

INTERVIEWEE: SERGEANT MAJOR [WILLIAM] GULLEY

INTERVIEWER: STEPHEN GOODELL

November 29, 1968

Go: Sir, I'd like to start out by asking you if you could tell me when you first came into contact with the President? What were the circumstances surrounding that?

Gu: That was in May 1966 when I came to the White House as a Marine Corps sergeant major to work as Jim Cross'--who was the Armed Forces Aide at that time--as his administrative assistant. He was in the process of reorganizing the Armed Forces Aides office at the White House, and he selected me by some means or other from the Marine Corps to be his administrative assistant. At that time I met the President for the first time when I came here to go to work.

Go: And what was the nature of the exchange between the President and yourself?

Gu: Colonel Cross said, as I recall, "Mr. President, this is a new man that I've brought in to be my administrative assistant. He's a Marine."

The President said, "I understand from Cross that you can walk on water and replace about six or eight people over there, and that's what I'm expecting." And that was the nature of my first visit with the President.

Go: What was your first impression of the President?

Gu: My first impression of the President was his size. I really didn't realize the President was as big physically as he is. The second thing

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that impressed me was that the President had the time to meet a guy of my position and knew enough about the operation of the Armed Forces Aides office to be of an opinion that six or eight people could be replaced.

Go: Have you had much contact with the President since then in 1966?

Gu: No, not a lot. Telephone conversations occasionally regarding flights when he wanted someone picked up at a point and delivered to a point. He has always been very nice at such times as I've met him officially over in the appointment secretary's office. As you know, we're responsible here for all the military affairs that go on and, of course, I have tried to get out of his way at a few of these when he has taken the time to stop and speak and say what a fine job the military office was doing here at the White House.

Go: Could you tell me a little bit about yourself--your background, your training, your career?

Gu: I came from Illinois--a little town in the Southern part of Illinois, Dongola. It's a little farming community of about 600 people. I left there after I had completed my sophomore year in high school and joined the Marine Corps. I was sixteen years of age at that time. I served in the Marine Corps through the Second World War. I was in Korea and at various posts and stations around the world with the Marine Corps. I stayed in the Marine Corps until 31 July of this year, 1968, when I retired and then was retained here as a civilian.

Go: Could you tell me a little bit about the job that you have here at the White House?

Gu: This job is like no job any military man has ever had, I suppose, and

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I suspect this goes for every military member of this staff. You don't do the same thing here twice, it seems. We're responsive to the President's needs. We work very close--I say "we", I'm speaking of the office--with the appointments secretary. He's the first guy that gets the signals.

Go: Marty Underwood?

Gu: No, when I came here it was Marvin Watson. It's presently Jim Jones. We do work quite a bit with Marty Underwood, that's true, and Marty's relationship with the President, arranging trips. We're geared here to put seventy-five people on Air Force One in an hour's time and have the plane airborne with food on there for these seventy-five people. We operate that way here.

The President for his own purposes very seldom tells people in advance when he's going any place. Of course, because of certain staff functions there are, you might say, rumors. So you sort of stay at the half-cocked position all the time waiting for these rumors to develop. Of course, you learn after awhile to go to certain sources. In other words, if the rumor is that the President's leaving at six o'clock in the evening, say, to go to Texas, well, a good place to check is with Zephyr to see what Zephyr has got on the stove for possible dinner guests here in the House. Or, of course, the Secret Service sometimes isn't so secret. They need help too, so we sort of have to stick together. The same thing--he may be going to Camp David on the weekend, or he may be going boating. So we might call the garage and ask them if they've got any orders down there to pick up house guests or if they've got any orders to bring people to the South Lawn at, say, two o'clock in the afternoon.

Well, it wouldn't mean a lot to other people, but if we're to bring them here at two o'clock in the afternoon, it's probably very possible that there would be a weekend trip to Camp David.

Go: You're kind of playing the intelligence game yourself then?

Gu: We have to. I suppose the Secret Service has impressed on the President the need for secrecy about his movements. But at the same time if the President's going to, say, Camp David--as you know, Camp David stays in a caretaker status. Well, we have to move six or eight stewards from here up there because, as you know, the President can't eat food just prepared by anybody, so we have to move the food up there. We have to get the movies up there. We have to try to ascertain how many guests there's going to be and arrange for that many cabins to be in shape to receive these people, because even though he doesn't tell us, I'm damned sure he expects these things to be ready. And he should expect this. He's the President.

