



# Robert B. Landry Oral History Interview

## Oral History Interview with Robert B. Landry

Member of faculty, National War College, 1946; Executive Officer to Army Air Force Chief of Staff, General Carl Spaatz, 1947; United States Air Force Aide to President Truman, 1948-53.

February 28, 1974  
by James R. Fuchs

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## Oral History Interview with Robert B. Landry

Scottsdale, Arizona  
February 28, 1974  
James R. Fuchs

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FUCHS: General Landry, you might want to begin by telling a little of your military background leading up to when you joined the staff in the White House, and then, as you were this morning, relating some of your anecdotes.

LANDRY: Yes, this is a good way to start the interview. A copy of my biographical sketch covering my military assignments will give a pretty good picture of my military background, ([See Biographical Sketch of Military Service](#)) and it is associated with further remarks I will have to make on the subject. I think, too, it is desirable for me to establish a proper setting for answers to questions you wish to ask me, and for other information that may arise out of discussions I'm sure we will have as we go along. For example, why and what had occurred to bring about this

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first-time White House position on the President's staff, what were my qualifications for the job, what duties were involved, to whom I would be reporting, etc.

At the time of my appointment I was serving on the Air Force staff as Executive Officer to the Chief, General Tooley [Carl] Spaatz, whom I had known for many years and served under in England when he commanded all strategic and tactical air forces in the war against Germany.

As executive officer to General Spaatz, it had been my good fortune to get to know Secretary [Stuart] Symington very well. When military assignments are being made, being in the right place at the right time can be an asset and may have had something to do in my being recommended by the Chief and the Secretary for the White House position; probably a touch of luck, too. I have often asked who was it that took the initiative in setting up the Air Force Aide's job: the Air Force Secretary maybe, or the President.

At the time, however, there had been a rumor floating around the Air Staff regarding who, among several people, might be selected for this assignment, including my name. I never gave it much thought, really, as I had hoped after my job in the Pentagon, I would be able to get back in the field with a flying

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unit. I rather think it just developed, as between the President and the Secretary, that since the former Army Air Force had, in September 1947, been elevated by Congressional action to Department status, it seemed logical and fair that the President have an Air Force Officer Aide on his staff, as did the Army and Navy for their respective services.

Be that as it may, on the night of February 5, 1948, my wife and our two children were sitting on the porch of our home on Reno Road in Washington, D.C., watching the sun go down during the twilight period. The phone rang inside the house around 7:30 p.m. My wife answered it and returned to say Mr. Matt Connelly was calling from the White House wishing to speak with me. Neither of us knew Mr. Connelly, nor did we have any contacts in the White House except for the one time I had met General Harry Vaughan, the President's Military Aide, at a social function.

The message was brief. At the direction of the President, he was calling to say that I had been appointed by the President to be his Air Force Aide and I was to report to the White House the following morning for an appointment at 9:30 a.m. to meet the President. As one can imagine, this surprise news resulted in all sorts of speculation and excitement. Eventually, when things calmed down, my family and

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friends decided I had better "hit the sack" so as to be fresh and alert for my first meeting, ever, with a President of the United States.

At 9:15 a.m. the next day I was cleared at the White House gate and reported to Matt Connelly whose office was adjacent to the President's office. He said the President was having a meeting with Secretary [James] Forrestal and would see me at about 9:25. There I sat for a few minutes, wondering what the President would have to say to me and how I might respond.

The door into the President's office finally opened and there stood the President. He was just inside his office smiling and ready to greet me. After Matt introduced me, he said, "Come in

Colonel, glad to see you," and we shook hands. He said, "You're going to be my new Air Force Aide and I just want you to know you're going to be one of the family on my staff." He went on to say he was going to have a press conference right here in the Oval Office in a few minutes; I was to stand right behind him with Bob Dennison and Harry Vaughan, as he sat at his desk and took questions from the press. I recall him saying, "You will see it is something like a circus."

After the press conference was over, I was introduced to members of the President's staff. All

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were most cordial. My first reaction, after all this was over, was how the President had made me feel right at home, like I had known him for some time. As I look back, I can't believe how relaxed I was and relieved, too, of any anxieties about this assignment. I just knew right then and there, it would be fun, exciting and rewarding.

I was then shown around the premises and the location of my office on the second floor in the East Wing of the White House. (John Steelman, Harry Vaughan and Bob Dennison were on the first floor just below me.) It consisted of my office and an adjoining secretary-receptionist office with usual furnishings. It was obvious I would have to go to the Air Force for a secretary and such transportation as might be needed and authorized.

During the tour of the White House that first day, I was shown, among other things, the enclosed White House swimming pool with an adjoining enclosed exercise room like a small gym with the usual exercise equipment. I was told the President loved to swim and have a massage after he left the office around 5:00 to 5:30 each day. The little gym appealed to me because in those days I tried to exercise and work-out as much as possible. I wondered if I would be permitted to use the gym--swimming didn't interest me at all. At the

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proper time, later on, I figured I would ask the President if I was permitted to use it.

The rest of the day was spent getting oriented in this high-level environment. Either the President or Matt had told me after the meeting that I was expected to attend their daily 9:30 a.m. meetings with the principal staff members and his three Aides when he was in residence. I also learned that when the President attended local official gatherings, his three military aides were to escort him. Information on such activities--times, places, etc.--would be furnished by Connelly's office.

For the first several weeks I mostly watched and listened to what was going on. Several things seemed clear to me; one, there was no job description or precedent concerning what my responsibilities were; two, it became clear that my position on the staff was at the same level as other principal staff members, reporting directly to "the boss," the President. I assumed it was up to me to anticipate how best I could serve the President as the Air Force

representative on this special assignment. Duties and responsibilities would develop, I felt sure, and they did, as is indicated later on in this transcript.

What I believe was the first order given to me by the President early on was the scheduling of the

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Presidential airplane for use by the family, cabinet officers, other high Government officials approved by the President, and heads of foreign governments invited to visit the United States by the President. All scheduling was to be handled by me, and I was to be present in the aircraft as the President's representative on all such flights.

Soon after the completion of one of the morning meetings I had an opportunity to speak to the President about working out in the gym. "You do just that whenever you like," he said, "and use the pool, too, if you want to. It would be good company for me; nobody on the staff has ever shown much interest in these facilities."

Well, as it turned out the President would have his swim, shower and have a massage which he enjoyed very much as it was very relaxing and helpful in restoring the energy spent during the day in the office. While he relaxed on the table and I was dressing, he often liked to chat about events of the day, occasionally some more pressing matters such as the cold war, the Russian threat, the Korean situation and things like that. It was on one such occasion that I recommended to the President he have an up-to-date briefing on the Air Force on the Strategic Air Command's capabilities and readiness to launch a

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devastating airborne attack against vital Soviet targets, if such action should ever to necessary as a result of something like a Soviet miscalculated intercontinental atomic missile first strike against the United States. He thought the idea was a timely suggestion and told me to have it set up. The briefing took place in the Cabinet room in September, 1948, I believe. The subject matter was limited only to strategic air operations. The President; Secretary Symington; Chief of Staff General Hoyt Vandenberg; the briefer, Major General Montgomery; and myself attended the briefing. I'm not sure if Vaughan and Dennison attended it.

FUCHS: Did you become involved in the controversy over unification in any way?

LANDRY: No, this was not part of the unification program. I believe I can correctly say the President, and others, too, had become a little tired of the squabbling and infighting among the services over missions and the lion's share of appropriated money. The separation of the Army Air Force from the Army in September, 1947, was a distinct and separate action taken by the Congress and supported by the President. Under the term unification, the President meant, and he expected the several service departments to understand,

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that he wanted them to work together as a team in harmony, respect, and mutual understanding in regard to the fulfillment of their respective missions assigned by higher headquarters. Budget matters must be resolved between partners on a fair and equitable basis.

FUCHS: Well, when they set up the National Defense Establishment, first, they created the Air Force. Weren't there some problems involved there?

LANDRY: No, I don't think the Defense Department came into being at the same time as the Air Force.

FUCHS: No, it was later.

LANDRY: It was later.

FUCHS: But I believe they did have a National Military Establishment when they created the Air Force.

LANDRY: Yes, I would go along with this.

FUCHS: Were you happy about this assignment?

LANDRY: Well, I was very happy about it, but not knowing what it was all about, I was a bit bewildered. Knowing that we had a Chief of Staff and a Secretary and, I guess in those days, a Secretary of Defense, too, I did sort of wonder just exactly what my job would be. I

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don't mean to be boastful in any way. I felt quite honored, in being the first Air Force Aide.

FUCHS: How had the air travel been handled in the White House prior to their having an Air Force Aide?

LANDRY: Well, air travel for the President and for members of the Cabinet, or for any top official of Government that the President wanted to have travel by air someplace, and himself, of course was handled by a crew provided by MATS at that time, Military Air Transport Service. The Air Force provided an airplane--at that time it was a DC-6--and provided also a topflight crew under the command and control of Colonel Francis Williams.

FUCHS: MATS provided the *Sacred Cow* for Roosevelt.

LANDRY: The *Sacred Cow*. Mr. Truman had that for a while. The *Sacred Cow* was a C-54. Then we got the Douglas DC-6, and that was the one that we used the five years I was there. We got that fairly early in '48 and kept it right on through until '53 when I left. But the air transportation was handled by that crew.

Now, as I mentioned earlier, when I came in I was made responsible for all the air transportation, and I suppose during that period of time I must have, at the direction of the

President, gone over and gotten, or

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taken to and from the United States to their respective countries, ten, twelve, fifteen heads of state. For example, we flew the Shah of Iran a couple of times, and the President of Venezuela as well as Mr. [Winston] Churchill from England and so on. While I was not actually a part of the flying crew, I was in command of the air plane and of the operation. I took Mr. Acheson many times, as I mentioned to you this morning, to Paris first and then to New York City for meetings of the United Nations, and to various other parts of the world. All scheduling of the President's airplane was done in my office.

FUCHS: Did you know Vaughan and Admiral Dennison before you met them that day at the press conference?

LANDRY: No, I had never met Vaughan or Dennison, and, as I told you this morning, I had never met the President. In fact, I had never even seen a President, so it was a little awesome to be standing behind him that particular morning in February.

FUCHS: Did he take you aside after that and articulate further what you might be doing in the White House?

LANDRY: No. No, I don't recall that he ever took me aside and articulated anything. There was no such thing as a job description, and he didn't say that you're

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responsible for anything in particular, except it was evident that he expected me to handle the air transportation because his secretaries always came to me on that. So, it developed that that was one of my responsibilities.

