay, so you were being trained to help with the occupation of Japan, but you also apparently got involved in some of the planning for the invasion of Japan.

McCOLM: Well, we called ourselves the Working Group of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, because we worked on details. All of the policies had already been determined. We had absolutely nothing to do with policy, except that one officer, Colonel Hartman, said, "We will do anything we can to work out the land reform program."

JOHNSON: Who initiated that? Who said that?

McCOLM: Well, that was Colonel Hartman. And then also...

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

McCOLM: William A. I've got a letter or two from him I can give you. Colonel Hartman before the war was the head economist at Wisconsin University. He was the guy that

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wrote the Wisconsin zoning laws. So he had a little experience with law. During the war he was involved in some of the invasions over there, for a short period of time, he was the Governor of occupied Italy. So he came out with some Military Government experience, and he became chief of the economics section of Military Government.

JOHNSON: For Japan.

McCOLM: For Japan. I actually held that job myself for about six weeks after they transferred Colonel Hartman out, and I never did find out where they sent him. But I found him after the war. After the war he became Assistant Chief of the Department of Agricultural Economics in Washington. And my other boss there, Dr. Nichols, Dr. John R. Nichols, became head of the Indian Bureau. So we had some pretty heavyweight people.

JOHNSON: Do you remember a Lieutenant Colonel [Charles E.] Kades? He was apparently Assistant Executive Officer for Hildring, for General Hildring.

McCOLM: He wasn't at the Presidio that I know of.

JOHNSON: Do you remember this document JCS-1380/15?

McCOLM: 1380/15 was the one that was prepared as a kind of an overall statement of policy.

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JOHNSON: But it also had details in it. It was a rather lengthy document, according to Cohen. According to him, every paragraph called for some kind of a program to implement.

McCOLM: Well, you know, we just had our own. I just worked with...

JOHNSON: Did you have input into that JCS directive?

McCOLM: Everything we did at the Presidio, Monterey, whether it was planning invasions, or planning the occupation, everything we did there got into the orders that went to MacArthur.

JOHNSON: So you wrote up reports, or what would you call these, what you had to prepare? What kind of documents were they?

McCOLM: Well, they were called planning recommendations. We just made planning recommendations. They were all top secret -- everything that went out of there.

Now, I can go back and give you a little background on it. When I reported there, the first thing they told me about my assignment was, so far as the planning is concerned, that they had decided sometime apparently in 1944, that we would not invade Japan with any troops in the field.

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JOHNSON: Now, who told you that?

McCOLM: That was Colonel Hartman and that group. I've forgotten who all was present, but it was a very small group. The planning staff was just a small group at the Presidio. I don't remember whether there were 30 or 40 officers, but it was a very small staff, that is, out of the whole 900 that were there that studied Japanese.

JOHNSON: But when you enlisted, didn't they bring these issues up at Princeton, when you were there at Princeton?

McCOLM: At Princeton, we were just studying all of the background of Military Government.

JOHNSON: You were just studying the background. But when you got to Presidio you were told that they wanted to invade at some time other than when the crops were in the field?

McCOLM: That's right. They said that we cannot invade Japan with any crops in the field. That has been determined. In other words, apparently it was determined before I was recruited because of the fact that...

JOHNSON: It had already been made a policy statement.

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McCOLM: Apparently it was, because I don't find anything. I've been searching for a lot of material that would lead up to my time, and also some of the material that we created at the Presidio. The Army has always been closed-mouthed about the intelligence work that's been done at the Presidio in Monterey. They've tried to hide, as far as I can determine, what they were doing -- the work they were doing there from everybody including the President and the Senate and the House of Representatives. The intelligence work that was carried on at the Presidio in Monterey is still secret.

JOHNSON: What was the reason for the decision on when to invade?

McCOLM: They had three very definite reasons for not wanting to invade Japan with any crops in the field. They told me, first, that the most important was the military reason. They said that Japan was a rice-growing country and they planned to bring 1400 tanks ashore in the first wave. And flat rice land, with water on it, would slow both the troops and the tanks; it would be a hazard to military operations. So they needed to know not only the crops but the bearing power of all of the soils of all the coastal areas of Japan. There also was the fact that the rice period coincided with the rainfall period. And the rainfall periods of

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Japan created too much flow in many of the streams for tanks to cross safely.

During the dry season they could cross safely, but they couldn't cross safely during the wet season. They had to be able to cross because the only bridges that would support the tank in Japan were on the main roads.

You see, a lot of thinking went into this planning.

JOHNSON: You're talking mainly about Kyushu, I suppose, as the first invasion objective.

McCOLM: Yes. You see, we decided on Kyushu, and there was a number of reasons for deciding on that. You see, it's a separate island, and we could consolidate everything there in a hurry. It's rice is grown on benches, and they also grow barley in the wintertime. So we planned to invade right when they were plowing the ground for the barley.

JOHNSON: Which would be...

McCOLM: I gave them the 30th of October as the date. My documents, if you can ever find them, says October 30th as the recommended date for the invasion of Japan.

JOHNSON: Do you think you originated that date?

McCOLM: Well, they've used the 1st of November as the date.

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The "Top Secret" invasion plan "Olympic" used that date. They made all of the plans based on that date. We knew by the 4th of July that the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington had accepted the recommendation I'd made at CASA.

JOHNSON: Because see, a lot of documentation that I've seen just refers to the "earliest practicable date." And what made that date practicable was, as you say, that was after the fields had been drained -- the rice fields had been drained of water?

McCOLM: The rice fields are all drained, they're all dry enough to support a tank.

JOHNSON: Right. And it's just before the barley...

McCOLM: Before they plant the barley.

JOHNSON: Okay, what would have been the problem to invade after they planted the barley, what would have happened?

McCOLM: Well, you're getting into crops again.

JOHNSON: Then you would destroy the barley crop.

McCOLM: You'd be destroying the barley crop.

JOHNSON: And you didn't want to do that, for what reason?

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McCOLM: Well, there were two other reasons for not wanting to destroy crops. Japan had been using food from a lot of conquered countries as part of their foodstuffs to keep the Army and the civilian population going. There was no visible way they could do that without importing food. We were going to create a "friendly invasion." In other words, the whole idea of a "scorched earth" invasion was out. That had been ruled out. We were not a scorched earth people, we were going in to make friends with the Japanese and they told me at CASA that we had to make friends with the Japanese in order to be able to stay there with a small force for our Military Government. We had to have a friendly occupation.

JOHNSON: You mentioned CASA, what is it?

McCOLM: Civil Affairs Staging Area.

JOHNSON: That's at the Presidio.

McCOLM: That was the Presidio group. There were 900 of us there training, learning Japanese ostensibly, and learning all of that and being formed into all of these teams to go to Japan; an ag man, an economist and everybody, were being formed into teams. And so the planning staff was just a little group of us. I never did know; I never did meet all of them.

JOHNSON: But you were part of that.

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McCOLM: I was part of them. And everything we did was Top Secret.

JOHNSON: And it went to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

McCOLM: It went right to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington [D.C.].

JOHNSON: You already had orders, the JCS directive that said no scorched earth policy?

McCOLM: That was the policy established apparently by the old "Japanese hands," and I really think that [Eugene] Dooman and I think [Joseph] Grew, I think they had a lot to do with that.

JOHNSON: There was a "soft line"?

McCOLM: There was a soft line, including the idea of retaining the Emperor and retaining the stability and the concept that we were going to go in and take control of the Japanese Government. We were not going to go in and destroy the Japanese Government, or try to create anything else. That was the Russian plan, to destroy the government. The Russians planned to come in and create a Communist Government, and they had a...

JOHNSON: Yes, but they weren't too well received, some of those rather soft line policies, were they, by the

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U.S.?

McCOLM: Well that was why it was so secret. We had a lot of opposition to that line. And we even had a problem with our own officers at the Presidio over the fact that the Russians were planning to invade the same time we were, because that had been arranged by Roosevelt at Yalta.

JOHNSON: In February 1945, at Yalta, there was an agreement that the Russians would invade within 90 days of the surrender of Germany. Within 90 days of the surrender of Germany they would start a second front, or they would invade Japan, Japanese territory, right?

McCOLM: Well, that was the general idea, but the final deal with Russia was that they would invade the same time we did. In other words, that was the general idea that we had. I don't think Truman ever trusted Stalin because Stalin was moving much more rapidly, and was able to get his troops in a position to invade Japan much more rapidly than the plan called for.

JOHNSON: Was your plan based on the idea that there would be a Russian invasion through Manchuria?

McCOLM: To Hokkaido, through Manchuria, and come down from the north. We would come in from Kyushu, and our worry was that the Russians would get to Tokyo first and get

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the rebellion organized.

JOHNSON: Like they got into Berlin.

McCOLM: Yes. They had it set up, they had the people, and that was most disturbing to me, and I understand also to Truman. Everything I knew about Truman was hearsay. See, I had no direct contact with him, so everything I can tell you that people said about Truman's ideas or Truman's theory was all hearsay; no real historic value as far as what I see. But Truman was not too pleased with Roosevelt's giving Eastern Europe to Russia.

JOHNSON: Of course, Churchill was involved in that too.

McCOLM: Churchill was involved, and we regarded Harry Hopkins as a Russian agent.

JOHNSON: Who did?

McCOLM: Our staff.

JOHNSON: Harry Hopkins, you thought was an appeaser of Stalin?

McCOLM: Yes. We regarded him just as good as a Russian agent. He didn't have to be one, but he was helping Russia more...

JOHNSON: So there was a strongly anti-Soviet mood in your planning staff?

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McCOLM: Very definite, from the day I got there. Because we had to plan it after Yalta, and after Yalta we had some officers on our staff that had been right in the forefront of the taking of those southern European countries, and they were really upset over the fact that the Russians were getting control of them.