So our primary concern here--and understand we do a lot of little mundane things that are around here too--our primary concern is to stay ready at all times for the President. Of course, we serve the staff and their transportation. We have all the air transportation. We have the ground transportation--automobiles, the garage; boats. And, of course, there are classified locations in case of national emergency and we're responsible for those. And all of these things we maintain.

In addition to all these State arrivals out here on the lawn. I know you've probably seen a State arrival. Well, all those troops are coordinated through this office--the bands. You see social aides

at these events. Those are bachelor officers who have other jobs in the defense establishment here in Washington. We interview these guys--I say "We," Commander Latimer specifically interviews these gents, and he coordinates this with Bess Abell's office. We have some place between thirty-five and forty. It fluctuates. The marriage rate among these birds is pretty high. All of these things put us in a position of responding quickly. Does that answer that portion?

Go: Yes, very fully. You mentioned the cars, the ground transportation, and these sorts of contingencies that the President would expect. Is this all military equipment that's being used?

Gu: Of course, the aircraft are. This office has, at the President's direction, four 707's--

Go: That's the President's own--?

Gu: That's right. Well, they're used by other personages of the government.

Go: Cabinet officers--?

Gu: That's right. And they're used by the Air Force on occasion.

However, these are controlled by this office. It's necessary to control them by this office. We always have to have one of them available for the President, and of course that requires in turn a backup in case something went wrong with the primary aircraft. So there are always two here. But, no, the President authorizes their use for visiting heads of states, for Secretary Rusk--he has gone around the world in them--for the Secretary of Defense on occasion, other Cabinet members, other groups, NATO parliamentarian people, Congressmen, Senators. As you probably know, the President authorized the use of one of them by the Kennedy family, and we flew

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it to Los Angeles and brought back Senator Robert Kennedy's body along with seventy-five staff members of the Kennedy family. But as I say, they are controlled by this office.

Now, in addition to that, the President has a Jet Star for short hops. This hauls thirteen people and he used it for trips to Philadelphia and New York--short trips. We have helicopters--white-top helicopters that are roughly five minutes from the lawn here at all times when the President's in residence here at the White House. A telephone call will have one sitting on the lawn in five minutes.

We have automobiles, and these automobiles are on lease from different civilian motor companies--primarily Ford--and we pay a nominal fee to rent these cars. Then they're changed annually and, of course, they're used for bringing people to the White House. They're used for staff people who work here in the White House. And, of course, this being our front porch to the world, we can have, you might say, worn-out equipment, so these cars are kept in a high state. We have roughly sixty people that maintain and drive these automobiles.

This includes one for Luci and one for Lynda. There's no particular car set aside for them, but we do have drivers assigned to them. They're used for other purposes, of course, when they're out of town. But you need to become familiar with Luci's wants and Lynda's wants and any First Family. They have their likes and dislikes and so we try to have specific drivers assigned for that purpose. Of course, the Secret Service drives the President.

Go: Did you have anything to do with this President's special limousine?

Gu: No. That was, my understanding, built by the Ford Motor Company at

the Ford Motor Company's request with some direction from the Secret Service. This could best be talked to the Secret Service--

Go: Specifications and so on.

Gu: That's correct. No, the military is not involved in that.

Go: You mentioned also a little while ago about any special emergency plans that would go into effect in case of a national emergency. Have those been exercised very often. Does the President participate in that kind of thing?

Gu: The President is very well aware of the contingency plan. He's probably more aware of it than anybody, really. Any time the President is leaving here, you'll see the military aide with what has become famous and known as the "football," or the "little blue bag," or "brown bag," whatever the color of the covering happens to be at the time. Of course, the President is very familiar with all the contents of that.

Go: I wonder if his familiarity dates back to the incident right after the assassination in 1963, where apparently that football--

Gu: Well, you're talking before my time.

Go: You mentioned, also, that your office has to coordinate with other agencies or sections within the White House such as the Secret Service and so on. Is coordination pretty good?

Gu: Cooperation, maybe, is a better word than coordination. Cooperation is very good. I don't know if you have met Bob Taylor or not, or Clint Hill. These gentlemen are with the Secret Service, and they're truly dedicated gents. Their one purpose, it would appear to me, would be for the President's well-being and his welfare, and they work very closely with us, and we try to give them everything they

need. Of course, you always work in personalities, and you can't get away from it. If you didn't have trouble with people, you wouldn't have trouble with anybody, I suppose. But just speaking--not off the record--but there are Secret Service people who are not cooperative.

