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ANN C. WHITMAN

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December 7, 1992

APPENDIX E

The following additional papers and other historical materials are donated to and accepted by the United States of America pursuant to paragraph 10 of the instrument of gift of papers and other historical materials, executed by the Donor on February 15, 1991 and accepted by the Archivist of the United States on March 1, 1991.

Oral history interview conducted with Ann C. Whitman  
on February 15, 1991 (35 pages)

This interview is being conducted with Ann C. Whitman in her apartment in Clearwater, Florida, on February 15, 1991. The interviewer is Mack Teasley of the Eisenhower Library.

MR. TEASLEY: I asked if when you were on the road during the campaign did the files travel with you and you said that not all the files. You took what you thought you would need and you thought maybe they were kept in Denver, the rest of them. Did you have a filing cabinet on the train?

MRS. WHITMAN: Not in my best memory.

Q: No. But so you just kept the immediate files with you? Our records show that most of the correspondence from the campaign period was destroyed, but a few select items were microfilmed?

MRS. WHITMAN: No!

Q: Well, and it was done at the Commodore and James Landy was in charge of the microfilming, and that . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Art Minnich wasn't.

Q: This was in the campaign and . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: . . . on the train?

Q: Well, during the whole campaign, I guess, that they were, some of the materials were destroyed but there was some microfilming done.

MRS. WHITMAN: And Jim Landy was in charge?

Q: Yes. That's news to you?

MRS. WHITMAN: My god! [Laughter]

Q: So you don't know anything about that? The Landy records that we have at the Library actually have, they have a filing manual for the central files of the staff at the Commodore during the pre-Inaugural period. Now, of course, that's pre-Inaugural. That's after the election, but before the inauguration. So, that's a two and a half month period, I guess. And then Sherman Adams authorized the disposal of a large number of the files at the Commodore.

MRS. WHITMAN: I have no memory of what we did with the files there. I remember the office.

Q: And there was a Marjorie Hadden, who was a consultant.

MRS. WHITMAN: Who?

Q: Marjorie Hadden, or Haden. Does that name ring a bell?

MRS. WHITMAN: Not at all.

Q: Okay. Now when you were in the White House, in the White House central files, Betty Bonesteel, was she in the central files? Was that your primary point of contact?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes, I went over--I think the first day I was there I went over to see, to try to make friends with the head of the files. The files were absolutely nothing. And she was in charge at the time.

Q: During the administration, how did you decide whether a document should be filed in Eisenhower's personal files, which later became the Whitman Files, the Ann Whitman Files, or what went to Central Files? Was that a pretty easy decision?

MRS. WHITMAN: Wasn't hard. That which was completely private, at least I thought so, I kept and I had, eventually I had downstairs, a new room half the size of this with files and one of the girls that worked for me kept files down there.

Q: Do you remember what her name was?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes, Bonesteel.

Q: Bonesteel, okay. And that was downstairs in the . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Right down below my office.

Q: Now when a document had been sent to central files was it easy to retrieve?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: Did you just pick up . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: They were very good, very efficient.

Q: You just picked up the phone and asked for it and they sent it back over?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: Did you usually phone for that type of thing or did you send a memo to them? When you wanted something back?

MRS. WHITMAN: Probably with the phone, I don't remember.

Q: And do you know how long it took something to get back? Did it come back the same day usually?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: You know, there has been a controversy about the--and feel free not to say anything about this or not to answer--but about Eisenhower's taping system. I think even the National Enquirer had a story about it many years ago, but that there was this rudimentary system that was installed and this became of interest, of course . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes. I can't think of his name now, but they put this monster in my office and, of course, it didn't work at all.

Q: And were you supposed to activate it when a meeting was going on or something?

MRS. WHITMAN: He was supposed to push a button and the red light on my desk if he wanted me to listen in. And if he'd forgotten, I forgot.