JOHNSON: They were forcing collectivization, for instance, in agriculture.

McCOLM: Yes, everything was to be set up that way.

JOHNSON: You were concerned there would be collectivized agriculture in Japan if the Russians took...

McCOLM: They'd already had it planned, because we had intelligence information. We even had the names of some of the leaders of the tenant farmers organization in Japan, that had been taken to Russia. This was while Russia wasn't at war with Japan. They were trained and told how to take all these local associations and form them into communes. Do you know, we were discussing who we should interrogate and who we should detain. There are two words for that. One, we'd interrogate a lot of people that had been involved with this so-called Russian take-over in Japan, and we had made...

JOHNSON: Your planning staff now...

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McCOLM: The planning staff.

JOHNSON: You interrogated...

McCOLM: No, we had no way. You see, we were planning what we were going to do when we got to Japan. In other words, we had to decide how extensive this interrogation program would be, and how extensive the detention program would be, for war criminals and all that kind of stuff. There was the whole Zaibatsu set-up. The colonel was just knee-deep in Zaibatsu.

JOHNSON: Big cartels.

McCOLM: The big cartels. He was trying to figure out who the leaders were and which leaders would be useful leaders in developing the postwar economy of Japan, and which ones were too closely associated with the old militarist war element. And heck, we had all kinds of intelligence information and that's why I want to go to this meeting. There's a meeting in Washington on the 11th and 12th...

JOHNSON: Concerning the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) and its history.

McCOLM: An OSS meeting. I can ask them a lot of questions. I don't know whether I'll get any answers or not.

JOHNSON: Did you have the names of leaders of agriculture

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in Japan, so that you might interrogate them?

McCOLM: Yes, I did. Well, we were going to interrogate them but we were not going to detain them. I had the theory, based upon my experience with the Japanese in California, that all in the world these people wanted -- and that's the reason these people came to California -- was to own land. That all we had to do was to have a land reform program, and that's why my original statement was that that should be one of the first proclamations. I wrote it as a memo to Truman, or to his Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington. I wrote what should be in that memo, explaining the land reform program and giving the reasons for immediate release of that information, that we were going to have a land reform program.

JOHNSON: So you wrote a memo on this and it went through your planning staff.

McCOLM: The planning staff in Washington [D.C.].

JOHNSON: Went through Hartman?

McCOLM: Went through Hartman.

JOHNSON: To the planning staff of the JCS.

McCOLM: I'll tell you one thing that I can recognize that showed up in literature, even MacArthur's literature,

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and that was a statement I made in that the purpose of this program is to make Capitalists out of every Japanese farmer.

JOHNSON: Family farmers.

McCOLM: In other words, there's no use creating a farm unit unless you make it a sound economic unit. Otherwise, the whole program will deteriorate to the point where the Communists can take it over. That will happen unless you create sound economic units. That was the basic theory.

JOHNSON: Right. How about this statement of Cohen. Cohen says that in September 1945 he was furnished with a draft of the economic section of the draft JCS Directive 1380/15, which we have mentioned. It was in a secure room. I mean it was really highly secret. One provision called

for the breakup of "large landed estates." Cohen claims that there were no large landed estates in Japan, but there was a landlord class made up of 900,000 small rentier landowners. What is the difference between, let's say, large landed estates and these so-called small rentier landowners?

McCOLM: Well, you see, we had two classes of landlords that we studied in connection with the occupation. We had the very large landowners, and that included the Hommas

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and the Yamaguchis. I had a whole list of them that had over, you know, 1500 or 2000 acres or more, of land that they owned. We had a list of all these people.

JOHNSON: Were these, by the way, corporations?

McCOLM: No, they weren't corporations. They were just big family landowner groups. They didn't have any corporate farming.

JOHNSON: Yes, but were some of the industrialists also big landowners?

McCOLM: Not very many. There were a few that were joint.

JOHNSON: They lived out on the land.

McCOLM: They lived in the village usually. And they owned all the village or almost all; some of them did. They had all these tenant farmers, and the reason that I knew this program could succeed and would succeed was the fact that every farmer in Japan was a private operator of his farm business, not a peon.

JOHNSON: He was a renter though, a tenant.

McCOLM: He was a renter. He was a tenant.

JOHNSON: And he paid...

McCOLM: He paid the landlord in rice usually. Usually paid

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half his crop.

JOHNSON: In kind, I guess, rather than in cash.

McCOLM: Rather than in cash.

JOHNSON: Like a sharecropper.

McCOLM: He was a sharecropper in every sense of the word.

JOHNSON: Just like many southern farmers, especially the Black farmers who were sharecroppers.

McCOLM: A lot of them had to leave Japan and go to California.

JOHNSON: Okay. So they didn't have ownership.

McCOLM: Didn't have any ownership and he wanted to own the land. We had another fairly sizeable group that owned a little bit of land, what they had been able to scrape up. They owned a little bit of land, but they couldn't make a living on it so they rented a little bit more from the landlord. So those were another class and those we weren't too much worried about. We weren't too much worried about those people. We were primarily worried about this 70 percent of the farmers that were tenant farmers.

JOHNSON: But no land ownership.

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McCOLM: But no land. Only 16 percent of the rest of the group owned any land.

JOHNSON: Okay. These 900,000 so-called rentier landowners; I wonder if those were the ones that owned a little bit of land but not enough to make a living on, so they had to rent other land from larger landowners.

McCOLM: You say there's that many landowners?

JOHNSON: Yes, 900,000 small rentier landowners. That's what I'm trying to get defined.

McCOLM: Well, I think he was referring to the people that needed to rent additional land. That's probably what they are referring to. See, all of this material that we developed at CASA, had all fit into the Joint Chief of Staff group...

JOHNSON: So that would be in the records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the reports, and...

McCOLM: A lot of that should be; that's what I'm trying to find.

JOHNSON: So that would have ended up in the records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

McCOLM: We were sending it to the President, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

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JOHNSON: And that was all stamped Top Secret, or...

McCOLM: Yes. All stamped Secret, everything. I don't think a single document left the Presidio Monterey that wasn't classified.

JOHNSON: How long were you out there at the Presidio?

McCOLM: From the first of the year, in January, to along in September.

JOHNSON: Oh, it was as late as September.

McCOLM: I left there just about the same time that Cohen and Ladejinsky arrived, because Ladejinsky took my place at the Presidio. He was not a planning officer there. The title I had was Chief of Agriculture for the Training of Officers to be Assigned to Agriculture in Japan. That was his title. And that was my title too.

JOHNSON: How come he replaced you? Why did you leave? What did you do?

McCOLM: That was very simple. I was a Navy officer, and as soon as the Atomic bomb was dropped, Admiral [William] King found out that he was not going to have any authority or any responsibility in connection with the Military Government of Japan.

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JOHNSON: It was going to be in MacArthur's hands.

McCOLM: It was going to be with MacArthur entirely, and anybody sent over there would have to be subordinate to MacArthur. So, since he wasn't going to have any control over this personnel, Admiral King said, "Everybody I have trained in Military Government is needed to govern the islands." I had been scheduled to go into Japan, as part of his staff in Military Government.

JOHNSON: On King's.

McCOLM: Yes, to go into Japan and just jump right into the land reform, but Admiral King said, "No," I was a trained Military Government officer. I had been through Princeton, so I was needed to govern the islands of the Pacific.

JOHNSON: In the trusteeship.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: These trust islands.

McCOLM: So I went out as officer in charge of the civilian government of Ponape Island.

JOHNSON: Okay, so that's when you left the Presidio, and they let Ladejinsky take your place.

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McCOLM: That's when Ladejinsky took my place.

JOHNSON: Before we get into the trusteeships, would you repeat this story about Colonel Hartman?

McCOLM: Colonel Hartman, I think, was probably the best economist and the best thinker from the standpoint of overall economics. Colonel Hartman was faced with this problem, that here is the entire Japanese army being demobilized and coming home. Half of them were farmers with no skills. We were going to bring them all back and dump them on an economy that we didn't know at that time what it was going to be. It might be in utter chaos, due to the fact that we had invaded. Even though we weren't scorched earth, we might still create utter chaos in Japan. The Japanese knew it at the time, and even with all our noble ideas, we still had to face the economic realities of the situation into which we were going to be bringing our Military Government. All these people needed to be fed, and they needed to be taken care of.

Then they need to be put back to work. So the fast revival of the Japanese economy was a primary goal of Colonel Hartman. That was why he liked my idea of having local committees sell all the land, very quickly; in other words, put a two-year limit on it and get all of the land transferred and all of the money in

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the bonds and get it all available for economic development within a very short period of time.

JOHNSON: Now, this absentee landlord...

McCOLM: All the land owned by absentee landlords would be sold, and the Japanese Government was going to have to pass this law because we weren't going to decree land reform and start anything. It had to be done by the Japanese. So, since they were going to be totally responsible for it, then it had to be something that was appealing enough to their knowledge of the situation at the end of the war that they would vote it in. It had to be passed as a law. There was a number of little interesting things about it that caused me to put my tongue into my cheek in regard to the plans part. For example, I told them that there would be a big question about what the land was worth, and the surest way to tell what the land was worth was what the landlords had paid in taxes on that particular piece of land prior to 1941, over a period of years. Go back and study that. You know, they actually did that? Yes, they actually used that as a criteria.

JOHNSON: You were mentioning these three. Was it three reasons, or three factors?

McCOLM: There were three basic reasons. First, there was

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the military. We needed to invade a dry country that we could move fast in, with no crops in the field to interfere. The second was that we didn't want to destroy any food supplies that might be needed, and that we might have to use shipping to replace. The third was that the entire civil defense program in the rural area of Japan would be all organized on the basis of protecting the crops. In other words, everybody in the village was supposed to go to an assigned field and meet the Americans and try to protect the crops in that field.

