



INTERVIEW WITH

L. Arthur Minnich

by

Maclyn P. Burg  
Oral Historian

on

November 19, 1974

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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This interview is being recorded in Washington, D.C. in the State Department with Dr. L. Arthur Minnich in Dr. Minnich's offices on November 19, 1974. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff. Present for the interview, Dr. Minnich and Dr. Burg.

DR. BURG: Now may I start by asking you, sir, when and where you were born?

DR. MINNICH: Lorain, Ohio, November 12, 1918.



DR. BURG: And you were educated in the state of Ohio?

DR. MINNICH: Through high school, at least through the junior year of high school, yes, in Lorain, Ohio, in both the parochial and public schools.

DR. BURG: And then went out of state for your--

DR. MINNICH: To Phillips Exeter Academy for my senior year. From there on to Princeton which was 1936 to 1940 majoring in liberal arts, primarily history, some economics, a lot of languages thrown into it. After that I chose to go on to graduate school. I had support from Duke University through a teaching assistantship, and I guess tuition was thrown in with that teaching assistantship so that, at relatively little cost which was important to us in those days, I did a year and

a half at Duke and got my master's degree in modern European history under Dr. Paul T. Carroll, who was a specialist on German history. At that point I went into the army. My number had come up in February of 1942, and I went through the army routine, going to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana for basic training and then went on to officer candidate school at Ft. Benning. From there to Camp Croft, South Carolina was my first assignment as a second lieutenant, with the black regiment there.

BURG: Infantry regiment, Dr. Minnich?



MINNICH: Infantry regiment, yes. In the course of that I had back trouble, and I was put in the hospital there up in Swannanoa, North Carolina, delightful place.

BURG: How is that name spelled for the benefit of my transcriber?

MINNICH: S-w-a-n-n-a-n-o-a. Swannanoa, North Carolina. It's just outside of Asheville, Moore General Hospital. And eventually they did a spinal fusion for me which fixed the back up pretty good, but it left me on limited service. I went back to Camp Croft for a little while, and, for whatever reason I don't know, I was given the opportunity to come to the ASTP, the old

Army Student Training Program, which was still going on. And had a choice of either Georgetown or the University of Maryland. And for whatever reason I picked Georgetown.

BURG: Were you assigned then as an instructor in the ASTP program?



MINNICH: That's right. Well actually we were company officers you see in the ASTP program carrying out really the mechanics, the administrative side of the company. Virtually all the instruction was academic instruction you see, and I did none of that. But I did have the ROTC which still had a unit there, an instruction job there, and I don't remember what all--I remember the map teaching part of it and various other bits of ROTC instruction for the handful of people that they still had in the Georgetown ROTC unit.

BURG: Was the Georgetown ROTC program accelerated as so many of them were during wartime. They're moving them through as fast as they could?

MINNICH: I don't believe so. It was such an insignificant program at that point. The ASTP was the real program, you see,

where they were getting these people into language training and things like that.



BURG: At your alma mater they had as a matter of fact, at Princeton, they did seem to accelerate. Now I would like to ask you before moving on, as long as we're speaking of things academic, may I ask you if in your memory now, aside from Professor Carroll, if other instructors stand out in your mind, either from your undergraduate days or your graduate experience at Duke?

MINNICH: Oh, yes, a good many of them did, and I'd probably do an injustice to those that I don't mention, but I certainly would want to mention Bob [Robert R.] Palmer at Princeton whom I encountered time and again when he was doing military history later on. Somehow or other, I happened to have him as preceptor term after term after term until finally he asked me if wasn't I getting tired of having the same preceptor. I chose to prefer to stick with the known quantity, and we got along very well together.

BURG: Is this Age of Democratic Revolution's Palmer?

MINNICH: Yes, that's him.



BURG: Ah, yes, indeed, I met him at the University of Washington. Very lovely man.

MINNICH: And then of course there was the grand old man of British history there, Bobby Albion, who later went on to Harvard I believe it was. Joe Strayer from the history department too was a great guy. A very wonderful fellow in philosophy, Professor Stace, two of them, Professor Stace and Professor Spaulding. I had one for each semester of the philosophy that I took, and I must confess that they were over my head all the way, but they were great people. At Duke, in addition to Dr. Carroll whom I mentioned before, I would mark particularly a very fine man in southern history. You'd better scratch that part of the tape I can't pull it out.

BURG: That's all right. He was at Duke at that time.

MINNICH: [ Charles S. ] Sydnor.

BURG: Yes, of course, I know him.



MINNICH: An excellent man in history, southern history. And Earl Hamilton, the noted economic historian, I thought was one of the greatest teachers I'd ever encountered.

BURG: Well, there were a number of them then that struck you, and you were fortunate in that experience.



MINNICH: Well, they're both very fine institutions with excellent history departments and, even outside history departments, some very good people. The for example, I took Arabic Moslem history at Princeton for a semester, possibly two. We had Philip Hitti there, Philip K. Hitti who is one of the very few people that really knew anything about Arabic history in the United States at that point. And he had the definitive textbook on Arabic history.

BURG: How is his last name spelled, Dr. Minnich?

MINNICH: H-i-t-t-i.

BURG: Oh, yes. That field now of course has burgeoned since those days, but it would be most unusual then to have a man like that.

MINNICH: That was one little bit of my getting outside the standard European history area which I had been majoring in. British history of course took me around the world when I did the British empire bit. But I came to realize, only much later, how little there was in American schools in the curriculum of the colleges and even less in the elementary, secondary schools about non-western society, which is something we have been struggling to catch up with for the past twenty years now and have a long ways to go still.



BURG: Now the languages that you took during your college experience what were these?

MINNICH: A lot of French, just one year of Spanish, two years of Latin finishing off four years of high school Latin that I had had so that I had that very fundamental ground in language. No German, no Greek.

BURG: No Russian?

MINNICH: No. Western European short of German.

BURG: Well my wife and I wound up with Russian and Chinese. The Chinese was as far afield as we have got.

MINNICH: You were pioneering.



BURG: And the iron curtain fell down, and there were no jobs at the time we got all that done. I was going to ask you too, a last question about your university experience, do you remember any milestone books, studies that really impressed you at that particular time? Things that began to make you think, things that struck you hard at that time in your life?

MINNICH: Not so much in the standard books, textbooks. I'm trying to remember where I first got exposed to John Herman Randall's, The Making of the Modern Mind, magnificent book on the philosophical basis of western civilization, gorgeous book. I should go back and read it again now thirty years later. But I think probably I first saw it at Princeton. It would have been in connection, I think, with Professor Harbison who was another great guy there teaching medieval history. And when I eventually got into teaching myself I used it as my Bible. Whenever I wanted to put a little bit of extra cream on a lecture,

I could reach for John Herman Randall and come up with something that nobody else was reading any place.



BURG: Well it's interesting to have that from you too. For me it was Tacitus, the first exposure that I had to that, not in Latin of course, but it was my first classical historian, and it turned the tide for me, started me along those lines.

MINNICH: There was one little thing which came later when I was back in graduate school after the war at Cornell. I sat in on a course that Fred Marcham was giving there, British history. And he put a good bit of British literature into it of which I had never read very much other than the Dickens things that you get ordinarily in grade school. But he pulled one little thing out as a command reading. It was an essay by Lord Halifax called "The Character of a Trimmer"--trimmer in the sense of the guy who trims the ballast of the sailboat so that if things go too far that way you lean backwards and if things go too far the other way you trim it a little bit that way so that you keep it on an even keel. Well that was one of the more impressive things that I read through the years which has its moral of course of my own feelings

against extremism of any kind.



BURG: And Halifax served here in the United States during the war, did he not?

MINNICH: No, no, this goes way back. This was seventeenth, eighteenth century, an early Lord Halifax.

BURG: A predecessor, yes, I see. Well I never ran across that particular essay at all. Now while you were here at ASTP, it's my recollection that that program began to phase out, I'm not sure when, '44 perhaps? They may have needed infantry.

MINNICH: It was the spring of '44. I think maybe the announcement came that the program was in trouble in, I doubt as early as December '43, but January, February, some place in there came the announcement, and everybody was pretty well stirred up as to what was going to happen. I gave my own little ROTC lecture that morning, and made it a lecture on wait and see instead of jumping the gun and keep these studies going and see what happens, and if it goes a month, two months, three months, six months, whatever it

may be, don't burn your academic bridge before you find out what's going to happen. The colonel, good old feisty Colonel Dougherty, walked into the back of the room when I was in the middle of this, and I don't know how long he had been there when I became conscious of him, and I held my breath because counseling the students on a matter of a current political-military issue was not the role of a second lieutenant. But he never said a word.

BURG: Did he spell his name D-a-u?



MINNICH: I think it was D-o-u-g-h-e-r-t-y.

BURG: Now all of those young men, Dr. Minnich, would, if the program ceased, would become enlisted men.

MINNICH: They were already enlisted men, and they would be shipped out as enlisted men and--

BURG: Basic riflemen.

MINNICH: Well this was the great manpower crisis after the Battle of the Bulge, wasn't it, in January of '44?

BURG: Well that came in '44, yes, in December of '44.



MINNICH: Well that's, of course, that was a year later. This was the manpower crisis for the build up for the invasion.

BURG: Probably was, yes. And there would be literally thousands upon thousands of these ASTP people--all very bright or they wouldn't be in the program. So how much longer did it last then after Colonel Dougherty came in.

MINNICH: It was pretty well closed out in the spring, and it was at that point that my medical review was in order for six months of limited service. And so I went out to Walter Reed to go through the medical review business as to whether I would be marshalled out of the army or put on full duty or continued on limited service. And I was out there in the spring, I would guess, oh, maybe around early or mid-April I think it was. Because I know I was out there for approximately a month altogether. And then my real lucky break came in the middle of May approximately when I lucked into a job in the Pentagon in General [George C.] Marshall's office.

BURG: Now the result of your medical examination was a continuation of the limited service status.



MINNICH: That's right, yes. Actually they had made a decision to send me on home, that I wasn't going to be all that useful to the army on limited service, and that they would put me on inactive duty or separate, whatever they were doing in those days. But one afternoon I went to tea with a nurse and the nurse was really an agent for Carl [Carlisle H.] Humelsine, who later became assistant secretary of state and now is president of Williamsburg. Carl Humelsine was operating a communication center for General Marshall over in the Pentagon, Chief of Staff's office. And he needed a lot of able people. He wanted young people because he himself was pretty young, and Colonel Frank McCarthy, Secretary of the General Staff was only twenty-eight I think at that point, and obviously, if you have subordinates around, it's nicer to have the subordinates a few years younger. Well the problem was that Congress had said that there should not be any able bodied people in Washington under the age of so and so. So they had a hard time finding this combination of ability and youthfulness. I guess I was about twenty-six at that point,



forty-four, yes, twenty-six. So the nurse knew that I was about to be sent home. She said, "Would you like to stay in the army?"

And I gave it about a ten second thought, and I said, "Sure".

She said, "Would you like to work in the Pentagon?"

And I said, "I don't know if they'd have me." But it wound up that she made a date for me to go over and see Carl Humelsine, and Carl sent me down to see Colonel Pasco who was that much closer to the Chief of staff operation. Frank McCarthy interviewed me, and I wound up with a job in General Marshall's immediate office.



BURG: Still a second lieutenant?

MINNICH: Still a second lieutenant. Of course with the illness that I had had and then being on detached service to Georgetown, nobody was really thinking about promotions for Minnich, and I was eighteen months in grade or something like that. Now that you've said it I became one of the more distinctive people in the Pentagon. There were more major-generals around than there were second lieutenants in the Pentagon. At one point I think I was the ranking second lieutenant, there were only five or six of us at that time.

BURG: Yes, and they've often said you know there is no more rank among second lieutenants than there is virtue among prostitutes.

MINNICH: That's right.



BURG: What a unique position! Unique in that funny sense but unique too to be your age and with your background and then placed literally at the heart of the American war effort with great events on the horizon.

MINNICH: Well, I went in shortly before the Normandy invasion. That's why I can remember the April-May transition from Georgetown to Walter Reed and then to the Pentagon. Very soon after I got there we had Normandy.

BURG: Now let me ask you some questions, some specific questions here about the coming into the war department. In the first place, you speak of your interview with Frank McCarthy, now could I ask you to tell me how that interview went, again thinking of your background and everything and this opportunity before you. He was Colonel McCarthy at that time, wasn't he?

MINNICH: That's right, yes.



BURG: You were called into his office I presume and how did it go? How did that interview run? What did he tell you? What did he need to know of you?