I would say that if there was anything that had been difficult in the five years there it was, at times, a little difficult to know exactly what to do. But it was obvious that I was representing the Air Force and it was up to me to speak of the Air Force in glowing terms or to explain or to comment on things that the Air Force was trying to do at the appropriate time without in any sense of the word trying to oversell, or be doing it at the expense of any other service.

I do remember one thing. Very shortly after I got there--this is kind of strange--Matt Connelly, who was the Appointments Secretary, asked me if I would like to go to lunch with him one day. He would like to just visit with me. I said, "Sure, I'd love to." I had never met Matt before and he seemed like a very likeable fellow. I didn't know what he wanted to talk about.

So, we went to the hotel over there on K and 16th Streets, right across from the Statler. We sat down and talked, and very soon it was evident that Mr.

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Connelly wanted to let me know that while they loved to have military over there on staff, and they were delighted to have me, that civilians really ran that staff, and, while he didn't say so in so many words, that I should keep my nose out of things that were not my business. He indicated that I should do something like that. Not knowing exactly what my business was, I thought that was very amusing.

So, I think it was a kind of a warning or a charge to me to stay with the Air Force things, as they came up, and stay out of things like White House political and economic policy matters. We had a very friendly lunch and I got his message. I think he was just trying to tell me not to go meddling in anything I might want to meddle in, try to get my foot into anything. He wasn't scolding me, because I hadn't been there but a couple or three weeks.

FUCHS: Hadn't done anything yet.

LANDRY: Hadn't done anything yet. And at no time can I recall ever being unable to see the President when I had something I felt I needed to talk to him about.

FUCHS: Did you ever notice any resentment by the civilian members against any of the military aides?

LANDRY: No, I noticed just the opposite. I think, as I

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said this morning, the Naval Aide had the office of record. Admiral [William D.] Leahy had been there as a four-star admiral and was Chief of Staff until he retired and [Admiral Robert] Dennison came over [as Naval Aide to the President]. Dennison spent a great deal more time with papers and the President than any of the rest of us. Vaughan was an old war buddy in World War II. I was a new guy there still wet behind the ears and not knowing exactly what I should or should not get into. But as time went on and I had my opportunities to advise and to explain air power, I think I make a contribution to his tenure of office there; I think I did help him a great deal. And as I look through some of his correspondence, some of his comments, he said on several occasions that he really appreciated the contribution I had made, which I considered to be a contribution on Air Force matters.

FUCHS: Do you recall any comments he made at this briefing?

LANDRY: Oh, I think, if I remember, he complimented the briefer, he complimented Secretary Symington, and the chief. He said he was delighted, and that he learned a lot about the subject. And that was about it. But it was the first time that any real briefing on air power, as far as I know, had ever been presented to Mr. Truman. Concerning previous Presidents, I don't know.

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Roosevelt was a Navy man, and I guess he knew a lot about the Navy; he had been Secretary of the Navy. I think Mr. Truman, having been in the Army, knew quite a bit about

Army matters. But there's an interesting letter here, if I can find it, where he said something about he doesn't know too much about the military, which I thought was rather amusing. But he was only saying something to the effect, in a letter to me, that he was still learning about the military even though he was Commander in Chief, and had been in the Army and that sort of thing, which was an expression of humility in a way--that he always figured that he was learning.

I think it would be good for the record then, and probably other people have said this, but he truly loved the military. He just loved a man in uniform; and he often told me, "I wanted to go to West Point, but," he said, "I couldn't go, I had bad eyes." He really told me that any number of times, that he would have loved to have gone to West Point. He idolized [George C.] Marshall as a military man; thought he was one of the great living Americans.

He thought [Omar N.] Bradley was the finest field commander--he was the field commander of the largest force ever put in the field. General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower was a political commander in a sense, a strategic commander, but Bradley actually had command

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of the forces in the field, and President Truman thought Bradley was one of the great commanders. As a matter of fact, it was after the war that Bradley got his fifth star when the President made him chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Bradley was not a five-star man during the war.

So, he set that whole thing up. He got the law through the Congress that provided that these top flight people would never retire; that they would always be available. They would just sort of step down; that they would have an aide and a secretary and an office always available to them. These were the things that he thought that top military men should be entitled to.

FUCHS: Did you ever notice any leaning towards the Army over the Air Force and the Navy?

LANDRY: No, I don't think so at all. And in his reviews of the budget and trying to determine a budget for the several services, I think he listened to all the presentation. I don't recall in any instance where he sort of went out of the way or showed favoritism towards any particular service. He did a couple of things, I remember. I think he had a lot to do with the unification to stop this infighting and bickering and cutting each others throat for a bigger cut of the

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budget. I think that was good.

We used to have an Army Day and Navy Day, and I don't think we ever had an Air Force Day because the Air Force was so new, but he thought it should be Armed Forces Day. I remember the first day we reviewed it on Constitution Avenue, he was very proud of that. He wanted one Armed Forces Day. I think he thought that a man in the Army should wear an Army uniform and they should have their own tradition, and the Navy should have their own set-up as should the Air Force, and special missions. But he felt that they were all in the

Armed Forces. I think he felt just as good towards all the three major services. I'm not talking about the Coast Guard and all that, or the Marines, because the Marines are part of the Navy. I'm talking about the Army, Navy and Air Force. I don't think he ever favored one over the other, as far as I knew, in any discussions or anything else.

FUCHS: Did you ever have occasion to discuss with him some of his experiences in World War I?

LANDRY: Well, one of the things he loved to do--I've got some pictures--he'd get out with his old buddies in Kansas City and march, in the Armed Forces Day parade I think it was.

FUCHS: He used to go to the reunions of the 35th Division,

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some of them.

LANDRY: That's right. I think that's more specifically what I'm talking about, the reunion. He would get out there and march with his cane and his hat.

FUCHS: Of course, they came to the Inauguration, too, in 1949.

LANDRY: Yes, they came to the Inauguration. He maintained a very strong tie with all those people, no matter what their walks of life were after the war. No, he was a commander in chief in every sense of the word in my opinion, because he loved the service and he respected it.

FUCHS: Do you recall what occurred next after that briefing?

LANDRY: No, I don't think so. Maybe if I'd just go over a couple of things that are more like anecdotes.

FUCHS: It was said at one time that there seemed to be a move to make General Vaughan the head defense aide, and the others would more or less be under him. Do you recall anything of that?

LANDRY: I think that might very well have been in the back of the mind of Harry. I don't know whether he talked it over with the President or not. We, Dennison and I,

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never got into any discussion with anybody about it. I can remember having heard something about it, and if Harry did have this in mind I don't think it could ever have been done, because it was the understanding when I went over there that I represented the Air Force and I wasn't, in a sense, subservient to any other military person. I'm sure that Dennison didn't feel he was and would never have put up with him. I think Harry Vaughan, being a close old World War I buddy of the President, may have thought that his prestige might have been a little bigger, but in terms of seniority--I went over there as a colonel, Dennison was an admiral, Vaughan

was a general; rank didn't make any difference, because it just didn't come into play normally. I think we would be seated according to rank in various kinds of functions.

I certainly wouldn't believe that Harry Vaughan was trying to be the bigshot mogul and we would be assistant aides to him. I think that feeling might have developed because of the closeness of Harry Vaughan to Mr. Truman over the years, but I don't think anything ever came of it. I imagine some of that got into the press as a matter of fact, but it didn't bother us because I think that had it gotten to the point where it might have been a fact that probably we would have gone in and asked to discuss it with the

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President. There was certainly no need in having an overall aide and three assistants, so nothing ever came of it. There was some chatter about it, but it didn't amount to anything and it certainly didn't affect my relationship with Vaughan. I don't think it affected Dennison's relation with Harry Vaughan at all. We all worked together very well, indeed.

FUCHS: Was Admiral Dennison's relationship to the President, as far as you know, any different from yours?

LANDRY: No, Admiral Dennison had been there longer than I had and as a matter of fact Admiral Dennison had been the commander of the battleship *Missouri* that took Mr. Truman on a cruise, shortly after he became President. Mr. Truman was terribly fond of Admiral Dennison, which I think he was of all his aides. He knew him a long time. He respected Bob Dennison, who was a very studious type and who probably could have been Chief of Naval Operations if he wanted to. Dennison preferred, as I understood it, to be Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Fleet than Chief of Naval Operations. He had the guts of the Navy under him. No, Mr. Truman thought very highly of Dennison, as I did.

FUCHS: What occasioned the replacement of [Rear Admiral James H.] Foskett by Dennison?

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LANDRY: That was all before my time.

FUCHS: You never heard them discuss that?

LANDRY: No.

FUCHS: Whether it was just rotation or...

LANDRY: That was before my time. No, that was the time when I think Clark Clifford was in uniform, and was in Foskett's office. You see, Foskett was the Naval Aide and I think Clark Clifford was a commander at the time, lieutenant commander or something, and before he got out of uniform he became the President's legal counsel. No, I have no knowledge of the Foskett situation at all.

I think this is a good time to tell a couple of anecdotes about military people.

I'm looking here now at the huge arms outlay. See, in January 1949, the proposal by the President was for a 15 billion, 900 million dollars military budget. So, when we were talking about 24 billion this morning as the total budget, that's probably the correct figure in 1949. Let's see--I want to see the 70-group program. I think it was in 1949.

FUCHS: Was that when the discussion over the 70 groups versus a lesser number arose?

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LANDRY: Yes, I'm just trying to find it. I'll pin it down a little bit more correctly. "Air power advocates ready to fight for 70-group program. Stu Symington was Secretary of the Air Force and he was asked to testify before either the Senate or the House Armed Services Committee. There was a lot of infighting going on there for the major share of the budget, that is, between the services, and the Air Force felt that they had to have 70 groups, as I mentioned this morning. The military had been emasculated after World War II, reduced severely.

FUCHS: Did you ever discuss this with Mr. Truman?

LANDRY: Not in great detail, because that was more or less on a little higher level than I felt I should go and he never asked me. I discussed only the feeling that the Air Force should be built up and they were fighting for what they called a 70-group program.

Well, the President's budget provided, if I remember correctly, money for only about a 48-group program, and that was all right with the other services, but it wasn't all right with the Air Force. So, the Air Force was conducting its own campaign in Congress and had to state its own belief if they were to be sincere, and that's what Symington did before the Armed Services Committee, I believe, of either the

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House or the Senate; I don't remember which. That was contrary to what the President said he could afford in the budget.