Q: You know, we have about, I think, twenty transcripts in the Library, of meetings that were recorded and most of them are in the early part of the administration, and so I don't . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: My memory, which is foggy, was that [H.E.G.L.] Mehta was coming over and nobody trusted Mehta.

Q: Matiff?

MRS. WHITMAN: Mehta, I guess he was the prime minister of India, I don't know [Indian ambassador to U.S.]. And they wanted a transcript and so this machine was hid, secretly installed. They put it in and I couldn't understand one word that Mehta said.

Q: Do you know who would have made the decision to put it in?

MRS. WHITMAN: Probably Bobby Cutler, or somebody like that.

Q: When it came to transcribing the tape did you do that or did somebody else attempt to do that, I guess, in this case?

MRS. WHITMAN: I tried to do it, but I couldn't do it. And I don't think I ever gave it to anybody else.

Q: I guess other people wouldn't have been aware of the taping system anyway, probably. Would you have not given it to anybody else because it was none of their business or because they wouldn't have known how to do it anyway?

MRS. WHITMAN: We didn't want other people to know about it.

Q: I know that for Dulles' papers we have a--it was a very common practice for a secretary to be on the other line, on the dead phone taking dictation, taking notes of the telephone

conversation. I guess that was a very common practice in Washington, wasn't it?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: You probably did that too, didn't you and use your shorthand to . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Everybody did it.

Q: Yes, that was a common practice. There's been a lot said about Eisenhower the man and his temper. Did you witness--what's your assessment, I guess, of Eisenhower's . . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: He never directed his temper at me. I never was aware of it. You know, he had this vein in his temple and sometimes it would throb and I always thought that that was his temper.

Q: But he never directed it at you?

MRS. WHITMAN: No.

Q: I know when he was in the army he was reported to have used a fair amount of profanity when he got angry. Did you ever . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, "goddamn it to hell" and that sort of thing, yes, sure, but none of the four letter words or anything like that.



Q: He would say things like that when he was just angry about an incident, or a document, or anything else, I suppose.

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: There's that old story about "watch out when he was wearing his brown suit," do you remember that?

MRS. WHITMAN: That was just a figment of--Tom Stephens really . . . .

Q: Watch out when he's wearing his brown suit because then we know there's a storm brewing. My mother told me that one, I mean, it was such, it must have made . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, Moaney picked out what clothes he was going to wear every day so how could it be? [Laughter]

Q: Yes, it's a good story anyway.

MRS. WHITMAN: We went along with the story.

Q: What did you think of his temper?

MRS. WHITMAN: I thought he was entitled to it.

Q: Well, you're a little fiery yourself so maybe you could relate to it. [Laughter] The records at the Library show that he was really a very good writer and editor. And I'm sure that you probably saw a lot of that. Did you get a lot of materials back that he had marked up?

MRS. WHITMAN: Everything. He would take home with him scripts of speeches and they'd come back the next morning almost indecipherable because he'd go around . . .

Q: Around the whole page.

MRS. WHITMAN: It would take you hours to figure out what he really meant. Unlike this girl in the Pentagon, I wished I'd saved many more, but I didn't.

Q: But you did retrieve several things from the wastebasket?

MRS. WHITMAN: I wish I'd saved the drafts of the last speech.

Q: The military-industrial complex speech?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes. What do you think about the Military-Industrial-Complex speech? Who do you think coined the phrase?

Q: Well, we have an interview with Captain Ralph Williams . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Who was he?

Q: He was in the speech writers office. I think the consensus is that Malcolm Moos wrote the phrase. Why? What do you think?

MRS. WHITMAN: I have a suspicion that the president's brother had a hand in it.

Q: What makes you think so?

MRS. WHITMAN: Nothing definite or tangible. The phrase just is fitting with his philosophy.

Q: Would he have come to the White House to work on it?

MRS. WHITMAN: We sometimes sent things to the university and sometimes he came over.

Q: Did he write most of those himself?

