

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

GLENN GIBESON

AUGUST 17, 1989

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY ANDREW DUNAR

ORAL HISTORY #1989-1

This transcript corresponds to audiotapes DAV-AR #3584-3587

HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR





GLENN GIBESON

August 17, 1989
HSTR Photo

EDITORIAL NOTICE

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for Harry S Truman National Historic Site. After a draft of this transcript was made, the park provided a copy to the interviewee and requested that he or she return the transcript with any corrections or modifications that he or she wished to be included in the final transcript. The interviewer, or in some cases another qualified staff member, also reviewed the draft and compared it to the tape recordings. The corrections and other changes suggested by the interviewee and interviewer have been incorporated into this final transcript. The transcript follows as closely as possible the recorded interview, including the usual starts, stops, and other rough spots in typical conversation. The reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word. Stylistic matters, such as punctuation and capitalization, follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition. The transcript includes bracketed notices at the end of one tape and the beginning of the next so that, if desired, the reader can find a section of tape more easily by using this transcript.

Glenn Gibeson and Jim Williams reviewed the draft of this transcript. Their corrections were incorporated into this final transcript by Perky Beisel in summer 2000. A grant from Eastern National Park and Monument Association funded the transcription and final editing of this interview.

RESTRICTION

Researchers may read, quote from, cite, and photocopy this transcript without permission for purposes of research only. Publication is prohibited, however, without permission from the Superintendent, Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

ABSTRACT

Assigned as a special officer to the Truman Protective Division of the United States Secret Service in 1981, Glenn Gibeson was a member of the team of men who protected Bess W. Truman until her death in October 1982. Gibeson had a background in law enforcement. Prior to his association with the Secret Service he retired as a captain from the Kansas City, Missouri, Police Department after thirty years of service. He recalls Bess Truman's last Thanksgiving dinner at 219 N. Delaware, just eleven months before her death. Gibeson also sheds light on the fiscal conservatism of the Secret Service operation. He provides detailed accounts of how the agents spent their long quiet hours on duty at 224 N. Delaware, their command post across the street from 219 Delaware.

Persons mentioned: Bess W. Truman, Valeria LaMere, Ronald Reagan, Wallace H. Graham, Edward Hobby, Larry Stewart, Joseph Calpin, Robert E. Lockwood, Harry S Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, May Wallace, Lucius Beebe, Charles Clay, Orville Lashbrook, Sidney Van Trump, Tim Berry, Bonnie Calpin, Vernon Cox, Jim Ray, Doris Miller, Robert Hart, Bill Carnes, and E. Clifton Daniel

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

GLENN GIBESON

HSTR INTERVIEW #1989-1

ANDREW DUNAR: Was Valeria La Mere still here then?

GLENN GIBESON: Who?

DUNAR: Valeria LaMere.

GIBESON: Yeah, I didn't care too much for her.

DUNAR: She was still kind of running the show for the nurses, even when the Upjohn nurses were here.

GIBESON: Yes.

DUNAR: Okay, today is August 17, 1989. We are interviewing Mr. Glenn Gibeson this afternoon. We are in the living room of the Truman house at 219 Delaware in Independence, Missouri. I'd like to start just by asking you, Mr. Gibeson, if you could just tell us a little bit about your background and your experience as a Kansas City policeman and so forth.

GIBESON: Well, my background as a Kansas City, Missouri, police officer . . . My career may not have been as illustrious as some folks, but I did manage to rise through the ranks to the rank of captain. I retired after thirty years. It's an enforced retirement. Kansas City, after thirty years, it makes no difference how smart you are, healthy or what, thirty years and you're gone. After my retirement from the police department, why, I just enjoyed retirement for a couple of years.

And then, through a former policeman that went to the Secret

Service, I heard of an opening out here at Truman's, and he felt that I might be suitable. And as a result of his suggestion, I went down and applied, and was subsequently, eventually selected. They investigated me for about six months before I was ever hired. It was . . . By the time I was hired, I was really a little bit reluctant. I didn't particularly want to work—I was enjoying retirement—but I'm so happy that I did. I got to meet Mrs. Truman. And on the few good days that she had during the period I was here, I got to know a little bit about her.

DUNAR: Now, what period did you work in the house here with Mrs. Truman?

GIBESON: What period?

DUNAR: Yes, what years were they?

GIBESON: Now, by that do you mean what years?

DUNAR: Oh, yes. When did you start?

GIBESON: Well, I worked until the time of her death, and I came on about two years prior to that. She died—what is it?—October 1983, 1982 . . . I worked all of 1982 and October of 1983, and I believe a little bit of 1981. I had right at two years.

DUNAR: What was the difference between people that came into the service in the way that you did, perhaps in retirement, and people that were career Secret Service personnel?

GIBESON: Well, bear in mind, I was not a Secret Service agent. I'm what they call a special officer. Special officers are empowered to make arrests, I suppose, but theirs are strictly protective assignments. Secret Service agents work on

fraudulent documents and counterfeit money, of course, and then, also, the protective details. Now, all Secret Service agents have to put in a certain amount of time on protective details, and that, of course, is the first family and former first families and, oh, in a special instance like the gentleman that got shot, you know. His name escapes me. "The Bear" in Washington. See, he has Secret Service protection. But, generally speaking, it's first families and former first families.

DUNAR: Will they be in one site for a long period of time then? Were there agents that were here for an extended period of time?

GIBESON: Generally about two years.

DUNAR: Two years is all?

GIBESON: Yeah, about two years. Now, I do not off the top of my head know that there is any fixed amount of time that an agent has to spend on a protective assignment. They use special officers whenever they can because they're cheaper. Your special officers quite frequently come into the ranks as former police officers, former military, C.I.D. [Criminal Investigation Department] people and folks of that nature. They come with a wealth of enforcement and protective experience in lieu of probably some of the educational requirements, you see.

I do not have a degree. I have quite a bit of university time, but I do not have a degree. In order to advance in the ranks of the police department, I had to take graduate level work in, oh, psychology, human relations, administration, police science, even sensitivity training. This is a must.

You've got to take those, and you take it at graduate level, and you either make it or you don't. Now, I speak only for Kansas City Police Department, but that's something of my background.

DUNAR: What were your specific responsibilities when you were working here?

GIBESON: Your specific responsibilities was the protection and the security of the property and, obviously, the protectee: Mrs. Truman.

DUNAR: Were there other responsibilities that went along with that? Would you do things for Mrs. Truman, perhaps, if she . . . Would she ask you to do anything or . . . ?

GIBESON: Her personal needs were taken care of in their entirety by the household staff. You mentioned her name, the . . .

DUNAR: Valeria La Mere?

GIBESON: Val, yes. Old Valeria was supposed to look after the household, and then the nurses took care of Mrs. T and her personal needs.

DUNAR: What was the relationship like between the household staff and the Secret Service personnel?

GIBESON: Generally speaking, pleasant. See, I don't know whether I'm delving into an area that I shouldn't, but, see, Mrs. Truman really didn't have any assets of her own. I think the agent-in-charge saw to it that the gas bill was paid and that the nurses were paid and so on. And if she ran out of money over here to run the household and her personal needs, they would pass special legislation and place money in her account that was doled out by the Secret Service. You know, they were accountable, but that was handled strictly by

the agent-in-charge of the T.P.D., the Truman Protective Division.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

GIBESON: Until the time of her death, yes.

DUNAR: So they paid the household staff, too?

GIBESON: Yes, yes, yes.

DUNAR: How about things for household expenses? Were they also through that fund?

GIBESON: For mowing the yard, for paying the light bill, the gas bill. That's how I happen to know that the gas bill would run 600 bucks a month to heat this place, and you still froze to death. We had to heat it to keep the pipes upstairs from freezing.

DUNAR: So would the Secret Service detail watch things like the heat in the house and monitor that?

GIBESON: Oh, yes, yes, yes. You watched all the little details, as a matter of fact. See, the perimeter . . . This was a secure area. We had what we called—and again, I don't think I'm violating any rules—the house was circled by Opti-Guards, infrared beams from cameras and receivers that . . . if anything broke an Opti-Guard beam, you had to find out immediately what broke the beam and why, whether it was a defect or whether a squirrel broke the beam or a tomcat on the fence. Then the house was also secured by . . . In the back, on top of the garage, we had a infrared light and a camera that was sensitive to infrared lights, and we monitored. You could see any activity, no matter how dark it was, in the rear and around the building.

DUNAR: Did the camera rotate and could be controlled?

GIBESON: You could move the cameras if you desired, but most of them were fixed. See, they were in fixed positions. We had some on top of the R.L.D.S. owned building that's down on the corner.

DUNAR: Okay.

GIBESON: And one of our monitors was . . . from there, you could look down the alley, the alley to the south of us, clear to the garage. And then there was one on the garage.

DUNAR: So that would cover pretty much everything but the north.

GIBESON: Yes.

DUNAR: How would the north side be covered?

GIBESON: The north side was visually covered from the front windows of the . . .

DUNAR: From the house across the street?

GIBESON: The house across the street, yes.

DUNAR: Did they have a camera on that side at all either or just the [unintelligible]?

GIBESON: I'm sure it did. We had six monitors, and I can't remember exactly which areas each of the six cameras covered. I do know this, that when the one at the garage failed, I had a phone number . . . I figured it was somebody local and didn't realize I wasn't making a local call until the guy says, "Now, I will be at the airport . . ." and he gave me the local time. He says, "Now, have a car ready for me. And will I stay out at the Adams Mark Hotel, like I did the last time?" [laughter] See, when the cameras broke down, I get a hold of the agent-in-charge and he gives me this number. So I have to have

a car available to him up there at the airport and a hotel room, and he arrives with cameras and suitcases full of equipment and fixes it.

DUNAR: Did he come from Washington?

GIBESON: He come from Washington. Yes, sir, I was talking to a man in Washington. I didn't realize that until after our conversation was over, and nobody told me. But that is the lengths they go to to look after a protectee.

DUNAR: Could you explain a little more about the Opti-Guard system that you mentioned before? Were those just on windows or on . . . ?

GIBESON: No, no, no. One of them was at the base of the flagpole. I don't know whether it was a sender or a receiver, and another one was back over towards Mrs. Wallace's house, you know, the neighbor across the back way.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And it scanned . . . it run a beam down there, and then one runs across the front and down the sides and across the back. The entire house was girded, circled, enclosed—whatever you want to call it—by Opti-Guards.