So, the papers put out a big headline, "SYMINGTON DEFIES HST." I can still see it. And I tell you, it made real headlines. It was a very controversial thing and very sensitive. Symington reacted to it right away and got me on the horn and said, "Come on over, I want to talk to you." He wanted me to go back and explain to the President that he was in no sense of the word defying the Commander in Chief. That he had been asked what his opinion was, and based upon the advice that he had got from the military, from his own people, from his own staff and from the Air Force people in uniform, 70 groups was about the force that was needed for the security of the United States so far as the Air Force mission, and he so stated. So, he said, "You go back and tell the President that I'm not fighting him and I'm not defying him; I just felt that I had to state what I sincerely believed."

Which I did, and Mr. Connelly let me in between one of the appointments. I said I had an urgent message from the Secretary, because I think Mr. Secretary was getting a little queasy

about the fact that maybe the President did believe he was defying him. But when I explained it to Mr. Truman he smiled

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and said, "Get back on your horse, Bob, and go across the river and tell Stu to just keep his mouth shut for a few days; this will all blow over." Which I think was some relief to the Secretary and eased his own mind.

FUCHS: Had you known Stu Symington prior to your going into the White House?

LANDRY: I had known Secretary Symington because, as I said earlier, I was the executive officer to General Spaatz, and Mr. Symington's office was right here, we will say, on my left. Secretary Spaatz' office was right here on my right. I sat outside of Spaatz' office, so they were always going back and forth. Symington was usually going in and out of Spaatz' office a half a dozen times a day. So, I had known the Secretary in that job as executive officer for the Chief, for about eight months. I had formerly been on the staff of the War College over at Fort McNair as a representative of strategic air power before I got assigned to General Spaatz' office. So, I knew Symington probably for about a year.

I think the services were always grabbing for the largest share of the budget because they never had enough money to do what they thought they should do. The Navy in those days was trying to get the strategic

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air mission, because they thought they wouldn't have an air mission in the future--maybe the battleship was about done--and they wanted to build up a carrier force and probably take the strategic mission.

FUCHS: Why did they really want this? Didn't they have enough else to do?

LANDRY: Well, I think it was thought by some people that the Navy may run out of a mission. You know, the battleship had always been the front line; then the carriers came along in the Navy, and the old battleship admirals didn't think much of the carriers. So they were having an internal squabble. We had developed strategic airpower during World War II and knew what it could do. We knew, for example, that if they hadn't had the air offensive against Germany and knocked out all their ability to wage war, knocked out the oil industry, and knocked out the manufacturing industry, we never could have made a landing on the continent. But we did that with strategic airpower. So all the surveys made from the war indicated that strategic airpower was here to stay.

I was saying, the newspapers aided and abetted some of it, because maybe they were pro one service or the other, and a headline like that didn't do any good. Actually, as a result of this infighting that went on,

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you got unification, which tended to overcome some of that, because the Secretary of Defense had greater authority to apportion money. Prior to that time each service more or less autonomously had said this is what they wanted. So there had been three different approaches.

FUCHS: This point that the newspapers sometimes overplay things, or misstate, was brought up by you in an incident with Rosie [Emmett, Jr.] O'Donnell, I believe.

LANDRY: Yes, that's another one that I think shows the character and shows the thinking of the President. He wasn't concerned about a political controversy going on about the budget and one of the Armed Forces. He wasn't going to think ill of a man that he had thought so highly of, whereas other people would love to have cut his throat.

Yes, like I was saying, I think the great significance of the Symington incident is the fact that the President never got rattled or concerned, or lost his loyalty to people because of something they might have said in conscience, or because somebody in the press wrote something or some statement was made on the radio, as was being said about Vaughan from time to time. He never lost his love and affection for those people, or his respect. So, I think that's great, that

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under political pressure and everything else, he could do that.

There's one other incident that I think illustrates this loyalty towards people, his respect toward people. One of the great Air Force generals we had was Rosie O'Donnell. General Rosie O'Donnell, later Commander in Chief of Pacific Air Forces, led the first raid against the Japanese with B-29s in World War II. O'Donnell was commanding general of the 15th Air Force bomber forces that were being employed in Korea in the Korean war. Maybe it was '51-'52, along in there. The bombers began to take quite a licking because they weren't allowed to get up there and hit the real targets. I think they were stopped at the Yalu River. Although Rosie O'Donnell was not over in Korea all the time--he had his command headquarters at March Air Force Base in California--he spent some time over there, and came back home and naturally the press wanted to talk to him. During this period of time it was getting close, hopefully, to the end of the Korean war. There were some serious negotiations going on, of which Mr. Truman, of course, was well aware, to try to put an end to this war. So, there was a very delicate situation there, and we decided not to commit any more forces over there. We didn't want to get pinned down in Korea and have the Russians overrun all of Western

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Europe.

So, the situation was touchy, and Rosie had a press conference and explained why he was over there and what they were doing, and that sort of thing. Anyway, he thought the press

conference was all over--I think he was in his own office; he had walked out of the press conference room, certainly. He mentioned to some of his staff, which a man would do privately, that by God how in the world can we win; we ought to hit them with everything we got. I think his words were, "We ought to hit them with everything we've got if we want to win this war and get out of there."

Well, somebody in the press was either in the hall or heard this and put it on the Associated Press: "O'Donnell says that the United States should use the A-bomb."

Well, coming at a delicate time--these negotiations were going on to get us out of there--that comment was not good. In any case, John Steelman, the Assistant to the President, who was in the East Wing of the White House where I was, downstairs, called me down, and he said, "Take a look at this, Bob."

I read it and I said, "My goodness, it wouldn't surprise me if O'Donnell said this, but it sure as hell would surprise me if he said it to a press conference." [I knew] O'Donnell was a fighting general and the kind

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of man that would want to get at the heart of the enemy like we had done in World War II and get the damn thing over with.

Well, about that time I went upstairs, the phone rang, and General [Hoyt] Vandenberg, who was now Chief of Staff, who had succeeded General Spaatz, said, "Bob, come over, I want to talk to you right away."

So, having seen this telegram I had a pretty good idea what he wanted to talk about but I wasn't sure. He said, "I have just heard that O'Donnell has made a statement from March Field that could be very embarrassing for the Air Force and for the President."

I said, "Are you talking about that comment about using the A-bomb?"

He said, "Yes." He said, "I want you to tell the President that I have ordered O'Donnell to Washington immediately to explain what this is all about." He said, "You tell Mr. Truman that."

I said, "Yes, sir."

So, I went over there and asked Matt to get me in, that I had another important thing to say to the President. So, between appointments I went in. The President was there and greeted me with a smile as usual. I said, "Mr. President, I've got something to tell you involving an Air Force general who has been out to Korea. A statement has been made on the

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Associated Press line that O'Donnell says we should use the A-bomb in the Korean war."

[Incidentally,] if memory serves me correct, having known O'Donnell for many years as a lieutenant, and then later as a senior officer, I called up O'Donnell to try to find out what the hell had gone on before I went in to see the President. Also, this was after I had seen the Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff didn't seem to know what O'Donnell had said; and I didn't want to go in, in case the President asked me what O'Donnell had really said. So, I figured the best way to find out what O'Donnell had said, if anything, was to call him, which I did.

He said, "Hell, no, I didn't say anything like that to the press. Somebody may have heard me say that we had ought to hit them with everything we've got, but," he said, "I certainly didn't say anything about the bomb; and I didn't say anything about hitting them with everything we've got at the meeting as far as I can recall. Somebody must have been standing outside of my office when I was talking to one of my staff."

So I said, "Well, fine, I just wanted to know because Vandenberg just sent for me, and he is sending me to the President to tell him about this statement from the Associated Press before he reads it in the paper."

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So, I went on in, as I say, and I saw the President. I said, "I want to tell you about a fighting Irish general we've got, the guy who led the first raid against Tokyo with the B-29, commanded the 15th Air Force, and one hell of a fine officer." I said, "It's been attributed to him in the newspapers that he made this statement about using the A-bomb." I said, "I called up O'Donnell and asked him, and he says, 'hell, no' he hadn't said that." And I said, "Well, Mr. President, I can only tell you one thing about O'Donnell; he probably felt that way, and he probably would liked to have used everything he's got, but I can assure you that he wouldn't have made a public statement like that. Somehow or other he got in the press and it was a mistake." I said, "General Vandenberg is sick about it; he's worried about it, and he just asked me to come in and tell you. He's ordered O'Donnell back to Washington to explain the whole thing."

And he [President Truman] laughed and he laughed and he said, "Bob, you tell Vandenberg not to worry about this. You know, if I had been in O'Donnell's position I would have said the same thing."

So, then I said to the President, "Well, it's good for me to tell Vandenberg that, but the guy that's really probably wondering what's going to happen to him

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is O'Donnell." I said, "Can I call him up and tell him you said that?"

He said, "You do that."

FUCHS: This never had any adverse effect on O'Donnell?

LANDRY: Never had any adverse effect on O'Donnell and, of course, I went back and told Vandenberg that the President was not too concerned about it, that he understood it very well. I didn't get into how or what I knew that O'Donnell had told me, because I didn't want the Chief to know that I had gone to O'Donnell right away. But I knew the Chief would get the same information from O'Donnell that I had gotten. Yet it was touch and go. Again, here's a military situation, here's a big international situation, you would expect that the President might have got a little furious, but instead of that I think he indicated he understood what a good military man would be thinking. He knew that he hadn't just come out and said, "Let's drop the A-bomb on the people," but understood it for what it was. So, there again, when he heard the facts, why, he was satisfied.

I think that kind of thing is typical of Mr. Truman. I remember so many times how I used to see him when working out in the gym. He'd swim in the evening around 5 o'clock. I'd go over and work out and he'd

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get a rubdown. He would chat a little bit, with all these things going on in the world, information that only he knew, decisions to be made, things coming up like this that could be irritating, and could be damaging. He used to always say, "If I couldn't take my nap--he went to lunch between 1 and 3--"and relax and put everything out of my mind, I could never stay in this office very long." He said, "I've trained myself that when matters are brought to my attention for a decision, I make a decision and then I dismiss it." I think it's indicated in many things that have been written about the man that he got the best information he could and he made the best decision he could and then that was it.

Now, to me that's a sign of a great leader, and even though he wouldn't have won a popularity contest in 1948-49 and '50, I'll guarantee you, he made some of the greatest decisions in the world after he took office. By the use of military force soon after the end of World War II, he prevented a Communist Russia take-over of Greece and Turkey. There was the use of the atomic bomb on Japan, the Marshall Plan, the President's strong support of the United Nations, holding the line under U.N. mandate in Korea, the Berlin airlift--just to name a few.