MRS. WHITMAN: No. He took a draft and went over it. He changed it enormously.

Q: Well, you probably got to know his style so well that, did you do some editing yourself before things went in to him?

MRS. WHITMAN: Sure.

Q: Memo, or drafts, would come to you and then you could pretty well re-do them?

[Interruption]

MRS. WHITMAN: . . . asked her [Mary Stephens] to polish it up.

Q: So Mary was . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: What I couldn't figure out--when he'd bring home something and it was all over the pages.

Q: Deciphering. Was Hagerty's writing any better?

MRS. WHITMAN: No, his was worse.

Q: What about his, I guess, time management. That's a new cliché for, you know, a manager budgeting his time and so forth. Of course, Eisenhower had people taking care of that for him, I presume, but . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, Tom . . .

Q: His appointment secretary.

MRS. WHITMAN: Managed his time mostly.

Q: Did you get involved in keeping him on schedule sometimes. Did you have to shoo people out of the office and tell him . . . ?

MRS. WHITMAN: Once in a while. But Tom did it mostly. And Tom would stand there and just come in the office and go like this.

Q: Point to his watch, to Eisenhower, you mean to say?

MRS. WHITMAN: Meaning it's time for you to stop this and go on to something else.

Q: During those times when there were no appointments but people just wanted to see Eisenhower then they would come through you primarily. Some people could go in directly, right?

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, friends. I mean, General [Alfred] Gruenther could go in anytime he wanted.

Q: But most of the White House staff would have been coming through your office?

MRS. WHITMAN: People like Bryce [Harlow], yes.

Q: And they would say, "Is the boss busy?" or something.

MRS. WHITMAN: Most of them went through Tom, but some didn't want Tom to know and they'd come to me. I was the back door.

Q: So if people wanted to see him unofficially or off the record, they could . . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: What about his decisiveness and ability to make a decision. Did you witness that in action? I know that's kind of a broad . . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: I wasn't actually there, but I was in the outside office the day he decided to send troops to Lebanon. And it was the most brilliant exercise, all the big brass were there. And [Nathan F.] Twining, I think, was chief of staff. And [Nathan F.] Twining came out and said call somebody in the Pentagon, and said, "The boss says, 'Let's go'."

Q: Just like that, huh?

MRS. WHITMAN: And a few minutes later somebody called back and said they're on their way, very impressive. That was quite some

action. And that's actually true. They left in fifteen minutes. They were there exactly one month and no one was killed.

Q: The historians say that he was reluctant to decide to use military force but once he decided he would send enough to do the job. He didn't do things halfway. Same thing with Little Rock, that he sent enough troops.

MRS. WHITMAN: I don't remember the decision about Little Rock. I know we were in Newport, but I don't remember.

Q: You were probably in some meetings with him. How did he conduct a meeting? Was he . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Where?

Q: Just in general terms. When the President was chairing a meeting, or conducting a meeting, what was his style?

MRS. WHITMAN: I was not in very many meetings.

Q: But in those that you were do you remember did he do most of the talking or . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: A lot of it, yes. But he wasn't like Rockefeller, with whom I'm prone to compare him with. Nelson Rockefeller went into a meeting with his mind fully made up how it was going to-- how questions were going to be resolved. Eisenhower I didn't get that impression.

Q: He was truly open to persuasion or listening to different sides.

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes. I was never in a Cabinet meeting, and never was in an NSC meeting. I remember once I was sent into a meeting on oil and gas, which I knew nothing about. I was supposed to take notes. And I did my best, but I didn't know what the hell it was all about. [Laughter]

Q: In looking back, what do you think set him apart from other people that you have known?

MRS. WHITMAN: His honesty.

Q: How did that show itself? The honesty?

MRS. WHITMAN: I don't think he ever lied to me.

Q: Did he say what was on his mind and not beat around the bush?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: How was your relationship with him in that regard? Were you able to tell him what was on your mind?

