

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

PATRICIA K. DORSEY

AUGUST 20 & 21, 1990

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY #1990-3

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HARRY S TRUMAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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ABSTRACT

Patricia Kerr Dorsey, an employee of the Truman Library since 1969, helped perform the initial inventory of the Truman home, beginning in 1981 prior to Bess W. Truman's death. Dorsey relates extensive information about the condition of the house and the artifacts within at the time of the home's transfer to the park service. Due to the frequency of her work in the home, she was able to follow closely the last year of Mrs. Truman's life. As a result, Dorsey is able to name those persons who maintained regular contact with the elderly former first lady.

Persons mentioned: Harry S Truman, Bess W. Truman, Margaret Truman Daniel, Milton Perry, Sonny Directo, Rose Conway, Mary Jo Colley, Cecil Shrepford, Elizabeth Safly, Diane Seerfaus, Valeria LaMere, Edward Hobby, Doris Miller, May Wallace, Ardis Haukenberry, Polly Compton, Wallace H. Graham, J. Edgar Hoover, Benedict K. Zobrist, Curtis, Nancy Reagan, Rosalyn Carter, Betty Ford, Harry Clark, Thomas P. Richter, David McCullough, Robert E. Lockwood, Winston Churchill, Tom Posey, Georgia Neese Clark Gray, Andrew Gray, Thomas Hart Benton, John W. Snyder, Harry Lembcke, Henry Talge, Lyndon B. Johnson, E. Clifton Daniel, and Madge Gates Wallace.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH
PAT KERR DORSEY**

HSTR INTERVIEW #1990-3

JIM WILLIAMS: This interview is with Pat Dorsey of the Truman Library. We're in the museum collection room, I guess it's called, at the Truman Library. It's August 20, 1990. We hope the interview will continue tomorrow at the Truman home.

First of all, your name has changed recently. Is that right?

PAT K. DORSEY: Three years ago.

WILLIAMS: Three years ago.

DORSEY: Yeah, that's recently.

WILLIAMS: But since you were working in the Truman home it's changed?

DORSEY: Yeah, it was Pat Kerr then.

WILLIAMS: Do you live in Independence, first of all?

DORSEY: Yeah, I do.

WILLIAMS: How long have you lived in Independence?

DORSEY: Since I started working here in '69.

WILLIAMS: Where are you currently employed?

DORSEY: The Truman Library.

WILLIAMS: In what position?

DORSEY: Museum specialist.

WILLIAMS: And how long have you worked at the Truman Library?

DORSEY: Twenty-one years.

WILLIAMS: Have you always been a museum specialist?

DORSEY: I was an education specialist for a while, and then when I was . . . before that when I was first hired, I was an exhibit specialist. All of it blends together.

WILLIAMS: So the duties were fairly similar?

DORSEY: Except for when I'm at the sales desk, but that was in addition to the exhibit work.

WILLIAMS: So what does your job entail here?

DORSEY: Presently it's basically care of the items, research on the items, preservation of the items, and then preparation for display, basically, and then assisting with the exhibits.

WILLIAMS: How well did you know Harry S Truman?

DORSEY: I never met him.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever even see him?

DORSEY: I saw him a couple of times. Once he was in a car. Maybe twice he was in a car. And then there used to be a photographer on staff, and he was going to take me down to the house one time after Mr. Truman had quit coming up here, and he was going to take me in the house and introduce me to him, which was fine until we got to the back door and Mrs. Truman was there, and Cecil went up and asked them if I could come in the house and she said, "No." [chuckling] So I got to sit in the car while he went inside and took photographs. But that was as close as I ever got.

WILLIAMS: To meeting him.

DORSEY: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: Well, how did you work here all those years without meeting or even

seeing him?

DORSEY: He'd already gone down to the house by that point. He had quit coming up just before that time.

WILLIAMS: How well did you know Mrs. Truman?

DORSEY: I talked to her once on the phone.

WILLIAMS: What was that about?

DORSEY: She had sent Mrs. Daniel's wedding dress up, and she was calling about she had forgotten to send the petticoat to it or something like that, and she had called and said she would be sending it up or something. It was a very short phone call, but it kind of caught me by surprise. I picked up the phone, and she said, "This is Mrs. Truman." I was like, "Oh." [chuckling]

MICHAEL SHAVER: When she sent the wedding dress up, did she send it in a clothing bag?

DORSEY: Pink.

SHAVER: A pink clothing bag?

DORSEY: A pink quilted little clothing bag that you get at Ben Franklin. [chuckling] It was just amazing.

WILLIAMS: When was this?

DORSEY: Oh, that was probably about '71. Margaret had been home and said, "Gee, that ought to be up there on display." [chuckling] And so Mrs. Truman sent it up. It was evidently upstairs on the second or . . . you know, the second floor or the attic. She went out and got it and sent it up. I think she probably sent it up with Mike Westwood or something. Yeah, it was in a cheap, pink little garment bag.

WILLIAMS: Were you the only museum specialist or employee here at that time?

DORSEY: Milton Perry was the curator, and he hired me, and then there was . . . Milt Perry had a secretary, there was somebody at the sales desk, and then there was somebody part-time by the name of Sonny Directo and he was an exhibit specialist, but he only worked like one to two days a week. And then there was me, and that was it.

WILLIAMS: So there were others on the staff. You weren't down here by yourself?

DORSEY: Basically I was, because Mr. Perry lived upstairs in his office, and I basically had the collection, especially for the first couple of years.

WILLIAMS: Did the Trumans often send things over from the home to the library?

DORSEY: The way it worked then was Miss Conway was still officed here, and she'd go down to the house, as I understand it, and she'd take dictation and go over business with him, and then periodically she would call either Mr. Perry or myself and say, "I've got a load of stuff. Would you come get it?" So we'd go over there and pick it up and take it down to the collection.

WILLIAMS: So you were at the home several times?

DORSEY: No, Miss Conway was. It was housed here, so she would have the stuff in her office.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I see.

DORSEY: After she had talked to Mr. Truman to decide what he wanted to do with it.

WILLIAMS: Was there ever any time in your job as a museum specialist that you were called to go to the Truman home to pick anything up like that?

DORSEY: I don't believe so, not prior to when we started the inventory.

WILLIAMS: Besides the occasion when you spoke with Mrs. Truman, did you ever

formally meet her or see her?

DORSEY: No, I never had the opportunity.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever see her anyplace other than in the home?

DORSEY: No, I don't believe I did. Her picture was in the newspaper, but I don't believe I ever saw her.

WILLIAMS: Was she pleasant on the phone with you?

DORSEY: Yeah, she was very businesslike, but she was cordial, and she just wanted to make sure that we got all the wedding dress together. But I mean she wasn't stuffy or anything like that. I was kind of surprised.

WILLIAMS: As an Independence resident, at least for twenty-some years . . . ?

DORSEY: Mm-hmm, twenty-one.

WILLIAMS: When the Trumans were alive, was there anything special that you felt about the Truman home, living and working in the area?

DORSEY: You mean, outside of giving directions to everybody that stops at the museum? [chuckling] I always thought it was a nice house. I mean, it looked like something . . . It looked like something that ought to have a lot of memories to it. And then also Mr. Perry kept telling us that . . . for years he told us, "Well, we don't really know what's in the house," so it was a big mystery box. He kept saying, "It might be down at the house," or "It's probably down at the house." But it always was a tourist attraction. But seeing as we never got close to it, it was a little hard to really tell what was, you know . . .

WILLIAMS: So you were curious about what was inside?

DORSEY: You bet. [chuckling] I'm sure half the town was.

WILLIAMS: On these occasions when Miss Conway would bring things back from the home to the library for the museum, do you remember anything in particular, the types of things she would bring out?

DORSEY: Well, I think most of it was mail that had come in, so she had it . . . I believe all his mail was delivered here, and then she would go through it and probably take the smaller stuff or take the correspondence down to him and ask him if he wanted it, so I'm sure that about at least 50 percent of it never left the building. But it was usually handmade-type stuff that was sent to him, or sometimes it was nicer items, but it was usually stuff that . . . It was always current things that were being sent to him, so it wasn't anything from the administration or anything like that. That was usually handled differently if we got something in that area.

WILLIAMS: But Miss Conway was never bringing things out of the home that had been there for years and years?

DORSEY: No. No, not to my knowledge, no. She would usually staple the correspondence to the item, with red pen, circled, [chuckling] and it was obvious it was current mail, so no. And if we wanted something for exhibit purposes, it was approached in a different manner. So, if we thought there was something down at the house that might possibly be used in an exhibit, the director approached Miss Conway and it was done in a different manner. But that was rare.

WILLIAMS: But you were never sent down there to pick anything up?

DORSEY: No.

WILLIAMS: It was always done at a higher level?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. And as I say, Miss Conway would transfer the stuff over to us, and we had transfer sheets, but that was all current stuff.

WILLIAMS: After Mr. Truman died, was there still the same kind of contact with Mrs. Truman? Did you have any contact with her?

DORSEY: No, Miss Conway stayed on, and then when her health was bad Mary Jo took over, Mary Jo Colley—I'm not sure what her married name is now. But she took over where Miss Conway left off, so she handled Mrs. Truman's routine correspondence and would take care of anything that was sent to Mrs. Truman. And to some degree the same thing continued, you know: send it to the museum or send a thank-you note. Again, it was current items that were sent to her. It wasn't anything out of the house, that I remember.

WILLIAMS: So those types of handmade articles are in the collection now?

DORSEY: Yeah. They were transferred from Mrs. Truman or Mr. Truman and put in the collection directly when they were received.

WILLIAMS: Did Mrs. Truman ever box things up and send them over here, that you know of, while she was still active?

DORSEY: You mean out of the house?

WILLIAMS: Like sort of a housecleaning type thing: "I don't have room for this stuff. Send it to the museum."

DORSEY: Having seen the house, I find that hard to fathom. [chuckling] I don't remember anything that she sent up. And there are stories that she was asked for things by different museums in the area, and it was rare that she'd part with them. I know there's one story, and I've forgotten which museum

it actually was, that someone had asked for a suit of Mr. Truman's. And the answer came back: "He's not done wearing it yet." [chuckling] So I don't think she ever house-cleaned that she gave us much stuff. That wasn't her real area of interest.

WILLIAMS: When was the first time you were in the Truman home? You said way back you said you were on the grounds one time.

DORSEY: I was in the driveway, [chuckling] in a car, in about 1971, because Mr. Truman was still alive at that point.

WILLIAMS: And you didn't even get to the door.

DORSEY: I did not make it to the porch, no. [chuckling] No, I was told to wait in the car. And he went up and talked to Mrs. Truman, and she said, "No, she can stay in the car, but she cannot come in the house." So . . .

WILLIAMS: This was Cecil . . . ?

DORSEY: Shrepford, who was the staff photographer at that point. And I'm not sure that that wasn't their fiftieth wedding anniversary picture that was being taken, or it was some event. At that point, as I say, they would send a staff photographer down if somebody came out to give them something. They would send someone down from here and they'd go take his picture. Then the next time I was down at the house I got inside the house, and that was in '81 when we started the inventory.

WILLIAMS: What was the purpose of the inventory, as it was explained to you?

DORSEY: As it was explained to me, when Mrs. Daniel came out in May of '81 it was obvious that her mother's health was declining, and in order for her to stay home, stay in the house, she was going to need extensive medical attention

or medical care. And Mrs. Daniel was concerned that with a number of people in the house there was not any real record or any identification of the objects in the house. And she was concerned, with people traveling in and out, that things might be taken and nobody really even know what was missing. And it's my understanding that she asked the director that a couple of the staff members go down and start listing what was in the house so that we would have an idea of what was there.

WILLIAMS: Who was involved in the inventory besides yourself?

DORSEY: Initially Liz Safly and a young lady by the name of Diane Seerfaus and myself.

WILLIAMS: Why do you say *initially*? Did that change?

DORSEY: Because Diane left in the fall of '81. So there were actually three of us when we started, and we would alternate going down, and then at some point all three of us were down at the house, but Diane left.

WILLIAMS: When did you start the inventory?

DORSEY: I think we started it in either late May or June of '81, because Mrs. Truman was out of the house in the hospital at the time. Mrs. Daniel was quite clear to the point that she did not want her mother to know at that point that we were in the house. She thought it would be upsetting to her, so she thought it would be best if we started while her mother was in the hospital.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever consider it odd that you as government employees were providing this service for essentially private citizens? Did that ever cross your mind?

DORSEY: I think it probably did at the time, but not to any large extent. I mean, when

you're told, "This is what needs to be done, and this is what we want you to do," largely you don't question it. And it seemed like such a neat project anyway, it would have been a little foolhardy to say, "I have an ethical objection here." [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: But as far as you know, nobody really lost sleep over the fact that Truman Library employees were . . .

DORSEY: I don't believe so. And in a real sense, I think there probably was some understanding that at some point the material, some of it at least, would be coming up here. Because if Mrs. Daniel indeed did not know what was in the house, she surely didn't know what would belong here and what would belong rightfully in the house. And at that point, nobody really knew what the determination of the house would be. We didn't know that it wasn't coming to us. And if it was coming to us as the library, it would be a natural assumption that we would want to know what was in it. So, as I say, it might have posed some question but not a large question in my mind.

WILLIAMS: So it was done with thoughts of the future as well as the current safekeeping?

DORSEY: Well, yeah, definitely. The primary concern was the safety of the objects in the house. Whether they ultimately ended up being ours or whoever's, you know, a record of what was there needed to be done.

WILLIAMS: Do you know why you were chosen to be part of this team?

DORSEY: No, I assume it's because of my museum background, and I'm sure Liz was selected because she's a very good person and, like myself, willing to get dirty. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And curious.

DORSEY: And curious. [chuckling] Well, curious was in there. But she also has an extensive background of the family, and therefore she would be able to tell what was important and where the people fit in the picture and that type of thing.

WILLIAMS: Did Mrs. Truman ever find out that you were in the home doing this inventory?

DORSEY: I really don't know what her mental state was, but if she didn't pick it up somewhere along the line, I'd be real surprised. [chuckling] Because once or twice we came very close to running into her. And once or twice there was enough noise accidentally created that she had to have then thought something was going on. But there was no appearance that if she did know somebody was in the house that it disturbed her, so I don't think we upset her. And it's my understanding that no one actually came out and told her, because the nurses made an effort to help us out, that she wouldn't find out and she wouldn't be upset.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember specifically the times when you almost ran into her?

DORSEY: One day we were coming down the staircase, the main staircase, and we were working on the second floor and we thought Mrs. Truman was in the bedroom, so we were just going to come down the front and go through the dining room and go out. And we got to the landing, and here comes Mrs. Truman in the wheelchair. And the nurse saw us and she said, "Oh, let's go look at the piano. You haven't seen the piano in a long time," [chuckling] and wheeled her totally around and sent her in the direction of the piano,

which worked out swell. Another time she was on the back porch and the nurse didn't realize that we were taking some items and putting them in our cars, and she brought her out to the back porch while we were in this process, and we ducked. [chuckling] That happened a couple of times, I think. Then they would engage her in a conversation. They turned the wheelchair around, that's what they did, so she couldn't see us. [chuckling] So we were making a concerted effort that she not see us and she not be upset. I mean, it was very much the concern that we didn't want to upset her or bother her. I mean, I would think that anyone that had their mental faculties would be a little upset to find out that someone was running an inventory and parading through your house, that type of stuff, even in the best interest. We also were coming down the steps from the third floor to the second floor with a small trunk one time, and the handle on the trunk broke and made this large noise. [chuckling] At which time Liz and I started laughing, which didn't help either. [chuckling] So by the end of it, I think she . . . You know, if her hearing was any good at all, she probably heard us. But there was a question as to how much she was able to hear.

WILLIAMS: Did you generally try to be quiet when you were upstairs?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, we really made an effort. Like I say, we were concerned about her feelings as well, and we didn't want to upset her. And Margaret had made it quite clear that she didn't want her mother to know because she was afraid that it would hurt her feelings. And Mrs. Truman for years had been so conservative and so adamant about the museum conveying Mr. Truman's role as president, there was every reason to believe that she

would have been upset if she found out a couple of people were tromping through her house that she didn't know and it was being kept secret from her. So, yes, we were very concerned about her feelings.

WILLIAMS: What was the household staff when you began the inventory in June or so of 1981?

DORSEY: I think there was just Valeria . . . LaMarr? LaMere. Valeria was there. And then after Mrs. Truman came home . . . And, see, the lady that did the cooking, I don't believe . . . She was there for a while, but she wasn't there because Mrs. Truman wasn't in the house. And then after Mrs. Truman came home, then Vanetta, I believe . . . No, it couldn't have been Vanetta. The woman that was doing the cooking at that point came back, and then the nursing staff started arriving.