FUCHS: What do you recall about the Berlin airlift?

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LANDRY: I was in Germany. I was in the Eighth Air Force. When we dropped the bomb in August '45, I was in Frankfort, Germany. The war was over in Europe, and that of course led to the end of the war in the Pacific. I don't know anything more about the bomb than I have read in the books about Mr. Truman and in other historical books. I don't know anything about that. I knew something about the Berlin airlift.

FUCHS: I'm wondering what were your reactions at the time; did you feel that we were biting off more than we could chew? What were your professional reactions on that?

LANDRY: On the Berlin airlift?

FUCHS: Yes.

LANDRY: I think that that was one of the things to prevent the Russians from overrunning a good part of Western Europe, certainly more of Germany. Mr. Truman was accused of being soft of communism at one time, because he used to refer to Joe Stalin as "Old Joe," but he referred to people in a nice way no matter what. He stopped the Communists right there in Berlin.

FUCHS: Your first reaction was that logistically we could do what we set out to do there?

LANDRY: Well, logistically nobody had ever hauled coal. We

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had hauled other supplies in the C-54s. I was talking about the Berlin airlift with the President one day. General [Curtis E.] LeMay was in charge of it, and LeMay had some other people over in Europe [to supervise it]. I said, "Don't you think I had ought to go over there and take a look at that, Mr. President, and see how it's going?"

"Well," he said, "why don't you do that, Bob. Tell me what you see." So I went on over there and flew on one of the airplanes loaded with coal. God, soot all over, it's something. No, that was a very, very fine move, and I think that was one of the first little confrontations of any consequence we had with the Communists.

FUCHS: In Iran, we had a small one there when they were not getting out as quickly as they promised they would.

LANDRY: Yes, but this was a sensitive area, you know. This was much, much more serious and I think it was one of the first confrontations; I think it was very effective, very effective.

I don't know whether I should comment on the [General Douglas] MacArthur thing or not?

FUCHS: I wish you would.

LANDRY: Well, I think this would be significant because

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there again it shows the makeup of the man who was President, as a human being and as a man who is Commander in Chief, and a man who loved the military as a whole, and loved the people in the military, and respected the military. When MacArthur, for reasons best known to himself, I guess, began to communicate with the Congress of the United States directly, I think with Representative [Joseph] Martin, Speaker Martin at the time, Mr. Truman considered that to be a contravention of his, the President's, duties and responsibilities in the foreign power field, and certainly as Commander in Chief. It had to be considered as going over the head of your superior. I think that to most senior military people in Washington,

before Mr. Truman took any action, there was the general feeling that this [action by MacArthur] was not right. In any case, I won't go into the details. Mr. Truman did mention to me one time when he was just talking about military things in general, that he had a great general, one of the finest we've ever produced in this country. Even after General MacArthur had sort of "gotten off the reservation," we might say, in a little way, and gone directly to Congress, had he had the military courtesy to come and pay his credentials to the President and try to explain, Mr. Truman indicated that he would have forgiven the whole

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thing.

FUCHS: You are saying that he would have felt more kindly toward MacArthur if after he had relieved him he had come back and at least paid his respects?

LANDRY: I think that's probably so. He did mention it one time. He had met with MacArthur for the first time, as I mentioned, at Wake [Island].

FUCHS: Yes, I'd like to hear your comment of how you became involved in the Wake Island meeting in October, 1950.

LANDRY: So the President had a great respect for the man, as a military man, and I think that when this happened the President was hurt by the way it had developed. I think that probably is a better way of putting it. I might say that having come back like that still in uniform and so on, he was still a general and Mr. Truman was still Commander in Chief. So, I think the President was hurt by that whole thing. His decision to do what he did, I won't comment on that because that's been commented on by other people much more competent than I am.

Oh, on the Wake meeting Mr. Truman was anxious to find out if he could pull some units out of Korea.

FUCHS: He wanted to send them where?

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LANDRY: I think that he was worried about the defense of Western Europe, very much worried about it. So, he wanted to talk to MacArthur, who didn't feel, if I remember correctly, that he could leave and come [all the way] back. So, the President indicated he would meet him roughly halfway. He wanted to talk to him, and I think he wanted to hear it from MacArthur, what he thought of the military situation and that sort of thing.

So, he called me in one day and he said, "Bob, I want you and Jim [James J.] Rowley to go out there as quickly as you can and get this meeting set up." The Navy was over there on Wake, but I don't think Bob Dennison could go. Anyway, we flew over, partly on commercial as well as Air Force airplanes, to save time. So, he asked me to go and we set it up. The President, I think, came over a day or two later, and he was most anxious to get the thing

going. I didn't even take any clothes with me. I went with the uniform I was in and lived in it for three or four days. We got on the first commercial airplane we could get on. That's how quickly the thing developed. MacArthur, of course, got there first and then the President got there several hours later. MacArthur greeted him. They had the meeting in an old communications hut; MacArthur and some of his staff, and the President and

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some of his staff. I'm a little hazy on who the military people were, except that I was allowed to sit in the meeting, which lasted several hours.

FUCHS: Do you recall anything substantive while you were in the meeting that might be of interest, that ought to be recorded?

LANDRY: Well, I think that somewhere in the records that will be available to you, if it has not come out by now, that there will be a pretty good account of what went on in that meeting.

FUCHS: Well, of course, this is a story that Vernice Anderson, who was secretary to Ambassador [Phillip C.] Jessup, was outside a door that was ajar and took notes. I wonder if you remember that?

LANDRY: It was not recorded, I am sure of that; but I think there were many, many notes made of this that would be really accurate. It's such a sensitive thing in terms of history and involves so many people--I know what was said and what went on--but I would prefer it to come from some of the written notes that I am sure will reflect accurately what I said. I mean there was no intent to spy on anybody, or anything like that. It could be that some of the things didn't develop like they might have according to what went on in the

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meeting.

FUCHS: It would be of interest if you would put it in the record, but I'll respect your judgment on that, certainly.

LANDRY: I think the President was very much taken with MacArthur, thought so much of him at the moment. Just the two of them had a one-hour meeting. The President was happy and jolly, and the last thing he did before he took off was to pin another DSM [Distinguished Service Medal] on MacArthur.

FUCHS: Two points. One, I believe you've already told me that you haven't read the recent book by Merle Miller...

LANDRY: No.

FUCHS: ...his book, *Plain Speaking*. I haven't either, in toto, but it was brought out in there that there was some jousting about who would land first. We've checked our records and found that this story couldn't have been true. In other words, Mr. Truman was supposed to

have related to Merle Miller that MacArthur was up in the air and didn't want to land before Truman so he would have to greet Truman landing; and Truman said they flew around. We believe that MacArthur landed probably 12 hours earlier. Do you recall

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anything about that?

LANDRY: I'm trying to remember. I don't think it was the day before. I think it was the same day, but MacArthur landed first.

FUCHS: I did see in another account, in the records, that the plane did have a favorable tailwind and it slowed up about an hour and a half out from Wake, and then it circled a little bit, so it would land at its estimated time of arrival.

LANDRY: You know, that's a funny thing. I had ought to be able to remember this, but of course this could be proven out, because the *Independence* log was kept on every flight by Frenchie [Francis] Williams.

FUCHS: Yes, I just wondered if you happened to remember.

LANDRY: I went over there and I picked up a naval officer who was Commander in Chief, Pacific. We were over there the day before, got the place set up. but I'm sure MacArthur came in first. There was a question of timing, yes; but I really don't remember.

FUCHS: Another point. I believe Mr. Truman in his memoirs first mentioned this fact that MacArthur was not in complete uniform; he didn't have a tie and he had an old hat on. Then, I think in this recent book [of

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Merle Miller's] why, it is brought out more forcibly that he thought MacArthur was acting like a second lieutenant or something, with an old hat, and no tie. Did you ever talk with Mr. Truman? Did he ever say anything to you about this, that he was unhappy with the way he was greeted by MacArthur at Wake?

LANDRY: No. My impression was that he thought it was a very good meeting, that he enjoyed it, and he was glad to meet and get to know MacArthur. No, I don't think he ever made any unfavorable comments about it. I've got some pictures of the meeting here, although I don't know where they are right now. They are in a book. I think he did probably have an open collar; he was actually a field commander. You sit in khakis for a long flight, and they probably looked baggy. MacArthur's cap always did look like an Air Force pilot's cap, you know, where the headphones used to go like that.

FUCHS: You didn't think anything about that?

LANDRY: No, I didn't think anything about it. I certainly didn't. No, I thought the meeting went well. At least as far as my impression was, Mr. Truman was very pleased.

FUCHS: Anything else about the Wake conference that you

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would like to put in the record?

LANDRY: No. (See below, pp [82-63](#), and Appendix III.)

FUCHS: Any anecdotes?

LANDRY: No, I don't think so, of any consequence. We just got on the airplane and came back, played poker all the way back to Hawaii.

FUCHS: You did? Did he win?

LANDRY: Well, we always played kind of a penny-ante poker on the airplane; but he was very much relaxed and I think felt good about the whole thing, felt good about what he'd heard.

FUCHS: Did you attend the morning staff meetings regularly?

LANDRY: Yes, I attended every staff meeting with the three aides and the principal assistants; and that would have been Bill [William D.] Hassett, Clark Clifford, Charles Ross, John Steelman, Matt Connelly--that's five--and Vaughan, Dennison and Landry; that's eight. That was the principal personal staff. Now, some of the assistants like Dave Stowe, for example, would come in. I think Dave Stowe was working on the steel issue. Special things would be discussed. Yes, we attended

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staff meetings at 9:30 or 10 o'clock every morning.

FUCHS: How were they conducted?

LANDRY: Well, we all usually went to about the same chair we always sat in. The President was in his chair, and he just went right around the room and said, "John, what have you got today?" The military members really never got into much of the discussion unless it was a particular military subject someone had been asked to check on. We mostly listened, or if we were asked to comment on anything that had military significance, we did. But the staff meeting was principally about government affairs other than military; still, he wanted us there all the time. I would say this, and I never will forget it; I don't think I ever walked into one of those meetings in five years but that that man didn't have a smile on his face and a greeting for everybody. I just couldn't believe it. In spite of some of the crap that was being written and said: just glad to see everybody.

FUCHS: The article "The Terrible Tempered Mr. Truman" wouldn't go along with that? [Huie, William Bradford. "The Terrible Tempered Mr. Truman," *Cosmopolitan*, April 1951, pp. 32-35, 118-119.]