DUNAR: So they were along the fence then? The fence and the house?

GIBESON: No, they weren't on the fence. It was inside of the fence. Now, the fence was also bugged—it's probably illegal, I think—but you could monitor conversations of people at the front gate.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

GIBESON: Yes. If you wanted to, you could hear what they said. There was a monitor and a speaker back by the garage, at the corner of the garage, and if you saw people in the alley, you could ask them, you could tell them, "This is a

secure area. Please leave.” And if they didn’t, you’d go over there and forcibly eject them or find out what their business was.

DUNAR: Was that the only speaker, the one back on the garage?

GIBESON: No, no, there was speakers all around, in the fence.

DUNAR: I see.

GIBESON: Yes. See, you could . . . Oh, occasionally, a squirrel would sit on the . . . above the speaker out here at the front gate, and you could key the speaker and thump the microphone and watch Mr. Squirrel jump four feet in the air.
[chuckling]

DUNAR: Were there any security devices inside the house?

GIBESON: There’s fire alarms. See, I recall one incident where it had rained—this caused the fire alarm to go off in the attic—but it was bugged for fire alarms . . . yes.

DUNAR: And were there any other types of security devices?

GIBESON: Well, now, now, the nurses over here had a panic button. If for some reason nobody was in the den, why, all she had to do is pick up this little . . . about the size of a cigarette lighter, and didn’t look unlike a cigarette lighter with a button on it, and that would cause an alarm to go off. And, of course, anytime the alarm went off, somebody is over here physically, immediately, to find out what the problem is or . . . Well, if the panic button went off, why, you came over here physically and found out why, whether it fell out of her purse and she sat on it or what the situation was.

DUNAR: Right. Could you explain a little bit what the set-up was like in the house

across the street that was responsible . . . ?

GIBESON: Yes, I don't think I'd be violating anything. It was just an ordinary bungalow. As a matter of fact, there was even sleeping quarters upstairs, unused. But during the daytime, generally you'd have . . . the agent-in-charge would be in there and one guy on the monitors. That way you'd be in either actual visual contact, or by way of monitors, all around the house. They allowed us to have one TV. You could sit and watch TV, or listen to it or whatever, and just scan the monitors. And, of course, anytime an alarm went off . . . Now, the alarm would continue to beep until you shut it off and found out why. The alarms are little audio fellows, you know—beep, beep, beep, beep, beep—and a little red light would be blinking at you. If you couldn't hear, you could see the red light.

DUNAR: And then there would be two people on duty at all times over there?

GIBESON: Yes, yes.

DUNAR: Okay.

GIBESON: There's always two people on duty. The Secret Service, anytime they protect somebody, they've got two people there.

DUNAR: Okay.

GIBESON: If somebody has to use the washroom, why, there's a pair of eyes and a body there. And if you're there alone, you're expected to act and behave like a look and behave like a Secret Service man. And they all did.

DUNAR: When one person was stationed over here at the house . . .

GIBESON: Yes?

DUNAR: . . . Would there be then only one person across the street?

GIBESON: Then there would be one person across the street. And, see, at night . . . we'd always have somebody over here at night. There'd be the security man in Mr. Truman's library and then the nurse over here. The nurse would do her paperwork at night, and the guy in there . . . you could read, you could study for your master's thesis, you could do anything you wanted, but you were there—physically there, and armed to the teeth. You know, like I said, you either carried a riot gun, plus your regular service revolver, or sometimes we'd even have the machine gun over here, the little Uzi machine gun that they use.

DUNAR: Did most of the agents carry some sort of weapon?

GIBESON: Oh, yes, yes.

GIBESON: Yes, when you see a Secret Service man . . . Well, the classic was when Reagan was shot. If you noticed, there was a black man instantly had an Uzi machine gun in his hand. Well, that came out of his Samsonite briefcase—they're specially built—that fits in a absolutely standard Samsonite briefcase. And if you hit the right button, it comes out and it is ready. It is cocked, loaded, ready and off-safety, it is ready. And if it had been a less disciplined man that could have been a disaster when Mr. Reagan was shot, and there it was right on TV.

DUNAR: Was there any communication between the study here and the house, as far as . . . ?

GIBESON: Yes, you had radio, a handy talkie radio, and then the telephone. See, we

called back and forth across the street. Or the nurse would call if she had some request that she wanted.

DUNAR: Do you remember any incidents that took place in which any of the alarms were set off while you were on duty?

GIBESON: Oh, yes. My goodness, yes. They were always going off for some reason or another. It could be nothing more than a drunk leaning against the fence. You would hear it through the microphones, and you'd have to find out why. Generally speaking, when the alarms went off it was either a malfunction or a squirrel, a rabbit, cats. We had . . . Somebody around here has got cats that would get on the fence, and they'd get to romancing or whatever cats do in the middle of the night, and they'd break the alarms and you'd have to find out why. And occasionally we'd have malfunctions. A windstorm, for example, will cause the tree branches to drop. Or if a tree branch dropped, or the leaves, would break the alarm.

Of course, now, I recall an incident. It was early in the morning—I don't know, like 5:00 A.M. or something—and nobody is at his best, after he's stayed up all night, at 5:00 A.M. And I'm over in the house across the street, and I hear a big crash over the speakers, as if somebody had hit the gate, you know, the gate. And then I hear tires squealing. And, man, I'm alert and I've got the firearms up there, ready to blow the front window out. But what had actually happened was they threw the Sunday paper, and it hit the gate instead of going over. And the man screamed to a stop and then put it in reverse, and instead of escaping he was backing up. But I thought that

our security had been violated. He don't know, but he was in deadly, dangerous peril in the middle of the night. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Just because he came back to throw the paper over the fence?

GIBESON: Yes, to throw the . . . They'd always throw the paper over the fence, and, generally, on the sidewalk pretty good.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: But, see, an incident like that, it, it shakes you up.

DUNAR: Sure. Were there any cases in which there was a real threat at all?

GIBESON: Not to my knowledge, not on Mrs. Truman, per se. But bear in mind, in that period, as long as the T.P.D. was active, why, when they shut the switchboards off at the Secret Service downtown at night, all calls would be channeled out here. And we did, we received calls, oh, from Leavenworth, for example. A guy escaped from the . . . or didn't show up for bed check in the mental part of Wadsworth Hospital. And I asked the man, "Why are you calling me?" And he says, "Well, you know, he threatened President Eisenhower, and I think you'll . . ." I said, "Say no more."

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: You call the duty officer. And I will say this for the good Secret Service people that I worked with: Here I was a new man, and you could call those guys at three o'clock in the morning or two-thirty A.M. and tell them "a fellow missed midnight bed check at Wadsworth Hospital. They just called me, and he's the one that made the threat on Eisenhower back in so and so. Do you want to look into this?" And he says, "Yes, say no more." He said,

“Now, what was the name of the guy that called you?” And he’d be out to Wadsworth.

I had a lady call me one night about, oh, 3:00 A.M. from Lawrence, Kansas, and she identified herself as a member of the Lawrence Police Department. She said, “I’ve got a highly intoxicated Indian male here, and he says he’s on the way to Washington and he’s going to kill President Reagan. Are you interested?” You damn betcha we’re interested. And you get a hold of the duty officer, the agent that’s in the barrel, so to speak, and he is the one that goes out to Lawrence and talks to the guy.

DUNAR: Right.

GIBESON: And finds out why or so on. I’m sure they keep records of anybody that ever publicly made threats or that they considered to be a threat.

DUNAR: Right, yes. Could you explain a little bit just how the Truman Protective Detail then was structured? How many people were there? How did the rotation between duty shifts work?

GIBESON: Well, we would change, as I recall, either weekly or every other week. You’d work around the clock. And it’s just like a police agency. You know, this week you’d work days and then the next week you’d work evenings and then the next week midnight. You never really got adjusted to what shift you were working.

DUNAR: Yes. Eight-hour shifts or twelve-hour shifts?

GIBESON: Eight-hour shifts. Now, the only time we worked twelve-hour shifts is when she’d be in the hospital. Then we’d have to have two guys at the hospital

and one out here manning the command post, just looking after the physical property. He'd have to leave the command post every now and again and check the perimeter and then go on back, but he also had to be available to answer the telephones.

DUNAR: Yes. Could you just tell us a little bit about . . .

GIBESON: What?

DUNAR: Could you tell us a little bit about your relations with Mrs. Truman?

GIBESON: Well, needless to say, they were very few because she was so desperately ill. But I can cite one example. For example, we didn't know that she was near death. Dr. Wallace Graham, in his infinite wisdom, told me at the hospital, he said, "She's going to go back home. She wants to go home to die. We've done everything for her that medical science can do, and we're going to send her home." Okay. She's setting in her wheelchair while the nurse is freshening her bed and so on. She has feeding tube up her nose, so she can't speak. As a matter of fact, I think she actually had a stroke, and she couldn't have spoke if she didn't have a tube. Be that as it may, why, the agent-in-charge asked me to go over and get the G-Ride—the government car—he had to run some kind of an errand. So I came over here and the car was parked in by the nurse's car. So I went in and asked the nurse if she would mind moving her car so that I could get the government car out, and she says, "Well, Mrs. T has not been well. Would you mind moving it for me?" She said, "I think the keys are in it." And I said, "No, it's locked." She said, "Oh, well," and she starts searching around for the keys to her car, and

she can't find them. So she looks a little while longer and she still can't find them. Now, all this time, Mrs. T is sitting over there in her wheelchair, either asleep, perhaps even comatose, but whatever. The woman can't find her keys. Now, this lady, I could give you her name—it's immaterial—but she's a big Swedish lady. [chuckling] Pretty soon, she's exasperated and getting embarrassed. She's blushing. She says, "Here I'm supposed to be a trained professional and I can't even keep track of my car keys. I just don't know what's getting wrong with me." I told her, "Don't be so hard on yourself. There was only one perfect person ever walked the face of the earth." And she says, "Yes, I know, that was Jesus Christ." I said, "No, no. It was my wife's first husband." [chuckling] Mrs. T's eyes popped open, and she's setting in her wheelchair. Obviously she'd been listening. She was aware of what was going on. She patted her leg, laughing silently, and motions me to come over and gave me a kiss on the back of the hand. That's the last time that I ever touched Mrs. Truman.

