

INTERVIEW WITH

Robert O. Gemmill

by

David Horrocks
Oral Historian

on

March 12 & 13, 1975

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of
Robert O. Gemmill

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44,
United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions
hereinafter set forth, I, Robert O. Gemmill (hereinafter
referred to as the donor), do hereby give, donate, and convey
to the United States of America all my rights, title, and
interest in the tape recording and transcript of a personal
interview conducted on March 12 and 13, 1975 and prepared
for deposit in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. This
agreement is subject to the following terms and conditions:



(1) The transcript shall be available for use by
researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the
Dwight D. Eisenhower Library.

(2) The tape recording shall not be available for use
by researchers during the donor's lifetime. After the donor's
death, access to the tape recording is to be for background
use only, and researchers may not cite, paraphrase, or
quote therefrom.

(3) The donor retains during the donor's lifetime all
literary property rights in the material given to the United

States by the terms of this instrument. Thereafter the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States Government. During the life of the donor, researchers may publish brief "fair use" quotations from the transcript (but not the tape recording) without the donor's express consent in each case.

(4) Copies of the open portions of the interview transcript, but not the tape recording, may be provided by the library upon request to researchers.

(5) At the discretion of the Archivist of the United States, copies of the interview transcript, but not the tape recording, may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions. Upon death of donor, at the discretion of the Archivist of the United States, copies of the tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.

Robert O. Gessmiller
Donor

3/24/77
Date

Acting James E. O'hill
Archivist of the United States

April 12, 1977
Date



This begins an interview with Mr. Robert Gemmill at his home in Abilene, Kansas with David Horrocks of the Eisenhower Library; March 12, 1975.

MR. HORROCKS: Mr. Gemmill, could you give us some personal background as to where you were born?

MR. GEMMILL: I was born in Abilene; I've lived here all my life.

MR. HORROCKS: And what is your business?

MR. GEMMILL: I'm officially in the insurance business--unofficially I'm retired. I started work with the United Companies, which are now the United Telecom, when their offices were here, and I worked for them until 1935 at which time they were in receivership and I decided to go into business for myself because I had my home here and I wanted to stay here. So I went into business with my father-in-law, in the insurance business, and continued in that business until 1970 when I, as I say, retired. I'm still president of Gemmill, Gugler, & Garten Insurance Agency, but they pay me to stay away now.

MR. HORROCKS: Do you remember the Eisenhower family?



GEMMILL: Oh yes, as a matter of fact, for some period of time-- maybe two, three years--during my employment with the United Companies--

HORROCKS: This would be in the early '30s?



GEMMILL: --this was in the late '20s or early '30s, I was working in the same office with Ike's father. David, I think, was his name. I've forgotten, but I think it was David. Yes, I'm sure it was Dave Eisenhower. So I knew him rather well.

HORROCKS: What was his job at the time?

GEMMILL: At the time, the president of the companies--Mr. [C. L.] Brown, the founder--had a requirement that every employee save ten percent of his salary and Mr. Eisenhower's job was to keep a card record of all these. Every month the employees had to report what they had done with their ten percent; they could put it in the savings and loan, or stock, or a home, or a savings account in the bank, but they had to make a report or they lost their job. And Mr. Eisenhower's office--he was super-

visor--was to record these reports from all the employees, and there were a good many of them because it covered the telephone company and the power company. The telephone company covered the whole west two-thirds of the state; so there were a lot of employees, telephone operators, clerks, cashiers and so forth.

HORROCKS: And he was in a supervisory position--

GEMMILL: He was in charge of those cards.

HORROCKS: Was that considered a good job--a well-paying job?

GEMMILL: Well, no. Well, I don't know how much it paid; I haven't any idea. We all worked for peanuts in those days, and so I haven't any idea what kind of a paying job it was; it wasn't an executive type job. He wasn't what you'd call a boss.

HORROCKS: What were his work habits like? Are you familiar with those at all?

GEMMILL: No, I don't remember. You mean how hard did he work?



HORROCKS: Yes.

GEMMILL: He gave every bit of himself to his job, I know that. My father was very well acquainted with him. My father worked for the same company and he, being more nearly Mr. Eisenhower's age and having lived here longer than I had and particularly had been in the same office with him, he knew him quite well.

HORROCKS: Was he a gregarious fellow?

GEMMILL: I don't recall that he was; I don't believe he was. I don't know that. I don't remember.

HORROCKS: Did he have many outside interests, hobbies particularly?

GEMMILL: I can't tell you that. All I knew of him was at the office.

HORROCKS: Did you know Ida Eisenhower?

GEMMILL: Dave's wife?



HORROCKS: Yes.

GEMMILL: I knew her on sight. And I think maybe I knew her well enough that she would have known who I was if she'd have seen me on the street. But not beyond that point.

HORROCKS: By all accounts, she was very nice, very gentle woman.

GEMMILL: Oh yes. My mother knew her; I mean they were friends. That's the reason she would have known me on the street, I think, if she'd have passed me.

HORROCKS: Was she active in church affairs, do you know?

GEMMILL: Well, I don't know that. I can't tell you much about Mrs. Eisenhower.

HORROCKS: Did you ever have many conversations with David Eisenhower, have occasion to chat with him?

GEMMILL: I can't recall anything of that nature. I'm sure I talked to him, but I can't tell you what about or anything of it.



HORROCKS: Well, this is good because I don't think there's too much on record about David Eisenhower. I don't think he's a very well-known figure.

GEMMILL: Well, I recall one time that, I can't remember who it was, somebody came to Abilene to visit and I took them down to see the Eisenhower home and that was in the very early days, I don't think the museum was built at that time.

HORROCKS: Would have been late '40s.

GEMMILL: And we had special dispensation, I'm sure, because we got inside the roped area. This man whomever he was, noted in the bookcase a Talmud, the Hebrew Bible, I believe, and he remarked that Eisenhower, David Eisenhower, was the type man that would want to know all about other person's religions and he had obviously read that book because it was worn. You could see where it had been used; it wasn't just inserted in there and left like some libraries.

HORROCKS: Did they ever speak much of any of their children?



GEMMILL: Well, I don't remember a thing of that. My personal acquaintance with the family was through Milton. As a boy, of course, like all kids I wanted to be a Boy Scout, and we had a little difficulty getting somebody to organize it in Abilene. But there were two young men here, Milt and a fellow by the name of Paul Jeffcoat, who has a photography shop. I think Milt was maybe four years older than I am and probably Jeffcoat was the same age. And they would take a group of us boys out on hikes on Sundays, or Saturdays--Sundays I guess because I don't think they ever had any time off during the week except Sunday in those days. Your work day was six days a week. But I remember very well going out on hikes with Milton and Bud Jeffcoat. And then, for some reason or another my friendship with Milton continued even though we got separated quite a ways in space and when he would come back to Abilene to see his mother, I usually got to say hello to him and that friendship still continues. In other words, he has done lots of things and has lots of friends and knows lots of people, but if he would walk into this room today, he'd still know exactly who I



am and the contact we'd had in the past.

HORROCKS: Hometown roots.

GEMMILL: Yes.

HORROCKS: Milton has never had a reputation as an outdoorsman, outdoors figure. Is that a misapprehension?

GEMMILL: No. He might have been doing this just out of what he felt was his duty to youngsters in the town. But I'm sure I don't know. I never knew him to be camping or anything of that nature, and we actually didn't camp out overnight. These were hikes we may have taken two or three miles out of town to the prairie or pasture land or to a creek or something like that, had lunch and came back.

HORROCKS: What was Milton doing in those days?

GEMMILL: I would assume that he was working for the Reflector-Chronicle or the Chronicle or Reflector--they weren't combined in those days. I think the Reflector he worked for.



HORROCKS: With Charles Harger?

GEMMILL: Charlie Harger.

HORROCKS: Would that have been part-time during high school, or after high school?

GEMMILL: I think he worked part-time during high school and then I think he worked full-time for a while, but I'm not sure whether that was after he'd got through college or--I just don't know that.



HORROCKS: Did he have any particular ambitions at the time as to what he really wanted to do?

GEMMILL: I don't know. I don't know about that. See I was twelve, fifteen, sixteen years old at the time and those kind of things didn't bother me.

HORROCKS: Did you know any of the other Eisenhower brothers at the time?