MRS. WHITMAN: Of course. I always say what's on my mind. I felt no restraint in saying anything to him.

Q: A lot of people must have been intimidated by him and not felt that way. But you didn't?

MRS. WHITMAN: No.

Q: So you were able just to tell him what was on your mind. Did he always appreciate that?

MRS. WHITMAN: He argued with me, sometimes. We argued mostly about civil rights. I think we argued about the squirrels too.

Q: The squirrels? I haven't heard that one. Eating up his golf course or something?

MRS. WHITMAN: No, squirrels on the front lawn. And he had them, one night he had them all taken and put in the . . .

Q: Rock Creek Park or something? And you didn't think that was appropriate?

MRS. WHITMAN: No.

Q: Why did he have that done?

MRS. WHITMAN: Because they got in the way of his golf shots.

Q: And so what was your argument with him about that?

MRS. WHITMAN: They had a perfect right to be there. [Laughter]

Q: Did he ever get angry with you when you were arguing with him?

MRS. WHITMAN: Never.



Q: Steve Ambrose, on that tape we just saw, talked about Eisenhower being sort of--he used the word "victorian"--in terms of his approach. He's an honorable man, honest, "a man's word", and so forth, but also part and parcel of that was the male chauvinism.

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, he was a chauvinist.

Q: How was that reflected in his behavior?

MRS. WHITMAN: I don't think I want to answer that.

Q: Okay. I know before we talked about, well, Steve Ambrose cited, the way he treated you as the classic example, I guess, of not appreciating you or taking you for granted.

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, one time we had been overseas and we came back at five o'clock at night, Saturday night, and went to the office and there was a pile of work which was accumulated. And he went through some of it, and finally he said, "Well, girls, I guess I'll go over to the house." And he very generously said, "You take the rest of the weekend off."

Q: I know that Mamie Eisenhower played a role in a lot of his attitude toward women. I think that's a pretty common understanding, do you think that's the case?

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, I don't blame her.

Q: Based on the events of WWII or . . . ? Did you have a feel for what her feelings were toward . . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: I think Ambrose did it very delicately and absolutely right. Now she had her husband living with her, yet she was not a part of his business life at all. She wasn't interested. Mamie was a wonderful hostess. She did a great deal for him. Just for instance, because I'm very poor at it, I go into a room and I don't know what to do. I don't know who to talk to. They're people I don't know. Mamie would go from one group to another, introduce herself and make everybody feel at least at home as much as she could. She was wonderful. And I think it's probably true of a lot of army wives. Was your mother that way?

Q: Not really, she was more shy, I think. She didn't have to socialize. My father was not a senior officer, so she didn't have to do as much receiving and that sort of thing, but I think Mamie probably had pretty good training in that regard.

MRS. WHITMAN: I was terrible. Later, I guess in the 1956 campaign, I used to take Nancy Towel along. She was wonderful. She'd go up to anybody and say, "What's your name?" and "How are you?" And I couldn't do that, to this day I couldn't do it.

Q: What was Nancy's name? Towel? What's her last name?

MRS. WHITMAN: Nancy Towel. I think you talked to her on the telephone or something. She was one of the two girls who worked for me in the Rockefeller office I took to Washington.

Q: How do you spell her last name?

MRS. WHITMAN: As in towel.

Q: As in bath towel? Okay. Did you think that the President's, I don't want to say the treatment of you, but his behavior around you was affected by his experience during WWII? No?

MRS. WHITMAN: He treated me like another individual, I guess, a man, I don't know, and I appreciated that.

Q: He treated you like a key member of his staff, which you were. Well, he must have confided in you, I think.

MRS. WHITMAN: That developed.

Q: It wasn't that way from the beginning, but it grew?

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, it was almost from the beginning.

Q: Now how did it develop?