GIBESON: But here, within a week of her meeting her maker, she had moments of lucidity, she was aware of her surroundings. As a matter of fact, they told me that she said that she was going to try and make a hundred. She was going to go screaming and scratching all the way, and I believe it.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: Now that was . . . She laughed at this cornball joke of mine until tears run down her eyes, and it made me feel good.

DUNAR: Sure.

GIBESON: It makes me feel good today to relate it.

DUNAR: Sure.

GIBESON: The nurse finally found her keys, I got the government car out, and the agent wondered what in the world took me so long over there, but he didn't question because . . .

DUNAR: Who were some of the people that were on Mrs. Truman's staff that you had contact with?

GIBESON: That I had . . . her staff?

DUNAR: Yes, if you remember.

GIBESON: Her staff, while I was here, consisted solely of nurses and old Valeria and that was it. Now, there was an old black gentleman that used to come around and cut the yard, and it's my understanding that he, he did it way back when Mr. T was still around. But in the last year of her life, why, even he didn't come around.

DUNAR: That was Reverend Hobby?

GIBESON: I believe that's who it was. I believe it was, now that you mention it. Yes, he was indeed a minister, a fine, sterling old gentleman.

DUNAR: What was he like? Did you meet him at all?

GIBESON: I didn't, well, I didn't have an opportunity to talk to him a whole lot, because anytime he was around he was always conscientiously busy, doing little odd jobs, cleaning the yard and so on. But that's who he was. And he was a secure person. He had clearance. Anybody that came and went, why, you know, the people from the library, for example, they would come down

occasionally. And, oh, after she was so desperately sick, they started inventorying some of the stuff, you know, and recording the things down in the basement and so on. But, see, even something as mundane as when the sewer stopped up and the Roto-Rooter Service sends a sewer man out, you've got to be down there with the Roto-Rooter man while he's fixing the sewer.

DUNAR: Who would call somebody like that? Would it be Valeria or would it be the Secret Service?

GIBESON: Valeria would mention it to the agent-in-charge. He'd take care of it.

DUNAR: I see, yes.

GIBESON: Actually, I think, see, Valeria didn't even have to order food. Because in her last couple of years, for the most part, since her stroke, she couldn't eat properly and her food was supplied by, you know, a tube.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: It's unfortunate, but . . .

DUNAR: Right. Did you and the nurses eat here then when you were on duty?

GIBESON: Beg your pardon?

DUNAR: Did you and the nurses eat here then when you were on duty? Or how did that work?

GIBESON: I don't know what the nurses would do. They had access to the kitchen in there, and on special occasions they'd bring in little treats. But, see, we had cooking facilities across the street. Most of the guys would either bring a bag lunch or send somebody out for a hamburger or something like that.

Oh, on special occasions, like Sunday morning, why, like I mentioned earlier, Novack or somebody . . . They had a complete kitchen over there with utilities and so on, but if you cooked in the kitchen . . . Some of the agents liked to cook; some of them didn't.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And it just depended on who you was working with.

DUNAR: So you'd either cook or bring your own, bring a bag lunch or . . .

GIBESON: Yes, whether they would eat in or have something brought, or go out and get it.

DUNAR: Okay, I think we're coming to the end of one side of the tape, so maybe we can just pause for a moment and we'll change the tape here.

GIBESON: Okay.

[End #3584; Begin #3585]

DUNAR: You had mentioned a bit earlier, we had mentioned a little bit about a few of the agents that you knew. Do you remember who some of the agents were that you worked with? And could you maybe just describe a little bit . . .

GIBESON: Well, I should have . . . You know, they taught me one thing: You never throw anything away. And I could have bought a roster, but just without exception, such fine people. You know, in their absence, in the absence of the agent-in-charge, why, we would have like Larry Stewart—decent, athletic young fellow. Joseph Calpin. I worked with one agent that . . . damn it, his name escapes me. Such a fine guy, but he went to the C.A.T. Squad, the Counter-Assault Team, after the Reagan assassination attempt.

The Secret Service, in any of their motorcades, have what they call a C.A.T. Squad, a C.A.T.S., Counter-Assault Tactical Squad.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And he wanted to be in that. And these are the guys that when the motorcade is moving along, he can jog right alongside of it, five miles, ten miles—it makes no difference. You can't wear him out. I was trying to think of the man's name. But if all else failed, he would, he would run up and down the stairs to work up a sweat and get his exercise.

DUNAR: Yes.

[Looking through book with pictures of agents]

GIBESON: Bob Lockwood. Now, see, he was our . . . See, Inman, I never worked with him. I didn't work with Scooter.

DUNAR: Bob Lockwood was still in charge of the detail when you were working, right?

GIBESON: Yes, he was special agent-in-charge. Mr. Cantrell was . . .

DUNAR: Was Bob Lockwood a pretty good boss?

GIBESON: A good boss. Well, you know, he would rub fur the wrong way occasionally on some of the agents. He was eccentric, I suppose, in his own way. Inasmuch as he rode a bicycle to and from work. To him, happiness was getting a day off and riding his bicycle out to Sedalia and back. Let's see here. I am sorry, I cannot remember some of these guys' names. But see, now these I do not know. [pause] I've even forgot the command post phone number over there. But old Bob Lockwood—see, that was taken a while

back—but a fit, athletic, trim, fine man.

DUNAR: Did the detail keep contact with the Independence Police force? How did that relationship work?

GIBESON: Well, yes. We would have pretty close contact with the Independence P.D., in that there were always accidents over here on this corner. This is probably one of the most dangerous corners in Independence. But with regards to the Independence P.D., I couldn't believe my ears. One bitter cold night, I was driving the same car that I drive today and the battery was a little puny. So I asked the agent-in-charge if he would mind if I parked it in the basement of the command post. And he said, "No," he says, "you'll have to shovel the driveway out to get it in." So I shoveled the driveway out to get it in, and then the next morning . . . It snowed all night long and the snowplows had been out working, but there was a mountain of snow that I was going to have to get out of the way to even get my car out of the garage. So I'm out busy shoveling the walk and shoveling the driveway and the Independence police stopped by. And he says, "What are you doing?" And I says, "Well, I'm shoveling snow." [chuckling] He says, "Well, be careful and don't get any in the street. I'll have to issue you a citation if you . . ." I couldn't believe my ears. Now, see, this is different than a city police officer. Here he's talking to a Secret Service man, and he surely knows that that's a Secret Service command post, and threatening . . . He was serious. He was going to issue me a citation if I got any of that snow in the street. I couldn't believe my ears. But generally speaking, we maintained good

relationships with the . . .

Well, this house to the south of us is occupied by nurses from the Independence Sanitarium. And one morning, the trash truck backs in and, see, he's one of the regular people, he backs in and he picks up the trash. But his back step hooked onto the fender and the rear bumper of a Volvo, see? So we have to contact the police, and the police responded very nicely and handled the situation, found the woman and so on. But it would be mainly vehicular problems that we would have to contact the police with. Other than that, why, I don't think they're even aware that we existed here.

DUNAR: Were there any questions of the media coming in and wanting to get stories on Mrs. Truman or anything like that?

GIBESON: Occasionally. Occasionally, they would, they would show up, but, no, they didn't get in the house. See, this was a private residence.

DUNAR: Right.

GIBESON: The biggest problem we would have, I would suppose, is in the daytime. When Mrs. T was at all able, she loved to get over here in front of the window, and if there was schoolchildren outside, she would wave at the schoolchildren from her wheelchair. She got pleasure from that. She got pleasure . . . We had one nurse that wasn't popular with the other nurses and not popular with Valeria, but she was a Sunday school teacher, as I recall. And she'd sit at the piano and practice her music for Sunday morning. And I've seen the old lady listening to religious music played on Harry's piano, with tears running down her . . . She thoroughly enjoyed it. For the most

part, though, once in a while we'd get nurses that—you know, they were under contract from Upjohn, I think—that claimed the gal neglected some of her paperwork and some of the duties. I don't know what nurses do—I was never sick—but she would neglect some of her work, in there plunking on the piano. Well, to me, it gave me pleasure to see Mrs. T getting a little pleasure from somebody plunking out "The Old Rugged Cross" on Harry's Steinway, or whatever it is in there. They kept it tuned. It sounded good. Didn't bother me in the least.

DUNAR: Could Mrs. Truman still watch television when you were here?

GIBESON: Sure, we were permitted to watch television. You could sit in there and watch TV if you wanted to, but that's not a very good set. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: It's old as the hills and its reception isn't all that good. I suppose if it broke down they'd have got it fixed. But, yes, you could watch TV.

DUNAR: Did Mrs. Truman watch? Did Mrs. Truman watch at all? Or was she too ill? She was too ill at that point?

GIBESON: No, no. To the best of my knowledge, she never watched TV while I was here.

DUNAR: Were there any dignitaries that came to visit during the time you were here?

GIBESON: Not while I was here. She was already just too desperately ill. Now, occasionally, yes, we would have people. The Daniels family would come up and visit on occasion, but not all that often. They would maintain contact by phone and let us know where they were at, so that we could get a hold of

them.

DUNAR: How often would they call?

GIBESON: Anytime they were going to be away from home. They would let us . . .

DUNAR: Did they call on a regular basis, just to see how Mrs. Truman was doing?

GIBESON: Not really on a regular basis, per se. It would mainly be if they were going to be away from their residence. They would submit an itinerary so that we could contact them by phone no matter where they were at.

DUNAR: Were there guidelines under which circumstances you were supposed to contact the Daniel family?

GIBESON: Yes, yes, yes.

DUNAR: Just if she took a turn for the worse?

GIBESON: Well, now the guidelines was this way: If it was serious or we felt that the end was approaching or something like that, certainly, we get a hold of the Daniel family, because that's all the family Mrs. T had left.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: Of course, Mrs. Wallace lives right across the back fence there. She would drive . . . Dear old Mrs. Wallace is not the world's greatest driver, or wasn't. She dinged the corner of the garage and the telephone pole. [chuckling] But she was free to come and go. She's a secure person, and she was allowed to come and go at will.

DUNAR: Did she come over often?

GIBESON: If she did, I wasn't aware of it. See, she'd come in and out and go to the garage. And you recognize who she is. And what she did, I didn't pay

attention. You know, you get to the point where you know who the people are and you can see that they're alone and properly dressed for the occasion. And generally, she'd just go over and get her car.

DUNAR: Was Valeria La Mere still taking Mrs. Truman out at all, at this point? Or had she pretty much just been [unintelligible] inside the house?