GEMMILL: Well, I've met most of them. I had one interesting

episode with Ike that, this was I guess when he was here in 1952 or maybe it was another time, but I think it was then because all the brothers were back at that time except Roy who was gone. And Mr. [Sam] Heller had a reception at his home and invited the trustees. And I went through the line, and Earl Eisenhower I thought would know me because he used to work for my father in the telephone company as a lineman and I supposed he'd remember the name, but he didn't. I had to tell him who I was. But I came down the line to Ike and I shook hands with him and I was introduced to him. He looked up at me and he said, "You grew a hell of a lot taller than your old man, didn't you?" My father moved here in 1904 I believe. He had been here earlier then went to Topeka and came back--in 1904, so Ike was in high school, or in school at that time. You see Ike, in 1910 or '11 graduated from high school, and he went right into the military academy so he didn't have any reason to know my father--well he did meet him on several occasions after that when he'd come back to Abilene. Some of his old cronies here'd have him over for parties. They didn't have the same kind of parties they do now, but they'd have him over and my father



would be there too; so he got acquainted with Ike. But Ike was alert enough that he remembered--compared me with my father in size.

HORROCKS: I have heard Dwight described as kind of an "old shoe" sort of fellow.

GEMMILL: I think maybe that's right. I remember one time right after World War II started and Ike was here and Milton was here, Milton had charge of removal of the Japanese people into these camps that they kept them in and they were--

HORROCKS: In Kansas?

GEMMILL: I think they put them in Nevada, didn't they?

HORROCKS: Or mostly in the West.

GEMMILL: Took them out of California into Nevada or something. Thought it was necessary at the time and Milton had charge of that job or at least he was working on it, and Ike was here and Milton. I met Ike, they were down at Ike's old hang-out-- Joner Callahan's place, which was where they sold cigars and



cigarettes and coca-colas and that was it.

HORROCKS: Was that the town hang-out?

GEMMILL: Yes, to a certain extent. The fellows that ran it were two well-known fellows and they were friendly and everybody liked them and Ike had always stopped in at Joner's place. So I was there, it was right across the street from the United Building where I worked and so I was over there and I saw Milt and visited with him and then I shook hands with Ike, and of course there were lots of people coming around to see him so I didn't get to stay any longer than that. Everybody in town heard he was in town and they wanted to see Ike.

HORROCKS: Do you think that Dwight's becoming such a celebrity like that, in '42, say, created any sort of problems or friction with Milton, for instance, who up until then was the better known of the Eisenhower brothers. Do you think he felt that at all?

GEMMILL: Well, if he did, he didn't put it over to me that way. No, I don't think he--he had a job to do and he knew what he



had to do and he was worrying about it because the displacement of a lot of people is a problem in any--

HORROCKS: Well, what were some of the things that he was involved with in the Japanese removal--some of the things he was worried about?

GEMMILL: Well, just picking people up out of their homes and taking them into what we called in Germany concentration camps. It was a pretty hard thing to do and yet he realized that probably for their own protection they had to do it because most people didn't trust the Japanese in those days after Pearl Harbor and anybody that was of that origin was subject to abuse.



HORROCKS: Was he really more concerned then with the safety of Japanese-Americans than with American security.

GEMMILL: Well, I don't know. I think it was a matter of both. Nobody really knew in those days whether they had infiltrated with a big spy arrangement or not. Turned out afterwards, I think, that they didn't but there wasn't any way of knowing that at the time.

HORROCKS: Did you ever have occasion to discuss this afterwards with Milton--did he ever reflect back on it?

GEMMILL: No, I never talked to him about it afterwards. It got so that he was here for various dedications. We usually had a dedication every time we built a new wing or something on the building. And I maybe talked to Milt for ten or fifteen minutes and that was it; he just didn't have the time.

HORROCKS: Did you know the other brothers, Edgar and Earl and Roy and Arthur?

GEMMILL: I got acquainted with Edgar,--I didn't get acquainted with him--I met him at the time of Ike's funeral. I don't think I'd ever met Edgar before although he'd been in Abilene, but I had never met him. But he was here for Ike's funeral and Fred Waring was here. Fred was playing in Reno, Nevada at the time, and I had gotten acquainted with Fred through Ike's homecoming in '52. We got in touch with Fred Waring and he found a man out in Las Vegas, or I think it was Reno, who had a jet plane and he brought Fred back. I picked him up in Salina and brought



him over here and then took him down--they'd been trying to get ahold of him, but they didn't know where to locate him--so I took him down and we stood behind the ropes for a while until he spotted--

HORROCKS: Secret Service?

GEMMILL: --Secret Service man--I think he knew him--but he called him anyway and he came over to the ropes and Fred told him who he was so he'd go tell Edgar. So he went over to the train which was half a block away and reported and the next thing I knew Edgar was over here to get Fred under the ropes and take him in to see Mamie, because Fred Waring was very close friends with the Eisenhower family. Then I didn't see them again until after the funeral and Fred came back here to the house and brought Edgar with him. Seemed that Edgar hadn't made any plans on how to get back home so Fred invited him to ride back with him in this jet.

HORROCKS: Wasn't there a period when Edgar was not particularly close with the Eisenhower Foundation?



GEMMILL: I've heard that--I wasn't close enough to the top of the heap to know whether that was true or not. I can't say. No, I don't know.

HORROCKS: Did you know Earl, Arthur, or Roy very well?

GEMMILL: No, I've met Arthur and Earl was the one I thought would know me, because he worked for the company in my father's department, but it turned out his memory's as poor as mine.



HORROCKS: Were the brothers very different?

GEMMILL: See they'd all moved away from Abilene before I was old enough to--the only one that I knew in Abilene was Milt.

HORROCKS: Was really Milton.

GEMMILL: And the others had all moved on to other parts of the world.

HORROCKS: Did they take an active interest in Ida and David, in the '20s after they had left home? Did they come back and visit often?

GEMMILL: Well, I don't know. I can't tell you. I suppose they did, but not being famous people like Ike it didn't register on my memory; so I don't know. I think they were a pretty loyal family, but as to how often they came home, I don't know.

HORROCKS: Dwight seems to have been a very popular, well-liked character here.

GEMMILL: He was outgoing. Yes, he was outgoing and friendly. My gosh, he'd come back to Joner's and you'd see him in there in Joner's place that I told you about, and he'd meet these old fellows that life had almost passed by without anything great happening, and here Ike would come and see them and chat with them for fifteen or twenty minutes, you know, just over old times.

HORROCKS: They'd just be telling local stories?

GEMMILL: Yes, just hashing over the football days in high school or something else they had in common. And he had that knack of contacting people and making them feel real good about it.



HORROCKS: Joner Callahan's was a soda establishment and cigars. I take it that it was an eminently respectable establishment here in town--

GEMMILL: Oh yes. No I don't, didn't want to imply anything else.

HORROCKS: Oh, no, you didn't.

GEMMILL: It was just a soda fountain with magazines and cigars and tobacco and that's about all.

HORROCKS: I know the name keeps popping up in various accounts of life in Abilene, but a description of it would be--

GEMMILL: Actaually Joner Callahan's place didn't exist when Ike was a boy in Abilene and I doubt if even in his early days in the service. Callahan's place was started maybe in 1920 or '25, I can't recall--I would say maybe '25.

HORROCKS: Was Joner Callahan himself one of the old hands that grew up with everyone.



GEMMILL: Yes, he was. And the fact that a lot of people hung out in there who were old friends of Ike's, I think, got the story started and Ike didn't play it down. I mean, he was perfectly willing to go in there and see who was in there, probably his old friends, and then Joner made "Ike's Corner" out of it and--

HORROCKS: They had an "Ike's Corner" in the building?

GEMMILL: Right, "Ike's Corner" in the store, but it was "Ike's Corner" long after he had matured and gone away.

HORROCKS: Did he have this popular reception before the war?

GEMMILL: He has some very close friends in Abilene, of course, and I think probably most of the time when he came home, before his rapid advancement, I think he spent with his family or with his friends, fellows like Bill Sterl and Charlie Case and Art Hurd. I can't think who all it would be, but I'm sure that those three would be the three that he'd look up first if he came to town.



HORROCKS: Did you get the feeling that this return to Joneer Callahan's and the attention that Ike got was something that gratified and pleased him immensely, that he really enjoyed being a popular figure.

GEMMILL: I think so. I think he did.

HORROCKS: As far as working with David Eisenhower goes, how long did he work for that company?

GEMMILL: Oh, I don't know. I sure can't remember. I was just a youngster at the time that I worked in there in his office, and all men were old people to me at that time so I don't have any idea how long.

HORROCKS: Did he seem in pretty good health then?

GEMMILL: Yes, I've forgotten when he died.

HORROCKS: '42, I think.

GEMMILL: It was before Mrs. Eisenhower, I know but I had forgotten just when it was.



HORROCKS: At least by the standards of Abilene in the depression in the '30s, the Eisenhower family was at least securely provided for.

GEMMILL: Well I don't know whether you're ever securely provided for or not, but I expect he was. I'm sure that he just was not a wealthy man, of course, or even well-to-do. But he owned his home and his land around it. And a person in those years could survive on quite a little less than they can now.

HORROCKS: One of the reasons I asked is, the popular story of the Eisenhower family is that they were from "the other side of the tracks" in Abilene. Was Abilene ever divided into one side of the tracks and the other?

