

INTERVIEW WITH

Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg  
Oral Historian

and

Dr. John Wickman  
Director

on

July 20, 1972

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

(Edited by Mrs. Eisenhower - July 1974)



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MAMIE DOUD EISENHOWER

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This is an interview done with Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower on July 20, 1972. Present for the interview in addition to Mrs. Eisenhower are Mrs. Ethel Wetzel, Dr. John Wickman and Dr. Maclyn Burg. The interview took place in Mrs. Eisenhower's home at Gettysburg.

DR. WICKMAN: This is a reconstruction of the interview with Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower. Mrs. Eisenhower first said that what she had to say when the recorder was turned on was prologue to answering the questions which we had given her on her marriage and early life with General Eisenhower. She described her wedding in Denver noting that she was raised a Presbyterian and that her own minister was not available for the ceremony, so a visiting clergyman from England performed the service. She also commented that her parents considered her courtship and plans to marry quite speedy, though she and the General considered it to be in keeping with the changing customs which were common to their generation. She described the situation, as told to her by General Eisenhower, of his having to go before General Funston and request leave to be married. Leave was only supposed to be granted in extraordinary circumstances and the General queried "Mr. Eisenhower" (as 2nd Lieutenants were called in those days) about what emergency or unusual condition brought about his request for leave. When Eisenhower blurted out that he was to be married the General said he hardly considered that an emergency situation. Nevertheless, the leave was granted and Eisenhower journeyed from San Antonio, Texas, to Denver for the ceremony. Mrs. Eisenhower described her wedding trip to Eldorado Springs northwest of Denver. Eldorado Springs was a resort area and it had a fine hotel. The young

wedding couple reached the hotel by means of an interurban train. As they arrived on a weekend they were in the company of many of their young friends. However, when the weekend was over they found themselves at loose ends as they were both quite young and the pace of life at the hotel slowed considerably during the week. So they decided to return to Denver to her parents' home. Mrs. Eisenhower described how her parents were, she thought, among the first people in Denver to have a recreation room in the basement. The recreation room had a piano, and pool table, victrola, and there was a place where Mrs. Eisenhower frequently entertained her beaux. When they arrived at the house they found the family, consisting of Mr. & Mrs. Doud and Mrs. Eisenhower's younger sisters, in the basement sending out announcements of the wedding. So the newlyweds pitched in and helped address announcements also.

Mrs. Eisenhower also described how she and the General set out to visit his parents in Abilene. One of her surprises on the train trip was that her two younger sisters had filled her face powder box with rice.

She found the trip long and very hot. They left Denver at about 5:00 P.M. in the evening and arrived in Abilene at around 3:00 A.M. Upon arriving in Abilene, a place which she had difficulty imagining, she saw General Eisenhower's father, David Eisenhower, standing on the train platform without a coat. She commented that she thought that very unusual, for she had been



raised in a social circle where men always wore coats on any kind of business or formal occasion outside their homes and offices. In describing her first reactions to Abilene and to the Eisenhower home she noted that things were different there and her own lack of experience weighed heavily in her judgment. She noted that they went to the Eisenhower family home on S.E. 4th Street and that Mrs. Eisenhower had had help in preparing an enormous breakfast which consisted of all manners of things, including fried chicken. The young newlyweds were at the Eisenhower home only from 3:00 o'clock in the morning until 11:00 o'clock in the morning when they left on the train for Kansas City to visit the General's older brother, Arthur. After a brief stop over in Kansas City they then took the train south down to San Antonio and arrived there with barely enough time to begin getting settled before the General had to report for duty.

Mrs. Eisenhower described her quarters in San Antonio, which are marked with a plaque, as consisting of two rooms, a living room and a bedroom with a folding door in between. She told of how she had brought drapery material from Denver which her mother had used and how she also brought along a rug which her mother had in one of the rooms in her house. She described the colors as red and green for the two rooms and said that though she envisioned the red in the bedroom and the green in the living room things soon became reversed. She also said that she had a red kiva rug which she brought from Denver and was in her "hope chest."



Mrs. Eisenhower talked openly about the fact that her father had had a long talk with her before she got married and pointed out to her that Lieutenant Eisenhower was only making a hundred and forty-seven dollars a month and her life would be very different as an Army wife than it had been at home. She said that she really didn't care because she wanted to marry Ike and that she very quickly learned, when she went to San Antonio, how very different her life was. She found herself doing all kinds of household tasks, such as scrubbing floors, which she had never done in her own home, and she learned to make the best of any and all situations involving her work as a wife because she had an enormous pride to succeed in this job which she had set for herself. She also said that her father had given her money at the time of her wedding and this money she used to help furnish the apartment. She rented a piano and put that in the living room, for as she said, she could not imagine keeping house without a piano. She also purchased furniture for the living room and endeavored to make the quarters as home-like as possible.

I asked Mrs. Eisenhower if she knew Carl Adler and she said, "Yes," that he was a bachelor who lived in the apartment above them. A 1st Lieutenant he was a good deal older than the other Lieutenants. Mrs. Eisenhower said that he eventually married the daughter of Colonel Waltz, and that because he was older he was considered to be a rather sober personality. In commenting on the



social life in San Antonio, Mrs. Eisenhower said that much of this revolved around teas which the officers' wives gave and in the formal calling which was done in those days as part of the military tradition. Mrs. Eisenhower also described how Ike had tried to get around the tedium of calling by going around when the senior officers' were at a dance and leaving his card at each residence. This worked fine, except there was one officer and his wife who were home but who did not respond to a knock on the door, and so Lieutenant Eisenhower was caught at his attempt to make the job a little easier.

Mrs. Eisenhower said that because her parents had had a home in San Antonio and had been annual visitors there she was able to make friends in town. She was introduced throughout the city by Mrs. Ingram. Her acquaintances in the city also provided part of the social outlet for the young couple, and they frequently went down town to go to a restaurant, or Mrs. Eisenhower would go shopping, or they would go to dances.

Mrs. Eisenhower indicated that the fact that so many of the young couples, even though the Eisenhowers were the babies of the group, being the youngest, gathered together and made the best of their situation and this she thought added to the fun of the whole thing.

In response to other questions by Dr. Burg, Mrs. Eisenhower contrasted San Antonio with Camp Colt, which was her next duty



station with the General. Camp Colt was a temporary camp made up of tents and temporary structures. The weather was quite cold when they arrived and they had difficulty in securing housing. The first house she said was the ATO Fraternity House and for a time they lived in that during the summer while Gettysburg College was not in session. They then rented another house, temporarily. She described rents as being quite high and the facilities in the houses as being very poor. Coal stoves and gas lights were the rule of the day, at least in the housing she occupied. She said that she arrived at Gettysburg in a rainstorm and that Icky had come down with the chickenpox shortly after they arrived.

DR. BURG: Let's just continue from where we were.

DR. WICKMAN: We'll get to Camp Colt anyway; we were there, and that got you through the differences in quarters.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was a very difficult problem, because there wasn't such a thing as a servant. I couldn't get a helper of any kind. I think I probably weighed about a hundred and two pounds, and I had this baby to carry up and down these steps. They were really high ceilings in that place which made many steps on a stairway. It was a very difficult time for me. Then we moved to Springs Avenue -- and again we had another coal stove. I don't think they knew anything but coal stoves up here. We'd always had gas or electricity at home. Besides, at home, the cook would not



allow us in the kitchen, so I never had had any kitchen experience at all. You would have laughed to see me try to cope with some of this. Ike had a chef from the Traymor Hotel in his headquarters company. No wonder he'd go and eat at camp -- and take me incidentally.

Q: I can think of my own mother in World War II when my dad went overseas -- what were your feelings about that, Mrs. Eisenhower? The war was on and maybe departure was imminent --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike missed the first World War because he was here in Gettysburg for training. Ike said when he left the Philippines and Quezon tried to get him to stay, "I'm a soldier. I'm going home. We're going to go to war and I'm going to be in it." I felt so sorry for him, because they had promised him he could go over with the last contingent in November. Of course, then we had the Armistice. After all this career that he'd worked so hard for, and he thought so much of, he just didn't think there was going to be any solution.

A lot of his classmates were getting out and they had big positions with this firm and that. The next thing I knew they were working on Ike to get him out of the service. I said to him -- it was about only twice that I remember that I really interfered -- and this time I said, "Well, Ike, I don't think you'd be happy. This is your life and you know it and you like it. Now true,



there's not any money in it, but we have other personal things that make up for the lack of currency." That is true, so I talked him into staying. It was only a couple months after that, that the big crash came. All these men lost their positions, and they were around congratulating us that we had this government pay, as little as it was. At least as long as there was a United States Government we were going to be paid.

Q: I'd forgotten about that post-war recession.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That was very bad.

Q: So his decision had been the correct one to make.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That was my old common sense, you know. The only other time I gave him any advice was when he graduated from the War College and General Pershing wanted him to come on his staff and rewrite the battlefield guide. (Editor's note: This guide was written under the auspices of the Battle Monuments Commission, headed by General Pershing.) They also wanted him on the War Department General Staff. A young Major had never been given anything like that. This was terrific and, oh, Ike just wanted that worse than almost anything. I said, "Honey, let's go to Europe. Let's take this assignment. This gives us an opportunity to see the Old World and travel and everything." Very much against his will, we went. I will say that I think he disliked every



moment he was over there. He didn't like his Commanding Officer, and he had to tramp, and I mean literally walk, over all that part of France, but it stood him in such good stead in World War II, for he knew exactly where he was going.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That was the only other time I prevailed on him to do something, but I said that it was a blessing in disguise really, even though at the time you couldn't see it. We were having a very difficult time living in France. I had only school girl French, which amounted to absolutely nothing. Ike had had French at West Point. We could say "Oui" or a few things like that, and that's about it. But you try to order dinner and do it in French, so I had to take lessons every day to be able to, say, get the haricot verts on the table.

Q: At that time, after the war closed, when he was being contacted about civilian jobs and was thinking about leaving the Army, how did he handle that situation? Was it in discussion --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I guess I was the one that handled it, wasn't I?  
[Laughter]

Q: He discussed it with you as a possibility and --



MRS. EISENHOWER: Naturally he would, because that was a complete wrench from our way of life. I mean, he had to discuss that with me because I, too, was involved.

Q: Did it seem to really be bothering him, or was he thinking about this very calmly?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I knew no matter what I said he was going to make his own decision. I told David yesterday, "A man's got to be the head of his family." That, I'm old-fashioned enough about. My Father cracked the whip around the house, and I tell you everybody paid attention to Mr. Doud. I never felt like I had to help Ike in any way, except in making as nice a family-life as possible. I thought he was perfectly capable of paddling his own canoe. It just never occurred to me to give him any advice on his business. That was his. You see, when we were first married a wife never went near headquarters. You never went to his place of operation. You were not allowed in that building. I suppose that started me out early on that course. In all of the eight years that Ike was President, I don't think I ever went to his office over three times, and I was invited each time. It never occurred to me just to run over there off-hand, because I wasn't brought up that way.

Q: Yes. Now, during this time he was on that transcontinental trip --



MRS. EISENHOWER: I went home to Denver, again.

Q: Did you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, and then Papa and Mamma and all of us motored up and picked them up around Platte, Nebraska, or some place, and drove with them for a while until they started going out to Salt Lake. Then I went back to Denver and stayed until he came back.

Q: Then he came back to Denver and picked you up there?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I can't remember.

Q: I think that Meade was the next step.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike went there and, of course, they had just bachelor officers' quarters -- no families. It was called Franklin Post with the Tank Corps camp. Ike was a Tank Corps man, and where they had certain quarters over in the main part of Fort Meade, Franklin was a post by itself, which was the Tank Corps. There were no quarters for us at all. I came on East and stayed at Laurel, Maryland -- another experience. I lived in one room and we had to go out for all our meals. They would turn off the electric lights at 6:00 o'clock in the morning and not turn them on again until 6:00 o'clock at night.

Q: No matter what?



MRS. EISENHOWER: No matter what! There were some rainy days that were dark and I couldn't even press anything with the electric iron. That was a horrible time. Ike would take off for Meade, for Franklin, you see, and come home late at night. Then we would go over to Halverson's, a boarding house, and get dinner and go back to this one room, and no facilities again. The town of Laurel is after me now about where I lived there.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: After, I don't know how long I was there -- maybe two weeks, maybe a month, finally, I said, "Ike, I just can't take this any longer." So I went back to Denver. Then, later they turned the officers' barracks into houses and you could knock out walls and make decent living quarters. So then I came right on to Franklin with the baby and stayed -- it was there that he caught scarlet fever and died.

Q: Had the government helped any in that re-conversion job, or did the two of you have to pay for it yourselves -- that remodeling that was done?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, we had to pay for all that. We didn't have a stick of furniture, either.

Q: The labor costs and the paint and everything that went into re-doing those quarters?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I did most of it. I took orange crates and made a dressing table out of them. I got some cretonne and little thumb tacks and covered up the orange crates. I did all sorts of things.

Q: And, again, you now had to buy new furniture or make it?

MRS. EISENHOWER: There's something very interesting about that, too. You see, in World War I everybody was very patriotic, so they had a big Red Cross building over on the main part of Fort Meade and people had sent in furniture to make it attractive, so that the soldiers could come in there. They closed that up after the war, and they had what they called a "dump pile." We didn't have any furniture, so I went over and looked at it. I got a rattan chaise, and I brought that over and an octagon-shaped table -- it's out in the barn or some place now, I don't know where. I had it down here in the living room. Ike said, "My God, Mamie, you're not going to keep that?" I said, "Yes, I like it -- I got it off the dump heap." We slept on army cots and I would get cretonne and make covers for them, so it would cover up the head and foot and the whole thing. At that time we were getting Japanese print in the material, and I think they used them for towels over there, but I would get it by the yard and I made draperies.

Q: I see.



MRS. EISENHOWER: For the bedrooms. You just did anything, you know, to make it look decent.

Q: Yes. That was pretty much the style then that the others were following, too?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sure. Everybody was in the same boat. That was the nice thing about the service. Everybody knows what everybody else has. You're not trying to keep up with the Jones' or someone else. Even the George Patton's, they had loads of money. They had the quarters next to us, but they lived very much like we did. They did have a lot more servants and they did have cars and things that we didn't have. But other than that, they lived in the same old broken-down quarters. You could see cracks and they were built right, square, bang on the ground. You'd have a radiator and it was steaming like mad, and you'd be boiling above the waist and freezing at your feet. I've seen electrical storms out there that the lightning would go all around the room and end up at your telephone in a big blaze.

Q: Good Lord!

[Interruption]

Q: Resuming the interview, how about recreation at this time? Is it still in the same pattern as you were used to? Still card parties?



MRS. EISENHOWER: No, because, you see, we really didn't do much post duty. Most of Ike's was in a city like Washington -- we were nine years in Washington one time -- because he was passed from one general on to another and they knew he was capable.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And they were always looking for somebody that was capable. So he became a staff officer, which just irked him frightfully because he wanted to be a fighter.

Q: Of course.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And they got him on football. For a long time they passed him around because he had his "A" at West Point, you see, and he was known as a good coach, because he coached the football team at Meade and at Franklin. And so they just said, "We'll get him on a coaching job." That just irritated him beyond words. What post life we had, we made our own good times, like up at Ft. Lewis, Washington. We were out from Tacoma, fourteen or fifteen miles. What did we do? We had our own dances; we played cards of all kinds; and we gardened a lot.

Q: Now was that pretty much the pattern at Meade, too?

MRS. EISENHOWER: At Meade, I went into Washington and I really went into Baltimore more, because Washington did not have good shops in those days.

Q: Did you folks have a car at that time?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, sure we did. We've always had a car. Papa gave us our first one, and he kept on buying them. It was a Model-T Ford but it was, what would you call it, the limousine?

WICKMAN: A sedan?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I guess that is what it was -- but anyway it was all enclosed. These Tank Corps men got very interested in it. They put in a Stromberg carburetor and a little -- I don't know what -- but they duded that thing up until it was really something.

Q: Self-starter?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, everything you could think of. They just tinkered with that car. Then, we went to Panama and we put it on -- they had those ships they called "liberty ships," I think -- and we went down on that. That was the only time I rode on a transport, except to the Philippines. I was enceinte with John at the time and as near seasick as I'd ever gotten was on that trip. Ike was supposed to be in command of troops and have a very good accommodation, but some generals got on that were just doing a little joy riding and they took our quarters. So, there was a tiny little couch underneath the window and a double decker bunk. You know my claustrophobia; and I wasn't about to get in a bunk, so I'd sleep on that small seat. As I said, we put the car on deck, and



by the time we got to Panama somebody had stolen everything on that car. You couldn't even move the car off the ship. They had taken the engine and everything out.

Q: Just stripped it!

MRS. EISENHOWER: Stripped it! Completely!

Q: Now that trip would have been -- was it from New Orleans down to Panama?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, from New York City. We went into Puerto Rico, Port au Prince. I don't think we went to Cuba, because I went to Cuba on a fruit boat another time. My sister -- the other day -- when I was down there, pulled out something from somebody's bar down in Panama. My Secret Service Agents looked at me questioningly and I said, "Well, I haven't always been such a dodo." They said, "Why, Mrs. Eisenhower, you didn't go to some place like that!" I said, "Certainly I did."

Q: Now this was the first foreign service for you?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

Q: And quite a drastic change.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I had been to Panama before, because my Father was an inveterate traveler.

Q: Oh, you had been there?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, I had been there before I was married.

Q: I see. So you knew something about the climate?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I knew everything about it. Those naked little youngsters that ran around with no clothes on.

Q: Now how about the living accommodations? What were your feelings when you first saw them.

MRS. EISENHOWER: (Whistle) Ours looked really nice, but it was covered with cockroaches, bedbugs, bats, etc. Again, we slept on Army cots. Once a week you'd take your bed and put the legs in cans of kerosene, and you'd take paper and light it and go all over the springs to get the bedbugs.

Q: And that was a continuing process all the while you were down there?

MRS. EISENHOWER: All the time. The first night we were there, a rat gnawed all night long.

Q: Oh, great!



MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh!

Q: Once again, everyone in the same kind of quarters -- everyone in the same situation?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, Mrs. Connor was a Brandiff, and I think that was the name of a patent medicine. Mrs. Patton's father was an Ayre of Ayre's cherry pectrol. They all made big fortunes on this, you know, in the days when patent medicine was sold. Mrs. Connor thought I was namby-pamby, because things didn't bother her, but to have bats crawl in under the door at night and fly around was not my idea of a good time. Then, when those huge cockroaches would jump at you from the top of the door, I mean, those things I wasn't used to. Anyway, as I said, I wasn't feeling my best anyhow. You can imagine.

Q: Yes, I certainly can.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We had fixed up a little hospital. We had a whole Puerto Rican regiment. General Connor had it staffed by American Army officers. There was no place for these women, the Puerto Ricans, to have their children. We were the only post on that side of the Canal -- again one of those strange things. All the rest were on the other side, but we lived over where [George Washington] Goethals made his headquarters when he was building the Canal.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: So we took a house over in Enterprise, which was another big part of when they were building this canal, and we

decided to fix it up with some nurses with the help of the chaplain's sister who was down there. We got beds and things and staffed it after a fashion. I was going to have John down there, but my father and mother came and gave one look and said, "You're going to Denver." They finally took me home and John was born in Denver, but I was all ready to put up with this rugged business. It was all right with me.

Q: Yes. Now, then you returned there with John?



MRS. EISENHOWER: That's right. Ike came up when John was born and stayed until he was about three weeks old. He was christened at that time. Then, I took John back when he was about three months old. I went down on a fruit boat out of New Orleans, because I never traveled on a transport again, until I went to the Philippines. My father paid my way. I remember Fox Connor getting on a transport to come back to the States from Panama and he, as a two-star general, was pretty high-ranking. By the time that he got on, some others, with their families, were joy riding, and he ended up down in the hold.

Q: Now you've described to us that General Connor was a --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Great influence in Ike's life.

Q: A great influence.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.