Go: But that's more a personality factor than--?

Gu: That's a personality factor and fortunately for us--when I say us, for this office--the people we deal with most of the time, as Bob Taylor and Art Godfrey and Clint Hill, well, you just couldn't ask for finer gentlemen or you couldn't ask for people who would cooperate better than they do.

Go: Have there been any special problems that you've experienced, or any special difficulties or special assignments which have posed difficulties?

Gu: There are, and it's caused because the President won't tell anybody anything about his movements. I mean, for instance, we've been called at seven o'clock at night and told, "The President is going to New York at 7:30, and he wants a hot bowl of chili on the table when he gets on the plane." When he goes on the Jet Star, this means that probably at the very most, the Secret Service can have two seats on this Jet Star. Of course, this isn't near enough. The President, of course, is a very astute individual, and so this means that we have to try to help the Secret Service get some people to New York in time to be of service to the President. Of course, this means that you have got to get approval from the President for these planes to go, and we never run one without approval--never! What we do is we get it ready. I call and I tell the responsive

officer in the Pentagon to set aside a Convair, get a crew ready, set aside a Jet Star if it's only a small amount of people, get a crew ready; Bob Taylor then gets his agents underway for Andrews. Then if we obtain permission from the President, if he gives us a yes, we go. Now, I think sometimes he says yes, knowing we can't make it, but you see we do go ahead with these arrangements. There have been times when we've wound up with twenty agents out at Andrews, and we've got a plane and a crew ready to go, and the President says no. So the agents come back and the plane goes in the barn.

Go: I asked you about the coordination or cooperation with various agencies within the White House. In flights, what are the federal agencies with whom you have to deal--the Federal Aviation Agency, the Civil Aeronautics Board--what are the rules and regulations which operate on that?

Gu: When the President flies--and this is the only time special arrangements are made--when the President flies, we do have a FAA gentleman that we call. He's aware of the President's travels and, of course, the President has priority at all times on all fields and in all the air.

Go: That means that no other planes--?

Gu: For the president's safety other aircraft shut down operations for a given number of minutes before he takes off and a given number of minutes after he takes off. The air controllers clear corridors to make sure there's absolutely no chance of an accident or of having somebody literally flying into the President's aircraft.

Go: Do the same rules and regulations which apply to, say, a commercial flight apply to the President? This may seem mundane, but for

example, sitting on takeoff, no smoking, that sort of thing.

Gu: Oh, yes. All the safety features are in effect on the President's plane for everybody but the President. He does what he wants. Fortunately, he doesn't smoke.

Go: You obviously would have had to deal with overseas flights.

Gu: Yes.

Go: Are there any unusual circumstances that have accompanied those?

Gu: Oh, yes. To have an overseas flight such as the one that went last December, the logistics are almost unbelievable. In this case Colonel Cross, the Armed Forces aide, was also the pilot of Air Force One. His communications came back to me here at Washington at this office or at my home. Of course I had to dispatch support aircraft. In other words, we sent helicopters to Torrejon in Spain. We had to get people into Rome. We didn't really know where the President was going ourselves, you see.-

Go: You didn't before he--?

Gu: No. So, at his direction, on occasion Jim Cross filed for Torrejon Spain, when he knew he was going to Rome. Of course, Torrejon picked up--this is an air force base--they picked up the President's arrival and, of course, immediately started jumping, thinking, "How in the world will we take care of the President and the backup aircraft," where some 160 people were involved. Of course, I knew he wasn't going to Torrejon, but I didn't know how to get it across to Torrejon. In the meantime I had to get the helicopters out of Torrejon and get them into Rome in time so that they could be assembled, because they do have to be broken down when they're hauled on big aircraft. I had to get them in there and give the crews time

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to assemble them so they'd be ready when the President arrived. So there are many problems. Of course there are problems of safety aircraft and rescue aircraft, and all of these things are run by the Armed Forces aide. When Cross was the Armed Forces aide, they were run from the cockpit of Air Force One back through this office. Of course, this is done because you learn to speak a language here that people who are not close to this operation, or close to the President, just probably wouldn't understand. It not only goes for overseas flights, it goes in everyday operations. I was out just last Tuesday trying to get six dozen disposable nipples for Lynda's baby for her formula. We become involved--

Go: Not the normal run-of-the-mill job.