MINNICH: Well, I think he was trying to get an idea of the personality and character. He had a pretty good book on the academic achievement and the interest there you see. All that was on record. And I know he looked through some of that record and he saw the Exter, Princeton, Duke bit on it. And it looked, you know, like the rich man's club. And he said, "Now, lieutenant, have you ever worked?" And I bristled. And Mona Nason told me about it a little bit later. You know the office setup there was that the general's secretary, Mona Nason, was right in the same room with Frank McCarthy, and she was listening to this-a young naive kid, talking with the very experienced Frank McCarthy, and she chuckled about it many times after that. But apparently I came back pretty strong.

BURG: You spoke I believe at one point in your Columbia interview of the fortune that had come your way in getting to go to Exter. You were not out of a well-to-do family, my recollection is.

MINNICH: Absolutely not. We had pretty hard times there in '31, '32, '33. My father was a coal salesman, retailer. He ran this coal yard, and it was not a big one, and a lot of the people that he was selling coal to couldn't pay their bills. All of us kids worked for him at one time or another. The standard pay was a dime a ton for shoveling coal. So I could do two or three tons an hour. But it was a little money.



BURG: Then he had to ask you if you'd ever worked? Well I can imagine that your reply was a little on the waspish side. You satisfied him as to how much work you had done.

MINNICH: I can't remember the details on it, but it wound up very quickly that it would be fine and would I come to work next Monday or whatever it was, very quickly, as fast as they could get me out of the hospital. As a matter of fact I was going down to the office for a while even before the hospital had cleared my papers. And it took a little doing by that office to get it understood that this limited service man was wanted for work in the chief of staff's office and therefore would the board kindly rescind its decision to separate me from the service.

BURG: The board had already made that decision?

MINNICH: I think so.



BURG: Well that probably would explain any delay that ensued. Did Colonel McCarthy in that initial interview give you any idea of what your duties would be?

MINNICH: Yes, pretty much general service and paper work and correspondence drafting and brief writing and that sort of general office work that a staff person does. This you see was the staff secretariat for General Marshall. Colonel McCarthy headed the secretariat. Colonel Pasco was his immediate assistant, and he worked mainly on the paperwork side of it I'll say, the correspondence and the speeches and reports and staff studies that needed to be digested and briefed for General Marshall.

BURG: How big a group in total?

MINNICH: Well, it was very small, if you included in the deputy chief of staff. He had a couple of officers helping him. Frank McCarthy had Brad Davenport, Lieutenant Colonel Brad Davenport, and Colonel Pasco. Davenport

spent a lot of his time on White House liaison. There was a lot of White House business with the army of course, and he was the key guy for everything there to keep it coordinated. And there were one or two other officers there with secretary help of size. But it was quite small. I would say that we thought of our group for General Marshall as being approximately four or five people, maybe six.



BURG: I was going to ask you if General [Thomas] Handy was then deputy chief of staff.

MINNICH: Not at the beginning. I was trying to think of the name a minute ago, but General Handy did become chief of staff, and he was there almost down to the end. You'd better look at the official records.

BURG: All right. I'll ask General Handy as a matter of fact when I do an interview with him.

MINNICH: What I do remember is the Legion of Merit that I got presented by General Handy.

BURG: That would stick out in your mind.

MINNICH: Part of my rogue's gallery in my rec room now.



BURG: Yes, he will remember you, Dr. Minnich, do you think?

MINNICH: I doubt it. I did not really do much work with him. He was working the army policy side, war department policy bit, you see with all the heavy staff studies that came through. What we were doing was much more personal to General Marshall--his trips, his correspondence, his schedules, that sort of thing. And I certainly was not in on any of the things that got made about whether they were going to have a manpower policy of four million or two million or six million, whatever. That sort of thing was in the hard machinery rather than for our staffing operations that we did.

BURG: Did you happen to run into a Colonel Stack, James Stack?

MINNICH: Oh, yes. But you see he came back from Europe, and I had met him I think before that when he had come across the ocean once or twice and looked in on the office. But when General Eisenhower came back from Europe, Colonel Stack came back too you see. And he in effect became the equivalent of, well I don't

know whether he was the equivalent of Frank McCarthy or Merrill Pasco. Right there is the immediate high level staff assistant to General Eisenhower, just as McCarthy and Pasco were the high level assistants to General Marshall.



BURG: Yes, all right, I see. I know Stack, and we were doing interviews out in Tacoma when he died, and we were not able to complete that part of it. So I never got a clear picture from Stack of what he was doing when he got back here. We were into the wartime period when he was doing a great deal of liaison work back and forth. Now, Dr. Minnich, did your work put you in contact with George Marshall at fairly close range or were you doing work for him under somebody else's guidance and supervision.

MINNICH: Well I was under somebody else's guidance, but a good bit of my work went directly to him for approval or signature you see, going through these others but being unchanged by them. And on occasion I did a briefing on this, that or the other problem where it's better--well you know the old phrase, "Don't write, send word." So occasionally I would go in, perhaps three or four times in two years, year and a half. But I would see him on other occasions perhaps going to the airport with him so that



he could finish off some papers and send them back to the office. A couple of times I rode the plane with him as he came back from Europe. I would go out as courier to take the papers to him so that he'd get that much ahead of the stack that would otherwise be on his desk when he got back. This was before jet flights; so we were making long hops. What was it, seven or eight hour trip I think from Newfoundland down to Washington. So he would get virtually a day's work in on the plane and be that much ahead of the game by the time he hit the desk.



BURG: So your work included going up as far north as that to meet a flight coming in from England or Scotland and come back down with him.

MINNICH: I'll waste your tape, but I love to tell the story about the shortest overseas trip on record.

BURG: Go ahead.

MINNICH: It was one of these meet operations and the meeting ground was Bermuda. So I got the pouch, and I went up to New York and caught the army transport to go to Bermuda. They were

presumably on their way into Bermuda from the Azores. When I landed in Bermuda the commanding Colonel there met me and was very unhappy telling me that after I was in the air for Bermuda the weather pattern had changed a bit and they decided that they would go the northern route to Newfoundland rather than the southern route to Bermuda. So I had the pouch in Bermuda. We had a fairly tense two or three hours because they didn't like the weather conditions and they didn't really have a plane that could fly direct from Bermuda to Newfoundland. I think the Colonel wanted me to tell him that I had to go to Newfoundland, and I wasn't about to tell him that the plane had to go to Newfoundland. That was his business whether the plane could easily go to Newfoundland or not. It would be nice if I could go to Newfoundland. Well they finally decided they could do it. And we went up in this weather plane, a B-25 weather plane, with none of the niceties of life, not any heat or anything like that on it.

BURG: Twin-engine medium bomber.

MINNICH: Twin-engine medium bomber. We went up in that, and they gave me six or eight comforters to try to keep warm, and we



flew through the night, and you know there's a point of no return there. There's nothing closer than Newfoundland or Bermuda if you look at the map. One or the other is always the closest place. So if you're not going to go to Newfoundland, you've got to go back to Bermuda.

BURG: The Atlantic coast is not reachable.



MINNICH: It's far enough off you see. So we went along, and we went past that point of no return of getting back to Bermuda, and we went on to Newfoundland, and we landed. We landed in snow that was piled up on the edges of the runways higher than the plane. It was like going through a tunnel of snow and got there just about an hour, thirty minutes or so, before General Marshall's plane came in from the Azores. So he knew what had been going on through radio communications. He greeted me appreciatively when he saw me there with a pouch for him, and we had breakfast in Newfoundland then got on his plane and came back down to Washington. Well they wouldn't quite believe me when I turned in my travel reimbursement request, that I had been gone less than twenty-four hours to Bermuda and Newfoundland and back to Washington.

BURG: Well that B-25 could make pretty good time, fast aircraft. Let me have a second lieutenant's view of George Marshall, this most unusual circumstance that you came to see him in operation.

MINNICH: A great man. Completely impressive. A gentleman. Brilliant. Kindly. The stories about him are legendary. He'd drive his little old Plymouth in from Fort Myer you know, and some people were a little bit afraid of the way in which he drove that Plymouth because he moved awfully fast, and he'd whip down the ramp into the underground garage under there. But any number of times in bad weather he'd stop along the way and pick up anybody that was waiting for a bus. Odds were they were going to the Pentagon you know if they were waiting for a bus over in there, and he'd stop and fill his car up with people from the bus stop. They wouldn't know who he was. He never would wear his rank outside on a raincoat. And they'd go along with him and be amazed when they went into an underground garage, and he'd take them up in his elevator. It was the special elevator to get to the chief of staff's office, you know. And only after they got outside and looked back at the plaque that was over the door did



they realize who they had been helped along by.

BURG: Just a kindly middle-aged man.

MINNICH: At Christmas time he and Mrs. Marshall would collect up any of the bachelor lieutenants that didn't have any place to go for Christmas dinner and get them out to Fort Myer and have a little family affair out there. Thoughtful as could be. Just terrifically great to work for.



BURG: It sounds that way. He would greet you with friendliness, not just because you had flown all the way up from Bermuda, but on these various courier trips that you made I get the impression that he was solicitious about you when you met him.

MINNICH: And all others.

BURG: Now let me ask you this question about that period of time in your life. Do you now recollect, I'll use the vulgar, flap, do you recall any flaps in that office with respect to the war effort or with respect to the domestic political scene as it impinged on the war effort? Anything that caused you and your group special problems?

[ Interruption ]



MINNICH: One of the greatest concerns for all of us was what would happen to the American war effort against the Japanese after the surrender in Europe -- tremendous concern lest there be this great demand for bringing everybody home from Europe and putting them back in civilian life and letting up on the production effort and letting up on the appropriations and all the rest you see. General Marshall was terrifically concerned about that, and there was a good bit of flap. I got exposed to it in two different ways other than reading the newspapers and other things that came through routinely. One of the greatest things that I remember about General Marshall was when he took the initiative to try and offset some of this demobilization effort by going down to the Library of Congress to an informal meeting with however many members of congress wanted to sit in. He went down without a note in his hand, and he talked for about an hour. And it was one of the most lucid, convincing, compelling talks that I have ever heard as he took all of these complicated things, one strand at a time, developed it so far and then wove it together for the interactions that were involved. The audience

was just spellbound as they listened to him, and the congratulations after it were just terrific.

BURG: That's remarkable. You accompanied him on that trip?

MINNICH: Yes. ADC [Aide-deCamp] sort of thing, just going along with him, making sure the car was in the right place, whatever.



BURG: Had you been part of the process of putting together that data for his use?

MINNICH: Oh, no, he had it all up here. He was living this.

BURG: Nobody had to brief him in order to make that presentation.

MINNICH: No, no, he was at this all the time because he was doing it from the great strategic policies that he had been living with on what was involved here and what was involved there and what was involved there. So that he was talking what he knew best.

BURG: Did this occur sometime perhaps in the spring of 1945 as

you remember? Prior to Germany's collapse I would suppose.

MINNICH: I would say summer. I don't know when. The outcome in Europe was clear. There was no longer any doubt about what the outcome in Europe would be. And maybe it was over.

BURG: It folded there in May; I think about May 9 of '45.



MINNICH: Well it could have been April, but it was right there when they knew they'd be facing the demobilization bit very quickly.

BURG: It's interesting because I suspect that most of us, that was the year in which I was drafted. I think the most of my group would have assumed without giving it a bit of thought that it was all laid on--that the minute Germany was out of it we were turning the other direction, and yet General Marshall had to spend that time selling congressional leaders.

MINNICH: Absolutely.

BURG: For fear that we would simply let down.



MINNICH: The other way in which I saw it first hand was in the mail that came in from the public. General Marshall insisted that every bit of mail that came from the public to his office be given first class treatment. He had a list of all the mail that came every day unless there was some letter writing campaign where we could lump it together and say ninety-two cards promoting this. But, otherwise, each letter was individually listed for him, and I did the briefs on a good many of those with just two lines as to what the letter was all about or three lines or maybe six if it had all that content to it, so that he knew what was in his mail. Now he couldn't take the time to read all of it. But he'd read that list, and almost every list came out with a check mark or two check marks, two items checked, three, whatever, which meant that he wanted to see the reply. And he would be open if there was some reason that maybe he shouldn't answer it, nevertheless, he wanted to see our reply before it went out. And these were usually heartbreak cases. These were letters from the mothers and the fathers or whatnot of men in the army.



BURG: I see. Making pleas for some kind of special treatment.

MINNICH: Not necessarily special treatment, maybe they hadn't heard from Johnny for so long after they had heard that he was wounded, you see. And he was extremely sensitive to that. We did a certain amount of this routinely through the adjutant general anyway, and we tried to improve the system so that more of it got done regularly after he had flagged things that he thought shouldn't be happening or where the system didn't look good enough. Let three, four or five of these show up, and if he pounced on them every time, then it was time to go to talk to the G-1 or the adjutant general or somebody and make sure things were going as best they could go. In a way it was policy development that he was doing even while he was looking at these individual heartbreak cases. The "only-surviving-son" was one of his initiatives I'm pretty sure. I think it started out, if you lost two sons then your third son or third and fourth would not be sent into combat zones. And I think they eventually got that to where even if one son were lost, then an only surviving son would not go into combat.