Q: A professional soldier of ability, and so your husband and the General spent a good bit of their time talking to one another?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes. General Connor had been an aide to General Pershing. They worked in the same office. Ike was, I guess, General Connor's good man, Friday. I've forgotten just what his official position was. They would walk home for luncheon and back in the afternoon, you see, because they lived next door to us. They spent a great deal of time in the jungle and they both liked to ride. Ike was a great horseman, you know.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Many people don't know that, but he loved horseback riding and he trained his horse, "Blackie." That was something Ike loved, too. He wanted to see if he could cow him -- well, he did. He got Blackie so that Blackie would walk upstairs and down steps and do all sorts of things. General Connor and Ike had a great deal in common, because General Connor was a rugged soldier.

Q: And we get the impression from AT EASE that a good bit of your husband's reading in military history was a result of encouragement --



MRS. EISENHOWER: He would loan Ike the books because we couldn't afford them. He read all sorts of interesting military history from General Connor's library. There were many people that helped Ike along the way. You know, Ike used to have a favorite expression that he was a self-made man and he was very proud of his maker. Nobody can make it in this world without the help of somebody else. Ike had a lot of help from different officers, like General Connor and General MacArthur, General Joyce, General Walter Krueger, and I'm trying to think of that other one; oh -- George Van Horn Moseley. Ike worked in the Secretary of War's office (both the Assistant Secretary and the Secretary of War) so all this taught him different things -- how to get along with people in his own profession, lots of things, so he had a lot of help. If any man says to you, "Oh, well, I've gotten this all on my own." That is the biggest fallacy known to man. Nobody can get along in this world without somebody's help, you know that.

Q: Well, we were going to ask you -- and I think now you've answered it. As we said to you before, there seemed to be a change of direction from the Panama experience, but now, from what you've said about your husband's dedication to the profession right from the outset, what happened with General Connor was just another stage. Your husband's thinking must not have changed radically at all; it just rather continued --



MRS. EISENHOWER: They both had the same goal, but how do you reach it, you see? Do you do it through study or do you do it through experience? When we came back from Panama, Ike was put on another coaching job over at Ft. Meade. I think that lasted three months and then we went to Denver. While he was there General Fox Connor came up -- he was assistant Secretary of War, I think. No, I believe it was Chief of Infantry. All these names have changed today. He sent Ike a wire and said, "Stay put till you hear from me." General Connor was bound and determined Ike was going to Leavenworth (Editor's note: The Command and General Staff College) where Ike came out number one. So he was vindicated. We sat there until we got the telegram from General Connor, saying, "You're to go to Fort Logan," and Ike was put out there as recruiting officer. Of all the things in the world he was far from, it was that. If he worked hard, he worked one hour a day. He finally went around to the commanding officer and said, "Haven't you got something for me to do?" So he had all sorts of odd jobs out there at Ft. Logan. General Connor carried him there until Leavenworth opened in August, because he got him, right over the Chief of Infantry's head, because the Chief of Infantry had pigeon-holed Ike's card, because of all these things -- he was good for coaching, good for this and good for that.

Q: The assumption being made was that ultimately he would go, but --



MRS. EISENHOWER: Certainly, but a young Major didn't go in those days to Leavenworth; good Heavens, no. Ike was one of the youngest that ever went there. You remember this was way back when -- before you were born, probably.

Q: Yes, ma'am!

MRS. EISENHOWER: There have been an awful lot of changes. I said to David, yesterday, "I don't know a great deal about it," and I've said this to my service friends, "I don't know what you're talking about today; I only know what happened way back when."

Q: Having been in Kansas for a few hours in a hot summer, how did you feel about coming back out there for a year?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I tell you, in that funny little house, I have been there, and Grandma (Mrs. Ida Stover Eisenhower) would take and soak sheets and hang these wet sheets downstairs, sort of like an air-conditioning.

WICKMAN: Evaporative.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was sort of a type of air-conditioning. You couldn't go upstairs. They had brass beds and you couldn't touch that brass bed -- it'd be so hot. I got out of there in a hurry, I'll tell you, every time I got a chance.



Q: We walked through with John (Eisenhower) just a short time ago and he remarked about those sheets and that fan.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I think John's going to go out with you this weekend.

WICKMAN: Yes, he is -- Monday.

Q: I wanted to ask you about Leavenworth.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.



Q: Can you tell us about your quarters there, and what kind of a life that was for you for a year?

MRS. EISENHOWER: We had very nice quarters there. We had two sets of bachelor quarters thrown into one, so we had four rooms. We lived in Otis Hall, which was a bachelor building, and was built exactly like the one that Ike and myself moved into when we were first married, a living room and a bedroom. They threw two of them together and across the back they made a kitchen. You still had to go out in the hall to get to the room on the other side.

Q: Oh, no connecting doors through?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No. And then on the third floor you had another two big rooms and that's where Ike used to study.

Q: I understand he had that set up with maps and everything.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sure, he could do anything he pleased up there. He was away from anything that I wanted to do and, of course, John was only three years old. When you have a three-year-old around you couldn't really concentrate if you didn't have some place private.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But I liked living there and there were many Army people that I knew. Ike was a student, but most of my friends were instructors. A student didn't socialize with instructors -- I can tell you that. You had your own little place. It used to frighten me, though, as they had the disciplinary barracks there, and when that whistle would go off that one of the prisoners had escaped -- I was frightened.

Q: I can certainly believe that.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But I liked it there. It was hot, but we were young and somehow it didn't bother us. Today, I've got to keep this place air-conditioned all the time. I can't bear the heat.

Q: During the year, did you manage to get any trips in -- any vacation trips?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I went over to Abilene once on that old yellow train that went over there. I don't know what it was -- they called it a flyer or something. This is another funny story. When we moved in our quarters at Leavenworth we only had one bed so when I went over to Abilene, I said to Ike's mother, "Grandma, (I always called her 'Grandma') do you happen to have an extra bed you're not using?" And she thought for a minute and said, "I think there's an old bed out there in the barn -- up in the loft." We got it down, it's back in one of my bedrooms now. It's a --

MRS. WETZEL: Spool bed?

MRS. EISENHOWER: -- spool bed. It had been broken up, and at the foot it was repaired with a piece of an orange crate. They had just mended it with that. It is one of my prize possessions today. It was what we would call, I guess, a large three-quarter, so I had to have a mattress made to fit it.

Q: Oh, yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It had ropes, so then to get a spring and a mattress, I had to have them specially made for it, and that was John's. He slept in that. It's the only Eisenhower piece I have in this house. Everything else is Carlson or Doud. Carlson from my mother's side of the family and just one or two pieces of Doud. But I have no Eisenhower things at all, except this bed, and I just got that by accident.



Q: Now, did you entertain much under that pretty strict routine that all of the students had to go through, or was there much entertainment done?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, everybody was very busy studying. The wives, of course, would have their card games in the evening and serve supper or something. I had a three-year-old and had no help, and I suppose I spent a great deal of time with him. I never went into Kansas City, and that was pretty close, but not as close as it is today. I don't remember really much what we did do. Ike was always busy, of course, and I suppose I just tried to keep house in four rooms and, again, did the cooking.

Q: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Papa and Mamma went to San Antonio that year, so they said I should take their house man. He came on and stayed a very short while and had one of those rooms upstairs. That didn't work out too well, so he went on back to Denver or somewhere.

Q: Was he unhappy at Leavenworth, or --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I don't know, he went in the Armed Forces in World War I. I don't know exactly what it was. Maybe I didn't like his attitude, I don't know.

Q: Yes, that could be.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I just remember having a very nice time at Leavenworth. We had a commanding officer who was very strict. We never had even a beer in our sets of quarters. He didn't believe in that. If we wanted to have a cocktail or anything we went over to the disciplinary barracks which adjoined the post, where we had some friends. But never on the Post. Never a drop of anything.

Q: I see. This was a rule that he had instituted.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, and he was very strict. But we didn't miss it. We'd never gone in much for cocktail parties or things like that anyway. Ike was there for a purpose and that was to learn as much as he could.

Q: Then he must have been very pleased, and you must have been very pleased, with the final marks that he secured in that course.

MRS. EISENHOWER: When Julie tells me how good David is, I say, "It's no more than I expected."

Q: Now, when the duty there was finished, he then was offered this Battle Monuments opportunity?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, we went to Georgia then.

Q: You may have, let me just --



MRS. EISENHOWER: I think we went to Georgia.

WICKMAN: Yes, Ft. Benning.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ft. Benning -- and that was a coaching job there.

Q: After Benning then you went to the Battlefields affair. It was probably the only other time, the second time, that you ever tried to influence a decision, and you suggested that a trip overseas would be --

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's what I thought -- I thought it would be educational and be good for all of us. John lost his first tooth over there so he was about six, I think. It was good for him. He learned to speak French and speaks it very beautifully today. I think it was the ground work for that. He went to an American school but to talk to the servants, you had to speak their language. You see, the French did not like Americans at that time.

Q: Oh, they didn't?

MRS. EISENHOWER: And very few stores had a sign in it that said, "Interpreter." If you couldn't speak their language, you had a hard time getting around to buy food or clothes or anything else. They really didn't like us -- didn't like Americans -- so it was very difficult sledding.

Q: Did it ever show in their outward behavior towards you, Mrs. Eisenhower?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I don't think any more so than -- the French, I think, are apt to be a little quarrelsome among themselves. Because, I knew in my kitchen -- for instance -- I always had a femme d'chambre and then I had a cook. They would fight among themselves all the time -- chase each other with the butcher knives, or they would just do anything. They were very quarrelsome people. I don't think that envy was directed toward us, personally. I think, just in general, they just didn't care about us.

Q: They were just not putting themselves out to do anything much.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I should say they wouldn't. Now, today, it's different. Practically everybody speaks English over there. I mean in stores, and they don't have to put a sign in the window saying, "Interpreter."

Q: You stayed in Paris while the General was out in the field going over the battlefields?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I stayed right in Paris because John was going to school, you see. Ike would take these trips and probably stay a week. Sometimes he'd stay two or three days -- maybe just a day. When I was down in Washington recently, my sister who keeps everything had a letter from Papa. She had all these old letters stuck in a hat box or something, so when the storm flooded down

there in Virginia, these got water soaked and she brought them back to her apartment to put them out on her little gallery to dry out. There was a letter from Papa, written at that time, and he was telling how he and Mamma had accompanied Ike to Verdun and different places. It was very interesting. They had come over to visit us, you see, and from there Mama went up to Sweden to see if any of her relatives were still living. Papa's description of the different types of pensions they stayed in and things was very interesting.

Q: I was going to ask you about that French experience. Did your husband enjoy that tramping all over those battlefields, or --

MRS. EISENHOWER: He had written the original book, you see, in Washington, never having been to France.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: So, there was a need to re-write it. Now, you take your statues here [In Gettysburg] you'll find them in cornfields, you'll find them everywhere. That's the way it was in those days. The road isn't here any longer that used to be here where they had put a monument up, but it had gone back to farm land. In re-writing the book he had to tell them how they could get to a certain place, because every veteran would say, "Let's go back to the Chateau-Thierry, there's where I spent a lot of time in



the mud." So it had to be made as of today, so that any veteran going back could find his way to where he fought.

Q: Yes, yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: So that was what Ike was doing -- re-writing the way the ground was as of that time, instead of back in World War I.

Q: And as you suggested to us earlier, acquainting himself thereby with the terrain in that section of France --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I think it played a great part.

Q: Could very well have done.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Because when the invasion was started, he went in in France.

Q: Well, then the next move is back here for that nine years of duty in Washington, D.C. that you described.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

Q: Was there any great change in your life style, the way you did things when you returned to the United States?

MRS. EISENHOWER: When we came from Benning, I'd had some sort of illness, I don't know what, but they put me in the hospital and my sister took John to San Antonio, because she didn't have any

children at that time. I came to Walter Reed and sat out there from about January until May. In the meantime, the Wyoming Apartments had never taken children. The Drokes, living there, pled our cause and went to the woman who was running the place and said that John would be no difficulty. He was a quiet little boy and his father was a strict disciplinarian. They finally allowed us to move in and we first lived in a small apartment. We did have three bedrooms and a dining room. But it was small, I mean as far as rooms were concerned. We moved in there, and then we went to Europe. From there, to France, and then we came back from France and moved into a larger apartment -- because the depression was on and we could afford the rent.

Q: Your pay stayed at the same level and the apartment prices fell?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, had they fallen! That building was practically empty. People moved in with relatives. There was no money. The depression was a terrible thing, you know. But we still got our pay from the government.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: The only thing they did, they took a whole month's pay, Mr. Roosevelt did. You either took a leave or you lost a month's pay. Of course, Ike was invaluable, and he couldn't



take a leave, so we had to do without a whole month's pay. He took it from every Army officer.

Q: John, had you known that?

WICKMAN: Yes, I did.

MRS. EISENHOWER: A lot of people don't know that. I know it because I was keeping the books. We lived on three hundred and ninety-one dollars a month. We paid a hundred fifty-four for rent, ten dollars for telephone, five dollars for an icebox, and then you had to pay your gas and electricity.

Q: And this was still at the Wyoming; you had gone back there.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, sir. So you can see what was left. I fed and clothed four people, and we did our entertaining. We had our dinner parties down at the Willard, and every place. Of course, Ike, in the job he was in, had to entertain.

Q: Of course.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Now, in those days, my Father again gave me a maid. She wore her blue and white stripes in the morning and her black in the afternoon, with her organdy aprons -- all of that I had to buy, also. I still don't know how I did it. I gave Ike five dollars a week, and that was supposed to pay for his carfare and his lunches.



WICKMAN: How did he buy his cigarettes?

Q: Yes, my very thought.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We got them at the commissary, although I suppose they were a dollar a carton.

Q: Probably they were as cheap as that at that time.

MRS. EISENHOWER: He always said, "If I just have enough money for cigarettes and razor blades." Of course, I bought all his clothes -- he wouldn't go into a shop and purchase them. I'd have to bring home his overcoats. He was wearing civilian clothes, you see, because at that time they didn't think it was a good idea for a man to be in uniform, or to have so many uniforms around Washington, so they all wore civilian clothes. However, his uniforms had to be ready at all times.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I remember I used to walk up that hill, which is now the Washington Hilton, from Florida Avenue to the Wyoming to save twenty-five cents because we went into another zone in the taxi. I'd haul and pull the groceries up that hill myself. To save a quarter I'd go to any lengths. I mean it's astounding when I see how spoiled I am today. How could I do and did do the things I did -- pride again, you see.



Q: Yes, I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: My Father would have given me anything I wanted, but I wasn't going to call him up. I had told him I was interested in this man and I didn't care whether I ever had a home or anything else, so, by jove, I had to live up to it. In other words, I'd made my bed.

Q: Your parents must have been very proud of you --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Why I don't think it was any more than they expected.

Q: Now, you've spoken of the fact that your husband didn't care much for staff duties, so how --

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, he wanted to be in the field. He was a field soldier.

Q: Were those years rewarding enough to him in other ways?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, because later all those things finally came to help him. Every experience you have today helps you do something else.

Q: But he must have grumbled a little bit about it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Who doesn't gripe? Did you ever know a soldier that didn't gripe? You know, when they stop griping, you better start looking around for --

Q: That's right, to see what's going to happen next. You have a reputation, the two of you, with officers that I've met. They often will smile in reminiscence and say how good you were to them when they were young officers and you had seniority. Were you doing that in Washington, D.C., too? Or was your entertainment more connected with the requirements of your husband's position?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I don't think I quite understand that.

Q: Well, let me give you an example, the Parker's, in the Philippines --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

Q: Lefty Parker and his wife --



MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

Q: They remember how kind you were to them. You were senior people -- they were very junior --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, but that was the Army way. You moved in and if it was a hot day, someone brought you over some lemonade, or some sheets if your stuff had not arrived, or cooking pans. We all did it. Everybody did it. Everybody had helped me out at different times.

Q: Yes. They remember it, and others have spoken of it, too. They truly appreciated the kind of interest that you and your husband showed.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Doctor, I don't know whether this comes with age or not, but there's nothing truer than what it says in the Bible, "Put your bread on the waters." You don't get anything for nothing in this world. You get back exactly what you put into it.

Q: Yes, I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I try to remember that. No matter how high and mighty you are, don't forget some of the rest of it.

Q: Yes, yes, that's right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: I think you'll find that not only because of my middle western birth and environment, which I still carry, I just don't let my head get too big.

Q: Yes, I think I got my early training from the same church you did.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike was a wonderful example of that. That's why I'm so loyal to him. My heart and pride rest with him.

Q: Yes, we understand. This kind of entertainment that you did there in Washington was with people of other services, too, I would imagine.

INTERVIEW WITH  
Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg  
Oral Historian  
and  
Dr. John Wickman  
Director

on

August 15, 1972

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

(Edited by Mrs. Eisenhower - July, 1974)



This is an interview with Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower on August 15, 1972, at the Gettysburg Farm. Present for the interview are Dr. John Wickman and Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library. This is NLE Oral History #2 with Mrs. Eisenhower.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike was the sort of man that when he finished his day's work he left his work at the office. When he came home, he was home and we didn't discuss what his big problems were. He kept them to himself. That was the way we managed our lives. Mine was to take care of the house, his was to take care of the office. That's the way we kept it. So many people say to me, "Didn't General Eisenhower used to talk over some of his problems with you?" And I'd say, "Well, no." And I didn't say to him, "The dishwasher didn't work today." He wouldn't have been interested.

DR. BURG: So what would a conversation be like, Mrs. Eisenhower? He'd come home and --

MRS. EISENHOWER: John then was around six when we moved to Washington, so when he would come home at night Ike would ask him about school, and we practically had school at the dinner table. We were doing our numbers -- oh, arithmetic and history and things like that. That really was what most of the table conversation consisted of. At which, may I remind you, I said nothing -- the two gentlemen talked.

Q: About all the big important things of the day.

MRS. EISENHOWER: They were, yes, the things that were to them big. John would probably -- if he had had a fight -- talk about that.



But then John, of course, had to do a lot of foot exercises because he had some difficulty with the arches of his feet.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: He would have to take marbles and pick one up at a time with his toes and then walk on a straight line, like following a board on the floor. That took up quite a bit of time, too, and was done every single night before he went to bed. So far as homework was concerned, I can't remember that John ever had much homework. I don't think they did in those days.

Q: Probably not.

MRS. EISENHOWER: You see we had study periods where we were allowed to study in school. I never remember, as a youngster, bringing home armful of books like I see children do, today.

Q: The only thing I can think of bringing home was mathematics. I often had to bring home problems to work, but that's later on in elementary school.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That also was after our time; you're that much younger. I don't remember of John ever doing it, bringing home anything like that. I do think one thing was so interesting: After Ike had left office, one day up here at the farm, I went into his bedroom -- he was supposed to be resting -- and he was reading



a book on the new method of arithmetic today. He was studying the new way. I wouldn't even know that, but Ike was always a jump ahead of everybody else. There wasn't anything that was new that he didn't want to know.

Q: That's interesting that he would delve into that.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Certainly, but it was something that he wanted to know everything about. And he mastered it, as I would expect him to. I can assure you that I didn't attempt it.

Q: I tried and failed. I don't know about you, John; your children I guess aren't up to it yet, but --

DR. WICKMAN: Oh, yes.



Q: -- I couldn't cope with the new math. I just forgot about it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was just like Greek to me when Ike was trying to explain it. This was when David and he would converse, and I just decided that David could take care of that himself.

Q: Yes, without any help.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I passed that stage.

Q: Yes. Well then, in Washington, John probably wasn't, at any time during that period, getting enough homework so that he would be asking for help at home with it?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no. He worked his own problems. I never can remember us sitting around playing school at home -- never. We would have dinner between 6:00 and 6:30, because it was the only meal when all three of us were together. Shortly after that John would read the Book of Knowledge, or something like that, something that he wanted to look up. Then he went to bed, very early. Youngsters, then, usually didn't stay up until 10:00 o'clock like they do now. They were in bed by 8:00 o'clock. There wasn't much time in between.