GEMMILL: Oh, I don't know. I suppose that originated, and I'm guessing on this, in the early days of Abilene the original town was south of the tracks, and it was pretty wild and wooly. And with the passing of the cattle days and that part, the main business district started up north of the tracks and I suppose had a better--



[Interruption]

GEMMILL: I'm just thinking maybe, if there was any demarcation between the north and the south, it developed due to the fact that the south side of the tracks was pretty notorious in its day and the north side became the more respectable. A good many of the early settlers lived south of the tracks, and I'm sure had no stigma because of it.

HORROCKS: So really the question is mostly one of the origins of the town and the cowboy days.

GEMMILL: That's right. That's my feeling. It may be just imagination on my part.

HORROCKS: Were David and Ida Eisenhower particularly active in the community, or were they just pretty average citizens who kept to themselves?

GEMMILL: I would say they were probably what you would classify as average citizens. I don't think they were active. Now I've heard that Mrs. Eisenhower was more active in her church and her



religion and that probably is true, but that phase didn't get to me at all, because I didn't belong in the same church and my life just didn't cross hers in any way.

HORROCKS: To what would you attribute the success of the Eisenhower family? It seems kind of surprising that five or six brothers starting here had all done so well, been brought up so finely.

GEMMILL: Well, you kind of wonder about that, but I think probably David Eisenhower was very strict. And in those days you could be strict with your children. If they needed a tanning, you gave it to them, where today they teach us, or at least it seems that they're teaching us, let our children develop their own way, and I don't think he would have understood that at all. David Eisenhower was very strict, a disciplinarian; I think those boys all toed the mark or else they were in trouble. I don't think he was mean with them or anything of that nature, but he just saw to it that they toed the line and did the things they were supposed to do. And it stayed by them. And of course, obviously there was good mental background because the boys all had it. And if it hadn't been that the mother and father were



brains, maybe one or two of them would have developed, but not all. But it just seemed like all of them, they had something back of them.

HORROCKS: You wouldn't think it was just chance that they should all do so well.

GEMMILL: No, I don't think it was chance. I think in their case it was not chance. I think, from mother and father, they had their ability to make those boys into real men.

HORROCKS: Were any of the brothers particularly close to any of the other brothers?



GEMMILL: Well, I don't know that. Edgar and Ike, I think, were pretty close, although that's hearsay on my part. I mentioned Fred Waring before, and he was here for the Presidential announcement day in '52, I believe that was. And I got acquainted with him then and I've seen him a good many times since then. And he and his brother, Tom, were very close friends with Edgar and Ike, and they used to have competitive golf matches. I believe Tom and Ike were versus Edgar and Fred. From that, I gather that

Edgar and Ike were pretty close. And I've read maybe that, too, but I don't have any way of knowing it because they were all gone before my time. Of course, after Ike got into office why he consulted with Milt more than any of them, I think. I think he relied on Milt for quite a bit of his information.

HORROCKS: Did Milton ever write to you, or talk to you about any of these things, his jobs?

GEMMILL: Oh, I might have had an occasional letter from Milt. I don't think I have any of it--I gave everything I had to Don Wilson [Assistant Director, Eisenhower Library]--most everything. In fact, everything. The only thing I've got left is a letter here that establishes when I became a trustee of the Foundation, which was May 15, 1950, approximately five years after the Foundation was organized.

HORROCKS: Well, how did you become involved in the Foundation?

GEMMILL: Well, Mr. Graham, Emmett Graham was one of the men who helped organize it in 19--I think '45 maybe--and I was quite close to him and he took it upon himself. Mr. Harger was the



president, but Mr. Harger was quite old at the time and was president maybe in name and for merit.

HORROCKS: Just out of respect for his position.

GEMMILL: Yes, respect for him.

HORROCKS: Would this have been the case from the beginning of the Foundation, that Mr. Harger was really president in name but that Mr. Graham--



GEMMILL: Yes. Graham was--oh, on this letterhead he is listed as treasurer; actually he ramrodded everything in trying to get off the ground on the museum. Mr. Graham actually--I'm getting a little ahead of myself--but he gave his, well his financial wealth--he gave everything he had to this thing and called on lots of his friends for help, I mean in sending out literature to different organizations concerning contributions to the Eisenhower Foundation. And on several occasions that Foundation was just about dead, but he would grab ahold of another string and start on another angle. And I'm a little prejudiced, maybe, but I feel that without Mr. Graham we never would have had the

Foundation here at all. So this letter I have here was dated May the 18th, 1950 and it was addressed to me. All it does is say that you are elected to the Board of Trustees on the annual membership meeting held May 15th, 1950. So I came into the picture officially five years after it was founded, but I had worked with him for a good many years trying to get it off the ground, get the museum started. Finally they--well you've got more authority than I have for this--but we finally got the governor interested.



HORROCKS: Governor [Ed] Arn.

GEMMILL: I believe--was it Arn? Now I've forgotten which one, but whoever it was wrote to these companies on the governor's stationery soliciting pledges for the Foundation and that got it going.

HORROCKS: That was about in 1950 also, wasn't it? In that period.

GEMMILL: Well, it was--now these figures are completely gone from me; I don't have any idea. But it was after my election

to the Board of Directors, because I recall I was going to Kansas City to see Harry Darby who took over, really, put the thing up finally, I think. I mean he had a big hand in it in his position, and well, he could control a lot of persons.

HORROCKS: To develop this--how did Harry Darby become involved with the Foundation and was he the one that brought Governor Arn and Joyce Hall into the fund-raising?

GEMMILL: Well, he brought Joyce Hall. I don't know whether he brought Arn or whether Arn brought him that I don't know. Unfortunately Mr. Graham's gone and he would have been your major source of information. I don't know whether you've ever contacted her but his secretary Mabel Mellor, lives in California, and, if you have a way of contacting her, she can give you more information than all the rest of us put together.

HORROCKS: This would be Emmett Graham's secretary?

GEMMILL: Yes. She could really give you everything, because she was his secretary when this thing happened and she was his secretary clear on through till--well, long after Ike was President.



And she may even have a lot of the actual data.

HORROCKS: It was really the fund-raising activity of Governor Arn that cracked the ice as far as--

GEMMILL: I think that's true. That was when the tide turned and we got the west wing in the building built, and I don't remember when that was dedicated, but--

HORROCKS: I guess there were real fund-raising problems before then.

GEMMILL: Before then, oh, it was terrible. But as I told you, Mr. Graham, well, he used his whole wealth to put this thing over.



HORROCKS: Was then General Eisenhower aware of the fund-raising activity of Harry Darby and Governor Arn?

GEMMILL: Yes, I think so. Yes, it was all done with his permission everything had to be approved. And Mr. Graham did all the contacting, I think, most of it, at least with the family. And he was, incidentally, very close to Milton, because they were in

school together at Manhattan at Kansas State. Graham was a little older than I am, couple or three years, almost as old as Milton, so they knew each other quite well. But everything we did had to be approved by Ike or Milton.

HORROCKS: Governor Arn's activities then were done with the knowledge and approval of--

GEMMILL: I think I'd be safe in saying yes, in that case.

HORROCKS: Did Milton serve, usually, as the conduit for contacting General Eisenhower?

GEMMILL: Yes, particularly when Ike was so busy and maybe when he was overseas with NATO or when he wasn't available, Milton was the go-between, and there was a close relationship between Milton and Ike.

HORROCKS: Did they take the initiative and active interest in the affairs of the Foundation?

GEMMILL: No, I don't think so; I don't believe so. Now, just being a trustee, I attended meetings but a lot of this was



handled by Mr. Graham and Mr. Heller--Mr. Heller was vice-president at the time and Mr. Graham was treasurer--and they just handled a lot of this which would then be approved at the next meeting. And I just can't answer that.

HORROCKS: How often did you meet at the time?

GEMMILL: I can't remember back. We meet annually now, except there's an executive committee--I happen to be on that--and we did meet whenever occasion demanded it. Maybe they wanted to acquire some property or something like that and the executive committee had to meet and approve it. For instance, that property right east of the library, you know. I've forgotten the name of the people--

HORROCKS: Oh, where the chapel is now?

GEMMILL: No, there east of the library, where that farm house is, right north of the Dickinson County Historical Society.

HORROCKS: Right.

GEMMILL: We bought that to keep all--



HORROCKS: Kind of preserve the dignity of the setting.

GEMMILL: Yes, so that shops or something couldn't come in there.

HORROCKS: What were the original purposes of the Foundation when it was first founded?