BURG: I think just prior, of course it would have been prior to your going to that office, there had been that disaster in North Africa where some of our national guard units had gone into battle with everyone in this company or this battery out of the same town. You recall, in the Dakotas, one town lost in one affair, I think Kasserine, they lost something like thirteen of their young men in that one affair, and I believe there too was a case where General Marshall reacted to that--no more of that if we can avoid it. As much as possible, spread those men out.

I wonder, do you recollect working on some of the problems that occurred, it would have been probably in 1945, there was great unhappiness with the returning of men from Europe and the handling of them in the equivalent of a "repple-depple" [Ed. note: a replacement depot] --the food evidently was very poor, the camps were not managed well.



MINNICH: I don't have much memory of that. What I remember more were the special pleas that were made, and I used to parody some of them with full understanding of how much it did mean to a

family. Nevertheless you could characterize a lot of these letters as being, "General Marshall, you really ought to let out of the army first all those boys who have blue hair and red eyes, and it just so happens that my boy, Johnny, has blue hair and red eyes."



BURG: Yes, yes, they would fall into a pattern. But he never treated them that way himself?

MINNICH: No. No, he saw this as part of a real serious problem, an understandable problem, an understandable desire by the American people. But one which he felt really should not be allowed to prevail. The other big thing that I remember was his forward looking concern about what the army would be after the war was over. He would never forget that army of, what was it, two hundred thousand or something like that that we had up till the late 1930s--

BURG: '39, '40.

MINNICH: --and the starvation of the military where the appropriations were so low. And obviously we never did demobilize that

far though we did go pretty far down. But that was one of his great concerns--that the U.S. would over react and put themselves so much in the open to where we could be in trouble again for lack of taking proper care to be prepared.



BURG: Yes. As a student of history he remembered the post Civil War period of time and the enormous reduction of forces. Now, another thing that I wanted to ask about this period of your life, I can't help but feel, again stressing the uniqueness, here you were working closely under General Marshall's immediate eye in effect with Colonel McCarthy and others, and within a period of about seven years or so, seven to ten years, you were going to find yourself connected with an election campaign, connected with the White House where a staff system was put in and which included, in fact, men that you had met there in the war department. So prior to talking about that with you on our next interview, let me ask you, for example, did you meet at this time in the war department, General [ ] Paul T. [ ] Carroll?

MINNICH: Yes. As a matter of fact the last month or so maybe two months that I was there I was working under General Carroll, and that becomes the direct connection as to why I was in the White House seven years later, with a bit of luck in between which is

another story. But it became a one-for-one connection.

BURG: Now was that in late 1945 that you went with General Carroll at the war department?

MINNICH: Well you see what happened is that the old guard was leaving. Colonel Pasco left. The transition was there from Marshall to Eisenhower, and the staffs changed. Eisenhower brought in his staff, so much of which he had with him in Europe, and this was looking toward the long term then you see, post-war. Whereas the Pascos and the Davenports and others wanted to get back to their legal profession in Richmond. They were in for the duration, not for the long term.

BURG: These men were not West Pointers?

MINNICH: No, they were pretty much VMI [Virginia Military Institute] of which General Marshall was.

BURG: Yes, of course. How about McCarthy, sir? Was he a West Pointer, or do you recollect that?

MINNICH: I don't think any of--you see, West Point was out there



leading divisions. Now that's not a slap at VMI, but, in effect, you have these people who had been at VMI but were not career soldiers. But when 1941 came along, 1942, they're into active duty very fast, but they had not had all that line service you see. And, lawyers being lawyers, the skill that they could bring was more in the administrative work, frequently. Now Frank McCarthy was not a lawyer, he was a good all around man, many talents.



BURG: That's an interesting aspect of it. It never crossed my mind. Very interesting. Someone may want to follow that up a little bit. That's terrific.

MINNICH: I expect you will find that there were a good many VMI people like General Marshall himself who had stayed in the army all the way through.

BURG: Yes, First World War types.

MINNICH: Yes, or even graduates of VMI in the '20s or early '30s went on to make the army a career rather than going to civilian

life. And so they would have been in the regular mechanism, and they would have been out there leading divisions too.

BURG: Yes. I'm sure that happened too. But I hadn't realized it was any kind of a small concentration of them just in the immediate office where you were.



MINNICH: Well you can see what happened. However it was that Colonel McCarthy became just the right man for General Marshall I don't know the story. Possibly they had met at VMI sometime. I don't know.

BURG: Or it could have been an old boys' network which I'm sure--

MINNICH: Possibly, though I have a glimmer of a memory that Frank was somewhere else in the war department, naturally assigned, no VMI, no Marshall connection sticking out. But that he did so well that he came quickly to the notice and was moved up very fast to where he became Secretary, General Staff.

BURG: It wouldn't be very likely for General Marshall to show any kind of favoritism to someone simply because he wore a VMI rank?



It doesn't strike me that he's that kind of man.

MINNICH: Oh, no, no. But you see the other thing that happened though was that McCarthy could very well, you see, have known somebody and could know that that was just the right man to do this kind of a job and would be available for him. So that McCarthy might very well have reached for these Richmond people who were also VMI.

BURG: That's quite possible.



MINNICH: And they were quite acceptable to General Marshall.

BURG: Now General Carroll was coming back from overseas.

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: And what was the nature of your duty with him, Dr. Minnich?

MINNICH: The same as it had been. He, in effect, took Pasco's place. And so I was doing the same work with him and doing a lot of drafting of paperwork and the staff bit of shaking things out. If a paper came through and it looked as if it had a hole in it or somewhere was off from what we happened to know was the trend

that General Marshall had on his mind, then General Eisenhower after the switch, why then it would take a little leg work to go out and chat with various people and shape it up further and find out what was involved: Was something open to reconsideration? Were there compelling reasons for doing it this way, that way, or the other way?

BURG: Now, in short, when that happens General Marshall has left the chief of staff's office: General Eisenhower is there.

MINNICH: That's right.



BURG: Did you find yourself seeing General Eisenhower at about the same ratio that you had seen General Marshall?

MINNICH: No, in part because I wasn't there very much and in part because I was carrying the aftermath of General Marshall's correspondence in many respects. The people that came in with General Eisenhower were in the groove of doing things his way. You know there's a personal relationship on all of this.

BURG: Of course, of course.

MINNICH: And in effect I became, I think, the last of the transition of the old staff going out.

BURG: I wondered whether you had or not.

MINNICH: I think I was just about the last. Maybe somebody else was a little longer than I. But I had my eye you see on going back to grad school in the spring term which meant roughly a January departure from the Pentagon.

BURG: So this would be January of '46?

MINNICH: Yes.



BURG: Now how about the style, if we can use that term, the contrast in style between Pasco who had remained at the War Department and Carroll who is coming back from SHAEF overseas? Was there a discernible difference between these men in the way in which they handled things? Things that might, for example, suggest to you, Dr. Minnich, there's a great deal of difference between the Eisenhower SHAEF style and the George Marshall style?

MINNICH: I don't know whether that flowed from on top or whether it built up from the bottom; I don't know. But you take the direct Pasco-Carroll comparison contrast: Carroll always seemed to be wound up tight and Pasco always seemed to be alert but not nervous. Very calm, I don't want to say slow, but measured. Whereas Pete was sort of a nervous grab-it-here, grab-it-there, shake-it-over-there, tug-it-a-little-bit--more of a coiled spring. This has no meaning whatsoever as to their effectiveness because both of them were extremely able people. But it was the style of approach to something.

BURG: But as you and I know, shortly after the Eisenhower Administration was launched in '53 General Carroll died.

MINNICH: Heart attack first, then came back to work, then another heart attack and died.

BURG: And it is my understanding that in that first year or so, the tenseness was still there and visible.

MINNICH: I think so. Even more so there than it had been back in the Pentagon.



BURG: I see, I see. It may be that he was simply that kind of a man, a racing metabolism, a hard driving kind of man. One thing that we would like to know ultimately is whether that developed while he was at SHAEF or whether his army colleagues recollect him to be like that in 1930s too. We'll find out.

MINNICH: I sat in the same office with him for six weeks or so you see, December-January. But I didn't really know him personally. I could see how he worked.

BURG: Now here's another question I meant to ask you so that we have a contrast with later on. I would assume that during the period of time you were at the war department you were certainly not working the federal day. I would expect that your hours tended to stretch out on either side of the normal eight-hour day.

MINNICH; More so at the beginning and then less as it went along after Germany was defeated. The volume went down. Certainly we worked more than the eight-thirty to five-thirty or nine to five-thirty, whatever it was. My memory is we were in there about eight, and it was six, six-thirty, regularly for me, some-



times later, depending on what had to be done by tomorrow. McCarthy was always there till seven or later. Pasco I think frequently went a little bit earlier than McCarthy unless it was something hot, critical that had to be done. Part of that's your life style again. McCarthy was the bachelor. Pasco married with a couple of kids there at home, and he'd like to get home to dinner with them. So if he could get away at six-thirty that was fine.

BURG: I see. And you too were a bachelor at that time.

MINNICH: I was a bachelor.



BURG: General Carroll, did he tend to keep hours, longer hours, even though it was now after the war?

MINNICH: I don't really remember. I think at that stage of the game I was knocking off pretty much as early as I could and going on my way. I was married at that point. I got married in November '45. So being a newly-wed I had an interest in catching the bus out to Shirlington as fast as I could. And the heat was off me at that point. I was doing a cleanup job. So I left and he was

still there, and how long he stayed I don't know.

BURG: In the short time that we have available may I ask you this, you at that time, just prior to your separation, are a young college type with an M.A. from Duke. Clearly you're not going to stay in the army; you don't intend to stay in the army, a man, perhaps by then twenty-seven years old, maybe even twenty-eight.

MINNICH: Twenty-seven, over twenty-seven.



BURG: How did you view McCarthy-Pasco-Carroll intellectually? Did you get along readily with them? Did you find them to be men with minds and the capacity to use those minds?

MINNICH: Oh, very such so. Very much so, and very broad gauged people.

BURG: They were? Well read people?

MINNICH: Yes.

BURG: And General Carroll was in that same mold?

MINNICH: Yes. Even brilliant people I would say.

BURG: You found yourself completely at ease with them, in that sense, as a second lieutenant?

MINNICH: Well, they had so much more experience at it than I did so that actually we didn't have that kind of a thing going.

BURG: You didn't see them socially after hours too much?

MINNICH: Pasco, yes. Pasco and McCarthy both invited us out frequently.

BURG: They're closer to your age.

MINNICH: Very close, yes.



BURG: General Carroll I assume was a little older than you.

MINNICH: A little bit older.

BURG: I think he was only in his forties when he died.

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: All right this then with you leaving that operation and



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going back to the graduate school, going to Cornell, would be an excellent place to stop it. So I'll thank you so much for your time.





INTERVIEW WITH

L. Arthur Minnich

by

Maclyn P. Burg  
Oral Historian

on

February 6, 1975

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

This interview is being conducted on February 6 with L. Arthur Minnich, in Dr. Minnich's office at the State Department, Washington, D. C. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff and present for the interview are Dr. Minnich and Dr. Burg.

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DR. BURG: We had taken you to 1946 at which point you left the army, and what I wanted to know then was, what was your course of action following separation from service? What did you do then?



DR. MINNICH: Well, I went up to Cornell to graduate school and resumed my study of history, working for a Ph.D at that point. And from then until the end of the summer of '48 I was at Cornell.

BURG: And did I ask you on the last trip with whom you worked on your Ph.D.

DR. MINNICH: Primarily with Dr. Edward Whiting Fox who had been at Harvard. And actually he had been here at the State Department during the war in the policy planning section or whatever they called it at that point. And he arrived at Cornell in the fall of '46 and for the next two years I worked very closely with him. His interest and mine was modern European

history, particularly French history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

BURG: So you went right ahead. You finished out your work. May I ask the dissertation title?



MINNICH: Something about the--well, basically it was on the Léon Bourgeois ministry there in France in 1895--it's been so long since I've done this--18--very roughly 1893 to 1897. He was only there for six months, but I wrote the fore and aft of his ministry in order to get it put into context. Léon Bourgeois was really sort of an early Franklin Roosevelt New Deal. His ministry stood and fell pretty quickly, like French ministries did, on the basis of introducing a graduated income tax. And this was a tremendously graduated tax as I remember it now: it was something like one percent on the first ten thousand francs and two percent on the next, and it got all the way up to three or four percent! And this was just horrifying to the French people. I'm convinced that that was the reason for his fall though the stated reasons were his troubles in the French overseas operation that they had where the Senate cut off funds and, in effect, forced him out.

BURG: I'm sure you found that kind of work satisfying, your graduate school experience.

MINNICH: Very much so.



BURG: What particularly appealed to you about it, may I ask?