Q: How about radio programs? Do you remember any favorites that he had?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I don't think we allowed it. I did have a little radio but he had a crystal set in his room. I don't know how much he played with that, because John was an only child and he did make his own "fun times." I mean he relied on himself for interests. He would read; he was a great reader; he loved to read. I can remember when he was studying Roman history, he made shields and helmets and everything out of pasteboard. He went to the five and ten cent store and got a bottle of gilt paint or something and gilded them. He and Bo Horkan [Mr. George A. Horkan, Jr.], the two of them, were Roman soldiers. When we came up here to Gettysburg, David would be a Union soldier one day and a Confederate soldier the next. (David was fascinated by the battle; he makes a



wonderful guide to the battlefield. And, as you can see, he was bi-partisan.) He had the caps and he'd wear his little blue sweater and blue trousers, and that was, of course, when they were Union. He also had his Uncle's [Lt. Col. Joseph James Thompson, USAF, Mrs. John S. D. Eisenhower's brother] full dress coat from West Point. That was gray, so then he put that on and a gray hat and he was Confederate.

Q: Now when you speak of books, did the General buy him books, say in the Washington period, before he went to the Philippines? Do you remember what kinds of things he might have gotten for him or that you might have gotten?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I'm pretty hazy about that -- I don't remember. I suppose John had children's books, like fairy tales and things, like we all had. He may have read some of his father's. Ike was a great admirer of General Lee, and he probably read something like that, but I think the Book of Knowledge was something that Johnny was very interested in. He would just lie on his stomach on the floor and read his book, it didn't make any difference whether he was studying or not in school. It was something of interest to him.

Q: Right. I remember in our neighborhood how we passed a set of those around among the kids.



MRS. EISENHOWER: They were very valuable. They were kept at home.

Q: Yes, this kind of thing was like an encyclopedia, and we --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, that's right.

Q: -- would take different volumes, like a lending library.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, that's right. As I say, Ike was fairly low ranking in those days -- a Major got very little -- and so, when you spent a couple hundred dollars on a set of books like that, you were very careful with them.

Q: Right, right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: And we made him very careful of them; he understood that these were something that were unusual.

Q: Was your husband pretty much with him, up until John's bedtime then? Was that their time together?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, I suppose so. Ike was always busy reading the newspaper, like most men do when they come home in the evening. If Ike and I were delaying our dinner for some reason or other, or if we were going out to a party or something, Johnny would sit down to dinner with candles, and silver candelabra, and his finger bowl, and everything just exactly like we were at the table. He was

even served and he had everything done perfectly, just as if we were home.

Q: Right, right. Then your husband read the paper and then, later on in the evening, his professional --

MRS. EISENHOWER: By the time dinner was over and he and John sort of compared notes for the day, it was time for John to go to bed. There wasn't much time left to him. The only day they had to be together would be Sunday for Ike worked on Saturdays, you know, all day.

Q: Oh, yes, I see.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Of course, they would always go out and buy the Christmas tree together. We always waited till late Christmas Eve because then they would get it much more reasonable. They would drag it home and put it up and trim it. Ike would, in the meantime, be playing with John's electric train that he was to give him the next morning. We were the only ones that had a child and there were, oh, four or five other couples. So they would come to our house, and that's how our house became Club Eisenhower. We had no baby sitters in those days. So Ike and myself would stay home, because we never left John alone. Then everybody else would come on over to our house.

Q: For card parties or --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, get-togethers of any kind.

Q: -- just gatherings.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Or if you just wanted to talk. You sat down to dinner at 6:00 o'clock, because the men didn't get home practically until that time. Ordinarily -- you see, Ike was a great family man, and he believed in spending as much time as he could with his family, which was John and myself. We didn't go out much. We had home parties; everybody came to our house.

Q: Not enough money, really, for theaters and this kind of thing.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, we didn't, and besides, by the time Ike got home he was tired. He had been at the office since eight o'clock in the morning. He had seen a lot of people and done many things. He was willing to come home and relax and have his newspaper. Thank goodness, I understood that. And I understand it better today, because, I often think, the women stay home all day and when their husband is home, they say, "Well, aren't you going to take me out to dinner tonight?" And he'll say, "All I want to do is come home." But he's seen people all day. So, I mean, I can see both sides of it.

Q: Would it be pretty typical, after John went to bed, for the two of you to just read?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, many times, but we went to bed early, too. We would read; probably Ike would read much longer than I, but some nights I would get in bed very early, and John would come in and crawl in my bed and tell me what he had done during the day. I got a lot of secrets that way. He'd say, "Let's have conversation." Believe me, I found out quite a few things. I wouldn't want him to know that today. But, you see, our life was very normal -- not normal for today, but normal for then.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Your pleasures were simple. If you had a buffet supper, it was simple. You'd fix salads and cook meats or some special dish. Now, of course, today people do it because it's necessary, because they don't have any help to do otherwise. But we used to like to do that. Sunday nights were a particularly good time, because the group would gather around and we'd send out and get some Chinese food. Or maybe we'd had a leg of lamb, and Ike would make lamb sandwiches. He'd marinate his onions for two or three hours, and everybody had lamb and onion sandwiches. We would have a marvelous time. But your pleasures were so simple. That's the only way I can describe it.

Q: Well, that's what we need to know; -- just what were you doing? -- and it's interesting to hear it is very much like what our families were doing at the same period of time.

MRS. EISENHOWER: You didn't go to movies every night, and we never went to night clubs. Once in a while we'd go to the Army-Navy Club, or the Country Club, if there was a special dance. I had a very good maid who always stayed with John. She wasn't a baby sitter and the only requirement was that we take her home when we got home. Imagine that today.

Q: No payment, just get her back home.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Nothing, no gratuity at all, and she probably had been there since seven o'clock in the morning.

Q: The conversations at the parties, then, I would suppose that the ladies talked about the things that particularly interested them.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, the men talking about the War Department and the women talking about their shopping. Well, the ordinary running of a home. In those days we didn't have nylon things -- all our nightgowns and our slips were silk, so I would do my own silk things. And Sunday seemed to be a good day to do it.

WICKMAN: It has been said, Mrs. Eisenhower, that Washington in those days was really like a large village or a small town.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was an overgrown country town -- a delightful little village -- and your carfare was still five cents. You could

go ride all the way downtown around Union Station and come back up to the northwest section of Washington for five cents. Which, of course, you can't do today. But all the men -- I'd watch the senators and all the ambassadors stand and wait for the streetcar. Nobody every thought of taking a taxi. You went on the streetcars wherever you wanted to go downtown.

Q: Yes, it's hard to remember then, just that short time ago, it was a lot simpler for us --

MRS. EISENHOWER: It really has been long, but it doesn't seem long.

Q: No, it doesn't seem long at all.



MRS. EISENHOWER: But, as I say, it was a great treat when we let John go to the moving picture show on Saturday afternoon. We had the Ambassador, which was there at 18th and Columbia Road. It was only three or four blocks and it never occurred to me to be afraid if John and I did want to go to the movies -- if Ike was tired and wanted to go to bed -- to walk down there at night. You couldn't take two steps today. But we walked down there. I had an interesting thing happen the other day that I don't know whether I told you about: the Montessori school?

Q: No. No, you didn't say --

MRS. EISENHOWER: When we first moved to Washington John was only five and the public school wouldn't take him in kindergarten because he was too young. We had heard about the Montessori School -- which was about two blocks from where we lived, and my father said, "I will pay for his tuition." So we put Johnny in the Montessori School until he was old enough to go to kindergarten. The other day I had a letter from the Montessori system. They are now starting them again in the United States.

Q: Oh, yes, that's right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: They looked back on their records and saw where Major D. D. Eisenhower had signed their book, and written for information, or entered John in the school. Now that was very interesting to me. Think of all those years back -- how many years.

Q: And they still had it recorded?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, they had the records.

Q: Now, let me ask you this. It's a little aside, but it would be interesting to know, too; what about the motion pictures? What kinds of things would you see? Did you have favorite actors or actresses at the time?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I can remember the "Perils of Pauline," or the Marx Brothers, or things like that. You never had problem plays like they have today.

Q: No, not many.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I mean, the things you see in the movies today -- unless it's a good musical, I won't go. We never had any difficulty like that. Of course, they would have Bugs Bunny and some of your old cartoons the children could all see. They were good, healthy things for them to see. We never had to classify a movie in those days and say its for Family, General, or Adults Only, or whatever the thing would be, like they have today. As I say, we lived simply but it didn't hurt any of us.

Q: Right. But you were not regular movie goers?



MRS. EISENHOWER: No, not particularly. We were home people. We had our own fun at home. If we had bridge, we played bridge at home. Now if we just wanted to have a talk fest, we had it at home. If you wanted somebody to come in, you know, they came home.

Q: Did you have a car?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.

Q: And did you then drive, for example --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, I drove every place. I learned to drive in all that traffic all over Washington. We thought it was terrible in those days, because at Dupont Circle the streetcars went on one side and traffic went around the other side. We had to dodge the streetcars and, of course, we did have, I guess, a lot of government people, but not anything in comparison to what we have today.

Q: Right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: So that when I would sometimes take Ike to the office in the morning, you'd run into what we called then a great traffic problem, which is nothing in comparison to today. Sometimes I'd go to the State, War, and Navy Building and pick him up in the afternoon. But in summertime (we were talking about it the other day) Ike would get out of the office at six o'clock daylight saving time and go to the Old Soldiers' Home and play golf for an hour and a half, so he'd get nine holes in. He was grateful to have that. I would let my maid go in the summertime because Johnny went to Denver, and there would only be Ike and myself, so it didn't make any different what time we dined or what we did. That was our vacation, and I'd always plan on something that was cooling because there was no air conditioning in those days. I would even take all the wool rugs off the floor in the summertime

and put matting down. I took silk shades off the lamps and put paper ones on. In the summertime you made everything as cool as possible.

Q: Is this something you picked up from the people who lived in the area?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, everybody used to do it in those days. Well, I don't say everyone but, I mean, we had to do it and I know some other folks who did.

Q: Yes, a standard kind of adaptation to the Washington climate.

MRS. EISENHOWER: So all these things, then -- the summer things -- were put away and the winter things were brought out.

Q: See, I never lived in any kind of a climate like that -- and it must have been pretty bad in the pre-air conditioning days.

MRS. EISENHOWER: You didn't? Well, it was pretty hot in Washington and muggy. Very. I would get up early in the morning while it was still cool and crack the windows about two inches high and draw the glass curtains so that the whole place would be sort of gloomy. You had electric fans sitting all over the floors, which was the only circulation you had and the only cooling.

Q: Sure. How about drives out on a Sunday?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Sometimes when it was awfully hot in the summertime, if John were there, we'd take a drive through Rock Creek Park or down to Haines Point, some place like that, to cool off before you had to go back in your hot apartment.

Q: Yes, right. In that period of time, Mrs. Eisenhower, do you remember particular friends, I mean, people that you knew at that time that you thought highly of?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I see many of them today but, unfortunately, many of them are gone, too.

Q: Was any particular couple very close to you?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, there were several of them.

Q: May I ask who, in particular?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, for fear I leave someone out, I think I'd rather not.

Q: All right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: There might have been someone that thought they were closer to us than we thought maybe they were.

Q: Yes, I quite understand. I was going to ask you -- and I'm not sure that the General would have brought this home either -- I was

going to ask you about the period of the Bonus March, since I know he was --

MRS. EISENHOWER: That was a very interesting story, because I had been down to the commissary where I used to drive to bring all the groceries home. I had been down to what we now call Ft. McNair; in those days it was called Washington Barracks. That's way down south, you know, of Washington. There were also lots of fish places along there, wholesale grocers, and everything. So I circumvented it, I guess, and probably came -- I can't remember whether 21st was one way or 22nd -- but I came up one of those and got to the Wyoming and didn't go through town. I walked into the apartment and went back to John and Ike's room (they used the same room to dress) and there was a wooden thing, you know, things like put in shoes --

WICKMAN: Shoe tree?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, a tree, but it was for boots. They were sitting there and I thought, "Well, how peculiar," for Ike had gone off in his civilian clothes in the morning. Then I looked and his uniform was gone. I didn't know where he was, and I didn't know till he came home that night and told me about it, because I had not gone through that part of Washington. There were no radios or television.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But it gave me a horrible start when I came in and saw these things like dried bones just sitting there on the floor, because he hadn't had on his uniform. They all wore civilian clothes except for some state occasion of some kind.

Q: What did he say when he came back, Mrs. Eisenhower, and told you about it?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, he just told me what he had done that day; where they had been.

Q: Do you recollect his feelings about the marchers, or his actions?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I don't. He probably didn't say too much or I would have remembered some parts of it.

Q: Yes, that's probably true.



MRS. EISENHOWER: But then you pick up Time magazine, and it's covered with it. They still print it today and show a picture of Ike with General MacArthur. John looks exactly like his father did then, except his father was very much thinner. But you take it as a whole, it's uncanny to see how much they looked alike then.

Q: Well, that's an intriguing story though, I'm glad you told us that.

MRS. EISENHOWER: You'll never know my feelings -- I just didn't know what happened. It never occurred to me that it would be a serious thing such as the Bonus Marchers, or that they would go down and even try to stop them. It just never occurred to me. I didn't know whether there had been a funeral, or he had been asked to the White House for some reason, which he would have gone to in uniform, of course. I didn't know what to think I brought the groceries in, I guess, and put them away.

Q: Well, can you tell us something now of this next big move, the one to the Philippine Islands?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes. Ike was working with General MacArthur and General MacArthur was Chief of Staff and so, when the United States decided to give the Philippines their independence, General MacArthur was going out to be the head of the American contingent and he wanted Ike to go along. John was finishing his junior high and I said, "I'll stay behind with John," because, knowing some of these strange countries, sometimes the man who is elected doesn't become president or "Presidente," as you know. It was more or less of a gamble. Ike was so interested in education that this, what we used to call eighth grade, was a very important year. So I stayed behind, and then after that first year was over John and I went to



the Philippines. We went to Denver first, because we had to sail from San Francisco, and we took all our shots and all the things you had to have to get on a transport. Then we went to San Francisco, to the Presidio, where some very dear friends of ours, General and Mrs. George Sherwin Simonds -- he was in command there -- we stayed as their house guests for a couple of days.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: General Simonds had lived in the Wyoming apartment, too, and we were great friends. He used to take Ike down sometimes to the State, War, and Navy Building, and I think one instance was so amusing, showing how rather young and inexperienced Ike was. This big limousine would drive up for General Simonds every morning and take him to the State, War, and Navy Building. So the first morning he asked Ike to ride down with him and Ike goes out and he said, "After you, General." And the General said, "No, Eisenhower, you get in first, I always sit on the right." Those are little vignettes that, I think, are very interesting when you're growing up, and it is how you learn things.

Q: Now, was there a family discussion about this chance to go to the Philippines?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, there was, because Ike had always wanted to go to the Philippines. You see, up until the time his class

graduated from West Point, they always took the young shavetails and sent them right to the Philippines. So he had bought white uniforms, and khaki, and everything, and then we were having trouble with [Pancho] Villa down on the border.

Q: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: So, instead of going to the Philippines, they kept him in the United States. Anyway, his uniforms were fine for San Antonio in the warm weather. I never wanted to go that far away. It's eleven thousand miles and that was a very long way, because we had no airplanes in those days. We went by water or else. Well, we had planes, but we didn't have Clippers. We were out in the Philippines when the first clipper ship came out.

Q: That's right. That was about the time that Pan American began their flying boat service into the Pacific.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, we talked it over and I said, "Frankly, I don't like tropics." We had been to Panama; I had lost so much weight; I was so miserable the whole time, and I didn't want to go out to another tropical country. But the understanding was that when John finished school that we'd go out and join him, which is exactly what we did. We sent John to Baguio right away to school, because it was five thousand feet high and now, at Manila, we felt that he was too young to be in the town, which was not what it

should be for young people. The example was not good. So we sent him, and it was a very healthy place. He adored every minute of it up there. Bishop Brent from Chicago had started this school many years before. It was right up in Igorot country. John was then about thirteen. From that time on he was never home because he went from there, the high school at Baguio, to "Beanies" in Washington, which was a preparatory school for West Point, and then to West Point, and that was it. [ed. note: Horace B. Millard Prep School, 1918 "N" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. Mr. Millard's middle name was Behne so the students called it "Beanie's" and often referred to Mr. Millard as the "Bean" in private. Prior to this, however, John Eisenhower attended Stadium High School in Tacoma, Washington, and graduated from there in 1940.]

Q: You were the only ones who lived at the Manila Hotel?

MRS. EISENHOWER: General MacArthur had a doctor who lived there, but of the working staff, Ike was the only one.

Q: Where were the rest of the staff quartered?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Some rented houses in Manila; those that belonged to the High Commissioner's Office. There weren't very many on the staff. General MacArthur asked us to live at the Manila Hotel, which was owned by the Philippine government. Ike had lived at the Manila Hotel before I got out there, so we just figured it was the



easiest way to live, which it was, because I didn't have to worry about servants, meal hours, and didn't have to clean rooms or do anything. You'd have your amah that came in to do your body clothes, and things like that, or your sewing. But you weren't harassed by household. You had to be very careful out there; you couldn't eat any fresh vegetables and if you did, they had to be boiled before you could serve them. Now, many times you were never quite sure whether your Filipino servants had done that. But this doctor who was with General MacArthur would oversee everything in the kitchen of the Manila Hotel and make sure that everything was clean and that we did have the proper food, but that included the whole hotel. I mean, it was all clean.

Q: How many rooms did you have?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, we always had two. We had a bedroom and a living room. That was in the air-conditioned part, we had two bedrooms and a living room. They were all done in Louis Quinze or Louis Seize, I don't know which one, but it was very dressy. I used to lie in my bed and look at that Manila Bay and see those boats go out. They'd get smaller and smaller, and I said, "Oh, there they go home."

WICKMAN: What kind of social life did you have in Manila?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, social life was terrific. I think, as I remember, there were only three thousand Anglo-Saxons there. They all stuck together pretty closely. Some were heads of sugar centrals, some tobacco, some shipping, some banking; people like that who had to go out to represent their companies. But, oh, that polo -- [Joaquin M.] Elizalde, you know, who was our ambassador from the Philippines at one time, was a great polo player and they started what they called the Polo Club. The Elizaldes brothers, who had a great deal of means, had a wonderful string of horses, so there were lots of polo teams, and dinners practically every night. If you didn't, you went over to the Army-Navy Club, which was across the Lunetta. Oh, the social life was terrific. You had plenty of that.

Q: Would you describe this as being more than you had encountered in any of the previous posts or assignments?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I would think so, because, again, being a small community, you had to make your own good times. I think it was more lavish than some of the other places I had been. For instance, like Ft. Lewis, Washington, we were fourteen miles out from Tacoma. We danced a lot and we had poker games, bridge, and Mah-jong. We made our own fun right on the post. And your tea parties, and I mean tea parties! You had your tea, and your little sandwiches, and your little cakes; not cocktail parties.



Q: You did not ride, did you Mrs. Eisenhower?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I did in Panama, very much.

Q: Did you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

Q: But not over in the Philippines?



MRS. EISENHOWER: No. I started to play golf over there, too, but it was so very hot and, of course, they were worried about this rheumatic heart of mine. They just said, "Well, it's a bad game, because if you're making up a foursome and you get very tired, you keep on going rather than break up a foursome."

Q: Right, sure.

MRS. EISENHOWER: "So we would advise that you not play at all." So I did nothing active in that line out there at all.

Q: Now, in the hottest weather, did you get up to Baguio, too?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I'd go up and see John every once in awhile, but neither Ike nor myself believed that we should go see John too often. After all, he was on his own, and it's not well to have parents hang around. I never saw John at West Point, except for Christmas time or something unusual. Again, it's a place of business.

Q: Yes, that's right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: We didn't interfere with it, but John was very happy up there. There were many Navy children, whose parents were stationed in Shanghai -- at that time Shanghai was open -- and many of the sugar central people; all types of these Anglo-Saxon's children were up there.

Q: Now, you were also invited, of course, to various Philippine functions?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, we were at the Malacanan Palace, I don't know how many times; all sorts of times. You wear your Tagalog shirt, which is a beautiful embroidered thing that you wear outside with your black trousers like a dinner thing and, of course, I had mestizo costumes. Sometimes I would just wear my own dinner dresses. I came across a Chinese dress yesterday, while I was giving the girls a lot of things while they were here. I think I weighed a hundred and three pounds. I don't think I could get my shoulders in it today. But we did wear some things like that; it depended on what you were doing. But mostly, you wore your European clothes. The men would wear white sharkskin jackets and their dark trousers.