MRS. WHITMAN: When we were down in Denver he was in this great big office. I was scared to death, of course I was scared to death. He said to me, "Don't come in as though you're new, come in and sit down as though you belonged here." I said, "I'm scared of you." He said, "Forget it, it's all bluster." And I

think once I said, "I'm scared of you," he decided I was human. But I was terrified of him.

Q: Do you think that he had an appreciation for the personal sacrifice you were making at the time?

MRS. WHITMAN: No.

Q: Did he ask about Whit [Mr. Edmund S. Whitman] or anything?

MRS. WHITMAN: Very rarely. Once in a while I had to go to New York for dinner or something and I'd ask if I could take the night off and be back in the morning. He always said yes. So he knew that I still had a husband. He never asked. And once or twice, once at least, I had to go to a funeral in New York. I had to take a whole day off. I really had to.

Q: And that was fine with him?

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, he gave in to it, yes.

Q: Was he the kind of boss where you felt reluctant to even ask for time off or did he come out and say something about, "Oh, you need to be off?"

MRS. WHITMAN: Oh no, he never did that.

Q: It was more a sense of your loyalty that you felt . . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: I don't remember any sympathy from him.

Q: For personal situations, you mean. Was that just because he, as this film we saw, duty, honor, country, the fact that he thought it was duty?

MRS. WHITMAN: Duty, I guess. But I don't blame him.

Q: Well, you've probably heard the criticism, or the allegations made by Margaret Truman and Harry Truman in his notes about how Eisenhower was grouchy and inconsiderate, and I don't know, a frustrated, small person.

MRS. WHITMAN: He was never grouchy.

Q: And how he didn't like people. I mean, I've always found those hard to believe. I've always thought that Eisenhower was a "people person" that he liked to have people around him. What was your reaction when you read those things that Margaret Truman wrote?

MRS. WHITMAN: I wrote a note to the New York Times, which they published and I don't know what I said. I always liked Harry Truman but those notes that, that article that was published must have been written when he was senile. And I really never understood why he [Eisenhower] was so mad about ordering John [Eisenhower] home for the inaugural. Maybe he thought it was his prerogative, I don't know.

Q: There were, I guess, I don't know that much about it, but I always thought that maybe he thought Truman did it not because he

was a considerate person but actually as a source of embarrassment that, look, there's favoritism here. We'll have the president-elect's boy come home, it was more a source of embarrassment to Eisenhower because Eisenhower might not have done it himself and John Eisenhower might not have wanted it, I mean, it was more . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: I bet you're right.

Q: If you could talk to President Eisenhower one more time, what would you say to him? What would you ask him?

MRS. WHITMAN: "Don't you think you were wrong about civil rights?" The President always argued with me and said, "Ann, you would feel differently if you had been raised in the South like I was."

Q: But Kansas wasn't the South. It was at best a border state.

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, that's what he always said.

Q: That's interesting. In the materials that you gave me last time I was here there's a memo about Eisenhower on religion. And page two is missing. It sort of gets really intriguing and interesting and all of a sudden it--and I looked for it before I came because I wanted to bring it and have you look at it. But I don't know if you remember that.

MRS. WHITMAN: On religion?

Q: On religion. It's the President's views on religion. I'll send you a copy of it, if I can find it.

MRS. WHITMAN: If you think I'm going to remember what I said, you're crazy! [Laughter]

Q: But, it sort of leaves you hanging. You think, oh, my goodness. Well, did you have, do you remember any debates with him about religion? I get the sense that you're a person who can't tolerate hypocrites.

[Interruption]

MRS. WHITMAN: Say that over again, I didn't hear it.

Q: I have the feeling, just in getting to know you, that when it comes to religion that you feel there's a lot of hypocrisy out there and that bothers you. And Eisenhower is reported to have been a religious man, but yet he too, I think he shared some of your views, that he didn't want it to be a public spectacle, that religion was a private thing. Did you have any discussions with him about religion?

MRS. WHITMAN: Not that I know of. Probably the first page will dispute that, I don't know.