MINNICH: Well, it's the people you are with. It's the kind of work that is independent work, and of course, there was the intellectual challenge of it. I had long been pointed toward a teaching career. I liked academia, liked research, liked the enrichment that went with what you do naturally.

BURG: There was always that appeal within you for that kind of work.

MINNICH: Yes, very definitely.

BURG: And this satisfied it. Now, I was myself still in the army at that point. Now in '48 I was also in college but not in the job market. What kind of job market was there in '48 when you left Cornell.

MINNICH: There was a pretty good market. All of us that were leaving--I guess just two or three of us from the history department--we all got placed. We had interviews in various places. I think probably the best opportunity was out at the University of Washington in the history department there, and one of my friends that I had worked with--actually I first met him at prep school and we went through Princeton together--he got to Cornell for graduate school before I did but we wound up at the same time with Ph.D.s in history. His speciality was medieval history as I remember it. But at any rate, he went out to the University of Washington. I made my connection with Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.

BURG: Who was it that went out to the University of Washington?

MINNICH: This was Scott Lytle, L-y-t-l-e.

BURG: So you took your job at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania. How long did you stay there?

MINNICH: Four years. In 1952 I left. I was there as an instructor for two years and got the promotion to assistant professor--



BURG: And tenure?

MINNICH:--And had two years of that. No tenure.

BURG: No tenure.



MINNICH: No, tenure went with associate professor, but I was assistant professor. It was a small history department. As a matter of fact, the first semester that I was there there was only the head of the department, Ed Coddington and myself teaching the whole gamut of history courses with a great--as you can imagine--fifteen hour or more load. He gave the basic American history course for freshmen and sophomores, and I did sections and graded papers in that even though my expertise on American history was not even good enough to short-change the students. I brought the needed manpower and he ran the course, and apparently it was all right. He was a nice guy and a nice way to work. When we graded exam papers, why he would say, "Come on over to the house after dinner." And he took care of the niceties (Scotch!) while we graded papers, and he made sure that I was grading to his standard is what it amounted to.

BURG: You would learn a great deal from that kind of a situation--painfully you would learn it.

MINNICH: But then the next semester the fellow who had been on leave came back and, over the period of time, two more people were added so we had a respectable history department there by the time I left. It started to break down after that, temporarily. And they were scrambling for some more people--I left and another young fellow left.

BURG: Had you found another job that appealed to you?



MINNICH: No, I hadn't. But this is really where the General [George C.] Marshall-General Eisenhower story picks up again. This was the spring of '52. Things were awfully tough because, if you consult the pay scales then, they were extremely bad. We had two children at that point. We'd gone through all of my wife's savings bonds. I had done things like carry mail at Christmas time and go sit on the street and count trucks for a traffic count that were passing in my spare time trying to get the few extra nickels that we needed.

BURG: This is while you were actually an assistant professor in a--



MINNICH: Instructor, assistant professor, I don't remember the exact timing on these. I'd had summer work the several preceding summers for four, five or six hundred dollars, whatever it amounted to which made the margin that we had to have. And as we got into the spring of '52 it became more and more apparent that there wasn't likely to be any summer income out of Lafayette College. There was a great deal of faculty agitation going on--not very effectively, but what it was doing was bringing out clearly what the cost of living was and what we were getting and where we actually spent our money and how impossible the situation was. It was just about that time that I read in the morning Times that the street cleaners in New York were threatening to go on strike because they weren't satisfied with what they were getting and they were getting more than assistant professors at Lafayette College, and that was just a little bit too much. So I made up my mind to go down to Washington and look for something. I came down here and looked up some old friends in the Pentagon and got their advice on how to go about finding a job in Washington. I



eventually was offered one by CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] as a research--you see that was my ability there with the historical background. I was offered one, I think at a grade nine, which wasn't all that very grand. The personnel officer told me even as she gave me the papers to fill out for a clearance and all the rest of it that I probably ought to look around more because it seems she said, in what was not a fashionable word then but is now, that "you're over-qualified for a nine. You ought to get better than a nine." She said, "I shouldn't tell you this, but really it is in my interest because we in personnel aren't really anxious to recruit people that we know are going to very quickly find out that they can do better and they're off some place else and we've lost our investment of time and training."

So, I had that possibility at any rate in my hip pocket, and went to lunch very happily with General [Paul T.] Carroll who was just back from Europe. General Eisenhower had just come back from Europe to start his campaign, and this was the very day that General Eisenhower went out to Abilene. This was pre-convention. He went out to Abilene and Pete Carroll



stayed behind. (The military uniform wasn't really a good thing to be putting up on a political platform.) He stayed in Washington, and I knew that really he was having to again re-establish himself in the military, that he was not about to go on into the political run of things. He would have had to leave the military if he did. So we had lunch. But Pete was interested in his boss's welfare. Pete said to me, "Why don't you go work for the Eisenhower campaign?"

And I said, "Thank you, no. This is a Republican campaign and they won't want a known Democrat."

Pete said, "What the hell." He said, "They need good people." Well, I sort of laughed at the whole thing and went back to Easton a day or so later. And the very day that we got back there was a telephone call from New York from Arthur Vandenberg, Jr., who was chief of staff through the operation for General Eisenhower. It wound up that Vandenberg invited me aboard the campaign staff.

BURG: Now Carroll had dropped your name with Vandenberg.

MINNICH: That's right. You see, what Carroll's concern was,





was the staffwork for the candidate. And as he said to me, "There are an awful lot of people around who are ready to help who know a lot about the ins and outs of politics. But I don't really see any of these people who are real good in doing the kind of staffwork that this man has got to have." And Carroll was remembering, of course, the staffwork that I had done in the Marshall office--at that point five or six years before.

BURG: Now, did Vandenberg write to you, did he call you?

MINNICH: No he asked me to come up to New York. And I was up there right quick and he interviewed me and he put me in to work on the research team which Gabe [Gabriel] Hauge was in charge of.

BURG: What kind of instructions or what kind of an interview was it with Vandenberg? What did he lay stress upon as he talked with you?

MINNICH: Oh, I think the general background of what I had done before. We went very carefully because I told him mighty quick that I had this visible Democratic connection. It was a very

minimum one. I had gotten myself elected as precinct man to the local Democratic committee on a write-in vote of four votes to two, the four votes consisting of myself and my wife and my political science friend and his wife. The political science friend had spotted this business of a couple of precinct men who had been going along for years, just on their own write-in ballots. And so we very quietly did a four-man write-in and he got elected and I got elected. We never did get to a meeting because that had been there in the spring, you see. And before they convened the first meeting of these newcomers, of upstarts, I was off to New York and the campaign. But obviously it showed a Democratic sympathy. I could tell Vandenberg--and I gathered he believed it, it was accurate--but if he went back to my Princeton yearbook for that interest he would find me listed as a Republican there, but that I really was an independent, that I would go this way or that way. And the local regime in Easton, Pennsylvania was so damned corrupt and so stupid about how they assessed garbage collection--that was the real issue I had with the Easton city hall -- that I decided



if I couldn't beat them, I'd join 'em. And in effect, I was going to reform the Easton political situation!

BURG: I would imagine that Vandenberg must have been very amused at this--

MINNICH: I would expect so.



BURG:--at this story of your dabbling in the politics of Easton, Pennsylvania.

MINNICH: Yes, I would expect so. He did realize that we would be in pretty deeply in some current issues and he checked me on how well-read I was, and I allowed that I was about as well-read as the New York Times and Newsweek would allow, but I was no real expert on these other things, for this was the time I was reading French history and European history for all the lectures I had to give. But he took me on as a jack-of-all trades, consulted with Hauge of course, and Hauge allowed that it was worth trying.

BURG: So you were assigned to Hauge?

MINNICH: That's right.



BURG: What kind of man was Hauge as you saw him at that stage in both your careers? He, too, had a Ph.D., in economics.

MINNICH: That's right, that's right. He had taught actually at Princeton, I think, at one time. But most recently at that point he had been high up the line in getting out Business Week, the MacGraw Hill business publication as I remember it. And I'm not quite sure what his official title was, but he was one of the important characters in getting that out. I don't think he was editor, but he may have been. But he had his economics background, received a Ph.D. in economics, and I don't know but what he had been teaching at Princeton even when I was there as a student. He was just a couple of years older than me. He might have been there then, but I had no previous acquaintance with him.

BURG: How did he strike you?

MINNICH: He was a very bright guy and a very nice guy, very easy to get along with, very calm. He knew what to go after in

terms of where the information was, what kind of information was needed. In effect, he was in charge of the research team.

BURG: How many on that team besides you?



MINNICH: I don't know how many people he had working with him because the idea was that I was going to be the front man, that I would travel with the campaign, and I would relay and make all presentations, you see, or do such written work as might be necessary, briefing papers or whatever. He pretty much operated there from New York. That was the original idea.

BURG: In effect then, in a pre-computer day, the research computer was there in New York and you were then to have access back to it as you needed it.

MINNICH: That's right. He would alert me to things that were coming up. For instance, he spotted--I doubt that I would have spotted it myself--that sooner or later along the way there General Eisenhower would be asked about the St. Lawrence Seaway. And so I started compiling a file and getting the material that



they sent along to me and I'm off to the Library every now and then to do a little digging myself to try to build up as much knowledge as I could get about the St. Lawrence Seaway situation. That's one of the few things that I really remember that did happen the way people expected it was going to happen. The day would come actually in Detroit, naturally, when General Eisenhower, preparing for his meetings the next day, knew that he would be asked about the St. Lawrence Seaway. So I gave him a very brief oral presentation as to what was involved. And then I had one of the hardest questions and most precise questions put to me; I don't think anybody had ever asked me a question like this before. I remember very clearly, he said, "Mr. Minnich, would you build the seaway?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Why?" I don't know what all I put into it, but I know that one of the things that I put in was my impression from what I had read that if we didn't do it the Canadians were going to go ahead and do it anyway. And to me it seemed that it would be just an intolerable thing, both in substance and in posture, for this to be all Canadian and the United States not willing to pick up a piece of it.



BURG: Where presumably many of our midwestern agricultural and business interests were going to want to use that seaway would have to use it on Canadian terms if they were allowed to go ahead and build it on their own.

MINNICH: That was involved certainly.



BURG: But he asked you for your opinion on this matter and surprised you with that question. Was that one of the--

MINNICH: You see I was his historical research type that reflected opinions and facts and things and didn't really try to stick an oar in with my own opinion. In effect, I was supposed to be the honest broker of serving up the best available information in good staff style.

BURG: Which he would use in whatever way he chose to do it. Was that one of the first briefings that you gave to the General or was that just the first one that happens to strike your mind?

MINNICH: That's the one that I remember; I don't know whether it was first or not. Actually, I didn't do very many of them. On occasion I would fill Arthur Vandenberg in on some of the things where we had information on this, that or another thing

that might be expected to come up. And it turned out that I didn't really do a great deal along that line. The way the campaign went, they didn't get into a lot of issues of great depth where they needed all of this information coming along. I think a good bit was handled by phone directly to New York where Vandenberg or others on staff would be talking back to where most of the people were working.



BURG: Although the issues may not have come up, it would be your feeling that had issues continually presented themselves, that the train and New York were organized to handle--had it turned into a heavily issue-centered campaign, you were prepared, basically prepared to handle it.

MINNICH: Not all that well. Not all that well because every now and then for something or other I would go on over to the Denver Public Library. We had settled down out in Denver for a little while, you know.

BURG: Operating out of the Brown Palace.

MINNICH: That's right. And for lack of anything else and I

guess not being able to expect it out of New York in twenty four hours or so, or maybe to cover my own ignorance, I was trying to educate myself up to the level of what could be expected out of New York. This is all pretty far back. I did a fairly wide number of things--sort of a jack-of-all-trades as a matter of fact.

BURG: Now this is before the convention?



MINNICH: This is before the convention, here and there. The facility of handling paperwork, of taking a vast mass of material and condensing it and writing notes on this and that.

BURG: If we go now to the Brown Palace in 1952, prior to the convention, was Arthur Vandenberg, so to speak, your boss at the Brown Palace?

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: Was he pretty much in command of that pre-convention staff in Denver, or were the responsibilities shared between Vandenberg and others?

MINNICH: I don't know; I didn't sit in on the way things went. You know, if they had their staff meetings other than having the whole staff assembled every now and then for something--it wasn't a large staff--haven't thought about this for a long time; I'm even finding it difficult to remember what the key names were at that particular point--I think Frank Carlson was there.

BURG: Yes, I've heard that he was.

MINNICH: I believe he had been with the General ever since the Abilene appearance. I think Fred Seaton--well, no Fred may not have been at Denver, pre-convention.

BURG: I know he was there afterwards.



MINNICH: Bob Matthews was there. I think Tom [ Thomas E. ] Stephens was there. Lou Kelly was the logistics man.

BURG: Handling all the arrangements of travel and the like.