Q: Now, in the entertaining that you yourself did, what would be pretty typical? That you were inviting other Army officers and their wives?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Go to the Army-Navy Club, or sometimes Chinese -- I've eaten Chinese dinners out there, where you sat hours on end and ate one little thing at a time.

Q: Given by the Chinese civil leaders in Manila?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, or the Ambassador.



Q: And did the two of you have parties to which you would invite the other services?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, usually we did. I was in the Manila Hotel, and you will find a picture some place, I don't know whether you have it out there in Abilene or not, of one dinner that Ike and myself gave in the Manila Hotel. The big dining room, or the ballroom, in the Manila Hotel was all open and it was right on the bay. If you had a storm they had curtains made of heavy material of some kind that they would roll down and tie down to keep the wind and the rain out. But in the lovely weather you could roll these up and it would be just like dancing outdoors. We gave many dinner parties there and we did at the Army-Navy Club.

Q: Now that sounds like a Hollywood movie, doesn't it? Just unbelievable.

WICKMAN: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: I'd say, probably, it was the one time where we had a sort of an unnatural home life, because we didn't have John at home. Practically every night you would go to the movies, because it was the one place that was cool. They had wonderful movies, all the very best out there -- downtown, of course. They had lovely big theaters with comfortable chairs. They wouldn't start until probably 9:15 or 9:30 and then we would come back and have a brandy or something and watch everybody dancing.

WICKMAN: If you can remember this, where did the General think he was going while he was over in the Philippines? Was he hoping that the experience would in some way be helpful to his career, so that when he came back --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I don't think so. I think he was very interested in logistics, which is what we had to teach the Filipino. How could he defend his own country? So General MacArthur's position was to teach these people how to fight. Now, we had Filipino troops, but they were manned by white officers, and they had a lot of cadres; they had started all those. But I don't think Ike was ever against that, because he had told me from the beginning, he

said, "If I'm lucky, I'll be a Colonel." He told me that when we were at Ft. Lewis, after we had come home from the Philippines. He was a soldier and he was going to be a soldier, that was all there was to it. There was nothing that they could do to persuade him to stay out there. He said, "No, we're going to war and I'm going to be in it." I don't think rank ever made any difference to Ike.

WICKMAN: Well, I wasn't thinking of rank, particularly, but I was just wondering --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I know, but I think he learned something.

WICKMAN: Yes, right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: You couldn't help but learn in doing something like that; in other words, that's why he was so strong in his belief in People-to-People. You learn how those people live and that way you can understand better what makes them do things or why. That's what I think Ike thought all through; he said, "The most wonderful way to peace is for each one to know how the rest of the world lives, not try to foist our ideas, our way of living on somebody else."

Q: Did he start talking about the war as the war came to Europe? Was he pretty sure, early in that war -- 1939, for example -- that we were headed for it? Or do you remember?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I don't know that he said too much about it, because I knew about it, too. After all, I had been raised in that atmosphere, that we could not defend ourselves alone any more, because the Pacific and the Atlantic were no deterrents any longer, not once you had air power. See, they used to be natural barriers and we thought we were very safe having these two big bodies of water, is that what you mean?

Q: Something like that. I was wondering, for one thing, did you find that newcomers to the Islands, the ones who came out there in '38, '39, did you find that their attitudes, say about Japan, were quite different from the ones that you had?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, many of them went out there to fight in the 1890s, the Spanish-American War and we called them Sundowners. Many of them stated out there because they liked the climate; they liked the environment, they liked everything about it. Is that what you mean?

Q: Well, I'm wondering, too, did you people, as close as you were to Japan, perhaps see things a little sooner --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I think many officers did.



Q: Now, when you came back to this country after the Philippines, you went to that garden spot of America, my home state -- the State of Washington?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I loved it up there.

Q: Did you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: They dropped us off at the Presidio and we lived first at the El Driscoll Hotel. Do you know where that is?

Q: No, no, I don't.

MRS. EISENHOWER: In San Francisco -- it was up near the Presidio and that was one time I was really left alone. I would sit in those rooms and listen to those old fog horns over there at Alcatraz -- oh! And then is when I had that little radio that I showed you and you took back the other day. That's all I had -- that's all I had in the Philippines. It was to get news, or typhoon warnings, or something. And I'd sit and listen to that little radio by the hour. You see, they dropped us off there for about three months and then we went up to Ft. Lewis, and that was lovely up there. But Ike was sent down to El Bispo, what is it?

Q: San Luis Obispo.

MRS. EISENHOWER: San Luis Obispo. The 15th Infantry went down there for training, and I was left again at Ft. Lewis. John was going to school down in Tacoma -- he was finishing up his last six months of high school.



Q: Yes, he was an upper classman in the same school that I attended --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, really.

Q: Yes, I came in behind him.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, did you!

Q: Stadium High School.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's right, that was the name of it.

Q: The two of us, out in Abilene on the last trip, were cursing that experience together. We didn't like that school; neither one of us liked it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I'll never forget the night of his graduation. I was sick and couldn't go, and he had this little picture taken. We had it tinted later. Oh, he was such a baby-looking thing. But Janice Eisenhower went there also, you know.

Q: I didn't know that.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That was Ed's daughter. Well, John and Janice were great friends, because Ed watched her like a hawk and, of course, we watched John like a hawk. We were so afraid up on that horrible road into Tacoma, you know, they called it 'suicide drive' or something.



Q: That was the stretch of old Highway 99 from South Tacoma out to Fort Lewis.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We let John drive the car any place on the post, but he could not go out on that road. Every morning, you couldn't see farther than from here to that window for fog, and they'd be out on those school busses going to Stadium.

Q: Yes, the big chateau.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, it was such a mess.

WICKMAN: Well, this is rather interesting. You come to Tacoma now, the General's brother is there. There was somebody, a part of the family, at least --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, fairly close.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike loved to garden and he liked any growing things. He had a wonderful kitchen garden. Everywhere we had flowers; even I, who doesn't have a green thumb, I'd put something in the ground and it'd grow. No one was more surprised than I. But it was a wonderful place to live. One story, when we first got out there, I would like to tell you. We always had to make our calls on the commanding general, etc. and Ike and myself would go out on Sunday afternoon to make our calls. It would stay light,

and light, and light; and one night we got home at nine o'clock! We didn't think it was anything like that because it was still so daylight. We were horror struck when we found out we were making calls at nine o'clock at night.

The one thing I think I missed up there more than anything else -- being a middle westerner, we all liked our porches. You can never sit out after six o'clock at night -- it was too cold. And we used to have special lights on the road and special lights on the car. You'd crawl along hoping, just hoping, that you wouldn't hit the car ahead of you, or somebody in back wouldn't hit you.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We used to go into Tacoma quite often to parties and things the mayor would have, or somebody; believe me, it had to be somebody high ranking, or we didn't go. You would just sneak your way home and thank God when you went through those gates at the Fort. I've got some plates downstairs -- Ike was made the club officer. The club had run down terribly and they didn't have any china, so Ike, as club officer, had to get a lot of china. So I said, "Well, get me a set," so I bought and paid for a set. It has the gate on it, have you seen it?

Q: Yes. You know, they've relocated that gate since you were there --



MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I suppose so --

Q: -- it's been changed and put into a new position to make a more ornate entrance to Ft. Lewis than the one we used back then.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, that was a small little number. Of course, the post wasn't as big in those days, either.

Q: In fact, what they had to do, Mrs. Eisenhower, was to move it off to one side and it's become the information desk. Now all the traffic into the main post is on a four or six-lane highway.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I haven't been up these since we left in, let's see, we got to San Antonio on our 25th wedding anniversary. Well, I guess, it was about 1940. What would be our 25th, anyway? We were married in 1916.

WICKMAN: It would be '41.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We got down to San Antonio -- we left there in '41.

Q: Yes. Now, did you get a chance while you were there to get up into the mountains, to get out to the ocean beaches, or --

MRS. EISENHOWER: No.

Q: You didn't?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No. I don't know why, but Ike seemed to always have a job or he was indispensable. And, of course, I never went any place without him.

Q: Now, that's an interesting thought, too, isn't it, that very rarely do either one of you really get a chance to see a great deal. This business of five days a week, plus Saturday, and more, kept you from seeing more of the country around Fort Lewis.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We didn't. Oh, yes, he worked Saturdays, and part of Sundays, too.

Q: So a good bit of your recreation, as you said, was there at the post.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was entirely on the reservation. You had your little style shows; you had just anything that you could think of to do. But we liked it. And this picture was taken right outside our house there at Ft. Lewis. My father and mother. I keep that by my bed. Of course, Papa and Mamma always came around and visited us. Papa should have been an Army officer or a railroad man. He had the itchingest foot you ever saw.

WICKMAN: Did you have a fairly large house there on the post?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Doctor, the architect who built those houses built them in the North as well as the South. They were the same,



no matter where. I went in one -- well, at [Fort] Belvoir, when John and Barbara were stationed there -- and thought it was my house at Ft. Lewis.

WICKMAN: Uh-huh, the same one.

MRS. EISENHOWER: The same architect; they used the same architect.

Q: Yes. The same man designed the barracks, too, Ma'am!

MRS. EISENHOWER: I suppose.

WICKMAN: Probably.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, did you have many visitors there, now that you were back in the States? Did your mother and father come out from Colorado?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, they came, my cousins came, oh, the place was full of people all the time. I always kept a shelf of something, like baked beans, that you could fix in a hurry, or corned beef hash, or something. Ike would call me up five minutes before time to come home and say, "I'm bringing so-and-so home for lunch." Well, I had to have something we could do up quickly. I always had a maid, that was one thing my father did do, he always gave us our cars and gave me a maid. But I always tried to keep something that when you had surprise attacks like that, because we didn't go in for souffles, or things like that; you went in with



just common, ordinary something that a man can eat and would eat, in other words.

Q: Because there was no frozen food to speak of, or--

MRS. EISENHOWER: We had no frozen food. We didn't have anything like that.

WICKMAN: Did the General come home for lunch now--



MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, he came home every day for lunch. But we like that detail very much.

Q: John was almost finished wasn't he? He didn't have much time to put in at Stadium, as I recall. A year, or a portion of a year, to get his high school diploma?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, I think about six months. Because, I'll tell you, we were in Honolulu on New Year's Eve, so it took that long to get to San Francisco. Johnny went right up to Tacoma and lived with Ed, until Ike finished, until we finished at the Presidio. And then we moved out to the post, and then John, of course, went there. And from there we drove on to Denver, and Johnny drove, and Ike was doing something and he joined me in Idaho, or some place, I don't know where. Then I spent some time in Denver, and from Denver John came on to "Beanies" at Washington. I don't think "Beanies" exists any more.

Q: I don't know.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, it was a preparatory school. No, we've had some good times, and we've had some pretty rugged ones.

Q: Do you know, we haven't asked you--I've been sitting here thinking you made a trip directly back from Manila to the States, but you didn't actually come directly back, did you? Didn't you get a chance to see some of the Far East; I thought you had gone up--



MRS. EISENHOWER: They were at war and they wouldn't let us. The Filipinos, the Philippine government, would have sent us back any way we wanted to but, you see, by that time, Europe was at war. We weren't, but no American officer could go into India. We stopped in Japan and Shanghai--

Q: Yes, that's what I meant.

MRS. EISENHOWER: -- but we couldn't go the other way. Well, we stopped there because, you see, we came back on a liner, not a transport, and the liners came into all these places --

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: -- Hong Kong, Shanghai, Yokohama, I think it was, Honolulu; only because we were on a liner.

Q: I don't think that's ever been clear to me. I just assumed it was, what was it? The President Grant, -- the troop transport that ran out there?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, the Grant was the old -- what was that one I went? Oh, I've even forgotten, it's been so far back. Maybe the Grant was the new one and old one, what was the old one's name? They had one that plied between -- it was so old and rickety. but that was only the second time I ever rode on a transport. From that time on my father paid my way every place on a liner. I'd had enough of that.

Q: Were those stops in Japan and Shanghai of interest to you, or were you quite eager to get back?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, very.



Q: You enjoyed that?

MRS. EISENHOWER: John took a lot of pictures in Shanghai, because, see, weren't the Japanese and Chinese at war at that time?

Q: Yes, indeed.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And they had a barricade across the bridge of wire and Johnny would stand there and take pictures. Of course, we were having cat fits, we didn't know where he was. I've got a little thing down stairs that -- it's a little night light, and

it's rose quartz -- that John and Ike bought me. It was my birthday, and they brought it aboard in, I think it was Hong Kong, I don't know; I don't know which one of those places. I still have it. It is downstairs in the hall and is one of my prized possessions and memories. So, as I said, this house is a conglomeration of everything you could ever imagine.

WICKMAN: When did the subject come up about John going to West Point?

MRS. EISENHOWER: From the time he was knee high to a duck, he said, "I'm going to West Point." And Ed said, "Johnny, I'll send you to the best law school there is in the United States, any that you choose, if you will go and come in my office." John said, "Sorry, Uncle Ed, I'm going to West Point." And he was so skinny. It used to be that a senator or congressman could appoint you to West Point, and that's how Ike got his appointment from Kansas. Well, by this time, the demand was so great to go to either the Navy or the Army schools that they had to say, "You have to take a competitive examination." I think Johnny passed higher than anybody had ever passed from Kansas. He made a ninety-eight something, so they couldn't help but take him. But always, he'd clung to that; he was going to West Point. You couldn't talk him out of anything.

Q: And even that splendid offer from his uncle --



MRS. EISENHOWER: We never wanted to force John to go to a military school, so we had planned on his education. And, of course, my father had, too, so John would always have a college education.

Q: How did you feel about that choice? Of course you had had to live with it for quite a while.

MRS. EISENHOWER: The way I consider West Point -- I thought you'd get a very good rounded education. And that's what I thought was good for John. I mean, I don't think I had too many thoughts on the idea, that was his job. He knew where he wanted to go. Just exactly like David -- when David went around shopping for college, his father went with him, and there was only one place his father said, "You can't go."

Q: Oh?



MRS. EISENHOWER: So David went around and he chose Amherst, not dreaming that Amherst was really so badly rated. But I think we just considered that John had sense enough to know where he wanted to go. He was the one that had to go to school.

Q: Yes, that's right. Did you go down to San Antonio then? You had made the move from Ft. Lewis down to San Antonio in the summer of 1941?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes. We spent our 25th wedding anniversary in San Antonio. It had taken us twenty-five years to get back there. And so, then we were there and Ike went off on maneuvers, and I stayed in San Antonio. We were there when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Two days after Pearl Harbor, I think it was, he was ordered to Washington, and I stayed in San Antonio.

[Interruption]



MRS. EISENHOWER: It was a Sunday afternoon -- Ike was chief of staff then for --

Q: Third Army, I think.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, but I was trying to think of the General's name.

Q: [Walter E.] Krueger?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Krueger, General Krueger. I called the operator and said, "Don't ring this phone until I tell you." We didn't know who might be calling, you know; some friend might be calling or something, and Ike really needed the rest. I was sitting in what we used as a sort of living room, with that same little radio, and I heard this Pearl Harbor invasion. I went in and wakened Ike and told him. Then we went immediately to the

phone and told the operator so, of course, everybody was alerted. We were going to a dinner party on the post that evening and everybody arrived, but in a few minutes all the officers were gone. They had been called to headquarters. Ike had a leave coming and Johnny was in West Point, so we were going to go up and be with him for Christmas. So there went Ike's leave again and I went alone to West Point, because Ike, by this time, was in Washington. He never got to see John at all. Ike, in those first war years would work all night long. We didn't have a Pentagon in those days; you had the old State, War and Navy building. That's where he was in Plans and Training.

Q: Mrs. Eisenhower, what did you think when you heard that broadcast?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I suppose, like everyone else, I was absolutely stunned. It was unbelievable. It hadn't been so long since we were in Honolulu and we knew the big port for the Navy and everything about it. It just seemed an impossible thing. They said, "this means war, they can't do this to us," So I immediately went and wakened up my soldier, because I knew that he'd want to know right away. And, of course, they did want him right away. He had an interesting experience -- he was told to get to Washington as quickly as possible. The weather was bad and nothing was flying and the last train had left San Antonio. Ike called up Brooks



Field and said, "It's absolutely necessary for me to get to Washington," and they said, "Well, General, there's just nothing flying." Ike said, "They're going to have to." This man took him as far, I think it was Houston or Dallas, and just skimming the tree tops getting there, and he picked up the train that had left San Antonio. He got on the train and there wasn't one seat for him anyplace. Everything was crowded, and he was in uniform. He, I guess, was sitting on his suitcase in the aisle when some man came along and said, "General, I've got a drawing room back there, would you like to come back and sit?" And Ike said, "I certainly would." And that was -- it runs in my mind it was Richardson. We talked about him this morning -- richest man in Texas.

Q: Richardson?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sid Richardson. You've heard this story?

Q: No, I haven't, no.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And so it was Sid. That was the beginning of a very fine friendship that went on through many, many years. Ike went back to his drawing room, and I think they were playing poker. Anyway, they were enjoying themselves, and he got a ride to Washington that way. They had said "Right now;" they didn't question how he was going to get there. But he was a soldier, by jove, and he was going to get there.



Q: Right, right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Then he lived with Milton, out at Falls Church during that time before I got there. I had gone to West Point, and then he talked to John on the phone, wishing him a Merry Christmas. I finally got an apartment in the Wardman Park, because nothing was available, but because a friend knew the owner of the hotel, I got in. Then I went back to San Antonio to figure out what pieces I could take to put in this apartment. The old lady had died and it was sealed by the estate and I had to do things by a map, you know, what you call a floor plan, to try to figure what I would put in this apartment. The rest had to go in storage. I made five moves that one year, and that included sixty barrels of china, Lord knows what else. No wonder I was a wreck. Everything we owned in the world had to be packed up. So, except for a few things that I used at the Wardman Park, all the rest were put in storage. Then, they weren't gotten out until we built this house and put everything in it.

Q: A long time not to see a good share of your belongings. So then you settled in at the Wardman Park?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I lived there all during the war. We were living at Ft. Myer when Ike went over and I think they gave me a week to get out. They didn't care where I went. They didn't give a darn about families, you know. It isn't like today where you get

compassionate leave and all sorts of things. They ordered Ike away and I was ordered off the post. It was really a fast shuttle and if I hadn't had this friend who again got this same apartment back, I wouldn't have had a place to go. Except to Denver, and I couldn't go home to Papa and Momma.

Q: Well, how did you come to the decision to stay in Washington, Mrs. Eisenhower, rather than to go back?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, because you did have airplanes going back and forth, [to Europe] but not like we do today, in five and six hours, so I would have the latest news of Ike and officers would come back and say, "I saw your husband day before yesterday and he was fine. He sent you his love." Ike never called me up, I never heard his voice.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And so, I just felt that that was the best possible place for me. And when it would get me down terribly, twice I went to San Antonio to stay with my sister, and her husband was in Africa, too, and she had four small children. And I'd stay with Mike [Mrs. G. Gordon Moore] for a while because I was completely alone. And I had been raised in a family; I wasn't afraid anybody would get in because I had double locks on everything, but I could not stand this absolute loneliness.



Because even when Ike was gone other times, you see, I had a baby, or I had John for company. And I tell you, it was a gloomy experience.

Q: Well, I was trying, as I wrote the question which we will leave with you, I was trying to visualize my own mother's situation; my father overseas, and before long, I went, too. So I tried to think of your circumstances in line with hers.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, John was gone, too.

Q: Right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: So your mother put up exactly with what I did.

Q: Yes, yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Everything she had in the world was gone.

Q: That's what I wanted to ask you. How did you fill your time?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, there were quite a few other Army women in Washington at the time whose husbands were gone. We had one little ration ticket; we never got a decent meal unless we all got together and everybody put their things in and then we'd get some hamburger. And we'd play mah-jong, we'd celebrate birthdays, wedding anniversaries; just as if the men were home, and that's the way it'd go.