JOHNSON: You mentioned too that in regard to Hartman's recommendations, there was a question of who pays. The landlords had to be convinced that their money would be better invested in industry. Wasn't that one of the ideas?

McCOLM: That was the key factor. We had to convince them that the money, that they now had in land, could be reclaimed and reinvested. In other words, the land could be sold quick enough so that they could get it into industry without losing it. The program had to go fast so they wouldn't see a big loss in the whole thing, and that then they would be convinced that after it was completed their money would make more money in industry than it ever would in land. They believed

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that. Then there was this traditional thing about being landowners for ten generations or more; in other words, ownership went way back. Some of those families as landlords went back many generations, and they weren't about to change that, other than with an economic incentive.

JOHNSON: The other thing was who's going to pay for it. How was it going to be financed without American money?

McCOLM: Well, the whole idea was that the Japanese government would print the bonds to pay for every bit of that land, and the liquid value of that money would be guaranteed in reclaiming of the bonds. They could use the bonds for legal tender and the United States would guarantee the bonds. Now, we never had to pay a single bond, so far as I know, because the Japanese government held it. We didn't take over a Japanese government that wasn't intact. If we had come in and left the Japanese government in shambles, that would not have been a respected document. But the Japanese...

JOHNSON: Is that the way that the land was redistributed to the ones who worked the land, the tenants, the former tenants? Did they become family farmers this way?

McCOLM: They became family farmers.

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JOHNSON: And that was paid for with these bonds that the Japanese government redeemed.

McCOLM: See, the Japanese government furnished the bonds and paid the landowners. Each tenant farmer had a debt to the government which he was supposed to repay. Then the government, in effect, was holding this land. This mortgage on the farm was used to guarantee the bonds.

JOHNSON: I remember that you said one of the incentives for these landlords not only was that their money be better invested in industry, but that farming would be less profitable because farm products would have to be duty-free, right? They'd have to compete against foreign imports and that would produce less profit than otherwise. Is that what happened? Were farm products duty-free in postwar Japan?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Now, these ideas of Hartman...

McCOLM: Those were all Hartman ideas.

JOHNSON: But didn't Ladejinsky also promote those same ideas?

McCOLM: He didn't have anything to do with that. His contribution was this book that I used as a manual to plan the land reform program. He said in that that

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this program should be initiated immediately after the invasion.

JOHNSON: Was there any communication between Hartman and Ladejinsky that you know of? Do you think that these ideas of Hartman's did somehow get into the land reform program?

McCOLM: Yes, but that was a different...

JOHNSON: That hadn't gone through Ladejinsky?

McCOLM: Ladejinsky had no idea of how it would be paid for. In this manual he says that would be the problem, figuring out how to pay for it. The Government had considered this many years before, but the Government has never had a solution as to how to pay for it. And that's where Hartman's ideas came in.

JOHNSON: Well, what happened to Hartman?

McCOLM: He was an older man at the time, and he's been dead I guess for about 20 years.

JOHNSON: I mean, after the Presidio, you know, after...

McCOLM: First he went to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Atlanta, Georgia, and then he became Assistant Chief of Agricultural Economics in Washington [D.C.].

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JOHNSON: Okay, so he went into a high position in the Government.

McCOLM: Yes, in the Government.

JOHNSON: And you...

McCOLM: He got out of the service sooner than I did.

JOHNSON: You mentioned Admiral King, and I think we might have already recorded this. Admiral King did not want you going to Japan because you would be under General MacArthur.

You would be a Navy man, under orders of General MacArthur, and he didn't want any more Navy people than absolutely necessary to be under MacArthur.

McCOLM: That's right. And he insisted that he had this problem of his own; he needed all of the trained military government men that he had, and that's the reason I was sent to Ponape.

JOHNSON: He needed them where?

McCOLM: In the Pacific to govern the natives on all these islands that the Navy had responsibility for.

JOHNSON: Were these the mandated islands, which were placed under mandate to the Japanese by the League of Nations?

McCOLM: Yes. All of them came under King.

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JOHNSON: Yes, but there were other islands, too, in addition to those that were actually Japanese mandates that were under American control.

McCOLM: Yes. We had all kinds of problems in the Pacific, and I will give you my report that indicates some of the problems we ran into on Ponape. [Copy of letter, George L. McColm to Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, April 8, 1946, concerning Ponape, is in MHDC #698.] But these problems were actually minor compared to what was going on in Japan. They finally got into discussion of land reform in Japan, and Ladejinsky arrived at exactly the right time. He got to Japan in the spring of 1946 ...

JOHNSON: In regard to Ponape, you mentioned to me, off-tape, something about the marriage and divorce laws, and about two Jesuit priests.

McCOLM: Yes, when we got to Ponape, we had been given all kinds of training about problems we'd meet when we got to be civilian governors. It didn't conform to reality very much. When we got there we found that the chief problem that was upsetting all the natives was the fact that the two priests had told them that all of the marriages and divorces granted by the Japanese were null and void, now since the Americans came, and they'd

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all have to go back to their original mates. This was creating havoc all over the islands, and so the first task I had then was to deal with the marriage and divorce code.

JOHNSON: Was that was just for Ponape, or was that...

McCOLM: For Ponape.

JOHNSON: It didn't apply to the other islands?

McCOLM: No, I had no other responsibility at that time except the island of Ponape. It had 5,700 natives at that time. So we solved that problem pretty quick.

JOHNSON: The priests did cooperate?

McCOLM: The priests cooperated. They went into the pulpit the next Sunday after this was promulgated, and told their people exactly what the law was. All of the marriages and all of the divorces were the responsibility of the local chiefs; we had prescribed certain waiting periods, and all of that in regard to failing marriages. We set up the whole framework for the marriage and divorce code for the chiefs to carry out. They were the ones that were responsible. I had no trouble whatsoever with it except one case where the wife of one of the sons of one of the chiefs was suing him for divorce. That case I had to hear because of

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the conflict of interest involved. Otherwise, I heard no cases in regard to marriage and divorce, after writing the marriage and divorce code.

JOHNSON: Were there any disputes over property? Did they have private properties as we know it?

McCOLM: Well, that was another thing that we had. We had some Dutch planters on the island. They didn't own enough land to be any great problem, and they were acting as our interpreters. They helped us out with the whole Military Government thing, so we just kind of left that problem to be solved at a later date by the island government. But we did set up a central government of the Ponape chiefs and they handled the whole thing very well and did a good job.

When I got ready to leave, an old man came in with a petition that had been signed by all of the chiefs. All of the province chiefs had signed the petition asking that I be sent back as their civilian governor. I had to explain to them that in civilian life I was an agricultural specialist and that I had to go back and work for the Civil Service in the same line of work, and I just wasn't available to be governor of one of the islands. After this one old man left, the interpreter said, "Do you know who the old man was?"

I said, "He's the chief of "U" village." "Oh, no,

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that isn't what I meant." He said, "He was a leader of the rebellion that killed the German governors back in 1910."

JOHNSON: That had been a German colony.

McCOLM: It caused me to go into all the records I could find on Ponape and everywhere else, and I wrote a report on the Rebellion of 1910. I've never submitted it to a magazine for publication, but it ought to be published, I think, in some history magazine somewhere.

JOHNSON: Yes.

McCOLM: It's not in very polished form, because I wrote rather hurriedly before I left Ponape.

JOHNSON: It is certainly something most people know nothing about. By the way, you mentioned there were 10,000 Japanese soldiers on that island when you came to occupy it.

McCOLM: And they were all shipped home.

JOHNSON: You had them build new housing units...

McCOLM: They had quite a bit of material left over that had been shipped in from Japan. So, we had them build entirely new quarters for the Military Government people. We had nice, new screened places to live. You

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didn't need any heat to speak of because it was 80 degree average, day and night, for the whole island. We didn't need a lot of heat, but we did need a nice screened place to keep the insects out. They had no malaria on the island.

JOHNSON: No malaria. But you had those snails. You mentioned they imported snails.

McCOLM: We had millions and millions and millions of snails that they had brought in for food. They got away from them, because they had no enemies, and they became a menace to any crops that might be grown on the island.

JOHNSON: Did we have to import food for the islanders then, or how did they feed themselves?

McCOLM: They fed themselves on an awful lot of coconut. They had a lot of coconut. They had all the fish they could eat. In fact, it was very interesting. After I got to checking up on a few things around there, I found that all these boats that had belonged to the Japanese fishermen had all been taken over by the native crews. Certain members of these crews claimed ownership, but these were actually Japanese boats that were actually, by law, they were the property of the United States Government, see, under law.

JOHNSON: Booty I suppose.

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McCOLM: They were all confiscated items. We discussed that with the native government, and I arranged to make a government transfer of property to certain individuals and certain groups. They had their crews and we got ownership approved for each crew. But there was a catch to it. They had to sign contracts to move people, and also to do a certain amount of fishing and provide the fish for the fish market. So we put them all to work, and the only way they could work was under our terms because we furnished the fuel.

JOHNSON: Were these wooden boats or metal boats.

McCOLM: Oh, they were Japanese wooden fishing boats.

JOHNSON: That had gasoline engines.

McCOLM: They had mostly diesel engines.

JOHNSON: So, this was their cheap means of transportation and hauling...

McCOLM: From one part of the island to the other. So we got a pretty good set-up going there. We worked it all out, and...

JOHNSON: They were able to be self-sufficient in food then?

McCOLM: It was an interesting island. There were so many things that you could eat in the way of roots that they

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knew about. They'd survived all during the time when the Japanese didn't feed them very well, either.

JOHNSON: How did the Japanese compare with earlier rule under the Germans?