MINNICH: That's right. Bob Matthews helping along.

BURG: Sherman Adams?

MINNICH: No, you see, Sherman Adams was not pre-convention.

Sherman Adams, I think my first awareness of him was when he became floor manager at the convention and then very soon after the convention joined the headquarters at Denver, summer headquarters it was I think. I know there was a great deal of telephoning back and forth between Denver and New York.

BURG: You were working pretty much under Vandenberg--

MINNICH: That's right.



BURG: --and, with that proviso, independently. That is, you were not working

MINNICH: With the tie to Hauge in New York, you see. And then general handy man with the facility toward materials, let's say. For instance, when Roscoe Drummond wanted to write something up, he went to Bob Mullins I guess it was at that point-- and I may be mixing pre-convention with post-convention.

BURG: I can see how it could happen.

MINNICH: But, for instance, Drummond needed some background on something or other, so in effect I became the historian for

whatever it would have been to fill him in on some things that we had.

BURG: Now your activities then at Denver were pretty much along those lines--a little bit of historical research, some of it to fill you in, some of it to answer questions, and general factotum used as you were needed?

MINNICH: That's right.



BURG: And then from there the group goes to Chicago and you accompany them.

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: Was that your first major political convention?

MINNICH: Absolutely.

BURG: Which must have been fascinating to you, given your own background in history. By the way, did you arrive there considerably in advance of the convention, that is a week or two weeks in advance.

MINNICH: No, I think only a day or two.

BURG: I see.

MINNICH: Possibly three.



BURG: The whole party?

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: And what kind of assignments did you draw then during that convention period.

MINNICH: Not very much as a matter of fact. At that point they were not worried about my level and the kind of things I was doing, but that I was at hand for any miscellaneous things Vandenberg might want. I was, in effect, told to stay close to Stanley High who was the speech writer.

BURG: How is that last name spelt, Mr. Minnich?

MINNICH: H-i-g-h. He was a feature writer for Reader's Digest, you know, and he was lending his hand to the campaign. And so I worked along with Stanley High, in effect, as being an assistant



who could reach for material. Again, it was in the research, written material sort of thing on which he could draw as necessary.



BURG: You by then had no small knowledge of what was available, because this was the material that you had been working with, in some cases compiling in Denver.

MINNICH: That's right. And units of newspaper clips that I had picked up along the way that were pertinent and things like that. I don't know, if a real personnel expert went in and looked at it they might call me a supernumerary.

BURG: Or so it may have seemed to you at that time. Did you do any of the writing with High?

MINNICH: We were in the hotel across the street from the Conrad Hilton--I've forgotten the name of it--where most of the candidates had their headquarters.

BURG: Was it the Blackstone?

MINNICH: That's it. And I do know I had a great bit of time where I could watch the proceedings on television. I went out to

the colesium--cow--what was it now?

BURG: Cow Palace?



MINNICH: Cow Palace, yes. No, the Cow Palace is--

BURG: in San Francisco.

MINNICH: It was out at the stockyards.

BURG: I know what you mean, I can't think of its name. You got a chance to really observe. You were watching the process.

MINNICH: I was probably doing that more than anything else, and, if somebody needed any errand run, I guess I was there to do it. I certainly was not in any high policy position or influencing any of that--

BURG: Nor in a position to sit in on any of the meetings that--

[ Interruption ]

BURG: Thank you for showing me that. Now, when the nomination is secured and General Eisenhower becomes a candidate, were there any meetings in which you participated, where your presence

was needed prior to leaving Chicago? Now the campaign must be set up, must be arranged, and was there in any change in your job responsibilities even before you left Chicago?

MINNICH: No, in effect, there was a day or so where people didn't know quite what they were doing. Decisions had not been made as to what the continuing staff would be. After a day or so of really no prospect of what there would be and with a great deal of anxiety on my part to go back and see my family, I made my arrangements that off I would go and I could be reached at so and so if they were willing to have me for the post-convention campaign.



BURG: So there would be a prospect that you might not be used.

MINNICH: Oh, there was very definitely that prospect. My wife had gone to Cape Cod. She had closed out the apartment that we had in Easton because by that time I knew I was not going to be teaching at Lafayette the next year.

BURG: So you had no job for the autumn at all.

MINNICH: No. Well, I had this prospect. I think some place along the way I filled out the civil service form and sent that along, little bit of insurance as something to go to. But I went

up to--well, it was Providence, and wherever my wife's sister had their summer place at that point and visited their summer place which I think was Cape Cod that year, eventually it became Westport R.I. And then stayed in their house in Providence until eventually there did come a phone call from Gabe Hauge saying, "Would you like to rejoin?"

And I said, "I certainly would."



BURG: How long did you have to sweat, Mr. Minnich, before that call came, matter of weeks?

MINNICH: Ten days maybe. I think no more than two weeks.

BURG: Well, let me ask you another question. You may not remember after these years, but do you remember what you were paid for the Denver-Chicago period?

MINNICH: No.

BURG: Was it a monthly salary or a flat salary for--

MINNICH: No, it was weekly or monthly or something like that, and I know I was very, very happy with it, whatever it was because it was over and beyond whatever was left of the monthly faculty payment. I think they paid on a year basis at Lafayette.

BURG: Ah, yes, your nine months salary stretched--



MINNICH: There was still that base and the apartment had been closed out by that point so there was no rent for the moment. And on top of whatever salary there was, and I just don't remember. On top of it, there was, of course, the hotel and daily living expenses that were paid; so that in effect I was able to take care of myself on the operation and there was a certain amount of salary that I could just send on back to the family.

BURG: Somewhere the records I'm sure will indicate what the salary levels were for those of you who were engaged in that kind of work. Now, undoubtedly--

MINNICH: I expect those campaign records are still--well, they're probably out in Abilene--

BURG: They may well be. When Dr. Hauge called you from New York, was he at that point able to tell you what your responsibilities would be or did he merely ask, "Are you prepared to work again?"

MINNICH: I don't remember.

BURG: Did you then go down to New York to start work?

MINNICH: No I went to Denver, I believe, because the candidate, by that time the Republican candidate, General Eisenhower, had decided that he would have his summer headquarters in Denver and so I packed up and I'm pretty sure I flew to Denver and rejoined out there. And again with maybe some slippage in the time factor, the way it came out was that I was working really as an assistant to Arthur Vandenberg, that I went on the trips that went out of Denver--

[ Interruption ]



--things like that and this continued even after we were back to New York. Along about Labor Day or so we went to New York and set up there and was right in close proximity to Vandenberg and was working pretty much as his staff assistant.

BURG: So the type of work perhaps at this point is pretty much the same; the level, however, is maybe a little higher than it had been. When you say staff assistant to Vandenberg, that sounds like the regularizing of what you had actually been doing in an ad hoc fashion, prior to that.

MINNICH: I expect you could call it that. A good bit of what I eventually wound up doing was Vandenberg correspondence and some of the correspondence that had to be handled at a higher level rather than just bulk mail, which was back to where I had been with General Marshall, handling correspondence for General Marshall.

BURG: So you were on some of the air trips and train trips on that campaign. Does anything stand out in your memory about that period, any of your own experiences? Once again, this is a new facet of your life.



MINNICH: Sure was, it was a great deal of educational travel-- the quickie trips, the in and out of Texas and Los Angeles and Wyoming--

BURG: That state of Washington in October.

MINNICH: I didn't get to make that trip.

BURG: You didn't?

MINNICH: I made the train trip that went to Minnesota and St. Louis, Omaha, and then back. I guess, the last trip that I

made was the one that included the fuss over Mr. Nixon's campaign fund. And I remember a good bit of the excitement, the concern that there was, especially when we were in Charleston, West Virginia and Cleveland, Ohio.



BURG: Can you tell me about that as you saw it as a passenger on that train?

MINNICH: I can't really tell you very much. I wasn't in all that close. I was not in on the policy level; I was not in on discussions; I read the papers. I was at hand without anything really to register.

BURG: You knew the press on the train.

MINNICH: when the Nixon plane came into the airport there on the top of the mountain in West Virginia. I remember one of my odd jobs was to make sure that the speech book for the President was at hand when he finally reached the podium to deliver the address, and so I carried the book. Not a very heavy intellectual job, but sometimes it took a



little bit of ingenuity to make sure the book got there when the candidate did. I remember down in Miami one time I had the book and just getting from the motorcade into the ampitheater that was there was pure chaos. And the way that I finally got it was that one of the photographers recognized me and knew that I had to go along and he just swept me into the rush of press and photographers that were moving along with something of a cleared path and propelled me up into the cleared area where I could then have the book at hand when the candidate wanted to reach for it.

BURG: So you might have a picture of Dwight D. Eisenhower standing at the lecturn and looking around for L. Arthur Minnich to show up with the speech that he is going to present.

MINNICH: Well, actually he was looking as fast as he came on to the platform out of the side of his eye, which was very good to make sure that this resource was there.

BURG: Now that book would have contained a speech, presumably large type--

MINNICH: Yes.



BURG: --appropriate, the one that he was going to make there at Miami.

MINNICH: That's right. It had been typed up during the day and he'd reworked it, however many times, and the final copy would be put in my hand just before the motorcade was about to go from the office or train or plane or whatever, which put me right up front in the motorcade, usually in either the car in front of the President or the car behind him--sometimes even in the front seat of the candidate's car.

BURG: This process was followed then on major campaign speeches, but an off the back of the train speech might be an ad-libbed--

MINNICH: Ad-libbed or maybe with a few notes on cards.

BURG: Was it part of your responsibility to provide the notes for, "Here we are in Ashtabula", and here's some things you could say.

MINNICH: You might say I was the cartographer on it perhaps; the essence of what the candidate wanted to talk about was pretty well

determined back in his car. And then Stanley High or somebody would give me some notes and say, "Fix these up on cards, would you?" And I had a big black pencil and I would fix the cards with just key words. If I contributed anything it was to pick out the right key words that would be the reminders for what the candidate had on his mind to say. There was that little bit of paperwork that had to be done. Not a very momentous job, but part of the chain.

BURG: But again one that put you in a position where you could watch things happen a little bit.

MINNICH: Yes.



BURG: So you were there at Charleston, West Virginia, when Nixon rejoined or when the two men got together again. Did the President meet that plane when Nixon came in?

MINNICH: Yes, he was out at the airport.

BURG: He was right there, and you were there too.

MINNICH: Yes, because this is the one story that I can tell you. Governor Adams was there too, and again it was a pure chaos. I came to the conclusion very quickly that there was only one sure way of making sure that the book got to the platform when the President got there, and that was to have it in the same car with him. Well, that car, there was the driver, and General Eisenhower and Mr. Nixon and Governor Adams, and I said to the Governor, "We've got a problem," there as we waited for it to get going.

He said, "What's that."

I said, "Well, I can't guarantee that this book is going to get there given the way this motorcade is going to be loused up," I said, "unless I ride along in this car." And that would never do.

BURG: Darn it.

MINNICH: I knew it would never do.

BURG: Nice try though.

MINNICH: Well, I wasn't even trying.

BURG: Weren't you?



MINNICH: In effect, it was my way of asking the Governor to be the book carrier which was a little bit beneath his standard of operation as messenger boy for the book. But he realized what the situation was and said, "I'll take the book." So he took it on that occasion. And the motorcade was messed up. I think Mrs. Eisenhower was there and her car got separated from the rest of the motorcade, and it took quite a little while before she reached the stadium and caught up with General Eisenhower.

BURG: So if we need to know what kind of private conversation might have occurred between the candidate and his vice-presidential candidate we would have to go to Governor Adams presumably or Mr. Nixon, of course, could tell us anything that might have been said.

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: I hope I can be forgiven for regretting that you did not get into that car with your trained mind and historical sense--

MINNICH: I also have a very well-trained mind not to remember things.



BURG: Really? Pity, pity.

Were you on that part of the campaign swing that went into Wisconsin where the Joseph McCarthy thing surfaced?

MINNICH: Yes.

BURG: I would imagine as a scholar you would already have begun to formulate some opinions about McCarthyism and what was occurring and you had worked with General Marshall. Of course, it's on that occasion that the speech is modified a bit. You and I both know that the General was at the time and later criticized for not having supported Marshall in the speech.

MINNICH: Yes.

BURG: Were you privy to any of that, or an observer of any of that?

MINNICH: Not really. The only memories I have of it was that it was a good bit of discussion as to whether the train would go into Wisconsin or not. I think that was sort of on again, off again. The decision got made, I don't know how, that there would



be a venture into Wisconsin. The rest of it, I wasn't privy to. I do know that the next morning, the President from the back platform made it very clear that he had great respect for General Marshall. But it's been argued enough in the paper and nobody remembers the argument now, but there obviously was the argument that when you are in politics there are a number of things that you have to do and you don't deliberately go out and pick a fight with somebody and your silence doesn't necessarily mean that you are not doing right by a friend.