WICKMAN: The Allen's [Mr. and Mrs. George Allen], you know the Allen's then, Mary --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, Mary lived at Wardman Park, too.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But many of the wives now -- Mrs. [Arthur] Nevins, Mrs. [Benjamin Franklin Caffey, Jr.] Caffey -- by the way, General Caffey just died the other day. The only time I ever got a good night's sleep was when those women would come over and stay all night. I'd stay awake until daylight. I couldn't go to sleep, I was scared to go to sleep. I didn't know what this awful quietness was. I wasn't used to it. Papa and Momma came out a couple of times and another friend gave us their apartment in Wardman's, because they went away some place. And that's what I did; I mean, I don't know what I did.

Q: And John's routine was such that --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, he was a cadet.

Q: -- you wouldn't see him very often.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Heavens, no! And, you see, they didn't let them come home on Christmas leaves like they do today.

Q: Because of the wartime speed-up in their training?



MRS. EISENHOWER: No, rules and regulations were such that he couldn't own a car.

Q: Oh, I see.

WICKMAN: About the only way you got to see them, Mac, was if you went up there, and there was a special time for you to go up there too.

Q: And West Point was pretty well out of the way, too.

WICKMAN: Yes. Well, did you see much of Milton and his family? Were they close?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Not a great deal, I don't think. I was out to Milton's the night they went into Africa. See, Milton knew it, so he said, "Why don't you come out," he said, "I'll get a group together, and we'll have a little penny ante poker." And so he had a game room and we went in the game room, and Milton kept fidgeting around, you know, and I thought it was rather strange him playing the radio because Milton never liked that sort of thing. He was waiting for the announcement, you see.



Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And I was out there when the announcement came, and I stayed there for two days because, of course, all the

newspaper people were after me just like that. They were in all the hallways of Wardman Park, so you couldn't get in or out. So I stayed out at Falls Church with Milton.

WICKMAN: Well, you see, that's another question I was going to ask you, too. Once the General became the Supreme Allied Commander, how in the world did you fend off -- I mean, it looks to me as though you were imprisoned in the Wardman Park. Did the Army provide some kind of, just anybody who had to help you run --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Never! They didn't even give me a chauffeur; they gave me nothing. The War Department gave me absolutely nothing.

Q: So, day by day, your husband becomes more and more a public figure and you, right along with him --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I got nothing.

Q: -- and you got nothing.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Right. I had my own car but I couldn't drive it. I had no equilibrium, you see. I had been waiting on tables down at the mall, taking care of the soldiers, selling cigarettes, waiting on them. I stood up and realized that I, well, I couldn't stand. I wasn't pitching like I used to do in the Philippines,



because I always carried smelling salts. For twenty-five years, or more than that, I carried this equilibrium problem, which is a carotid sinus. That's why I couldn't drive a car. I couldn't walk out and get in a taxi without somebody being with me.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I didn't have a maid for a long time. I crawled on my hands and knees from my bedroom to the kitchen. I didn't dare try to walk -- I couldn't walk. Finally I called up Elder [Lightfoot] Michaux who, you know, had the Saints in Washington. Ike was an officer in the Church, along with George Allen, Steve Early and [Harry] Butcher. I called Elder and I said, "Elder, I've just got to have somebody to help me. I've got to have a maid. "Well," he said, "Mrs. Eisenhower, I'll take care of that." And, he did. He took my Mary [Newton] off of three other jobs and he said, "This is your war work." She stayed with me until we moved out to Ft. Myer. But she was the one that would get my breakfast. She had to be home at three o'clock in the afternoon because she had roomers, and she had to stoke the furnace, and so she would get me a good-sized breakfast, some luncheon, and for dinner I'd eat candy.

Q: Up until the time that affliction struck you, you had been doing charity work in --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I was active. I was very active in everything. I was talking the other day about how I used to go down to that lower part of Washington, down there by the fish market at Thanksgiving and Christmas and carry food to those people, driving my own car. It never occurred to be to be afraid. I'd take these baskets, you know, to all the needy families. Oh, yes, I should say I did. There was a mission -- I think it was called -- down right off the boardwalk, Constitution. I don't know where it is today, but I used to take clothes down there. I worked in the Army Relief, because in those days we used to have what they called rummage sales and everybody would send their old clothes in, and whatever you sold went to the Army Relief. Now that taught me a lesson. I never sent anything to a church that it wasn't in good condition and clean, because some of the things were so filthy that you had to handle, and we, Army wives, had to do it.

Q: Would you say that Army Relief work during the war was your major activity?

MRS. EISENHOWER: We called it the Army Relief during the war. Oh, no, no! I worked at the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Club and waited tables there; that was during the war. And then, as I say, I worked at the mall -- that's where I got sick. After that, I couldn't do anything. I did work at the USO, and I had the detail from eleven o'clock till one o'clock in the morning. I'd go out



there and stand and wait for a taxi or a streetcar, all by myself. I don't know how in the world I ever did it. I belonged to the AWVB which was the American Women's Voluntary Services. I worked at that. Oh, I did a lot of war work.

Q: It appears that you kept busy!



MRS. EISENHOWER: I never went to a place to dine, I never went to a night club. I just didn't think it was right that I should go, and I had plenty of invitations. Why, other people were suffering over there and my husband was the head of it. It was a very bad example.

Q: I know how much my dad counted on my mother's letters and how much his letters home counted to us. I don't want to ask you about personal things, but it occurred to me that probably one of the best things that you would have done during that period of time was keep the family together with letters to both of your men.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I'd write to Ike but, he was busy. I'd write him, but there wasn't anything much to write to him about, except who had been in, you know, the different wives. Oh, and Papa and Momma would come, and my trips to San Antonio, or whatever, like that. Because I was doing housework, too. He wouldn't get home from the War Department until eleven or twelve o'clock at night; I couldn't keep a maid. And I, who knew very little about the

kitchen, would have to hold dinner or cook dinner for him at eleven or twelve o'clock at night.

Q: Yes, that was before he went over, while you were still in Washington.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes we were at war. After I worked for the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Club, I'd come home -- my floors were uneven, you know, we had that old house down on Massachusetts, beautiful house now, but the floors were uneven, holes in them, and everything. My feet would be so tired when I'd come home at night. And then I'd have to sit and wait for Ike, and then you'd have those awful alarms that would scare you. I can hear them now, those horns in the halls of the hotel, saying, "Turn off all lights! This is a warning!" Oh, and that would put the fear of the Lord into you. It would.



WICKMAN: I can imagine.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, Ike wrote to me very regularly and I have all his letters there that I've never looked at since. They're sitting in a sealed box there. He never told me where he was. He had to -- what's the word I want?

WICKMAN: Censor.

MRS. EISENHOWER: He censored his own letters. He never told me where he was; I never knew. It was three years completely out of my life, except some of things, and he didn't tell me a lot of things when he came home either. It would have frightened me, even afterward. But finally, I had to build up a philosophy, which was that nothing was going to happen to him until God was through with what he had put him on this earth to do. Now, I wasn't quite so sure about John, my little 2nd Lieutenant, but I thought Ike had a great responsibility, and it had come so unexpectedly in lots of ways. He must have chosen this man for something.

Q: Did that come to you as the time passed from the beginning of the war?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes. I don't think right away -- I worried like all the rest of the wives. I worried and stewed and fretted and everything and finally, I thought, well, this is absolutely ridiculous; there's nothing I can do about it.

Q: That's right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And so one time, I just sat down and I thought this thing out. And when I know, now, how many times he came near death; God did have something else for him to do. Because you see he flew into Gibraltar one time when nothing could go in there, and they kept telling them not to come in, and, why, they just said it



was suicide! Out in the Philippines, he took John back up to Baguio one time, after he had spent a weekend, and they cleared that mountain by inches. Another time, many times over there in Europe -- look when they shot at him and everything, and they had to have a double for him. So, as I say, until -- and when he was dying out here at Walter Reed -- I thought, well, I don't know how you stood the responsibilities. But Ike had had a full life, he had a wonderful life; he lived eight years longer than the Bible said. He'd seen his children married, grown up, fine, upstanding young Americans. We'd had a good life.

Q: Yes, you have.



MRS. EISENHOWER: And a bad life; we had plenty ups and downs, but we were still together.

Q: Well, how amused you must have been when suddenly that magic marker of "Colonel" was by and it was "General" and he was on his way up.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It never occurred to me; I don't know why. I think the day that he got his first star was my biggest thrill. The rest of them -- the first one is always the biggest one.

Q: Yes. I suppose so.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And that was in San Antonio, too.

Q: Any special celebration for that first star?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, no. General and Mrs. Krueger, and my father and mother, and I stood on the sidewalk when he took his first parade.

Q: Oh, your mother and father were there for that?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, they were.

Q: Good, That's good to hear.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, they adored Ike. So, there was no celebration. But he had made such a name for himself on the [Louisiana] maneuvers, you see. But I do know that we were pretty excited about that star, because we didn't have as many stars around in those days.

Q: Yes, that's right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was a great feather in his cap.

WICKMAN: When did he come back to Washington then for the first time after he left in 1942? Was it in '44?

MRS. EISENHOWER: He came, I can't remember just when, was it '44?

WICKMAN: Early 1944, probably. [Ed. note. General Eisenhower left Algiers on December 31, 1943, and reached Washington, D.C., on January 2, 1944]

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, then that was a very interesting thing. We were talking about it the other day, how difficult it was for men to come home and live in a home, and how hard it was for us to have a man around the house. He'd made his own life running his house, or whatever he was doing, and we had made our own lives. And when they did call and tell me that he was due in that night, whenever it was, I think it was around Christmas or New Year's --

Q: Yes, it would have been in December of 1943, I think.



MRS. EISENHOWER: -- and I invited all these ladies to come to my apartment for dinner. We were all going to get together and have a hamburger. And so I thought, how in the world, I can't tell anybody. I hope he doesn't come in while they're all here. I couldn't wait to get them out, and then I had to start washing dishes and cleaning up the ash trays and doing all the things, you know, so the house would look decent when he came in, and luckily he didn't get in until one o'clock in the morning. But I was carrying this horrible secret, you see, because no one was supposed to know he was home.

Q: Sure.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And I had to make believe I was having a high time, too, you know, celebrating Christmas or New Year's, whatever we were doing.

Q: And you were very excited about the fact that he was coming back.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I couldn't let on anything like that. I was petrified. I was so afraid that he'd come home and find everything a mess. And Ike was not -- he wasn't beyond mess himself, but he certainly didn't want it around his house or me.

Q: Now you got in a little bit of travel during that time period?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Only to San Antonio, and to Denver. That's all. And those were visiting my relatives, my father and mother and sister.

Q: But on your husband's trip back here?



MRS. EISENHOWER: That time?

Q: Did the two of you get a chance to travel a bit?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, he -- no. They did let him go to West Point, and we stopped down in the train yards and they brought Johnny down from the Academy to the car, with three of his friends, and they had dinner with us on the train. Then we went down to

white Sulphur and we had about a week down there, where nobody was supposed to know he was home that time. So I suppose, all in all, it was about ten days. But he was called hither and yon and every place, you know.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And I was so provoked to think that Mr. Roosevelt, knowing that I hadn't seen this man in so long, would demand that he come to the White House and spend a whole evening, when I thought that time belonged to me. I thought it was pretty thoughtless.

Q: Yes, I can understand how you must have felt.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We were young enough so, good heavens, I mean, it meant a lot to us.

Q: Yes, of course it did.



WICKMAN: Then he came back though, in '44 or '45.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, for good in '45. June of '45. But one -- when did I go to Boston and meet him? When was that?

Q: I remember the story.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I remember, I went up there -- now that was another time; no plane could land, you know. You couldn't see

anything, and suddenly this plane came right down on the ground. One time he came back from Europe, when he was over there in NATO, and we flew to Ft. Knox to see the children -- that's where John was stationed -- and it was snowing like mad and no plane could land in the United States. And we landed right outside of New York, that big army base there, and the snow was so deep -- I didn't have sense enough to be afraid.

Q: Mrs. Eisenhower, when you saw him late 1943, was he pretty tired? Or did he seem all right to you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I think he was very keyed up. No, I don't think Ike ever showed -- Barbara said to me this morning, she said, "You know, Mimi," -- she went over to Lancaster, I think, last week for a political meeting of some kind and these newspaper people came up and they said, "Well, what do you think of your father-in-law being called a 'do-nothing' President?" And Barbara said, "I looked at them and I said, 'You know, I remember that I loved skating when I was young and I would watch them skate and you'd say, 'Oh, how easy'", she said, "Dad used to come home at night, and looked just as pleased at being home and everything, just like he had done nothing, but we knew he had been working all day long -- and it wasn't easy; he hadn't had an easy day, so it's all in your viewpoint." But I think history is taking care of that now. They



realize how much Ike really did do, but he did it so quietly, without any fanfare, that people just didn't think he did anything.

Q: Well, I was just thinking of that enormous responsibility he had, and what he was about to take up as soon as he returned to London, the rush towards Normandy -- and I wondered if you had noticed any difference, any strain?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, he was the same old Ike as far as I was concerned. As I say, his wonderful sense of humor -- when I told you he went to open the door to let the colored boy come in after the trash --

Q: No, I don't --



MRS. EISENHOWER: Didn't I tell you that story?

Q: No, no.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I loved that story. This was the time he was supposed to be home and nobody knew it, so it was Sunday morning, and I had a front door and a kitchen door. So The kitchen door-bell rang and I said, "Ike, that's the trash man, go let him in." Ike padded down the hall in his pajamas; he opened the door, and this fellow's face turned gray. He's never seen a man in my apartment. He took the trash and Ike came back laughing like mad.

He climbed into bed and he said, "Talk yourself our of that one!" I don't believe he'd lost his sense of humor.

WICKMAN: Very good, very good.

Q: That is funny!

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I'll never forget when he said, "Talk yourself out of that one, if you can!" Because I never allowed a man to come into my apartment if there wasn't another women or somebody there. I was going to have nothing started of any kind. I never went out with even his best friend during the war, just to have dinner, or anything, never. So that's what he meant, and he knew that, too!

Q: That's right. That was another difficult thing about that period of time.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, because other women were going out and having fun and occupying their time, you know, going to the Shoreham for dinner, or the Chevy Chase Country Club, or some place, but I didn't. But it wasn't difficult for me because it was something I believed in.

Q: Yes. And you had to make some kind of a decision about it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And I wouldn't have liked it! Just like today, I say, "All right, are we going to give up Vietnam now? If I were

a mother who had lost her son over there, or a wife who had lost her husband, do you think I would like it if today we say, 'Oh, we'll just pull out and say nothing more about it'? My son had given his life, my husband had given his life. I wouldn't like that a bit. What did they do, give it for nothing? We've got to come out with peace and honor. That's the only American way we know. Wouldn't you feel that way? I'd be very bitter. 'Say, what did he do, give up his life for nothing? After all he was very dear to me!' So I often think of that when these so-called 'doves' gather around and say, "Oh, pull them out right now." Well, Mr. Nixon is doing the best he knows how to get them out. But, still, we've got to do it in such a way that Americans do not have to hang their heads in shame. We've never had to do that.



Q: As you came up on the end of that other war, before he came back home, what did you think was ahead now? What kind of plans did you have in your mind?

MRS. EISENHOWER: When he came back in '45?

Q: Yes, before he got back, you could see that that war in Europe was coming to a close and --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I don't know that I saw that it was.

Q: Don't you think so?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I don't think so.

Q: Those last months, April, May --

MRS. EISENHOWER: We kept hoping, of course, and they kept talking about it, and everything, but until, well, until they called me up and said, "What did you think of the invasion?" And I said, "What invasion?" The day John graduated from West Point.

(Interruption)

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, who was I to try to prognosticate anything? I didn't know enough about it.

Q: No thoughts there? I mean at the end now, 1945.



MRS. EISENHOWER: I'm talking about that.

Q: Yes. It just seems to me that you would have been sort of thinking, 'Now what, where will we go?'

MRS. EISENHOWER: No.

Q: You weren't thinking about that at all?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, there was still an awful lot to be done, because John left four hours after he graduated, for Europe.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And it wasn't over.

Q: Well, the Japanese -- from May until August, or so --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

Q: There were the Japanese, but I just wondered if you had thought about this.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, John graduated in '44 you know.



Q: Yes, but I'm one year further on. I'm at the end of the war in Europe.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I remember sitting on the porch our a Ft. Myer, the night that they talked about Japan, and that was closed. Of course, we had already closed ours. Ike had been home and gone back because he thought he was to take command of all the troops in Europe and then General Marshall said, "You're going to be Chief of Staff", and Ike said, "Well, I don't want it but if you're going to make me, I'll keep with it for two years." That's all he stayed. It was a feeling of, as I look back on it and think of it, how we sat out there on that beautiful moonlight night and looked out over Washington, you know, the lights, you know, everything -- it was so beautiful. He said, "It just seems almost like a dream; my end was finished, but there are others who are still going over there."

You wondered, of course, knowing that part of the world so well, it wouldn't have surprised me if they hadn't hung on a lot longer than they did.

Q: In the Pacific?



MRS. EISENHOWER: To me, I don't still think I could believe that they would ever give up, because, you see, they had no fear of death. They think they're better off dead, and most of them are. But, you know, Sgt. Moaney said something interesting to me the other day. He said, "You know, we all want to go to heaven but, unfortunately, we have to die to get there." Now isn't that something to think about -- but how true! I never thought of it like that. You've got to die before you can get there.

Q: Well, I don't think there's any use in asking this particular question, because I think I know something of your views. I was going to ask you, how did you cope with it all when he came home and you had there in your hands a national hero? But I think you probably handled that right in your stride.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, so many things had happened to Ike and myself, and I think I did. As far as I'm concerned, I had my husband home. That was the big thing to me! Because Ike was a very strong character and I never thought I was. I think I've turned out to be much stronger than I thought I ever could be. I

relied on him if I were ill. I wanted him in the room, I always felt stronger because I knew he was there. Or if we had a bad lightening storm, and I'm frightened to death of lightening, if I could hold his hand or get my head under his shoulder, I felt perfectly safe.

Q: Did the strength of that reaction when he came back, the overwhelming kind of greeting he got, did that surprise you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, because I always thought he was good! It wasn't any surprise. Oh, I thought, "they like him a whole lot!" I sure did. Because I knew he hadn't had an easy time, because it was hard for Ike to have to send those boys -- every one of those boys he had to send, he could see John.



Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I bet his heart broke many, many, many, many times. Like that picture, that everybody looks at, where he goes and tells those boys that are facing death and everything -- he tells them all goodbye, knowing maybe, a lot of them wouldn't come back. That's pretty hard to do. But I think his philosophy of saying -- I often wondered how in the world he could ever go to sleep at night with all the horrors that he had seen in those years, you know, those awful camps, and the responsibility of so many lives -- and one night I heard him say, very quietly, "God,

I've done the best I could today." And I think that was the theory he went on.

And once, out at Ft. Myers, when we were trying to get supplies and things out to Bataan and we had been pared to nothing; we'd given up ships and we'd done every --, we were so utterly unprepared -- and he was walking up and down the room where I was sitting, and he was talking to himself. He said, "Dear God, I don't have it, I don't have it to send." See, he was responsible, Plans and Training, he was trying to get stuff to them. He said, "I don't have it." And a lot of his friends, too, and people he knew were out there waiting for that material that we didn't have. Well, certainly, and we were trying to prepare these people. He had worked with them for four years. But when it came to a showdown, we had nothing in the United States to be able to help them out with. But, you know, Ike, he depended a great deal on that Man above, and I think that's what carried him through so many things, and it certainly was in his last illness. Because he memorized that St. Francis of Assisi, you know, ". . . if I'm a good man today, whatever I think"; he memorized that while he was lying there in that bed. And I know he was thinking, you see, about that. And then, he loved "The Sound of Music", you know -- that part in there that he liked so much -- "from the highest mountains." See, all those things he kept thinking about. He'd



never let you know, but I can go back now and piece a lot of things together I couldn't then.

Q: Sure, sure.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But he was of very strong character. Never let me know for a minute that he wasn't getting well, because he knew what it would do to me. I was the one he worried about!

Q: I asked one of his soldiers once, a young company commander, I said, "Irvin, what did you think, looking back on it." -- he'd led a company from Normandy all the way through -- and I said, "You made mistakes, what did you think?" He looked at me with a very firm look and he said, "I never made mistakes, Mac. You don't think back that they were mistakes. You did the best you could with what you had."