GEMMILL: I can only read to you what it says in the articles of incorporation and that you can obtain--well, in fact if you don't have a copy you can have this one. But it's to "recognize suitably the military achievements of that great American, General Dwight D. Eisenhower" so forth and so forth. "To confer honor on the living members and on the memory of the deceased members of the armed forces", et cetera. "To obtain a site, erect and maintain thereon in General Eisenhower's hometown, Abilene, a war memorial to those ends. To aid worthy young persons in obtaining an education with a special emphasis on the science of government as conceived and established by our fathers. To assist veterans of World War II" and so forth.

HORROCKS: On the last portion of it with the aiding students, I guess there's a proposed citizenship program, at least in the



early years.

GEMMILL: Yes. I think the thing has outgrown the Foundation. Of course, the federal government's come along and taken over the whole matter, as you know, so the Foundation hasn't got very much to do anymore.

HORROCKS: When the Foundation first began, was it the Foundation's idea that a citizenship education program be part of it, or was this a suggestion of the General, or Milton?

GEMMILL: This I remember. Ike wanted nothing as a memorial to him--the family, yes, if they wanted to recognize the family, but not personally him. It was for the soldiers and so forth; he felt this thing was all right. That's the basis that he worked in getting and that's the way it was deeded to the, the deed I mean for the ground and for the home, was deeded to the Foundation, not as a memorial to Ike, but maybe to his mother and father and his brothers and particularly to the members of armed services, whoever they might be.

HORROCKS: And the citizenship education program was--



GEMMILL: Well, of course this was July 21, 1945 when it was filed and it says "to confer honor on the living members and on the memory of the deceased members of the armed forces of the United States."

HORROCKS: The reason I asked about the citizenship program is I was not sure who initiated that. I thought maybe General Eisenhower had suggested it when he visited in '45.

GEMMILL: That's possible that he did, and I don't know about that.

HORROCKS: And Milton also had a program at K-State on citizenship education, so I thought maybe it came from him also.

GEMMILL: This maybe is guessing, too, but I believe that the way Joyce Hall got involved in it was on the student activity. He had visions of doing something in that line. At one time he was quite active in the Foundation, but his other business interests were a little too much, I think. He didn't have time to devote to everything that came along.



HORROCKS: What about some of the early fund-raising activities of the Foundation? Could you tell us about the attempt of the Jaycees?

GEMMILL: I think most of those were before I was a trustee, but when I was working for Mr. Graham, I mean he was asking a lot of us to help him, and he would get the President of the Jaycees in the state, state president, and attempt to get the Jaycees organized in all towns to raise funds for this museum. And I recall going with him to Dodge City one day and I believe the fellow's name down there was [W. G.] Muncy---I think he was maybe president of the Jaycees, state president--and he was back and forth in Abilene quite often after that. But they just couldn't get the job done. Then Mr. Graham went to the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] and attempted that, and they'd get a little more money, but still they couldn't get it off the ground. Who else did he try? Well, the American Legion, I believe; I'm not sure about this. Every organization he could think of that could possibly help, he contacted.

HORROCKS: Wasn't there some sort of an early contract or agree-



ment with Gregory and House of Cleveland, Ohio--public relations firm--that was going to have a nation-wide fund-raising campaign?

GEMMILL: I don't remember that name. I think there was a fellow by the name of Doug Berrywell--no, not Berrywell--Burrow, Doug Burrow, who came out here from Kansas City and it was in that kind of an arrangement that he would get out and get the money raised for a certain percentage. I believe they fired him. He didn't work out. I don't remember whether he raised any money or not before--

HORROCKS: The reason I asked about the Gregory and House thing is I was under the impression that they may have planned a large scale, nation-wide, fund-raising campaign in the late '40s and that General Eisenhower found out about the campaign and took umbrage at what he thought were high-pressure tactics and put a stop to it and the Foundation had to release this firm.

GEMMILL: That probably could be. The thing runs in my mind that we tried to retain this fund raising into the state of Kansas. It was not to be nation-wide, but just in the state. Now later, when they raised the money for the library, it became a national matter, and I think Ben Fairless of United States



Steel took over as the chairman of that committee. I always remember, they'd say well, it wasn't a matter of raising the money, and Fairless could go to maybe ten men in the United States who would supply the whole thing, it was a matter of getting these small contributions from the common people so they all have an interest in it. And Ike didn't want just ten men to come up with the money.

HORROCKS: This was one of his specific--

GEMMILL: I don't know that it was, but it runs in my mind that always we were impressed or told that we don't want big contributions. Now they'd take ten thousand from Sears Roebuck or some figure like that, but when a man could come up with--I'll give a million dollars--they wouldn't have any truck with that.

HORROCKS: How did the Kansas Eisenhower Presidential Library Commission come into being and what was its relationship with the Foundation?

GEMMILL: Well, they were so darned near the same that it was kind of hard for me to figure out the difference. When it came



time for the Library, they went on a different basis where the Foundation--that was out of their--I don't know whether I'm

, anyway they had the different organization altogether for the raising of the funds because this was to be transferred upon completion--. This was organized by the state: the legislature appropriated money to finance this committee or organization for the completion of the library. Actually the members of the two organizations, to some extent, were the same. For instance, Mr. [C.L.] Brainard I recall was the, I believe chairman of the library organization and he was also a trustee in the Foundation. And Mr. Heller and I've forgotten who now, but there was some inter-mixture. But the idea was to go out and raise money this time on a national basis for the library, and upon completion, then it was to be transferred to the federal government, to the archivist [of the United States].

HORROCKS: Was it understood at the time, this would be in the late '50s now, that when the library was transferred over to the federal government that at that time the home and the museum would also go from the Foundation to the government?

GEMMILL: I don't know. It might have been understood by maybe



some of the officers, but I don't know whether I knew that. It all just seemed to come about gradually that it was the better thing to do. We weren't in the hole or anything; after we once got the museum built the fees took care of it.

HORROCKS: It's sort of what I was wondering, if, by the late '50s, when the home and museum were really a well-established and going concern for the Foundation, if the Foundation looked kindly or with any enthusiasm at the prospect of having the government come in.

GEMMILL: Well I think we all felt we were a bunch of amateurs and it should be--



This begins the second day of interviewing with Mr. Robert Gemmill at his home in Abilene, Kansas with David Horrocks of the Eisenhower Library; March 13, 1975.

HORROCKS: Mr. Gemmill, I believe we were talking yesterday about the transfer of the home and the library to the government in the early '60s. Was there any problem with that as far as the Foundation wanting to relinquish control over these buildings?

GEMMILL: No, I don't think so. Actually I believe we agreed that while we were proud of what we'd done, we agreed that we were amateurs in managing it. And the administrator, Earl Endacott, was very hard working and he'd put a certain personality into it that maybe the government couldn't, but nevertheless it was an amateur job. And we all felt, I think, that for posterity it should be transferred to the government.

HORROCKS: Who handled the negotiations between the government and the Foundation?

GEMMILL: Well I suppose Mr. Heller; I'm sure he was president at the time. Probably Mr. Heller and Mr. Lehman, John Lehman. I don't recall being in on any of the matter except maybe the formal acceptance of the agreement. I think it was all probably handled by maybe those two men.

HORROCKS: Who handled it on the government's side? Was that Wayne Grover, do you recall?

GEMMILL: I believe it was Wayne Grover. That name is very familiar to me and Wayne Grover, he was archivist was he?



HORROCKS: Yes.

GEMMILL: Yes, I'm pretty sure that would be the man.

HORROCKS: Was there any objection by any of the Eisenhower brothers to transferring these--

GEMMILL: Not that I know of.

HORROCKS: Was there any agreement or any discussion in these negotiations as to the status of Foundation employees who worked at the museum and home?

GEMMILL: That's a little embarrassing question because I was concerned at the time about the future for Mr. Endacott. I think I asked Mr. Heller about it, and he assured me that Mr. Endacott would be retained by the GSA and have employment as long as he desired. Actually I don't know whether that worked out that way or not. I haven't talked to Endacott for quite a few years now, and I don't know whether he retired because he desired it or because he was pressured into it. I just don't know that.

HORROCKS: Your feeling is that when the negotiations were going on, the Foundation felt that it had an agreement to retain.



personnel.

GEMMILL: Yes that was the understanding I had.

HORROCKS: Was this discussed at the meeting at which the transfer was accepted by the trustees.

GEMMILL: I don't recall.

HORROCKS: In the 1950s, who generally handled relations between the Foundation and the President?

GEMMILL: Well, I don't recall when Mr. Graham's authority passed on, but I would say that in the early '50s quite a bit of the contact with the White House was through him. He was very well acquainted with Colonel [Robert L.] Schulz, who was the President's aide. He was his aide, I guess, from the time of World War II until sometime while he was in office as President.

HORROCKS: Right up through his death, I think.

GEMMILL: Yes, and Mr. Graham's contact with the White House or with the President or the President of Columbia, as he was earlier, was through Colonel Schulz.