GIBESON: Valeria's duties was very limited at the last. Now, when Mrs. T was able to eat regular food and stuff like that, I assume that she saw to it that she had a proper diet and so on and kept the house swept and cleaned up and so on.

DUNAR: But Mrs. Truman wasn't going out at all anymore then?

GIBESON: No, no. When she was able to get out, then she'd drive her to the beauty shop and so on, if that's what she wanted to do.

DUNAR: When the Daniel family came, could you see . . . were you in a situation where you could see the relationship between Mrs. Truman and [the family]?

GIBESON: Not really, because, actually, that's a family situation and we would maintain our security post in Mr. Truman's private little library in there. And, of course, we was in instant contact if anybody'd want us. They knew we were there. And on occasion, why, in the daytime, we wouldn't even man the post during the day. It would be manned from across the street, and then you walk the grounds. And, of course, you're in instant contact by way of the panic button, the telephone, and you just maintained pretty close contact. Obviously, male agents cannot keep visual contact with female protectees at all times.

DUNAR: Right, right. How often would Dr. Graham come to check on Mrs. Truman?

GIBESON: He wouldn't come too often to the house. I think I can be safe in mentioning—[chuckling]—I probably shouldn't—but Mrs. T had some very strong opinions about the Independence Sanitarium. She did not want to go there. She wanted to go to Research Hospital. She was very, very, very emphatic about that. I do not know why. I did not question why. But under no circumstances was she to go to Independence Sanitarium, and that's just down the street. It presented a little bit of a dilemma. Because in a life-threatening situation, why, you're morally, I'm sure, obligated, as Secret Service personnel, to get her, according to the book, to the nearest medical facility. But where she was so strong about that, I don't know. She always went to Research.

DUNAR: Was this something that had just been sort of a tradition that went back a ways? Or could she still express her own desires?

GIBESON: It must be, it must be. It indicated to me just how . . . I won't say headstrong, but, believe you me, she made her mind up that she did not, under any circumstances, want to go—. And this was information that was passed from agent to agent and from the agents to the special officers: that she goes to Research, she does not go to Independence unless it's an absolute life-and-death situation, which probably won't occur. But it was just understood that she went to Research.

DUNAR: Was she still healthy enough when you were here to express her opinions about any other things that were going on?

GIBESON: Not really, because she had had this stroke that affected her speech, and I assume that she was probably a little self-conscious about it.

DUNAR: Sure.

GIBESON: But she, with her eyes and her hands . . . I admired the woman's grit. You know, she fell and broke her hip. Or her hip broke and she fell, and she was so spunky. I have been around elderly people that this was their death warrant. It was not so with Mrs. T. She got to the point where she would lift herself out of her wheelchair and support herself. Then she got to where she would use her wheelchair like a walker and take one step.

DUNAR: Really?

GIBESON: One lone step. To me, this was a big, bright day.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And she got to where she could take two steps then, and it took her like a week to get to where she could go from one step to two. And eventually, she's pushing her wheelchair, getting out of it, and pushing on her broken leg—which I know was hurting her—and attached to all these . . . not IVs, but her feeding tubes and tubes, and managed to push her wheelchair, oh, maybe ten steps. What I'm saying is, the woman was struggling to get back. She would practice writing her name. And she could get "Bess" real good, and then when she'd get down to "Truman," it would kind of get off the line. But she was working on it.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And she was working on it as long as she was with it at all. You know, she

was, indeed, fighting every inch of the way.

DUNAR: And she would spend most of her time then in this room, I presume.

GIBESON: Right in this room, yes.

DUNAR: And then when she was trying to walk and so forth, would that be in the living room here or . . . ?

GIBESON: Yes, it would be either in that room or out here. See, the nurses would stand her up and see that she wouldn't fall, and then maybe get one faltering step and then have to go back to the chair. But she'd keep coming back for more.

DUNAR: Would the nurses tell her it was time to try to do this? Or would she . . . She would indicate . . .

GIBESON: No, no, no, no. No, she would indicate to the nurses what she wanted to do.

DUNAR: How would she do that? Would she just . . .

GIBESON: I suppose with hand signals or . . . I do not know how. She couldn't do it with writing because her eyesight was so bad she couldn't keep her writing on the line. I regret that I didn't save some of those faltering signatures because she demonstrated for me how she was improving. She had little pads "From the Desk of Bess Truman," and she'd write it for you or do the best she could. Now, her mail . . . had to use a rubber stamp on it.

DUNAR: Right, right.

GIBESON: But see, that's a franking privilege.

DUNAR: The household staff would handle her mail? Would they take care of her mail? Do you know how that was handled?

GIBESON: Now, the household staff would do what?

DUNAR: Would they take care of her mail, her correspondence and such?

GIBESON: Yes, they'd have to. Valeria would do that. That's one of the things she'd do. You know, somebody would write her a birthday card and wish her a happy birthday or something. I assume that Valeria would do it because she had access to a rubber stamp.

DUNAR: Right. Now, was Valeria a nurse or did she . . . ?

GIBESON: No, no.

DUNAR: She was not a nurse? Okay.

GIBESON: I don't know whether she was a personal friend or . . . I just don't know about Valeria. She was here, when I came and she was here as long as she was around, as long as Mrs. T was here. But from then on I do not know. I just never did question her much. She was a little bit crusty, Valeria was, although I got along with her all right. You know, she was privileged to come and go at will.

DUNAR: Would the nurses from Upjohn take directive from her at all? Or were they sort of an independent . . . ?

GIBESON: Therein is a different story, and, of course, I can't speak for the nurses. They maintained, I guess, a fairly pleasant relationship.

DUNAR: There is one thing you mentioned some time ago that I meant to bring up and we got onto something else. But you had mentioned about Reverend Hobby. Would he just do things that he decided on his own schedule?

GIBESON: As far as the outside, yes.

DUNAR: Yes?

GIBESON: Yes.

DUNAR: So he was entirely responsible for the outside?

GIBESON: Well, I wouldn't say that. I would suspect that Bob Lockwood or somebody would get a hold of him if there was something that they wanted done, or Valeria would get a hold of him if there was something they wanted done.

DUNAR: And how about things inside? But he did some inside work, too, didn't he?

GIBESON: Now, he did what?

DUNAR: He did some inside work, too, didn't he? Or am I wrong?

GIBESON: I'm sure that if they wanted some done, he would have done it. But I don't recall him being inside, not while I was here. See, Mrs. T was fond of sitting out on the back porch, the screened-in porch, in the summertime. When weather was clement and she felt up to it, why, she liked to be out there where she could see the sunshine, feel the breeze, and hear the birds, and so on.

DUNAR: And she did that up to, up to the end then?

GIBESON: Yes.

DUNAR: She'd still go out to the back porch?

GIBESON: Yeah, yeah. Until she was just so desperately ill that she was just bedridden.

DUNAR: Right. You were here then until Mrs. Truman died. Is that correct?

GIBESON: Yes, yes.

DUNAR: Okay. What happened, as far as taking care of the house, at the time that she died?

GIBESON: Well, of course, after she passed away, why, then we just secured the house.

And we didn't know what the disposition would be. And, of course, set about disassembling the command post over there. And, you know, the agents, they didn't know where they was going, what their new assignments were going to be. But until it was turned over . . . Her will was read and she was pretty specific. It's my understanding that the upstairs, Margaret's area, will remain as long as Margaret lives. I don't think anybody goes up there, do they? You know, the . . .

DUNAR: There's no public access.

GIBESON: No, no public access at all, period, as long as Margaret lives. But that was spelled out in her will. And then she wanted it to go to the Department of the Interior or whatever, and this is just her wishes.

DUNAR: Yes.

SHAVER: We were left with the impression that when she died the Secret Service packed up and left in a rather big hurry.

GIBESON: Well, not really in a big hurry, but, see, when our protectee is gone, why, then our duties end, see. After her funeral and once she's securely interred, that's it, see. Of course, we're not going to leave the property until you know what the deal is.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: But, yes, they did, they left pretty much in a hurry because that's an expensive operation. I don't remember what it cost per year, but it was, indeed, an expensive operation, when you consider that you've got two people around the clock. Well, towards the end, to the best of my

knowledge, I don't think they ever used any special officers out here until I came out here. And special officers are about half as expensive as agents. Then they got three more special officers. That way they could put these high-priced agents on other assignments. And it is expensive, and it cuts into the budget, I'm sure, of the Secret Service. And the quicker they can shut it down, why, the quicker they can put the money elsewhere. I'm sure the Secret Service, of all agencies, is probably as close a guardian on their money as any government agency I ever heard of.

SHAVER: Well, looking at the work that they've left behind, we kind of got the impression that they were.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: They did make their money go as far as they could. [chuckling]

GIBESON: Yes, yes, yes.

SHAVER: The wiring with the fire alarm and all that.

GIBESON: Yes, yes, yes.

DUNAR: Did they do some of that work?

GIBESON: Well, see . . .

DUNAR: Or did [unintelligible]?

GIBESON: Yes, see, they'd take care of the fire alarm, the alarm system. The locks on the doors. You can go and look at the locks on the door. They're V-8 locks. They've got eight pins instead of two in a V. They're special. Man, I have no idea what them locks cost. And they were installed by the Secret Service shortly before her death, as a matter of fact. The front door—of course, we

were in visual contact with it—but it had an old cast-iron key. That’s how you come in the front door.

DUNAR: Correct.

GIBESON: I suppose the thing still works. [chuckling]

SHAVER: It’s still there. We still use it.

GIBESON: Yes.

DUNAR: Is that right?

GIBESON: Yes. But these side doors and stuff, they put those . . . I mean, those are secure locks. They’re absolutely as close to pick-proof. I don’t think there’s a pick in the world that could . . . But they’ve got two sets of pins and keys. I could see problems with them, because they were so sharp that they’d wear holes in your pockets or your clothes if you carried them suckers around.

DUNAR: Then, as far as maintenance of anything that had to do with the security system, the Secret Service took care of that itself, right? It didn’t . . . ?

GIBESON: But, see, now, as far as the house, man, I could see structural deficiencies and plumbing deficiencies and so on.

DUNAR: Right.

GIBESON: Like I mentioned, the Roto-Rooter man had to come out. And, of course, you’re with the Roto-Rooter man when he’s cleaning the sewer, and this gives you an opportunity to kind of see what’s holding the place up.

DUNAR: Right, right.

GIBESON: And this was in a sad state of repair, it really was. I’m amazed that it looks

as good as it does with the amount of . . . in order to have the building continue to stand.