LANDRY: Absolutely unfounded. I never saw him lose his

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temper about anything; not once. I heard him say some things about a few people now and then that he didn't particularly care for, but he was not a malicious man. A lot of this business about him swearing and one thing or another--he referred to some people as an SOB, but he was not vulgar in any sense of the word. He was just a strong gentleman. No, it was just terrific to work for him and to see him operate.

As I said to you, when I got this appointment in February of 1948, and I didn't ask for it, Mr. Truman was just finishing out that end of Mr. Roosevelt's term, and he had to get elected in '48. Nobody in the circles that I seemed to be running around thought that he had a ghost of a chance, and I think this was interesting. As I think I mentioned to you this morning, a lot of my military friends, especially Air Force people, got a laugh out of saying to me that this is going to be probably the shortest assignment I've ever had, from about February to the end of the year.

But then came along June of 1948, and Mr. Truman made what you may remember was referred to in the press as a "non-political tour," a train trip to the west coast, and then back to Washington [D.C.], all on the train. He did some whistle-stopping; he got on the back and he talked to people all over. I went on that trip the first time, just four months after coming to

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the White House. Now we're out seeing him exposed to the people. I had listened to all of this rot about the shortest assignment that I'd have, and this uneducated President, you know, no college man and this and that sort of thing, and easy on communism, a lot of that stuff was kicking around. Then I watched the reaction of the ordinary person that came out to see him and how his response was, and that "give 'em hell" business. I had never seen a politician really in operation before. I was convinced in June of 1948 that I was going to have a longer assignment than eight months.

FUCHS: That early.

LANDRY: I was convinced. That's when I had the feel for it. So when people would talk to me I'd say, "Well, you're going to be surprised." I can remember very clearly feeling that.

FUCHS: Did you travel with him in the later national campaign?

LANDRY: No, none of the military ever went on a political trip with him, and, of course, he didn't use the airplane, he used the train.

There's another story that I think indicates his attitude towards the Armed Forces, towards the

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military, and about him as a person. I think I got this story pretty well. It was towards the end of the term in about 1952, during the campaign. I've already mentioned his great love and respect and regard for Marshall, who was always available to do anything Mr. Truman asked him to do, like serving as Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, those kinds of things, when Marshall came back from early retirement. I believe General Eisenhower was going to make a speech someplace, and an advance copy of the speech had been out, and apparently, as sometimes happens, you may line out something. General Marshall and General Eisenhower had been very close. As a matter of fact, General Marshall had been the one that made General Eisenhower, had picked him for the job, brought him along. If I recall correctly there was a complimentary statement, sentence or two, in one of the paragraphs in General Eisenhower's speech about Marshall. I think it was out in McCarthy's state or someplace like that. Well, somebody said they wanted it deleted and Eisenhower took it out.

FUCHS: I believe it was McCarthy territory, in Wisconsin.

LANDRY: I think it was deleted and the President found out about it and that made him furious. I remember something about that, you know, because there was a

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fallout there. You see, here was Mr. Truman, loving the military and having great respect for the leaders and the senior people, and he couldn't understand [why Eisenhower agreed to that]. I think that was the incident that drove them apart.

FUCHS: Did he mention this to you personally; did you know that he was wrathful about this, so to speak? It is a matter of record that he did get extremely unhappy about Eisenhower deleting that.

LANDRY: No, I don't think that he told me that, but I think it was common knowledge among the staff, that this was not appreciated a bit by the President, because Marshall was considered to be probably the outstanding living American. That's the way he used to refer to Marshall. And for political reasons, to take a complimentary remark out was the beginning of this little thing between General Eisenhower and Mr. Truman, which was very unfortunate. Of course, later on it was corrected. But I mean that's an indication of how strongly he felt about a real American. Certainly General Eisenhower was, too, and I think General Ike may have been a victim of somebody's political, overriding reason for that deletion, if that is correct. It seems to me that that is the correct story, but I think it was just known among the staff,

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and I don't think for a long time many people knew why there was this little falling out between Ike and HST. It wasn't mean or vicious; they just weren't close like they had been before.

FUCHS: Have you met General Eisenhower?

LANDRY: Oh yes, I met General Eisenhower. I didn't know him very well. I knew him after the war when he came back you know, as Chief of Staff of the Army.

FUCHS: Did President Truman give you special assignments now and then to do this and that?

LANDRY: Yes, as indicated in this document and to include such special assignments like some twelve, fifteen, maybe twenty trips where he asked me to go and get the president of Venezuela, the Shah of Iran, Premier of India, Presidents of Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, and others; things like that. I would go as his representative in command of the airplane and escort them to Washington and take them back home, maybe. One way or both ways.

FUCHS: What kind of staff of aides would you take on a trip like that?

LANDRY: Well, we would just take the crew of the airplane and what you would call the flight attendants, who

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would prepare the meals and things like that.

FUCHS: Well, as the Air Force Aide, did you have a certain number of personal aides or assistants?

LANDRY: Well, no, but on the airplane we had a crew.

FUCHS: Yes, but you didn't have an Assistant Air Force Aide?

LANDRY: No, I had no Assistant Air Force Aide, but one thing of interest here. Well, I can tell you what there was in the White House military, and, of course, that may vary with each President, but on the airplane we had the crew and then we had the flight attendants. Probably there were three flight attendants, and we always carried at least two armed guards on the airplane, sometimes four. You see, the airplane was always under guard.

FUCHS: These were Air Force men?

LANDRY: These were all Air Force men. Now, in the White House itself--and I had surveillance over these kids.--we used to call them "the potted palms." Each service (Army, Navy, Air Force) made available seven officers who were used at various functions in the White House; the white glove types, you know. They dressed up and escorted the ladies around, and helped do chores--kept

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people in the lines and that sort of thing. We had those seven representatives who, if there were a reception in the Blue Room, or the East Room or something like that, they would assist the business, and either Vaughan, Dennison and I would always be in the line and would alternate introducing the guests as they came through, things like that. We did have

those military people there that represented the services, and they were always in uniform when they had a function.

FUCHS: They didn't stay on that detail all the time, did they?

LANDRY: Just part-time detail.

FUCHS: They were performing other services, but they came when they were needed at the White House for a function?

LANDRY: Yes. So, you always had that military representation. And, if I remember correctly, one year the Air Force Aide would be responsible for seeing that they were doing the job, available, approving selections as replacements came in. Maybe the next year it would be the Naval Aide, and then maybe Vaughan who called himself the Military Aide--he represented the Army--maybe he'd have it. But that was the extent

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of the military over there except a lot of the drivers came from the military and they were usually in civilian clothes in Washington.

In the way of a special assignment, here is one that I think is very interesting. It's about the trip of Averell Harriman in the summer of 1951. The British were having a hell of a time with the oil situation and the Iranians wanted to kick them out of the country, and the British couldn't seem to work out any solution to the problem. Mr. Truman was very close to Mr. [Winston] Churchill at this time, and Mr. Churchill either asked Mr. Truman if he would assist, or Mr. Truman offered to assist; in any case, Mr. Truman asked Mr. Harriman to go over to Iran and see if he could help arbitrate this thing. Having got the Shah of Iran once before, having gone over to get him to bring him back to the United States, I knew the Shah. And so, the President thought it might be useful to Harriman, my knowing the Shah, if I went along; but also he was very much concerned about Harriman's security. Harriman took a fellow named Bill [William M.] Rountree from the State Department, and Dick [Vernon] Walters, who recently became famous testifying in the Watergate thing. He at that time [1951] was a colonel, who spoke about six languages; that was the staff that Harriman had.

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The President called me in and he said, "I want you to go over there." The only instructions he gave me were, "Bob, don't you let anything happen to Harriman."

Now, at that time, [Mohammed] Mossadegh was in the parliament, you remember, and the feeling over there was very anti-West. People were not too happy, and there was some great concern on the part of the President for Harriman's safety. Well, of course, they provided soldiers over there and everything, and no Secret Service or bodyguards were sent with Harriman.

FUCHS: Oh, is that right?

LANDRY: So, little old Landry was sitting there with a little pistol in his pocket all the time, and I kind of wondered what the hell I would do if they really wanted to kill everybody. But, we were over there six weeks. He was very much concerned with Averell Harriman's safety. We spent an interesting six weeks over there.

FUCHS: What were your views of Averell Harriman? Do you have any reflections upon his competency?

LANDRY: Oh, yes, I thought that Harriman was doing a very great job. I'll read something here. This was a letter I wrote to Vaughan to give to the President:

As I mentioned to Bob Dennison, Averell has driven himself hard since we arrived with little regard for anything except results. Since the British arrived and began the

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negotiations there has been some easing of the pace. However, there is a tenseness about the entire situation which, although it appears to be moving most satisfactorily, induces a sort of strain that is not easily overcome. His patience and understanding of all the factors involved in this complicated oil situation has contributed greatly to the results achieved thus far. In no small measure has his rather quiet and disarming charm broken down the Iranians and given new assurance to the British. The remarkable thing about the whole performance is the fact that he has won over the Iranian people completely and reestablished American prestige which was at a very low ebb.

And then at the same time he has not in any sense of the word let the British down, as to do so would have been to lower the prestige not only of the British in the Middle East, but all the people of the countries of the West as well.

So, in answer to your question I would say that Averell Harriman did a wonderful job over there under very difficult circumstances. But Averell is a very patient man, a very thorough man, a very dedicated man. Unfortunately in that case he wasn't able to accomplish too much because nobody could deal with Mr. Mossadegh.

An interesting thing about the Iranian trip, and, of course, this is nothing new, but this Mr. Mossadegh had his interviews in bed. He'd sit there in his pajamas.

Averell Harriman would go over there and talk to him when he wanted to talk, and he would come back feeling very good about some progress being made. He would sit down with Rountree and

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meticulously work out a dispatch to the state Department, go back the next day, and Mossadegh would have completely reversed himself. So it was a very frustrating thing for him, and after about six weeks he came home. I think Mr. Harriman had hoped to be there not more than two weeks. Well, it was a frustrating thing and then after six weeks there wasn't much more we could do, and I certainly had no part in the negotiations.

FUCHS: You mentioned this morning that you did have an assignment when the McCarthy era came along to investigate the precedents of witch-hunting in the United States.

LANDRY: Oh, I didn't tell you about the hysteria report yet, did I?

FUCHS: Not on tape. No, sir.