McCOLM: In a way they got along with the Japanese pretty well, see, a lot better than they did with the Germans. The Germans were too autocratic. The Germans would go out on a road gang with buggy whips to make sure they worked, and so they decided to kill the German governors in 1910. This report I have gives the whole story.

JOHNSON: The Japanese were certainly militaristic and autocratic too.

McCOLM: But they managed to get along, and they were so outnumbered. The local people were so outnumbered when the Japanese came. See, they weren't outnumbered with just a few German governors around. But with 10,000 Japanese on the island, they had all the work they needed, working for the Japanese. The Japanese needed help and so it was a pretty symbiotic society.

JOHNSON: Did the natives show good feelings toward the American governments there?

McCOLM: They liked our group; you see, our group was all

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civilian officers ushered into the Navy. We didn't have a single regular Navy man on the island. We were all civilian military and we didn't have any pomp and ceremony.

JOHNSON: Did they have the idea of independence, though, of complete independence?

McCOLM: Oh, yes, they loved it. The minute we announced that they were going to be completely independent and control their own government, they were ready to take it over.

JOHNSON: When did we tell them that?

McCOLM: Just as soon as I got there.

JOHNSON: But still they would be under Americans' tutelage?

McCOLM: They were under American control, that is from the standpoint of who was in charge of the island; there wasn't any question. We had airplanes flying over the island; they were zooming over the island like we had in the past, about twice a week.

JOHNSON: That didn't bother them, then. As long as they had local village chief government, governed by village chiefs, that was satisfactory to them?

McCOLM: They thought that was wonderful, and they were very

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happy. They even set up their own schools. We didn't even have any text books to give them. They wanted English books and all kinds of stuff, and I didn't have a thing to give them. Yet I had a little report on how many people they had in school, and they had an average of people in school almost as high as we have in the United States.

JOHNSON: Did you have textbooks for them by the time you left? How long were you there?

McCOLM: Just three or four months.

JOHNSON: What did they study from, just oral?

McCOLM: They had a dictionary, a Ponapeian dictionary, written in Ponapeian, of course in English script, but it was Ponapeian. They didn't have a language of their own, a script of their own like the Japanese, but they had a Bible written in Ponapeian.

JOHNSON: The missionaries created their language for them?

McCOLM: Yes, and the dictionary in Ponapeian. They had schools all set up and they were teaching them arithmetic, and they were teaching all kinds of stuff.

JOHNSON: Well, how could they use that education later on?

McCOLM: Well, they'd been able to use it pretty effectively

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when the Japanese were there, because the Japanese had helped them. They furnished them with a lot of materials for their schools, and they never let those schools stop. That was a very

interesting thing. I was almost afraid to even mention schools, because I wasn't in a position to help them, but they went right ahead with it.

JOHNSON: It was still operating that way when you left?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: And why was it you left? Were you reassigned, or what?

McCOLM: No, I just ran out on my Navy time; my enlistment was over. The Navy was willing to release me, so I thought the sooner I got home, the quicker I'd get a good job.

JOHNSON: What month and year was that?

McCOLM: I left in the summer of 1946.

JOHNSON: You're out of the Navy?

McCOLM: Yes, I got out of the Navy.

JOHNSON: And you're back home. Your wife in the meantime stayed in Kansas?

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McCOLM: Stayed in Kansas.

JOHNSON: So you were discharged, and you came back to get a civilian job.

McCOLM: Well, that's right. I stayed in Kansas a little while, and then went to Washington. All I could get in Washington was an offer to go to Japan.

JOHNSON: Yes, they offered you a job in Japan. What was your wife's response?

McCOLM: She said no way was she going to go to Japan. They offered me a P-5. I had only been a P-3.

JOHNSON: That would have been in the agricultural program?

McCOLM: Yes. They told me that I was supposed to go over and help MacArthur with the land reform because they had just passed the law. I was supposed to go in and help him.

JOHNSON: Was Ladejinsky the one that would have recommended you, do you think?

McCOLM: He could have. He could have been the one. I don't know. I didn't know who took my place, but he certainly knew whose place he took, because my name was around everywhere in the training material. He didn't have clearance, as far as I know, to examine any of the

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Top Secret information.

JOHNSON: That's something, isn't it?

McCOLM: It was very interesting that he went right directly from CASA to Japan and immediately got thrust into this land reform thing. The only difference that was made in the whole plan -- they even went to the bonding bill -- was that they increased the number on the [local] committee from five to twelve.

JOHNSON: You helped lay the groundwork at least. Did you never get involved with Japanese land reform after you got through with the Presidio?

McCOLM: Not in Japan.

JOHNSON: So what kind of job did you get then?

McCOLM: Well, I went out as the soil conservation head at the Navajo reservation, and I got a shock. I found out that what I'd been practicing in Ponape had never happened with the Navajos. They had been regarded as inferior citizens who couldn't even manage their own money. So I started a campaign to get citizenship for them, and finally did. The Indian Bureau would probably have fired me if they had found out how I did it.

JOHNSON: Were you working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

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McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: What was your title?

McCOLM: I was the officer in charge of the soil conservation program.

JOHNSON: With the Navajo reservation. You lived on the reservation?

McCOLM: Lived on the reservation.

JOHNSON: With your family.

McCOLM: In government housing, with the family.

JOHNSON: You did that for how long?

McCOLM: Well, my wife got cancer, and I got a transfer to Shiprock, closer to her doctor. I was at Window Rock [with the Navajos] for a year. In that first year I was editor of the Navajo long-range program report, and the Navajo welfare report. The Superintendent picked up right away that I was a writer and so he put me in to edit the long-range program. They had never been able

to get it through because it was everybody's diarrhea of words. I had to cut it down and made everybody mad, cutting out about 90 percent of what they said in order to get Congress to listen to what we needed. We got the Navajo program report prepared; we

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got the request for the money for the various programs and the estimated amount and all that, and sent it to Congress. But the thing that put it over was the Navajo welfare report. See, from the Navajo reservation we had all these boys that had been Navajo talkers all the way across the Pacific.

JOHNSON: Oh yes.

McCOLM: We had Navajo boys that really confounded the Japanese. The main reason they were able to do that was that even if there were Japanese who might have picked up Navajo, they couldn't tell what they were saying, because the Navajo, when he speaks his own language, speaks in idioms. So when he was talking about a Japanese soldier going over the hill, he would say, "Well, one of the little brown bears just went by," in Navajo.

JOHNSON: Sort of like metaphors, or figures of speech.

McCOLM: Figures of speech; that is just rampant in the Navajo language.

JOHNSON: At least in their oral communications. They have a written language, too, don't they?

McCOLM: They have a written language too. But, no way could a Japanese get ahold of that and tell what they

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were saying because they wouldn't understand how the Navajos talk. So they were very successful.

I can show you an old article -- I've brought along a copy of the article in the 1947 *Gallup Independent* -- which notes that the district court of New Mexico made a ruling that the Navajos still weren't eligible to vote. [This article is filed in MHDC #698 [folder 2].]

JOHNSON: In what kind of election?

McCOLM: In any election.

JOHNSON: Well, how about local elections on their own reservation?

McCOLM: They didn't have such thing.

JOHNSON: They didn't elect their own tribal chairman?

McCOLM: They had a tribal chairman system; they had a local election for tribal chairman, but not for sheriff, for example. No sheriff could effect anything that's going on on the reservation, because he belonged to the county. Only the superintendent had complete control of the tribal government.

JOHNSON: The superintendent, which is the...

McCOLM: The Navajo superintendent, a white man from the

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Indian Bureau.

JOHNSON: He was appointed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

McCOLM: The Bureau of Indian Affairs sent out the...

JOHNSON: The superintendent for each reservation?

McCOLM: Of each reservation. That's been going on ever since the Army had it.

JOHNSON: And he was the one that was really the authority figure?

McCOLM: He was the authority, and there was no way you could get any information about what was going on on a reservation unless the superintendent was willing to release that information.

JOHNSON: He had to make reports, didn't he?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: But you weren't sure whether it was a complete report, or doctored report? It was all up to him to decide what he wanted to report?

McCOLM: Well, you couldn't even have an accident on the reservation and get it reported by the newspapers.

JOHNSON: He kept the press off the reservation; he kept the newspaper people off? Anybody he didn't want, he'd

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just cut them off?

McCOLM: Well, they couldn't gain any information, so why come on the reservation. They couldn't get anything except from the superintendent.

JOHNSON: Everything had to go through the superintendent?

McCOLM: It all had to go through the superintendent. So I was told right off the bat, "There are certain things which we publish. We run a mimeograph and we publish certain things about what's going on on the reservation. But everything else is presumed to be classified -- everything. All the letters you write between each other, all the reports you write, everything; and you can't pass on any government report regarding Indians.

JOHNSON: Do you mean that the official correspondence between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the local superintendent, for instance, was considered classified?

McCOLM: Everything was considered classified. That's the way it's been operating. How many stories have you heard in the last 20 years or more about something that happened on the Navajo reservation? You didn't know anything happened on the Navajo reservation until recently, when the Congressional investigation started

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finding out that the Navajo chief that they'd managed to elect, in a real democratic election was taking kick-backs from all the contractors that came on the reservation. He was making about \$7 million a year. In other words, he had a good thing going and he had learned it from the Americans.

JOHNSON: Okay. You were there for just a year, but were you agitating against that kind of set-up?

McCOLM: Oh yes, I started right in. I'll give you a copy of the testimony that I gave to the committee that came out.

JOHNSON: Congressional committee?

McCOLM: A Congressional committee.

JOHNSON: This was way back...

McCOLM: In '47.

JOHNSON: What did that do for you?