HORROCKS: Did Milton actively involve himself in the 1950s.

GEMMILL: Yes, I think so. Yes, I think he was very active then. He was another one, of course, with whom Mr. Graham had contact. But I don't know too much about that.

HORROCKS: So really it was a relationship between Emmett Graham and Colonel Schulz.

GEMMILL: Well, I'd say Colonel Schulz and Milton.

HORROCKS: And Milton.

GEMMILL: Yes. I think his contacts were with Milton quite often too. In fact, I think quite often when he wrote a letter to one, a copy went to the other person.

HORROCKS: Do you know what kinds of issues and problems were most--

GEMMILL: No. No, I really don't. I was just trying to think of something but I can't. But I know that when something came up, they proposed to make some change, it was very essential that we



get the President's approval of it, and the approval would come through Milton or the disapproval.

HORROCKS: Did he disapprove or veto many proposed actions, do you recall?

GEMMILL: I don't think so, but I don't really know. If you could get in touch with Mabel Mellor, she either in her memory would have it or she may even have some papers. I don't know. She was here a couple of months ago and unfortunately I didn't learn that she was here until she was about to leave.

HORROCKS: Does she have relatives here?

GEMMILL: No, she has friends. Lena Benson, who used to have-- it closed down now--she had a chicken house up on the hill, and they were very good friends. In fact if you wanted to get in contact with her, that would be the way to get the address. I don't have it.

HORROCKS: We may do that. Did Mr. Graham's activities in kind of spearheading the work of the Foundation continue all the way



through the '50s?

GEMMILL: Well he got ill, I'll put it that way. He became sick and his control of the situation deteriorated, and I don't remember the dates, but I would say it was in the '50s that this happened to him. I can't tell you anymore than that; I just don't remember the dates.

HORROCKS: Who would have taken his place then?

GEMMILL: Well, Mr. Heller was President and Carl Scupin was the fellow that came along and took a very active part in the, well he was very active in the construction of the small building where they have the--

HORROCKS: The chapel?

GEMMILL: --the chapel. And he bought the ground west of the chapel, across the street where the Greyhound Museum is today. I say he bought it; he worked out the details so that the trustees could buy it to prevent commercialism getting in on the edge of the territory and he continued that. For instance, he



was active in getting the farm land just east of the library and north of the Dickinson County Historical Museum. What else? There was some land which would have been north of the home that we acquired.

HORROCKS: Did Mr. Scupin make his real entrance into the affairs of the Foundation in the mid-'50s then?

GEMMILL: He became more active as Mr. Graham's interest went down, why he went up, I mean in activity. Mr. Scupin was a wealthy man and he had time to devote to it.

HORROCKS: It must have cost quite a bit to acquire these properties.



GEMMILL: Well, I would have known at the time what we paid for them. Of course, we later sold the ground west of the street, Buckeye Street, to the Greyhound people, and we didn't lose anything on that transaction--in fact I wouldn't be surprised if we made something. There was a young man came here to work for the Duckwall Stores Company who was quite a promoter, and he had bought all that ground over on the west side of the street and

had visions, I think, of a motel or something.

HORROCKS: He was going to speculate in cashing in--

GEMMILL: And he was speculating on the future. He got a job with another company, and when he left town, then, he lost interest in this project and very kindly agreed to sell the property to the trustees for exactly what he had in it.

HORROCKS: Do you remember this fellow's name?

GEMMILL: No. Oh, his name? Why'd you ask me? [Laughter]

HORROCKS: Oh, for the record. Seems like he was quite generous.

GEMMILL: Well, I should remember it; it may come to me but as of the moment I can't think of it. I sure can't think of it now. [Ron Mayer]

HORROCKS: How did the Foundation raise the funds to pay for these properties?

GEMMILL: Well the Foundation had funds which came from the admission charges to the museum. I don't remember the exact



amount of capital we had, but we did have considerable amount of money. And it was through this money that we were able to buy these properties. The one we sold back to the Greyhound people and I don't know yet what we'll do with the one east of the library.

HORROCKS: Then the funds for these purchases came from museum donations, museum ticket purchases?

GEMMILL: I think so. It could have been that Mr. Scupin would go in and buy the property because of the urgency or, while the chance was available to get it--he'd go in and buy it--but he would then turn it over to the trustees for exactly what it cost him. He didn't make anything on it.

HORROCKS: Was there much problem in obtaining this land at a reasonable price?

GEMMILL: No. Simply, I think, because no pressure was put on anyone and I think the property owners--

[Interruption]



GEMMILL: I believe that the property owners were approached with the idea that the Foundation would appreciate a chance to buy the ground from them at any time they wanted to offer it for sale, and they would appreciate first chance at it. And I'm sure they paid more than you or I would have if we were going out to look for a place to put a house, but in most cases I think the people were kind of anxious to be a part of the Foundation. And so when there was a death in the family or something that allowed the sale to be made, they contacted the Foundation and the transaction was completed.

HORROCKS: Now the land that the library is built on--this is a different parcel of land than what we've been talking about--this was acquired by the Presidential Library Commission?

GEMMILL: Yes, I think that's right. The presidential foundation was a state organization and financed by the Kansas legislature. Money was appropriated to finance the operation and right of condemnation was also given to the Presidential Commission. There was a row of houses along that block across the street from the museum, and they were all acquired either by outright purchase



or condemnation. The Rock Island Railroad had an elevator in what would now be just west of the library along their tracks. They moved that across Buckeye and on the other side of the tracks; it's still there. And then the ground down to the railroad right-of-way was deeded by the Rock Island--all of their property was deeded to the Presidential Commission.

HORROCKS: Was that the purpose behind--establishing the Presidential Commission--to enable the Foundation, essentially, to acquire these lands through the authority of condemnation and eminent domain.

GEMMILL: Yes. It wasn't done for the Foundation. I mean it wasn't done for the Eisenhower Foundation, the organization that operated the museum. It was done for the Presidential Commission to build the library; that was the project that they had in mind when they started acquiring this property on the south side of the street.



HORROCKS: There were close ties between the Foundation and the Commission.

GEMMILL: Oh, yes. Now if you haven't already, I would suggest that you contact Mr. Brainard, C.L. Brainard; he was the official representative--I would guess that's what you'd call him--the official representative of the trustees of the Foundation on the Presidential Library Commission. He could give you first-hand information on the library, the construction of it and how the property was acquired and all about it. And he's a man that would be able to give you much more detail than I can because he was just made that way.

HORROCKS: Directly involved with it.

GEMMILL: Yes.

HORROCKS: At least from your standpoint, who was the propelling force in running the Commission during this period?

GEMMILL: I think Harry Darby probably was as active as anyone. He was quite a friend of Ike's and he had been appointed senator for an unexpired term. He didn't run for re-election but he did serve as senator, and he got to be very well acquainted with the President. He was a very close friend and he took it on, I think,



as a project and I would say he undoubtedly was the driving force for the library.

HORROCKS: Who originated the idea of having a Presidential Library Commission with these powers?

GEMMILL: Well, I don't know that I can tell you that. I just vaguely in the back of my head, I recall that we had several meetings discussing the matter and the reason for it and the necessity for it and the necessity of separating the Library Commission from the Foundation. Of course in those days, I don't think we had any thought yet of the federal government taking over the museum, but also to separate us and to be sure that the library became a real thing we had to do certain things in forming committees and so forth which the Foundation didn't have the authority to do. So the Library Commission was the method used to raise the funds and to get the ground and property and then the final construction of the building. But as I say, I remember us talking in meetings about the problems and why they had to be separated. I don't remember what the problems were at this time, it's just too long ago in my



memory to recall.

HORROCKS: Had Harry Darby been very active in the Foundation before this?

GEMMILL: Yes. Yes, he had. He became active when we finally got the ball rolling on the raising of funds for the construction of the museum.

HORROCKS: That's right, with Joyce Hall.

GEMMILL: I'm sure that Joyce Hall's interest was instigated by Darby as were a good many others who could afford to help us. But Darby became interested about the time that we, well I think maybe the reason we began to get money was because of Darby.

HORROCKS: Over the course of the years, did it develop that, although he wasn't actually president of the Foundation, I guess Sam Heller became President--

GEMMILL: That's right.

HORROCKS: --that in fact Harry Darby did play more and more of



a role as a spokesman for the Foundation with President Eisenhower, or ex-President Eisenhower.

GEMMILL: He became more active. Well even up until a year or two ago, he came out here several times a year. He and Mr. Scupin became very close friends and Mr. Darby was an outgoing, extrovert type of person, and he just seemed to literally enjoy coming out to Abilene to see the museum or to see the people who were interested in it. And he became a very close friend of Lena Benson's--which, he advertised her all over the countryside.

HORROCKS: Can't hurt.