Gu: We become involved in everything here, I suppose for several reasons. One is [that] both their husbands are in the service. Both Luci and Lynda are liked and greatly respected by this office here, and we talk to them often and we deal with them often. We do become involved in, you might say, babysitting chores--not actually, but running errands for them.

Of course, I think maybe our office is really the only office in the whole White House that's really organized. That's because of the military mind. All the experience here is military. I don't know what you know about the military, but, you know, you line up the yellow pencils and the red pencils and the blue pencils, and this is military thinking. Consequently, we have gotten a reputation here in the White House here of being very responsive both to the staff and--we do any number of things here that really have nothing to do with a mission, but it all contributes to helping a special

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assistant do something for the President that needs to be done or do something that the President has ordered done.

When he went to Manila for the conference, and when he went down to South America to Punta del Este--if the people don't know what the President is doing, there's not a hell of a lot of reason for him doing it. So film taking has to be brought back, and it has to be brought back when it's new so it can be put on television. So we have to arrange for aircraft to fly this film back. You have to arrange for pickups of this film.

And you deal with people you never see. Over a period of years you talk to people at Travis Air Force Base in California, or you talk to people at Fleet Marine Force Headquarters in Hawaii, or even in Viet Nam. And you talk to people--you have no idea what they look like--but you become acquainted with them, and you remember how responsive they were the previous time you dealt with them. And really the same thing happens right here in Washington, even right here in the White House. You talk to people, deal with people, day after day after day, having no idea what they look like really.

And I think--to wander off the subject a little bit--that's one of the problems for someone coming to the White House new--getting to know people--because until people here know you, they don't trust you, and it takes a long time. It takes a long time. I suppose it's because, even though everyone works for the President, what's going on Mr. Califano's office, we'll say, this afternoon not even in your wildest dreams would be connected with this office. But eventually you have dealings with every office for purposes.

When the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia was taken by the

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Russians to Russia, we were called to come down here. Colonel Smith and I got here at nine o'clock in the evening, and the President wanted certain people picked up. Congress and the Senate were not in session and we had Senators in California, some in Arkansas, some in Pennsylvania, some in Michigan, and all around the United States. This meant trying to coordinate this, and the President wanted them all to arrive here on the lawn at one p.m. in the afternoon. He wanted them all to get into Andrews and he didn't want one to have to wait on the other when they arrived at Andrews. So we were up all night trying to get some Senators to ride with some Congressmen. Those birds have more vanity than women! Surprisingly, as it all seemed, at one o'clock the next afternoon the helicopter landed and they were all here.

Go: When the President flies to Viet Nam, are things pretty tense around here?

Gu: No. Believe it or not, we never know for sure if the President--well, he has gone to Viet Nam twice since '66. Both times we weren't really certain he was going there to Viet Nam. We were prepared for him going to Viet Nam. But, no, you do the best you can in your preparations, and when you know you've done the best you can, all you can do is sit back and hope that you haven't forgotten or haven't overlooked something that could in any manner contribute to a dangerous situation where he is concerned--or for that matter, the First Lady, or the girls.

Go: Do you think that it's a good idea that the importance of this kind of job, particularly when the President flies--could you voice your own opinion as to whether you think it's a particularly good idea to

to have the same people become a permanent office or permanent members of the White House from President to President? Do you think, in other words, that the people who have been dealing with this have the experience and professional expertise and the know-how to do this better than bringing in new people?

Gu: Oh, I don't know. You never know what exactly the next President will require. I know from our standpoint we have military people that have been around here, some as long as twelve years, maybe longer. These are the people down at the garage. We have here in the office a guy who has been here for seven years. He's a Navy chief. In the shelter, another portion of our office, we have about the same situation [with] another individual. All I know is it takes so long to break anybody in, it takes so long to be certain that the guy is trustworthy, that he does keep his mouth shut. You see, very few documents here are stamped secret or top secret or confidential, but every damned one of them is sensitive.