BURG: That's how you felt, although I know of your great admiration for General Marshall.

MINNICH: Whether something had been in the speech or not been in the speech I don't know.

BURG: You had done no work on that speech?

Anything else that comes to your mind, interesting vignettes that you might have of personalities of that period prior to the election in 1952? You did so much traveling in so many ways of traveling--



MINNICH: Well, up to a point, up to a point, through that last train trip, and then I did not go on the rest of it. Mostly it was just paperwork out of the office helping Vandenberg along and receiving people and talking to them and screening visitors for appointments with Vandenberg or others maybe that they should see. I know Hugh Scott and Fred Seaton had offices there at the Commodore too; they were around a good bit. It was back to the old business of being staff men, coordinator, sort of thing where you get the right subject to the right people, make sure the people who want to see something or talk to somebody do it and be as helpful as you can staffwise.

BURG: So the latter stage of the campaign, your seat of action transferred back to New York City--



MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: --in the Commodore. And you were there then when election night--

MINNICH: Yes. Two stories that might add a little color for



you. One was that Abbott Washburn, whom I had been very close to along the way in the campaign, put on a little dinner party for a number of staff people--maybe a dozen of us perhaps, including my wife who had come up to New York for the occasion. And even as we were eating dinner, or just beginning to eat, he turned the radio on to see what they were saying about the turn-out during the day and they were beginning to give some early returns. Well, we had various functions. My own particular function was to keep the bulletin board and the blackboard up on what the returns were looking like, this was long before this computerized television.

BURG: Was this for the entire staff, that is the campaign headquarters staff?

MINNICH: Yes. It was for that part of the hotel, not the big auditorium, no. Not the big auditorium, but this was in the private wing where the candidate and the top staff were and a number of us. At any rate, I had all my things lined up and the chief thing then was to watch the ticker tape and listen to the



radio and take off these things as they came along and have the scoreboard, the private scoreboard, working. Well, the early returns started to show such a landslide that I got nervous about having the thing over before I even started to operate the scoreboard. And I gulped that dinner and moved up there and was real busy, but not for long because, as you remember, it was very early in the game that the outcome became very, very clear.

The other memory of the evening was that, when I could afford to take the time later on, I got my wife and we went through the hotel. I knew all the back passages, using the service elevator and getting through such security as we had and all. And was showing her the whole thing. And eventually we went to the big room, the ballroom, where party workers and delegates and followers from all over New York were there, you see. And we didn't go in and sit down, but we watched some of the entertainment from the back of the place and sort of looked over the crowd and we spotted, in the very back of it, maybe a row or two from the very back, sitting very quietly Governor and Rachel Adams.



BURG: They were there in the--

MINNICH: They were there in the Ballroom as just some of the people there.

BURG: And unrecognized?



MINNICH: There was no crowd around or anything. They just slipped in there where they could quietly watch these things and wait until eventually the President-elect could make his announcement.

BURG: Did you say anything to Governor Adams at all, or just look at them, watch them from a distance?

MINNICH: I don't remember whether we reached over and said hello or not. It wouldn't have been tough because it was about ten feet, twenty feet, away, something like that. I was quite impressed that he should be there, anonymously really, rather than being up front somehow or other and being in the limelight. That wasn't his way.

BURG: Was Mr. Eisenhower coming into that smaller display board that you had been keeping up, or was he in his own room?

MINNICH: No, this was really a wing and this was one of the rooms along the wing and the suite was at the end of the wing. I don't remember details. I don't think he ever came back to the ticker tapes. Mrs. Eisenhower did. She made a tour of the place and she looked in on us and obviously enjoyed what the tickers were saying.



BURG: Had anything been said to you, Mr. Minnich, prior to election night, about the possibility of your staying on even longer or was your career in politics up in the air again at this point?

MINNICH: I don't know the time. Obviously we had to close out the headquarters. There was a lot to be done, you see, after that. I don't think there was any question really about staying on after the election. The question was whether I would go to Washington. Well, at that point I felt pretty confident that if I did not go as part of the White House staff, certainly there would be a livelihood somewhere around Washington that I could pick up with, and I still had my CIA possibility to fall back on. By that time I was pretty well established, I'll say,

with a number of people who would know how to lend a hand to help me do something useful. I wasn't worrying at that point.

BURG: It's been observed that, in the past, in that administration particularly, coming in as they did, after twenty years of their party being out of office, that one of the key ways they would have of picking White House staff would be from those few that they'd had the opportunity to closely observe during the campaign. It's also been observed that that was not necessarily the best way to pick a staff, that the qualities needed on a campaign might not be at all the qualities one would need in the White House. But in your own specific case, the qualities that you could demonstrate in the campaign, might have a great deal of application in the White House because your work was staff work and you had a staff background.



MINNICH: You're putting it very nicely and I think that's the fact of it. A number of people who had been on the campaign did not come to the White House because theirs had been a typical campaign type operation. Bob Matthews for instance, I don't think he had any interest in coming to the White House. He had

been on loan from American Express anyway and probably wanted to continue his future there. But the kind of thing that he had been doing probably just didn't constitute a continuing White House function because so much of that would be taken over by Secret Service and other such, appointment secretary, and so on.

BURG: By contrast, James Hagerty would fit in beautifully into a White House setup because the campaign--there was very little difference.



MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: Do you happen to recall when and how you were first told that there was going to be a place for you at the White House?

MINNICH: Well, I know it was up at the Commodore and again it went to the historical background. Forrest Pogue whom you know well wrote a letter to General Eisenhower urging him to make arrangements so that proper historical records would be kept of his presidency. That letter went to Gabe Hauge, and Gabe talked with me and wanted my advice on it and it eventually turned out that Gabe talked with Governor Adams, who by that time was identified as being chief of staff, and Governor Adams

asked me if I would be interested in doing this--of coming to the White House and looking to historical records for the Eisenhower administration.



BURG: You do recollect, Mr. Minnich, whether anything comparable had been done in the Truman administration?

MINNICH: Well, as it turned out, something very comparable had been done. There were people in the Truman administration, George Elsey for instance, who had historical training and who, in their work at the White House, were involved in seeing to records being kept. Now, I don't want to call it writing the history of the administration because in my own experience what I found very quickly was that it was a matter of systematically promoting good record keeping so that there would be minutes of meetings, so that documents perhaps that were related to each other in fact were somehow related to each other in the files instead of seeming to be completely separate things.

BURG: This is the point where I would like to begin on our next session. My time is up, my tape is almost out too; so we'll start at that point on our next session.



INTERVIEW WITH  
L. Arthur Minnich

by

Maclyn P. Burg  
Oral Historian

on

June 26, 1975

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



This interview is being taped with Dr. L. Arthur Minnich in Dr. Minnich's office in the State Department on June the 26th, 1975. Present for the interview, Dr. Minnich and the interviewer is Dr. Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

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DR. BURG: I believe that when we completed our work last time, we had brought you to the White House and we had talked about the circumstances that led to your being there and your work when you first got there. As I recall, there was some thought that you as a trained historian would be in a position to, have the training to keep certain records. And one almost could hark back to that time when Douglas Southall Freeman wrote to Eisenhower and, I think he was in North Africa at the time when Freeman wrote to him, said to him, "My dear sir, after going through the papers of the Confederate command, Lee, Jackson, others, how I wish more accurate records, and complete records had been kept."

DR. MINNICH: In this instance it was Forrest Pogue who wrote the candidate, President-elect, and it went to Governor [Sherman] Adams and Gabe [Gabriel] Hauge, and they pursued the idea, and eventually agreed that I might be the right guy to do it. I don't know how far we went with this, but it turned out pretty fast that it was such a tremendous job that



there really wasn't any way that a guy, even on the spot, could recognize where were the key things, where there was more than met the eye in the newspaper accounts of all the stuff that was being done--could even begin to, then, smoke it out to see what the rest of the story was. And there were also the differences of ideas as to what constituted history. I'm a meat and a potato man whereas some people would have ideas that a good history needed the anecdotal material. Well, sure, the anecdote puts color and life and substantiation into it. But on the other hand, if it's merely the anecdotes, you haven't got much of a dinner. So, in effect, I just don't think it is possible to have a person do the comprehensive job that is necessary for what you're now trying to recover with your oral history.

BURG: Now what kind of a mandate or what plan did Adams and Hauge have in mind when you reached the White House and they first talked to you?

MINNICH: Well in effect that I was sort of a free lance agent there who would be able to keep an eye on the happenings and make a record of the Eisenhower administration, you see.



BURG: Do you remember how many there were on that staff at that particular time?



MINNICH: It was a very small staff. I suppose we were seventeen or eighteen, maybe even thirteen at the beginning, that qualified as staff members. It grew and maybe the White House staff member title was expanded to where we had twenty-five perhaps at any one time. And there was always the problem of whether in working in the executive office of the President you became a White House staff member. And a case in point that I can recall was when somebody came in with a major office that was established. No doubt about it, Nelson Rockefeller as special assistant to the President was White House staff. But if he had fifteen people there, were they all White House staff? Technical question.

BURG: But interesting because in your mind, you do make that distinction.

MINNICH: Of course I do.

BURG: It isn't 250 people who are White House staff--

MINNICH: We all worked for the President, and we had a staff list that went into the organizational directory of the Congressional Record, and, in effect, who attended staff meetings with Governor Adams. This was the, maybe it's the "inner" White House staff. Staff officer of course was a distinction as against the secretaries, clerk-file people, whatever you have, all of whom are very important, I'm quick to say. But in terms of the chief people, I suppose--

BURG: Yes. Who's carrying the responsibility.



MINNICH: Yes. Bill [William J.] Hopkins, immediately a member of the White House staff, but there was a whole complex of people who were moving all this paper that Bill had to oversee. But he was the staff member and the others were one step away.

BURG: Did Hauge and Adams tell you that this particular approach was their own or had it come from the President or in conjunction with the Presidency?

MINNICH: Oh, it was cleared with the President, of course, absolutely.

BURG: Your own reaction to this then, as a trained historian, when this plan was laid before you, was your first thought that well it could be done, or was your first thought one of I'm not too sure?

MINNICH: I was starry-eyed and I thought, yes, sure. I allowed even at the beginning that I was not the writer. You know, I could be the research man, the compiler, but if anybody was looking for a written history, naturally they would need a glossy writer, which I am not.

BURG: Did they suggest that that indeed was on their mind? Or was it merely the gathering of data that seemed to interest them?

MINNICH: I think both were. I think both were so that there would be a published record that would stand the scrutiny of professional historians.

BURG: Had there been anyone in a comparable position in the Truman administration in your knowledge?

MINNICH: I don't think so. George Elsey was a trained



historian, but I don't think he was there in that capacity. He would have an eye for it. But he had a run of assignments that--

BURG: Pretty well precluded--



MINNICH:--would preempt his time. No, I think it's useful for the White House to have a trained historian around who can be free lance and do thus and so. It can be productive; it can be useful. I don't think it can be definitive at all. We go back in to the historiography class at this point. Who's to know at the moment how to select out things that get what little bit of time you have. -

BURG: You and I both would think immediately, I think, of Eric Goldman or Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. What would be your quick, I've not given you time to think about it at all, but what would be your assessments of their roles in this same regard?

MINNICH: I can't. I don't know how they operated. I don't know who they were talking to. I haven't even followed carefully what they've done. I can write my definition of

what might be done, but that would have no relationship to what is the actuality of what a specific person has done.

BURG: And it's got to vary so much with the, if I may use the term, the quality of the administration involved as well as the particular quality and qualifications of the historian who does it, and his sympathies.

MINNICH: Well you're putting words into my mouth, but I think it's pretty obvious that if an administration is a great disappointment to somebody who's there as a professional historian, then he's immediately got a conflict between his professional expertise and the privilege that he's had. And in my own instance, I expect I would go the South Pacific and keep my mouth shut.

BURG: The whole thing is a fascinating thing which obviously we can't get into, but at some point would be most intriguing, if they've not done it already, to see papers focused on this sort of thing, the assessment of the administration historian and his objectivity and what happens to that.

MINNICH: Well in effect it never did materialize that I was the administration historian.



BURG: No.



MINNICH: It didn't work that way. I may have told you the story previously when Jimmy [James] Reston called up one day to check a point about the Bermuda conference and talked with me to ask if I were going. And I said, "No, I'm not going to Bermuda." And he came out with an article to the effect that neither the state department historian nor the White House historian--for Christ's sake there wasn't a White House historian. I don't care what the intent was at the beginning, but by that time there was no pretense of having a White House historian. It's impossible.

BURG: How long did it take before--I would assume you are the first one to realize, well this task is not going to be accomplished, or was it Hauge or Adams?