GEMMILL: No. Well, she's retired now, but she had a lot of famous people out there in her time.

HORROCKS: And good meals too.

GEMMILL: Yes, very good.

HORROCKS: This may pertain more to the work of the Library Commission then, but was Arthur Minnich the person in the White



House who handled discussions regarding the library and presidential papers?

GEMMILL: I don't know. I sure don't know at all. Don't remember that name. I remember the archivist's name that you had mentioned.

HORROCKS: Grover.

GEMMILL: Grover, and I think I met him out here on occasion, but I don't remember the other name.

HORROCKS: Well, what happened to the Foundation and its activities when the transfer was finally completed, when the home and museum were finally deeded over to the government? What activities did the Foundation continue with?

GEMMILL: About the only thing that ever happened after that was maybe the purchase of some of this land that I spoke of where the Greyhound Foundation is north of home and over east of the pylons.

HORROCKS: These acquisitions then are pretty recent, relatively speaking.



GEMMILL: Some of them were rather recent.

HORROCKS: But really the Foundation's center core work--

GEMMILL: Well, the property east of the pylons is, I don't know whether it's still occupied by the owner or not. At the purchase I think it was agreed that he could remain there as long as he desired, and whether he's moved out, I haven't found out or hadn't thought about it even. Time gets away from you; you forget how many years ago these things happened.

HORROCKS: This is something I should have brought out at the beginning of the first interview. If you could state what offices you held in the Foundation and the dates of your connection with it. I guess you joined in 1950 as a trustee.

GEMMILL: 1950. The date, I don't recall, but it would have been when Mr. Loraine Long died. He had been chairman of the building committee and was chairman during the construction of the center part and the west wing of the museum. At the time of his death

[Interruption]



HORROCKS: Continuing at the time of Mr. Long's death.

GEMMILL: Well the plans and specifications for the air conditioning of the museum building had been issued and in fact the contract was to have been let in about seven or eight days after his death. Mr. Heller came to me and asked me to take the position as chairman of the building committee at that time; so I can't tell you the dates but it relates to Mr. Long's death. I knew nothing about air conditioning; so we delayed the letting of the contract for a couple of weeks while I delved into the mystery of that problem. Through Mr. Graham I got contacts with the professors at Manhattan, at Kansas State University, and they explained a lot of the things that I should be watching for in such a matter, and we finally then did let the contract in a couple of weeks. And then the next big project was the east wing, and I can't tell you when that happened, what dates those were, but it was a rush job because they wanted it completed in time for Ike to dedicate it--and I believe it was an October date, but I don't know which year--but as chairman of the building committee I had that job. We had Wilson and Company at Salina



which is an engineering and architectural firm and Busboom and Rauh Construction Company. Busboom and Rauh wanted to build all the property--they wanted their name attached to the fact that the building had been built by them; so they were very anxious to get this job. And they did, I think, a good job.

We were not wealthy enough in those days--I'm talking about the Foundation--we were not wealthy enough to spend money right and left, and the problem came up of watering the grounds. And we didn't feel we could afford city water. So we drilled a well which produced volumes of water, but it was so full of iron that where the sprinkler system hit the building, it turned it brown. In fact, the sidewalks out in front were all turned brown. So we had to give that up. Then later we had the building sand-blasted to bring it back to its natural color, but our attempt to save money on water didn't work out. They got the building finished anyway in time for the dedication that was scheduled for it. I've forgotten how many months it took, but they did a good job.

HORROCKS: You were also on the executive committee, were you?



GEMMILL: Yes, I don't know when I became a member of the executive committee. I think that was--

HORROCKS: '59, perhaps.

GEMMILL: Well, it could have been. It's been a long time now. I was chairman of the building committee and then chairman of the insurance committee. In fact I retained both jobs at one time. The reason for that is that I was in the insurance business and they just pushed it off onto me. And I remember we had a floater policy on the contents of the museum, and everytime they sent out new material from the White House we had to have an appraisal. And this became one of the most difficult parts of my job down there was to get appraisals on all this material that was sent out from Washington. This was, of course, before the days when Watergate and Nixon and all that trouble--they still allowed the President to deduct this from his income tax as property deeded to the Foundation. Two of our principal sources of appraisers were the University of Kansas and the Nelson Art Gallery in Kansas City--we would ask these men to come out and view this. Some of it was paintings and some of it was



books, old books and so forth, and then of course objects of art--vases and--

HORROCKS: Steuben glass.

GEMMILL: Yes. The Steuben glass came a little later. I don't recall we had much Steuben glass when the Foundation was managing it. But anyway, we'd get these professors and curators out here and they would inspect the property and give us an evaluation. I recall that one professor from Kansas University was an old book expert. And while it wasn't an old book, it was the President's inaugural address which was with big type and he was turning these over, turning the pages over, and in one place there there was inserted in pen or pencil something that the President wanted to add to what he was going to say there. When he turned that over and saw that page, he said, "The value of this just went up \$1,000.00". So I remembered that one. Silliman I believe is the name of the, well, I don't know what you'd call him--Curator of the Nelson Art Gallery, but anyway Mr. Silliman was out here on a number of occasions on art objects and paintings and so forth. So that insurance job got to be a pretty tough thing, because we



wanted it accurate, you know, and Colonel [Robert] Schulz insisted that we send them back an evaluation on everything that they sent out.

HORROCKS: For their tax purposes?

GEMMILL: I think so.

HORROCKS: Do you remember the amounts you were dealing with in total insured value?

GEMMILL: No, I don't. The President had a medal which was given to him by Stalin, or maybe General [Grigori] Zhukov I don't remember. Anyway it was the equivalent of Eisenhower's position in the Russian army, and they gave this medal to Ike and I understand they later wanted it back, but they didn't get it. This had diamonds and rubies, I don't know--all kinds of precious stones in it. I think somebody came up with a \$50,000.00 value on that object. We had panels set up upright with a glass front which could be raised and lowered like a window, and we had this one object right in the middle of this big three foot square, maybe, panel. And after we found out what



it was valued at, I got nervous about it because somebody could have walked into that museum and could easily have cut a hole in that glass and walked off with that medal.

HORROCKS: That would be a hard thing to dispose of.

GEMMILL: It would have been hard, except there was considerable value in the diamonds and the jewels. Anyway, we got a local automobile plate glass man to make us a piece of safety glass so if they cut it, it couldn't cut through, see--it wouldn't come out in one piece. It would be a safety factor. Nobody ever got into it so far as I know.

HORROCKS: Didn't these appraisers have problems in appraising the value of items that were unique to President Eisenhower and therefore had no equivalent in the market place?

GEMMILL: I think they did. I don't know how they ever arrived at a decision. I know there were some monstrosities of things that were included in that--a golf bag I recall that was made of elephant hide, I think, anyway it was made of some kind of leather. It was so heavy you couldn't pick it up. I mean, you



could pick it up but it was so heavy you couldn't have--

HORROCKS: Well, I remember a Madonna made out of paper clips and--

GEMMILL: Yes, there were a lot of things like that. These things really, I don't think they gave them much value.

HORROCKS: So really the items that were insured included gifts to the President from the general public that were transferred out here, and the amounts that these appraisers decided upon were used for insurance purposes and for tax purposes by the White House.

GEMMILL: That's my understanding. I know they were used for insurance purposes and I know we had to refer them back to the White House; so I'm sure they wanted to know what we'd put on it so they'd know what to take off on their income tax.

HORROCKS: What kind of arrangements, or maybe this wasn't such a problem then, was there in having the amount of insurance equal the inflation and appreciation in value of the items at



the museum?

GEMMILL: Well, I don't recall exactly how much, I think we automatically on renewals would increase the insurance maybe five percent or so, ten percent I've forgotten now. It's gotten almost obligatory that you increase your insurance every time you turn around, but--

HORROCKS: Especially with art objects, too.

GEMMILL: Yes. We were fortunate maybe in that we never had a claim in all those years; we've never had anything taken or disappeared.

HORROCKS: Were there ever any attempted robberies?

GEMMILL: Not to my knowledge. I don't think we ever had an incident at all of any kind.

HORROCKS: Were there ever any items that were lost in the storage and transfer--significant items?

GEMMILL: I don't think so. Mr. Endacott, Earl Endacott who



lives in Lawrence now, of course, was the administrator of the Foundation from the time the home was open to the public until his retirement. He was an ex-schoolteacher who taught in Abilene High School and served in World War I and also in World War II, and he had quite a personality. He was gruff and you'd think he was an old crab, but underneath it all he had a flair for showing things the way people wanted to see them. While it wasn't probably--as I mentioned earlier--we did it in an amateurish way. For instance, if somebody came in who he thought maybe deserved a little VIP treatment and they had a little child with them, he'd go to the vault and get out one of the Arab costumes or something like that and put it on this child and allow them to take a picture of it. Well, people really loved that sort of thing, you know. They'd come in and everybody'd stand around and watch them while they were taking these pictures--everybody would want to take a picture of this child. It was a little public relations thing that he had a knack for, but Earl did a real good job of running the thing. He started, of course, over in the home. He and his wife had an old garage behind the house which they converted into an office where you



signed in when you wanted to go through the home. Then Earl would take a tour of maybe ten or twelve people and his wife would come along a little later with another ten or twelve and they'd take the tour through the house. Of course, that's one of the reasons why we had to recondition it, and that's when Mr. [Edward] Birmingham got involved in it. I was told at that time that I was to supervise the home and not to let them change a stone in it.