Q: You don't recall any . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, I know that he used to gripe about going to church. That's all I know about religion. [Laughter]

Q: You mean he would complain that he had to go, or something?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: What did he say, was it just a bother, or . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: I think he felt, as I felt, that Dr. [Edward] Elson was a complete phony. And how he ever put up with Billy Graham I'll never know.

Q: I have a memo here from the convenience file. It's dated August of 1961 per Bob Schultz but it says, this is about Eisenhower and professional baseball. It says, "As of August 1961 DDE indicated inquiries should not be answered concerning his participation in professional baseball as it would necessarily become too complicated. The following are Mrs. Whitman's remarks to Colonel Schultz regarding above subject, quote 'DDE did play professional baseball one season to make money. He did make one trip under an assumed name, (did not say whether Wilson or not) but he says not to answer this because it gets 'too complicated'." Do you remember that incident?

MRS. WHITMAN: No.

Q: You know, there are stories, in fact Merle Miller's book talks about Eisenhower having played professional baseball under an assumed name of Wilson before he went off to West Point. But this sounds like, this was up at Gettysburg, that people were



asking about it. But you don't remember him talking about that at all?

MRS. WHITMAN: I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember. That's kind of an intriguing story. You see Merle, have you read Merle Miller's book at all or looked at it?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes. A long time ago.

Q: He sort of tries to say that Eisenhower was much more clever than people gave him credit for and that the fact that he did play professional sports but hid that fact, that he was a poker player and that he . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Why not?

Q: And that he applied for Annapolis knowing that he was too old but kind of fudged on his birthdate or played innocent.

MRS. WHITMAN: I didn't know he fudged on his birthdate. I did not know that he knew he was too old.

Q: I think that Merle Miller tried to make an issue of the fact that he probably did know. I don't think he substantiated it, but that he just wanted to go so badly that if they overlooked the fact that would have been fine with him. He was trying to paint Eisenhower as not the complete innocent that people think he was, I guess. Well, how was he as a boss?

MRS. WHITMAN: As what?

Q: How was Eisenhower to work for?

MRS. WHITMAN: As a boss?

Q: As a boss.

MRS. WHITMAN: Well, I don't, I've only worked for two men really, Rockefeller and with both of them, I guess, I took the initiative. Knowing what it was that had to be done and doing it. But Rockefeller was far more understanding and compassionate. For instance, we were talking about somebody dying. He would be solicitous and want to know about it.

Q: And Eisenhower would just say, "Oh, you need the afternoon off, okay," period?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes. Well, the difference was that if somebody died in New York, I probably knew them and so did Rockefeller.

Q: Do you think--did it show a difference in level of compassion?

MRS. WHITMAN: Or understanding or being close to . . .

Q: Well, when Foster Dulles died, did that affect Eisenhower, I mean, was he . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Terribly.

Q: I mean, that was a personal loss because he really liked the man? Or was it just a loss to the administration, do you think?

MRS. WHITMAN: A loss to the administration.

Q: Not so much on a personal level.

MRS. WHITMAN: No.

Q: Did you have a fair amount of contact with Richard Nixon? I think you probably did, didn't you? What was your impression of him?

MRS. WHITMAN: I liked him. He and Pat used to invite us to parties at their house that I enjoyed, they were fun.

Q: I'm sure that Nixon maybe shared some of your feelings about . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: He was always resentful.

Q: Eisenhower didn't always treat him that well either, did he, I guess? Or maybe there was a generation gap if nothing else.

MRS. WHITMAN: I tried to explain it, the generation gap. Why would anybody want to be seen everyday with somebody twenty years younger.

Q: Well, if you could do something over again in those years in the White House, what would you do?

MRS. WHITMAN: I wouldn't go.

Q: You wouldn't go. I've heard you say that before, do you really mean it?

MRS. WHITMAN: I don't know whether I mean it or not. It was a great, great, great experience, but I loved my husband very much.