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's right, and that's what Ike said many times to me. I'd say, "Honey, how in the world did you have the nerve to do this?" He said, "I had to." He said, "If I let anybody, any of my commanders, think that maybe things weren't going to work out, that I was afraid," he said, "they'd be afraid, too. He said, "I didn't dare". He said, "I had to have the confidence. I had to make them believe that everything was going to work." Well, that's one of [these philosophies] like this boy's. Everything he did was right.

Q: Yes. it had to be.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And he passed that confidence on to those men under him. So, it's really well to wait awhile, I guess.

Q: Yes, particularly under those conditions, I think.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, this business of negotiating now. Ike has said, I've heard him say many, many times, "You cannot negotiate from weakness; it has to be strength." Now how can you negotiate with these countries if we don't keep a good standing army, even though they don't pay much attention to it, but still, they know, militaristically, that we are able to take care of ourselves. Now if we cut our people to the bone, they're not going to have any respect for us. Listen, I've lived enough all over this world that -- most countries in this world only believe in strength. How strong, militarily, are you? Not economically, not in how much money you can send. How many soldiers do you have? And they revere that. Now it was brought out so much to us in Brazil, when Mr. Truman sent Ike down as the goodwill -- my Lord, you'd think the Heavens rose and set on Ike. He was a military man and that was what they respected.

Q: Yes, I remember reading about that trip.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, as I say, they respected that uniform. That meant a lot, you see. I think that was brought home very



strongly -- well, of course, it was in the Philippines, too, as far as that goes. But different places we've lived. How about France? How about NATO? How do you suppose Ike got all those countries, Sweden, and Denmark, and Norway, and France, and all them, to say 'We'll put in men'. His belief was that if we could protect Europe against starvation and outside intervention; and that's how he got NATO together. But he was a strong believer -- again, it's sort of a People-to-People thing, isn't it?

WICKMAN: Right, yes, it is.



Q: You said a moment ago that he said, "Two years as Chief of Staff and that's it!" What did he have in mind by limiting it in that way? He didn't want that job at all?

MRS. EISENHOWER: He wanted to be a soldier some place. He didn't want to be a desk man again. Ike always wanted service with troops and, by jove, he was put out to coach football -- you know, put in offices here, and all this "wonderful staff officer" in Washington. And he wanted to prove that he was a soldier; he wanted to prove that.

Q: And I suppose the problem was that he had gone so high and had done so well that his appointment as Chief of Staff was as inevitable as the rising of the sun.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I don't know. I don't know why he was, but he was ready to go back to Europe. But, as I say, it was nothing -- at least he had command of troops, you see. As Chief of Staff, well, you were Chief of Staff, but you didn't have close touch with your men.

Q: And that was a tough time to be Chief of Staff, too, because I think he took that job just in time to have to cope with a lot of the demobilization problems.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Mothers writing in, saying, "I want my boy home tomorrow."

Q: Yes, indeed.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike used to say, "You know, I can take care of the men," but he said, "I'll be John Brown if I can take care of the women." The wives were always saying, 'Why don't you promote my husband?' Or, 'Why don't you send my son home?' Ike said -- and he did to several of his classmates -- he had to relieve them, you know, and send them home. He never had any trouble with them, but the wives --

Q: Did you ever have to cope with the wives yourself, Mrs. Eisenhower? In any of those instances?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, why would I?

Q: I had a vision of somebody calling you up and saying, "Your husband just relieved my husband!"

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no.

Q: Nothing like that occurred?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no. No. There were many of them that thought their husbands should have been promoted.

Q: Did they call you up?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, it came out later in life. Oh, no they didn't call me at the time! Oh, indeed they did not. No, I think the people that we were closer to were people who were about our age that really had made their mark. There was no unpleasantness at all. I think I would have been -- I'm very sensitive, and I think I would have remembered that very, very well.

Q: Right, I think you would have, too.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But I can't recall of any unpleasantness like that.

Q: It's good to have your word on that. We wondered about it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And today, I'm an Army wife and I go any place that I possibly can to be with Army, because I am an Army wife. The other things were interims. But our whole life has been the



service. And that's why, sometimes, I get a little provoked with some of these young ones today. They won't put up with a lot of things that we did, and yet we were better off than the women who had to follow their husbands to Arizona by mule train. So you can always find out there's something different.

But I talked this over with my two granddaughters and Sue's husband, who is just barely thirty, and I said, "In a way, I can understand that I was brought up in peace. You could plan for tomorrow, you could plan for old age." Today, these youngsters don't know whether this is the last day they're going to be on earth or not, so everybody is trying to have everything right now, quick. That's my viewpoint of, maybe, why they're acting the way they do today. I can't think of any other reason. Because I got my first mink coat when I was fifty years old, and I never had a dishwasher. I do now, but --. And I washed my first little boy's clothes on a washboard until I had no skin left on my hands at all. And I did all his washing and ironing, and we didn't have -- listen, we didn't have diaper service in those days. But I was perfectly willing to do it, because I wanted to show my father and my mother that I could take this. Because they said to me, well, Papa said -- well they loved Ike -- but they said, "Remember, you will never have a home, you'll never have any money, you'll never have a cent." Well, that didn't make any difference to me, I wanted that man. I found out a hundred fifty seven dollars a month



didn't go very far, but we were never in debt; never, never a cent in debt. And I never bought anything on time. I waited two years to get that chest of drawers back there. I waited, I saved until I could get it. And that's why I think they're so wrong today to go out and buy everything on the cuff. That's what's wrong with the economy of our country -- I think it's very bad. I don't know, maybe I don't know what I'm talking about, but that's the way I feel anyway. But I do know this, that anything that you have to work for you appreciate more than something that is just handed to you. And if I had wanted to, I could have lived mighty well, if I had let my father and mother help me, and I wouldn't do it. I used to go wash dishes at that old sink there in Abilene at Grandma's, sure; I set the table, I did a lot of things I never did in my own home, my father and mother's home. But I could do them. And I, at my age today, I'm not sure I can scrub floors, but I wouldn't be surprised.

Q: You're not drawn to do that very often, are you? [Laughter]

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, but I don't ask people to do things I can't do or haven't been able to do myself. So I know that they can do them, and I was a girl that didn't know how to do anything. Most people are raised to do something. I wasn't. And if I could go ahead and get on my hands and knees, somebody else can. But then,



INTERVIEW WITH  
Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg  
Oral Historian  
and  
Dr. John Wickman  
Director

on

August 16, 1972

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

(Edited by Mrs. Eisenhower - July 1974)



This is an interview with Mrs. Mamie Doud Eisenhower on August 16, 1972, at the Gettysburg Farm. Present for the interview are Dr. John Wickman and Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library. This is NLE Oral History #3 with Mrs. Eisenhower.

BURG: During this time that your husband was Chief of Staff he seems to have gotten offers to do a lot of different things, and it was a time when he was thinking about whether it would be a business endeavor, or whether he would go into education work. There were a lot of things that he seems to have had a chance to do, and I know that you had discussed from time to time the idea of a small college presidency. Can you tell us a little about that?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, that I don't know too much about. You see, he took leave from the Army to write the book, the Crusade in Europe and he wrote that in the Chief of Staff's house; he worked night and day. I practically never saw him, and I think that was so much on his mind at the time that I don't think he was thinking too far ahead, or not discussing too far ahead, what he might do. In the meantime, they came from Columbia, you see, the head trustees who was, what was his name?

WICKMAN: Watson

MRS. EISENHOWER: Watson, Tom Watson. Ike went to West Point to, I believe, address the graduating class. I'm not sure, but he went to West Point for something, and I went along, and Tom Watson came up from New York City to Ike to ask him to take Columbia, and Ike did not promise to do it at the time. He was thinking it over. I



don't think he discussed it too much with me, he knew I'd do whatever he wanted to do.

Q: How did you feel about it yourself, do you remember?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, frankly, Doctor, I wanted him to do anything he wanted to do, because if you do not allow the man in the home, who is the head, to do as he wants to, he's pretty hard to live with if he doesn't get his way. So I was willing to do anything that Ike wanted to do and, of course, I will say that Columbia appealed to me because of the hugeness of the institution, because it was spread all over New York City. Consequently, it would not be like a small college where you must entertain all of the students' fathers, mothers, and the students themselves -- which is a very, very difficult position to have. I've seen it in many small colleges.

Q: Right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: In other words, he would think about these things later because he was never retired anyway, until he went into politics.

Q: How did you feel about a move to New York?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Frankly, I'm not a New York lover. I don't like a large city. I was born and reared in a large city, because Denver was considered quite a good-sized town when we were there,

but I think, probably, I like smaller towns. The only reason that I didn't mind New York so much is because the house of the President was up on a hill and you overlooked Harlem. You sort of had a feeling of space there. So they said, "Well, come and look at the house." I did and of course nothing had been done to it since it had been built and there was a great deal of renovation to be done. When I saw that it was on a hill where I could look at the Triborough Bridge and you looked all over the trees and everything, I didn't mind it.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I loved that house. We were very happy there. It was a beautiful house to live in and very easy to run. I had a house manager and, of course, we had plenty of assistance -- maids and Delores [Mrs. John A. Moaney] was our cook. And it lent itself beautifully for entertaining: drawing rooms, and everything. We took the top floor, which had not been made into anything, except just a walk around, and made it into a living room. That's where we lived and that's where Ike did his painting. I had my piano up there. There was a terrace where the children could go out and play right off this penthouse. I just enjoyed being there. Now there were certain duties with the faculty that I did, but they were interesting.

Q: What kind of things, Mrs. Eisenhower?

MRS. EISENHOWER: There were teas; there were get-togethers and meetings of different types, but only with the high echelon. I have an awfully cute picture, and I don't believe it's been printed much, of Ike and myself in a carriage. We had been over to one of the dormitories - the boys had had a party -- and we attended and they took us over in a horse and carriage and brought us back to our house. Both Ike and myself are just laughing so hard, sitting in this little carriage -- have you seen that picture?

WICKMAN: I don't think so.

Q: No.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, it's amusing.

Q: So most of the contacts with the faculty are with deans and departmental chairman, people of this level?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, Trustees and heads of different departments. But, as I say, being such a large institution people did not get together as often as they would have in a small college.

Q: So it was more of a formal kind of entertaining?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, it was very formal. Naturally, we had heads of state that were given honorary degrees from different countries. We entertained quite a few people from New York that were prominent at that time so, yes, our entertaining was formal.

Q: Now this may have been the first time you were tossed really into that kind of an atmosphere --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no, we'd had that formal entertaining many places before.

Q: Oh, yes, but I'm thinking of these faculty people. How did that work out?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, of that type. Yes, of the collegiate type. I can always say that it sort of likened itself to an Army post.

Q: Oh, really?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I always sort of thought about that, because you had your higher echelon and you did very much the same type of entertaining, only on a larger scale. But the deans, and the professors, and so forth, they were in a class by themselves, just like captains or majors, or colonels in the Army.

WICKMAN: And in the Chief of Staff period, of course, this coming right after this, it would have been very similar.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We did a great deal of entertaining there, you see, at Number 60, because Ike knew so many people all over the world. And they would come to Washington and, naturally, we'd have big teas, and we had all the grounds outside of Number One, where



it, again, lent itself beautifully for entertaining. It was nothing new.

Q: No, I just wondered if the people that you were meeting came as any kind of a surprise to you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Not necessarily, because I don't think anybody would have surprised me much, because we had met too many different types of people. It was just another group of people.

Q: Yes. That interested me because, as Dr. Wickman knows, you can run into some of the biggest eccentrics in the world on any campus, small or large.

(Interruption)

WICKMAN: . . . When John was married, I was just wondering if you have any particular reflections or reactions to that fact.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Of course, Ike was Chief of Staff at that time. Barbara's father and mother [Colonel and Mrs. Percy W. Thompson], and John, and Barbara, all came home on the same transport. Col. Thompson was immediately assigned to, well, I always think of it as Old Point Comfort, but that isn't the --

WICKMAN: I think you mean Fort Monroe.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's right, so the wedding had to be held there. Barbara's mother had to get her wedding gown, make all the



preparations, as the mother of the bride has to do, but we could help a great deal because Ike, being Chief of Staff, had troops down there that could help a great deal on the crowds, the church - - he had all sorts of people that could help him.

WICKMAN: Well, where had John met Barbara?

MRS. EISENHOWER: In Vienna. That's where they did their courting, because Col. Thompson was on duty there, and John was doing guard duty, along with the Russians.

WICKMAN: Oh, yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And I think the only piece that Barbara could play was -- what was it? The "Vienna Woods?" Anyway, it was a Viennese piece, and that was all she could play on the piano.

Q: Yes, "Vienna Woods", I think, is the name of it.

WICKMAN: Let's see, John would have been what, about 23?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Twenty-four. And Barbara was about 19. Let's see, her birthday is on the 15th of June and they were married on the 10th of June. John would have been 25, so I guess Barbara was about 20 years old, or 21.

(Interruption)

WICKMAN: So, in the Chief of Staff period you have a wedding, also, to --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, that's another affair. So then they had the old hotel down there, you know, that burned once, and this was the new one, without air conditioning, and it was pretty hot, but we didn't mind too much. Then her father and mother had the big wedding reception at the Officers' Club -- that was where my mother stepped off a step and broke her arm right at the wedding reception. Well, I just barely made the wedding reception, because we had to take my mother to the hospital and I stayed with her. But I got back in time to see John and Barbara drive off in an old horse and carriage.

Q: Yes, very nice indeed.



MRS. EISENHOWER: But I always felt like I had missed a lot. Of course, missing David and Julie's wedding was a very difficult thing because Ike was very ill and, of course, I was, too. We didn't get to New York to that. Did get to Anne's, of course, we had Susie's here at the farm.

Q: The acquisition of a daughter-in-law must have been a thrilling time for you.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I tell you, we were very grateful -- John had had a few girls on the side -- and we were very grateful that John had

chosen such a wonderful girl as Barbie, and with such a fine family background. Although, in all our Army service, we had never met the Thompsons. But we knew she had to be a mighty nice girl to come from a good Army family.

WICKMAN: Col. Thompson lectured when I was at Purdue, as I recall.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Barbara went to Purdue.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, for a couple of years. I think it was only about two years. I think Ohio was their home originally and then, during the war, Mrs. Thompson went down to Gainesville and bought a house and that's the house they've been living in. Of course, he is now in a veteran's hospital and she's in a rest home, both very sick.

Q: Oh, that's too bad.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, because they're years younger than I.

Q: Let me ask you about that New York experience. Does anything stand out in your mind, now, as you think back on it; any particular problems that you had to face there that might have been new to you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Running my house was no problem because I had a wonderful house manager. She ordered all the meals, did all the

buying, hired all the servants; she even arranged all the flowers. It was a very relaxing time, really, for me. And I think my one big problem was going down into the city and getting into those crowds of people and going across those side streets. I would go down to shop and I would say to Sgt. [Leonard] Dry, who was driving us at that time -- he was assigned to Ike, you see -- "Let's go back up on the hill." I couldn't wait to get out of the crowds. I just don't like crowds in particular. I think that's the one big experience that I disliked about being in New York -- and people never smiled, no one ever seemed to be happy. I like happy folks. I just don't like people to look down in the mouth.

Q: Yes. I have a feeling if I lived in New York it would take the smile out of me in a hurry, too.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, that is so true. You know, they're all so busy --

Q: So you preferred to stay away from that.



MRS. EISENHOWER: I liked to stay up on the hill. Now, I did have to go shopping, of course, like most women.

Q: How about your recreation? Was there any change in that?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Not particularly. Again, as Ike was working all day, I don't remember that I did anything different than what I do today. Of course, we didn't have television; we only had radio.

But I did a great deal of reading. John and Barbara were at West Point. They were close, and they would come down and spend weekends or even stay a little bit longer, sometimes.

Q: How about university functions, things that went on on the campus? Did you --

MRS. EISENHOWER: If we were invited to them we attended.

Q: Right. Plays, concerts --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I did a lot of social work in New York City with David Rockefeller, and we had what was called the Manhattan Mission. He and I worked up a school down near 125th or 128th Street. To raise money for this school for retarded children and the underprivileged I would go around to all my friends and get them to give me money, and buy the tickets for this. Then, the shows that were put on were put on by actors and actresses that would give their time to it, so that we could use all the proceeds that came from it. But that was hard work because you had to ask all your friends for money. We had no backing. We took an old building and had it painted inside, and in looking over things today, how mediocre it was, because we got no help from the government. There wasn't such a thing as that, like all the welfare work they do, and everything, today.

Q: What kind of school was it, Mrs. Eisenhower?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, for children in the neighborhood who had no place to play, except in the street. They did finger painting and they had little kindergarten classes where they learned their numbers. We had a place where they could play volley ball, things you had to teach -- anything to keep them off the streets. We would take them, probably, up to fourteen years old. I think you can go back and look on the record for that.

Q: How did you come to get into that?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I always seem to have a project of some kind. I don't remember exactly how I got started on that. I think somebody asked me to do it, and I did.

Q: You'd have to watch yourself, wouldn't you, all through this period, to say 'no' to hold down the number of things you did? That must be one of the most difficult things to do.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I've never been what you could call a very robust person and, so, I think, my health has played a part, although I don't like to emphasize that because I've never been the big organizer, or - I've never been a club woman.

Q: I see. Well, It seems to me that in this period of Columbia, for example, you had quite enough to perform your regular duties.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, there was plenty going on. I remember one time that Ike went down to that big church, you know, on Riverside

Drive that the Rockefeller's built and read the sermon, or reading something, a passage of the Bible, one Sunday. We would go to church there, right at the college, and of course it was Episcopal, and they wanted Ike to change his religion from Presbyterian and he wouldn't do it. We never changed, but we attended the Episcopal Church. So that was another thing, you see, that was attached to Columbia.

WICKMAN: This is also the period of time when there are thoughts and overtures, and what not, to the General about running for the Presidency in '48.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, they did; that was in 1948. And both the Republicans and Democrats tried to persuade Ike to run.

WICKMAN: Did he talk to you about this?

MRS. EISENHOWER: It was just generally discussed up in the penthouse by friends that would come in. But Ike said he thought there were good men to represent either party and he was not interested. The country was not in bad shape then. Ike thought the country was in pretty good hands and he wasn't worried about it at that time.

Q: What was your reaction to this talk in 1948? Do you recall?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I had no reaction. I was Ike's wife; he made his own decisions and I followed. I can't emphasize that enough.



Q: Not even a secret little yen.

MRS. EISENHOWER: What?

Q: To be the First Lady, or to say --

MRS. EISENHOWER: We had lived around Washington twenty-five years, you must remember.

Q: Yes. So you didn't see that as any golden garden of delight, eh?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I was perfectly satisfied with Ike being a soldier. I've never had any social ambitions -- I didn't have to. I had my place in this world and I knew it. I came from a long family of Americans. I didn't have to prove anything.

Q: I understand.



MRS. EISENHOWER: It just never occurred to me, I never thought about it, to be perfectly honest and frank.

WICKMAN: Now we go from that, then to the NATO business, and the -

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MRS. EISENHOWER: NATO was rather a frightful blow. I decided we would go to Denver and spend Christmas with my father and mother, because my father was failing and I said, "Well, if we're going to Europe --" (already we knew we were going) and I thought this may

be the last Christmas that we can go home, and it proved to be. So we were on the train going to Denver in snow, snow, snow, when the train was stopped. It looked like it was right out in the countryside, and they came back and said, "The President wants General Eisenhower on the telephone." So Ike had to get off the train and wade in snow to this funny little station and talk to the President. He said, "You're going to Europe." So that was how we first heard about NATO. We'd heard about it before, but I don't think that Ike thought that the axe would fall on his head. He was the logical person to go because he knew every head of state of all those countries, and I think the President took that into consideration.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We didn't want to leave Columbia. But Ike was a soldier again and when he was ordered to take NATO he took it. So he went over first in about January to see all these different countries, and they all promised to give a certain number of representatives to NATO. Then he came back and we went over in February. We went over on the Queen Elizabeth. Ike had a chance to rest on that trip and he painted. He went down to the gym. We dined always in our suite. We didn't go to the dining room but one time, I think. But he had a very good rest on the way over. We had our doctors along, and, of course, the minute that we got to Cherbourg everything started. We had to drink champagne at three



o'clock in the morning. Maybe it was four or five, but it was a ghastly hour. But then is when it started.