WILLIAMS: So the only permanent employee was Valeria, until the nurses came in?

DORSEY: Yeah, because the cook wasn't there, and the cook was only there part-time or part of the day anyway, but Valeria was kind of a fixture.

WILLIAMS: What did Valeria do?

DORSEY: It was my understanding her basic role was a companion-type, and she'd been with Mrs. Truman for a number of years by that point. She came right after Mr. Truman died, so she'd been there for a while, and she kind of looked after her more or less, like a nurse's aide type of situation.

WILLIAMS: She wasn't a nurse? She was there more for—

DORSEY: No, she was really . . . Well, there wasn't any real need for a nurse by that point, until she fell and broke her hip. She took care of the mail, I think, and just ordinary daily things. And she made a point that her biggest job

was just to keep Mrs. Truman company and take care of her physical needs, such as they were.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever meet Reverend Hobby?

DORSEY: Yeah, he's a neat man.

WILLIAMS: Was he around much?

DORSEY: He was around in that he polished the silver with that wonderful pink polish, and he did the yard work and some of the . . . Evidently, earlier on he had had more extensive duties, but there wasn't that much going on at the house after Mr. Truman died that he did that much. I think he was there like maybe a couple of days a week. I'd forgotten about him, but yeah, he was around.

WILLIAMS: He was inside and outside of the house?

DORSEY: He was inside and out, basically out in the summer, but yeah, he was inside also because he'd do the vacuuming and that kind of stuff.

WILLIAMS: Did he ever come up and visit with you?

DORSEY: He'd stop and talk to us every now and again. They were all very cordial to us. And he'd talk about how things used to be, and he'd have different little stories and that kind of thing.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember any of those stories of how things used to be?

DORSEY: Well, he used to talk about . . . All that really comes to mind right now is how he talked about how Mrs. Truman really wasn't willing to part with anything. [chuckling] He was talking one day when—

WILLIAMS: That was obvious, right?

DORSEY: Yeah. [chuckling] And we all swear to that now. But he was talking one

day about she had bought a new stove or a new refrigerator or some new appliance, and she told him to move it to the garage. And he asked her if he could have it, and I don't think the thing even worked, and she told him no. [chuckling] I guess she thought she might need it again at some point. But he was always very proud of his work, and he was always very meticulous to make sure he did exactly what she wanted. And he used to talk about how she wanted it. He used to know exactly how she wanted it done, because at one point evidently she spent quite a bit of time telling him, "Now this is the way I want it done," and he was always very thorough in what he did. And he always made a point of he enjoyed working there, even as he was getting older and he wasn't able to do as much. Then his duties weren't as extensive as they were initially, evidently, but he still hung on and enjoyed it, and enjoyed her. I think at that point he was even still talking to her. She was able to converse a little at that point, so . . .

WILLIAMS: Did you say Valeria was friendly to you?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, she was very friendly. I don't think at any point she was unfriendly. As a matter of fact, she was real helpful. All the staff was concerned and very cooperative with us, and concerned that Mrs. Truman not be upset. You know, they didn't want her to get her blood pressure up or even to hurt her feelings—that was very high on our list—so they all made an effort to work with us. And they saw the validity of what we were doing also, so it was . . . There was somebody else in this. Oh, it's gone now. Oh, the beautician lady would come in.

WILLIAMS: Doris?

DORSEY: Doris. What's her last name?

WILLIAMS: Miller?

DORSEY: May, Miller, or something. She would come in and do Mrs. Truman's hair in the kitchen, but she only came in once every two weeks or something like that and give her—

WILLIAMS: Just like a shampoo and set?

DORSEY: Occasionally we did permanents, and this *wonderful* aroma went through the whole house. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: So she was still getting permanents?

DORSEY: She was still getting permanents, yes. Yeah, and she'd bring this hair dryer thing, as I remember, and poor Mrs. Truman would sit underneath this and bake her hair. But she was the other person that just came occasionally, but she'd been doing Mrs. Truman's hair for years. Mrs. Truman was real friendly with her, too.

WILLIAMS: How much do you think Mrs. Truman realized what was going on? Did you ever get any impression?

DORSEY: I never got any impression that she realized we were there. I remember she did not seem upset at any point, nor did she acknowledge any noise that she heard. I don't think her hearing must have been very good, because if she had heard something I think it would have been obvious that she was upset or she would have been at least looking around. For example, when we came down the stairs, it's real hard to sneak down those stairs, and when they turned her in the wheelchair, she didn't notice it at all or she didn't look around, so I doubt that she heard it.

WILLIAMS: Did the nurses ever let you know how competent Mrs. Truman was? Did she seem to understand what they were—

DORSEY: Oh, they'd make a comment about how she was doing or something like that. To be totally honest, I think they felt sorry for her more than anything else. I mean, it was sad to see her age, I guess is what I'm really saying, especially in the later years when they started grinding up the food to give to her. That was really pathetic. There was one nurse that had a standing joke about "We're having green goo and brown goo and . . ." [chuckling] You know, when they put the pancakes with the butter and the syrup, and Valeria was very meticulous about making sure everything tasted right, so we had the pancakes that we cooked in the skillet, and then we put butter on them, and then we put the syrup on them, and then we put them all in the blender, and we swished them all around.

WILLIAMS: So she could be fed?

DORSEY: So she could be fed.

WILLIAMS: Through the . . . ?

DORSEY: They fed her. They didn't have a—

WILLIAMS: Through the mouth still? They didn't have a . . .

DORSEY: Yeah. They didn't have the tube in her. I don't know that they ever really . . . I don't think they ever went to a tube.

But you were talking about whether she was aware of things. There was also one time when they brought . . . There was something wrong with the hospital bed, and they brought in all these people to fix this hospital bed, and this poor woman was laying there in the bed while they

were adjusting it. It was appalling to us. And there were at least two people from this bed company that were adjusting it and trying to fix it and make it work, and then there's Valeria and then there's the nurse, so we've got four people in that bedroom in the front on the first floor, with Mrs. Truman in the bed. And, you know, if she had been aware or she had been sensitive to it, she didn't . . . She may have been aware of it, but she did not convey that she was unhappy or disturbed or anything; whereas I'm sure three years prior to that she would have let quite a few people know that she had been unhappy about her privacy being invaded, which it was.

WILLIAMS: It sounds like you were around enough, around the nurses when they were preparing food, that you could witness some of the things going on.

DORSEY: Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: You got a feeling for how she was doing.

DORSEY: Yeah, you could really see. You know, even if when she didn't know we were in the house, you could see how she was doing. And the nurses when they'd take a break, or Valeria would sit with her for a while, they'd come up and talk about how she was doing. It was all a very open situation.

WILLIAMS: Was she like everyone else about that age, she had good days and bad days? Did they say things like that?

DORSEY: Yeah, like everybody's grandmother—I mean, really. She was a nice, sweet little lady, and she didn't seem to impose on anybody, and she did have days when she looked a little bit more perk and she was a little bit more with the program, and then she had days when, you know, she wasn't quite as well.

[End #4117; Begin #4118]

DORSEY: . . . you guys were in the house it was better.

WILLIAMS: Well, how often did you go to the Truman home during the inventory?

DORSEY: It seems like it was like two or three days a week, basically, and there were some breaks in it, but not for any long period of time, and the breaks were usually because the work up here was . . . we needed to catch up up here, but it was usually about two to three days a week.

WILLIAMS: And you would work in pairs?

DORSEY: Yeah, we never went alone. Always went in pairs.

WILLIAMS: When you were at the home, did you work together or did you work separately?

DORSEY: Both. If we worked separately, or when we worked separately, it was usually one was at one end of the room and one was at the other and you'd work towards the middle where you met. Or like when we were working in the storeroom, because of the large number of items involved, [chuckling] it required two people to actually physically get through the stuff—you know, one would make a list and the other one would move boxes and that kind of stuff. So we worked in pairs as well as individually.

WILLIAMS: So did you ever . . . one person dictate to another who was writing or anything like that?

DORSEY: We did that initially on the first floor. We did that a lot, and it went fairly quickly that way, but we were really concerned that we get as much done before Mrs. Truman got home from the hospital. And we listed everything. I don't know if you've seen the initial inventories where we list dead plants

and . . . [chuckling] I mean, the point was we were trying to make it as complete a physical description of what was in the house as possible.

WILLIAMS: Were there any restrictions about where you should or should not look or go, or did you—

DORSEY: Initially Mrs. Daniel said she didn't wanted us looking in drawers or closets. Initially that's what she said.

WILLIAMS: And that changed along the way?

DORSEY: That changed when she got a little bit more comfortable with the project, or she began to see that it really . . . it was working out very well, and then it was at her direction, you know. Because it's my interpretation that we were finding more in the house than she thought was there, so she said, "Well, go right ahead and check into the rest of it as long as you're this far along."

SHAVER: Did you have to go back and backtrack?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, we went and backtracked. Part of it was because we didn't get finished with the first floor, as I remember it, by the time she got home. So when she went back to the hospital or when she was in another part of the house, we'd go downstairs and finish the first floor. Or the other reason was because of the heat. If you were working in the storeroom, you could only stay in there for so long and then you had to go, you know, someplace where there was at least a window that you could open. Because as I remember, the windows in the storeroom didn't open, or there was so much stuff in front of them we couldn't get to them, which is entirely possible. Yeah, but we did go back and backtrack. And the other place we backtracked was the attic. We started in parts of the attic, and then it got

miserable up there. Even with the attic fan or whatever that big monster is going, it was really warm, so . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, how did you get to the home each day?

DORSEY: We drove our cars.

WILLIAMS: Both?

DORSEY: Well, if we knew we were going to bring items back, we usually took two cars. And we were told to take our cars because they didn't really want the neighbors knowing that the federal government was down there. It took the neighbors absolutely nothing flat to figure this out [chuckling] with the same two cars being down there three days a week, but that was the reason.

WILLIAMS: Where did you park?

DORSEY: In the driveway.

WILLIAMS: Was there ever any problem with that?

DORSEY: No, the only problem that I was aware of was that we called ahead and told the Secret Service we were coming down, and they didn't give us any trouble. Occasionally we had to like move a car because Mrs. Wallace wanted out of the garage. [chuckling] And Liz probably told you one day Mrs. Wallace wanted to get out of the garage, and she couldn't back this car out. And she finally got it out and turned it totally at a 180-degree angle so it was sitting in the grass in the yard, [chuckling] at a 90-degree angle to the driveway, and she couldn't go any further with it. So she finally came in the house, and she knew we were in the house, of course, because our cars were there, and she asked Liz to drive her car so she could get it out of the driveway and turned around so she could drive it out. [chuckling] But the

Secret Service was fine. They didn't mind us being down there.

WILLIAMS: Was there any process you had to go through each time that they'd check at all?

DORSEY: I don't think so. At that point, Mrs. Truman wasn't going out. I don't remember that she ever left the house to go out to like lunch or anything like that. And they'd come over. Maybe one of them would come over to say hi to her or something like that, but it was nothing extensive. Dr. Zobrist had already told the Secret Service what we were doing and why, and Mrs. Daniel had given her approval and all that, so . . .

SHAVER: Cars in the driveway? Did the nurses park in the driveway?

DORSEY: Sure.

SHAVER: So that was yours, the nurses, and then Mrs. Wallace's car, the Truman car, and—

DORSEY: And the Truman car, yeah.

SHAVER: Did the Secret Service agents keep a car back there at all?

DORSEY: No, not to my knowledge.

WILLIAMS: So there could have been four or five cars out there at one time, with the two in the garage?

DORSEY: Yeah. I don't remember now if Valeria drove or not, which would have been an additional car.

SHAVER: I got the impression that the nurses did park out back.

DORSEY: Yeah, they did.

SHAVER: It just seems like it would be awful snug with all those cars.

DORSEY: Yeah, there were a number of cars there at given points.

WILLIAMS: Did anyone ever use the Truman Road gate into the driveway?

DORSEY: Once or twice we did, and we had to call like the Secret Service to come unlock it or something because we had gotten boxed in and couldn't get out. [chuckling] So we came out the Truman Road drive. But that didn't happen that often. That was like maybe two or three times that that ever happened. And I think the one time I specifically remember is that there was some kind of service truck there doing something, and there was no way around it, so we went out the Truman Road.

WILLIAMS: What was your overall impression of the Secret Service security measures or attitude about security at the home?

DORSEY: They were very concerned about Mrs. Truman's safety, and secondarily about the safety of the house. Granted it was not the most exciting detail, and they'll be the first to tell you that, but most of them had a real grandmother-type feeling about her, that they wanted to make sure she was okay and that she was well taken care of.

WILLIAMS: When you were inside doing the inventory, did you see them, the agents, very much?

DORSEY: I don't think we saw them. I mean, we saw them rarely, but not to any extent that I remember.

WILLIAMS: Did they have any regular walk through the house or were they upstairs or checking on things?

DORSEY: No, they were not upstairs. No, I don't remember them ever being on the second floor or the attic. I think they probably came through maybe, you know, every now and again, but I don't remember a regular schedule of

them.

SHAVER: Did the fire alarm ever trip while you were upstairs or in the house?

DORSEY: What fire alarm? [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: The smoke detectors? Those little round things on the ceiling?

SHAVER: We got the impression that the fire detectors tripped quite a bit.

DORSEY: Oh, really? I don't remember that. No, I don't remember that.

WILLIAMS: Never when you were there? You didn't stir up enough dust?

DORSEY: Not that I remember. Well, it would have been hard not to. [chuckling]
And when we'd come back, we were so filthy the staff wouldn't come in five feet of us, and they would go, "Oh, they're back!" [laughter] It was bad. Liz and I both had clothes that we had to throw away they were so dirty. [chuckling] Old dirt's hard to get rid of.

WILLIAMS: Did Mrs. Wallace or Mrs. Haukenberry know that you were doing this inventory?

DORSEY: I'm sure they both did. I'm sure they both did. As I say, Mrs. Wallace came over one day and asked us to move her car because she couldn't drive it, so I know she . . . And she was real friendly. She would speak. And I don't remember running . . . Now Mrs. Haukenberry, I think I ran into her like at Mary Paxton Study Club or something. She was up here and she just mentioned it, and she said something about she was glad we were doing it—you know, something along those lines. But she didn't come over to the house as much as Aunt May did.

WILLIAMS: Do you think they just figured it out, or were they notified? Do you know?

DORSEY: I think Mrs. Wallace was notified because we were in her driveway. Mrs.

Haukenberry probably was as well, but it was probably a secondary thing if she was notified.

WILLIAMS: Did they come over and visit Mrs. Truman at all, that you know of?

DORSEY: Mrs. Wallace did every now and again. I don't remember that Mrs. Haukenberry did. Now, she may very well have called her, you know, and both of them, I'm sure, called and asked the nurses how she was doing, because there were a number of people that called and just said, "How's she doing today?" or "Is there anything I can do?" or something like that. But Mrs. Haukenberry, not to my knowledge, came over to see her.

SHAVER: Do you recall any other regular visitors, like the minister or Mr. Compton or anybody else?

DORSEY: Mr. Compton would send stuff, or he'd come to the back door to bring her something, and I think he might have come in once to give her something. The minister I don't believe I ever saw. He might have been there once, but I don't think much beyond that. If he was, we got sent upstairs, so we didn't see him anyway.

SHAVER: So she might get like one or two visitors a week?

DORSEY: Yeah, I would think that would probably be the extent of it, because Valeria and everyone seemed to be very protective of her. Her physical appearance had changed quite a bit, and I don't know that they wanted it widely known what her mental state, whatever that was, discussed at that point, so they were extremely protective of her.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever see Dr. Graham there?

DORSEY: No. No, I don't think I ever . . .

WILLIAMS: Or any other medical people?

DORSEY: One day the nurse . . . I think this is right. One day the nurse couldn't get a blood pressure on her, or it was something like 60/30 or 30/60 or something, and they called the emergency, the 911 folks, and I think they came. There was some disruption, and then it was decided that she really was okay, that the nurse just hadn't read it right or couldn't hear it or something. But I don't think there were, outside of the people fixing the hospital bed, I don't think there were ever any medical people that I remember.

WILLIAMS: Did you get to know any of the nurses, other than just hello?

DORSEY: Yeah, some of them would come sit and talk. There was one of them whose name I don't remember at this point that was just real talkative and real friendly. They were all part of a service that was provided, so there were a number of them that came on a regular basis, but they were all subject to call, so . . .

WILLIAMS: Do you remember any of their names?

DORSEY: Not right off the top of my head. Liz would probably do better at that. One of them went to V.A. to work at the hospital there. She had two kids and was divorced and lived out in Grandview, but no, I don't remember her name. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Which door did you use to go in and out of the home?