DUNAR: What were some of the most noticeable structural problems that you noticed as you were going around?

GIBESON: Well, see, this house has been added onto. I'm sure the upstairs bathroom was added at a later date. And Mr. T probably had those closets on the second floor just added onto the rooms. This is an old, old house.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: The garage out in back, see, if you notice, the timbers in that, I swear, are hand-hewn. They're old as the hills. That was probably a carriage house, I imagine.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And that's where he kept his car. It was interesting to me to note, though, that Mr. T's old lawn mower still sat out there. And it's my understanding, when he was able, he used it himself occasionally. [chuckling] I don't know, probably the old preacher might have used it, but nonetheless the former president had his own little putt-putt lawn mower.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And it wasn't a rider, I'll guarantee you.

DUNAR: [chuckling] Was the barn back there used at all, when you were here, by the Secret Service?

GIBESON: Oh, yes, yes.

DUNAR: It was still used?

GIBESON: The Truman car was in there, and I believe Mrs. Wallace parked in half of it most of the time in the summertime.

DUNAR: The Secret Service didn't have anything there, though, did they?

GIBESON: We would use the parking area out there to keep cars.

DUNAR: Just the parking area.

GIBESON: Because, see, there was three or four vehicles assigned out here. As a matter of fact, one of my last duties was . . . After her . . . after her death, I and another fellow, we had to take a brand new car to Washington that was no longer needed here, and we just turned it into the pool up to Washington, in Washington, D. C. But we were sent up there to work. Some of the fellows flew. And hell, I volunteered to drive. Another guy volunteered to drive. It was a very pleasant trip.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: Took us three days, but it was a very pleasant trip.

DUNAR: I'd like to, if we could, maybe move over to the study. Can we do that and get some comments over there?

GIBESON: Yes, yes, sure.

[conversation ensues regarding microphone cord, etc., as interview relocates to the study]

DUNAR: Okay, we're in the study now, and if you could maybe just . . . We were starting to talk about the books and the records that were in the bookshelf, if you could maybe just repeat that.

GIBESON: Well, see, he had classical records, hundreds of them, on the top shelf and even on these other shelves. And I forget . . .

DUNAR: These are the shelves in the middle you're talking about?

GIBESON: Yes. It seemed to me like it was one of these shelves broke in the middle of the night, and my goodness! It made a tremendous crash and shook the floor. [chuckling] I thought I'd been invaded from space.

DUNAR: That's when you were in the study here?

GIBESON: When we were in . . . yes.

DUNAR: You were in this room when it happened, when it fell down?

GIBESON: Yes. A cold night, and it occurred, I would say, about 3:20 A.M.

DUNAR: Did Mrs. Truman hear that?

GIBESON: I doubt it, because, see, she'd be over in her bedroom. Actually, we would hang a curtain here . . .

DUNAR: On the doorway?

GIBESON: To try and keep some heat in here. [chuckling] This place is frigid cold. Now, there's a heat duct back here someplace.

DUNAR: Is it just this room that's cold, or the whole house that is so cold?

GIBESON: The whole house would be cool. They'd keep it warm for Mrs. T. But this is on the north side and this is a drafty, drafty place, make no mistake about it. It was cold. It was so cold that we would have to—at least I—would borrow some hospital-type blankets from a nurse, and sit over here and read and freeze all night long. [chuckling]

DUNAR: So had that changed since Mr. Truman was here? Because supposedly he spent a lot of time in the evenings here, as I understand it.

GIBESON: Oh, yes.

DUNAR: Had it been that cold when he was here, or had . . . Do you know?

GIBESON: I am certain that it was probably cold when the house was occupied by Mr. T and everybody else. I'll bet he didn't do much studying in here in the wintertime.

DUNAR: In winter, huh? [chuckling] Now, you said that you could read any books here that you wanted.

GIBESON: Oh, yes, yes. See, now, I didn't get any permission from Mrs. Truman, of course, but the agent-in-charge, yes. Just put them back where you got them.

DUNAR: Yes. Do you remember anything you noticed in any of the books? Were there any notes from him or . . .

GIBESON: Well, if you look through them, once in a while you would find a little handwritten note by Mr. T himself. And, of course, that has historic significance, as far as I'm concerned, and I would tuck them right back and generally put that book back and let it alone.

DUNAR: Okay.

GIBESON: But Mr. Truman was obviously an omnivorous reader. He read everything. And I think I mentioned to you earlier, he had one in here, *The History of the Steam Threshing Engine*, from the first one ever built to the last one. I was just looking to see if I could find my old favorite. But she had a lot of religious-oriented books. Lots of history books. Well, see, *War and Peace*. Who in the world would read that unless it was an assignment? [chuckling] I was just looking . . .

DUNAR: Do you remember any of his notes in any of the books that maybe made . . . ?

GIBESON: Not really, not really. It would be just little hen scratching, but I got to where I could recognize the real McCoy. Without question, I'm sure the people from the library came up here, and I think they inventoried all this stuff. I don't know.

DUNAR: Right, yes. Does everything else in this room look pretty much as it looked? Do you see any changes?

GIBESON: It looks just like the last time I was here, except for the upholstering on the chair looks a lot neater and nice. I confess, we wore out one of his chairs setting in here. But . . . the same old green telephone, and that's how you maintained contact with the people across the street, generally speaking. Oh, we'd have radio, but it was just easier to talk on the telephone. But all the telephones are hooked together in this house. There's no two lines. This is no private line. But this looks just like it was.

[End #3585; Begin \$3586]

DUNAR: Were there other parts of the house that you spent time in? Or was it mostly when you were here at night, just that you were always in here?

GIBESON: This was the official security post here. Now, you were privileged to go all over the house. And if there was anything unusual, any unusual incidents . . . why, I know I've been upstairs a lot of times, but it would generally be some mundane thing like a toilet hanging up or, you know, the nurse might hear water running, or something of that nature. But, no, we had . . . were

privileged to go all over the house, even up into the attic area. That's where it was prone to leak, and that's where the fire alarms were located, up in the top part of the house, the *defective* fire alarms. [laughter] These were the ones that would give us problems. But, of course, anytime you have any kind of alarm, any unusual incident would be reported and reported, and it would be handled. You'd have to have some kind of a disposition. And if it was even remotely, you felt, of a serious nature, even if . . . why, get hold of somebody higher up and tell them about it, what we've got out here. [pause] See, I have to wear bifocals now, and I can't look up and read the books right.

SHAVER: I'll give you a couple of hints. There weren't a whole lot of books at the table when we got here. So, when they were doing filming for Margaret Truman's episode of *Smithsonian World*, she grabbed down a few select books to put down.

DUNAR: Oh, is that right?

SHAVER: A good number of those weren't even in print when he was alive.

GIBESON: Really?

SHAVER: The copy she sent of *Murder at the White House* is on the table. [laughter] Bizarre, you know Harry hadn't been reading it. It's kind of interesting to hear that the alarms were always going off in the attic. It hasn't changed a bit. It still happens.

GIBESON: Here. Here's one of my favorites. See? My favorite authors, Lucius Beebe and Charles Clay. See, I'd read this by hours. Now, see, I'm a railroad buff.

DUNAR: Yeah.

GIBESON: And, see, obviously he was, too. Sometimes in the flyleaf, see . . . A lot of pictures in here. And if I had lived in another time, I'd have given my soul to be a railroad man. And to this day, see, I have a very tolerant wife. She'll allow me to go all over the country just to ride on a steam train. But, see, now, this is one of his books. And it . . .

DUNAR: You can tell it's been read.

GIBESON: Yes, see? Well, I hope I put it back in the right place.

SHAVER: You say you're a train buff. Is that right?

GIBESON: Yes, I am.

SHAVER: He was, too.

GIBESON: Yes, now, *First Ladies of the White House*, see, that was here.

DUNAR: You were commenting on how much music there was here. Was any of that music played while you were here?

GIBESON: No, no. See, to begin with, it was all wax records, and I would be reluctant to play it even if I could. Now, I enjoy the same kind of music he did, apparently, but, you know, you risk scratching a record. And I wouldn't touch one of them for anything because, you know, you might damage it. See, to the best of my knowledge, even though we used this desk every night and guys studied on it, I don't think anything would have been disturbed. See these little trinkets and stuff, that's exactly the way it was. And I would suspect . . . Now, if you had access to the upstairs . . . See, his canes, the valet that he hung his suits on, see, I'm sure that that probably the way it was

the last time he used it, pretty much the way he left it.

SHAVER: What was your impression when you went through that room the first time?

GIBESON: Upstairs?

SHAVER: Yes.

GIBESON: Well, you know, you felt like . . . I don't know, I wouldn't say that I'm insulated or anything like that, but you felt the presence of the man, you know. Of course, you see, if you're a policeman for years and years and years, I think like . . . well, I'll bet you could vacuum the floor and come up with some hairs and identify them as being Harry Truman's, and so on. [chuckling] You know, idiotic things like that runs through your mind. But, you know, this is the real McCoy, this is where the man spent his time. He must have been a fascinating man. Everybody that knew him close, see, they have fascinating tales to tell. A man of depth. As years go by, I'm becoming more and more of an admirer of him. I admired him way back when, but especially from the chance meeting I had.

DUNAR: Would you repeat that? You told us about that before . . .

GIBESON: Yes, well, I was attending the University of Missouri at Kansas City, and I see the man walking across the campus, alone, with his cane, about twenty miles an hour, the way he always walked. And since there was nobody around, I walked up to him and I said, "Mr. Truman . . ." Now, I was wearing a police uniform, so he didn't have to worry about me. I told him I'd like to have the privilege of shaking his hand so I could tell my grandchildren that I had shaken the hand of the President of the United

States. And he told me, “That’s the easiest thing I’ve done all day,” gave me a pat on the shoulder and a hearty handshake, and asked about a gentleman, as it turned out, that I had worked with, old Sergeant Orville Lashbrook. And he pointed out to me, that back . . . I believe he said he was either running for the senate or running for judge or something, he carried three counties for him. And later, I asked—well, Mr. Truman he says, “Is he still around? If he’s around, tell him I want to see him.” So I did.