From our side of the House, I never really felt like that I worked for President Johnson. I felt like I worked for the Armed Forces aide. The majority of the people on our side of the House are not politically oriented, really. Oh, I suppose some are Republicans and some are Democrats, from that standpoint, but they're primarily military. The job may not be military by a lot of standards, but it takes so long to find people that can be a driver for people of such stature as the Secretary [General] of the United Nations when he comes in and has to be picked up, or is involved with the business of Heads of States, that they know what has to be done to baggage and how to store this baggage on aircraft, and how not to offend the

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President in any manner, and how not to offend his guests, to be discreet and to keep their mouth shut about what takes place in the daily operations of the White House. After all, a family does live here and, of course, everyone is curious about the First Family, no matter who the First Family is, I suppose. There have been cases--I don't know of a single one in our particular office--but there have been cases of people who couldn't keep their mouths shut and who got fired.

Then we had a civilian--a girl, a typist who worked here--and she one evening went down and opened the door of the theater and went in and sat down by Lynda to watch a movie that Lynda was watching. Well, outside of being damned dangerous--she almost got shot by the Secret Service. Well, of course, she was let go.

But we are not involved with politics over here. We may be required to take the President to Los Angeles to speak at a Democratic fund-raising dinner, in which case we send a bill to the President. He sends it to the Democratic National Committee and they send us the check, which we in turn send to the Treasury to pay for the aircraft. But we're not glad-handers, and we're not vote-getters and this type of thing.

Go: Have there been any new, let's say, new equipment in terms of communications equipment put on Air Force One to your knowledge since President Johnson became President?

Gu: Yes. The equipment is always being updated as new equipment comes out, not only in communications equipment but safety equipment aboard the aircraft--navigational equipment. Yes, as new and better equipment is found, of course it's utilized. I'm sure that there's

no aircraft in the world equipped like his aircraft is.

Go: Do you also make provisions for the press to fly with the President?

Gu: No, not unless they charter one of our aircraft. We get into this by the press not being given enough time to charter an airplane.

Go: If you don't know when the President is going, they don't know either.

Gu: That's right--to go with the President. So consequently, Jiggs Falver (?) who runs the transportation on the other side and takes care of the press transportation, he calls us and he charters one of our aircraft. So we charge each guy that gets on there first-class fare, plus tax, plus \$1.00. So it costs his news service \$1.00 more to fly when they charter one of our aircraft than it does if they--And that's a token to keep us out of competition with civilian airlines.

Go: How does the President react to flying, do you know?

Gu: No, I don't. I really can't say, because I don't fly. I stay here. My job requirement is that I do remain here when they fly for the purpose of communications and support. So I really don't know and all I have heard has been secondhand, so you'd best get that information from other people.

Go: That kind of leads into this. I don't know whether you would like to comment on it, but I guess President Johnson is one of the most best-travelled Presidents that this country has ever had. I was wondering if you could comment on the impact of the jet age on this particular office of the President's and so on. He seems to make good use of flying.

Gu: Well, that's right, and of course when this SST comes along and the

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President can fly from here to London or here to Paris in two or three hours, I'm sure that instead of trips to what we now know as the Texas White House, there'll be weekends in Paris. We're talking about something five or six years away, but that's right. Of course, President Roosevelt couldn't travel like this because he primarily had to go by train. And they were still in props when Truman came in. And the jet age came to the White House right at the end of the Eisenhower years. Of course it's ideal, I suppose, because where the President goes, the government goes. These planes are big and they're fast, and yet they can land at comparatively short runways. So this give him the leeway of picking up the phone at 7:30 and saying, "I want to be at the Waldorf in New York at nine o'clock for dinner." Roosevelt, Truman--none of them probably before Kennedy had this available to them.

Go: You said where the President goes, the government goes. What do you exactly mean by that?

Gu: The President is the government, and the decisions that only can be made by him, of course, rest with him. Consequently it's necessary to move these support people with the President. Now, other Presidents have always used a different aircraft, you see, when they travelled. On one aircraft would be the President and his principal advisers, where on the so-called backup aircraft you would have all your walk-up people. These are communications people and secretaries and speech writers, and all the people it takes to run the Presidency.

President Johnson, because of economy, he takes all these people for the most part on his plane. In other words on his plane, we

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have telephone operators, and we have communications experts, and we have the Secret Service, and we have staff members, and we have the staff members' secretaries. These are all put right on the President's aircraft. Along with them goes all the documents. It's just a working office literally for him while he's in flight. All the things that are in his office for him to do come out of his office and go aboard the aircraft when he flies. So, it's just moving the Presidency at 35,000 feet and some seven hundred miles an hour to a new location.

Go: Do you feel that the advance in technology, and the facilities and so on on Air Force One and what would be involved in moving the President from, let's say, Washington to the Texas ranch--are these adequate, do you think?