Q: You paid a high price and I guess you're rewarded with a place in history.

MRS. WHITMAN: Nonsense.

Q: No. No, you are.

MRS. WHITMAN: Nonsense.

Q: You are.

MRS. WHITMAN: I guess I was rewarded in the fact that he apparently was very happy in the last--after he married his third wife.

Q: Did you get divorced right after the administration?

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: And then when did Whit pass away?

MRS. WHITMAN: I went home thinking I had a home, after. And found that this woman had sort of moved in. We had two bedrooms, and she really had taken over one of the bedrooms.

Q: And did you then just go directly to Albany from there? And that's when you went to work for Rockefeller?

MRS. WHITMAN: No, I don't know what I did. I think I moved to a hotel for a while. And for a long time, Nelson and I had more or less talked about my working for him. And finally after about three months I ventured to call his office, had lunch with him and decided to take the job. This was the same kind of a job. Travelling back and forth, and back and forth and going to Albany every week. Albany is just awful.

Q: I got that impression from, I guess Donovan's book and from what you've told me before that that was, if not as bad as Gettysburg, it was almost as bad. At least it was bigger, but in terms of the isolation and . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: And the cold, wind, and everything.

Q: Now Whit ended up going to Arizona, is that right? Or where? Did your husband move to Arizona eventually? And when did he pass away?

MRS. WHITMAN: About two years ago.

Q: I thought it had been longer ago than that but just . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Apparently, I don't know, we never talked about having children. I didn't want children. We never talked about it. And after he married this young, and she was very beautiful,

girl, they adopted two children, two boys. And apparently the idea of being a father attracted him and he enjoyed it.

Q: Have you had any contact with them?

MRS. WHITMAN: I did until he died. Occasional letters and phone calls.

Q: With Whit?

MRS. WHITMAN: With Whit.

Q: So you remained on good terms?

MRS. WHITMAN: No, but no acrimony. You see, when we were divorced I was younger and I thought "I can take care of myself" and that defiant mood. And I did survive. [Pause] Thanks to Nelson.

Q: Well, I think you were a strong woman in a time before that was more common. And you were probably a threat to a lot of men, I mean, I could see where . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: I know I was.

Q: A man would have to be a pretty confident individual to come head to head with you. And, speaking as a man, I can see where men aren't always up to that challenge, where a woman is strong, smart and good-looking, that could be pretty threatening.

MRS. WHITMAN: I remember once Nelson said to me . . . . They had something which I did not understand. In the state government they have ranks. And I don't know what rank I went in as, but he said, "I'm promoting you to Henry Albright's position." I said, "Why?" Knowing that I was going to do the same exact work. He said, "Because it would increase your pension," which had never occurred to me, never, never, never. And I thought that was unusual.

Q: He was a pretty thoughtful person, I think. Caring.

MRS. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q: I think I told you this before but I met him in an elevator at the old EOB, I was going between the ground floor and the third floor, or fourth floor, and he got on with Secret Service and we were actually, it was myself, another archivist and a uniformed female guard guarding some of the Nixon files that we were going through for the Watergate Committee and he immediately, Nelson ignored me and the other person, I mean he said "Hi, how are you?" like he was campaigning, you know. And then he started talking to this female guard about, you know, asking her where she was from and it was, he immediately zeroed in on the more interesting person in the group, or the common person. I mean, you could tell . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: He was interested in everybody.

Q: He was really a very likeable person. Who were some of your favorite people on the White House staff?

MRS. WHITMAN: This Harry Albright I told you about and this black man, who is now head of Dime Savings.

Q: And in the White House?

MRS. WHITMAN: Andy Goodpaster.

Q: Andy Goodpaster. And did you have any least favorite people in the White House staff?

MRS. WHITMAN: Most favorite?

Q: Least favorite. People that bothered you or got on your nerves.

MRS. WHITMAN: No. My favorite was Merriman Smith.