HORROCKS: Who told you that?

GEMMILL: Mr. Heller.

HORROCKS: That was a firm Foundation policy.

GEMMILL: Yes. There was to be no changes made in the home except where it was just absolutely necessary.

HORROCKS: I think the Foundation certainly deserves thanks and credit for that kind of decision.

GEMMILL: Well, they went in there and marked everyone of those stones in the foundation before they removed them. There was a little, tiny basement down there, I think a dirt floor as I remember it and an old furnace and that was all that was down there. They excavated completely underneath the home and then



built in. I believe it was eighteen inch wall and steel girders put in there and then the stones put back in place. In the walls they put some girders up between the first and second floor; I couldn't even tell you today where they are.

HORROCKS: This is all after the great flood in--

GEMMILL: In '51?

HORROCKS: --in '51.

GEMMILL: Yes. Well I gave you that letter from Birmingham. That would have been approximate date of it.

HORROCKS: Ok, that was a couple of years later.

GEMMILL: But they went to great ends to find wallpaper or to have wallpaper made that was exactly the patterns that were on the home when Mrs. Eisenhower passed away.

HORROCKS: Now who did this, for instance, matching the wallpaper?

GEMMILL: Well, I didn't. I don't know who did; whether this lady--there was some lady representing Birmingham--



HORROCKS: Mrs. Birmingham was on it.

GEMMILL: Yes, she was on it, but this lady in Pennsylvania-- I don't remember her name at all. But she checked thoroughly and came up with the answer that we would use Wilson and Company in Salina who she had checked through a rating service on engineering firms, and they had what it took. So that was the company that handled the engineering on it. I don't remember whether they did the work or whether Busboom and Rauh did, but I think Wilson Company handled most of this. At least they supervised everything. Anyway that house was put back in A-1 condition.

HORROCKS: I was under the impression that there was quite a disagreement at the time between some people on the ladies' committee who wanted to redecorate and pretty up the home.

GEMMILL: That I didn't come in contact with. I know that Mr. Graham had problems at various times, and I think the DAR raised the money for the pylons. Of course they used to be arranged in a different location there in front of the museum. But he had some difficulty with the ladies at that time on what



was to be, where they were to go, and what the wording would be on the pylons and so forth. But it all came out all right. I'm also pretty sure that you're right that there was quite a bit of disagreement over the remodeling of the house.

HORROCKS: Did Milton take an active interest in the remodeling?

GEMMILL: I don't remember at the time, but I'm sure he did. It just seems to me that Milton was always in the background; that whatever happened, Mr. Graham would contact Milton. I think Mr. Graham spent a million dollars on telephone calls.

HORROCKS: He would have been in close contact with Milton on just about everything then.

GEMMILL: On about everything. As I said, Milton represented the family, and, if there was any problem that they thought needed approval by the family, why they went to Milton with it.

HORROCKS: Were there ever any problems in getting the entire family to agree on specific action?

GEMMILL: I think not after I became active. There was a little



problem at first: I don't think Edgar wanted to deed the property to the Foundation at first, but that was before my time and that's hearsay.

HORROCKS: In a general sense, wasn't the Foundation in sort of an awkward position having been founded really to honor just one of the brothers, Dwight, and yet, in the end, having to administer the home on behalf of all the brothers.

GEMMILL: Well, you see the articles of incorporation stated that they were honoring all the armed forces. Eisenhower wouldn't consider at all--I mean, he wouldn't go along with anything that was for him. So when the Foundation was first organized, it had to be dedicated to all the members of the armed services, maybe the family, but none of it was for him.



HORROCKS: That was one of his preconditions was it?

GEMMILL: Yes. That was when, I think, Edgar maybe did balk a little, but he came around.

HORROCKS: On the remodeling of the home, when Mr. Birmingham came out and decided that that should be done, I guess you

said yesterday that he and Mr. Dillon funded it largely.

GEMMILL: Well, I don't know whether that's supposed to have ever been said out loud, but that was the arrangement. They supplied the money.

HORROCKS: What was Mr. Birmingham's particular interest in this? Did he ever say really why we wanted to do it. Was it a purely spontaneous thing on his part?

GEMMILL: I can't tell you. Whether he or Dillon was here and decided the house needed renovating or whether somebody brought it up to him, I don't know. All I know is that I was informed that the Foundation was going to have funds available to renovate the house and we were to get Wilson and Company to do the job.

HORROCKS: When the Foundation first took over the home, after the death of Mother Eisenhower, I guess there was some remodeling done then. Do you know, if the house was in very good condition then?

GEMMILL: Well, it wasn't run down. I'd say for a home, it was in good condition, that type of home. Now it wasn't fancy,



you know.

HORROCKS: Considering its age and such.

GEMMILL: Yes. It was, I think, in good condition. It was very plain, you know, there was nothing fancy about it, and that's the way they've kept it.

HORROCKS: We were talking earlier about Mr. Endacott's work with the museum. Was there any sort of hard feelings within the Foundation towards the government after the government took over the museum?

GEMMILL: Well, I can't tell you. I think Mr. Endacott maybe was at loggerheads with the people that came in to represent the GSA. [General Service Administration] and maybe brought on his resignation, but I never did get to talk to him about it. See his wife had passed away and then Earl moved to Lawrence to live, and I haven't seen him since. He's had a heart attack, I know that, and if he's been back I haven't seen him. But if he would talk, he could tell you more than anybody in the place. Of course, Mr. Graham could have too, but Miss Mellor and



Endacott and Chuck Brainard are the people who were here that I would say had the most information on the Foundation.

HORROCKS: How did the Foundation manage to bring in new members over the years, still being an Abilene based group and yet to be able to bring in people like Senator Darby from further out in the state and then also to perhaps bring in some entirely out-of-staters, people from New York or Washington?

GEMMILL: Well, of course, in the early days they created vice-presidents and members of the Foundation. I never did understand that thoroughly--there's members and there's trustees. I'm a trustee, but I'm not a member of the Foundation. So we go to an annual meeting and the members meet and some of them are both--both members and trustees. Anyway, the members meet, close that meeting and start the trustees' meeting.

HORROCKS: Do the trustees do the voting and the actual decision making, is that it?

GEMMILL: Yes, that's right. Almost anybody that they could think of would get a job as a vice-president. I think I gave you



some lists yesterday--you've probably had them before--but there were names on there from all over the state of Kansas, all the prominent men in every community.

HORROCKS: OK, well that's what I thought. Then really the use of the vice-presidential office was a way to honor people who cooperated with the Foundation without really bringing them into the mechanics of it.

GEMMILL: That's right. The most active people from outside of Abilene were Harry Darby and Joyce Hall and Don Hall and Ray Evans. Ray Evans is Darby's son-in-law and was president of the Traders National Bank in Kansas City but retired with a heart attack here about three months ago. We used to have, in its hey-day, before the government took over the museum, our annual meetings would be 50 or 100 people attend. We'd have the dinner at the hotel and then these vice-presidents from different parts of the state would come in. I recall that when Ike was President, he invited the trustees to Washington to a luncheon. That was in honor of the German--



HORROCKS: Konrad Adenauer?

GEMMILL: --Adenauer and people who were trustees in name only were suddenly be--

[Interruption]

HORROCKS: You started to mention the White House luncheon you were invited to in 1960 with President Eisenhower and Chancellor Adenauer. I guess that was quite an honor.

GEMMILL: Well, for a small town group in Abilene, it was. We were very thrilled with the invitation and somehow or another I think practically every trustee in the organization and some of the members managed to get away from their work. I didn't see how I could afford it, but my wife said I had to go and I did and I guess I never missed the money afterwards.

HORROCKS: Was everyone included in this? Were there any people associated with the Foundation that were left out?

GEMMILL: No, I don't think anyone was left out. I think they just took the list of trustees and maybe the vice-presidents, and



by that time I don't believe that we had nearly as many vice-presidents as we had earlier. But I think it was principally trustees.

HORROCKS: I wonder if you could give us a few thumbnail sketches of some of the people that you worked with or came in contact with on the Foundation. We'll go through the list of names and if you could add a few comments. Charles Harger.