LANDRY: Well, let me tell you another thing that came up. I was just looking at a picture here. It seems to me this was around 1949, '50, right in there. The new Lockheed four-engine airplane had come out and they had a lot of trouble with fires; and then the DC-6 came out and it had a lot of trouble with fire warnings and pulling the fire warning thing. Apparently, some of the carbon dioxide came into the

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cabin and a number of crashes were occurring. There had been several transport planes that had gone into populated areas and killed a bunch of people. One of them was up in New Jersey in the Eastern coast area. There were just an unusually large number of unexplained crashes. The people were getting concerned, especially those around the airports. I was reading about it, and there was developing a little hysteria in the country around these airports. So, one article came out where people in Newark, I think it was, threatened to go out to the airport and place themselves at the end of the runway so there would be no more landings. This is the kind of thing that can become hysteria and people can do funny things, crazy things, insane things. So, I talked around with a few people in the business; I knew everybody in the airline business, and they were all getting a little bit concerned about this situation.

So I suggested to the President one day that this was not a thing for the CAA [Civil Aeronautics Administration], now the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. It was not a thing that they could solve. The airlines couldn't do it. It involved the whole country, not just one state; I thought it was a Government problem. You could have an adverse

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affect on air transportation and the aviation industry as a whole. I said, "I think from what I read in the papers, that maybe the President of the United States ought to ask somebody to look into this thing, maybe a survey."

He said, "That sounds good, Bob. Who would you suggest?"

"Well," I said, "I just happen to have a guy I think would be terrific; everybody knows him." I said, Jimmy [James H.] Doolittle would be just the guy if he would do it."

He said, "Why don't you talk to him and see if he'll do it."

I did then get a hold of Jimmy Doolittle who was then vice-president of Shell Oil, among other things, and had been commander of the 8th Air Force during the war. He also was a famous air racing pilot, and that sort of thing--well-known all over. He knew what the problem was. He said, "What is the involvement? How long will it take?"

"Oh," I said, "I don't know. I imagine you could get it done in about a year." I said, "The President is very much interested in this and he said you could have all the help you want."

So, he said, "All right, I'll do it."

So he made this study and as a result of that

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study there was a book published by his committee. The report that came out was called *The Airport and Its Neighbor*. I think that's the word, and that was this special presidential commission, appointed by the President, to study the problem of built-up areas around airports. As a result of that there are certain areas of land at the end of runways you can't built in and under, so if there is a crash you don't kill a lot of people.

FUCHS: Do you think most of the recommendations by the President's Airport Commission have been implemented since then?

LANDRY: I don't know that I could answer that accurately, but this tended to reduce the hysteria, to deflate a little bit of the concern about airplanes going in on the end of runways, either taking off or landing. But, it was critical, it really was, and everybody in the industry was quite worried about it. It was another form of hysteria.

FUCHS: Did you have something to do with the retirement from presidential use of the *Sacred Cow* and the acquisition of the *Independence*?

LANDRY: I believe about the time I got there, the beginning of 1948, I think they had just phased out

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the DC-4 and we were just getting the DC-6. Both of them were available, but I think the time I got involved in going anyplace in equipment was early in 1948 and we had the DC-6.

The other thing that we mentioned was about a special report that I was asked to prepare. In early 1949, while I was sitting in my office, minding my own business, the phone rings and the President's on the line. He says, "Bob, I would like you to make a study for me." He said, "I'd like for you to make a study for me about witch-hunting in Salem dating back to 1692,

about the Know-Nothing party, the Ku Klux Klan, and about anti-Masonry and hysteria, primarily about the witch-hunting in Salem, starting then."

Then he went on to explain a little bit more. This was during the days of McCarthyism and there was guilt by association and repression and undermining of people with false charges and a sort of hysteria going around, which McCarthyism was a form of. He was very much concerned about it, and I think he was very much concerned about its impact on future elections, and its impact of the country. It might just tend to destroy the country, turning people against people, on the basis of this guilt by association, witch-hunting approach.

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FUCHS: Why did he select you to make this study, do you know?

LANDRY: Just one of the special assignments the President gave me occasionally.

To this day I don't know, because I am no student of history. I've studied history, but I'm not a student of history as such. I think he may have thought that I had the time, I don't know why. And I did have the time, naturally; because I had no job description, I was subject to special things as they came up and to represent him whenever I could and to be with him wherever he went normally in air travel, and certainly be available in the White House on his call.

I haven't the slightest idea why he selected me because it was a very difficult thing. I don't know very much about witch-hunting in Salem in 1692 anyway. But I did sit down and think about it for a couple of days and decided that what I had to get was somebody someplace that was knowledgeable in American history.

Mr. Truman had told me that in getting at this thing, "You'll probably want to use the Library of Congress." He said, "You call them up and tell them anything you want you can have," which I did.

So then I went over to see the Secretary of the

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Air Force and I said, "I've got an assignment where I'm sure going to need some help. I don't have a time limit on this, but we certainly ought to get it done in a few months, six months or so, at least that's what I think I should shoot for." I said, "I've got to have somebody that can help me put this thing together." I said, "I think I know what the President's trying to show, that this is bad for the country, it's un-American, and it's all wrong."

So, they made a survey and found a fellow named Mr. Lauren Green who had a master's degree in American history. He came over to my office and we sat down and talked about it, and he was knowledgeable of course in these kind of things. We sort of made an outline of how to go about this thing and to some extent what we might be trying to prove.

So, Green went ahead and did, oh, three months of real basic research and about every few weeks we'd meet and go over it. We finally got to the point where it was in rough draft, well-documented, good bibliography (I guess we'd call it), and we came up with a study which you've seen, and which I sent to the President, and for which he was very pleased. This thing was later briefed down by [George] Elsey. There is a copy here. It shows

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what this kind of thing can do to the country, or what it has done over the years. Really, it shows how dangerous it is; what hysteria can do. It could destroy the country. I gather it was used very effectively. I presume that the original copy is either in Mr. Truman's files or somewhere in the White House files. [The document, entitled *A Study of Mass Hysteria and "Witch Hunting" in America*, is in the Robert B. Landry Papers at the Truman Library. Copies are also in the Harry S. Truman Papers, Official File and in the George Elsey Papers.]

FUCHS: Quite a large report. I wonder if he had time to read it all? The briefing, you say, was done later.

LANDRY: There is no date on this thing and I don't know when George Elsey did it.

But it's a very interesting report and I think Mr. Green did a magnificent job in putting it together.

FUCHS: In 1950 there were some hearings held to gain higher rank for Air Force officers, to put them on a par, I believe, with the Army and the Navy. Do you recall anything of that of interest?

LANDRY: I had nothing to do with anything like that, but when the Air Force became autonomous, we, of course, had no rules of our own. So I was appointed to a

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committee with one of the Assistant Secretaries, Gene [Eugene M.] Zuckert, and another officer on the Air staff, to take out of the Army rules and regulations those things that would apply to the Air Force. In other words, we had to write all the rules and regulations for the Air Force. Some of them were repeats of what the Army had; in the Army rules and regulations there was a lot of stuff specifically aimed at the Air Force. So that was one thing that was done. When we separated, of course, we had a new officer structure. And if I remember correctly, as compared to the Navy on a comparable basis, for a long, long time the Air Force had a hell of a time getting its senior officer structure up to that that would compare with the Navy and the Army. But I had nothing to do with that over in the White House, that was all handled in the Air Force. But there was a problem, very definitely in that regard.

I'm trying to think of one thing, and I'm sort of jumping to the end of my tour. General [Nathan F.] Twining had become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, of course, used to see the President from time to time; the President knew him well. General Twining, of course, was Air Force Chief of Staff and then he became Chairman of the Joint

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Chiefs. I think General Twining was over there for something else--or the President may have asked him to come in, but I was called down, the President wanted to see me, so I went on down and went on in. There was General Twining with the Chief, and he said, "Bob, I just wanted you to hear what I'm telling General Twining."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "General Twining, I just want to be sure that you understand that I don't want Bob Landry to have to suffer or pay for the five years he's been with me. I want to be sure that this is not going to affect his career adversely."

General Twining said, "Yes, sir."

I thought that was a nice thing for the President to say. I didn't know anything about it. Of course, I didn't expect it would have an adverse effect. And there again, you get in a job like that, and a lot of people will say, "Well, you're out of the normal swim, because you've got an easy job; anyway, you don't have any responsibility, you don't have all this and all that." It's very easy to get out of the main channel and be passed over. I wouldn't say forgotten, but I think just ignored, because you're not slugging it out every day in the mainstream of your own service.

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FUCHS: At the time of unification was there ever any pressure from the Hill, from Congressmen or other individuals, where you entered into it in any way?

LANDRY: No, I never got into it. I got to know Mr. Forrestal very well. Later on I got to know Johnson very well, until he stepped down.

FUCHS: How would you characterize him vis-a-vis Forrestal or some of the other Secretaries of Defense?

LANDRY: Well, I got to be very fond of Forrestal. I think he was a little prejudiced towards the Navy, but I can understand why he might be; he had been Secretary of the Navy.

FUCHS: Did you ever notice the deterioration in him that apparently came, resulting in his death?

LANDRY: No, I never knew that, and I was surprised as anybody to find out he jumped out the 35th story of the naval hospital. I really couldn't believe it. He was a dedicated fellow and if he woke up at night and wrote himself notes and couldn't sleep and got worried about the Russians, it just had to be that he broke down mentally, I suppose; because he was a very fine guy.

I'll tell you one man that I think is one of

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the really great ones in Government. I think Mr. Dean Acheson has got to be one of the ablest men that I have ever been around and listened to; [he was] shrewd, articulate, visionary, and delightful to listen to.

FUCHS: You knew him personally?

LANDRY: I knew him personally because I took him on any number of trips; both Secretary and Mrs. Acheson. Like I was telling you, I took him on trips to the United Nations, to Canada, and many trips to Paris when the General Assembly was meeting there. Outstanding man, absolutely outstanding.

FUCHS: Do you recall any incidents or anecdotes, humorous or otherwise?

LANDRY: No, although he was a very humorous fellow himself. No, I don't. Nothing special. It was just a great pleasure to be around him. He talked about a number of things and current events and that sort of thing.

FUCHS: How did you and Matt Connelly get along?

LANDRY: Oh, I got along fine with everybody on the staff.

FUCHS: What were your views of his subsequent problems

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with the Republican administration.

LANDRY: Well, I don't know whether I could use the word "frame" but they certainly waited to get at him for some reason. If he didn't let somebody in to see the President who felt that they ought to get in or something like that, I don't know...