Q: I know in the material you gave me, you have some letters exchanging with him, and you can see the true affection there. Sounds like he was . . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Tom and Merriman were good friends and we used to go up to Tom's place.

Q: Was this to the farm or was this to . . . ?

MRS. WHITMAN: The farm.



Q: When you were working at the White House did you usually have one day off, did you work Saturday or . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: My husband would come down to see me then he'd go down to their [Stephens] farm because I was busy.

Q: What time did you usually come into the office in the morning? Do you remember?

MRS. WHITMAN: Of course I remember. I used to meet Tom at 7:20 in the morning and we'd walk down together, which took at the most twenty minutes. We were there, in the office, in place, by ten minutes of eight. And the mess would bring us coffee.

Q: And you'd eat lunch at your desk or would you go to the mess? Eat at your desk?

MRS. WHITMAN: They'd bring lunch up and usually Tom had his lunch brought up too and he'd sit, there were two desks in my office.

Q: Who was the other desk for? Was that just for . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: Just there.

Q: And what time would you quit at night? I know it was whenever it was possible but did you . . .

MRS. WHITMAN: It was usually seven-thirty to eight. And then almost routinely Mary and I went to Duke Zeibert's for dinner. And Duke was wonderful to us.

Q: Those were long days, my goodness. And then did you take a taxi up there or something? Of course, that's walking distance, isn't it?

MRS. WHITMAN: We might have called, I had the ability to call a car. But then, I remember, one terribly snowy night we got to Duke's and we had dinner, it was an awful night. Duke himself drove us home.

Q: Duke drove you home? I went to Duke Zeibert's place and I don't know whether it's still there now or not.

MRS. WHITMAN: It's moved.

Q: Has it?

MRS. WHITMAN: I haven't been to the new one.

Q: Is it up on K Street, or H Street?

MRS. WHITMAN: Connecticut. The new one is on Connecticut. Sort of across from the Mayflower.

Q: What would you want the world to remember about the Eisenhower Administration or about your time in the White House? That sounds like a pretty philosophical question.

MRS. WHITMAN: I would say that this was a time of peace and tranquility. And growth. America grew during those years.

Q: When the press was criticizing Eisenhower for being this grandfatherly type who was out golfing, how did that affect the White House staff?

MRS. WHITMAN: They paid no attention.

Q: Because you knew better?

MRS. WHITMAN: If he wanted to play golf I thought it was his privilege. He had a perfectly good reason. He said, "I've got to have exercise." And he loved to play golf.

Q: Did you play golf?

MRS. WHITMAN: Do I?

Q: Yes.

MRS. WHITMAN: The last time I played golf was when Eisenhower went to Korea. I had just been appointed his secretary and the night he came down to Florida for a vacation and I had my golf clubs and we played golf. I got back to Washington, put them in the storeroom and the next time I looked they were gone. Somebody had stolen them. [Laughter] That was the last time I played golf.

Q: Had you played in New York, ever?

MRS. WHITMAN: I'd played, yes. We belonged to a club out in Long Island.

Q: So were you a good golfer?

MRS. WHITMAN: Terrible.

Q: Do you remember what your handicap was or what your typical score was?

MRS. WHITMAN: My first husband. I don't know the difference between a slice and a . . .

Q: Hook. I still don't know that myself.

MRS. WHITMAN: . . . two couples, and we used to go out on Sunday morning to public courses and one husband would go this way and the other one would go this way. And my first husband's second wife was a superb golfer, she went right straight down the middle and beat both of the men. [Laughter] And of course, I just piddled along. She was good.

Q: I played golf one time with David in Abilene. He was out researching his book. I borrowed some shoes for him and some clubs and he hadn't played for a year or two and he was pretty wretched. He could really hit it hard but it would go everywhere. And one time he finally hit a good shot, it really went, right on the green, near the cup. And I said, "Great shot." And he said, "Well, after a million dollars worth of golf

lessons that my grandfather made me take I should be able to do something."