McCOLM: Well, I'll tell you the first thing it did for me. In 1947 I worked with Elizabeth Chief. She was a highly educated social worker, with Indian blood, from North Dakota. She came out to write a welfare report

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on the Navajos. [A copy of this "Statement on the Navajo Problem," as well as other material pertaining to Indian issues, is filed in MHDC #698 [folder 2].] The superintendent wanted someone to keep an eye on her, so he assigned me to it. We went in, and I wanted to be sure that everything that we put into that report was all from documented material. We had the total

number of Navajo soldiers that had been in the Army, the total number in the Navy, the total number of people that had drawn soldier's relief benefits during the time this soldier served in the Army. We had it documented right down to the individual soldier, and how many dependents he had. Most of them had 16 to 20. We documented all of that, and how many millions of dollars that they drew in soldier's and sailor's dependent allotments before they came home and it was all cut off. You see, this was income coming into the reservation, and when that was cut off, the Indians started to starve. The Navajo welfare program was \$5 a month; that was all you could draw if you were a Navajo on welfare, \$5 a month. There was no way that the Navajo family could survive on \$5 a month.

Then we went into the hospital records and we found that on an average day at that time, five Navajos were dying from a problem called inanition. That meant death by starvation, recorded on death certificates

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written by the very methodical Indian Bureau doctors. They were dying of starvation. Well, you may have remembered that in 1947, if you're old enough to remember that, all of the papers were just full of these big stories about the starving Navajos. That came from the fact that we wrote this report. We got it in absolute correct form, Indian Bureau form, any way you want to call it. We got it absolutely right. So, I passed it to the superintendent, and he said, "Well, this is pretty important information." I said, "Yes, I think we ought to mimeograph it." I had been told that anything mimeographed could be passed around a little bit.

So, we got that Navajo welfare report in 1947. The next time you go to Washington ask the Indian Bureau to show you a copy of that -- because that's still there. All reference to the dependent allotments paid to Navajos in World War II has been removed.

JOHNSON: Were the Indian Bureau doctors actually reporting death by starvation?

McCOLM: They had this word for it.

JOHNSON: But it meant the same thing.

McCOLM: It meant the same thing.

JOHNSON: People knew what it meant.

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McCOLM: Sure.

JOHNSON: So they were telling the truth.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: How did this report become public?

McCOLM: Well, how it became public is kind of interesting. The superintendent was the guy responsible. So as soon as it was mimeographed, we passed it around to all the staff and everybody thought it was a good report it was. Somehow or other, a copy got to the *Gallup Independent*. I don't claim any information on how it got to the *Gallup Independent* but they got hold of it and they started quoting from this report. The next week, within one week, there were over 200 reporter that showed up on the Navajo reservation, looking for the starving Indians. There was a trader out north of Gallup, and nearby was an old Indian woman who was crippled. I don't know how they would treat her now, but at the time she moved entirely on her elbows, and dragged herself across the road to Shanty Myers Trading Post. Her family had put her out in a hogan by herself. Anytime you're old and crippled, the Navajo put you out in your own hogan so you don't spread your disease to the other Navajos. She got put out in this old hogan and across the road from Shanty Myers, and

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once a week or twice a week she'd drag herself across and he'd fill a big old gunny sack full of food for her. She'd drag herself on her elbows back across to the hogan and she'd live another week.

Well, you know, she made a beautiful picture for these photographers. She was the best-fed starving woman on the reservation, but she made a beautiful picture for every reporter. They always managed to get out there and see her dragging herself across the road with this bag of food across.

JOHNSON: So she was not typical. But there were starving Indians.

McCOLM: She wasn't starving, but there were hundreds of starving Indians everywhere you looked. They had all of the data in this report to explain exactly why they were starving. I took Will Rogers, Jr., and we spent two days going around while he wrote this magazine article for *Life* magazine.

JOHNSON: So you escorted him around.

McCOLM: Yes. This is like something hitting the fan. The Indian Bureau decided that the superintendent was very, very much to blame because he allowed this thing to get out of hand. So they transferred him out right away. He was no longer qualified because he allowed the

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starving Navajo problem to get into the press, and of course, I was planning to move to Shiprock anyway, so it was pretty easy to get rid of me. I wanted to get out of there. Besides I wasn't getting along too well with the bosses either because I discovered all of the graft that they had in the PMA [Production and Marketing Administration] program. See, we had PMA program work going on and the PMA contractor was in their building. We had it worked out with the county, with each of the county AAA [Agricultural Adjustment Administration] committees to do work on their part of the Navajo reservation. But they didn't have any control over it; the Indian Bureau controlled it all. All we did was submit the payment slips down there, and they had to make the payments out of their office, out of St. John. The reason I discovered the problem was

that this junior engineer -- the senior engineer had left and was not yet replaced -- came in and he said, "The contractor's going to be in town tomorrow night. He'll be in town tomorrow night, and he'll be over at the motel." He said, "We play poker with him every time he comes in. You can make a lot of money that way." I said, "You mean you play poker with a contractor. Who permits you to do that?" "Oh," he says, "Berry and Flory taught him how to play poker." He was a Mormon and he didn't play poker. He wanted to make the

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payoffs, but he had to play poker to make the payoffs.

JOHNSON: That's the way he made the payoffs.

McCOLM: That's the way he made the payoffs. It just happened that this guy that he was making payoffs to was now my boss in Phoenix. I reported it to Washington, and the guy that I had to report the problem to in Washington was the other one implicated in the poker business. So then they transferred everybody out of there that could possibly testify against them. I started looking around for people that might testify, and nobody around there knew a thing about it.

JOHNSON: So then you left.

McCOLM: So then I left, and four years later I got a Sustained Superior Performance Award from the Department of the Interior.

JOHNSON: You were still with the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

McCOLM: I was with the Bureau all the way through.

JOHNSON: At Shiprock. That's where?

McCOLM: On the northwest corner of New Mexico.

JOHNSON: You were there how long?

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McCOLM: Well, I was there from about '48 to '57.

JOHNSON: What was your title there?

McCOLM: I was in charge of the Shiprock nursery. We were growing trees for all the reservations out there.

JOHNSON: Oh, you were in horticulture.

McCOLM: Yes, it was horticulture. We had an independent organization. It says in my citation what I accomplished, but they were growing about 400 and some trees per man-day of labor, and

I increased it more than ten-fold. They grew millions of trees with the same money they had been growing a few thousand trees before.

JOHNSON: You were growing these outside in plots?

McCOLM: Outside in the field. We were not only growing erosion control trees, we grew over 3 million Russian olive trees for distribution to the reservations. A lot of them were for the Navajo.

JOHNSON: Russian olives.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Would they harvest olives?

McCOLM: No. It's for wildlife and for erosion control.

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You know, the Russian olive seed has the highest nutrient value of any known organic material, that is, natural organic material. The hull of the Russian olive has the highest nutritive value of anything. It's a very thin little tiny hull, and any bird or animal that can digest it lives fat on the hog. In fact, we had a lady at Fruitland, New Mexico, that I bought eggs from. One day I went by and she said all her chickens had quit laying. She couldn't give me any more eggs, but did I want to buy a fat hen. I said, "Well, sure I'd like to have a fat hen, but I need the eggs too." So she took me out and showed me that she wasn't feeding her chickens at all; they were under the Russian olive trees, and these chickens were eating the Russian olive seed and all the seed was coming right on through the gizzard and everything without being destroyed. So I had her gathering up Russian olive seeds for me that I could plant on the nursery. It isn't the seed, it's the hull that...

JOHNSON: The covering around the seed.

McCOLM: It's extremely rich in carbohydrates. As far as we know, it's the strongest of any plant in the world.

JOHNSON: In carbohydrates.

McCOLM: It is so rich that the pheasants over in eastern

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Utah get so fat, they can't fly when they try to get up in the air.

JOHNSON: It's mainly starch, some kind of starch.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: But not necessarily vitamins and minerals.

McCOLM: I don't know; I've never really had it completely examined, but I've been told that.

JOHNSON: So this has proved to be a good kind of vegetation for these reservations to have.

McCOLM: That's right. It's great to plant where you need some trees around your place.

JOHNSON: And doesn't require very much moisture apparently.

McCOLM: Very little, very low. Once they get started, they can make it on about 13 inches of rainfall.

JOHNSON: You helped introduce that to the various reservations?

McCOLM: We sent them around to any reservation that needed them.

JOHNSON: But you also recommended new varieties or whatever? Who decided how many and what kind of trees you were going to grow and where they were to be

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transplanted?

McCOLM: Well, the Indian Bureau had their orders in from various reservations. Fruit trees were grown for sale to the Navajos at a very low price. We grew them at cost to be sold to the Navajos, and one of the trees we were growing was the peach, and they had an awful lot of yellowing on them. They looked bad. The inspector came along one day and said, "Well, you've got too much disease. We can't allow you to grow them. We've got to destroy this batch, and we can't allow you to grow peach trees here anymore, because this disease is in your soil." I said, "I'll have it all cleared up by next year." "Well," he said, "I doubt that."

All we had to do to clear it up was to go to where they were opening up a coal mine and take the lignite off the top. We took 25 tons per acre to the nursery, and we spread lignite, 25 tons per acre. Lignite has 3.2 ph over there.

JOHNSON: Pretty acidic.

McCOLM: We'd ground it through a hammermill and we put 3.2 ph lignite, 25 tons per acre, using our government trucks. We hauled it in and we spread it on that land. The next year the peach trees grew seven feet tall. The inspector came by, and he was having the hardest time trying to figure out where the field was that had

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those bad peach trees the year before. You know, I never told him a thing about how I got rid of all of that disease that he was supposed to have found. He didn't find disease at all.

I could have told him he didn't even know what he was talking about. I could have told him exactly what was wrong with those peach trees, because I recognized a problem that is created by excessive, high ph of the soil.

JOHNSON: You'd had experience with that.