And when I told the man who was my sergeant at the time that I’d met Mr. Truman out at the university and he wanted to see him, so he went to his commander at the time. . . Let’s see, he was still a captain, Captain Sidney Van Trump, and said, “I’d like to have a little time off. I’ve got to go downtown and meet the former President of the United States.” And Mr. Van Trump had a few words to say. He said, “No, no, no kidding.” He said, “Well, if you say so, why, go ahead.” So he went downtown, in the . . . down at the courthouse where Mr. Truman had an office. And when he went in the office, why, he identified himself and said that Mr. Truman had indicated he wanted to speak to him. Mr. Truman heard his voice and says, “Orville, is that you?” [chuckling] And he went immediately in the office. What transpired in the office was behind closed doors, but I’m sure they had a pleasant little discourse of some kind or another. I was left outside with the dignitaries with their attaché cases waiting to see the former president while those two old men sat in there and talked about old times down in Texas County. Orville is still alive, though he’s not enjoying too good

health. He's in his upper nineties now, and I still maintain contact with the old gentleman. But Mr. Truman never forgot a friend, period. That is fact; that is fact.

DUNAR: What's your most lasting memory, do you think, of having worked here?

GIBESON: Well, actually, to sum it all up, it was the caliber of men I worked with, men . . . people that I worked with in the Secret Service. All of them, just such a fine bunch of people, the finest bunch of people I ever worked with. And the major part of my life I spent working around people in law enforcement, and so on.

I think perhaps my name came up as a candidate for Secret Service because, for years as a policeman I worked at the Municipal Auditorium when the annual police circus would come to town. I'm also a circus buff. So I would arrange my time, even after I got rank, to where I could work the circus. Well, this gave me access to and knowledge of the Municipal Auditorium. So, anytime there would be a presidential visit or foreign dignitaries that the Secret Service protects . . .

See, I failed to mention that earlier, but the Secret Service looks after foreign dignitaries. If they came to town and were to be at the Municipal Auditorium, I was immediately assigned, no matter what my assignment was with the police department, to work with the Secret Service to do what they call building sweeps. You know, that was before bombing was rampant and things like that, but we would still have to go over the building down there, and I knew all the nooks and crannies. And that way I got acquainted with a

few of the agents. It didn't make an impression at the time, but I am sure that that came up when my name came up as a possible special officer for out here. But that's how I got on, I guess. I really got on kind of by accident. The fellow that they originally had in mind, he was retired from the P.D. with a back disability, and I retired healthy. And he said, "I can't take it but I'm sure . . . I know a guy that might make you a good hand if he's willing to work." And I did, and I am so happy that I did.

DUNAR: Since we're in this room, let me just ask you one thing about this. Since you didn't really know the president very well personally, having met one time, but yet you probably have a pretty good impression of what he was like, from having spent time in this room and seeing his books.

GIBESON: Well, see, by looking at the books he read and the music he obviously loved, you get to know the man. Sure, they make fun of him because he played the piano, but I could play the piano, too. [chuckling] Apparently enjoyed the same kind of music. I read the same kind of stuff that he apparently liked, although he was more history-oriented. But, see, some of the books in here, his own little personal books, the ones that he read like this one, one of my favorite authors . . . And I'm sure if we looked through more, why, you'd find more of them. And if you've got eight hours to spend over here, and nice and peaceful and quiet and comfortable, why, you get to feel that you know the guy from the books he read, the stuff that he had on his desk. It's the same kind of trash I have on my desk, you know.

DUNAR: Yes. Is there anything here that really left an impression on you, anything on

the desk?

GIBESON: No, not really, not really. But I don't even remember what this seal is, but that was there. And, oh, little things like the campaign buttons and so on. You know, they were his. Even the paper clips, see. My desk has got old rusty paper clips on it. That's just the kind of a man he was. You can identify with him. He was a man, I don't know, just of the people, and I feel like I'm a people. [chuckling]

DUNAR: Yes. Michael, do you have any questions?

MICHAEL SHAVER: Yes. The housekeeper kept a note or a listing of all the agents stuck on the refrigerator and it's got your name on it, along with some other fellows.

GIBESON: Yes, okay. Yes, Tim Berry. Sure, I worked with Tim Berry, and Joe Calpin.

SHAVER: You can tell us some things about those folks.

GIBESON: Well, see, Tim Berry, he was young and, as I recall, single. Joe Calpin, married to a lady named Bonnie, had a couple of lovely little children. He is a firearms instructor for the Secret Service back in Virginia. Yeah, see, "From the Desk of [Mrs. Harry S. Truman] . . .," only hers had Bess. And Minklin. See, he liked to do woodwork, precision woodwork things. He'd make little wooden toys and all kinds of stuff. Jordan. Jordan is the one that . . . an exercise buff, a physical health nut. He went to the C.A.T. Squad and probably [is] still there. They don't stay around very long. They retire at twenty years. It's a young man's job and you're on the road constantly. Well, now, see, Vernon Cox, he works out at the VA Hospital. I see him on

occasion. Birdsong—I'm not very fond of. He was a special officer and a very short-timer. He and I went to California to take offensive driving education. [enunciating] Offensive driving education. [laughter] Yes, using your vehicle as a weapon. And, of course, that's me. Vernon Cox is not the one at the VA Hospital; it's Jim Ray that's at the VA Hospital. Cox, I think, is a air traffic controller now. I see Cox on very rare occasions. But that was the special officers, see. I don't know how our name got there. That looks like my writing.

SHAVER: Well, we found it stuck in the refrigerator, so I imagine it was stuck on the refrigerator.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: That's all the other important numbers there, doctors and . . .

GIBESON: Yes, see, Dr. Graham, Margaret, Valeria. Let's see, see now, that's the preacher, the old reverend.

DUNAR: Who is that? Reverend Hart?

GIBESON: Let's see . . . Rhonda was one of my favorite nurses. But, see, these nurses would . . . they would change, change, change. This Doris, I think, is the one that played the piano at night. See, old Bob Lockwood. See, I don't think . . .

DUNAR: Doris was a beautician, wasn't she?

GIBESON: Maybe, maybe, now that you mention it. See, the beautician, she would come out. She had clearance, see, and one of the people that I'd have to learn.

DUNAR: Do you remember her?

GIBESON: Yes.

DUNAR: Did you talk to her at all?

GIBESON: No, no.

DUNAR: Because she was a very close friend of Mrs. Truman.

GIBESON: See, what happened, they would say, “Oh, yeah, that’s Doris,” and you let her in. See, you could punch a button that let them in the gate.

SHAVER: You could control the gate from across the street, couldn’t you?

GIBESON: Yeah, yeah.

SHAVER: Okay. We thought you could, but we didn’t know for sure.

GIBESON: But, see, in an emergency or if you was alone, you go right over the fence. You know, if the panic button went . . . And the only time they ever pushed the panic button, why, I was alone. I was working with the exercise man and he was out jogging. And I just abandoned the post and over the fence . . . You know, there’s nobody to push a button. You had a key, but I come off without the key, so you go over the fence.

SHAVER: Oh, gosh! [chuckling]

GIBESON: But, you know, it turned out that it wasn’t what we thought it was. I think she had dropped it, out of her purse and sat on it, or something like that. But it sounded like a French ambulance, the panic button. You know, whoo-hoo, whoo-hoo!

DUNAR: Yeah, so you definitely knew it was going off?

GIBESON: Oh, yes.

DUNAR: Well, I don't think I have anything else. Michael, did you have something?

GIBESON: Well, I've kind of run my mouth here. I hope I haven't embarrassed the . . .

SHAVER: We're getting a kick out of it.

GIBESON: I wouldn't embarrass the Secret Service for anything. Like I said before, and I'd say it till I die, they're just such a sterling group of people.

SHAVER: A lot of people have respect for the agency, and they ask a lot of questions about the Secret Service, and what, and how . . .

GIBESON: See, they're such low-profile people. I have to unlearn the things that I learned as a police officer. I could even cite you a little example. When I was in Washington, they were still talking about it. One of the assignments that I worked was at an L Street location, 1310 L Street. It's an office building that's full of Secret Service offices. That's where you go and turn in for your travel money, and so on. The basement of the building goes down five floors—I believe it's five floors—but that's where they park the limousines. And there's a tremendous steel door. It's probably twenty feet wide, and you control the door. You sit and you visually inspect each and every guy and the tag that he wears around his neck, and the vehicle, before it enters or leaves. Okay? This post is in a . . . it's a little office, and you can look right straight across the street. There's a parking lot across the street. Well, one of the special officers, prior to my run over there—they were still talking about—he sees in the parking lot across the street a guy get behind the building, pull a silk stocking over his face, get his pistol out and check it, and then sneak around and grab the parking lot attendant, [who the guy

knows], by the necktie, puts a pistol against his head, and robs him. Well, what does the guy do? He leaves his post, he goes over, and he puts the “I gotchas” on the holdup man, captures him, cuffs him, drags his butt across the street, nobody was hurt, recovers the money, and then he calls everybody and tells them what he has done. See, what he’d done is abandon his post. Even though it was only for thirty seconds or a minute, he abandoned the post where these secure vehicles are supposed to be down below, and come within an ace of getting fired. And he still was subjected to . . . Well, they were discussing what kind of discipline the guy should get. See, because this could be a . . . This is one thing that they pounded home: If you’re down buying a pound of coffee for the command post and a holdup man comes in, you do nothing. *You do nothing.* You don’t try to stop him. You don’t do anything. You do nothing. You get back if you can, but you do nothing. And, see, this is not . . . this goes against your police training.

DUNAR: Right.

GIBESON: Their radio procedures were different. In their own way, they were just as effective as the radio procedures that I was accustomed to. But in unusual situations, I would revert back to my old police . . . You know, you give your location, you identify yourself. See, they did it backwards to what I was used to. But really no problem, it worked out. I can’t think of anything too different. Offensive driving. Offensive driving . . . man, that was . . . man, you’ve gotta unlearn everything, unlearn everything.

SHAVER: When she was on the back porch, did the operation change? Was there

somebody out there in the back yard keeping an eye on her?

GIBESON: The operation did not change at all. The nurse had her little panic button. The porch is within the perimeters that are secure, both visually and through alarm beams, and it didn't change at all. She would be out there and enjoy the sunshine and enjoy being out in the fresh air.

SHAVER: I don't know if we got it on tape, but come on in here to the dining room.

GIBESON: The dining room?

SHAVER: Yes. You talked to me . . . When I talked to you back in October, you said something about Mrs. Truman's last Thanksgiving meal.