FUCHS: He was accused of aiding in a tax case. [The prosecution of Matthew Connelly is described in Andrew Dunar's *The Truman Scandals and the Politics of Morality*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri press, 1984, pp. 150-156.]

LANDRY: The tax case, yes.

My own feeling is from what I recall of it, it was sort of a vindictive thing, a "let's get even" kind of thing. I certainly don't believe that Matt was dishonest. In that kind of job if you pick up the phone and call somebody, you could be accused of using your office to do most anything. I know that while I was there in the White House, I never used it for any personal gain. But I don't know how many times I have called up where I felt it was proper, without putting undue pressure, or saying "it will be done," but to present a case on behalf of someone for a good reason, you know, both in the civilian part of the Government and the military. In other words, [these were situations] where you could be

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helpful if it's deserving; compassionate things, or things like that. I didn't hesitate to do it. But, I'm just as sure as anything, if people wanted to dig into one thing or another, they could say I used my office to further somebody; but it was never for my own personal use. It was used to help somebody, and if Matt made a phone call or something to the tax department that was interpreted to be pressure, well, I suppose you could probably prove it if you get enough people to say it was. So, I don't know; I just can't help but think that he got a bum deal. I don't know if Matt's even alive today, is he?

FUCHS: Yes, I think he's in Chicago. He was in New York, but I think he's since gone to live with a son in Chicago.

LANDRY: Well, he had a rough time. As another example of how the man will stand behind him, HST [Harry S. Truman] raised a hundred thousand dollars with a dinner and a speech for his lawyer fees, remember?

FUCHS: Yes, I know that he did. I guess Connelly kind of got "down on his uppers" after he was in prison.

LANDRY: President Truman didn't disassociate himself from anybody who had served him well. He stayed right with him and made a big contribution to this

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man's defense.

FUCHS: Did you generally go on the Key West trips?

LANDRY: Oh, yes, I went on every one of them. We went on every one in which he flew down.

FUCHS: Do you remember any anecdotes or conversations, or any little thing that characterizes the visits to Key West?

LANDRY: I would say only about Key West that this was one of the great things the President enjoyed. He just loved going down there, because it was easy to do, and it was secure. He didn't have to take an awful lot of people with him, but he took his staff, and it was a nice, easy way [to relax].

We'd work, and then at 10 o'clock we'd all go down to the beach. At 1 o'clock we'd come home and eat, sleep 'til 4, and then we'd start playing poker at 4, play until 6:30 or 7; then have dinner. Then we'd either go to the movie or play some more poker until 11; it was great.

FUCHS: Might I ask you about Mr. Truman's poker playing? I've had several stories on that and I'd like to get yours. What kind of poker player was he?

LANDRY: Oh, great, a good poker player. He played two

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kinds of poker. He had some friends that he played a larger poker game with. I think Clark Clifford played in it with him, and several other people that played--you know--a real men's poker game. But the poker game that we all played on the staff was a \$50 take out. In other words, if you were down there two weeks you could only lose \$50. And if you got down to where you had no chips--we took something out of each pot for the kitty--and if you went broke you got restaked. We had a 25-50 cent limit; but it wasn't a poker game to gouge anybody or win a lot of money. It was just a poker game for laughs, and that's the way it was. We just loved it. He just loved that poker game.

But there again, this reminds me of what the man stands for. He was very meticulous about keeping anything that was given to him while he was in Government. He, of course, didn't acquire much while he was in Government and he was very considerate of people who had to look after him for security. Now, he never used Shangri-La, which it was called then; I think it's now Camp David. He wouldn't go up there; he said, "Why should I go up there? It takes a whole doggone company of Marines to protect me." So, he hardly ever went up there. But he let the staff use it. Of course there were

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always people up there, attendants, and you paid for your food and that sort of thing; but he always felt badly about requiring a whole company of Marines to go up there.

Now, he used the *Williamsburg*. We'd go out cruising on the Chesapeake Bay. He liked that because only two Secret Service men were on the ship and that was a piece of cake. It didn't put anybody out. The ship was maintained, anyway. So, whereas it did have crew on it, it didn't take a lot of people for him to go anywhere and be guarded. Nor did he acquire a lot of personal property during his tour of office, which can be a very controversial issue, you know.

Key West was the same way. It was a naval establishment. It was easy to go to, the house was there, and so that was a very pleasant thing, and he tried to go down twice a year. I think he went down, all total, about eight times.

FUCHS: Were you given any particular assignment in the transition period from the Truman to the Eisenhower administration?

LANDRY: No, none at all. We were all lame ducks, just waiting to be reassigned. I have here a copy of an order relieving me from assignment to the White

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House, the last thing he gave me. But here is something, coming back a little bit to this witch-hunt study; I had given him the thing about August, 1950. I forget just exactly when it was we started, but it took about six to eight months to do this. Anyway, I'm going to read this just because I think it's funny, and you'll recognize the names.

"Dear Bobbie," says Mr. Truman. This is in a letter in 1950 [August 27]. But he never called me Bobbie; Rose Conway must have stuck that in there. He said, "I've just finished reading the digest of the witch-hunt which you so ably made for me. It is an education and will be a stabilizing factor in these times. I'm sure you and all of your associates received an education on the subject. You learned that preachers, Catholics, Masons, Jews, Negroes have all been treated alike when the country goes crazy. We've had six of these cases since 1692--and now we have No. 7--a lucky No.?" That's McCarthyism. "Thanks a lot, Bob. Harry S. Truman."

So I gave this to Bill Hillman and Dave Noyes--oh, and here is something I wrote them: "I am enclosing a copy of HST's letter to me regarding the "Study of Mass Hysteria and 'Witch-Hunting' in America" which I submitted to him on 31 October '49."

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"I believe he had in mind two reasons for asking me to make this study." (I'd forgotten about this letter.) "One was the reason I gave you--all verbally, and it was that he expected Communism and the methods being employed to attack Communism in the United States to be an issue in the 1952 campaign." And it goes on [later in the letter]: "No one detested the Communists and the Communistic ideology more than did HST while he was in Washington." This was in 1955 that I wrote this. "And no one recognized the inherent danger to constitutional democratic government, as we know it, more than he did as President of these United States." I wrote a bunch of stuff here about this and some of Mr. Truman's feelings. I also told Bill and Dave that my visits with them "always seem to be an 'intellectual uplift' for me." (A Copy of this Letter, dated January 10, 1955, is appended to this transcript as Appendix II.)

So, anyway, I got a reply to this letter and a copy of Mr. Truman's letter, signed by Dave Noyes and Bill Hillman. Bill Hillman wrote the [draft for] *Mr. President*, and I had known Bill very, very well. As a matter of fact he gave me that old print of the White House right up there on top of Mr. Truman's picture.

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"Dear Bobbie," they say, "From now on this is what we are going to call you. This is a price you must pay for the intellectual uplift." And they say, "Get it?"

"Your letter of January 10th was as illuminating as was your talk with us. It throws a brilliant spotlight on HST's inner convictions and will help us with the job of doing justice to them. We are returning herewith the original of the 'Dear Bobbie' letter, which is a historic priceless gem." They signed it, "Dave Noyes and Bill Hillman."

FUCHS: Well, your career after that didn't suffer any I gather.

LANDRY: Well, then I got a good assignment in SAC [Strategic Air Command]. I got a real choice assignment as Deputy Commander, 2nd Air Force. I originally was going to go out and be deputy commander to Lieutenant General Rosie [Emmett, Jr.] O'Donnell at 15th Air Force,

but for some reason the two deputies being assigned were swapped and I went to Barksdale Field, Shreveport, Louisiana with the 2nd Air Force. I stayed there for two years and then got the 4th Air Force in Hamilton Field, California. I was not married then. I remarried. Then, Rosie O'Donnell came out on his way to the

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Pacific on a trip, and he was at that time Deputy Chief of Staff of Personnel. He said, "Why don't you come on back to Washington and be my deputy?"

Well, I hadn't been back to Washington on duty since January '53, or whenever the Inauguration was. So, I went on back there and then my wife got ill. She had a ranch out in California and I wanted to get her back there in case anything happened. So, I got command of what they call the Sacramento Air Materiel Area. It's a big depot out there at McClelland Air Force Base in California.

FUCHS: Where did your wife die?

LANDRY: After we got back to California, in Napa. So, I had command of that base and then rather than stay in 35 years, I got out of the service in 30 years, in '62, and just came over here for a job and have done several things over here. It's a civilian corporation and I'm executive director of the Arizona State Development Board, which will tell you a little bit about tourism here and economic development, industrial development. Then I had about three years with Hughes Air West Airline.

FUCHS: Anything else that you think we ought to talk about?

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LANDRY: Some of these things I've run across, I haven't even seen for so long, but there's so darned much of it right here. I'm sure it will remind me of something; but I presume you've got enough of my ramblings.

FUCHS: Well, thank you very much.

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## Addendum

LANDRY: Much time has passed since I did this oral history interview with Mr. Fuchs. I have recently reviewed the manuscript resulting therefrom. I have also had my memory bank energized by a review of data recently sent to the Truman Library concerning my five-year association with Presidential activities it was my privilege to experience. As a consequence of

all this, I feel a few changes and/or additions should be included as part of the original manuscript, as listed below.

**Subject:** Visit by President Carols Prio to the United States as Guest of the President

**Date:** December 8, 1948

On this occasion, the United States and Cuba had friendly relations. As reference to the pictures in my album will show, Prio's arrival in Washington and greeting by the President was a friendly, ceremonious affair, officially and socially, at the Cuban Embassy and at the White House. Air transportation to and from Havana and

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Washington was provided by the President's airplane, the *Independence*.

Something very interesting occurred on the airplane shortly after take-off from Havana for Washington. There were about six associates of President Prio traveling with him: his Army Chief of Staff, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and several other agencies of government. All were carrying leather attache business cases in the cabin. As we cruised along, the passengers could be seen with their cases open, seemingly full of packages of United States one thousand dollar bills.

This is not to say there was anything wrong, because diplomatic people do enjoy diplomatic immunity; it was, however, a revealing sight.

**Subject:** UFOs;

**Date:** 1948

In this time period the UFO phenomenon was getting quite a bit of play in the press, radio, TV and from miscellaneous other sources. All manner of objects and things were being seen in the sky by people, including attempted UFO landings and UFO hoverings over isolated areas. There was even a report of seeing little men with big round heads getting in and out of a UFO. Well, the President, like any other citizen, is exposed to all these goings on, too.