MINNICH: It may have been Pete Carroll. It may have been Pete who may have recognized it even before I did. I knew the limitations of what I was doing, but maybe I hadn't adjusted my definition. At any rate--and I do think I've told this story--that Pete went in as a staff secretary and



needed some help and reached for me for reasons that we've gone over. And I protested that this would mean that I wouldn't have the time to do the other and Pete said, "The important thing is to get the records made and right here in the middle of things you have a better chance of getting the records made and even of having the insights when you're in the operating ring, rather than being a fringe, outside element." And he was right. And I think I did a hell of a lot more for the historian by virtue of being in the middle of a paper work operation and seeing to it that there were papers on this, that or the other thing that wouldn't otherwise have existed.

BURG: It seems to me this is perfectly correct. All I could see you doing under the original mandate, if I may use that word, is being really the outsider attached firmly to no one with no one's strong influence helping you and attempting to get into things that by the very nature of work in the White House were going to be passed where they needed to be passed for a certain series of eyes only. And there you'd be attempting to crack into these channels. I think the task would have been incredibly difficult.



MINNICH: Yes.



BURG: And one other thing too, when you spoke of varying views of how history ought to be handled and described yourself as a meat-and-potatoes man, was there anyone on the White House staff, and was your remark made in reference to them; somebody who disagreed with how you intended to function in the White House. Somebody whose view of history was--

MINNICH: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I think that there were merely some people whose interest in history ran more to the fact that Dolley Madison hung the wash outside the White House rather than how did President Madison happen to make a particular decision.

BURG: So their view was more along the lines of a popular history.

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: I thought if there was anyone there who had strong feelings about how history ought to be written, it would be very interesting to know who they were.

MINNICH: Plus the subject was not discussed all that much.

BURG: So you found yourself then with Pete Carroll, and one of the tasks that you took on was the keeping of minutes in the cabinet. Was that the first assignment you had with him, the first kind of work you did with him?

MINNICH: Even before him. I think I was put on that from the word go by Governor Adams who wanted to have a record of cabinet meetings. Whether he had his instructions from the President or not I don't know. But there would be something of a record and there would be an action sheet, a simplified action summary sheet, which started I'm quite sure from the very beginning.

BURG: Now am I correct in thinking that Brad [Bradley H.] Patterson kept a record of action or record of decision--

MINNICH: That started later.

BURG: That was later.

MINNICH: That was later.



BURG: At first you, then, were keeping both. You were keeping your minutes and the record of action.

MINNICH: That's right.



BURG: Now you took your minutes in longhand--

MINNICH: That's right.

BURG: And these are later then transcribed for you, typed up.

MINNICH: I dictated from my record--no, I dictated from my own notebook. And both the polished dictation went into the President's files and the books went somewhere to Gettysburg or Abilene--

BURG: Quite possibly out with us.

MINNICH: But there should be a whole flock of stenographic notebooks which have my handwriting on them--sometimes more neatly and sometimes more hurriedly, depending on how the conversation went.

BURG: Let me ask the homely little fact: When you started that work, was this your first experience of this kind of

nature, the recording secretary, so to speak, who is sitting in on a session and taking notes? Because it seems to me the job was not as easy as one might think. It would be very easy to say, "Oh, well, Minnich kept the minutes." But how did you feel about it? That's a pretty high-powered group to be keeping minutes for.



MINNICH: I took lecture notes for God knows how many years. And it's purely mechanical to get the essence of what somebody is saying.

BURG: So no strain at all for you.

MINNICH: No, I didn't feel so. I had no feeling that the fate of government was going to rest upon what my note happened to say. There were better minds than that constantly at work. And it was not completely a lonesome job. The brief statement of the five or six or ten, or whatever agreements were reached were looked over by Governor Adams before he signed a note sending them out. And this perhaps was a little bit more tricky with the legislative leaders' meetings than it was with the cabinet meetings. Possibly because there was

a little more of a sensitive relationship between the Presidency, the White House, and the congress, and you never wanted to overreach either on the cabinet or on the other. But the discussions were there and there was probably more meat in the discussion than there was in the simple statement of the line of action. Granted that the line of action was the bottom line, but nevertheless the tones that were in it could be quite important. And I say, there was some insurance that I just didn't go overboard on something and that every now and then, Roger Jones from BOB [Bureau of the Budget] would need to check back on something--what was the gist of the conversation and did somebody really say this. And Roger and I and my notes would put our heads together and would see what they said, and we all know the shortcoming of longhand notes.

BURG: Technically it would have been feasible to, if not tape record, wire record the meetings. Was this ever suggested?

MINNICH: I don't think that it was suggested. I think everybody started from the proposition that this was a free speaking thing. Certainly I had in my own mind the fact that



I was fallible. And I could never be brought into court to say that somebody said thus and so simply because I wrote in longhand. And if two or three people were talking at once that was even more so. So, in effect, this is the best effort of a guy who, (patting myself on the back), had a certain capability of giving a fairly faithful report of what went on. There may be some tremendous goofs in there. I may have completely misunderstood somebody.



BURG: They'd have been caught I would suppose.

MINNICH: Not if they were not important, you know, if it was not then seen as anything of real significance. I don't know that anybody ever read the three or four or five page legal size, tightly spaced, minute of the cabinet meeting. I did; proofread it. Gave it to Ann Whitman for the President's files. The Governor [Adams] may have read it or may not have. I don't know that anybody else ever read it. They were not distributed widely. There was no sending them out for verification. This was my impressionistic, if you want to call it, recording of a meeting of the cabinet.

BURG: So what went down as a record of action or record of decision--



MINNICH: That did get, that, yes, that was sent out, you see.

BURG: But your minutes that covered debates and arguments, counter discussion that is where there might have been the error where you'd misunderstand.

MINNICH: Yes. That's right. Sure.

BURG: Now do I understand correctly that someone doing this kind of work was not used in the Truman administration?

MINNICH: I don't know.

BURG: I've been told the very interesting proposition that oftentimes someone like Dean Acheson would return to his office, call in his secretary--

MINNICH: I've heard that story.

BURG:--yes, dictate what had happened at the cabinet meeting because there were no minutes kept.



MINNICH: Okay. So there were no minutes that went out, you know, any extensive minutes that went out to the rest of the cabinet. Not until the more systematic thing was set up with Max Rabb and Brad Patterson, and then Bob [Robert K.] Gray after Max Rabb. It was, I think, a more systematic reporting that was then circulated through the cabinet members.



BURG: They tried to get out sometime that day if it could be done, the following day if not. But at the time that you were doing this, this was not the procedure. It was not quite so systematized.

MINNICH: True. True.

BURG: A more limited circulation of the cabinet minutes.

MINNICH: It was the President's own record of the cabinet meeting. Anybody that wanted to take away his impressions or his account of what happened in the cabinet, took it away himself. We were not providing a minutes service to the rest of the administration. What we were doing was nailing down the three or four or eight or ten or whatever it happened to

be reminders of things to be done, whatever they happened to be.



BURG: Have you, in subsequent years, compared that system with that later system? One of the things they touted about the later system was that here was a record of the things that have been decided and it went out and they thought, I think, enhanced the possibility that these things indeed would be done, that action would be taken, that action was checked upon. So that if it were agreed that the Department of Agriculture would follow a certain line of development, would do a certain thing, there was a way to check back into it. Does it strike you now, thinking back, that that might have been better than the earlier system?

MINNICH: Oh, it was a more refined thing, and it set up a better network of staff assistants for cabinet purposes. Here is the network of the secretary of this, that or the other thing having his cabinet assistant that was in touch with the cabinet secretary's office, whether it was Brad or Max or Bob Gray or whoever. So that you had a quick way to

go to somebody and say, I can almost hear Brad saying it, "The cabinet decided three months ago that it would be good to have all agricultural elements done thus and so. Is it happening?" There was a little bit more extensive operation and it was focused there on that specific bit of the cabinet business. In effect there was more manpower for it so you could put more time in on it. You could do more follow-up. But I was hard put to keep going without doing follow-up. On the other hand, you see, you would have somebody like a [I.] Jack Martin, though he was later, who--I used agriculture so I pulled Jack out because he followed the agriculture thing later on. Jack had a memory like an elephant and if something was agreed that Agriculture was going to do, why he did the follow-up on it. You see it was more of a decentralized, delegated sort of thing. Or on a few key things the Governor himself or the President would have these on their mind and we had staff there to do things, even if it wasn't me, or a cabinet secretary, you see.

BURG: I should keep in mind, too, that, I think it's long been your contention that, in that administration, mechanism



was perhaps not as important as the kind of people who are operating those mechanisms.

MINNICH: Precisely.



BURG: The kinds of cooperation, understanding.

MINNICH: I think you can have all sorts of arguments. I used to kid Brad every now and then. He can tell you about it, this top heavy paper work, that the paper was taking precedence.

BURG: Had become more important than the ideas that it might convey.

MINNICH: You need a certain amount of it and I haven't really thought about this except for your coming in right now, but I've complained any number of times about the amount of paper work involved here in the department. It gets in the way sometimes. On the other hand a certain amount of it is needed and we've got a big operation. You can have all sorts of trouble if it's all oral, without tape.

BURG: Yes. Yes. As we found out. Well, this task, this particular task that you had, this important task was a once a week affair, roughly speaking--

MINNICH: For cabinet. And once for the legislative leaders.

BURG: Did that fully occupy your time?

MINNICH: Oh, no.



BURG: Now what other things did you do?

MINNICH: I think as we went over the Pete Carroll story, when the staff secretariat got set up fairly early in the game--I would expect as early as April of '53--I was in as Pete's assistant with all sorts of the daily run of paper work that was coming through: Whether there are things going out to the departments and coming back with suggested replies for White House signature; whether it was a certain amount of bulk mail that I reviewed before it got Governor Adams' attention. Max Rabb did a hell of a lot of that but he tended to run to the tougher ones

and there was a certain amount of bulk that was answered by Governor Adams and that was my baby--to put an evil eye on that.

BURG: Oh, so now we're talking about some of the things that Bill Hopkins' operation the mail room operation is routing various places into the White House some of that--

MINNICH: And out to the departments and eventually some of it came back. Now whether it was from the White House office back to the Governor or the President--I was looking at the voluminous mail answered by Governor Adams even before the staff secretariat was set up. Then with the staff secretariat, we got more systematic about getting stuff out to the departments and back from the departments when we wanted to have a White House reply. Maybe we would have been better off saying, "It's your business; you take care of it." But that's not the nature of American politics and a certain amount of it needed to be brought back either for American political purposes or for good management purposes of keeping some eye on what the fiefdoms are doing. That was Jesse Jones' phrase, I think.



BURG: What the fiefdoms are doing?



MINNICH: The fiefdoms. Or was it, it was somebody studying the government in earlier years and referred to the commerce department fiefdom that Jesse Jones had. That's a good concept: I'm digressing but it's an awfully good concept for public administration purposes of how the federal government operates. People have given it more attention as to the dual loyalties of the secretary of a department, as chief of his fiefdom or as a helpmate to the President.

BURG: It's an intriguing idea isn't it?

MINNICH: Sure it is. Sure it is. With their own international alliances with the congress or the press or what have you.

BURG: And their needs sometimes to be protected one from the other--and some of the tough infighting. And whose hands did they clasp when, as they got the fief.

MINNICH: Especially when BOB, now OMB [Office of Management and Budget] gets regarded as the President's agent and enemy of the departments.

BURG: Well, that's right.

MINNICH: Government life.



BURG: Now your job, I'm wondering, did you continue to accrete things; whether you planned it that way or not. You started out with the idea that you're going to keep some sort of records, you're going to do a historian's job in a way, move on to the whip of Pete Carroll and minutes of the cabinet, answering a certain amount of the correspondence or handling it. Did that continue to grow?

MINNICH: The volume of the staff secretariat was a tremendous thing. We had to limit it because we were a small secretariat all through the years. Our secretariat really did not grow so far as these operational things were concerned. From Pete and me and Bill Hopkins to General [Andrew J.] Goodpaster and me and Bill Hopkins with some ever-devoted, terrific gals there getting the stuff out, there were a few things that were added which Andy was primarily responsible for that brought in people like Al [Albert P.] Toner and the business of trying to keep an eye out on things that would be coming up of concern to the White House, an advance alert system which was added to the secretariat



under General Goodpaster. But that didn't effect the day-to-day movement of paper, the operational thing. So I was completely taken with that. I did maintain the business of sitting in on cabinet meetings and making these notes. And I did maintain the legislative leadership meeting thing all the way through. I dropped completely any effort to do special memorandum on, oh my goodness--what was one of the early things--I tried to do a memorandum that would go beyond what was in the newspapers from what I could pick up by talking to various people that had to do with, maybe it was the Council of Economic Advisers--or there was something there where there was a misunderstanding between the White House and the Republican leadership of the Congress as to which way they were going to go on something, maybe an ambiguous word that was misinterpreted. There was a newspaper fluff about it so I tried to get behind the story and put something in the record on it. Well that sort of special memorandum I just couldn't do, absolutely no time for it. What I did do was the systematic thing that I think I've already told you about--of going through all of the cross reference sheets of all the stuff that was in the files from 1953 early until I left in mid-



'60, and trying to sort that out into categories and making sets of things that were--I've forgotten now how I did it--I wrote a memo explaining the whole thing that went into the basket that went to John Eisenhower, explaining that I had these categories of personal correspondence, official business.