McCOLM: I knew that, so I wasn't worried about that. Later I was down at the University of Arizona, and I started making up potting mixes in which I used 10 percent lignite. Then I'd grow geraniums and various plants that are hard to root in that. In the lignite they grew ten times as good as they did in the normal potting mixes. So, what I was doing was proving the value of lignite, but nobody's really taken that up and made a big commercial thing out of it. But some day some one will.

JOHNSON: So you did that in 1957.

McCOLM: About '54 it was when I had the peach trees. I stayed there until '57.

JOHNSON: At Shiprock.

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McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: In charge of the nursery for the whole Bureau of Indian Affairs.

McCOLM: The whole bureau.

JOHNSON: Then after that you...

McCOLM: Well, my wife was dying of cancer then, and I took a job as the manager of an experiment station that a private, rich oil man had set up to develop crops for the new Navajo project that they voted in. Congress voted the Navajo project, and he agreed to furnish the experiment station for that. So I ran that for a few years. I can show you some of the pictures from that.

JOHNSON: You were acquainted with Dillon Myer, and he was in charge of the Japanese relocation. He also was the Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs at one time.

McCOLM: Yes, I knew him both times.

JOHNSON: You know, there's a controversy about what was called the "termination" program, in which the reservation system was to be converted into something resembling a county government type of system. In other words, end the reservation system and integrate Indians into society. Dillon Myer became identified with that.

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McCOLM: Well, he got that from me.

JOHNSON: But that backfired, I think.

McCOLM: It backfired on him and me both. You see, when the committee started to investigate the Navajos in '47, I gave them a plan to do away with the Indian Bureau entirely, and then have only an Indian office that had to do with liquidation of the Indian Bureau and the protection of Indian rights. [A copy of this "Statement on the Navajo Problem," as well as other material pertaining to Indian issues, is filed in MHDC #698 [folder 2].] All of the Indian programs could be set up on the basis of giving them preference on Civil Service status like they had for the veterans. To help Indian farmers, they could set up a loan program with the Resettlement Administration that would take care of that part of the Indian Bureau program. I had it figured out for every part of the Indian Bureau, including the Bureau of Public Health. They finally did get that through; the Bureau of Public Health came on the reservation as a result of this Navajo welfare report in 1947.

JOHNSON: It was called the termination program?

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Yes, the termination concept. You admit it backfired on Dillon Myer.

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McCOLM: And on me, too.

JOHNSON: And you too. In other words, I suppose many students of Indian Affairs became very critical of your proposal.

McCOLM: You know why it was so political? Because we had people that had been running Indian Affairs, in the Bureau and everywhere else, who were anthropologists, and they wanted to maintain Indians as primitive man for continued study. There wasn't any way that they were willing to relinquish control of the Indians, because if they became like everybody else, they wouldn't be a valuable item to study.

JOHNSON: Did you really feel at the time that you could make yeoman farmers out of Indians in spite of the fact that they were not on good farmland, but they could make a good living out of it?

McCOLM: We had this Navajo project, and if they had handled that Navajo project the way I had it planned, there would have been all of these prosperous Indians out there today. They tried to manage it as a Navajo tribal project, and it went flat.

JOHNSON: I am under the impression that Indian tribes were. But the Indians were very suspicious of any plan to terminate their reservation status too.

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McCOLM: Well, no, the Indians [Navajo] supported me almost 100 percent. It was only until later when we got a lot of educated Indians who decided there was a lot more graft if they could keep the Bureau and then suck both ends.

JOHNSON: What kind of economy did you propose for the Navajos? There was a lot of sheep herding. Was that the basis of their economy?

McCOLM: Well, see, that had already been destroyed more or less by the soil conservation program, in which they [the Government] went in there and tried to reduce the number of sheep. The whole idea was to reduce the sheep numbers and save the Navajo from ruining Lake Mead. They already had the sheep numbers down, and that was part...

JOHNSON: They were overgrazing the land?

McCOLM: Yes, they were overgrazing every part of their reservation.

JOHNSON: So the vegetation was dying off, the grass.

McCOLM: They had already got to that stage long before I got there.

JOHNSON: Were you planning to transport them to other areas off the reservation, or were you going to make the

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reservation a viable, economic unit?

McCOLM: Well, what I planned was that the Navajo, the new Navajo project, the big irrigation project, would create a lot of farms. They did build the project and they were still messing around with it and I haven't been back to see what's happening. They tried to keep a lot of big tracts of land, and the Navajos really weren't interested in that. Only certain Navajos were interested in farming at all. For the ones that are interested in other things, there was no reason why you should keep them on the reservation; you should have a relocation program for them and help them get reestablished in other places.

JOHNSON: But there were these tribal and kinship ties that...

McCOLM: Those were very important and they've gotten to be more important now than they were then, because they use that as a political whipping boy for the Government. The tribes have learned how to completely manipulate the Government now.

JOHNSON: There also was a problem involving the Hopis I guess, too, that came up later. There was some dispute about what land belonged to the Hopis and what belonged to the Navajos.

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McCOLM: There will always be that.

JOHNSON: So you supported Dillon Myers' program for termination.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: I think they did that up in northern Wisconsin, didn't they, and that didn't turn out to be very successful. I believe that was the Menominee tribe. The Government essentially converted the reservation into a county, a county government.

McCOLM: Well, that's wrong. They should not convert just the given block of land into a county government. In Utah and in New Mexico, and in Arizona, the county government laws could apply on that part of the reservation that was in the county, in that county. The same way over in Apache County in Arizona. Every county had its own laws, and they had lines drawn through the reservation, but it didn't do us any good.

JOHNSON: Would that mean different laws in the same area, the same general area?

McCOLM: They'd have to abide by the state law. In other words, there was no justification for ever having any law for Navajos alone.

JOHNSON: Yes, but if you had several counties.

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McCOLM: Each county had its own jurisdiction. The only purpose of a tribal organization is to manage property owned by the tribe, not the police power. You see, they've always maintained the police and the courts, and they've got police and courts and everything else on the Navajo reservation, and that's where all this graft came into effect. They had no effective way of keeping their own chief from stealing amounts of money.

JOHNSON: Did you write up the report or was there anything in writing that you did which you passed on to Dillon Myer, or did Dillon Myer consult you? Did you offer him advice?

McCOLM: No, I never had any private conferences with him, but I sent all this material to Washington, and there was a lot of people in Washington that wanted to crucify me when Dillon Myers said, "Terminate BIA." You know, the man that was in ahead of him was John R. Nichols. John R. Nichols was my boss in the Presidio Monterey; he was my boss in the training section. My boss in the planning staff was Colonel Hartman. You see, I had two bosses; one on the training side and one on the planning side. But they were pretty much together. Dr. Nichols was involved with some of the planning. He had a wonderful mind as an educator.

JOHNSON: He was the director of the Bureau of Indian

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Affairs?

McCOLM: Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs before Dillon Myers.

JOHNSON: Did he propose termination?

McCOLM: He had all my material on it, and I don't know what he passed on to Dillon Myers. See, he believed in termination, but he couldn't put it over. He didn't have any political support to do it, so he resigned and became President of New Mexico State College.

JOHNSON: I see.

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Second Oral History Interview with George L. McColm, Independence, Missouri, May 21, 1992. By Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library.

JOHNSON: I'm once again with Mr. George L. McColm, and he's looking at the statement here, a one-page statement that was given to the Hoover Commission regarding Indian affairs, Indian self government, and particularly the Navajos. You say a longer version of this went to Dillon Myer?

McCOLM: I have a longer, more detailed description of how the Bureau of Indian Affairs could be phased out, and I'll try to find that too. [A copy of this document and of the statement for the Hoover Commission are on file in MHDC #698 [folder 2].]

JOHNSON: Is there evidence that you had an influence on Dillon Myers' thinking on Indian policy?

McCOLM: Well, there was a lot of controversy at the time, and I always regarded Dillon Myers as being on my side, as soon as he started to talk about it. As soon as he started to talk about it, he was saying the same things that I'd said.

JOHNSON: How about Nichols, who preceded him?

McCOLM: Yes. John R. Nichols was in when I first started to work for the Indian Bureau.

JOHNSON: Did he have the same...

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McCOLM: I had John R. Nichols convinced that the Indian Bureau was just about to be phased out or should be phased out, and so he left and went back to teaching. You see, before the war Dr. Nichols was president of one of the colleges in either North or South Carolina, I've forgotten which. And then after the war he went into politics, becoming the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

JOHNSON: Did you feel that what you wanted to do for the Indians, or should do for the Indians, was what you were doing for the tenant farmers of Japan? In other words, did you see some connection between the policy for land reform in Japan, and reform of Indian policy?

McCOLM: Well, the Indian policy, of course, had been a communal thing. In other words, the whole idea was a communal thing. But we were getting ready to form, on the Navajo [reservation], we had a plan for the development of what we called the Navajo Project. In fact, I made the soil survey. The Bureau of Reclamation was building it. Since I was an experienced soil survey supervisor, I was put in charge of the soil survey for that project, and what I had in mind was that instead of handling that project as a tribal enterprise, that the project should be divided up and each Indian given a sound economic unit to farm and granted title to it, just like any other citizen in the United States that receives land under a Bureau of Reclamation project. I

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didn't see why there should be any difference between Indians and...

JOHNSON: But was this also the thing that you were proposing for the Japanese farmers?

McCOLM: Well, what I was proposing for the Japanese farmers was strictly a sound economy so that they could increase their production.

JOHNSON: Okay.

McCOLM: See, they had to have a sound economy. They couldn't take it away from the rich and give it to the poor, that type of land reform. We had to have there a committee that knew these people. In other words, the committee that we had sitting in each community were the only people that could tell you two or three things. One was whether this fellow was a worthy person to receive the land. In good Japanese language, a "worthy person" was one who had experience and was qualified to be an owner-farmer, that was the first thing. The second was whether the this particular plot of land was capable of producing on that level. If it wasn't, we wanted the committee to give him just a little bit more land so that he would have a sound economic unit. The whole principle of the Japanese land reform was the development of sound economic units.