Gu: Oh, yes, very adequate for the age we are living in. I'm sure that if someone in your position interviews someone in my position twenty years from now, they would find it very inadequate. But as we see it and as we know it, it's more than adequate.

Go: Just to speculate, what would happen if the President's plane were to become lost--if that's ever possible--or were to crash? What are the immediate things that would happen?

Gu: Well, to become lost is impossible with the navigational equipment and the radio equipment and such that's on there--.

Go: There's contact with that plane at all times?

Gu: Oh, yes, constantly. It's tracked constantly. There's nothing to prevent that plane from crashing, as there is in no--you know, most plane crashes are caused by pilot's error, and of course I don't think that's a likelihood. Let me say, they've eliminated

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this likelihood mainly because the pilots are the best they can possibly find in the Air Force. His crew is the best, and they've been together a long time. So as to what would happen from our standpoint, I really can't say. Of course, this office would be the only office who would know who was aboard the aircraft.

Go: Or where that aircraft might be.

Gu: No, there would be all your tracking stations that would know, but it would be instantly known if the plane crashed. And to be lost would be an impossibility. You couldn't lose it.

Go: You began to describe some of your other duties. I think you mentioned that there were some ceremonial functions of a military nature which your office was involved in. What would some of those be?

Gu: We're involved in everything military here at the White House where it's a Head of State visit, where you see all the different services have their representatives--they have this honor guard out here--or a cordon for an Ambassador who's presenting his credentials for the first time, or for the Marine Band to appear in the East Room, or for the dance section of the Marine Band to play at a State dinner, or the Air Force's Strolling Strings or Singing Sergeants. We would coordinate this and we would see that their names were with the Secret Service. We would see that they have a place to change their clothes. Of course, most of this is done in cooperation with Bess Abell's office--these evening functions I'm talking about.

If the President is giving a Medal of Honor, it's up to us to provide the wherewithal and coordinate with Defense and make sure that the families are brought to Washington in time, and that the

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families are taken care of in the hotel and that transportation is available to them. The President, of course, must have a briefing. We have to furnish the speech writers with the raw materials so they can put it in Texas language so the President can come out with it at the ceremony. The aide has to brief him on who's present, who to recognize. So, yes, we prepare all of those. In fact, all Medals of Honor are handled through this office, whether they are subsequently presented to the President or whether he just approves them and we send them back for someone else to present--there are so many of them he can't present all of them. He just doesn't have the time, although he has presented, as of today, thirty-three of them. And we have two pending, two where the recipients are alive, and I think he'll probably present those before he goes out of office. One is an Army man and one is a Marine major.

Go: Have you ever participated in any of these ceremonies?

Gu: Oh, yes. It takes all of us. We have a very small staff. And, of course, it gets right down to who is going to have the medal there. Oh, yes, we all do. When there's a medal presentation, you normally will only find the one person left in the office, and that's someone to take care of the telephones while the actual ceremony is going on because flags have to be put in the proper place, and social aides have to be briefed on what's expected of them.

Go: How does the President react to a Medal of Honor ceremony?

Gu: I don't really know. I know that he's very sincere, I think, and it bothers him, I'm sure especially at the posthumous ceremonies. The President appears to be highly affected really. As you know, he writes a letter to the survivors of all servicemen killed. Now,

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this is just not people killed in Viet Nam, this is a boy that's down at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, and he goes home for the weekend and he's killed in an automobile accident. The President writes letters to these families. Juanita Roberts told me one time when, of course, the casualties were very high in Viet Nam--of course, you always have a large number of people killed in the United States from training accidents, from automobile accidents, whatever. She said that the President often becomes very depressed when he sees these stacks and stacks of letters that we send over there on a daily basis for him to sign. So, I guess even if you're President, you can't put on a cloak that protects you from the feelings of a human being.

Go: In your office do you personally attend to incoming mail, let's say, from the military to the President?

Gu: Well, most of the mail comes in through the Central Mail Room. Now, we process a good portion of this mail. If it pertains to Viet Nam, we process it. It comes to us, and we make a decision as to whether it can be answered by Defense, whether it can be answered by this office, or whether we should prepare it for the President's signature. Of course, you can't take this mail at face value. These guys have to be checked out. Most of them want something, and that's only natural, because they probably tried locally and they didn't get the answer they were looking for, or in some cases maybe they got no response. Maybe it's a wife who didn't get her allotment check, or maybe it's a mother whose son is locked up in a military jail for a reason that she really doesn't know about because he lied about the thing, you see--because we all have a tendency to lie to

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our parents when we look bad and we're young. And he, I'm sure, tells Mom that he's there unjustly and so she writes the President. She wants this boy out of jail right now, or she wants him home on leave, or she wants a hardship discharge for him, or she doesn't want her son drafted. So all of these things have to be looked in to.