GIBESON: Yes, her last Thanksgiving. Why, since I was the oldest rat in the barn, certainly not seniority-wise, but I got to sit right up there at the head table. See, this Thanksgiving was an impromptu affair. Her Upjohn nurses were so fond of this woman that they each decided what they would bring beforehand and then at the last minute, they notified us that any of you that's off duty, you're welcome to come over and have dinner with Mrs. T Thanksgiving evening. They'd have it in the evening. And the guys that was on duty, one could leave [and one could] stay at the command post, and he'd come over and have turkey with all the trimmings. It was a beautiful, *nice* Thanksgiving dinner, but, to me, it was a nice gesture. You see, these were employees, out of their own pocket and going to considerable work to assemble this, and it was a nice Thanksgiving dinner. My only regret is that my wife had a cold. And she was invited, but I said, "Jo, if you give that old lady a cold, it would forever be on your conscience that you might have

hastened her death.” Whatever, I didn’t have my wife, here but some of the other wives were here, and we just had a pleasant little Thanksgiving dinner. And Mrs. T was impressed. She even took a little bite of whipped cream off of the pumpkin pie and got a little dab of the pumpkin, too, and, in essence, said, “To hell with Dr. Graham.” [laughter] She didn’t say it, but you could read her mind.

DUNAR: She was sitting in a wheelchair over near the door? Is that right?

GIBESON: She sat right here in her wheelchair, right here in her wheelchair. South of . . . Right there in the place of honor. They didn’t [unintelligible] I was the oldest guy out here, next to her.

SHAVER: Did she spend a lot of time in the living room?

GIBESON: No.

SHAVER: Did she sit in the living room a lot?

GIBESON: No, not too much. She was, like I said, so desperately ill, that when she could, she sure did.

SHAVER: Did they have that sofa moved away from the window so she could see out?

GIBESON: Yes, she could move her wheelchair right over to the window. And although it gave us heart failure, why, she would indeed wave at the school children. She was particularly fond of the bus loads of school children coming to pay her a visit.

DUNAR: Were the school children, were they aware of it? Did they wave back to her?

GIBESON: Oh, yes, yes, yes. But there again, see, to those agents right there, this is a

cause for real concern. But all of this is just like it was. Even this . . . See, I told you about the eight-cylinder lock? Apparently it's been changed. We had them super-duper locks, I was here when they put them in.

SHAVER: I think they took them out when they left.

GIBESON: They've taken them out, see. This is typical keys, like is in the door.

SHAVER: Yes.

GIBESON: That old cast-iron sucker. But this has not changed at all.

DUNAR: Would you spend time, when you were over here, in the kitchen? Would you cook anything over here ever?

GIBESON: No, never.

DUNAR: No? Would you bring a sack lunch or anything over and eat right here?

GIBESON: No.

DUNAR: You always ate across the street?

GIBESON: I always ate across the street.

DUNAR: Did any of the agents eat over here? Or did they always eat over there?

GIBESON: No, always over across the street.

DUNAR: But the nurses would eat in here.

GIBESON: The nurses would eat in here. Mrs. T, if she was able, she would eat in the kitchen. See, she liked to get out on the back porch.

SHAVER: Did her chair just roll up to the table? Is that what . . . ?

GIBESON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DUNAR: But she was downstairs the whole time you were here?

GIBESON: Yes, right.

DUNAR: Well, Michael, do you have anything else?

SHAVER: That's about it.

DUNAR: Well, we certainly appreciate this.

GIBESON: It's been my pleasure. Well, I'll tell you, it's a sign of getting old, I suppose, when you start living in the past. But it was sure a pleasant couple of years of my past.

DUNAR: I'm sure it was.

GIBESON: I'm sure Bob Lockwood . . . See, he was probably around the longest, and he could probably tell you, you know . . . But there again, what will impress somebody and stick in your mind . . . You know, I'm inclined to forget sordid things and just tuck them in the back of my mind, and it takes something to dredge them up. The pleasant things, why, they just come out easy.

DUNAR: And everybody sees things differently, too.

GIBESON: Yes. Well, this just looks like home. It just looks like it should look.

DUNAR: Well, we sure appreciate you coming out. I hope it was as enjoyable for you as it was for us.

SHAVER: Tell you what. If you want to let's slip outside and walk around the yard and see if there's anything that might jiggle your memory or something you could tell us about out there.

[End #3586; Begin #3587]

SHAVER: . . . I've never figured out what the red one goes to.

GIBESON: I don't know what it is.

SHAVER: This is something I want to ask you. Do you remember this? [at the hat and coat rack in the central hall]

GIBESON: No.

SHAVER: Did anybody ever talk about this, remark about this, you know?

GIBESON: No, no. See, there's a telephone in here, isn't there?

SHAVER: Well, there was a telephone.

GIBESON: There used to be a telephone in here, yes.

SHAVER: And Margaret may have blocked off the . . .

GIBESON: Yes, see, they put one of them high-powered locks in here. You guys are changing them all.

SHAVER: The estate changed them and then we changed them, so they've been changed several times.

DUNAR: Nobody ever remarked about that hat and coat being there?

GIBESON: No. See, another thing that caused me concern was back in the basement of the place, the wiring was knobs and nails. [laughter] Yes.

DUNAR: Is that right?

GIBESON: Yes, you know, old, exposed wiring.

SHAVER: Well, that caused us concern, too. That was the first thing we fixed when we got here.

GIBESON: Yes. See, and this is the heat for the kitchen. That's just exactly what it was. [stepping out onto the back porch] See, the old lady, she's [unintelligible]. Is Mrs. Wallace still around?

SHAVER: Oh, yes. She turned ninety-five last month.

DUNAR: And still . . .

SHAVER: And still pretty sharp, yes. She's gone down a little bit, but she's still pretty sharp. Her nephew Bill [Carnes] comes and checks on her every once in a while.

GIBESON: They've refurbished the garage.

SHAVER: We just finished that last year. You were talking about the hand-hewn timbers. Most of them had rotted and it was just resting on the garage door.

DUNAR: Sure.

GIBESON: Yes, see, this has been redone. This is in good shape.

DUNAR: Would she ever come out here on this side of the porch or just on the back screened-in porch?

GIBESON: No, no, she'd stay in the screened-in part. She'd stay in the screened-in part.

[the remainder of this interview was conducted as part of a walking tour around the perimeter of the Truman property]

SHAVER: When the ambulance came, basically, as we understand it they would, for the most part, come back here and all the traffic would go up through this way.

GIBESON: Yes, yes. Yes, right, right. But, see, now, we had bugs in the fence. I don't think I'm divulging any national secrets.

SHAVER: Well, now we do . . .

GIBESON: And the Roto-Rooter man had to go down under there.

DUNAR: Yes.

SHAVER: We found a lot of the bugs.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: We found telephone wire all along the fence.

GIBESON: Yes, oh, yes. All over, all over.

DUNAR: Was the telephone wire on the fence, was that the wire that was sensitive if somebody touched it?

GIBESON: No, it was for the speakers and the microphone.

DUNAR: Oh, I see, right.

[Carriage House]

SHAVER: If you'll look over here where the camera box is, you'll notice there's [unintelligible] there.

GIBESON: Oh, over there, yes.

DUNAR: That's right, yes.

GIBESON: It's got yellow jackets in it. [laughter]

SHAVER: [unintelligible].

GIBESON: Well, see, some of the old . . . Now, see, that was a camera box. This was an infrared light up here.

DUNAR: On top of the carriage house here?

GIBESON: See, it looked dark to the naked eye. But that's what this is here.

SHAVER: I didn't know that.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: And there's one of your speakers right there above the garage window.

GIBESON: Yes. Yes, see, people would come back down here and you could tell them . . . [alarm begins to ring] Uh-oh, we . . .

SHAVER: No, you didn't do anything.

GIBESON: Well, see, this is, of course, well-treated and so on, but it's pretty much like it was. But that's a camera box.

DUNAR: Yes.

[walking west into the alley]

GIBESON: And that one sat up on the corner of the church building up there. I don't know whether it's still infested with nurses or not. [the house across the alley] [laughter]

SHAVER: No, they finally sold it, didn't they?

GIBESON: Oh, did they?

SHAVER: Yes, some other folks own it now. A nice, nice young family.

GIBESON: But, see, now this gate was never used.

SHAVER: There wasn't a gate back here for this back fence, was there? Was there ever a gate in the driveway back here?

GIBESON: No.

DUNAR: It was always open?

SHAVER: It was always open just like that?

GIBESON: It was open just like that, but it was secured by Opti-Guard.

DUNAR: The secure area was along the fence line then, right?

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: Well, there was an inside perimeter. I know what he's talking about, with one of them tied . . .

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: It was right in the front post.

SHAVER: There was a reflector that was taped to the . . . tied to the flagpole.

DUNAR: Oh, okay.

GIBESON: Yes, there was one on the flagpole, and I don't know where the one was that was there, but inside. But, see, you could maintain visual contact and . . .

SHAVER: There were contacts inside all the doors, too, from what I . . .

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

GIBESON: Yes, you opened the doors and they had these little magnetic things like the burglar alarms. But right up on the corner of this building, [Center Stake Building] I helped take that equipment down.

SHAVER: Yes, you can still see the electric box and a . . .

[walking north on Delaware Street]

GIBESON: But see . . .

DUNAR: Oh, yes.

GIBESON: See, that camera was moveable. You could move it. You know, like a . . . You could listen in on the conversation at this box here.

[at the front gate]

DUNAR: The box that's hanging on the gate, is that the one that . . .

GIBESON: Yes. And, see, the command post across the street, it looked like a porcupine with all them antennas on it.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: See, there was a box there and the squirrels would sit on top of it and crack nuts and things. [chuckling] And you could just thump the microphone and

they'd jump right straight up. [laughter]

SHAVER: There's a doorbell switch here. Did that ring across the way?

GIBESON: Yes, yes.

SHAVER: Kids are always fascinated with that.

GIBESON: Well, and then the [unintelligible]. But, see, you can still see the tape from where the Opti-Guards were. As a matter of fact, there was two of them on there. But a stiff wind would vibrate it and occasionally trip it.

DUNAR: On the flagpole, you say?

GIBESON: Yes. [unintelligible].

SHAVER: You fellows put the flags up every day, I imagine, and took them down.

GIBESON: Would you believe, now, here I was bragging about the high caliber of Secret Service men. Some of them would bitch about running the flag up and down. [chuckling] And I'd tell them, "God damn, it pays just as much." And I was glad to do it. Now, we didn't have a formal ceremony, but . . . oh, and occasionally they'd forget it. But no, I was glad to run it up and down.