DORSEY: We used the kitchen door almost exclusively. I remember one or two situations where Mrs. Truman was in the back . . . early on when Mrs. Truman was in the back of the house, and we walked out the front door so

we wouldn't . . . And we were parked on the street at that point so it made sense. But we used the kitchen door almost exclusively.

SHAVER: Did you ever use the back stairway?

DORSEY: All the time, yeah.

SHAVER: Could you get up and down? Could you negotiate the back stairway up to the second floor?

DORSEY: It was a little tricky, but yeah, [chuckling] you could find a path through it. Especially if she was in the front of the house, we'd go up the back stairs. So, if we were working on the second floor or the attic, we'd go up the back stairs.

SHAVER: Did you get the impression that Reverend Hobby had kind of converted that stairway to like a cleaning closet of sorts?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. There were dust mops and god knows what. I mean, flower pots. There were flower pots, and there was some booze, some liquor. Yeah. [chuckling] As a matter of fact, that was kind of a standing joke because we used to watch . . . Somebody evidently was . . . or it was evaporating very quickly. [laughter] We'd come back and, "Oh, yes, that's gone down another half-inch there." But yeah, there was a regular path to go to the second floor up the back stairway because there was junk everywhere, stuff everywhere.

WILLIAMS: What was the most commonly used door of the house?

DORSEY: For everybody?

WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm.

DORSEY: All the nurses came through the back, through the kitchen.

WILLIAMS: The side kitchen door, not the one going out toward the porch?

DORSEY: No, the side door. Yeah, I think almost everybody did because I don't remember anybody . . . Nobody comes to mind right off the top of my head that came through the front door, nobody that worked there.

WILLIAMS: Did they ever take Mrs. Truman out to any of the other porches besides the screened-in porch, that you know of?

DORSEY: Not to my knowledge. Valeria might have taken her out to the side porch once early on, but it was my understanding she liked the back porch better, and she really like the privacy of it where people couldn't see in, so she was more comfortable back there. And actually, seeing as she was in a wheelchair at that point, it was easier to negotiate the back one anyway.

WILLIAMS: Did anybody ever use the basement door underneath the porch?

DORSEY: You mean to come in the house initially, or just to use it?

WILLIAMS: Just to use it everyday.

DORSEY: Reverend Hobby would go in and out of it because he had stuff down there, too. And then when we were working in the basement, we'd go in and out that door to get some fresh air.

WILLIAMS: Were all the doors locked on a normal basis? Did you have to have keys or knock? They were wide open?

DORSEY: Now they might have kept the other doors locked, but the back door . . . The back door might have been locked initially, but then when Valeria knew we were coming, she'd just go ahead and unlock it anyway. But we never had keys, no.

SHAVER: Did they ever have the front room set up in such a way where Mrs. Truman

would sit in it in the afternoons? Were you aware of that? We've heard tales from some folks that in the afternoons they might roll her into the front room and open up the window.

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. Yeah, they'd do that. She didn't stay in bed all the time, especially early, you know. They kept her up as long as they could, so they'd take her in the front room or they'd take her in what's referred to as the music room. I don't think she watched much television, but she'd sit in there for a while.

SHAVER: Was the living room configured any differently then than the way—

DORSEY: I think they might have moved a chair only to get the wheelchair in and out of there easier. They took up a rug, too, and that's because . . . That might have happened just before we started, or right after it. Something was spilled on it, so Valeria took the rug out and sent it upstairs. But that's the only other change. But yeah, they'd take her out to the front room. And then she also spent a fair amount of time in the kitchen. Well, by the time you fed her, unfortunately it took like half an hour to forty-five minutes at least. And then the nurse would be sitting out there, and Valeria would be sitting out there, and Mrs. Truman, and they'd all talk back and forth. It was kind of sweet. It's the only company she really had.

WILLIAMS: Did they try to entertain her and keep her—

DORSEY: They made efforts at that, yeah. They'd say, "Did you hear on the news this morning . . . ?" or "Look what's in the paper," or Valeria would read her the mail and say that so and so just called and wanted to know about her and that kind of stuff. Yeah, they made a concerted effort to keep things

going for her.

SHAVER: Did you ever hear that they'd ever read to her on the back porch?

DORSEY: The nurses would read the paper to her, or they'd read a book to her. It seemed to be a great way to pass the time for her. Especially if you're sitting out there on the back porch, you can only watch so many cars go up and down Truman Road.

WILLIAMS: When was the inventory finished?

DORSEY: [laughter] Right before the park service took over. Well, let's see, I think it probably coincided with her death pretty close, actually. I don't know that we actually ever finished the attic, [chuckling] but we could still be doing the attic. It was just incredible.

WILLIAMS: We are.

DORSEY: [laughter] Good. I'm glad to know it's in good hands.

WILLIAMS: Where did you start the inventory? Which room?

DORSEY: We started it downstairs.

WILLIAMS: Meaning the first floor?

DORSEY: Yeah. I'm sorry, the first floor, and I think we started it in the front room. I think that's where we started. I don't remember the sequence of it right now. I'd have to look at the notes, but I think that's where we started.

WILLIAMS: And then you moved . . . ?

DORSEY: To the music room, and then I think probably the dining room or the kitchen. I don't remember the sequence of it now. And as I say, it was interrupted by her coming home, so . . .

WILLIAMS: Which floor did you move to after the first floor?

DORSEY: I think we went to the storeroom because we did the storeroom in the summer. As I remember, we did the storeroom in the summer of '81, and that was out of the way and there was enough there to do, so that kept us busy for most of the summer.

WILLIAMS: And then the rest of the second floor?

DORSEY: The rest of the second floor, and then we like went back downstairs when she was . . . I think she went back to the hospital or . . . Because we did the den after we'd done part of the second floor, and the den took forever. That took a great deal of time.

WILLIAMS: With all the books?

DORSEY: Well, see, we started doing all the books. And that was one of the times where we dictated—one person would read it off and the other would write it down—and that took a considerable amount of time. And all the little knickknacks. There was a lot more stuff sitting out at that point.

WILLIAMS: Was it the intent from the beginning to remove items from the house?

DORSEY: No. No, the intent from the beginning was to record what was in the house.

WILLIAMS: When did it change?

DORSEY: It changed after we started finding that the objects were really endangered by staying there, and we brought it to the director's attention that some of the items were physically in imminent danger by staying in the house. For example, in the attic the glassware was under one set of . . . in one portion of the attic where the insulation had fallen down, and it's a wonder the stuff didn't break. Not that's it's great glassware, but it would have broken, and the stuff was exposed to so many temperature changes up there that it was

just obvious . . . There's a really wonderful lacquered box that was given to them by the president of Korea that the finish on it was just crackling and bursting from the different temperatures and humidity changes up there.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything in particular that prompted you to suggest removal of items? Did something happen?

DORSEY: I think there was probably one or two items that really concerned us at the time. I don't remember objects. I remember that when we found written correspondence, we found letters, we were concerned about leaving them in the house as well.

WILLIAMS: What kind of letters were they?

DORSEY: Oh, on the second floor there was a lot of senatorial stuff. He had written to Margaret. There were letters that he wrote to Mrs. Truman during the presidency. In the attic there was all that wonderful correspondence from World War I, and I think it started in 1911. That was all tucked in one corner of the attic, and we didn't know the stuff even existed. But to leave it there, it just seemed very unsafe, again with all the people in the house.

And it was obvious that the nurses at night were not staying necessarily on the first floor, you know. For example, we came in one time and were in the front room and couldn't find an ashtray that J. Edgar Hoover had given to Mr. Truman. We knew Hoover had given it to him, and we couldn't find it anywhere. And we finally asked about it, and one of the nurses was using it in the back as she was smoking. So she had moved it to the kitchen. So it became a concern that some of the objects would either be abused or would be broken or would be lost from one way

or another.

WILLIAMS: Was there ever any idea that “this is a great object to put on exhibit someday”?

DORSEY: No. No, we brought the stuff up here so that it would be in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment. We didn’t know who was getting this stuff, but whoever got it was going to get it in better shape than we found it, and that was *truly* our concern. The item itself and the material was what was important. We didn’t know who was getting the house. Of course we were concerned, but our concern was for the objects.

WILLIAMS: As a museum specialist, it never even occurred to you that this would make a great exhibit or something?

DORSEY: You betcha it did. I mean if we get it, that’s great, but whoever gets it ought to find it in better shape than we did.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any contact with Margaret when the inventory was going on?

DORSEY: Not directly. She didn’t come out here that often anyway, but any contact, as far as the inventory itself was concerned, was really through the director rather than through us directly.

WILLIAMS: Did he update her regularly?

DORSEY: Oh, I’m sure. Yeah, he would let us know that he had called her and, you know, she was aware of the situation and what was going on and how it was going, that type of thing.

WILLIAMS: I think you already said that she agreed that things in danger should be removed from the house.

DORSEY: It was her direction. Dr. Zobrist called her and said, “You know, the girls

are finding that some of this stuff is going to be lost one way or another if it's not kept in a better environment, and we'd be glad to bring it up here, if that's what you want, and keep it until you decide what you want to do with it. And if you want to give it to us . . ." Or I'm sure that was the assumption if not the statement, "If you want to give it to us, that's fine. If you want to give it to whoever, you know, but it needs to be in a better environment." And it was my understanding that she totally agreed.

WILLIAMS: Did she ever show any interest in the items that were removed?

DORSEY: Minimal. After we brought all the stuff up, she was interested in going through the jewelry. And then she was given a typewritten list of everything that was brought up here.

WILLIAMS: Was this before or after Mrs. Truman died that she wanted to go through the jewelry?

DORSEY: It was after her mother died. Her mother died in October and it would have had to have been after her mother died, because I had my son in March of '83 and I was on maternity leave when she did that. Then, as I say, this written list was given to her and she was asked to annotate what she wanted to take.

WILLIAMS: Did she ever ask for anything specifically for you to remove while Mrs. Truman was still alive, while you were doing the inventory?

DORSEY: I think there probably were one or two items, but I don't really remember what they were. It wasn't anything that I remember being on the first floor because she didn't want anything disturbed where her mother would see it. But nothing comes to mind now. It strikes me that she might have said,

“Be sure you bring that up,” or something, but nothing in particular.

WILLIAMS: Who set the criteria for the things that were removed? Were there certain guidelines, or was it just left up to you really?

DORSEY: Seeing as the other people involved, being Dr. Zobrist and Dr. Curtis and Mrs. Daniel, really didn't know what was there, it was really our basic judgment as to what we thought was of high value, either historically or intrinsically, and was in danger. So it was really our judgment pretty much.

WILLIAMS: Was there ever any restriction about “Don't remove things from the first floor,” or . . . ?

DORSEY: Mrs. Daniel made it eminently clear that she did not want anything removed from the first floor, and I think again it was probably her interest that her mother not be upset. I mean, if somebody snatches a painting off the wall, her mother would probably wonder where it went, so she didn't want to do that.

WILLIAMS: So that was basically the reason for not removing things from the first floor, because they were afraid Mrs. Truman would notice?

DORSEY: Well, that was the point up until Mrs. Truman's death. Then we were told, “If you think it would be of historical importance and be beneficial to the library, go ahead and take it. But leave the first floor alone because the park service . . . I want it intact for the park service.” She was real big on that. She was very emphatic about that.

WILLIAMS: This was Margaret saying this?

DORSEY: Yeah, as I remember, it was.

WILLIAMS: This was between October and December?

DORSEY: I think it probably was, because I think at that point it was the feeling that the park service would have the house, or it was even stated that the park service would have the house. And Margaret made it quite clear, it's my recollection, that she wanted it intact, as it was when her parents lived there, so she did not want anything taken out of the first floor, with the exception of maybe some of the silver or something. Anything that could be seen by the public she wanted left, anything that was seen.

WILLIAMS: When you were removing things from the home when Mrs. Truman was still alive, did the Secret Service ever check what you were removing?

DORSEY: [chuckling] No. They weren't anywhere around, so they didn't check.

WILLIAMS: And you worked straight through from June of '81 until October of '82?

DORSEY: As I say, I think there were some time breaks, but never more than maybe three or four weeks, something like that.

WILLIAMS: Okay.

[End #4118; Begin #4119]

WILLIAMS: How did you transport things back to the library that were removed?

DORSEY: In our cars, usually in the trunk.

WILLIAMS: Was there any special packing that you did? Obviously you didn't want things broken.

DORSEY: No, and most of the items from . . . most of the fragile items were still in the packing they were in when they were received. They didn't throw out the box or anything else. They left it in the box it was received, so some of it was in some packing, and I think we might have had some blankets or something in the back end of it after we got used to this project. But

because of not wanting to alert the neighborhood, we didn't go to any real .
. . . as much effort as we would have liked in transporting the stuff.

WILLIAMS: What happened to the things once they were here at the library?

DORSEY: They were put in a locked room, as I remember, and just put away.

WILLIAMS: Was someone keeping track, making a list, or . . . ?

DORSEY: Not at that point. Not at that point. I think initially we were going to do that, but then it became that we had so much stuff, that we were so busy trying to take the inventory down there and bring the stuff up, that running an inventory of what we brought up was getting too cumbersome to continue, so we didn't, and then did it later, after, listed it after we finished bringing stuff up.

SHAVER: In which of the rooms down here did you initially store the stuff that you brought up?

DORSEY: I think it was upstairs and it was the office down from Vicky's, where the computers are. There's an audio studio that's never been used back behind that computer room, and I think that's where we put it initially because nobody ever used that room.

SHAVER: And as time went on, did you need more space or did you . . . ?

DORSEY: We just kept stacking it.

SHAVER: Just kept stacking it?

DORSEY: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: There was quite a volume of material after a while.

DORSEY: After a while there was, yeah. Because like some of the costumes and the clothes that were upstairs, it was obvious that the critters were getting to

them, so, yeah, there became quite a bit of it.

WILLIAMS: What was the library's policy or decision about who owned these things you were taking out of there?

DORSEY: I think it was in limbo. We were storing it for Mrs. Daniel and . . .

WILLIAMS: So Mrs. Daniel had ultimate control over it?

DORSEY: Well, as far as I know. It was my understanding that we were keeping it in courtesy storage, or whatever the term is, until a decision was made on what she wanted to do with it.

WILLIAMS: So was it your feeling that everything in the home after Mrs. Truman died belonged to Margaret, or at least could be disposed of?

DORSEY: It would be her option to dispose of it, yeah.

WILLIAMS: So you felt there were no restrictions on Margaret as far as what she may have wanted to keep as a memento?

DORSEY: I don't understand.

WILLIAMS: Anything in the home, were there any restrictions that you knew of on Margaret's . . .

DORSEY: On what Margaret could take and what Margaret couldn't take?

WILLIAMS: What belonged to her and what went with the house to the government.

DORSEY: Oh, I don't know that we were aware of that situation, no. We weren't sure who was getting the house, let alone who got what.

WILLIAMS: Were you around when Mrs. Truman died?

DORSEY: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: You were in the house?

DORSEY: No, we weren't in the house when she died. She died during the night, and

it was my understanding she died in the house and then they took her to the sanitarium and pronounced her dead there. No, but it was early in the morning. We weren't in the house.

WILLIAMS: Had you been there recently?

DORSEY: I think we probably had, and then we quit going for a while.

WILLIAMS: Did you come back—

DORSEY: No, we didn't. I take that back. We didn't because we went down to the house to help straighten up, to get things ready for Mrs. Daniel coming back for the funeral.

WILLIAMS: What did that involve, straightening up?

DORSEY: Well, like they took the hospital bed out, and Valeria asked for some help getting a couple of beds out of the attic, because it was obvious that Reverend Hobby couldn't handle that, and some physical moving of things like that, and just, you know, helping out in general like that. It wasn't anything to any great extent.

SHAVER: Was that in your initiative, or did somebody call Dr. Zobrist and have you guys come down? Do you have any sense of that?

DORSEY: Oh, I don't remember that anybody said, "Would you go down and help out?" but they might have. But I mean, you know, we offered to help just out of the situation, to make things more comfortable for her at her mother's death.

WILLIAMS: Once the Daniels arrived, was there any staff in the house at all when they were there?

DORSEY: Library staff?

WILLIAMS: Staff of any sort of employee.

DORSEY: I don't know. We weren't there when she got there, so I don't know who was in the house.

WILLIAMS: You don't know if Valeria was still around?

DORSEY: Valeria was still employed—I mean, it was my understanding. Yeah, Valeria was still there. Valeria was there, I think, when Mrs. Daniel arrived. I remember Valeria talking about it afterwards.

WILLIAMS: In what way? [chuckling]

DORSEY: Well, I guess Mrs. Daniel had been a little direct with Valeria, and Valeria wasn't . . . Valeria was very hurt when Mrs. Truman died. She considered Mrs. Truman a personal friend, and I got the impression that Margaret considered Valeria an employee and . . .