Of course, we have specific places to go. We have representatives of all the Armed Services directly responsive to us. Now, they don't work for this office. They work on other means and on other projects for the Secretaries of the Navy, and Air Force, the Army, Marine Corps, what have you. But they are responsive to this office, and we ask them to go look into the details of this and give us a report back. Well, they do, and then the Armed Forces aide or one of the assistants, or myself, makes a judgment on the thing, based on what they present.

Sometimes the President plays cupid, you know. We have cases where the bride and the groom have the hall and the band and the invitations are out, and he gets drafted, and they won't let him off for the weekend to get married. Well, there have been occasions when the President asked the Army or the Navy or whoever to see if they couldn't arrange to let the guy go home and get married.

There is no routine here, really.

Go: Each one of these is a unique case in itself.

Gu: It is, and you just never know what you're going to be involved in. Our hours of operation here start in the morning at seven o'clock. That's when I get here, and I try to catch up with everything from the previous day plus all the mail that comes in during the night.

By eight o'clock we start our dealings with the Department of Defense. By ten o'clock most of our previous day's work is allotted out within the areas of Department of Defense and [we've] got them working on it. The rest of the staff come in at nine-thirty, and then we're covered here until about nine at night. I'm usually here until six or six-thirty. The Armed Forces aide is normally here from about nine-thirty in the morning until eight or nine at night. The President works about those hours.

Go: Has the President ever made a request to see certain types of mail that comes in, for example, letters from combat soldiers in Viet Nam, and that sort of thing?

Gu: Well, most of this he sees through Whitney Shoemaker's office. Whitney Shoemaker makes a determination on a lot of this. However, we often pick up mail that they don't pick up on the West side-- maybe a boy dying of cancer. Maybe we see something in this that they don't, and, of course, we make our own recommendations. The Armed Forces aide has an open door to the President, so consequently we have no difficulty in getting our thoughts and recommendations to the President.

Go: Sir, would you like to make any comments of any particular personal insights that you might have about the President, your experience at the White House here? It has been what--'66 to '68?

Gu: No, I really don't. I've been impressed with many things here of people who don't know anything but "yes". What I mean by this is "can do" people. Marvin Watson, the appointments secretary, I think, probably was the most efficient man I've ever seen. I never saw people with the stamina that the people who work here have. And

this not only goes for Marvin Watsons and Jim Jones and Joe Califanos, it goes for secretaries who put in twelve-fifteen hours a day. Then, you know the President will not authorize overtime here, so these people paid by different agencies could get the same money for eight hours a day. If I've been impressed by one thing, it's the little detail things that the President's aware of that go on around the White House.

I know that the President has had our national leaders in here, and they'll have a small break, and he'll call over here about--well, maybe his dog Ukie is ill, and he needs veterenarian. But when you don't know, you don't think of the President as being a father who's worried about his dog, but this President must work twenty hours a day, and it seems like it's every day. Although we are seldom involved with him personally--I mean the members of the staff, the aide himself is--you can tell by your telephone ringing all night and until two or three o'clock in the morning that he's still up and about and he's still originating requests and things are still on the burner.

Go: The government is still--?

Gu: That's right.

Go: Do you work well with the White House staff as aides? You mentioned Marvin Watson being a very efficient man.

Gu: Well, yes, they know what they want. They don't always know what the President wants, maybe. They have a tendency to--and I'm not speaking of Marvin Watson now--but they have the tendency that once they find out that there's an office here where you can call this office and with the proper procedures, they'll set you up an airplane

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and take you any place in the world, well, some of the assistants that come in here have a tendency to go heavy on taking advantage of this. Of course, with this President, you don't do this, but until such time as they find out that these planes don't move without the President knowing--But overall, I suppose that probably the most efficient people in the world work on the West side of the White House. I hope they are.

Go: I guess we all do. Well, thank you very, very much, Sergeant Major. It has been a pleasure talking to you.

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By W. L. Gulley

to the

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