[Interruption]



BURG: You were telling me, and to make sure that we didn't lose anything when the machine was off, that among the things that you had noted down and you referred to in your memo for John Eisenhower would be letters that the President wrote that bore upon a particular policy, letters which explained to someone perhaps who had written in some of the implications of that particular policy. This work was accomplished toward the end of the administration?

MINNICH: Yes, I would guess that probably, oh, maybe in '58 I started it, and as I had a little bit of free time I would work at it. The [File Room personnel] (files) were under orders to pull these things methodically for me and send them up. There was merely a cross reference sheet, but the collection of them covered everything that

was in the files. And they came up in no arrangement whatsoever, and I would just take them item by item and start sorting them out. And I tried to spread them out in terms of what was hard official, like executive orders, proclamations, appointments, those things; then a second category where it was on policy matters but not an official decree, executive order and whatnot; and the third thing of the personal type of thing the President wrote where, for one reason or another, I thought it might be of much interest. It wasn't just, "Thank you for sending me the poem that your daughter wrote about the 4th of July."

BURG: Or my portrait in corn--



MINNICH: I got a little bit beyond that, but every now and then there was something that struck me as being a little intriguing, interesting, out of the ordinary. So then, in effect, I tried to sort these out and to push a whole flock of the things aside as being standard and routine or not really of any particular interest or repetitious. But to see that there was this collection of stuff month-by-month, year-by-year, of things that the

President or the staff for the President--I don't think I limited this just to the Presidential bit. If it was a Governor Adams letter reporting to the President, or something like that, this too went in.

BURG: So in short, there is another aspect of your work which represents your training as a historian and your thinking in terms of research purposes and--

MINNICH: Yes, that's right. It was an attempt to skim the cream of significant stuff to make it easier for the guy who would be delving into the records for historical purposes later on. I wrote a memo explaining this, and, presumably, it went to Gettysburg. I think I called it to John Eisenhower's attention or gave him a copy of it, because I knew he was going to be custodian of records after a fashion. He, I think, was in charge of the disposition of these things.

BURG: Yes. And we might expect that that material was used in the production of the two books The White House Years; it's very likely that it was. Be part of the supporting--



MINNICH: I don't know. There was so damned much material that had to be moved out of the White House hither and yon that the stuff could have been lost and buried under stuff that may still not have been opened out at Abilene as far as I know. I've not kept up with it; I've no understanding of who used what.

BURG: We have it on the record here anyway, just in case it hasn't surfaced yet. Now I wanted to ask you, too, considering the fact that you were indeed a very busy man with much to do, how did you fall heir to the Public Papers of the Presidents?

MINNICH: Ah, that's my cultural contribution to government documentation.

BURG: I think I mentioned to you, we were astonished. None of us had realized that it had started then, in what, 1957?

MINNICH: 1957 was the first volume.

BURG: Nor did we know that we owed it to you.

MINNICH: In part. Only in part.



BURG: I don't know whether it was, I think Bill Hopkins was the one who told us about this.

MINNICH: I can't vouch for where this was born. When I first learned of it, it was Wayne Grover, the archivist of the United States who came to Hopkins and me, or maybe to me to begin with, but immediately Bill Hopkins had to be involved, with the idea of doing this. In part, I think as it explains in there, nothing had been done since the Richardson Presidential Papers, which was a collection that gave out long about 1900 roughly. There had been the Roosevelt Papers that Judge [Samuel I.] Rosenman? Sam?

BURG: Sam Rosenman.



MINNICH:--Sam Rosenman had done which were somewhat different in categories and nature than what the archivists put together. Subsequently I heard that the idea had emanated from a committee that the Archivist had. On the committee was George Elsey, one of Mr. Truman's right-hand men, administrative assistants. The idea, I suppose, originated there, but Wayne Grover saw the merit of it and picked it up and pursued it. Again without details, but I suppose that there did come eventually a formal letter from the Archivist to the President proposing this. But I think we

had it pretty well laid out at that point that within staff, we would be receptive to this. Obviously it had to be cleared with the President. I wrote the staff paper that circulated around in the interested staff elements, like counsel and press secretary and congressional relations and--the circuit of it. And it got cleared. So it went to the President as a recommendation from staff that this be done with some specifics as to what would be included and how it would be handled and all the rest. So with that approval, Wayne then put his Federal Register people to work on it, a very special team that he put together. And from, I suppose it was 1956 when we started, '57 I suppose we started, because the '57 volume in due course came out in '58. And we worked like trojans on that, Bill Hopkins doing a tremendous job and his people providing the basic papers that they had the, what do I want to say; the certified copy of things to work from rather than just press reprints which had typos or whatnot in them, with Bill and staff helping out on putting notes together on these things with any number of policy conferences of Grover and his people and Hopkins and me deciding how to handle this, that, and the other thing. As a



case in point, technically every resignation acceptance should be in there. But we pretty soon came to the conclusion that the assistant secretaries of this, that or the other fell off like fleas and they all read the same way anyway--that really there was no point. And I think that was a category that we in our wisdom excluded, and they really didn't add to the insights of the administration. Acceptances of secretary level letters and under secretaries and things like that absolutely, they went in. Another problem was how to handle something that came in with long attachments to it, you know. You can't understand a response unless you see what it's responding to, frequently. So the whole business of how much would go into the notes, and that's where we had editorial license and judgment to make.

BURG: Did Bill Hopkins put on any extra people specifically to work this body of material?

MINNICH: No, no, no.

BURG: It was handled within his regular staff.

MINNICH: I think so.





BURG: I'm not sure whether I checked that with him, but I'll ask him tomorrow.

MINNICH: No, no I don't think so. It was a matter of their pulling out files--this, this, this, this, and this. Like pulling out all proclamations or pulling out all press releases--they would start from press releases, because these are the public papers and there were categories; press releases were the basic thing. But then we got into the press conference transcript thing.



BURG: That was the next thing I wanted to ask you about, because obviously that was an unusual step to take and my recollection of the situation is that it was you, yourself, personally, who edited press conference tapes.

MINNICH: Yes. I guess the word "edited" is likely. I sort of wince at it because of the pejorative--

BURG: Yes. I'm thinking of it in its very good sense.

MINNICH: Thank you. Yes. It was my baby. I took the records that, discs--recording discs that had been made by the Signal

Corps. They were right there with the microphones at every press conference and not just press conferences--off the cuff speeches and things like that. I played those back. I played them back against the transcripts that had been put out either by virtue of the New York Times on press conferences, where they had a court reporter service, and I don't know, I guess [James C.] Hagerty had a transcript that was made by the White House court reporter, Jack Romagna. And I'd have those plus the disc, the actual voice. I can filibuster at length on this, which I'm sure you don't want, but anybody who's worked at this sort of thing can realize immediately the problems of punctuation that come up. You know, a court reporter listening can go on and on and not know where the period is. Well I put periods in every now and then. If there were false starts, I played it in two ways. If the false start, was, to my mind, completely insignificant, to hell with the false start, knock it out. If the false start had some significance to it and could possibly be revealing of something where the President was catching himself up and saying, "I better not say that," it stayed in. Now obviously there was my judgment on it, but I think I'm honest in saying



that I leaned over backwards to put it in the record rather than take it out. Obviously I scratched all the and-a, and-a, and-a things. I say all of them; I know that I deliberately left them in occasionally to give a little bit of the flavor. But there was no point in leaving them in all the time, disrupting the text and the meaning and all the rest of it.



BURG: And judging from your approach, this kind of a fine approach to the work you were doing, you did nothing with the President's syntax.

MINNICH: No. Not the syntax, except to punctuate it. And maybe I knocked out an and. He had a stream of thought, like all of us do I think when we're ad-libbing, and I may have knocked out the and that began a sentence. It was that same sort of and which was, I call it a holding operation, as he put his next thought together. That and fooled the court reporters to where they wouldn't put a period in at the completion of a thought. See this would just string out as a three page sentence in some of the transcripts that came along.

BURG: So if any of that material went into the New York Times, for example, that would actually give a rather erroneous picture

of the President expressing himself verbally.



MINNICH: It would have been an accurate impression of the words that came. It would be an accurate report of the words that came. But obviously it doesn't have the flavor of dialogue where you're sitting talking with a person. You understand him thoroughly even though there's no punctuation in the sentence. You see, you hear the pause; you grasp the thought; you don't see a comma, even as I'm talking to you right now. But obviously there are commas and semi-colons and periods and whatnot. I'm not trying to strike any blows for victory or syntax or anything else, but I do think that Ike was a readily understandable guy when you were listening to him, and that I'm not at all happy with the barbs that have been thrown about his terrible syntax as seen from transcripts, written transcripts, of what he was saying. I do believe those reporters that listened to him, you know, were pretty clear on what he was saying. I think there's no real problem until they tried to put the words together and the transcript didn't make it easy for them. Now there were cases, there were cases when there are just two things that I've put in--I know your time's running short--there were cases where

actually the transcript came out with a bad run, double negative where there was only a single negative. And Ike in his phrasing could very well have thrown in a double negative when it was meant to be single because of this stream of thought. But it was, I think absolutely beyond contest as to what the meaning was. The other thing that I had on my mind was that there were cases where the understanding was difficult, where the meaning was not clear, and where a word could very easily make a great deal of difference. You know, it was there. And there were instances, relatively few, but enough that I wore out some shoe leather on them, where after I played this thing ten times and could not resolve it in my own mind I'd call in two or three other people to listen to it with me. Go to the guy who had the greatest knowledge of the substance--Goodpaster any number of times, or Bryce Harlow, or Gerry [Gerald D.] Morgan--and make them listen to it and see if they could make any sense out of what was otherwise a very puzzling content.



BURG: Because this was a case where a word was used, perhaps partially obscured and sounded like one or two other words and

anyone of the three might have substantially altered the meaning.

MINNICH: Sure. Sure.

BURG: Well I did want to get on the record something which I was quite sure was the case--that in your work on the messages, the public papers, you were not altering the President's spoken word at all.

MINNICH: Absolutely not.



BURG: This was something that you eschewed completely.

MINNICH: Absolutely.

BURG: Might have removed a false start or two as indeed we do in our project.

MINNICH: I defy anybody to find any change in meaning or any change of words, any substitution of words, anyplace in those.

BURG: Well that was my impression, too. May I ask you were these sessions, the press session particularly, weren't they about half an hour in length?

MINNICH: Almost always, yes. Occasionally it would run a little bit longer, but good old Merriman Smith had his eye on the clock and at twenty-nine and a half minutes after the hour, "Thank you, Mr. President", and there we went. I think it was pretty well understood that there would be a half hour press conference.

BURG: And the editing of one half an hour of material, as I know very well, is far more than one half hour of editing work.

MINNICH: It could be a whole afternoon.



BURG: Yes. So this was really an additional burden of some substance on your available time. And I believe that you did this from 1957 throughout--you continued to edit the press conferences.

MINNICH: Ah, but going back and starting in '53. As we published the books, we went forwards and backwards. We usually had a forward book underway along with one or two backward books so that we would be back and have the whole set from '53 through '60. Now on the '60 volume I must say that I left the White

House before it was finished. I left at the end of June, I think it was, in '60.

BURG: So we must visualize Minnich doing the press conferences as they occur in the administration and simultaneously having to go back as far as 1953 and pick up the press conferences that had occurred in over a four-year period, coming up to 1957. Just one more task. Let me ask you, how long was your day, Mr. Minnich. About when would you clear the White House in the evening.



MINNICH: Oh, it got better as time went on, but I think I was leaving pretty regularly at 6:15 toward the end, but it was 6:30, 7:00 at the beginning, Saturday work included.

BURG: I was going to ask.

MINNICH: Not all day Saturday, we usually got away from there about two o'clock. And maybe at the end, maybe I wasn't even going in on Saturdays, but it was hard work, and this compulsion to work fast.



BURG: Not self-produced complusion, but simply the flavor,  
the whole thrust of--



MINNICH: There was that. You don't let correspondence mellow if you can help it, and obviously it was a work of love on doing the Public Papers, and I didn't ever want to hold up the archives' effort. They were doing such a great job down there; that was just tremendous what the Federal Register group did. But to the extent that they were dependent upon Bill Hopkins or me, we both knocked ourselves out to make sure that they had their stuff on time. Because you know we were interested in getting it out fast and we were pushing them. And if you're pushing them, don't be guilty of holding them up.

BURG: Well regrettably I--speaking of holding up--must go and head for my next. So I thank you so much for today's session.