WICKMAN: Now this was your first trip back to Europe then since the '20's and back in France --

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's true.

WICKMAN: What impressed you most?



MRS. EISENHOWER: It was a very difficult time because -- I always think this is a very interesting story. They showed Ike a lot of houses in Paris and they said, "You can have anything you want." They wanted me to take Lady Mendel's house. It was beautifully situated as far as entertaining, but when I went up to the bedrooms, they were so small and so low-ceilinged I said, "I never could live here."

WICKMAN: Wasn't that on the Seine River? Wasn't Lady Mendel's house --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I don't remember where it was, but it was quite beautiful.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: So, they showed these different places to Ike, then they showed them to me, and I chose this one at Marnes-la-Coquette. Ike started to laugh and said, "I told them this was the

last place that you would chose." He said, "Well, that's like a woman; you can never outguess her." I took this place because it had beautiful grounds and great possibilities which I could see, having had to fix a lot of houses all over the world.

Q: Sure, sure.

MRS. EISENHOWER: So we had to live at the Trianon Palace Hotel for six months while the house was done over, because it had to be modernized. Modern kitchens were put in, modern plumbing and everything, and, of course, you had French labor to contend with, because France was doing all this. And they didn't work too hard at it. They liked their vin rouge and their croissants of pane (bread). Every day I would go over to see how the house was getting along. Well, it wasn't getting along. So we only had about six months to live in this beautiful house and the lovely grounds that Louis Quinze or Louis Seize used for his hunting.

WICKMAN: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Of course, that was the first time that I realized it was against the French law to cut a tree down -- unless you had permission of the government. They preserved their trees. The French were wonderful to us. I could have anything I wanted out of any musee; consequently, we had a tapestry that was priceless in the dining room. We had an Aubusson rug on the

drawing room floor. We had Napoleon's bed from Fontainebleau. They gave me entre' to anything I wanted.

Q: Now did you go around, Mrs. Eisenhower, and make these selections?

MRS. EISENHOWER: They would bring them to me, and I would make my selection. Now I bought the rug, the Aubusson rug. I bought also the one for my bedroom, which was dark green, but it was not an Aubusson. It was a beautiful French rug and the background was green with great big pink roses. It made a very bright, cheery room. The man who owned the house had started to modernize it when the Germans came in, and the Germans lived in this house. They lived in all parts of St. Cloud Parc which was where -- that actor just died --

WICKMAN: Maurice Chevalier?



MRS. EISENHOWER: Chevalier, he had a place there. In fact, when we moved onto our place, which was the Villa St. Pierre, here were the wires, all rolled up still, that the Germans had surrounding all this town. But it was very interesting living there.

(Interruption)

MRS. EISENHOWER: Because we belonged to the Interallee Club in Paris, which is now right down there adjoining the palace and right

along the Champs Elysees, we could do entertaining there, as well as in our home.

Q: I understand.



MRS. EISENHOWER: But NATO, again, was so spread out all over that you didn't know a lot of the officers that were there from different countries, because they would rent their own houses, you see. Everybody had to find a house to live in. But we did have get-togethers. We had dinners at the club with all the group. And the French ladies would come to call upon me to pay their respects. I would lunch in Paris, and one experience that taught me -- you know, our houses we keep so warm, so I went to this particular luncheon and I wore one of my silk dresses and my fur coat. Well, I practically froze to death! They all wore tweed suits or something to keep them warm. They didn't take off their jackets for luncheon and they were perfectly comfortable while I was freezing. So I learned about the chauffage central from that. You couldn't depend on going some place where it was going to be warm for Americans.

Q: Let me ask you to contrast Paris with New York now, the people that you saw on the streets there. Did you enjoy it?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I didn't have to go into Paris very much.

Q: You didn't go in?

MRS. EISENHOWER: But you had more feeling of openness in Paris that you had in New York City. You go down the Champs Elysees and it's very broad, and beautiful trees, and you can see the sky. They had gardeners that kept them just so; little rose trees, the most intricate designs of all kinds. So, I think you had more the feeling that we used to have in Washington. When I would come down from New York and I would get to Washington, I'd look and say, "Oh, I can see the sky." So there was a great contrast between Paris and New York. They did not go in for the tall buildings that we do in New York.

Q: Well, in the area where you were, at Marnes-la-Coquette --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, we were out in the country. See, we would go through the Parc St. Cloud from Paris to get to Marnes-la-Coquette.

Q: So, if you wanted to shop, there were areas around there that -

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MRS. EISENHOWER: Not particularly, because I had brought quite a few clothes from New York and I really didn't need clothes. And your ordinary marketing was done at the commissary and some we bought at the local markets in Marnes-la-Coquette



Q: Yes. Life pretty much centered then in that house for you, or was there an opportunity to get out and take drives, to see more of France than you had seen?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, I could have. Many times I would go out in the countryside and drive. I remember going to Chartres one time, to see those perfectly beautiful windows in the cathedral. I had the opportunity to go any place I wanted. I had a CID [Counter Intelligence Division] man with me, I had my own car and my own chauffeur. I could go any place I wanted to. Remember, I saw many of the historic spots when we lived in Paris in 1928.

WICKMAN: For your house staff over there, I know that Sgt. [John A.] Moaney was over, and also your maid Mary --

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, Rosie (Wood).

WICKMAN: Rosie, yes, Rosie.



MRS. EISENHOWER: We did not take Delores that time.

WICKMAN: -- and did the Army provide, or the French government provide the rest of it?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes. We had all sergeants, cooks, and so forth. But Ike had his own person and I had mine. So we had no maids in the house.

WICKMAN: Very much like the Chief of Staff period then, that way you organized the house.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, it was run by men, by sergeants. Of course, I had to order the food but again, they were American sergeants who knew very much the kind of food that we liked and, of course, we had to have French dishes, too. Again, we made it our home.

Q: Were there people at this time who were exceptionally close to you? Friends that you counted on heavily there?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Our doctor and his wife lived in the next house, General [Howard] Snyder and, of course, he had been our family doctor for a long time; Ike was Chief of Staff an awfully long time. General and Mrs. [Alfred M.] Gruenther lived up at the top of the hill. So we three lived in this compound, I guess you would call it. We saw a great deal of them, yes. I did not go to the flea market often like some of my other friends did. In the first place, there wasn't anything I wanted and, again, I didn't care too much about going out with crowds, and it was far from clean.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: My mother came after my father died. We went to the races. In fact, we were at the races when we came home the night -- that was before we moved out there, we were still living at the Tianon -- and we got the message that my father had had a



stroke, and later we found out he had died, so we flew right out that night for home.

Q: Right. Then you started to say that you brought your mother back with you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I brought my mother back. Momma had had pneumonia and she was not doing too well, so we told her that Ike's plane was coming home and we asked her to come over to be with us, thinking, maybe, the change in climate would help. Papa had a nurse in the house -- he wasn't alone. My sister was in Washington and, of course, she flew right on to Denver and got there before he died. He died that night. I think the last peaceful moment I had was the Villa St. Pierre, and it was there that they came over from New York, and Jacqueline Cochran was the one that brought the news. They had had this big rally in Madison Square Garden about Ike, and that was the first that we had taken any of this thing seriously!

Q: Now, she brought a film over, didn't she?



MRS. EISENHOWER: She certainly did! It frightened us to pieces.

Q: It did? It frightened you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I mean, we liked what we were doing. When I said, "frightened", I mean that things had gone farther in this country than we realized. We were divorced from it, you see, so we didn't know that this big movement was on in the United States.

Many people had been over to see Ike, trying to convince him to come home and run. And I, personally -- now, this is my own idea -- you know, at West Point there's "Duty, Honor, Country --", and when they presented it to him as a duty to his country, that was what changed his mind.

WICKMAN: No, I think this is right. I think that's my analysis, too --

MRS. EISENHOWER: "Duty, Honor, Country."

WICKMAN: This is right. That was the only way they could reach him. They couldn't reach him with anything else.

MRS. EISENHOWER: When they put it on the duty line, why, there was no question.

Q: And you don't recall that any particular one person --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, he had many, -- he had his own office and he would see those people down there; he didn't bring them to the house.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I'm told today -- many people will come today and say, "I went over and I was the one that persuaded General Eisenhower."



Q: Yes, that's it. And yet, I thought your husband might have come back and said, "Well, I could resist everything, but Henry Cabot Lodge got me when he --"

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no.

Q: Well, O.K.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No. If this is true, it is something I don't know.

WICKMAN: When we get into the records, Mac -- I think when the papers are all open -- we have the papers -- they will very clearly show -- "Where", "When", you know; but it wasn't any one person, really.

Q: No, I knew that many had been involved.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I don't think so, except that day when Jackie brought this film over, and that was to both of us. Both of us were sitting there looking at it. We were really astounded that things had gone so far in this country toward getting Ike interested, or to convince him it was his duty. When he made up his mind that this was something he should do, we packed up our belongings and hurried home, and I think we had the fastest campaign of anybody, because we didn't even get home till May, and the nomination was in July. In the meantime, we saw delegations of all kinds, from every place, and we traveled a great deal.



WICKMAN: Went out to Abilene for the announcement, finally.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sure did. One of the things we had to do was "go to Abilene for the dedication of the museum." So in that awful rainstorm out there that day -- his first speech of the nomination, Ike said, "It's only rain!", and he stood up there and said his little piece. His trousers were rolled up to his knees to keep out of the mud.

WICKMAN: When you were -- let's see, I don't know if it was on that trip or, I guess it was on that trip -- you stayed in the Sunflower Hotel, didn't you?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Right. See, it was still in existence.

WICKMAN: Yes, it was still a hotel.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And then we sat out on the roof and watched the parade.

WICKMAN: Yes, and Charley Case's house is right across the street.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I'm so glad I went to see him the last time I was there, too. No, it was the time before last, because last year he was gone.

Q: Yes.

WICKMAN: Time before last. He really enjoyed that.



MRS. EISENHOWER: He was a great friend of Ike's and one that Ike always remembered. It's hard to go back over the years and try to remember things, because everything happened so quickly. And we were so busy living that day for what we were doing that maybe I should remember many more things than I do.

Q: I would think it would all run together.

MRS. EISENHOWER: More or less, it does.

Q: Does anything stand out though in your mind as you think back on that period after the nomination -- the campaign itself?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I think the day that we left Paris and everybody as a whole, every nation, was down to see us off, and we got on that plane realizing what we were going home to. I think that was sort of a heartbreaking experience. We hated to leave NATO and all our friends of all nations. We took trips to every country, when he was NATO Commander; to all these different countries that were represented in NATO, and that was very interesting to me. Now, we didn't go to Sweden. Sweden didn't do it, I'm sorry to say. But Norway and Denmark, Italy, oh, all the different countries that you know of today. But to go to these countries and see these people, personally, was to me a very interesting thing.

Q: Right. And a preparation.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Every day was a preparation for something. I've got that old expression of mine, 'it's a bad day when you can't learn something.'

WICKMAN: One of the things that has always struck me about this, even reading about it -- see, here you are, you're coming back to the United States; what are you going to call home? Because what did you have to call home? You've been living in Columbia, then you went to NATO --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Home is wherever we stayed.



WICKMAN: And so you settled into where, when you got back, do you remember?

MRS. EISENHOWER: We went right back to Columbia. Columbia had held the presidency open the whole time Ike was in NATO, hoping he would come back. They just had an acting president, but Ike was never taken off the rolls as President of Columbia.

WICKMAN: So you went back to Columbia then, until --

MRS. EISENHOWER: We went right back to Number 60 and lived there, and left there to go to the White House.

WICKMAN: Then you had a headquarters in Denver at the Brown Palace

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MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, and then had a headquarters in New York at the Commodore. We met many delegations at Number 60. And when he went to Korea -- we were supposed to keep that very quiet, you see -- I would meet the delegations, and I don't know what excuse we'd give that Ike was not there. But I would -- because, naturally, they wanted to see what sort of a wife Ike had. I had a man tell me that one time. He said, "Well, we all know about Ike; we all know about him, but we just sort of wondered what you'd be like."

WICKMAN: That's a very interesting reaction, yes.

Q: Did you ask him, "How do I measure up?" Meet frankness with frankness?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I guess I had confidence enough, I just thought I did.

WICKMAN: No, that, of course, would be of interest to them.

MRS. EISENHOWER: That was when they were interviewing him for Columbia. I tell you, there were some trustees there that were really something, and they'd come down to look us over. But I do think a wife does play such a great part in a man's life.

Q: Yes. of course.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Not in the ordinary one, but in our life it did because we always did things as a team. But a man, ordinarily, has his work in New York City and his wife and family live out in Connecticut, for instance. So she has her friends out there and he has his friends in town. But with our Army career, a wife plays a very big part. And if she doesn't measure up, or if she's a trouble maker, a gossip, or if she doesn't know the proper things to do, these things all play a great part. All these other things that we did, on the way, I was a part of that team, you see.

Q: And that would include the campaign and --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, definitely.

Q: -- the campaign train --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, definitely, definitely! I never said a word, Ike did all the talking -- but I'd stand beside him, because the women wanted to see what Mamie looked like.

Q: Yes, I saw you in October of '52.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, and you noticed I didn't say anything?

Q: No, that's right you didn't

MRS. EISENHOWER: He was the speech maker, but I was there. And to me, as I think I mentioned yesterday, to stand there and look out the window of the car -- because he would stand on the back



platform and make his little talk -- and then they'd say, "Well, where's Mamie?", then I'd appear. But to look at those faces just did something to me. I'd be so tired and so worn out, and you'd look at those hopeful faces and it would just give you the impetus to go on. You'd say, "Well, my goodness, I've just got to get out here and prove!" Because we never went into anything that we didn't go in to win.

Q: Now, you had the press with you, you had constant scrutiny from all sides, --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.



Q: --how did you feel about that? Take it in your stride?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, naturally, by this time, I'd gone up through the years, from a twenty-year-old to a fifty-year-old. It'd be very sad if you hadn't learned something in all that time about it; how to conduct yourself.

Q: But if it ever annoyed you, it never showed. Of course, you've said --

MRS. EISENHOWER: It didn't annoy me because I like people.

Q: --you said once before, too, that if you were out of sorts, you took yourself off and --

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's true, because I don't believe in people grieving or growling about things. If you got something to growl about, or something to grieve about, don't push it on your friends.

Q: Let me ask you this. At the close of that campaign, before the election occurs, you've spoken of fatigue. You speak of exhilaration of these smiling faces. What was the feeling at the end of the campaign? Was it one of fatigue, or did you come out of that campaign feeling that this had been quite an exciting thing?

MRS. EISENHOWER: You know, Doctor, I've often thought about that. We sat -- it was pitch dark by the time that parade was over, and Ike and myself had been at the inauguration at ten o'clock in the morning, or something like that. We'd gone through a luncheon, we stood out there and watched this parade until after dark. We had to go in and get dressed for the balls and make three appearances -- down at the Armory first, then we went to the Mayflower, and from the Mayflower we went out to Georgetown University -- that was the first term. The second inauguration we went to the Shoreham, and to the Statler, Wardman Park -- we had five of them, all in this one day. I think I was pretty good to be able to do all that! And come up smiling. You see, there were pictures of me. I don't look tired. I suppose it was the exhilaration, and what people give to you!

Q: Yes, that could be.



MRS. EISENHOWER: And don't forget that!

Q: You can draw from that!

MRS. EISENHOWER: That's a big thing when people -- the love and affection, and the admiration, and the friendliness -- I'd put friendliness first -- that people give you is what keeps you going. That's what keeps me going today, my friends. I had friends just call me from Los Angeles. They call me from all over the world -- how do I feel? Am I all right? Those are things people will do.

WICKMAN: I was just wondering, after the election how did you organize the move into the White House?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, that was really difficult!



WICKMAN: Did Mrs. Truman -- did you go in before the inauguration?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, of course, I like Mrs. Truman very much, and I'd known her for a great many years. Like you always do, you invite the following First Lady to come in and look at the mansion. So I went into see her and the first thing she said, "Oh, Mrs. Eisenhower, I want to show you. I picked out the most wonderful suite for the grandchildren." And she took me on the third floor and showed me these rooms that all opened out, they were perfect for the children. Now that was very thoughtful.

WICKMAN: That was very thoughtful.

MRS. EISENHOWER: A nice thing to do. Of course, I'd seen the rooms, but I really hadn't seen much on the second floor. She took me all over that, and I did the same thing with Mrs. Kennedy. Now, Mrs. Johnson did the same thing for Mrs. Nixon. This is a traditional thing that you do.

Q: When you were shown through by Mrs. Truman, do you remember now any particular ideas that you had at that point about how to use the space or change anything?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I didn't go that far. But I was interested in what was going to happen to the grandchildren. I knew that Ike and myself could make a home, no matter where we were, but these youngsters were so little at that time. Mary Jean wasn't even born, Susie took her first step at the White House, and David was a little older.

Q: So when you stepped inside you were starting out again, perhaps in a larger house than any of the others, and a larger staff than before.

MRS. EISENHOWER: It wasn't any larger than the one at Columbia, except of its height. The one at Columbia was five stories. This was only three, counting the basement floor, and two other floors.

Q: But you had a little more now to supervise than before, and --



MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, that's right, you do. But, again, you see, I'm a housewife and I run my house. I used to have a friend who said, "Nasty-nice housekeeper." Well, I am. When the children left yesterday, as I told you -- I couldn't wait to get all the ash trays and the chairs back in shape and everything.

Q: Let me have a sample of any typical day, the time you got up, and what --

MRS. EISENHOWER: The first year, every single day, every single morning, I would meet different groups of people, mostly women. They would be farm women, they could be Ph.Ds, they could be Junior Leaguers, they could be a Republican group from Illinois, or from any place else, you never knew. But every day, I was downstairs shaking hands with all those groups.

Q: So you sort of had a morning schedule into parcels for this.

MRS. EISENHOWER: We tried to do it after the house was closed for sightseers at twelve o'clock, you see, so it would probably be from twelve o'clock on. The house didn't open until, I think, nine, so when I say "mornings", I take it from really noon time which was still morning to me. That would be the start of my day, because I was very interested in meeting all these people who, again, were the people that voted for Ike, these groups and, again, they wanted to see me, and they wanted the hospitality of the White House. Now I did not serve them food. I would greet them all and then the



guards, whoever was there, would take them and show them the state rooms and explain different things to them. In other words, they had a tour. Other times I would have huge teas. Everybody has their own way of doing things, but we never served any cocktails or anything in the White House before dinners, because you had your wines with dinners, which was enough. We never served cocktails of any kind. We did have liqueurs with coffee, but that was all.

Q: Now, Mrs. Eisenhower, did any of these groups coincide with your husband's work, so it would be desirable or necessary for you to say "Well, now, today --"

MRS. EISENHOWER: I wanted to meet Ike's constituents --

Q: Yes, but did your husband ever work with you in this.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no.

Q: All of these were on your own?



MRS. EISENHOWER: This is all mine; this is all my own.

Q: So it would not be a case of, "Well, here are a delegation of Republican Women."

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no! No, these were women that came to see me.

Q: Right. So your life was separate from his life.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Exactly. I was the hostess to these ladies. Ike was working over in his side of the building.

Q: Yes, I see. Now, you described the first year as being especially like that. Did that taper off a bit, Mrs. Eisenhower?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, it did, because, I mean, no person can take that responsibility for an everyday occurrence. So gradually -- but still I met large groups of people, five hundred at a time. I've stood up there -- and the doctors told me last year, "don't you stand in a receiving line any more." I enjoyed doing that, and that wasn't so hard on me but it was a little hard to unlock the knees after standing that long. It gave me an insight into the people of the United States, because there are all types, and to me that was interesting.

Q: You must have met those same people through the mail, too. There must have been a great deal of correspondence that came to you.