GEMMILL: Charles Harger was a newspaper man, you might say of the old school, and he was at this time quite up in years. But he had been very close to Ike because of his newspaper work and he knew Ike and he was the man in Abilene that everybody kind of respected you know because he was the head of this paper. And he was an author--he'd written numerous articles for the Country Gentleman. So he just almost automatically became the man to head up the Foundation because--

HORROCKS: Even though he was old and not too active at the time.

GEMMILL: Well he was still active in '45 when the Foundation



was started; he was active then.

HORROCKS: How about Sam Heller?

GEMMILL: Sam Heller was a very successful businessman. I don't know just how to--he had a very smooth manner and handled things gracefully. I worked for Mr. Heller for a while, and in later years then I would go to him for advice sometimes when I felt I needed some guidance in some matter because I had known him in earlier days and I had worked for him for a short period of time.

HORROCKS: How about Emmett Graham?

GEMMILL: Yes. Emmett was his own worst enemy, but he's the man that I could expound on for the rest of the day because of what he did. He literally gave his life for the Eisenhower Foundation. He was so wrapped up in it. He hadn't known Ike before the Foundation was organized, but he rapidly became the leading man in the group to get the job done.

HORROCKS: Why was he his own worst enemy?

GEMMILL: Well, he had a drinking problem, and it just finally

got too great for him. But in his earlier days before that happened he was a dedicated man and this job was to get this museum built and he worked to that end, and when everybody else was ready to throw in the sponge and give up, he'd start over again.

HORROCKS: He didn't have this problem during the early years of the Foundation.

GEMMILL: No. No, he didn't. But I think the job just got maybe too much. But he would spend his own money; he never hesitated to spend it on anything that he thought would help the Eisenhower Foundation progress. As I say, I could talk about him all day. You can just lay it to his doorstep that the buildings are there.

HORROCKS: OK, we talked about him yesterday. How about Edward Birmingham?

GEMMILL: Well, I only met Birmingham on one occasion. He and his wife flew in from New York to Wichita and I went down there with a friend, picked him up and brought him back to Abilene, and



so we had a conversation on the way from Wichita to Abilene and then some conversation while he was here over the remodeling or renovating of the home, and then he disappeared from my life.

HORROCKS: So you really didn't know him very well.

GEMMILL: No, I didn't know him, no. I didn't know him at all.

HORROCKS: Harry Darby.

GEMMILL: Well, Harry Darby was a driving, dynamic personality. When he took hold of the thing, when he got interested in it, it started moving. I attended numerous meetings in the hotel in Kansas City or even out here where Harry Darby'd just take over and tell us what we were going to do and get it done.



HORROCKS: Was his advice welcomed?

GEMMILL: Yes. Well, he has a key to Abilene I'm sure, and on a number of occasions they've tried to give him one.

HORROCKS: Why was he so actively interested in the Foundation?

GEMMILL: Well, that I can't tell you except that he was a

politician, of course, but always in the background. I think he was a delegate to the Republican National Committee meetings, but he never ran for office, publicly. Of course, as I say, he was appointed senator by one of the governors, I've forgotten, Arn or [John] Anderson or who it was. But why he got this sudden interest in Abilene--it wasn't in Abilene--it was in the Eisenhower Museum that he became interested and then by degrees he became interested in Abilene. Before his illness, he was out here--well when Mr. Scupin was living he was here maybe every two months.

HORROCKS: And he's no longer so actively involved, is he?

GEMMILL: Well, none of us are actually. Ever since the government took over the museum, why, we had nothing to do except have an annual meeting and approve the minutes of the last meeting and that's it. So there really hasn't been anything. There is of course, some funds left in the organization and we have to see to that, you know, see that everything's OK, but we don't actually have any more projects in mind.



HORROCKS: How about J. Earl Endacott? I don't know where the "J" fits in there.

GEMMILL: J. Earl Endacott is right. As I told you, he was rather gruff and austere until you got to know him or until these children got around him and then he'd scold them. But somehow or other children seemed to discover that he didn't mean it all. Underneath he was a great fellow. But he did put personality into the museum that was just what we needed at the time. At least, I feel that way. You can, I suppose, run a museum and have it just run under rules and regulations, but there wasn't any rules and regulations with Earl. He dressed it up any way he felt would get it over to the people. He would take these Arab costumes or something else and go to schools and make talks for the kids about the Eisenhower museum.

HORROCKS: Was he a close, personal friend initially of any of the people on the Foundation?

GEMMILL: No.

HORROCKS: How did he come to be chosen?



GEMMILL: Well, he returned from World War II in 1945 just when they were getting this thing off the ground--I mean the home part--and I guess he didn't want to go back to teaching, he was getting a little old for that, so he just became available. And it was a very fortunate thing for the Foundation that he did because he and his wife ran that project down there on peanuts. You see, there was no charge for admission to the home and the Foundation didn't have any means of support except by maybe selling a few trinkets down there in the old office, which was the garage behind the home. Endacott was not overly paid, I can assure you of that, when they started.

HORROCKS: A labor of love.

GEMMILL: Yes.

HORROCKS: How about Skip Scupin?

GEMMILL: Well Skip was my old boss and I've known him for a good many years now, since about 1923. I worked for him in the early '30s and had known him since '23. He was a rough-hewn person, maybe butchered the King's English, but he had



a mind that was brilliant, particularly on finance. And he had friends in New York and Chicago and Boston in financial circles that respected his opinion on everything. Skip lost his wife years ago by heart attack, I think. Of course he had a daughter, married and lives in Abilene, Mrs. Jack Mohler. But with his own life he had nothing to do but work, which he did. He was president and then chairman of the board of the United Utilities which later became United Telecom. His hometown was Junction [City] but he was loyal to Abilene. That's where he'd made his living and he was very loyal to the town, and as long as he was living he managed to keep the headquarters for the United Companies in Abilene.

HORROCKS: Now that was also the employer of David Eisenhower in the '30s, wasn't it.

GEMMILL: Yes. That's right. It was the pre-existing company back in the early '20s.

HORROCKS: Would he have known David Eisenhower?

GEMMILL: Oh, yes. Yes. Skip would have known--yes, he knew



David Eisenhower.

HORROCKS: Then he would have known the boys perhaps, at least been familiar with the family even before they became so well-known.

GEMMILL: Well, when you say did he know David Eisenhower, he knew him, but I don't suppose he had much in common with him. They were in different parts of the organization and while he'd know him to say hello to him on the street, he probably didn't know Mr. Eisenhower--

HORROCKS: Personally.

GEMMILL: --personally.

HORROCKS: How about Colonel A. E. Howse?

GEMMILL: I never met him. I recall vaguely that in the early days we had some, I wouldn't say difficulty, but there was something about Colonel Howse that I can't remember. Either he wanted to do things his way or--I just don't remember what. I never did meet the man.



HORROCKS: How about Earl Schaefer of Wichita.

GEMMILL: Well I only met him on one or two occasions when he came up for meetings. I wouldn't remember a thing about him.

HORROCKS: Robert Schulz.

GEMMILL: Well, my contact with Schulz was minimal. I think I met him when--well out here on several occasions I met him but had no conversation with him. I think my knowledge of Colonel Schulz was through my acquaintance with Mr. Graham. In other words, it just rubbed off. He has this contact with Schulz and, as a friend, I kind of acquired knowledge that there was such a man and I met him on some occasions, but I don't know anything more than that about him.

HORROCKS: How about a personality sketch of Milton Eisenhower?

GEMMILL: Well, Milt, of course, was a very intelligent man and that's obvious with the positions he held and he--the fact that before he was president of these schools he was in the government work and he retained his position, or got better ones under



presidents of each party--he never lost his job because of a change in presidential politics. And I considered Milt a friend. In fact the last time he was here which was, I suppose, the dedication of something--I think he's been here since Ike's funeral--but I saw him at that time and saw him the last time he was here, whatever time that was. But Milt was a brain. For instance--a personal item--was when our daughter was ready to go to college she had taken the college examination tests and had been accepted at Smith and had been awarded a scholarship at Goucher. I had a problem of deciding--or helping her decide which of these we were going to do. Milton was president of Kansas State so I called him and asked him what I should do and then I called Dean Mallot, who was chancellor at the University of Kansas, both Abilene boys, and asked them what I should do. They both told me that I should send her to Smith even though they weren't going to furnish her any money. And so we followed their advice. But the fact that I would call Milt indicates the feeling I had toward him.

HORROCKS: I guess we've covered a lot of ground.

GEMMILL: Well when you get all the stuff out of it that is unimportant, you won't have much left, I'm afraid.

HORROCKS: Is there anything that you can think of that you would particularly like to add?

GEMMILL: Oh, no. I think you've drawn out of me all I know and ten cents worth more.

HORROCKS: Thank you very much, Mr. Gemmill.