SHAVER: Treated her as such?

DORSEY: Treated her as such and let her know that she considered her as an employee and was a little miffed that Valeria had . . . a great deal miffed that Valeria had come out in the newspaper making statements about her mother's death. Margaret let her know that she wasn't real happy with that.

WILLIAMS: Do you know if Margaret wanted to have somebody around cooking or cleaning or anything while the funeral was coming up?

DORSEY: I don't really know, you know.

WILLIAMS: You weren't around, other than that?

DORSEY: We weren't in the house during the funeral.

WILLIAMS: Just that first day?

DORSEY: We were up here working then, because we were making the arrangements.

Liz was busy with guest lists and contacting people, and I was busy trying to help with the physical arrangements for the funeral, as far as getting the Secret Service and logistics and all that straightened away.

WILLIAMS: Do you know why you were chosen for this duty? You were available? Is that the reason?

DORSEY: You mean helping out with . . .

WILLIAMS: Arranging it.

DORSEY: No, I was doing that when I was up here, because at that point I had the sales desk and public programs, so I was doing public programs at that point anyway. At that point there wasn't a curator, so I was doing that as well as trying to ride herd on the collection.

WILLIAMS: So you were maybe not in charge of the collection but you were the only person—

DORSEY: [chuckling] I was the only person they had in that area, yeah.

SHAVER: But didn't everybody more or less . . . most of the folks here have something to do planning the funeral in one way or another?

DORSEY: Everybody pitched in, the same way they did when Mr. Truman died, only it wasn't . . . Mrs. Truman's funeral was so much lower-key than his. It was incredible during Mr. Truman's funeral.

WILLIAMS: Did you help for Mr. Truman's funeral?

DORSEY: [inaudible response]

WILLIAMS: What did you do then?

DORSEY: Well, because it was such a military event and there were *so* many people involved, there was a lot of, for lack of a better term, nickel stuff that

needed to be done. For example, Mrs. Truman had agreed that the networks could have one network. They could have one television camera unit in the auditorium and one network could film it. So they were in the baffles behind the . . . where they couldn't be seen. She made the restriction, "I don't want them anywhere around." So they were setting up, and the funeral bier was in the middle of the stage, and it was black velvet, and the Army had provided it, but it was terribly wrinkled. And it was the day after Christmas when he died and not a lot of preparations had been made for that kind of stuff, so they told me to go steam it and iron it. So I'm sitting on the stage with my little wrinkle doo-dah and getting the wrinkles out of this black velvet thing, and this voice comes over and says, "Don't move." And I wasn't sure where it was coming from because I didn't know the network was in there. And they said, "Hon, you're the first live object we've had to focus on all morning. Can you stay there for a minute?" [chuckling] So there was a lot of little stuff like that that had to be done. We were here for all kinds of hours developing schedules and invitation lists and moving stuff in the building. And when Mrs. Truman died, it was such a smaller-scaled thing that we didn't . . . I think we closed the building the day of the funeral maybe, and that was it; whereas when he died, we closed the building until after he was buried, and that was largely for security reasons. But when he died, the vault and everything hadn't been put in the courtyard. And when she died, all of that was done, so it was really a much smaller scale, which is what she wanted anyway. But Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Ford all three came out for the

funeral, so there were a lot of security aspects to take care of as well.

WILLIAMS: When did you find out that the home was left to the government?

DORSEY: After she died, after Mrs. Truman died, but I'm not sure. It was not long after. It might have been intimated that it was left to the government before, but what avenue of the government wasn't made clear to us.

WILLIAMS: What was your reaction to finding out, though?

DORSEY: I was glad. I think it's far safer and in far better hands in the federal government than it would be with some of the county historical societies or something like that. I felt confident it would be properly taken care of.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a particular feeling about the National Park Service taking control?

DORSEY: I knew that the National Park Service would do an excellent job with it and would make sure that the building was physically maintained well, as well as I felt comfortable they would take good care of the collections as well. I had seen some of the other sites, like in Springfield, Illinois, and the care that was done there and the work that was done there, so I felt very good about it.

WILLIAMS: Was there any regret that you wouldn't have as much contact as you had, giving it up?

DORSEY: Oh, sure. I mean, you guys took our playground away. [laughter] I mean, let's get real about it.

SHAVER: Well, you took a lot of the toys with you, so . . . [laughter]

DORSEY: Well, you can come up to our playground. Well, really, Mrs. Daniel said, and she said it after Mrs. Truman died, too, "If it can be used at the

museum, if the public can see it there, go ahead and take it up to the library and we'll sit down and talk about it." It was still her decision. But if the public can see it up here, it's far better than sitting in the attic at your place. And again the restriction was made: Don't take anything out of the first floor.

WILLIAMS: Did you remove anything from the home after Mrs. Truman died?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. I mean, with her instructions, sure.

WILLIAMS: Margaret's instructions.

DORSEY: Before the park service got there, [chuckling] we needed to make sure that she had gotten everything that she wanted out of the house, so we did.

WILLIAMS: Because you knew that once the park service arrived—

DORSEY: You guys were going to lock the doors and never let us in. [chuckling] Yes, we knew, we knew. We had the feeling at least. You were an unknown quantity. The park service was really an unknown, up-front, or closed quantity. We knew you'd take good care of it, but we didn't know what relationship would develop. We didn't know you'd be so nice to deal with.

WILLIAMS: Thank you. Would you say that there was any idea of the quantity of the things removed after Mrs. Truman's death? Were these things you had had your eyes on before and just didn't get to?

DORSEY: Oh, no. Well, there might have been some of that. I mean, we didn't know that she was going to die that quickly. I mean, you know she was going to die, she was not doing that well, but I mean this wasn't a grand haul or something, but yes, there were some items, especially in the attic, that we

had not removed. But I mean, you know you all are well aware that there was bunches of stuff. I mean, if you've got that stuff out at the cave, you can imagine what was in the attic totally. And there were some items that we had definitely envisioned. The Kaltenborn microphone, for example. It was obvious that that was not ever going to be seen in the context of the house, and it would be far more important up here. There's a couple of other things. There's a large Wedgewood vase that was sitting up in the attic in one of the window wells that the birds had used extensively. That was one of the items that we went to Mrs. Daniel initially and said, "This is really not functioning well in the bird stuff down there, so it would be far safer up here."

WILLIAMS: How many times do you think you were in the home between October and December of '82?

DORSEY: Maybe a couple of hundred I would guess. I mean, an educated guess.

WILLIAMS: So every day?

DORSEY: No, but in the two years.

WILLIAMS: No, I mean in 1982, between Mrs. Truman's death and the park service—

DORSEY: Oh, and the park service taking over? It strikes me that was a real short period of time. [chuckling] It strikes me that we were told, "The park service will be taking over effective such and such a date." Time gets away from me, but I don't think it was . . . I'd be surprised if it was a week.

WILLIAMS: And Liz was helping you in this time, also?

DORSEY: Liz was helping, and we got Dr. Curtis to help, and then we got an archivist by the name of Harry Clark.

SHAVER: Oh, and you all went up to the carriage house. [chuckling]

DORSEY: Well, we didn't know what was in there. We hadn't gotten to the carriage house yet. You know, again we wanted to make sure if it was good stuff and if it was exhibitable stuff . . .

WILLIAMS: Did you ever see Margaret taking anything from the home?

DORSEY: No, but we weren't really in the home when Margaret was in the house.

WILLIAMS: Did she come down here after the funeral and look through anything?

DORSEY: Margaret was shown the material a number of times and was really very nice about it. And at points it was obvious that she was surprised at what was in it. You know, it strikes me that she didn't know, for example, that the letters were there, or if she did know, that she had forgotten about it. But I'd be surprised if she knew the quantity of letters that were down there. On one of the boxes . . . I think Liz probably told you that on one of the boxes Mrs. Truman had written, "When I die, destroy. This is to be burned."

SHAVER: No, she didn't.

DORSEY: Oh.

WILLIAMS: You didn't do it.

DORSEY: No, we didn't. [chuckling] We did not light a match in the storeroom and burn this stuff. We brought it back with the box, and when we wrote up the list we wrote on the list that this was the inscription on the top of the box. And Margaret said, "Well, Mother had different ideas of historical context than I do and we're not going to do that."

SHAVER: She'd actually gone and written that on the box?

DORSEY: She sure had. It was in the second-floor storeroom.

WILLIAMS: Those were some of the letters?

DORSEY: Mm-hmm. Yeah, like I think it strikes me that some of it was the letters that he'd written to her when he was in Potsdam. That one strikes me in particular, when he talks about all the other guys getting drunk.

WILLIAMS: Once Margaret realized just what was in the home, did her attitude about it switch at all?

DORSEY: Not that I'm aware of. If anything, like I say, she was appreciative that we'd done it. And she mentioned this two or three times, that she really appreciated all the effort that had been put into it.

WILLIAMS: So she did thank you personally?

DORSEY: Yes, she did, a couple of times.

WILLIAMS: Did she ever give you anything as a memento of all the scrounging around?

DORSEY: Oh, I think she might have given me something, some small little thing, but . . . I mean, I don't have the crown jewels at my house.

WILLIAMS: Nothing like a big bottle of perfume?

DORSEY: I didn't get a big bottle of perfume. No, I don't have that.

WILLIAMS: Well, Liz said she did. How come you didn't?

DORSEY: Yes, that's true. That's true. I don't remember exactly. There were only five of them. This was neat stuff, too.

WILLIAMS: Well, if there were only five, there were only two of you doing the inventory. [chuckling]

DORSEY: But being no dummies, we distributed this. [chuckling] We gave one to like, I don't know, Mrs. Zobrist or Mrs. Curtis or something like that. But

no, I didn't get a bottle of imported perfume.

WILLIAMS: You didn't keep one for yourself?

DORSEY: No. I should have thought about that. No, but she was . . . and I think, I shouldn't say this on a tape recorder probably, but I think like anybody else that was in a similar situation, she was glad that somebody that she felt she could trust, because she made that known too, she was glad that somebody else that she felt comfortable with was doing it. Because I think it's a real difficult thing to go through your parents' things. I know it is. I've been through that and it's real difficult to do, and I think she was probably relieved that she didn't have to.

WILLIAMS: One last question. Did you have any contact with National Park Service personnel after they arrived, before the home was dedicated?

DORSEY: You mean Tom Richter?

WILLIAMS: Or others? Did you help—

DORSEY: Or others? I think there was a parade of these folks. They came through. Yeah, I think only on the basis of, you know, I guess they knew we'd worked in the house and that type thing, but I don't think it was to any large extent.

WILLIAMS: You were never called to the home to assist? "We can't find something, can you help us?" or . . .

SHAVER: To help set the table?

DORSEY: That might have been.

WILLIAMS: "David McCullough is coming. Could you . . .?"

DORSEY: "Margaret is coming and . . ." We were called once or twice, yeah, and

went down on that basis. I don't remember if it was before the dedication or afterwards or when it was, but yeah, we were called and said, "Do you guys remember how this is supposed to be?" Or indeed, "Margaret's coming. Can you help us get this set up, because she remembers it one way and we didn't find it that way," that type of stuff.

WILLIAMS: So you were in the house a little bit after the park service took control?

DORSEY: Yeah, if we were invited we went. Yeah, sure, if we could help out. Yeah, if somebody called.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

DORSEY: You're welcome.

[End #4119; Begin #4120]

WILLIAMS: We're continuing the interview with Pat Dorsey. We're in the basement of the Truman home, and it's the afternoon of August 21, 1990. The interviewer is Jim Williams, a park ranger at Harry S Truman National Historic Site, and also present is Mike Shaver, a museum aide at Harry S Truman National Historic Site.

When was the last time you were in the home before today?

DORSEY: I came on a tour a couple of years ago.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember anything about the tour, noticing things were . . .

DORSEY: Cleaner.

WILLIAMS: Just cleaner?

DORSEY: More organized. It wasn't as cluttered, anywhere near as cluttered, and there was a gray carpet down.

WILLIAMS: Since you didn't see anything but the first floor on your tour, things

probably weren't all that different. Is that right?

DORSEY: No.

WILLIAMS: Well, since we're in the basement, do you notice anything different down here since you were doing the inventory?

DORSEY: It's hard to tell it's the same place. I mean, it's all cleaned out and dry.

WILLIAMS: How much time did you spend down here during the inventory?

DORSEY: Not a great deal. There wasn't a lot of material down here, and it was scary because there was standing water and the electrical wiring was exposed and you couldn't see where you were going, but outside of that . . . No, it was really a problem to work down here.

WILLIAMS: Did you look through the things at all?

DORSEY: Yeah, we did, just to make sure that there wasn't anything that needed to be taken out. But it seemed to be larger objects and wine bottles.

WILLIAMS: What kinds of things were in this immediate area by the staircase and the door going outside?

DORSEY: There was a chest freezer, I think, over here.

WILLIAMS: On the south side.

DORSEY: And a refrigerator, and it had a turkey or something in it that had probably been there for at least eight, ten years, from the freezer stuff on it. And then there was a sort of cleaning junk. Valeria kept all kinds of cleaning supplies down here. Then there was the world's largest collection of pop bottles over here. [chuckling] Which you've probably catalogued.

WILLIAMS: Towards the center of the basement.

DORSEY: Towards the center. There was just an unbelievable amount of crates of

pop bottles.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear why they kept those around?

DORSEY: No, they probably didn't get anybody to take them back to the store, I would guess. But it was just amazing. I'm sure they just bought it when the grandkids came out or something like that, but they'd been there for years from the appearance of it. But it was all stacked in the center.

WILLIAMS: When you look at the HABS photographs taken in March of 1983 of the basement, does that look pretty much like it was when you were here?

DORSEY: Yeah. It looks cleaner, though. Yeah, the stove was down here. I forgot about the stove.

WILLIAMS: Were there people down here very much working?

DORSEY: Nobody wanted to come to the basement. It was just a question of if you had to go down there to get something or do some ironing. I think Valeria did most of the pressing down here, the little that was done, because she still ironed Mrs. Truman's napkins and stuff for lunch and everything for her meals.

WILLIAMS: So she had cloth napkins?

DORSEY: Yeah, it's my recollection. When she was setting the places, the place setting and stuff, it was cloth.

WILLIAMS: Did anyone ever use the toilet down here in the basement?

DORSEY: I think in a couple of emergencies we did, but Bob Lockwood of the Secret Service had mentioned to us that it wasn't a real good idea to use it. Unfortunately, when he was working here in the Secret Service detail he had to fix it, and he said, "It wouldn't be a real good idea to use it too

much.” [chuckling] So we didn’t.

WILLIAMS: Did any of the other staff use it, that you know of?

DORSEY: I think Reverend Hobby probably did. I think he came down here, because he was in and out of the back of the house, in the garage and stuff, and I think it was really designated as his area rather than upstairs.

WILLIAMS: Well, would you mind walking back into the darker recesses?

DORSEY: Only if it’s lit. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: We do have lights now.

DORSEY: Oh, good.

WILLIAMS: No standing water.

DORSEY: See, now I don’t think . . . I think the door probably sagged or drug or something, because it was . . .

WILLIAMS: It still doesn’t close all the way.

DORSEY: Okay, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Which makes it nice when you . . .

DORSEY: Yes, it’s real convenient that way.

WILLIAMS: We’re walking by one of the window recesses. Does it look different, looking out toward the north?

DORSEY: Well, it’s just cleaner. I don’t remember that you could see the street. I don’t know what was in it, but I don’t remember that you could see the street. And see, all this was water. There was standing water all through here. And then there were crates back in this area. There were crates, White House crates.

WILLIAMS: Did you look through the crates at all, thinking there might still be some

things from the White House?

DORSEY: Yeah, we looked to make sure that nothing was getting water-damaged or anything like that, but as I remember, they were empty.

WILLIAMS: We're in the coal bin and wine cellar area.

DORSEY: Yeah, now there was all kinds of . . . The tricycle, and I think the bike and the slide and all that stuff was all over in that area, over towards the windows. And the larger . . . maybe the lawn mower as well. But the larger outdoor stuff was brought in here.

SHAVER: It was a coal room.

DORSEY: And it was filthy.

WILLIAMS: Did you remove anything at all from the basement?

DORSEY: The lawn mower, the slide, the tricycle . . . [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Oh, those things you were—

DORSEY: Yeah, that stuff.

WILLIAMS: Why did you?

DORSEY: I think maybe Margaret . . . Well, we wanted the lawn mower, and I think maybe . . . because we hadn't taken it up, I don't think, at the time Mrs. Truman died. I think Margaret specifically said, "You really should take that."

WILLIAMS: So this was after Mrs. Truman died?

DORSEY: I think that was after she died, because I don't think we would have moved anything that big.

SHAVER: Was this a motorized lawn mower or a push mower?