JOHNSON: If you were going to terminate the reservation policy,

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the communal principal, on the reservations, would you not have applied the same principle to the Indians as you planned to apply in Japan?

McCOLM: We would have applied the same principle and in that we would divide the land. There was no real reason why the Navajo project should not have been handled like any other Government project in which the person that got title to it was taking full responsibility for his actions and for his acreage and he furnished a big enough acreage. They had a 160-acre limit, you know, in the Bureau of Reclamation program to start with, and that's going by the wayside pretty fast.

JOHNSON: Well, would that have been a viable unit?

McCOLM: That would have been viable on the Indian reservation, except that the reservation felt they had so many people that they wanted to cut that down to 40 acres in the first

discussions. I haven't been back to know what was finally developed, but they didn't start it out that way. They started out as a communal project.

JOHNSON: Would 40 acres have been an economic unit?

McCOLM: Well, it would have been in parts of the new irrigation project, because what we proved in the experiment station that I developed was that it was a wonderful place to grow things like onions. Anything over ten acres of onions would

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have been more than the whole family could take care of. Also there were other crops that were well adapted to that area.

JOHNSON: In other words, you're thinking of the Navajos becoming more like truck farmers rather than sheep herders?

McCOLM: That's right. They'd have to be. If they are no longer sheep herders, they become irrigation farmers. They would still have their sheep. They'd have their mutton, and have a little plot of land of maybe five or ten acres of good irrigated pasture. As early as 1938 and '39 I developed irrigated pastures in Utah under the rotation system that would permit you to run four head per acre. If you had 16 acres of land, you could divide it up in plots so that you could have over 60 head of livestock. In other words, there's tremendous possibilities in the rotation of irrigated pastures.

JOHNSON: Depending on reliable irrigation.

McCOLM: Yes, you must have plenty of water, and you have to irrigate only one fourth of the land at a time. You allow the grass to grow on that, and then you have an electric fence, or some method of keeping the stock confined to the area where the grass is already grown. Then you take them off and you take the manure down and then you irrigate it. You give that time to grow while another patch is grazing,

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and by rotating pasture you can more than double the carrying capacity of irrigated land.

JOHNSON: Was that part of the planning for that Navajo project?

McCOLM: Part of my planning for it.

JOHNSON: Did they get irrigated pastures? Did they get the irrigation that had been planned?

McCOLM: They got the irrigation, but they never got the system, and they've been fighting over it ever since. I haven't been down there lately, but I should go down. We had some aerial seeding on the reservation while I was in charge that involved the seeding of pellets in the high mountains. I'm the only one alive today that knows where it was seeded. So, I need to go back

down there and go over that area and see what remains from that seeding. See, we were introducing new species. We were introducing crested wheat and tall wheat and...

JOHNSON: Crested wheat?

McCOLM: And tall wheat grass and short wheat grass, and brome grass and other grasses in the high mountain meadows that had been completely depleted by the grazing. We wanted to reclaim them so we introduced grass and clover species we had reason to believe would be adapted to that region. Do you have the story of Lydell Adams and his bats? Have you

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ever heard that story?

JOHNSON: I'm not sure I have.

McCOLM: Lydell S. Adams was a dentist in, I believe, it was Montana. He proposed a plan to burn up Japan. He would burn Japan to the ground because they had such flimsy buildings and they were so prone to fires and they were so afraid of fire. He was going to burn them up. So, he proposed that we release half a million incendiary bats over Japan. [These were bats fitted with incendiary devices.] Did you ever hear that story?

JOHNSON: Yes, vaguely.

McCOLM: Our War Department bought the idea and they got the bats all in California in a pretty good size Army base. One of the bats got loose and burned down a whole barracks, and the General just scrapped the program immediately. But Lydell Adams had other ideas. Lydell Adams made a machine that would take certain types of clay and put the grass seed in this clay and then it could be dropped from the airplane and they'd spread evenly over the ground, and not too thick. He had perfected that; the pellets were heavy enough that they half imbedded themselves in the ground. They'd be laying there in a dry condition if you put them there just ahead of the rains. The rain then would soften the pellets and release the seed and they'd come up. It worked pretty well

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on a lot of trial areas. The reason we tried it on the Navajo was that Congress bought it and sent the money out. The Indian Bureau wasn't in favor of it. But I thought the old man's project ought to be given a chance anyway, so we planted pellet seed on about 40,000 acres.

JOHNSON: From an airplane.

McCOLM: From the airplane. I haven't been back to see whether it succeeded.

JOHNSON: You don't know whether...

McCOLM: Well, the first few years we saw sparse evidence of it. In other words, in the size of this room we might find one or two plants. Well, to me that was great, because it was just giving

it a chance to reseed. But when they came out from Washington and looked at it, they came back and wrote it as a failure, because they couldn't find more than one or two plants on a square rod of ground. Well, they expected to go up there and see a flowing meadow, and you don't find that when you seed at the rate that was seeded. In other words, there was just three or four pellets dropped on that space. And so that project didn't work out too well.

JOHNSON: Maybe we can just summarize the rest of your career. We got into the post-Truman period yesterday, and I notice we do have a chronology of your career, mainly in

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agriculture. [See the appendix to this transcript for a brief chronology of George McCollm's career.] You went to Shiprock, New Mexico in 1952, and to Farmington, New Mexico, I see in 1957. You developed low-temperature tolerant tomato varieties. You were there for what, about four years?

McCOLM: We completed the experimental work needed to determine what would be practical to grow on the new proposed Navajo project. It was a private project. See, Tom Bolack was a Kansas farm boy who studied geology by correspondence school and he got in an airplane and flew over a section of New Mexico and picked out where the oil would be. Well, fortunately he was right, because he made 7 million dollars in the oil business in the next ten years. He was always one jump ahead of the drilling; he owned the leases everywhere they went to try to get oil from then on. They found that Tom Bolack owned the leases. He decided that to help the Navajos he would set up an experimental project and provide the land. So I developed his ranch for him there in Farmington. We did the experimental work. That's what these pictures are that I showed you, of the exhibit at the state fair. Did you see that?

JOHNSON: Yes.

McCOLM: That was the crops that could be grown in the Navajo reservation.

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JOHNSON: You've had some connection with the Navajo for many years.

McCOLM: Well, I was with the Navajo for 9 years. I have a sustained superior performance award from the Department of Interior for work on the Navajo.

JOHNSON: You went to India in 1964, in a State Department aid program.

McCOLM: Yes. India was importing 70 million tons of grain from the United States at the time I went over there. The first thing I noticed was that they were using about ten or eleven inches of water on the rice just like they were in California. That was twice as much water as they needed for rice. The only thing they had to do was to get every field perfectly level, so three inches of water would grow just as much rice as eleven inches. That way they could double their rice acreage in India.

They had a management problem. So we got the irrigation management transferred from the Public Works Department, the English had started. Here we call it the Interior Department. We got it transferred from the Public Works Department to the Agricultural Department, and then we trained all of the men that were involved with irrigation to be field men. When I first went there, only 3 percent of the Indian technicians had ever lived on a farm. So they were afraid to go out and talk to a farmer. After I showed

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up in India I would not talk to a technician anywhere except with a farmer, in the farmer's field.

JOHNSON: I see.

McCOLM: In other words, I would not talk to a smart aleck Indian technician in his office, because he could outtalk me, and that's saying something.

JOHNSON: So, you had your feet on the ground so to speak.

McCOLM: I had to be on the ground. I insisted everywhere I worked that any training of any technical personnel that has to do with farmers, we do it right on the farm with the farmer. That way, if I have anything to offer, they both get it.

JOHNSON: Then you went from there to South Vietnam, 1966-72. You were employed by the Department of State CORDS-NLD South Vietnam program, as you have identified it.

McCOLM: CORDS was actually CIA, coordination of the aid program and the military program.

JOHNSON: You were a water management advisor, an agronomist, agriculture program coordinator and program analyst. You also served as technical advisor to the International Mekong Project Committee. You wrote the first paper on the use of the IR-8 rice variety to increase rice production in South Vietnam. You prepared an agricultural climatological data

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crop growing season map on South Vietnam, and after you got back in '72 you retired from the Government, I notice. South Vietnam, of course, is a big story in itself. I think we'll finish up, perhaps with your comments about introducing the IR-8 rice into South Vietnam, which had been grown in the Philippines.

McCOLM: See, the Rockefeller Institute was developing varieties for all of the tropical areas of the world, because rice is a principal food. Yet, it is actually a type of crop that grows in the areas just a little bit north of the tropics. To get tropical varieties, varieties that were well adapted the tropical areas, like the Philippines, they had to develop a special gene structure in all the rice plants -- especially in lower growing plants that didn't lodge. Those were adapted to more level land. In other words, in India we leveled the land, and got the land perfectly level. After I'd been in India six months we had 20 million Indians leveling land. So, the thing is, we level the land, then we grow the shorter varieties of rice, and we grow it with less water.

JOHNSON: So your job in South Vietnam was to increase food production, mainly through improving the rice?

McCOLM: Improving the rice varieties. That was what I was working on in South Vietnam.