MRS. EISENHOWER: There were many that did write. They would write to Mrs. McCaffree and say, "My group is coming to Washington and we would like to see the First Lady." And Mrs. McCaffree would pass that on to me and I would say, "Well, fine, we'll do it at such and such a time." Of course, you must realize that with the mansion open to the public you have to plan your meetings or greetings at



a time when the public was not in the White House. Because you have to use the state rooms to greet them.

Q: Of course, yes, for groups of the size you described, you sure would.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Because you only have the Red parlor, the Blue parlor and the Green parlor. The only time we ever used the ball room was when we'd have Christmas parties for everybody in the White House. And then we would have a big counter of doughnuts and coffee, and things like that, and shake hands with every employee of the White House.

WICKMAN: Well, I am curious. How was your secretarial force organized?

MRS. EISENHOWER: I had a very small one.



WICKMAN: I mean, who was at the head, Anne Wheaton?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Mrs. McCaffree.

WICKMAN: McCaffree, Mary Jane.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And she had one helper and, there were quite a few girls in the office that opened letters and did things like that. But I had a very small staff. Very small. I did it the way I thought was proper.

Q: Sure. Now how about these state visits, of which there were a number?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Some of those people I already knew, you must remember. But after Ike's heart attack we started to use the Blair House for Heads of State, as the mansion was not really built for overnight guests. As Ike called it, the President's guest house (The Blair House) works out better because you have cooks over there that can cook in Hungarian, or anything that they would want. And they can order what they want. At the White House, before a guest would come we would get instructions about one didn't like orange juice and one didn't like something else, you know, and we would try to go along with what their embassy said, or whoever was the head of that country. Your kitchens are way at one end and your guest quarters are way at the other. You have one elevator; all the trunks and things have to come up through there, or are taken to the third floor and brought down a staircase that goes to the Queen's Room and the Lincoln Room, because, you see, we used those two rooms for heads of state.

Q: Did any of these guests prove to be any kind of a special problem?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, I don't think you will ever find that. Your problem comes with the people that are sort of managing their trip.

Q: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: You see we were unique. I think Ike was almost better fitted for that position than anybody else, because we had lived all over the world, we didn't have to be told these things. I wasn't unhappy because I was there, or felt that I was a prisoner, I never had that feeling at all. People would say, "the Secret Service"; I said, "We've had Secret Service for years around us. That doesn't bother me any, I'm grateful to them."

Q: Yes, it's coming through so strong in each of these interviews. I think it's the sort of thing that people don't tend to think about; that all of this previous life had been in so many ways the finest kind of preparation for what you were going to be doing for eight years time.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Many people were sorry, they didn't want to leave their little home towns, and their houses, and their little bridge groups. We sometimes didn't see some of our friends for twenty years, but then when we saw them again, we started right off from where we left off twenty years before. The change was ours, change was inevitable.

Q: Yes, you were far more cosmopolitan, I suspect, than many think, even today. I mean, the image that one often receives, as you read the works of various historians, is that of the solid Middle West background, forgetting --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, yes. Well, we were Americans.



Q: -- forgetting that you had lived in Panama, forgetting the Philippine Islands, forgetting too -- well, for your husband --

MRS. EISENHOWER: France.

Q: -- France several different times, aside from the tours.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And different places in the United States.

Q: Yes, and you had lived all over the United States.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Which were very different. Texas is as different from New York City as it could possible be.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: California is different from the East Coast. Even though you are Americans, I mean, you have different backgrounds.

(Interruption)



Q: You had the press with you. How did you get along with them? They seemed to recall you with great pleasure.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I never had any difficulty with the press.

Q: You have been described recently as being one of the very gracious ladies who inhabited the White House -- so --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, I didn't give them a great many interviews, but I knew most of the social girls that covered the White House. I see them today, and they look at me and just grin and are so glad to see me again. The other day, down at the Foreign Wars thing, one of the photographers there looked at me and broke into this broad grin as he took the picture. And I looked at him and I said, "Oh, but I don't know you with glasses on." He took off his glasses and I said, "Now you look natural."

Q: Was this someone back from the White House days?

MRS. EISENHOWER: This was just the other day.



Q: But he's one that you knew during the White House Period?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sure.

Q: Well, you saw so many -- so very many people; it's remarkable that you --

MRS. EISENHOWER: We used to see quite a few of those people because, of course, they followed us every place, to church and everything. So there were certain ones that you looked on as your friends. They were always cooperative. We never had any difficulty with the press.

Q: No, that's right. And you never had, Mrs. Eisenhower, any occurrence similar to the one that happened to Mrs. Johnson?

MRS. EISENHOWER: What was that?

Q: Well, do you remember the singer, Eartha Kitt, was invited to the function at the White House?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, no. Oh, no.

Q: Yes, I didn't think you had.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, we had no difficulty at all like that. I don't know just how I would have coped with such things. I probably would have found a way, but there was never any unpleasantness.

Q: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But we never allowed smoking either, you know, at the dinner table.

Q: Oh, you didn't? Oh, I didn't know that.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, we did not. There were no ash trays put on the dining tables at all when we had state dinners, or around when you had tea. One woman came in one day and she had a cigarette and the aide went to her very nicely and said, "Madame, please, no smoking." I did this because many of the dresses are inflammable today; you could start a terrible fire that way -- and this woman put it on the rug and stepped on it.



Q: Oh, boy!

MRS. EISENHOWER: She's a very well known person and knows better.

Q: Good Lord! What an incredible thing to do!

MRS. EISENHOWER: In our entertaining, neither religion nor political party played any part, for when I had the Senate wives for luncheon or a Congressional tea, I never knew whether one was a Republican or a Democrat, they were all friends. I never made it a political issue in any manner, shape or form, because I myself didn't know, and I mean, I didn't want to know. I liked that person for what they were -- my guest.

Q: Then would this carry over, as it had previously in your life, in dinner conversations with your husband? Politics, the affairs of state, are left out of your life as much as possible?

MRS. EISENHOWER: For instance, before a state dinner a slate would come over with the seating arrangements. Now Ike and I would go over that and say who was compatible with somebody else or who wasn't. And, to that extend, we did do things together and he had the last word.

Q: Oh, he did?

MRS. EISENHOWER: As President.

Q: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: I can remember in dining, if we were dining alone with the children in the family dining room, his chair was always put out first and he was served first. He would say to the butler, "You serve Mrs. Eisenhower first." I always came first. But, under their protocol, the President, you see, is seated before everybody else and he is passed the food first. Now, to me, that was no different from the way we'd always been at home.

(Interruption)

Q: Well, we have been talking about life in the White House in general and about some of the problems; the state visits and how they handled guests; the way the house was set up for that, and --

MRS. EISENHOWER: I'd like to bring out the fact that we knew all the carpenters, the painters, the electricians. We knew them all in the White House. They were all our friends, because they're the ones that make your life pleasant. We had them up here [at the farm] to big parties; two big parties we had out on the lawn, every employee of the White House. We had big roasts and all sorts of food. Ike took them all around in the "Mamie and Ike" wagon and showed them the grounds. We had a big pond down here at that time. He showed them all the places of interest. They were our friends, and today they're my friends. I go to the White House and, my goodness, the same butlers are there, some of the same maids, and everything. They're so glad to see me. They made those beautiful

cases down in the drawing room and gave them to us for Christmas. So they thought a lot of Ike and myself, as much as we thought of them. But every Christmas everybody in that White House got a present from me that I had gone out and bought myself. Sometimes it wouldn't be very much, it might be a tie or a couple of handkerchiefs, but they all got a present from me and I wrote the little gift card.

Q: John, while you were out of the room, I asked Mrs. Eisenhower about the state guests and what kind of people they were -- whether any of them had presented problems.

MRS. EISENHOWER: No. We knew ahead of time that certain people liked a long black cigar, so we had some nice black cigars waiting; we knew some liked Scotch, the Scotch was put in their room and they could have it any time they wanted it. We knew certain things like that, that we always tried to have ready for them. Now over in the President's guest house [Blair House], of course, those things were just naturally done. Have you seen the Eisenhower Room, there?

WICKMAN: I've not seen it. I would like very much to see it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Do see it. Oh, it's so lovely.

WICKMAN: I don't know who to see to get in there.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, the Head of Protocol.



WICKMAN: Head of Protocol, O.K.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Who is [Marion H.] Smoak [Deputy Chief of Protocol] right now. And then what is the woman's name that runs the house, but it's not always open?

WICKMAN: Mrs. Emil Mosbacher, Jr., I think, isn't it?



MRS. EISENHOWER: I didn't think I'd ever forget that name.

WICKMAN: Well, I'll -- John mentioned it too.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But really, that should be some place, because they've taken the Eisenhower toile, you see, from the den and crossed swords over the door. Now, that was one time I really choked up, when those two cadets came up to that room and presented the swords. I really got tearful on that one.

Q: When you had overnight guests of considerable importance did your knowledge of them also extend to the sort of thing that they might like to do while they were in the White House?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, you must understand this, Doctor, that a certain program is set up for every head of state. They have to go to Arlington, you know, to place a wreath, and things were pretty well laid out for them.

Q: So you had very little chance for informal opportunities to be with these people? In the evening, for example?

MRS. EISENHOWER: No, for instance, we had Mr. Churchill at the White House, because he was a personal friend. We had Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip at the White House, because Ike had known her when she was a little girl. Montgomery, we had -- but they were people that we had known before. We had the Queen Mother, people like that, we wouldn't put over at the President's guest house, we'd have them stay in the White House, because they were people that we had known that were heads of state. Not even after Ike had his heart attack did we not have them as our personal guests.

Q: Yes, right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: But the majority of them -- and, of course, there weren't so many nations as there are today, you see, many new ones in Africa that were not on the agenda when we were there. Eleven years makes an awful lot of difference, things have moved pretty fast since then.

Q: Yes. indeed they have.

WICKMAN: One thing I've been kind of interested in is, what role did this house play while you were down in the White House? I know you came up here. Was it just to get away? Just kind of a retreat from it all?

MRS. EISENHOWER: In the first place, I wanted to get my stuff out of storage that had been there so many years, and I wanted a home to come to. I said, "I never had a home," and having bought this property as we did in 1949 or '50, I said, "Let's build this house." We'd heard that one room was made of logs, was a log cabin, but when the contractor came up to look it over, we found the whole house really was a log house, but it had been covered by brick. I wanted to preserve it, but because termites had gotten into it, we had to tear it down, so all that's left of the old house is right there at the beginning of the staircase. That back staircase is the old staircase that belonged to the house. So there's just a little piece that's left of the old house, and the dutch oven. But, otherwise we had to blast to get a basement because this is all rock. So then I said, "Well, we'll build a house." And Ike said, "Let's don't do it until after I get out of office, and I'm not going to run the second time." I used all the wiles that women do and cried and kicked up my heels, and all the things to get my own way, and I got it.

WICKMAN: So this construction was going on then all during the first administration?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, we had no time to come up here to see it. We were so busy down there living that we seldom got up there. We had to leave it mostly to Charley [Charles A. Thompkins], and I remember one day I came up here and looked at it and said, " "Oh,



Charley, this room isn't big enough [Mrs. Eisenhower's bedroom]." I like big rooms. And he said, "Why, Mamie, that's a big room." This would be a big room is we didn't have so much furniture in it. And I said, "The ceilings aren't high enough." "Why," he said, "they are much higher than the ones we're building today." And I said, "Well, they're not high enough for me." But anyway they stayed. So then I looked at those two windows facing East, they were up short like these are, and I said, "Charley, I've got to have windows I can look out of." So they cut them deeper and that's how they are today.

Q: I see, they are dropped down further.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sure, so that I can look out. When there are no leaves on the trees, I can see cars going by on Route 15. I've got a bird's nest here, I watch all the time, see that little wren's house?

Q: Oh, of course, yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: I watch the wrens come in there and I can look out, and I can see who's driving in and up and down the back road.

WICKMAN: So the construction was going on then right along.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes, and we had to pay portal to portal, from Washington up here -- from Harrisburg, etc. -- we could have built a mansion for what this place cost. Really, it cost so much I



wouldn't even tell you. But, anyway, we had it and it was home when he was sick. It was all ready, looked just exactly the way it is today when we moved from the White House. All the china, all the linens, everything, was set. And we used to come up here sometimes, oh, for a weekend.

WICKMAN: Well, that's the sort of thing I was referring to, you know, the public notice of the fact that he went to Gettysburg.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Sure, we'd come up here. When he was so ill, this was a wonderful place for him to recuperate. Then is when they used to have so much of the press here. And why Gettysburg got to be known so well. Then is when the tourists seized it. We ruined this town. Because people, you know, then began to get interested in Gettysburg. But it hadn't changed one iota from 1918 until, what was it, '50? '54, when we started here. It was '55 when we laid the cornerstone. Then people got to be conscious of this national park and today they come by the millions.

Q: Speaking of Gettysburg, just a few minutes ago you mentioned the name of a very famous British Commander and put on what my grandmother would call 'a stale look'; could you tell me?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Who, Montgomery?

Q: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, Monty was one of the nicest house guests I ever had.

Q: Really?

MRS. EISENHOWER: He didn't demand anything, he went along with anything. When Ike was Chief of Staff he came over to visit us first and that was the day that Ike's mother died. We had this big reception planned that night for him there at our house. Ike, of course, didn't come downstairs, but I went down and from there we went right to the train and Monty carried on the party. He was just as gracious and nice as he could be. He has written, I think, some not very nice things about Ike since, and he came to the White House and his remark to me was so absolutely -- well, I'll tell you -- he stood on the first floor and he looked all around and said, "Well, it isn't Buckingham Palace." And I said, "Well, thank goodness for that."

WICKMAN: He was up here, too, wasn't he?

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes. But, anyway, when Mr. Churchill was there, we took the room they call the Treaty Room now and we'd have luncheon, you see, served up there. But then we'd always go to the family room for dinner. So he was very much of a friend; sit around and visit, you know, and just the four of us, or three of us, have luncheon, and his equerry, whose name, I think was Brown, would come in and fix his little napkin on him and it was fastened



with two gold safety pins, like we used to fasten our children's bibs with, only his were solid gold. And he'd sit up there like a little cherub and eat his lunch. Oh, there are many, many, many interesting experiences in the mansion on a large scale. We had beautiful vermeil, you know, from Margaret Biddle, who was a great Republican, and her father was, also. When she died she left all her vermeil to the White House because Ike was there. It is kept in the Gold Room.

Q: I see.

MRS. EISENHOWER: And I think there's a plaque that says it was presented by Margaret Biddle. But she gave it to us for the White House.

WICKMAN: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: The First Lady Plates, that I am very sorry they don't have much in evidence. They're down in the east wing where tourists come in and see them -- not all of them. But I had them all, and they were all given to me by a friend for the White House. And I wish I had them for Abilene, but I couldn't get them back. So many nice things were given to us, but we didn't go out wholesale, like they're doing today. I kept asking where the Monroe couch is. President Monroe died on that couch and some of his family -- sold this to two anonymous friends. Through [Mary Jane] McCaffree we found this and bought it and paid for it and she

sent it to me at the White House. Some members of his family have never gotten over it. But that's an historical piece. I found out later that it was in storage.

Q: Oh, it's no longer --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, when I talked to Clem Conger [the Curator] I said, "Where in the world is that couch?" "Why," he said, "Mrs. Eisenhower, I've never heard of it." "Well," I said, "you better look it up." So he called me back and said, "I found it, it was in storage." He said, "I didn't know it had all that history, but," he said, "I wasn't here then."

WICKMAN: Well, that's right. This is, of course, another one of these things that's always fascinated me, because I discovered, since being at the Library, how many things there are in the White House that are in storage, and how many things they don't really know anything about.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.



(Interruption)

MRS. EISENHOWER: When we came up here to the farm we thought Ike could use the den as sort of a waiting room and that he would have his office in that little room where the desk is.

WICKMAN: Yes.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Well, he soon realized that that was not going to work, so then he started to look for an office here at Gettysburg. General [Willard Stewart] Paul was then President of Gettysburg College, and he had married a Mrs. Musselman here. She had a beautiful estate outside of Gettysburg, so the President's house was available, and that's how he happened to move in that house.

Q: Right.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Ike would go to the office every single morning. He'd come home for lunch and go back and stay till probably six o'clock. He carried on work exactly like he'd done all through the years. I still ran my house. We had many friends that came up. We didn't socialize in Gettysburg. We took a lot of trips, of course, and we went out to the desert around Christmas -- we spent at least three Christmases out there. We'd gone four months at a time.

Q: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: So life didn't change any. We still had the same servants. We still could have all our friends come up here, because we had plenty of room for them. We have six bedrooms and five baths up here besides the guest house. So life went on very much the same. In fact, I think it was a little bit better, because we were home and our own people were around us.

WICKMAN: One of the things that's going to come up years from now, and I think that we could save historians a lot of scratching around. We can get the answer, I'm sure, if they do their research very thoroughly, but maybe we can shortcut that a little bit: The annual pilgrimage to Palm Desert --

MRS. EISENHOWER: Yes.

WICKMAN: What kicked that off?



MRS. EISENHOWER: We had this great friend, George Allen who had bought a house out at La Quinta [California] and he kept saying, "Oh, you'd love it out there." He said, "Mamie, particularly you'd like it because it's at sea level." You know altitudes are bad for me, and he said, "You'll just love it and Ike, you can play golf every day." And that appealed to him, so the first time I ever saw it was on television. They were having the Bob Hope Classic and that was the first I ever saw El Dorado. Then Freeman Gosden came up and he was awfully worried about whether they could find a proper house that I would like, because everything there is built on one floor and they have low ceilings on account of earthquakes. Well, me again and my claustrophobia, I said, "The only ceiling I thought was a little bit too high was the rotunda of the Capitol." That was the only time I ever thought it was a little bit too high. Anyway, they finally found this place and somebody said they were good Republicans and they would let Ike and myself rent it for the

two or three months. This was right after he got out of office. And so we just loved it out there. We liked the folks and everything. Ike just loved going out on that golf course, and I liked that; it suited me fine.

WICKMAN: Yes, I see.



MRS. EISENHOWER: Then the next year they built this beautiful house for us, in which they included the high ceilings, which was against club rules, and everything else, but they did it. So both of us loved it out there. It's completely different; the folks and their thoughts, and everything, from the east coast, so we got the best of both.

WICKMAN: Yes, right. And there was privacy there, too. That would have something to do with it.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Oh, we had a beautiful house. It was well taken care of and no one got in there. In the first place, people would not intrude on you, and the club was guarded. No one could come in there just willy-nilly, you had to be a member of the club, or live on the club grounds, and there were lots of private homes. We just enjoyed it thoroughly. So from that time on, after they built this house, we went out every year. You know time just goes so fast.

Q: Sure does.

MRS. EISENHOWER: Coming back to the farm was just like coming back home, that's all there was to it. The bed was made and everything was already to go. That part was no effort. You know, when I look back on it, and I'd say to God every day, "I'm so thankful for many, many, many things." Things were made very easy for Ike and myself, in a way. We didn't ever have to really fight, you know, or be disappointed. I don't know how exactly to explain it, but everything was a pattern, like it had been planned. But it wasn't planned by us. God planned it.

WICKMAN: Yes.



MRS. EISENHOWER: But, I mean, to Ike and myself it didn't seem to be. That's why I so often say, "Well, I can't put myself in a position of a certain person." I used to say these things to widows and when I think of them now, how trite they were, but until I became one myself -- no matter what you say to a person about whether they didn't get the rank, or they weren't in the right place, or so and so, we always seemed to be in the right place. Now, I've experienced this other and so I can talk more appealingly to a person. You ought to see the letters I get from widows. The only thing I say to them is that life had to go on and you've got to keep on doing things to your best ability. Because death is inevitable; there's nothing you can do about it; till then, one must get out and stay cheerful. Maybe it comes with old age, too, but I just like to see people happy. I get very disgusted with

people that just grouse about this and that and the next thing all the time. And I say, "Well, for goodness sake, why aren't you happy about anything -- happy with what you've got?" Things could be a lot worse.

WICKMAN: That's right.



MRS. EISENHOWER: And if you don't like a job, well, that's not going to last forever either. You'll go on to something else. You know, that type of thing.

Q: Oftentimes, they have the power to change it themselves --

MRS. EISENHOWER: They have the power --

Q: -- if they would.