DORSEY: Oh, no, this is the push mower.

SHAVER: An old push mower?

DORSEY: Yeah. You know, the story that he was out in front on Sunday mornings mowing the lawn. Yeah, because Margaret said specifically, “That’s the one my dad used.”

WILLIAMS: What was over here in the southwest area?

DORSEY: All the booze. That was just a mess.

WILLIAMS: Did you examine the bottles at all?

DORSEY: Well, that was kind of hard to do because they were in such bad shape and we were concerned about if we messed with them too much that the labels would come off. Yeah, there was all this old furniture. There was all this old furniture and dilapidated stuff. And then we didn’t mess with the wine bottles too much because we were afraid the labels would come off, because it was obvious to us it hadn’t been disturbed in years. But as I remember, there were some really nice things in it. Bottles of wine from Churchill. I mean I don’t know that much about wine, but there was some old vintage and good-quality stuff.

WILLIAMS: But about the only things you took were the play set and the bicycles and things?

DORSEY: Yeah, the outdoor stuff. I don’t think we took any wine bottles at all.

WILLIAMS: In any other parts of the basement, do you remember removing anything else?

DORSEY: No, I don’t think so. I don’t know where it would be. I don’t think so.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Was there anything underneath the stairs or around the bottom of the stairs?

DORSEY: Oh, there was the world's largest collection, and over there in that window, of flower pots and vases and that kind of stuff. And we asked about those, saying, "Wouldn't it be a good idea to throw this stuff out?" And Valeria said, "No, we keep all that stuff. Anytime she gets flowers we keep it." Which was obviously true. Yeah, but it was old stuff. It was down here and there was some upstairs in the stairway between the kitchen and the second-floor storeroom as well, but most of it was down here.

WILLIAMS: Anything else about the basement that comes to mind?

DORSEY: I don't think so. It was an obstacle course to get down these stairs too, because they'd put mops and rags and all that stuff down here too, so you had to be careful where you stepped. Oh, there was a trunk where the panel is. It was underneath there. Right in this area there was a trunk.

WILLIAMS: Underneath the staircase.

DORSEY: And some boxes. And Margaret's stamp collection was in there, and she also wanted us to take that as well.

SHAVER: I know we had found a real pretty wooden box in a small trunk, but the trunk that you're referring to, did you folks take it out or did you just empty it?

DORSEY: No, we emptied whatever it was because we didn't take the trunk. It wasn't of any interest. Mrs. Daniel had particularly said, "You should have that stamp collection," so that's what we did. But we didn't take any containers, that I remember.

SHAVER: Well, then I guess we still have that box in the collection.

DORSEY: We can work out a deal where you can have the stamps. [chuckling] On

loan.

SHAVER: Well, I kept hearing mention about a trunk, and then I do know there was like a real pretty . . . a very simple oak box or a dark maple-finish box.

DORSEY: This was in . . . there was some other little trinket stuff, you know, that she had when she was evidently in high school or right after that period. Oh, and there was some other pictures from her early singing career in that stuff.

SHAVER: Yeah, it seemed like the trunk was all this, you know, after high school, singing career type stuff.

DORSEY: Yeah, and there was a lot of pictures of her in stage productions and that kind of stuff.

WILLIAMS: So it was treacherous going up these steps?

DORSEY: You bet. They're not wide anyway, but when you put stuff on them like flower pots and glass and all that—

WILLIAMS: What about on the ledge? There are hooks and nails up here.

DORSEY: Yeah, all that, they kept all kinds of rags and more brooms and stuff, as I remember, because it was real hard to get through here.

WILLIAMS: Let's go out on the back porch for a minute and see if there's anything out here. Were you out here on the porch much?

DORSEY: We were out here a fair amount of time. When Mrs. Truman wasn't in the house, it was the only area that you could come out and get a breath of air.

WILLIAMS: Does it look . . .

DORSEY: It looks different. I'm not sure exactly. The configuration is different, I think. I thought there was a flower pot in there and the table was further

out, but I could be wrong. It's been a while.

WILLIAMS: It might be because we've had to clear something of a path here.

DORSEY: Oh, okay. Okay, because this, it seemed to me, was more in the center, and there weren't four chairs there, that I recall. Or maybe they were in different places, because that or something similar to it was there.

WILLIAMS: The plate up on the wall?

DORSEY: The plate, yeah. There might have been a different clock at one point—or it was attached differently, that could have been it. Because they had to have room to bring her out in the wheelchair, and I'm sure there weren't four chairs there.

WILLIAMS: Could you see off of the porch as much as you can now, with the shrubbery?

DORSEY: I think it was probably a little higher and a little fuller. Valeria used to talk about one of the reasons she liked to come out here was because so people couldn't see her, so probably it was a little higher.

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Truman? So people couldn't see Mrs. Truman?

DORSEY: Yeah, which was kind of unlikely anyway, but I think we made some comment at the time that they couldn't see us either.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever go in the carriage house?

DORSEY: Yeah, we went in the carriage house too, went up in the upper floor and looked in the boxes after Mrs. Truman died, because we hadn't gotten to it by the time we'd done the . . . we hadn't gotten that far in the inventory. And I don't believe we found a blessed thing in there. That might have been where the lawn mower was, I'm not sure, because the lawn mower

was in better shape than the toys and the tricycle and the bicycle.

WILLIAMS: Was the carriage house as cluttered as the rest of the house, generally?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was some old furniture in it, and there were some old appliances down along the wall, and it was just . . . you know, nobody had really taken care of it.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever see that car driven anywhere?

DORSEY: I don't think so. No, Valeria would take it out once in a while. If she went to go to the post office or the grocery store or something, every now and again she'd drive it just to say that . . . you know, it was good for the car was the reasoning. Yeah, she'd drive it every now and again, but not very often.

WILLIAMS: But by that time Mrs. Truman wasn't going out?

DORSEY: Mrs. Truman wasn't going out at all.

SHAVER: Do you recall Valeria ever having any problems with the car or having a wreck with it?

DORSEY: I don't remember her ever saying that she was in a wreck with it.

SHAVER: I thought she was a few months before Mrs. Truman died.

DORSEY: Somebody had run into her or something?

SHAVER: Somebody had run into her or something.

DORSEY: The back end of it or something?

SHAVER: The front end.

DORSEY: The front end? I don't remember anything about that.

WILLIAMS: Let's go back in the kitchen.

DORSEY: It wouldn't have been Valeria's fault. [chuckling]

SHAVER: The impression is left that way.

DORSEY: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAMS: Back in the kitchen. What is your impression of the kitchen as compared to when you were doing the inventory?

DORSEY: Well, it's cleaner and it's a lot neater than it was. You've taken the grease off the wall [chuckling] and all the stuff off the counter. There used to be lots of stuff on the counter. Valeria used to keep dishes out, as I remember, over here. There were some kind of little dishes and trinkets and stuff.

WILLIAMS: On this cart?

DORSEY: On the cart.

WILLIAMS: How did you manage to do an inventory of dishes and things that were being used?

DORSEY: Well, I don't remember when we did the kitchen, but I think we probably did it when she wasn't in the house. Because I remember finding the Grandma Moses. Well, we found that early on, and we were real impressed with the original Grandma Moses.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything on the refrigerator?

DORSEY: More stuff, if anything. There wasn't anything ornamental or anything, that I remember.

WILLIAMS: Nothing stuck on with tape or magnets or anything?

DORSEY: Oh, Valeria put schedules everywhere.

WILLIAMS: For the nurses, you mean?

DORSEY: For the nurses and for Reverend Hobby and whoever, her schedule, and she would always mark on the calendar, mark the days off and all that stuff. Is

that when Mrs. Truman died?

WILLIAMS: She died on the 18th.

DORSEY: I thought it was earlier in the month.

WILLIAMS: That's one of our frequently asked questions.

DORSEY: Yeah, sorry about that.

WILLIAMS: We have to blame Valeria. Anything in the pantry that you spent time with?

DORSEY: We went through the stuff in here, and it's pretty much the way it was. I think there was more stuff, but it's basically the way it was.

WILLIAMS: Were there any dishes or other things that were removed to the library from in here?

DORSEY: I don't think so. I don't think we took anything out of here. I'm almost positive we didn't.

WILLIAMS: We can walk through the butler's pantry. How does it look?

DORSEY: Now it's not as cluttered as it was then. I mean, as I remember, the stuff was stacked—I mean like bunches of it.

WILLIAMS: What kinds of things?

DORSEY: Oh, trays and serving dishes and that kind of stuff.

WILLIAMS: Kind of stacked the way they are in this corner?

DORSEY: Yeah, but we're talking about magnifying that by about ten, fifteen, twenty times, yeah. I mean, we're talking a big space here.

SHAVER: So like a full third of the thing?

DORSEY: A full third of the thing, yeah. I mean we're talking a lot of junk.

SHAVER: Was this bread box here then?

DORSEY: I don't remember. I don't. It could have been out there in the kitchen, which is more likely.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything in here of these trays and pitchers that was worth removing?

DORSEY: I don't think so. I don't remember that we took anything out of here.

WILLIAMS: Because there are quite a few commemorative-type things. I just wondered if maybe some of them were.

DORSEY: I don't think we did, because we were steering totally away from taking anything off the first floor.

WILLIAMS: That's right.

DORSEY: So I don't think we did. Now, Mrs. Truman . . . I don't know if you all know this or not, but it was obviously broken, and it was sent up to the library for one of the staff to repair in about 1970.

WILLIAMS: The wedding plate on the wall?

DORSEY: The wedding plate on the wall. And the comment was made that Mrs. Truman was extremely fond of it. And it was broken in a number of pieces—I mean small pieces, like less than an inch across—and one of the staff painstakingly put this thing back together.

WILLIAMS: Would that have been you?

DORSEY: No, I helped with it, but I didn't do it. Tom Posey was the gentleman's name. He left, I think, about '73. No, '72, because he left before Mr. Truman died. But I'm not sure what kind of glue he used to put it back together.

WILLIAMS: He did a nice job, at least, when you look at it.

DORSEY: Yeah. And evidently it was given . . . We were told at the time it was brought up that it was a wedding present, but it wasn't.

WILLIAMS: No.

DORSEY: You took out all the phone books.

WILLIAMS: There were phone books in here?

DORSEY: There was phone books, and I thought there was a little chair of some kind maybe.

WILLIAMS: Was this the phone that was used the most when people would call?

DORSEY: Yeah, this one, if Valeria was in this end of the house, but more than likely she used the one in the study. She was more inclined to use that one.

SHAVER: Were the phone books stacked under the telephone or on the floor?

DORSEY: I'm not sure, but there was a lot of papers and stuff in here.

WILLIAMS: More so than just this little pad of paper?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. There was a little directory, and I don't know what happened to that, but they used to keep that either here, or it would move, but it was everybody's address and all that kind of stuff.

WILLIAMS: Okay, as we walk into the dining room.

DORSEY: This is pretty much like I remember it also. Of course, the table wasn't set and there weren't as many leaves out, I don't think.

WILLIAMS: Were you here when they set the table for the *Smithsonian World*?

DORSEY: No.

SHAVER: Were you involved in setting the table at any time?

DORSEY: No.

WILLIAMS: Before the house opened?

DORSEY: I think Liz and I were asked to come down, and we did, but I mean everything was basically done at that point. There was something in particular Margaret was concerned about, and we came down to help out with it, but it wasn't anything of any major importance.

WILLIAMS: Did anyone ever eat in this room?

DORSEY: I think Valeria had a birthday party for Mrs. Truman in here, and that's the only time I remember. I think I remember it being used. And Valeria was real pleased about the birthday party. She had some of the nurses involved and all that, and that was in here.

WILLIAMS: Did she invite any of Mrs. Truman's friends, or was it just private?

DORSEY: No, it was just the people that were around her.

WILLIAMS: At that time, were any of the bridge club or the study club people dropping by? Would they ever see Mrs. Truman?

DORSEY: I don't think so. They might have on a rare occasion, like Mrs. Wallace coming over just to say hello or something like that. But somebody actually coming to see her was an event. Now I think the Grays, Georgia Neese Clark Gray, I think they came down, Andy and Georgia came down to see her, and that was probably the extent of it. But very few people saw her.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything of value in this room that was eventually taken out?

DORSEY: I think Mrs. Daniel asked us to go . . . I know she asked us to go through this stuff.

SHAVER: The buffet?

DORSEY: The buffet and the linens and that stuff. And some of it was taken out at her

direction, and then I'm sure we sent some of it back to you all, at her direction.

WILLIAMS: That was after Mrs. Truman died?

DORSEY: After Mrs. Truman died, yeah.

SHAVER: Do you remember the silver, if it was stored in here or somewhere else?

DORSEY: The silver was stored, as I remember it, in here and under there.

WILLIAMS: In the built-in cabinet.

DORSEY: In the built-in cabinet. And then some of it was also over here, and some of it . . . I think one or two pieces of it may have even been sitting out underneath that cabinet. But it was just stacked in here. And if it was sent in cellophane, it stayed in cellophane. [chuckling]

SHAVER: I heard you had good fun with cellophane.

DORSEY: We're still having fun with cellophane, yes, with the little bows on top.

WILLIAMS: The epergne was down on the table?

DORSEY: Right. I think you all had it plated, and it might have been broken or a piece loose or something.

WILLIAMS: Well, the study is next. Okay?

DORSEY: Okay. Now this again was a lot more cluttered and had a lot more stuff, and the books were all stacked against this wall or underneath the print.

SHAVER: Do you remember a lot of things on the table, or not?

DORSEY: Do I remember what they were?

WILLIAMS: Just the amount.

SHAVER: Was the table cluttered or was it relatively empty, in your recollection?

DORSEY: I thought it was more cluttered. Part of it was, I'm sure, Valeria's clutter

though, because she like wrote bills in here and stuff.

WILLIAMS: Did Mrs. Truman ever sit in here?

DORSEY: No, not that I remember, and part of that was probably due to the fact that they would have had a difficult time getting the wheelchair in here. But I don't know that . . . I got the feeling from Valeria she wouldn't have been comfortable in here anyway because Mr. Truman spent so much of his time in here. Valeria spent a great deal of time telling us when we first came down here that Mrs. Truman wouldn't go out on the back porch for years after he died because it was painful to her. And it wasn't until Valeria had been here a couple of years that she actually started going out to the porch, so I doubt that she came in here much at all, if any.

WILLIAMS: Do you have any recollections of the chair, this particular chair, isn't the original one?

DORSEY: Yeah, I know.

WILLIAMS: Do you have any recollections of that?

DORSEY: It was an overstuffed chair, and we tried to run it down, as a matter of fact, so we could get it back for the park service. But it went to Field Furniture Store, and we could never get them to commit to turn it loose or admit that they really even had it.

WILLIAMS: Was it an upholstered chair or leather?

DORSEY: I thought it was a genuine naugahyde chair. And there was some discussion about . . . because in the pictures of Tom Benton painting Truman, I think it's a brown, leather-looking chair, but I think it was different. That chair was different from the chair that was in here while we

were in the house, and then after Mrs. Truman died I think they bought this thing. Isn't that right?

SHAVER: Yes. In some other interviews, we've kind of tracked down the fact that there was a chair that he sat in and a chair that was brought in after he died, which is the one you're looking for, and then this is ours or somebody's.

DORSEY: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Fields swapped up for it or something.

SHAVER: Or Mrs. Daniel had it put in here.

DORSEY: Yeah, I think they were a little embarrassed maybe with the way it looked, but . . .

SHAVER: Were you aware that it was being used on a regular basis? Did you get that impression?

DORSEY: You mean while we were in the house?

SHAVER: Yeah.

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. The house was used as a regular house. The nurses, much to our concern sometimes, didn't have any sense of history to it. I mean, they considered it a grandmother-type house and they used it as such, you know, like any other house they'd go to, and so did Valeria pretty much. There were a lot more dead plants over there, or dying plants, and there's more phone books over there. And the directory was usually on that table, and it was a little notebook thing.

WILLIAMS: What about on the floor, other than where you've already pointed out, were there things stacked anyplace else in the room?

DORSEY: Just the stuff over here. And then I thought that there were also like

phonograph records maybe over here on the floor. That could be wrong, though.

SHAVER: Do you have any recollection of the problems with bookshelves?

DORSEY: You mean, outside of getting attacked by them? [chuckling] They weren't, at that point at least, very well constructed and they'd fall out on a real regular basis. As a matter of fact, there were a couple of shelves that had fallen out that we put back in place, that the books had fallen on top of each other. And the records. The records were incredible! The records were a big mess.

SHAVER: Let's take a short break.

[End #4120; Begin #4121]

WILLIAMS: You mentioned while we were off the tape that the knickknacks on the corner of shelf B were not arranged in any kind of order.