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In any case, I was called one afternoon to come to the Oval Office--the President wanted to see me. We talked about UFO reports and what might be the meaning for all these rather way-out reports of sightings, and the subject in general. The president said he hadn't give much serious thought to all these reports; but at the same time, he said, if there was any evidence of a strategic threat to the national security, the collection and evaluation of UFO data by Central Intelligence warranted more intense study and attention at the highest government level.

I was directed to report quarterly to the President after consulting with Central Intelligence people, as to whether or not any UFO incidents received by them could be considered as having any strategic threatening implications at all.

The report was to be made orally by me unless it was considered by intelligence to be so serious or alarming as to warrant a more detailed report in writing. During the four and one-half years in office there, all reports were made orally. Nothing of substance considered credible or threatening to the country was ever received from intelligence. Note: the Air Force had been charged by the Department of Defense with the collection and

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evaluation of UFO data from all sources such as the other services, the National Weather Service, and any other reliable source.

**Subject:** National Defense Budget Presidential Briefing;

**Date:** Late 1948-1949

Secretary of Defense Forrestal and the Secretaries of the three services plus the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the chiefs of the three services spelled out in some detail their requirements for build-up of the nation's military strength that had been so severely reduced after World War II. The President had invited the three military aides to attend the briefings.

After some two hours or so the President thanked everyone for their fine presentations, and noted that the total Department of Defense added up to \$53 billion, as I recall the figure. He indicated he could appreciate the services asking for funds they felt were needed to fulfill their museum assignments, but he felt the country was still recovering from the costs of World War II and the total military budget for the current year would have to be limited at \$23 billion. The President had listened carefully to his top military advisors and had made his decision.

**Subject:** Specific Materials for Airport Runways, Taxi-ways, and Hard Stands;

**Date:** 1948/1949

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The President was being hounded by representatives of Portland cement companies and asphalt suppliers, each seeking from the government a ruling, or order, of some kind that their material be designated for use on the subject facilities on all airports where government funds are involved.

The President called me in and said, "Bob, I want you to do a special study on this situation and determine how best to handle it. Call in anybody you need from the suppliers, the services or anybody you need to talk to in your office at my direction."

I mentioned to the President that when airplanes with jet engines are sitting on the ground the engines have a tendency to leak fuel. If they are on asphalt, the kerosene fuel eats away the asphalt and damages it. The kerosene fuel does not damage Portland cement concrete.

After many meeting with the interested parties we were able to come to the following agreement: One: all hard stands around hangars, maintenance facilities and taxi-ways would use Portland cement concrete. Two: Asphalt could be used for runways, if desired, except that at the ends of each runway for a length of 500 feet, cement concrete would be used.

A written report was submitted to the President

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and presumably this took care of the problem.

**Subject:** Location of new Washington International Airport;

**Date:** Estimated 1950/51

I received word from the President's office that Secretary of Commerce Charles Sawyer had arranged with the office to take the President by car to see the location in Virginia, just outside Washington, where a tentative site had been selected for construction of a new international airport. He wished for me to accompany him. Washington National was rapidly outgrowing its operating area and facilities. Over a million dollars had already been spent by engineering people on feasibility studies for the new site. The project had been treated as highly confidential to prevent land speculators from getting into the picture and jacking-up land costs.

Geographically, the location looked very good in regard to not interfering in other local commercial or military flight patterns. It was far enough removed from the Potomac River basin where frequent low fog conditions caused problems, especially for commercial aircraft operations at Washington National. The areas around the site were open fields providing space and safe conditions for take-offs and landings of aircraft. Without going into greater detail, all agreed the site appeared to be a good one. The President was pleased and told

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the Secretary to continue working on plans for the construction and scheduling of necessary work.

About four or five weeks later I received a call to come see the President. He told me that he had received credible information that the site location had been

leaked out of the FAA office in the Commerce Department. The land speculators and others were hard at work buying up land around the site. The President would not tolerate anything like this.

"I want you," he said, "personally to go over to the Commerce Department and advise Secretary Sawyer that the president's preliminary approval of the site visited was cancelled." The Secretary was to expedite a search for another location. And that is how and why Dulles International Airport came into being and located in another state, Maryland.

To me, this was typical firm action by the President in response to shady actions by greedy people.

**Subject:** The President's Meeting at Wake Island with General MacArthur;  
**Date:** October 15, 1950

In addition to what I have previously stated about this meeting, there is a humorous incident that occurred at the beginning of the meeting that morning at 7:45 a.m. in a quonset hut.

The President sat at the head of the table with

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General MacArthur on his right. The President called the meeting to order. General MacArthur took out his noted corncob pipe and said, "Mr. President, do you mind if I smoke?" "No, General," said the President most courteously, "go right ahead; I don't smoke but for years people have been blowing smoke in my face." With that the pipe was returned to the General's pocket and the meeting got going.

General Vaughan and I had been invited by the President to attend the meeting.

Enclosed with this document are a few very interesting data sheets from an 83-page "Log of President Truman's Trip to Wake Island," October 11-18, 1950 prepared by Lieutenant Commander Rigdon in the White House Naval Aide's office. There has been some hullabaloo about MacArthur's plane supposedly having held-up and circled the island so that the President would land first and have to greet him, but you see MacArthur had landed the evening before, October 14, at 6:30 p.m. and was bedded down that night. I met him upon arrival that evening.

The log is of such historical interest, followed not too long after by MacArthur's being

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relieved from command of the United States Forces in Korea for exceeding the limits of his authority from the President and Joint Chiefs of Staff in pursuing the conflict in Korea, that I very much want it to be a part of my manuscript.

**Subject:** Transportation for Prime Minister Churchill from U.S. to Jamaica;  
**Date:** Late 1952

After Prime Minister Churchill had retired and was getting old and in need of R & R (Rest and Recuperation), he was flown to the United States enroute to Jamaica for what I believe was his last visit with President Truman. We, the crew of the *Independence*, flew him from either New York or Washington after a visit with President Truman.

On the flight down to Jamaica our route took us over the water along the U.S. seaboard. He had with him his son, Randolph, who was not known for any great achievements, or much else.

As we proceeded south we encountered some questionable weather off Jacksonville, Florida. Colonel French Williams and I talked about the weather--no problem, we agreed; there would be some rough air as we threaded our way through on radar at about 12,000 feet. I went back and told the Prime Minister we would have some bumpy weather for maybe ten minutes, but no problem. His son, Randolph, had come to me and questioned the rough weather and how

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it might disturb his father.

I listened and we flew on. The radar was very good and we saw no problem in getting through. This son came to me again questioning whether we should go on. Finally I went back to where the Prime Minister was sitting comfortably in President Truman's office chair having a brandy and his cigar, and told him his son was questioning my and the pilot's judgment in going through the weather. I told him as I had before, we could land in Florida and go on later, or carry on. He responded, "General, are you in command of this flight?" I said, "Yes, I am," to which he said words to the effect that that was good enough for him.

When we landed in Jamaica, there was a military honor guard to greet him. He left on the airplane a box of his favorite cigars in thanks for the trip down.

**Subject:** On Harry S. Truman

Finally, I want to state why I look upon President Truman as a truly sincere person and as one of the country's greatest Presidents. His outstanding leadership in peace and war is now a

matter of historic fact and recognition. he was a good and caring man. His character and integrity were as solid as a rock. His instincts and his

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judgment bode well for the security and welfare of our country.

He was a compassionate leader, yet firm in his convictions and decisions in regard to what he considered right or wrong.

He was a man who inspired great loyalty among his associates. In turn, his interest and concern for his family and friends encouraged those with whom he had contact to relax and enjoy the benefits of mutual understanding and friendship. (See Appendix IV for a photograph inscribed by President Truman for General Landry, on the eve of the President's departure from office)

Appendix V is an inscribed photograph of General Landry , Stuart Symington. and President Harry S. Truman at the ground breaking ceremonies for the Truman Library on May 8, 1955.

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## Biographical Sketch of Military Service

- Born December 1, 1909 in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- Entered the United States Military Academy June, 1928; graduated June, 1932. Commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, United States Army.
- Served as Infantry Commander, Fort Huachuca, Arizona, 1932-1934.
- Awarded pilot's wings, Army Air Corps., at Kelly Field, Texas, February, 1935.
- Served with 16th and 20th Pursuit Groups in Panama and at Barksdale Field, Louisiana, 1935-1940.
- Performed duties in newly-formed Army Hawaiian Air Force, Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu as Operations Officer, Aide to Commanding General and Executive Officer Hawaiian Interceptor Command, 1940-1942.
- Following the Japanese attack on Hawaii on December 7, 1941, ordered to duty in February, 1942 with the 8th Air Force in England for the air offensive against Germany, 1942-1945.
- In England served in the order stated as:
  - Director, Combat Operations, 8th Fighter Command
  - Commander, 56th Pursuit Group, P-47s
  - Director, 8th Air Force fighter operations, Lt. General James Doolittle, Commander
  - Executive Officer, 93rd Bomber Wing

- Commander, 493rd Bomber Group, B-17s
- On the continent at Frankfurt, served as Director, Air Staff SHAEF, June to November 1945.
- Reassigned to Washington, DC, December, 1945, to the Army-Navy Operations Review Board for a study of WWII operations.
- Joined staff and faculty, National War College, Fort McNair, Washington, DC, as instructor for Strategic Air Operations, 1946.
- Assigned to Army Air Force Headquarters, Washington, DC, as Executive Officer to the Chief of Staff, General Carl Spaatz, August, 1947.
- Served as first United States Air Force Aide to the President, Harry S. Truman, February, 1948-February, 1953.
- Returned to Barksdale Air Force Base as Deputy Commander, 2nd Strategic Air Force, February, 1953-February, 1955.
- Commander, 4th US Air Force, Hamilton Air Force Base, California, 1955-57.
- Appointed Assistant Deputy, Chief of Staff for Personnel, Washington, DC, July 1, 1957-June, 1960, Hqs. United States Air Force.
- Commander, Sacramento Air Materiel Area, June, 1960-June, 1962.
- Retired with 30 years service June 12, 1962. Rated Command Pilot. Accrued 7,500 hours flying time; flew combat mission in P-47s and B-17s in the European Theatre.

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## Harry S. Truman Library & Museum

500 W US Hwy 24

Independence, MO 64050

816-268-8200 | 800-833-1225

Fax: 816-268-8295

### Museum Information

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CONTEXT FROM ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

(PUBLIC DOMAIN) - 1948 — President Harry S. Truman asks his USAF aide, Col. Robert B. Landry, to give him quarterly updates on UAP research but to do so verbally. No records are kept.

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