[walking east on Truman Road]

GIBESON: Yes. This yellow house down here with the green roof, there's a bunch of [brush apes] here, but . . . The wife would for hours crank on their snowmobile trying to get it started. But, see, we had binoculars up there that you could look at licenses or something if you wanted to.

SHAVER: See, we still have a little wiring left here. A cable to open the fence.

GIBESON: Oh, yes.

SHAVER: And one of the wires to the speakers. Somebody walked off with the speaker, but . . .

GIBESON: Is that right?

SHAVER: There's still a few of them nailed around.

DUNAR: Are any of the speakers still hooked up?

SHAVER: Yes, well, they're not hooked up but they're still in place.

DUNAR: Yes, yes. [at the Truman Road gate]

GIBESON: You can use this back gate but it had a key. We had to open it with a key.

DUNAR: Would the employees all park in the back? The people that worked here, did everybody park in the back here?

GIBESON: Yes, the nurses parked back here. And, well, between you and I, I parked my own car back here. And in the summertime when I'd have to be over here, why, instead of sitting inside where it was hot, I'd come out here and polish my car and do things like that. [laughter]

DUNAR: Did any of the agents that were stationed here, that were part of the regular Secret Service, look at this as sort of being sent to Siberia because it was so far?

GIBESON: No, no. Quite frequently they'd be bored, see.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: These are young, virile, up-and-at-'em guys.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And like I say, the ones that was advancing their education liked to get this assignment.

DUNAR: Take classes.

GIBESON: So that you had time, you could write a thesis, you could study just uninterrupted.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: It was just quiet and peaceful and there's nothing doing. See, if you get over here in the study, why . . . and somebody knew that's what you was doing, we'd never bother them over here.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: You know, the guy over there, he's the one that answers the phone.

DUNAR: Right.

GIBESON: And he's the one that would have to be alert. And this guy, he'd sit over here and do nothing, just, you know, he could study. Now, Lockwood could tell you probably how many agents finished their careers and advanced their degrees and so on.

DUNAR: Would they take courses down at UMKC [University of Missouri, Kansas City] or . . . ?

GIBESON: Well, I don't know where they'd take them, but, you know, they'd use it for their studies.

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

GIBESON: And personally, I'd just read for amusement.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: Generally, there was all kinds of periodicals and stuff available that come to Mrs. Truman. I'm sure they gave them for free, but she got, oh, The New

Yorker, all kinds of magazines. And then old Val would leave them in there and you could read magazines, you could read books or whatever you wanted.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: See, that's a pleasant way to . . . and whatever you earn an hour.

DUNAR: Sure, sure.

SHAVER: Since I don't have my key, we'll have to slip around through Mrs. [May] Wallace's gate. [at 605 W. Truman Road]

DUNAR: Okay.

GIBESON: Yes. Does the Park Department, do you all have somebody here around the clock?

SHAVER: No, we did for a while but now we've got a real good security system.

DUNAR: The study that was so cold in the winter, was that real hot in the summer, too?

GIBESON: Hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

DUNAR: So that's the gate Mrs. Wallace would come through then?

SHAVER: I guess she'd come through there.

DUNAR: Did she? Yes. Well, she could just come from the back, too.

SHAVER: She comes out her back door quite often.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: Did you ever have very many dealings with her?

GIBESON: No. No, we just knew that she was there and that she was secure. The only problem we had was with her driving. [laughter] The doors were a little too

narrow. And they always kept Truman's car in the other bay. [looking at the carriage house]

DUNAR: It was reversed?

SHAVER: Oh, so you say he kept his car in the other one, right? [the west side]

GIBESON: Huh?

SHAVER: You say his car was always in this other one?

GIBESON: Yes, in this one.

DUNAR: In this over here?

SHAVER: And she kept hers where this one is now? [the east side]

GIBESON: Yes, yes.

SHAVER: Oh, boy, you're going to upset things here all over. [laughter]

GIBESON: Oh, no.

SHAVER: We were always kidding about her parking in this bay, [the west] because at the back of this bay was an old stove.

GIBESON: Yes?

SHAVER: And you can see where the stove door had been banged in by somebody's bumper. And we always were blaming her for the . . . blaming that for her.

SHAVER: But it may have been Harry's car that was banging the stove. So you're saying . . .

GIBESON: Well, now, Harry was not the world's best driver.

SHAVER: I've heard that, yes.

GIBESON: He was just terrible. God damn! Let's see, I was just a regular policeman and one of them dipsticks wrote Harry Truman, the former President of the

United States, a ticket. I don't care what he did . . .

SHAVER: I think, I think the guy got goaded into it. He started writing it and then he figured out who the dude was. Mr. Truman said, "Finish the job up."
[laughter]

GIBESON: But, see, I'm sure that the boss never ever paid it. My goodness. [laughter]
Well, see, I mean, we extend diplomatic immunity to all kinds of meatheads from all over the world. [laughter] The least we can do is look after our own former presidents.

SHAVER: So you say the car was in the other stall in the garage?

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: Our maintenance man will be real happy about that. He just built himself a shop in that one. [the west bay] [laughter]

DUNAR: Oh, that's right.

GIBESON: Well, now, I may be all wet, but I [parked Mrs. Truman] in the other side.

SHAVER: Well, it's worth thinking about. You remember how messed up all these sidewalks were back here. They were all overgrown.

GIBESON: Yes, yes. Yes, I'm glad you got them fixed up. But, see, the wiring and the plumbing in this place and all of the duct work for the gas furnace, it disturbed us, quite frankly.

SHAVER: Oh, we've cleaned it up. Let's go look at the basement anyway. [stepping in basement]

GIBESON: Okay.

SHAVER: You won't recognize it much.

GIBESON: No, because it was in pretty bad shape down here. And we were the only guys, I think, that ever come down here. Oh, you've got a little office down here.

SHAVER: Yes, we've got to call someplace home.

GIBESON: Yes. Well, see, there's a bathroom around the corner here.

SHAVER: Yes.

GIBESON: And that was the "colored" bath.

SHAVER: Yes, the hired help still uses it. It's the only one we can use.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: Here's some pictures of the basement. [HABS photos - 1983]

GIBESON: Yes. Well, see, that's where the old ironing board and stuff . . . it was down here.

SHAVER: And you're talking about the wiring looking so bad.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: And the wine cellar over there.

GIBESON: Yes, yes, see the old dusty bottles. [laughter]

DUNAR: That's how you remember it, huh?

GIBESON: Yes. Yes, it's just like old home. But it wasn't built for guys our size.

DUNAR: Watch your step there.

GIBESON: Well, you know . . . See, now, I have a God-given knack for fixing things. And I never will forget one day her bed broke down on Sunday. And they called all over town, and I wound up fixing her bed. Yes, it was . . .

DUNAR: Was that the hospital the bed or the other one?

GIBESON: It was the hospital bed. It got down or something jumped out of it and it was [unintelligible]. I got a two-by-four and got a hold of a hacksaw and cut it, and some alignment pliers and wired her bed up in shape until we could get some help.

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

GIBESON: I wonder what [unintelligible]?

SHAVER: This thing, it's not worth recording, but this thing right here is what's known as a Stair trac. Folks who want to tour the home that are in wheelchairs . . .

GIBESON: Oh, I see.

SHAVER: And what we do is we back their chair up against this thing and then clamp them in.

GIBESON: Clamp . . . in, yes, sure.

SHAVER: And tilt them back and then turn the motor up, and it will just crawl up the steps like a train.

GIBESON: Fantastic. Wow.

SHAVER: So even mobility people . . .

GIBESON: This is a new furnace, isn't it?

SHAVER: Yes, we took the old one out.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: You probably remember the old one.

GIBESON: Oh, yes.

SHAVER: It would wake you up every once in a while.

GIBESON: Yes.

SHAVER: And we cleaned all the . . .

GIBESON: See, here's the hired helps' washroom.

SHAVER: We cleaned all the stuff out of there. That was a mess.

GIBESON: See, you can see vestiges of the old wiring.

SHAVER: Yes.

GIBESON: See, and the switches was . . . [chuckling]

SHAVER: Well, there's one right here still.

GIBESON: Yes, yes. But I was wondering . . . Now, see, they just wantonly cut through beams and stuff to put in duct work.

DUNAR: Yes.

[conversation interrupted by telephone ringing]

GIBESON: Yes, well, see, they've got you some facilities. You can make some coffee down here or whatever. But, you know, I could have went directly to the National Park Service or gone to, oh, U. S. Marshals, but I can't hear good enough. And like I told you . . . See, Mr. Simmon didn't fill . . . ask me if I wanted to stay. He wanted me to relocate in Washington. [Upstairs in the kitchen] Now, see, this is not changed. This is the way it was, tacks and all.

DUNAR: The floor with the tacks.

GIBESON: Yes. But I just couldn't do it. [in the dining room] Look at this. Well, that's the same. That old silver had to be polished. Somebody had to polish it. Now, tell me, do the stairs still squeak? I won't go upstairs and violate anything. [in the central hall]

SHAVER: They still creak. They still creak quite a bit.

GIBESON: Them was the squeakiest son of a guns. See, there's no bathroom here.

DUNAR: Yes.

GIBESON: And when you had to use the washroom, you'd have to go upstairs and use the bathroom upstairs.

SHAVER: Oh, so you folks went upstairs to use it?

GIBESON: Yes, yes. And that's why I'm so familiar with the old green bathroom upstairs. You could tell it was an add-on because, see they had to have false work to raise it up for the pipes to go underneath, the plumbing and stuff. That's the bathroom we used upstairs, but you'd wake the dead going up them damn stairs. [laughter]

SHAVER: Well, Mrs. [May] Wallace, she was here with Clifton and Mrs. Daniel one time. She just sat there in a chair and they started going up the steps. She said, "That step is going to creak." And lo and behold, old Cliff hit the step and it creaked. [laughter] And she just sat there like nothing else. "Well, I'll listen for it and it creaked."

GIBESON: Yes, sure. They were the creakiest old stairs. See, you forget little things like that.

DUNAR: Yes, yes.

SHAVER: Well, they're still creaky, and the ones up to the attic are even creakier.

GIBESON: Well, I've taken too much of your time. I appreciate . . .

DUNAR: Well, we sure appreciate this.

SHAVER: Well, if you want, before you leave, we'll take a picture of you.

END OF INTERVIEW