DORSEY: I don't think there was any order to them. As I mentioned, I think they're in fairly straight lines and that type of thing now, but I don't think there was any particular order. And they weren't clean. It was obvious that no attention had been paid to them for years.

WILLIAMS: Did you get the impression that anyone ever dusted in here?

DORSEY: Not really, no. No, and like the pictures were falling off the wall.

WILLIAMS: And the grandsons?

DORSEY: And the grandsons were fading and had slipped out of the holders and that kind of thing. I mean, if they didn't come in here and take care of the dead plants, they didn't dust or anything either.

SHAVER: Did you get that impression about the house throughout the first floor?

DORSEY: I think they made more of an effort in rooms that she was in. Yeah, I think they made more of an effort in those areas, but there was so much clutter and stuff in here it would have been hard. Unless she was willing to let you start over again, you know, I think it was really a case of don't disturb it because where are you going to start?

WILLIAMS: There's not much in the foyer anyway, but does it look any different?

DORSEY: Not really. It really looks pretty much the same, with the exception of the wheelchair, the one that used to be over in the—

WILLIAMS: Near the staircase?

DORSEY: Near the staircase.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever know anyone to use this doorway by the coat rack?

DORSEY: I think it might have been opened once, but no, I don't remember anybody using it.

WILLIAMS: And if you took a look around at the hat and coat, does it look any different?

DORSEY: I think there were more coats on it and maybe one more hat.

WILLIAMS: Was there a telephone over here?

DORSEY: Yeah, there was, come to think of it. That's where I remember this thing. Yeah, you could sit here and use the phone.

WILLIAMS: There was a phone in the kitchen, the study, here, and in Mrs. Truman's bedroom?

DORSEY: I thought there was one in the front room. Maybe it was a long cord on the one in Mrs. Truman's bedroom.

WILLIAMS: I think there is a jack in there.

SHAVER: It seems like your picture may have shown there was a telephone in the front, next to her chair.

DORSEY: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did they all ring?

DORSEY: I think so.

WILLIAMS: Did it have quite a . . . ?

DORSEY: Yeah, it woke the dead by the time . . . Let's see, that's the front room. That might be a phone over here. But I never saw her talk on the phone. No, that's not a phone. But I never saw her talk on the phone.

SHAVER: You were talking about the wheelchair. Was the wheelchair a rental, or was that one from the library?

DORSEY: No, it was a rental. All the equipment like that was rented.

WILLIAMS: In the music room, any difference really in this room?

DORSEY: No. Well, you mentioned earlier the paintings were different on the wall, and the photographs have been arranged so that the tourists can see them. They weren't that neatly organized, and they were facing the other direction.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember finding anything especially interesting in this room, other than the paintings?

DORSEY: The paintings were nice. Those pieces were kind of nice.

WILLIAMS: The glass?

DORSEY: And then there's more music down there in that little bookcase thing, isn't there?

WILLIAMS: Right.

DORSEY: I like the things on the mantel. Now, this small portrait of Mr. Truman, wasn't that given to him by Averell Harriman or somebody?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. It would be nice if it was.

DORSEY: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: How about the bookcase over here in the corner? Did you look through it?

DORSEY: We looked through that. Liz was impressed with the books because they were neat books, but other than that I don't remember. And there were linens underneath in those drawers. See that coat rack, sorry to interrupt you, maybe it's the angle, but I think that stuck out further. See, from this picture it looks like there was . . . and there was a dark coat maybe underneath it, but they were over further.

SHAVER: Well, I think for *Smithsonian World* things had been rearranged. We noticed that in several pictures that things had been rearranged and removed from the coat rack. And this little associated clutter, we think Margaret may have removed some things. Like there's a plastic rain bonnet hanging on the coat rack, and it appears in one picture and then it doesn't appear again.

WILLIAMS: Gloves and hangers.

DORSEY: Yeah, personal type stuff which makes a house a home and that kind of stuff.

SHAVER: We tracked down the hangers into another closet, but we haven't found a lot of the other stuff. I noticed in one of your pictures of the music room that you had the back of another chair almost here in the doorway to the foyer.

DORSEY: That one.

WILLIAMS: It's almost where we're standing, next to the piano.

DORSEY: But I don't know what chair it is.

SHAVER: And I'd suspect you'll probably find it upstairs somewhere.

DORSEY: Okay.

SHAVER: That's the first time I ever recall seeing that chair. Of course, these are the very few pictures that we have of the house before she passed away, but it looks like the chair was kind of rigged up for the television.

DORSEY: Now that could be because Valeria used to talk about she'd occasionally like to come in and watch TV, but that was usually only if Margaret was going to be on it, or some talk shows she liked. I think that's right. Some of the talk shows she liked.

WILLIAMS: The television looks about the same as your picture?

DORSEY: Yeah.

SHAVER: Do you ever recall, as you were sneaking out of the house, seeing her in here, I think, where her wheelchair would be sat?

DORSEY: Yeah, they brought her in here. I mean, there wasn't a whole lot of places to take her on the first floor, so yeah, they'd bring her in here, and they'd bring her in the other room.

WILLIAMS: Mostly for variety?

DORSEY: Yeah, I think so, and depending on what the nurses had an interest in. Because you could look out the windows at least this way and see people going by, so yeah, they'd bring her in here.

SHAVER: Did you ever hear any of the nurses play the piano?

DORSEY: I think Karen did. Karen was the one you asked me about yesterday, and I still don't remember her last name, but Karen might have piddled with it.

WILLIAMS: Did it sound in tune?

DORSEY: You're asking the wrong person. [laughter] I don't have any idea.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Let's look over into the living room.

DORSEY: See, that thing was on a different side. That circular bell business or whatever that is, that was on the other side in these pictures.

SHAVER: The little clock, it's between the vase on the north and . . . Well, there's the vase on the north. In your picture, there's a vase on the north end and a plastic angel with a broken face, and then this little clock which is now on the south side of the Seth Thomas clock instead of the north as your photograph indicates.

DORSEY: Yeah, that would have been over there.

WILLIAMS: And your photograph shows the gate-leg table more cluttered.

DORSEY: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Was that, do you think, with Mrs. Truman's things, or was it the nurses'?

DORSEY: No, it was Mrs. Truman's things, because it was my understanding from Valeria that that's where she did like her correspondence and stuff, that she would come in here, and it looked like her stuff. There was, yeah, a picture of John Snyder, and she also kept a Bible on there, yeah. And Valeria would talk about the minister would come down. And I think she said something about Mrs. Truman read out of the Bible every day, or frequently at least. But see, all the stationery stuff and everything would be her writing equipment. So, when she quit using the desk upstairs, I'm sure

that's where it all moved.

WILLIAMS: Which minister was this that visited?

DORSEY: Well, it would have been Reverend Lembcke at that point because she was real close to him.

WILLIAMS: From Trinity Episcopal.

DORSEY: From Trinity Episcopal, yeah.

WILLIAMS: There is a phone jack right underneath the table, so maybe that's where . . .

DORSEY: Yeah, I think they brought it in here when she needed to use the phone or wanted to talk to somebody.

SHAVER: Was this chair here, as you recall, or had it been moved? I don't think any of the pictures really show it very well, but talking about Mrs. Truman being in here . . .

DORSEY: I think it was when we first came down to the house. You need to look at the list to make sure, but I'm almost positive . . . And that thing we used to trip over. I thought it was over here.

SHAVER: So you'd say the trash can was on the opposite side of the chair?

DORSEY: I think so, just to get through the room. But I think after Mrs. Truman came back in the wheelchair, I think they took that out, just logistically again to get through the room.

WILLIAMS: Anything else in the room?

DORSEY: Well, the pictures have been changed, the stuff on the mantel has been changed. Yeah, those are different pictures of the children.

WILLIAMS: They're not even in your picture.

DORSEY: No. No, and there were those little angels. Yeah, and Valeria was of the

impression that Mrs. Truman liked that.

WILLIAMS: The balancing man?

DORSEY: Yeah, and I have my serious doubts about that. But no, the children weren't there, and the angels were up there. I think the children came after Mrs. Daniel came out. Now Valeria also mentioned, and this is probably very accurate, that Mrs. Truman was extremely fond of that portrait, and that's why she wanted it down here rather than any of the ones that are up at the museum. She liked that one expressly.

SHAVER: Were the blinds ever opened more than they are now?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah.

SHAVER: So they were opened up far enough you could see, clearly see what was going on outside?

DORSEY: You could see, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did they decorate at all that last Christmas, in 1981 it would have been?

DORSEY: I don't remember that they did.

WILLIAMS: I just wondered since you said Valeria was big on . . . with parties and things.

DORSEY: Valeria was big on Valentine's Day and birthdays and that kind of business, but . . . They might have put a wreath up, but I don't remember that there was a tree or anything like that to any extent.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever see the sofa pulled away from the window so that Mrs. Truman could sit at it?

DORSEY: Yeah, they did that periodically, too. I don't remember exactly where they moved it, but yeah, they tried to make it real comfortable for her. The

coffee table had more stuff on it, too. Yeah, you can see in the picture there's another box, I think, and some more little odds and ends of stuff.

And plants. You will notice there are a lot of plants.

WILLIAMS: Did you get the impression that those were the nurses' or Mrs. Truman's?

DORSEY: Oh, no, when we came down initially—because these pictures are '83, these are before the nurses came in—there were a lot more plants. And it was obvious that they hadn't really seen very good care, but I think that was . . . She couldn't take care of them or didn't have much interest in them.

There might have been different trinkets out on the . . . Now, I think the lambs in this little piece were here, and those were there, but I think this might have been different underneath.

SHAVER: Yeah, I notice the arrangement on the top of that table is different in your picture than the way we have it.

DORSEY: Yeah.

SHAVER: Of course, they get moved around in the course of cleaning, too.

DORSEY: Yeah, that's true, that's true.

WILLIAMS: Well, the bedroom is left for the first floor.

DORSEY: Oh, gee. It gives you the willies. Yeah, you forget all the little trinkets and stuff. There were pictures of the children. Yeah, they're there, okay. There were pictures of the boys in here, but this looks pretty much like it did when we came in.

WILLIAMS: These are the beds that you brought down from the attic a day or so after Mrs. Truman died?

DORSEY: Yeah, after she died.

WILLIAMS: When you started the inventory, they were here also?

DORSEY: I think these were the ones that were down here, and at that point I think Reverend Hobby took them upstairs; or they might have already been upstairs when we started, I don't remember now. But yeah, we helped bring them down after she died.

WILLIAMS: Did you do the bathroom during the inventory?

DORSEY: Yes, we did.

WILLIAMS: Was it scary at all?

DORSEY: No, the bathroom wasn't scary. The bathroom was not spooky.

WILLIAMS: Ceilings, walls?

DORSEY: Oh, well, yeah. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Water damage?

DORSEY: Water-damaged, that's true. That's true. But there was stuff in the cabinets. There was lots of . . .

WILLIAMS: More so than there is now? Were there things on the hangers?

DORSEY: I don't remember. There might have been like dressing gowns and that kind of stuff, and then there were . . . I think there was stuff overhead, too.

WILLIAMS: Was this closet used for Mrs. Truman's things?

DORSEY: Yeah, it was used for her personal things. Any kind of nursing supplies and stuff I think were kept in here as well. Maybe her medicine was kept . . . I'm not sure about her medicine, but her personal effect-type things were in there. There was some kind of Henry Taldge thing.

WILLIAMS: Appliance?

SHAVER: A picture? Autographed, right? An autographed photo.

DORSEY: Yeah, okay. Now he'd send stuff periodically and . . .

WILLIAMS: What kind of stuff?

DORSEY: I think he sent flowers, cut flowers, and he'd call, and Valeria would tell him how she was doing and everything. But he was genuinely interested, so he was a frequent caller.

WILLIAMS: Shall we go upstairs?

DORSEY: Okey-doke.

WILLIAMS: Does the lamp shake as much?

DORSEY: No, the lamp visibly moved when you walked up and down the stairs. A lot. We were genuinely concerned it would lose its head one day. [noise of footsteps ascending the stairs]

DORSEY: Now, there was an Audubon print there, right?

SHAVER: Right.

WILLIAMS: Yes. Some of this clutter is ours from clearing out the attic, but the things not boxed and wrapped up, does it look any different?

DORSEY: You have a pair of eyeglasses. I thought we had all the eyeglasses in the world. It looks pretty much the same. There was a lot of stuff on it. And we had a question I don't know if you all have resolved, but the panther, I wondered if that wasn't the one that he had in the county court. Does that ring any bells with you?

SHAVER: Liz has mentioned that once or twice, but no, we haven't chased it down. And the fact that you and her have both mentioned it . . .

DORSEY: Well, see, we wanted it is why. [laughter]

SHAVER: See, we're going to check now.

DORSEY: Now that you found out that we wanted it, right? Because, see, my first husband did the county courthouse, did the restoration of the Truman courtroom at the county courthouse, and he looked high and low for one of those things and couldn't find one. And the pictures indicate that there is an animal, but I don't think he had a pin sticking out of him so it may not be the same one, but it's real similar to it I'd bet.

WILLIAMS: Did you remove anything from this desk, find anything?

DORSEY: I think we found some things, some personal correspondence or some White House stuff. We didn't find the Social Security card, darn it.
[laughter]

SHAVER: I don't think we have either.

DORSEY: Oh, you don't have it either?

SHAVER: I don't think so.

DORSEY: I thought it was underneath the desk blotter and we had missed it.

SHAVER: It may be. We'll take a look under there when you leave and see.
[laughter]

WILLIAMS: Mr. Truman's?

DORSEY: Yeah, Mr. and Mrs. Truman's Social Security . . . No, it's Medicare cards. Medicare cards.

SHAVER: I thought you had those.

DORSEY: I don't think so, no. That or somebody from the park service told us that just to make us feel bad. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: The ones that President Johnson gave them?

DORSEY: Right, yeah.

SHAVER: Your picture of the desk, you just put them away. This picture of Mr. Truman, which we have on our desk, I guess on the front right-hand corner, it looks like the picture, at least in your photograph, it's downstairs on her desk next to her chair. I just wondered if this picture didn't find its way up here later on. Like that now, do you see it?

DORSEY: Yeah, that's right.

SHAVER: You had a picture of the desk. It is the same one.

DORSEY: Yeah, it's the same one. Now, that's the one by Greta Kempton, so she would have been real pleased with that one. And there was stuff in that thing, in that circular container business.

WILLIAMS: These two bookcases, did you get the impression that they were one or the other that belonged to Mr. or Mrs. Truman?

DORSEY: Oh, I understood this was Mrs. Truman's desk, but I don't know about that thing. It had a plaque on it, I don't know if it still does, that it was made by the . . . both of them made by the White House carpenters.

WILLIAMS: Was this settee here?

DORSEY: Yeah, it was. As I remember, it was.

WILLIAMS: Was it at all cluttered around it?

DORSEY: Yeah, they put more stuff on it. Well, it was a convenient catchall place. Yeah, there's the photograph.

SHAVER: Here's your desk picture.

DORSEY: And see, there were more books in that corner thing.

WILLIAMS: In the corner cabinet?

DORSEY: Yeah.

SHAVER: Oh, your picture doesn't even show it up here. In fact, it shows the one of Mr. Truman which we have laying down in front of the panther, in that spot almost.

DORSEY: I'll bet that's closer to right, though. Yeah, and that lamp would have been just a little further over.

WILLIAMS: Is there anything else out here in the hall that was worth removing?

DORSEY: No, not that I remember. I remember this thing was full of all kinds of strange odds and ends. I mean, I was surprised to find out that she indeed, like a number of people, myself included, saved wrapping paper and tissue paper and balls of string.

WILLIAMS: In this cabinet with the curtain-type front?

DORSEY: Yeah, and rubber bands.

WILLIAMS: How about the alcove? How does it look?

DORSEY: Oh, that's empty compared to what it was, because it was at one point stacked, oh, at least up to where the windows break there.

WILLIAMS: On top of the chest?

DORSEY: On top of the chest.

WILLIAMS: And the floor, was it cluttered?

DORSEY: Yeah, you could get in there but that's about it. And there were boxes in there and stuff.

WILLIAMS: Did you find anything special in there?

DORSEY: As I remember it, this was Mrs. Truman's correspondence from like the White House, and menus and that kind of paper-type stuff.

WILLIAMS: Did you look in the file cabinet?

DORSEY: It wasn't locked. Yeah, we looked in the file cabinet.

WILLIAMS: Was it full? Half-full?

DORSEY: It was about half-full, or two-thirds of the way full, and again it was correspondence that . . . I think it was basically hers, and odds and ends of Margaret-type stuff, newspaper clippings and that kind of business.

WILLIAMS: So it's that correspondence you removed to the library, some of it? All of it?