A little later I got into coordinating all of the

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agricultural programs. I gave you a copy of that deal with the Army, in which the Army was bombing the salt intrusion dams. That is an interesting story, and it shows why you need an Ag man connected with the Army. A fellow walked in my office one day and he said, "You know, we've got a problem in the Delta." He said, "Since you're a soils man, I've been told to contact you and find out if you have any ideas on what to do about it." He said, "The VC are building dikes all across the streams in South Vietnam and keeping PT boats from coming up the rivers." He said, "The Army's bombing them, but they build them back before morning." I said, "Where are these?" He started to try to tell me. I found out what was happening. The Army was bombing the salt intrusion dams that the natives were putting up to have enough fresh water to live on. You see, there's a section of the Delta that has salt intrusion during the dry season. Salt going back as much as 180 miles from the ocean. In order to prevent that, the French had built a very elaborate system of salt intrusion dams, and they'd been blown up by the VC long ago.

Well, then the PT boats are running up and down these rivers. When the water got rather low, the people up above, in order to keep the salt out, were building little temporary dams by hand mostly. They were building little temporary dams to hold the tidal flow back, so they would not have salt water to drink, and salt water to wash with,

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and salt water to irrigate. They had to have these salt intrusion dams.

JOHNSON: To prevent the salt from getting into the irrigation.

McCOLM: Prevent the salt from coming up. Well, the Army thought the VC who were trying to keep Navy PT boats from running up the rivers, so they started blowing those dams up everywhere the natives were building them.

JOHNSON: That didn't...

McCOLM: Didn't make friends and influence people very well.

JOHNSON: And the herbicides; I notice you have a picture here.

McCOLM: I fought those, but...

JOHNSON: Agent orange.

McCOLM: Agent orange. See, agent orange was a total failure from an agricultural standpoint, because they were destroying crops with it in the mountains where those natives needed every bit of crop that they could grow in order to survive. The minute we destroyed those crops, the VC moved in and provided food for them and used them for all their labor gangs. So it was counterproductive.

JOHNSON: You didn't have too much influence then on that policy.

McCOLM: Well, it took me two years to get it stopped.

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JOHNSON: But you tried to stop it.

McCOLM: I finally got it stopped in 1969.

JOHNSON: You think it was largely through your agitation?

McCOLM: Well, we also got a big, big drive going in the United States. Of course, the press took credit for getting it stopped, but I had as much to do with it as anybody. The press kept trying to get me to blow the whistle on it. See, they kept coming to me because they knew I was opposed to it, trying to get me to make a statement. I don't make statements like that to the press. I never got in trouble by issuing anything that wasn't official.

JOHNSON: In other words, you worked through channels when you had to.

McCOLM: I worked through channels. Just like on the Navajo, when I worked through channels to get the Welfare Report put on mimeograph so it could be released.

JOHNSON: That was the situation with the starving Navajos.

McCOLM: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, I think we'll conclude at this point. I thank you.

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APPENDIX

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF A LONG CAREER IN AGRICULTURE

George L. McColm

- 1911 Born in a sod house near Colby, Northwestern Kansas.
- 1916 Irrigated a small vegetable garden adjacent to the well by overturning a tub filled with water from the hand pump.
- 1923 Charter member of Lyon County 4-H club in Eastern Kansas.
- 1925 Winner in Kansas State High School algebra contest.

- 1927 Kansas 4-H Crops Champion. Organized and wrote by-laws for Lyon County's Produce Growers Association, which operated a Farmer's Market in Emporia Kansas, for over 15 years.
Farm reporter, *Emporia Gazette*: William Allen White, Editor
- 1928 Graduated, Valedictorian, Emporia Kansas High School. Junior Delegate-Republican National Convention, Kansas City Missouri.
Managed a large plant growing greenhouse, Emporia, Kansas.
- 1929 Edison Medal -- Kansas outstanding 4-H member.
Purchased a flock of 20 purebred Southdown sheep.
Managed Kansas first large scale irrigated commercial vegetable growing project.
Local surveyor-land drainage and broad based terraces.
- 1930 Initiated a comparative mass data analysis study of crop-weather relationships.
- 1931 A Kansas delegate to National 4-H Club Congress, Washington, D.C.
Assisted in development of green wrap tomato marketing industry.
- 1932 Enrolled, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas.
Joined Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity.
Wrote "Sheep Production In Kansas", featured article 28th Biennial Report -- Kansas State Board of Agriculture.
- 1934 Wrote first report on *Crop Weather Studies*.
Member of three conference championship track teams.
- 1935 Graduated from Kansas State with BS in Agriculture.
Gamma Sigma Delta and Alpha Zeta honors.
Employed Kansas Farm Home Administration. (Resettlement Adm., now Farmer's Home Administration) Employed Kansas Agriculture Extension Service--Asst. County Agent, Colby Kansas.
- 1936 Employed Soil Conservation Service-Jr. Soil Surveyor.
Supervised first soil survey made with aerial photographs Winona County, MN.
- 1937 Recognized and reported zinc deficiency and Cicada activity in Utah soils.
- 1938 Acting Utah State Soils Scientist -- SCS Regional office. Salt Lake: City, Utah.
Member National Committee that developed Land Use Capability Classification System

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- 1939 Engineered new satisfactory method of taking irrigation water from a flowing stream.
Inverted perforated pipe is buried in gravel in front of cross-channel concrete diversion structure anchored to bedrock, shale or clay, and built to bed level of stream. Diverted water is piped to nearby well or released into ditch above flood level of stream. Causes no flood erosion and permits unlimited movement of fish.
- 1942 Employed Farm Crop Supervisor, War Relocation Center, Topaz, Utah. Developed the hypochlorite method of sterilizing Mung bean seed, now used in the commercial production of bean sprouts. Wrote and published booklet *A NEW METHOD OF DETERMINING THE GROWING SEASON FOR FARM AND TRUCK CROPS*. Also title of paper presented to Utah Academy of Science.
- 1944 U.S. Navy Officer Training -- University of Arizona and Princeton University.
- 1945 Officer in charge of Agriculture, Joint Chiefs of Staff, preparing detailed plans for the

- invasion and occupation of Japan; also training of Agricultural officers for the military Government of Japan. Prepared *Crop Growing Season map of Japan*, used for invasion planning and post-war agricultural programming. Wrote original draft of *JAPANESE LAND REFORM PROGRAM*. Wrote *Hydroponic Vegetable Production Manual for U.S. Army*. Suggested quonset hut frames covered with Polyethylene film could be used to grow vegetables for the U.S. Army in Japan.
- 1946 U.S. Navy Officer in charge of Civilian Government of Ponape Island -- Eastern Carolinas, Pacific Area. Wrote *CODE OF LAW FOR DEMOCRATIC CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT OF PONAPE*.
- 1947 Employed Bureau of Indian Affairs, Window Rock, Arizona. Agency Soil Conservation -- Edited *NAVAJO LAND RANGE PROGRAM AND NAVAJO WELFARE REPORT*. Results -- Social Security U.S. Public Health Services, extensive development programs and voting rights for Navajo citizens.
- 1948 Presented *A NEW WORLD-WIDE CROP AND GROWING SEASON CLASSIFICATION AND MAPPING SYSTEM*_American Society of Agronomy meetings, Fort Collins, Colorado.
- 1952 Employed Director in charge of BIA Nursery, Shiprock, New Mexico. In four year, increased production from 563 trees to 4,650 trees per man-day nursery labor. Awarded SUSTAINED SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE AWARD, U.S. Department of Interior.
- 1957 Employed Director of Agricultural Experiment Station B Square Ranch, Farmington, New Mexico. Developed low temperature tolerant tomato varieties. Studied use of Lignite in potting soils to improve rooting. Designed first greenhouse built with a low plastic ceiling to reduce heating and cooling costs, and to permit controlled atmosphere studies in an inexpensive structure. This design is now used by many commercial growers.
- 1960 Vice Chairman San Juan County Fair. President San Juan County Farm Bureau.

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- 1961 Employed University of Arizona, teaching and PHD program. Studied ability of plants to modify their environment; also, the selection of planting dates and favorable sites to achieve natural control of insects and diseases.
- 1964 Co-author Robert Dennis, prepared a *Crop Growing Season Bulletin and Map of the State of Arizona*, published by University of Arizona in 1980.
- 1964 Employed U.S. State Department *U.S. AID-India*, as Water Management Advisor. Assisted with planning and personnel training, Indian Government's transfer of Water Management and Irrigation Programs from Public Works to Department of Agriculture. Suggested that a great increase in rice Acreage and production could be achieved by leveling land to use only 3 inches of standing water. This is now a proven successful method.
- 1966 to 1972 Employed U.S. Department of State CORDS-NLD- South Vietnam. Water Management Advisor, Agronomist, Agriculture Program Coordinator, Program Analyst. Also served as Technical Advisor to International Mekong Project Committee. Wrote first paper on use of IR-8 rice variety to increase rice production in South Vietnam. Prepared *Agricultural Climatological Data and Crop Growing Season Map of South*

Vietnam.

- 1972 Retired-30 years service -- U.S. Government.
- 1973 Purchased small ranch at Lewiston, California, Trinity County. Cleared old brush covered fields and established a nursery and vegetable growing business.
- 1976-1981 Part-time Agricultural Advisor for the Mexican Government. Prepared Agricultural Climatological, and Crop Growing Seasons Maps of the 31 States of Mexico, suggested the commercial crops now being grown successfully in certain high mountain communities of Mexico.
- 1983 Presented paper "The Classification and mapping of Crop Growing Seasons" (an update), American Society of Agronomy meeting, Washington, DC.
- 1987 Now own and operate Lewiston Nursery, Lewiston, CA. Growing nursery and vegetable crops, sales and market quality summer squash has greatly increased by placing organically grown squash in a small plastic bag as it is picked from the plant.
- 1991 Oral history interview-Truman Library-Independence, MO. Attended "The Secrets of War: The Office of Strategic Services in World War II" conference at the National Archives, Washington D.C.

Memberships: American Society of Agronomy and Soil Science.
California Society of Agronomy & Soil Science.
CAST.
National Rifle Association.
American Association of Retired Persons.
Certified Professional Agronomist.

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