DORSEY: Some of it. I don't remember how much of it. Whatever Liz and I thought was best. We were more interested in the material that was from the White House years.

WILLIAMS: And the master bedroom.

DORSEY: Well, that . . .

SHAVER: The secretary?

DORSEY: Yeah, the secretary used to be over there.

WILLIAMS: Did you find anything . . . Was it cluttered more so than it is now?

DORSEY: No, this was kept, I think, pretty much . . . kept neater, and part of the reasoning was I think that they used these bedrooms more. I don't think I have a picture of this bedroom. This is the other one. Oh, here it is.

WILLIAMS: Who would use these bedrooms?

DORSEY: It was my understanding that Margaret, when she came back . . . Margaret and her family used them. I forget how it went. One was Clifton's and one was Mrs. Daniel's. Valeria was telling us one day that was how it worked.

WILLIAMS: Did you find anything in here especially noteworthy tucked away anywhere?

DORSEY: There was some jewelry of Margaret's that wasn't of any real . . . It's not of any high intrinsic value. It's more like sorority pins and that kind of stuff. It was on top of the dresser. And there were some items over here in this secretary, like a Bible or something, a couple of items.

SHAVER: Was there a box of jewelry under the bed? Do you recall that? Older, more like Mrs. Wallace and Mrs. Gates-type jewelry?

DORSEY: That could be, but I don't remember it being there.

WILLIAMS: How about the closet?

DORSEY: The closet had strange things in it. It had a fur coat maybe? Yeah, it had kid things from the grandchildren, but there wasn't a great deal of stuff in there. It was basically empty. One of the more unusual parts of the house that was.

WILLIAMS: [chuckling] An empty closet.

DORSEY: Yes. But there was a lot of water damage, even then. There was something else on top of the television, I thought too, but I don't remember what it was. It could have been something Valeria put there because she did come upstairs periodically. Oh, yeah, the stuffed toys. Yeah, there were lots of those for the kids, for the grandkids.

WILLIAMS: And the closet underneath the staircase.

DORSEY: The closet underneath the staircase had good stuff in it. [chuckling] You want me to be honest or not? [laughter]

WILLIAMS: It looks pretty empty now.

SHAVER: Well, what were your impressions of it?

DORSEY: I thought it was a treasure trove. Evidently this is where some of the stuff

that he had from like the county court days and stuff got stashed, because there was a checkbook or some kind of a record of county court payments, and there was a Ku Klux Klan poster, and there was some of the campaign material from the county court stuff. And boots and that kind of stuff.

SHAVER: And the loving cup, do you recall?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, the loving cup was there, too. Yeah, it was all that period. And I think that's probably true in most of the house: the stuff was stashed according to a specific time. And the county court stuff went in there.

WILLIAMS: So this closet, did you get the impression that it was used at all?

DORSEY: No, I think they put stuff in there and closed the door. I think there were more clothes in there. [chuckling] That's entirely possible. [laughter]

WILLIAMS: We just have ties.

DORSEY: You just have ties? Well, we have close to no ties, fellas.

SHAVER: Did you get the impression that it was his clothes or her clothes that were in here?

DORSEY: As I remember, they were his, but that could be wrong, too.

WILLIAMS: Was the closet virtually overflowing?

DORSEY: The back of it was the good stuff. I remember the back of it was nice, and I think it was rather full. I don't see any ties that we have pictures of.

WILLIAMS: Is this a handbag down here?

DORSEY: Yeah, that plastic thing? I think that's a lady's handbag.

WILLIAMS: Very attractive.

DORSEY: Yes, you'll find a number of those, a number of attractive items. Is that a bug spray thing, the black with the green?

SHAVER: Yeah, that's a sprayer.

DORSEY: A pump sprayer. Great.

WILLIAMS: And a no-pest strip just hanging up there.

DORSEY: Well, you want to preserve all that stuff. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I don't think it worked.

DORSEY: The door still doesn't close right. We had a difficult time getting it open, as I remember. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: I think we call this the guest bedroom.

DORSEY: Yeah, this is really pretty much the way it is. And again, it was thought that Mrs. Daniel had used it. And I thought it was so sweet to have the Panama hat on the top. I thought that chair might have been further back. This is the bedroom Clifton used, I believe. I think that's the way it went.

WILLIAMS: Anything nice in the closet?

DORSEY: There was some stuff in the closet, but nothing I don't think that really had any historical interest to us. Aren't those flower prints or something, large photo or . . .

SHAVER: All the frames we got face . . .

DORSEY: Yeah. See, we left some things. [laughter]

SHAVER: Fine artwork.

DORSEY: Yes, and I think those are camellias or something behind it. And I don't even remember what's in the boxes up above.

WILLIAMS: What was your impression of these tables over here, the blank tables?

DORSEY: I think that I got the impression that Mrs. Daniel used that area when she came back to the house, because it didn't look like it had been used on a

regular basis.

WILLIAMS: And anything over here in the corner? There's kind of a pile of . . .

DORSEY: Stationery and stuff? I don't remember anything of any import that we took—or that we found.

WILLIAMS: Did you sort through the big box over here in the corner?

DORSEY: We might have, but I think that was all kid toys and, you know, again was just for the grandchildren's use.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Was there anything piled up on the stairs or on the landing up here, similar to the back staircase?

DORSEY: I think there were little boxes, but there wasn't anywhere near the clutter that there was downstairs. And I was always taken with that painting.

WILLIAMS: The seashore?

DORSEY: Yeah, the seashore thing. Wasn't that done in like the early '30s or something?

SHAVER: It seems like in 1923.

DORSEY: Something like that.

SHAVER: I can't remember the artist.

DORSEY: But I couldn't pin it down ever. I just thought it was a good thing.

WILLIAMS: Why didn't Betty Ford's picture go to the library, or this one inscribed?

DORSEY: Well, you know, we wanted you to have something from each president.

[laughter]

SHAVER: You just took the Audubon next to it.

DORSEY: Would we do that? We were told to take that, I'm sure.

SHAVER: Oh, yeah.

DORSEY: We wouldn't have walked off without somebody saying something.
[chuckling]

SHAVER: Well, that's the one you gave us last year, I think.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything in this closet?

DORSEY: That's household linens as I remember it. And there were tons of it, I mean, literally tons of it. And somebody got the unfortunate task of ironing all that stuff.

[End #4121; Begin #4122]

WILLIAMS: Okay, we're walking back toward the small bedroom with all the closets.
What was in these closets?

DORSEY: Mrs. Truman's clothes.

SHAVER: Did you get the idea they were more modern clothes or were they older?

DORSEY: I think there was a mix, but they were basically the stuff she was currently using, or had used for the last ten, fifteen years since she came back from the White House probably.

SHAVER: You recognize a lot of that stuff as some of the stuff that you have in your collection?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. Mrs. Daniel said, after Mrs. Truman died, Mrs. Daniel said, "I want all the clothes gotten rid of." This is the way I remember it, at least, and she said, "I don't want any of Mother's clothes when I get there." So Dr. Zobrist talked to her and persuaded her that what we thought was of historical importance to the library that we could have, and after he talked to her she agreed to that, and then Liz and I decided that . . . And she said, "I want the rest of it given away, destroyed, whatever. I don't want it

there.” So what we decided was that anything that could be reflected back on Mrs. Truman, anything, even if it wasn’t historically important, if it had her name or her monogram on it, we kept it rather than giving it to the Salvation Army.

WILLIAMS: So this was done immediately after Mrs. Truman died?

DORSEY: As I remember, it was, yeah, because Margaret said, “I don’t want to see it there when I get there.”

WILLIAMS: So you came over immediately?

DORSEY: Well, it was like in the next day or two before she . . . She was in Europe when her mother died, so it took her a little while to get back. But that’s what we did.

WILLIAMS: Anything else?

SHAVER: Were there any other sorts of requests like that, things to take care of or remove before she got here?

DORSEY: Not that I really remember. There might have been some minor things. And I think, you know, like we were talking about yesterday, moving the beds was more of an accommodation-type thing.

WILLIAMS: Well, the blue bathroom awaits.

DORSEY: There was stuff under the bed.

WILLIAMS: Oh? What kind of stuff?

DORSEY: There was stuff from Margaret’s grandmother, like letters and—

WILLIAMS: Mrs. Wallace?

DORSEY: Yeah, Mrs. Wallace. And there was like some sewing trinkets or hair ornaments or something like that, as I remember, in a box. You know, it

looked like something somebody had just stuffed underneath the bed, but it wasn't anything of any . . .

WILLIAMS: Did Valeria ever say that anyone used this bedroom?

DORSEY: I don't remember that anybody ever did, no. And then occasionally when it got hot we'd go out there, when we were working on this floor, and sit on the porch.

SHAVER: So you went out on the porch?

DORSEY: Sure.

SHAVER: Pretty nice breeze?

DORSEY: It was the only air up here. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: Through the window?

DORSEY: Yeah. Wasn't there a phone in there, too?

WILLIAMS: In the bedroom or in the passageway?

DORSEY: In the passageway.

SHAVER: Not that we are aware of.

WILLIAMS: There were phone books stacked up.

DORSEY: Oh, well, maybe there were just phone books, yeah.

SHAVER: Lots of phone books.

DORSEY: Okay. Well, that could have been it.

WILLIAMS: Was that any more or less cluttered, that little passageway?

DORSEY: It might have been a little bit more cluttered, but not much. You couldn't stick more in it.

WILLIAMS: I assume this is the bathroom that most people used, most of the staff.

DORSEY: Oh, the glorious blue bathroom, yes. Yeah, the nurses were all told to use

this one up here. Yeah, Valeria gave them instructions she didn't want them downstairs in Mrs. Truman's bathroom, so yeah, everybody was told to use this one.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Truman's dressing room. Is anything noteworthy in here?

DORSEY: The bed's down on the floor. No, it was on the floor, wasn't it?

SHAVER: Yeah.

DORSEY: Oh, that's right, because Valeria or somebody said that he had trouble getting up, or this was easier for him. I don't know that it was always that way, but . . .

SHAVER: But you've heard some tale connected with the fact that there were just nothing but mattresses here and a box springs?

DORSEY: Yeah, and then there was more junk in here, too. Let's see, yeah, because see, there were a couple more things on that tie rack over there.

SHAVER: You were talking about Hawaiian shirts at one time. Did you find them in here?

DORSEY: No, they were upstairs in the attic.

SHAVER: Up in the attic?

DORSEY: Yeah. Oh, yeah! How did we leave all that? My goodness. [chuckling] Yeah, that was pretty much the same way.

WILLIAMS: Did you remove anything from the closet over here?

DORSEY: No, I think we were told not to.

WILLIAMS: By who?

DORSEY: Margaret, I believe.

WILLIAMS: Were those bricks in there?

DORSEY: Yeah, the bricks were in the room. We never did figure out what they were really doing in life.

WILLIAMS: They were out in the room, or in the closet?

DORSEY: No, they were in the room, in the closet. Yeah, but I never did figure out the importance of that. But I think most of that clothing is stuff after the White House.

SHAVER: Did you ever hear any explanation why the room was changed so little?

DORSEY: No. I would assume that it was just the fact that they didn't use it that much, and he came up here in the afternoons and napped and probably didn't want to be bothered with too many people.

WILLIAMS: Did Valeria ever say that Mrs. Truman didn't want to come up here at all when she was still able to?

DORSEY: Yeah, I think she probably did say this room made her uncomfortable.

WILLIAMS: Last but not least, the storage room. [chuckling]

DORSEY: Now, see, there's more stuff in here, too.

WILLIAMS: In this little storage area.

DORSEY: They used this as a catchall for a cleaning place. Yeah, and they never threw a bottle of medicine out, I'm sure. [chuckling] Well, in that chest in the other room, in Mrs. Wallace's . . . in between the two—in that passageway, that's what I'm trying to say—there were medicine bottles from the '30s. You know, it was just amazing.

SHAVER: Yeah, there was also some medicinal liquor bottles, too.

DORSEY: Oh, there were a number of those in the house.

WILLIAMS: Could you walk through this little hallway without fearing for your life or

tripping over anything?

DORSEY: There was a question of falling out the window, as I remember, because there was more stuff piled everywhere.

WILLIAMS: Were these windows kept open?

DORSEY: No, not that I remember. I don't think you could get them open, because I do remember two people trying to get some air in here and not having any luck.

WILLIAMS: Well, what about the general appearance of this room, the storage room?

DORSEY: This is pretty much the way it was, as I remember, especially the exterior of it. Now there was more stuff in here by a long shot, but it's physically pretty much the way it was. There was more textile junk piled against the window, and there was something I thought right in this area in front of those pieces of furniture. And that was probably turned around.

WILLIAMS: The radio?

DORSEY: The radio was probably turned around.

WILLIAMS: Was the ironing board set up?

DORSEY: Yeah, I think it was. And there was every appliance ever made by Daisy Manufacturing, I believe.

SHAVER: Or Rival, maybe? [chuckling]

DORSEY: Rival Manufacturing, yeah. Amazing, yeah. There was a lot of that stuff over in here.

SHAVER: In the southwest corner.

WILLIAMS: You managed to make your way through the whole room?

DORSEY: I think we did. I think we did. But there was so much stuff, it took quite a

while.

WILLIAMS: Can you estimate at all the volume of material removed from this room?

Did it look like you'd made a dent in it after you were . . .

DORSEY: No. No, I don't think it really did. This is where the correspondence from the White House was. Some of the *Dear Bess* letters were down . . . They were on those shelves over there, but you had to work to get to it because there was stuff piled in front of it.

SHAVER: So were they basically on the top shelves, which I guess are in the southwest corner?

DORSEY: I'm not sure of that. I'm not sure if they were on the top shelf or the first shelf.

SHAVER: They were on that set of shelves, though?

DORSEY: Yeah, they were on that set of shelves, as I remember.

SHAVER: Did you find anything in these shelves over here on the southeast corner on the east wall?

DORSEY: We probably did, but I don't remember what it was at that point.

SHAVER: There seemed to be a lot of Senate-type stuff, at least newspaper clippings and things, in that corner, from what few times I've been over there.

DORSEY: I don't think we found any correspondence over in that corner. But there's clippings everywhere. I mean, there were clippings of Margaret's wedding. There's a whole raft of that stuff—there was over there somewhere against that wall under the window.

WILLIAMS: Did you get the idea that anything up here was actively used by the staff?

DORSEY: The only stuff that was actively used is like the invalid material, the walker

and that kind of stuff, and that was close-in, because the rest of it just kept piling up.

WILLIAMS: Right here at the top of the steps where you could get to it?

DORSEY: Yeah, right in this immediate area. And there were some things I think that Valeria rotated. You know, if she wanted an appliance for some strange reason, like one of the blenders or something, it was all in one particular corner. And yet again, more flower arrangements.

WILLIAMS: Looking down the steps, what would the scene have been? It's empty now.

DORSEY: You had to get a path through there, because over on both sides they had cleaning stuff, and then there was some kind of liquor over here.

WILLIAMS: Toward the right?

DORSEY: Yeah, Haig & Haig or something.

WILLIAMS: On the south side.

SHAVER: A pinched old bottle with a football next to it?

DORSEY: Yeah. Yeah, and somebody must have been drinking out of that one, or as I said yesterday, it evaporated very fast. But there was rags and stuff on both . . . Because I remember at points you really had to put almost one foot in front of the other to get down.

SHAVER: Did you more or less have to zig-zag up the stairs?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah.

SHAVER: Or was there a straight path?

DORSEY: No, there wasn't a straight path because nobody really used it on a regular basis.

WILLIAMS: Mostly cleaning things?

DORSEY: Yeah, mostly.

WILLIAMS: Were there the flower pots, too?

DORSEY: Yeah. It just looked like somebody had left it on their way and . . .

WILLIAMS: Could you open that window down on the north?

DORSEY: I don't remember opening any of these windows.

WILLIAMS: Did you manage to inventory the things above the steps, up there on that ledge?

DORSEY: I think we looked at them but I don't think there was much of any, you know, we felt importance to us there.

WILLIAMS: How did you get there?

DORSEY: I'm not sure that we didn't get a path through there and lean over the railing or something. Or maybe we just even asked Valeria what was over there, because it looked like newer stuff.

WILLIAMS: When you were doing the inventory did you try, for this room especially, to leave things fairly similar to the way—

DORSEY: Yeah, we put it back where we found it, as much as we could and as much as was safe for the stuff. I mean, some of the stuff—I mean, I know it looks bad now—but it was worse, and we tried to make it a little safer. That meat thing that you could carve half a cow on was over here somewhere, and we tried to make it a little bit safer for other stuff. That shelving, for example, wasn't anywhere near that neat. It was really kind of tossed in there. And there was some presidential period gifts, I think, that we took in there.

WILLIAMS: Did you notice the shelves were made out of packing crates?

DORSEY: It wouldn't surprise me at all. It seemed like they weren't extremely well

constructed.

WILLIAMS: Anything else about this storage room?

DORSEY: We found some senate stuff in here, buttons and that kind of stuff.

WILLIAMS: In this gray-looking chest?

DORSEY: Yeah, buttons and that kind of stuff that we took back up to the library. And I think again it was that period of stuff that was in here. There were some county judge badges also, I think, that might have either been in here or in the closet, because we have a couple of county judge convention badges.

SHAVER: Was that always a source of excitement, finding those political things?

DORSEY: You bet, it's just like a kid at Christmas, you know? [chuckling] Well, not only the political stuff, but there was a gift over there that was a carved ivory piece that's about that long and about that high, and it's some kind of an animal, and it's from Tibet, I think, or someplace. Thailand, I guess. And it was in the box that it came in with the little plaque on it and everything, just like it was shipped out last week. It was given to him while he was in office, but it's basically as safely as we could put it back. You do have the corner on coat hangers, don't you? [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: And paper clips.

SHAVER: You guys have been helping, too.

WILLIAMS: You returned them.

DORSEY: It wasn't my idea. [chuckling] I thought that was real strange.

SHAVER: Well, we have ten boxes of coat hangers that are catalogued somewhere.

DORSEY: You know, I tried to point out to somebody at the time that just because you

have the coat hanger does not mean that object came up on it, you know. I never saw the point in taking that.

WILLIAMS: Looking up the steps to the attic, were there things piled up on these steps like all the other steps?

DORSEY: Yeah, as I remember, there was stuff. There was some stuff. There wasn't as much stuff, but there was some stuff. Oh! yeah, and up at the landing there was a lot of stuff. There was Christmas stuff up there.

WILLIAMS: What kind of material was this kind of stuff?

DORSEY: I don't really remember. It was odds and ends of stuff, whatever was here. But like I say, there wasn't that much of it that I remember.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever use the big attic fan?

DORSEY: You bet! It was the only air in here for a while because it was ungodly hot.

WILLIAMS: And what was up here on the landing?

DORSEY: As I remember, all the Christmas stuff, and there were ornaments by the hundred, I think. It seemed that way at least. There were lots of Christmas ornaments and Christmas decorations and that kind of stuff.

SHAVER: Did you have any Christmas ornaments, or did you take any Christmas ornaments out of that? Were you the one telling me that you folks had had some older generation Christmas decorations?

DORSEY: We had in the collection, original to the collection I think, or right after they came home, three ornaments. Because I don't think we took any of these. We didn't see any real need to.

WILLIAMS: There are quite a few water stains up here. Did you ever see or experience the roof leaking up here?

DORSEY: Yeah, as a matter of fact, now that you mention it, there were buckets scattered throughout the attic, and I think one of the Secret Service guys mentioned to us one time about they had to put buckets out, especially when it rained.

WILLIAMS: We're actually in the attic now. We're in the process of packing things away, so it probably looks different. What was over here in the northwest corner in these closets and shelves?

DORSEY: There was odds and ends of stuff on the shelves. I don't remember exactly what was there, but there was a table or something here and it had all kinds of hats on it. There was an *incredible* number of hats, most of which we left in the house, but we did take some. There's an incredible number of Stetsons. I think the count was somewhere around twelve or thirteen Stetsons, and we took the ones that we thought were important or valid for us and left the rest of them, because there were so many of them.

SHAVER: Well, there's an LBJ Stetson I noticed, or an LBJ hat. You guys have got the box, but I found the lid so I assume you guys had had the box.

DORSEY: We have the hat, too.

SHAVER: Okay, you have the hat, too. [chuckling]

WILLIAMS: In this window and around the floor, could you even see the floor?

DORSEY: I don't think so.

WILLIAMS: Things piled on the window sill?

DORSEY: Yeah, there was stuff piled everywhere. I mean, I was just . . . we were both amazed when we got up here. There was stuff everywhere.

WILLIAMS: Was it as cluttered as the storage room?

DORSEY: Every bit, I think, only it was boxed a little better. The storage room was a little bit more loose-type stuff. This was a little bit better, but not a whole lot.

WILLIAMS: Anything important in these closets?

DORSEY: There was clothing. There was clothing in all these closets that was just . . . they were packed. You couldn't get hardly anything out of them, there was so much stuff in them.

WILLIAMS: And up above in the cabinets?

DORSEY: I think there was more hats up there. I'm not sure about that. And that's the window where the Wedgewood vase was sitting.

WILLIAMS: The one with all the bird droppings?

DORSEY: Droppings in it, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever get the idea that there were parts of the attic that were kind of separated by periods?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. Yeah, this was obviously stuff that he had brought back from the White House, and then back in that corner, over there to the left, whatever direction that is—

WILLIAMS: In the northeast corner.

DORSEY: Yeah, that was World War I stuff, as I remember, his stuff from World War I. I think that's right. That's where the World War I letters were, at any rate, as I remember.

WILLIAMS: Were there things stacked up against the fan?

DORSEY: I don't think so.

WILLIAMS: So you could use it?

DORSEY: Yeah, we did use it.

WILLIAMS: Up on top?

DORSEY: Yeah, there was stuff on top, but I don't remember what it was.

WILLIAMS: Things around the chimney?

DORSEY: Yeah, there was some kind of furniture or something.

WILLIAMS: Was that in front of it?

DORSEY: Yeah, maybe that. Isn't there another ugly chair that goes with it, or another—

SHAVER: Yeah, down the hall this way.

WILLIAMS: All of these closets you'd say were mostly fairly recent clothing?

DORSEY: No, I don't think they were recent clothing. I think there was every suit Mr. Truman ever owned probably, because it seemed very in period and there were a lot of formal clothes and that kind of stuff.

SHAVER: The kind of stuff you wouldn't wear in Independence, you'd suspect?

DORSEY: Probably not, not to the square. They were more formal clothes.

WILLIAMS: But they were mostly Truman things, not earlier generations hanging up in these closets?

DORSEY: Not that I remember, no. And there was a strange collection of liquor in the bottom of that closet.

SHAVER: In the leather briefcases in the north-central closet, lower attic.

DORSEY: Well, there was stuff in . . . There was boxes. You have boxes of Prohibition liquor.

SHAVER: Yeah.

DORSEY: Okay, but over here, I don't remember if the Prohibition liquor was over

there or over here, but this was stuff like rum, and it was stuff that somebody had drank out of. And I don't remember now where I heard the story that Mr. Truman would keep little supplies of liquor in the house and—I think one of the Secret Service guys told me this—that periodically Mrs. Truman [chuckling] would come across one of these or would suspect that he'd been drinking and have the Secret Service take him out for a drive, and she'd go through the house and clean out everything she could find. [chuckling] Well, she evidently didn't find that stash, because there were a number of different brands and different bottles in that little bin.

WILLIAMS: What about over here on the east side, still in the lower attic?

DORSEY: All this shelving had stuff on it, and there was luggage in here and lots of straw baskets and that kind of stuff. But luggage that had tags on it from trips was over in here, and then there was stuff . . . There was stuff everywhere. There was stuff down in here.

WILLIAMS: What was your biggest concern up here in the attic?

DORSEY: Well, the concern up here was for the physical environment of this stuff. I mean, you can see that even then this insulation stuff was falling down.

SHAVER: You're lucky, we just had one fall down last night. [chuckling]

DORSEY: Yeah, and the glassware, see, was all over there.

SHAVER: Oh, so you had the glass like in the middle of the upper attic here, kind of off in that west wing?

DORSEY: Well, when we started working, it was underneath that place where you have the plastic now, and then we moved it out a little bit so it wouldn't be out . . . you know, so it would get out of the way. I think that's how it went.

But just the heat and the different variance in temperature . . . And then there were also the critters.

SHAVER: The critters.

DORSEY: The critters, yes.

WILLIAMS: We can walk up to the upper attic if you would like to.

DORSEY: Okay.

SHAVER: Did you see critters or just evidence of critters?

DORSEY: We saw evidence of critters. I don't know what we would have done if we'd ever seen critters. I think we might have heard a mouse or something like that. But like we were over here one time, and I know nothing about canning, maybe I mentioned this, and we came across a jar of spiced pears or spiced fruit of some kind and there were these holes in the top. And I said to Liz, "When you can this stuff you don't leave holes in it, do you?" [chuckling] And she said, "No, the raccoons have been here." And it was a couple of jars of this stuff that they'd been into.

SHAVER: The northwest corner of the upper attic.

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, I think this is also probably the area where we found the pillows, where the critters had ripped open the pillows and there were feathers . . . There were feathers everywhere.

WILLIAMS: Did you make an attempt to clean up at all while you were going?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. I mean, you had to. Well, we wanted to as well, but it was just . . . It was so filthy, because nobody had been up here for years.

WILLIAMS: Did you try to prevent the animals from coming in by repairing holes in the walls or anything like that?

DORSEY: We didn't get into that. We didn't really get into doing that. You know, as you guys know, you can't work up here for too long a period of time, and we didn't really feel it was our place to go fixing the house. But I don't know how you would have really controlled it without doing something to the exterior anyway. But we were told that they weren't aware of any critters actively when we were here, which is a little hard to envision. But Margaret's stuff, there was a lot of Margaret's stuff over in this corner, dolls and stuff, and shipping crates. There was a lot of shipping crates that had pictures, photographs and stuff, that were over here.

WILLIAMS: From the White House?

DORSEY: From the White House. There were some of these crates that had not been opened.

WILLIAMS: At all?

DORSEY: At all, since they were shipped, yeah. And then there were a lot of Gates-Waggoner stuff over in that corner.

SHAVER: That's the west end.

DORSEY: Oh, there was some World War I equipment. The letters were over in that corner with some other trinkets, but there was like a tripod and some other equipment that he had in World War I that was over in that corner.

SHAVER: You maintain that the letters were over here near these corner shelves in the lower attic? The northeast?

DORSEY: I think so. Yeah, I think they were on that second-from-the-top shelf, but I could be wrong.

SHAVER: Oh, well, that's a different variation.

DORSEY: This is ten years later, I mean, you know?

WILLIAMS: Were there paths to the windows?

DORSEY: There were *narrow* paths to the windows. I mean, it's a wonder there wasn't a fire, it was so hot and so cluttered. Yeah, and there was the old furniture back in . . . That hasn't changed much. And the pictures and all that stuff looks pretty much the same way, but it was throughout the attic. If you got a path that wide you were doing pretty well.

WILLIAMS: Did you try to attack the attic systematically?

DORSEY: Yeah. [chuckling] You know, we did. It wasn't easy but yeah, I think . . . But we didn't get all the way finished with it, as I remember. We were pretty familiar with what was here, but working up here for any amount of time was difficult. And Margaret's baby stuff, the crib and some of that kind of stuff, was over in that corner with that other furniture. I think that furniture was up against this wall or something like that.

WILLIAMS: In the south eaves.

DORSEY: And then there were boxes of books and stuff. A lot of Mrs. Truman's father's books and things were in those boxes that were over underneath that part.

WILLIAMS: Were you interested primarily in Truman things, or Gates-Wallace—

DORSEY: If we came across early Gates-Wallace stuff, that was terrific as we had virtually none of that stuff, but it was basically Truman White House period that we were interested in. Of course, when we ran across the county judge stuff and the senatorial things, that was just a bonus because we didn't know that existed either. What does that rug look like on the . . . Do you

remember?

SHAVER: You can pretty much make the design out on it.

DORSEY: That's what the continuing pattern of it is?

SHAVER: Yeah.

DORSEY: Okay, because I might have seen a photograph of it being presented.

SHAVER: It may be more embroidered, though.

WILLIAMS: It looks like archers hunting stags or something.

SHAVER: Sitting in one of those, I guess quote-unquote, Key West chairs that was in *Person to Person*.

DORSEY: Oh, yeah. I might have a photograph of it. I'll look and see.

WILLIAMS: Did you get the idea that this south part was more Margaret's corner?

DORSEY: Well, over on this side it was. The furniture as it is now, I think some of this furniture was there at the time, but I think . . . I'm not sure that the baby bed was Margaret's, but it was used by her children when they were kids and came out.

WILLIAMS: Would you say that the upper attic was mostly Gates and Wallace things?

DORSEY: Yeah, I think so, with the exception of interspersed was, you know, like the White House crates over here and the glassware over there. But yeah, this trunk was like right here, or in this area—I'm not sure it was turned that direction—and then that had more ties and more shirts in it.

WILLIAMS: This chest of drawers?

DORSEY: Yeah, the chest of drawers.

SHAVER: That's 23257, a green chest.

DORSEY: And I think the same thing is probably true of that.

WILLIAMS: The blue chest of drawers?

DORSEY: The blue one as well. There was more of his accessory-type items in there.

WILLIAMS: Were there ever things hanging from the ceiling or the walls?

DORSEY: You mean like those . . .

SHAVER: There are some hooks over here.

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, they were there, but I don't remember . . . There was something on them, I thought, maybe coats or something on hangers. But maybe not. I don't remember at this point.

WILLIAMS: There seems to be a lot of rather unusual artwork up here. Did you find anything worth . . .

DORSEY: [laughter] Worth keeping?

WILLIAMS: Worth saving, preserving?

DORSEY: I think we found some because yeah, they seemed to store . . . and I think it was probably over in this corner, like leaned up against something.

WILLIAMS: Where the luggage was?

DORSEY: Yeah, where the luggage was. I think there were prints and stuff. But there were some prints in those boxes as well, with the photographs. No, I take it back. There was a whole stack of framed items, and they were just leaning up against that side of that thing.

SHAVER: This is in the well of the lower attic, west of the attic fan well.

DORSEY: They were stacked and I think there was probably two rows of stuff, and we didn't take many of them.

WILLIAMS: These were the White House crates that you said you opened for the first time?

DORSEY: Well, there was White House crates there, Jim, and then there was photographs or something that was framed over there, okay? And then there was still some other framed . . . one or two things like over here, and they might have been smaller.

SHAVER: Paintings or something just standing up against the wall?

DORSEY: Yeah, like paintings.

SHAVER: Like really hideous portraits of Mr. Truman?

DORSEY: Yeah, we didn't take the "less talented" items because we have a number of those already. [chuckling] So if we weren't familiar with the artist or didn't consider it an important piece, we didn't mess with it.

WILLIAMS: The crates that you opened, did you assume that they hadn't been opened because there wasn't anything in there worth looking at?

DORSEY: Oh, I think they probably just said, "Take it to the attic," and that's where it stayed, and they just forgot it was there.

WILLIAMS: There wasn't anything noteworthy, that you were aware of?

DORSEY: Oh, I don't know. There was a lot of autographed photographs and that kind of stuff in there, and we have some of that.

WILLIAMS: I assume they were in fairly good condition.

DORSEY: They were in pretty good condition. Yeah, they were in pretty good shape because they hadn't been bothered at all till we got in them.

WILLIAMS: Is there anything else about the attic or the inventory in general that we should bring up?

DORSEY: It was a lot of fun. I think it was a valid thing to be done at the time and I was real glad to be a part of it.

[End #4122; Begin #4123]

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear stories about fires in the house?

DORSEY: Yeah, and I thought at one point we looked up here—

WILLIAMS: In the hatch?

DORSEY: In the hatch, and found scorch marks. Because Liz said something about she had some kind of newspaper clippings that reflected a fire. And someone had told her a story about a fire, and I think we saw scorch marks over there.

WILLIAMS: You never went out on the roof?

DORSEY: No, I understand the grandchildren did.

WILLIAMS: Oh?

DORSEY: Oh, yeah, I understand that the grandchildren did when they came for a visit, and liked to have scared somebody to death. But yeah, because they'd just climb this ladder and have at it. But no, we didn't get that adventuresome.

WILLIAMS: Was there ever any evidence that they had been playing up here?

DORSEY: I don't think so, but it would have been hard to tell. I mean, there was not a great deal of order.

WILLIAMS: There weren't toys left out or anything like that?

DORSEY: No, there weren't any kid-type things lying around or anything that would really contain their interest. Most of it was pretty well boxed up and contained. There was also over in that cabinet . . . You'd think I have a liquor fixation or something, but the reason I bring it up is that looked like it had just come back from Key West. Somehow I got that impression.

WILLIAMS: This kind of liquor cabinet that promptly falls apart when you mess with it?

DORSEY: Yeah. That could explain why it had liquor in it.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the park service for your time and all your help over the years.

DORSEY: If I can do anything to help, let me know.

WILLIAMS: And continued help, we hope. [chuckling]

DORSEY: You bet, we're all working for the same cause.

SHAVER: Oh, you bet.

WILLIAMS: The Trumans. [chuckling] All for one and one for all.

DORSEY: That's pretty much it.

WILLIAMS: Thanks.

DORSEY: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW