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DWIGHT E. SNIDER

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Dwight E. Snider
Donor

11 December 1993
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Ralph C. Bledsoe
Archivist of the United States

October 21, 1994
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This is an interview being conducted with Lt. Col. Dwight E. Snider, USAF (Retired), in Washington, D.C., on June 26, 1978, in the Army-Navy Club. Present for the interview are Col. Snider and Dr. Maclyn P. Burg of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: Now, our earlier conversation on the phone and the notes that we had on you indicated that in 1951 you were at that stage a Master Sergeant. So your service had begun much earlier than that I would assume. Had you served in the Second World War?

SNIDER: Oh, yes.

Q: In the Air Corps?

SNIDER: I was commissioned in World War II through OCS [Officers Candidate School]. And there was an opportunity available to us to revert to the grade of Master Sergeant.

Q: After the war was over?

SNIDER: After the war was over. I had had service prior to the war. Therefore, I wasn't gaining a lot by reverting to Master Sergeant.

Q: Precisely. Maybe I'd better start then, Colonel, by asking you this: You were born in Ohio. When was that?

SNIDER: I was born in 1921. Central Ohio near Columbus.

Q: And when had you gone into the Air Corps?

SNIDER: Well, I was in the Ohio National Guard from '38 until '41. Then we were nationalized in '40. I came out in '41, in August. And then the war started in December, of course, and I went down immediately to get in. But I didn't want back in an infantry division. So I asked for Cadet School. I passed the required examinations, and was made an aviation cadet. I was injured in cadet school. Didn't finish cadet school. I got to flight training.

Q: Had that been in Texas?

SNIDER: It was in Texas, yes.

Q: Not Shepard Field, was it?

SNIDER: No, I was at Fort Stockton, west Texas. A little flying school.

Q: I see. Was the injury training connected?

SNIDER: Well, yes. I fell off of the horizontal bars while doing some required physical maneuvers we had to do. From there I went to an unassigned pool and later to OCS which I have mentioned. And that's where I was commissioned.

Q: Right. Now that OCS was just general air corps OCS for administrative officers. Is that the sort of thing that was involved?

SNIDER: Right.

Q: Then--

SNIDER: I ended up in air transportation in the Caribbean. And after having been in air transportation career field I personally saw there was a need for better in-flight service and I'd had a little home experience in cooking. I'd worked in a hotel as a room service waiter for a short while in Columbus. And I thought that I could do something with this in-flight service.

Q: You mean the box of one piece of cold chicken didn't turn you on? [Laughter]

SNIDER: No. And since the aircraft that we had at Washington National Airport--that was then the VIP fleet, including the Presidential aircraft.

Q: This was World War II now we're still talking about?

SNIDER: World War II. And in 1947 when I reverted back to Master Sergeant, I asked if I could get into this career field, this phase of the air transportation career field which is in-flight passenger service.

Q: And you had done this. Pardon me, but you had done this air transportation as an administrative officer then during the war--stationed here in the United States or did you also find yourself overseas?

SNIDER: I spent most of my time right around--in the United States, yes; but I was overseas for a short while, in the Azores, but always in the same career field. Loading airplanes, putting passengers on airplanes, directing people through the border clearance agencies. And writing some material related to--I did quite a bit of administrative writing.

Q: Now I would have to ask you this because it's entirely possible. In the course of that work did you find yourself in contact with any of the major figures of that period; that is, the President himself, Secretary of War, any of the major military generals?

SNIDER: Oh, yes. I've seen Mr. Roosevelt many, many times. President Roosevelt. Many, many times. Secretary of War Stimson, I believe it was.

Q: Yes.

SNIDER: Secretary of State--

Q: Mr. Hull.

SNIDER: And then many, many Secretaries of State and Defense and the various Cabinet members after that.

Q: Did you see Dwight Eisenhower during that period of time; that is, during World War II?

SNIDER: The only time I saw Dwight Eisenhower--the first time I saw him was when he returned from the ETO [European Theater of Operations] on his aircraft. Of course, his airplane--

Q: In 1945?

SNIDER: Right.

Q: You didn't see him when he made the trip in '44?

SNIDER: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. If he made a trip in '44, I probably saw him.

Q: It would have been late '43 come to think of it. Very late '43, because it seems to me he was brought from North Africa. Came back here. Had just a period of perhaps ten days or so in this general area around Washington, D.C., and maybe White Sulphur Springs, and then went back over so that he was back in London either in December of '43 or January of '44, to begin the plans for Overlord.

SNIDER: Now that you mention it, I did see him at Washington National Airport. But I was a person who went out and met airplanes when people came in. As I say, helped them, directed them through customs, immigration, public health, and security. But normally if I didn't do that, my boss did it.

Q: So one of you probably met him on that occasion. But it does not--you had no real contact with him, don't remember having talked with him, or anything of this sort at that point?

SNIDER: No. In fact, I don't remember the first time I really spoke to the General. I know I made flights with him, short flights with him around the United States before 1951. But by that time--from 19--I started flying in 1947. And almost immediately I was flying with the Secretary of State, with General Marshall who was probably the first five-star I flew with, Admiral Leahy(?), General Arnold from the Air Force. I flew with General Bradley. So actually I had met several of the five-star officers in the military before I met General Eisenhower. In fact I was on one flight to Florida with the Chiefs of Staff. I forget whether they called them the Joint Chiefs at that time or not.

Q: Yes. I'm not sure either, but I think they did.

SNIDER: But shortly thereafter we were told, how much truth there was to this I don't know, but we were told that these people could

not fly together again. Because, it would, of course, be a disaster if something happened to that aircraft.

Q: Right. Now I'm going to ask you this: At the end of the war what was your rank at that point?

SNIDER: I was a First Lieutenant.

Q: You were a First Lieutenant. And I should put on tape that going back, reverting back to Master Sergeant, would in your case have given you certain very definite monetary advantages. It was in your best interest to drop back to that high non-commissioned rank.

SNIDER: Well, not really. The flying pay made a difference though.

Q: That made a difference. Because I have friends who did that very same thing at the end of World War II--

SNIDER: Is that right?

Q: --and they did it because to them it worked out better in terms of pay and allowances and a series of other things and they just-- they looked at it and made a very cold decision that to stay at the rank of First Lieutenant or Second Lieutenant or whatever when they could revert to a previously held non-com rank--now they had prior service. Often these men had had quite a bit of National Guard

Service--fifteen years of it or so, and in their instances it worked out.

SNIDER: Well, I always describe it this way. By the time the war was over in 1945 I wasn't ready to get out of the service. I'd been in the service long enough to know my way around; and as I told other people, if I'd been jerkin' sodas for this long, I probably wouldn't quit. So I thought when I went back to Master Sergeant it might be temporary. I might acquire something which would allow me to be commissioned at a later date. I have since taken several examinations. For example, for Warrant officer, I passed all those. So I wasn't far along-- Then when they came out with the super grades I was--in my career field I was on the first group to be promoted to the super grades. So my means of living were augmented or were enhanced really. So I really wasn't-- really wasn't hurting. And I didn't know until I retired that I would be able to retire as a Lieutenant Colonel. Because I'd been overseas apparently, and I missed when Congress passed this bill which said that if you were disabled due to a service-connected disability, you would revert to your highest-held reserve grade. In fact, when I received the orders from the personnel center at Randolph, I didn't even show them to anyone that I knew for about eight days. I took them around to the retirement people around Andrews Air Force Base to see if they were right. [Laughter] And

it took eight days before I found a Master Sergeant who knew the answers.

Q: Okay--so we go back then to the period after World War II and you've reverted to Master Sergeant, and you're in a career situation with regard to air transportation. You have an interest in the in-flight--now I should ask in the in-flight feeding, for example, of passengers and handling of them, was that Military Air Transport Service, MATS?

SNIDER: That was the Air Transport Command.

Q: ATC.

SNIDER: Which later became Military Air Transport Service. I don't remember exactly when this transpired.

Q: All right. Now you say about 1947 you began to go on flight status. You began flying as a result of that decision to follow that career.

SNIDER: Right. To specialize in that phase of the career for the Air Transportation Command. 'Cause I saw some guys who were not too good in appearance. They didn't have particularly good manners as far as handling passengers. They weren't particularly good cooks, and I thought--well, I'm not a particularly good cook either--but I can learn. I can add to what I already know, and I

could cook most anything at that time. So one of the first aircrafts I was assigned to was the one which had the nickname Sacred Cow, which had been Mr. Roosevelt's airplane and Mr. Truman's airplane when they were President. And I made some flights with Mr. Truman, including the last flight he made. And one historical flight in July of 1947 in which the national--oh boy, I forget the name of the act--which provided for the autonomous air force and which created the Air Force actually.

Q: The United States Army Air Force.

SNIDER: From the United States Army Air Force to the United States Air Force. And that was done on the plane at Washington National Airport. So I got in on a bit of history there, having been present when this was signed.

Q: Let me ask you: You would have at that time been in the business whenever he was on the aircraft of serving Mr. Truman.

SNIDER: Yes. I was flight steward. The flight steward. We only had one.

Q: How did you find him to deal with? What kind of a man was he?

SNIDER: Oh, I loved the man.

Q: Did you?

SNIDER: Right from the beginning and to this day I really admired him. I thought he was very personable, very sincere, probably one of the most sincere men I've ever met, and I have before and since met a lot of politicians. And he impressed me--

Q: He stands out even today in your mind?

SNIDER: Oh, yes.

Q: For those qualities?

SNIDER: Yes.

Q: Well, that's very interesting to know. You found him easy, I assume, easy to become acquainted with. Did you feel relaxed with him?

SNIDER: I felt completely relaxed with him because he was a midwesterner, and we had somewhat of a similar accent. But he just allowed people to relax. If he was busy, you didn't bother him like you wouldn't bother any other busy person of his stature or near his stature. So I just did my job. Kept out of sight. But occasionally he'd stop and talk to you--small talk.

Q: Would there sometimes be a part of the official family, and I'm not thinking of his own personal family, but the official family, along with him. For example, Dean Acheson.

SNIDER: I don't remember ever having that nature of a flight with him.

Q: Harry Vaughan?

SNIDER: General Vaughan, yes. And General Graham, his physician. In fact on this date that we mentioned, I believe it was the 22nd of July, '47, but I'm not sure. It was the day his mother died. And he had gone in the stateroom, closed the door, to take a nap. In the meanwhile I had gone up to the cockpit to pass a little time of day and see what the crew needed. And the pilot, who was Captain Charles Mills, who was not the President's pilot--the President's pilot was on a mission to Greece on the new Independence aircraft returning the body of I believe the Greek ambassador who had died in this country. But Captain Mills, over the radio, had learned that the President's mother had died and told me this had to be communicated to him. He didn't say how.

Q: They never do. [Laughter]

SNIDER: They never do. And I thought to myself, "Well, wait a minute, this is the aircraft commander's job," but nevertheless I'd gone back to the stateroom. I had no intention of waking the President. General Graham could see that I had a problem, and he asked me what--I forget exactly the context--but he asked me what was going on, and I told him. I said, "The President's mother

died, General, and I don't think that I should be the person to tell the President of the United States this." He said, "No, you're not. I am. That's my job, and I'll take care of it."

Q: Did the aircraft continue on to its destination?

SNIDER: Oh, we were on the way to Grandview at the time. He knew his mother--someone had called him and told him his mother was in critical condition. He had jumped on this trip, and I believe that's one of the reasons why he hadn't signed the Air Force bill before he got to planeside. And that's why a dispatch rider brought the thing to planeside on a motorcycle.

Q: I've heard of that happening in the Eisenhower administration, too, where bills had to go literally out to the field to be signed. Well, now, that put you on the Sacred Cow, and here in the United States. What is the next move for you? Do you go then on board Independence?

SNIDER: No. I only flew on the Independence a couple of times. In fact, one time with Mr. Truman to the Near South and another time to Cuba, and that was due to the illness of the regular crew member. I was the senior man in the steward section immediately upon being assigned there, and having had the proper security clearance, I could make these flights. So then I stayed on the Scared Cow, which was primarily used by the Secretary of State.

And I flew many times with Mr. Acheson, and I flew with General Marshall, Secretary of State Marshall, and Secretary of Defense Marshall. All the same person, of course.

Q: Let me ask you, because of his associations with Eisenhower for many years, how did General Marshall impress you? You saw him under a variety of hats and at various times.

SNIDER: He impressed me as being a typical high-ranking military officer. He was not, in my presence--I don't know how to say this--he didn't have too much to say.

Q: He did not unbend?

SNIDER: No, he was--

Q: Reserved kind of man?

SNIDER: He was more reserved than General Eisenhower. He was not as affable as General Eisenhower, in my opinion. And he didn't change when he put on the other hats as Secretary of the other two Cabinet posts.

Q: Can I assume that his treatment of you was courteous and correct?

SNIDER: Oh, yes. He was always courteous.

Q: But not a kind of man to pass the time of day in idle conversation or anything of this sort?

SNIDER: No, he didn't--I didn't make small talk with him, and I didn't notice anyone that did except persons of near equivalent rank. Of course, if you're making a comparison between General Marshall and General Eisenhower, when General Eisenhower had to correct someone at my level--in other words someone many, many levels below him in rank--it was generally done by someone in between rather than himself. Although he would, if he were on the spot, he would correct you. I remember one occasion when we were flying somewhere in Europe. We made so many missions I can't-- But we on the aircraft, we had to carry different types of set-ups for different types of meals. We would have maybe a snack meal which would be soup, sandwiches, dessert, so forth, or we would have a luncheon setup and we'd put tablecloths on the tables and set up for that. Well, with the size of the galley, we couldn't carry the equipment for both of these types of service at the same time. So on this occasion, my assistant--I had an assistant then. I'd graduated. And we started to set up the tables as we normally did for a luncheon and the General told him, he says, "Woody," which was Sergeant Woodward, he says, "Woody, just feed us on a tray." You don't have to go to all that trouble of setting up the tables." And Woody came to me, and I was in the galley doing the cooking and preparing. He said, "The boss doesn't want us to feed him on a

table." I said, "Woody, we have no choice." I said, "You're going to have to explain it to him, that we don't have the trays on board because with this many people, by the time we get the food on board, we don't have any room left in the galley." So I assumed that he'd explained this to the General. But a few minutes later the galley door on this aircraft had an opening in it; the Dutch door folded down. A few minutes later here's General Eisenhower's head through the door, and his remark was something to the effect that "One word from me and you guys can do as you please!" [Laughter] So it was embarrassing, and it scared me a little bit. But I mean there was nothing we could do about it.

Q: Did you explain it to him?

SNIDER: No, there wasn't much explaining to do, because I had a man--my representative was in the back of the aircraft--and I assumed that he would sometime get an opportunity to explain it to the General. Now whether he did or not, I don't know to this day, and I hope he did, because it made us look pretty unprofessional. [Laughter]

Q: Yes. There's nothing like having a five-star general pull that on you. Now--

SNIDER: But this was not characteristic of him to do this. Generally he would say to Colonel Schulz--or Major Schulz I believe

he was at that particular time--whether he liked something or not and to change it. But this was a rare incident.

Q: Now, you went over there, I believe you said when we were talking earlier, you went over there in 1951.

SNIDER: Yes.

Q: When he went over to SHAPE?

SNIDER: Exactly.

Q: Now am I correct in thinking you were on the aircraft that flew him over from the United States?

SNIDER: No. If I remember correctly, he came over on surface, and we picked him up on the Normandy coast somewhere.

Q: Now that could be right, come to think of it. I seem to remember something about a trip by ship rather than flying over, because I know that Mrs. Eisenhower didn't like to fly.

SNIDER: Well, it's been reported that she didn't. We had some thoughts on that, too, among the crew. I guess she really didn't like to fly.

Q: Did you know that she had an inner ear difficulty which she got here in Washington about 1942. It hit her and she just went down. Absolutely unable to stand and nauseated. Got a minister--her

minister came in first I think and then doctors, and from that point on any kind of quick motion, particularly in the air in a prop-driven aircraft at the lower altitudes, that inner ear was gone and she was instantaneously sick. Violently sick. And she loathed--in fact even now when she comes out to Abilene if it's at all possible she will drive. If that is not possible, she's often used railroad, and avoids even under modern jet flight, where as you know there's very little rough motion. I think only the most extreme emergency would cause her to fly.

SNIDER: Well, she was a little uneasy in flight generally. And a lot of aircraft at that time, executive-modified aircraft such as we had, had altimeters and some instrumentation in the cabin. We didn't have that in this aircraft. We had a SHAPE plaque in that location because she was always interested in how high we were flying, and she was one of the rare people that didn't seem to want to fly high. Now most people who fly want to fly as high as they can because you avoid more turbulence--the higher you get in a pressurized airplane of that kind. And she didn't want to--she didn't want to fly too high. And I noticed in connection with what you mentioned and I've mentioned this before to Mr. Laros and his book, The Presidential Plane, that she did not like to use portable ladders. She didn't like to use anything where she could look through the steps and see the ground, see how high she actually was. So this might be connected with the inner ear difficulty.

Q: I see. Yes, it could. What is that? Acrophobia, a fear of heights.

SNIDER: I believe that's what they call it.

Q: Yes. Could be that, too.

SNIDER: And the fact that also I felt that the rungs on this ladder were--they weren't really rungs, they were flat steps--but they were perforated to make the ladder lighter, because it was an electrically-operated ladder. And women wearing high-heeled shoes, I think, would be a little apprehensive about putting the heel through one of those perforations on the ladder steps.

Q: And I would imagine, too, that if she's on that thing and it's the least bit insubstantial, then she maybe feels that first onslaught of this inner ear thing since her balance evidently--well, since wartime, has really--

SNIDER: In connection with that there was only one hand rail on the ladder--and being a portable thing it--she just didn't like the ladder. In fact, for her we modified the particular ladder we had and with snaps put a piece of canvas under the ladder so that she couldn't see the ground--which seemed to help some, but she never did like that ladder, and I probably wouldn't like it myself today. [Laughter] I was twenty-five years old.

Q: That's an interesting story. So you met them possibly in Cherbourg. I don't know where there--or Le Havre--

SNIDER: I think we met them at Maupertus Airport if I remember correctly which is--

Q: They had been driven there probably?

SNIDER: Yes.

Q: And you met them there. Was that aircraft the Columbine, 8614 or whatever its number was?

SNIDER: No. Actually, when we first went to Paris, we had selected an aircraft number 8614 to be used in Europe. However, it had to have some modifications on it because it was a standard passenger cargo convertible aircraft just off the cargo runs between Westover Air Force Base and Frankfurt, the Rhein-Main Air Force base in Germany.

Q: Was it a Lockheed aircraft?

SNIDER: This was the Lockheed Constellation, what they called the "Small Connie." Technically it was a 749A model.

Q: Four engines.

SNIDER: Four engines.

Q: --and the triple-tail configuration.

SNIDER: Pretty airplane. But we had to put 614 into New York City to Lockheed Aircraft Service, International, for modifications for a couple of months, and we used an aircraft we borrowed from MATS at Washington National Airport. We borrowed it from the 1254th there, the organization which we all were in anyhow before we went to Europe. And we borrowed 8612 Constellation for at least two months.

Q: In early 1951?

SNIDER: In early 1951, yes.

Q: While 614 was being turned into an executive aircraft?

SNIDER: It was being completely refitted on the interior, plus a lot of service bulletins were being updated to bring it up to the latest configuration.

Q: With regards, perhaps, to navigation equipment, additional auxiliary equipment, any number of--

SNIDER: Radio gear, safety gear, and as we mentioned the interior configuration was changed to executive where there were a couple of divans put in, but at this time the airplane was not a super-plush airplane. It was comfortable, but it was not one of the beauties of the world as far as executive aircraft were concerned.

Q: So you picked them up in its replacement and flew them then to Orly?

SNIDER: Yes.

Q: In Paris.

SNIDER: Right.

Q: And your station there, at Orly I assume--

SNIDER: Our plane was based at Orly Airport because that was the nearest commercial airport with complete navigation and radio and let down facilities, etc.

Q: And you had been permitted to have your wife come over too.

SNIDER: Oh, yes.

Q: So she was there, and you then lived off the field. You lived in--

[Interruption]

Q: Once he's there with SHAPE, then your task as part of that plane's crew--let us say that we now have the Columbine. We have the aircraft back, modified, ready to go. You're then taking him into various European capitals and other European cities as part of his duties as Supreme Commander of that force. What would a typical trip be like for you personally?

SNIDER: Well, as you said, our first task was to take him to each of the fourteen NATO countries. I believe there were fourteen at that time. And that was one of the most interesting experiences I ever had, because I was amazed to see how people in other countries related to General Eisenhower. They related to him just as Americans did and in some places--I remember in Greece the people that met him there--the crowds that met him there or came out to see him--were just fantastic. Of course, in England they already knew him. He was an old friend returning. In Germany, he was fantastically received. But to go to Athens, Bonn, Copenhagen, Oslo, to Turkey, and to all these countries--to Spain--to Italy. It was a real experience to see how they accepted him.

Q: You could even see that at the airport, because, presumably, you wouldn't be going into town--

SNIDER: I didn't ride in with the motorcade, no. So you could see this at the airport, and after you got into town you could also see it around the hotel. People waiting to see him.

Q: It's a fascinating thing, isn't it.

SNIDER: Yes, it is.

Q: And then you see it later on in the Presidency, particularly in the second term, the kind of personal diplomacy. And I know that

a number of people in the United States wondered about that. Evidently not realizing the depth of the man's popularity.

SNIDER: No, and particularly since he had been a military type-- Of course, he'd been a very cosmopolitan military type anyhow. And every GI in the service related to him in some way.

Q: Right. And I think many of our people, on the political side, many did not realize the deep connections he had. They thought of him as strictly a military officer, and they'd forgotten the years in Europe and in North Africa and in Italy and then back up to England again. That had made him pretty well known across the rest of the world.

SNIDER: I read something in this Sunday's paper, the Washington Star, which mentioned that even the politicians didn't realize how adept he was at politics. Of course, I didn't--I never would see that side of it. I could see his side as a commander because when you're in an area of that size with high-ranking people and quite often the other high-ranking people of SHAPE plus foreign military representatives and so forth, you overhear things. I remember particularly when Lord Ismay was the Governor General of NATO. Of course, SHAPE was the military arm of NATO. And I heard him tell Lord Ismay something to the effect that two of the most brilliant men in the service of the United States were General Al [Alfred]

Gruenther and Larry [Lauris] Norstad. Of course, that was the names he used. I wouldn't use those names. [Laughter]

Q: They were not in your opinion?

SNIDER: Oh, they were in my opinion. I thought--in fact I flew with both of them later on, and I agreed with him one hundred percent, but I wouldn't have called them Al Gruenther and Larry Norstad! [Laughter]

Q: Interestingly enough, and for your information, those two men often come, although they're now aging--I think it's more difficult, but when I first got to the Library in 1970, we usually could count on these two men arriving together after his death to lay a wreath around the time of his birthday. The two men would come in together and do that. Be with us for an hour or so and go. Very quietly. Quietly came in and quietly left. Thought you'd be interested in knowing that.

SNIDER: Thank you. After General Eisenhower came back to be Mr. Eisenhower, I stayed with General Gruenther for five years, and I really, really enjoyed working with him. In fact, I have an autographed picture that he gave me without solicitation. And I'd seen the ones he'd given to the high-ranking people who worked with him, but mine was one that's more self-satisfying to me than some

of the other ones I saw. It says, "You have been a perfect assistant." And it goes on with another comment.

Q: What a nice line!

SNIDER: And coming from General Gruenther, now, I've seen him fire a lot of people on the spot. [Laughter]

Q: That's the impression I get.

SNIDER: Coming from him, that's about as good an accolade as you can get from anybody.

Q: Now, let's go back to the routine that you would have to follow. You, as well as the rest of the crew, would be informed perhaps sometimes with very little preparation time. Other times maybe you knew quite a bit in advance that you're scheduled for a flight. You're going to take General Eisenhower to destination X. What then was your routine?

SNIDER: Well, having learned the General's likes and dislikes and the Mrs.'s, and various members of the staff and all, my first job was to go to the commissary or to one of the airlines or someplace and buy food. Now, of course, we had certain security considerations we had to recognize. So I couldn't go anywhere and say, "I want to buy some food for General Eisenhower." Of course, it got to where most people knew who I was after a while anyhow.

Q: I hadn't thought about that.

SNIDER: But we would plan the menu and go and buy the food. Now the American commissary was at one time in the U.S. Embassy downtown Paris, next door to the Trianon Hotel. And then later it was out on the other side of town. So in order to get food, if I didn't have enough notice to get out there, sometimes I had problems until I devised a method of buying in advance a certain amount of steaks and chicken and frozen, canned goods and so forth and storing them in the small mess facility, the mess hall at Orly field.

Q: Which was for the flight crews?

SNIDER: Well, no, Orly Field had a small squadron there at the time.

Q: We did?

SNIDER: We did. U.S. Air Force had a MATS squadron there that handled MATS airplanes flying between the east coast and Germany. And sometimes I would have to resort--go to the mess hall and buy or order food and pay for it cash, because there was a provision for that in the Air Force regulations and you could buy food at cost. But one time I remember in particular. The Air Force was drawing the rations from the Army down at Fontainebleau, and they for some reason or another didn't seem to always get the same cuts

as the Army did. At least we thought they didn't. So I got a quick trip to Frankfurt. And I'm out at the airplane ready to go. Well, normally we didn't serve a full meal to Frankfurt, because it's around an hour flight from Paris. But this time Major Draper--who was later Colonel Draper, of course--said, "Oh, I almost forgot, the General wants a meal." I said, "Colonel, we're leaving in twenty minutes." He says, "Well, you'd better get him something." So I had to run to the mess hall. Now it is almost a fact, at least that the Air Force was serving liver once or twice a day because that's what they were getting from the Army at Fontainebleau. And I went to the mess hall and I said, "I need a few steaks." We only had seven or eight passengers as I recall. Just the General and a small party. And I said, I told the mess sergeant, "I need about seven or eight steaks that I can cook in a hurry because I've got to cook them in about twenty minutes in order to serve them before we land." He says, "You'll get liver." I said, "Come on, man." I said, "You don't give a five-star general liver." He said, "If you get it out of this mess hall, you do. That's all we've got." So it turned out, my only salvation was they did find a piece of chuck which I cut up into steaks and used it. And it turned out. There were no complaints. It might have been a little tough, but at least they were tasty and we were complimented all around. But we didn't have to serve the liver.

Q: Isn't that funny. No wonder you people were suspicious of the Army.

SNIDER: Well, yes. I believe that we were getting more liver than the Army people.

Q: And more than was necessary, for sure.

SNIDER: But we were fortunate. For some reason or another they had French cooks in the mess hall there. They had two chefs and they were good. And they could fricassee, and fry, and broil, and boil, and par-boil liver. They could cook it a lot of different ways. I know the average mess sergeant in this country wouldn't get by with it, not the way those guys did.

Q: Would you have to carry that food on board the aircraft then, or was that delivered to the aircraft by some--?

SNIDER: No, I took it myself.

Q: You'd take it yourself. So there's no hands handling that or no access to that food once you've got it in your hands.

SNIDER: No in-betweens. In addition to the security clearance we had to have, there was also--we also had to have a annual food handlers permit. Issued by the flight surgeon. So that was a protection and that still is enforced within the airplane. It started during the war I guess.

Q: Now, would you also take liquor on board, Colonel, for serving during those flights?

SNIDER: Well, yes, for medicinal purposes--no, not really. We carried liquor. We had a pretty well-stocked bar.

Q: Pretty much the standard stuff that we would expect to find; bourbon, gin, vodka, Scotch--

SNIDER: Scotch, Canadian, and the normal mixes.

Q: What was the General's preference? Do you recall?

SNIDER: I don't remember. Yes, I do. He liked an Old Fashion as I recall, and Mrs. Eisenhower liked an Old Fashion. But I was taught by one of the aides from the House that Mrs. Eisenhower--I don't think that she knew it, but we always put a little bit of soda in hers.

Q: A little bit of soda, because she liked that taste?

SNIDER: No, we weakened it a little bit. I guess so she could keep up with the boys. I really don't know. But I never knew the General to have more than two drinks, at least on the aircraft. And as I've said this before, I don't think he really was one who enjoyed drinking. I think he drank to be sociable. At least that was the impression I got, and I've served many, many thousands of drinks to people.

Q: Yes. Many of the old friends, the people who knew them back as early as 1916 when they were married and knew them then for a lifetime virtually, said that her general habit was she would have two in an evening. But that second one got nursed. That that was her normal routine as long--and so many of them have told me that independently of one of another that I assume that that pretty much was her routine.

SNIDER: I found that to be true. Exactly.

Q: But someone on the staff at Marnes-la-Coquette just passed the word to you--

SNIDER: Suggested that I put a little water in hers--well, I mean, physiologically it's a good idea because she's not as big as the guys. And why should she ingest as much alcohol? If she noticed, she never said anything. But I don't know whether if the aide that told me that did that to protect himself or protect her or protect me, but it worked. And we liked it.

Q: So once in the air--I should ask you this too, Colonel. At that time did you have any responsibility for seeing to it that the aircraft was absolutely clean and spotless, ready to go when they boarded, or was that handled by others?

SNIDER: That was totally the responsibility of the air crew, primarily the stewards. Of course, everyone had to pitch in. The

engineers didn't walk through the interior of the aircraft with greasy hands or oil on their feet or tar or anything because--yes, the airplane we thought it was spotless. Colonel Draper would check it regularly. But we had a routine in the flight which not only involved cleanliness but safety. And I was a safety nut anyhow. When you have an airplane and you have a lot of strangers on board, or some strangers on board, you don't know what their smoking habits are, what their bathroom habits are, so we always made it a point for one of the stewards to check each restroom about every twenty minutes. Make sure the basins were clean. Make sure there was no flammable materials left unattended in the bathroom because a fire on an airplane could be really serious.

Q: You bet it can.

SNIDER: We had had a lot of safety training and we went through regular drills: ditching, evacuation of the aircraft. Although technically there were no regulations in the command that we belonged to at that time, in the USAF pertaining to our aircraft, we maintained constant liaison with Washington National Airport. In fact it's like we never left there as far as crew qualification and crew training was concerned. In fact some people didn't know I had left there because we were back. I was--all the time I was in Europe--I was back at least on the average of once and sometimes

twice a month. And people would see me around and they'd never know I'd left home.

Q: Interesting. Now I'm getting the impression, too, that contrary to the airline practices we know today where those meals come on board and presumably are heated up in a microwave oven or something of this sort, you're bringing raw materials on board the aircraft and preparing that meal in flight.

SNIDER: Mostly we did. Now we did cater. I did have an arrangement with TWA, and where I had food chests where I could pick up food and I could go in the kitchen. I knew the chef very well. We had a working arrangement with TWA. Due to the fact that they admired General Eisenhower, they let us put our airplane in their hangar. They gave us an office in the TWA hangar. We were almost divorced from the Air Force Base insofar as the maintenance and the care of our aircraft was concerned.

Q: You mean TWA did maintenance work on your--

SNIDER: No. TWA never touched the airplane.

Q: They never touched the airplane.

SNIDER: And the airplane was under constant guard by U.S. Air Force security police.

Q: But they were guarding it in a TWA hangar?

SNIDER: Or in front of the TWA hangar. In inclement weather we would work on the airplane in TWA's hangar, and we would borrow tools and equipment and jacks and tugs from them to tow the aircraft. They were really good to us as a crew. As I say, they even gave us a little office with telephones. The whole thing.

Q: Very interesting. Just because they seemed to like him and admire him.

SNIDER: We certainly didn't arrange it, so it was arranged at some level higher than us. If it were oriented by the military, they didn't tell us about it.

Q: Now--

SNIDER: You asked me a question.

Q: About your preparing the meal in flight.

SNIDER: Oh, the food. I liked to go to TWA because they had capabilities that the Air Force didn't have. For instance, the General particularly liked a little dessert that TWA had which was nothing more than a piece of iced cake, about twice as big as a petit four, but they had different flavors of it. And this gave us a little variety that we couldn't get from the Air Force food. And they were very nice. Although we carried relatively quite a lot fewer passengers than a commercial airline carried, they weren't

very helpful in providing us with little special items. And I hated not to patronize them. Also, finally after we'd been in Europe for a few months, I was in Lisbon and the Pan American representative came up and he says, "Why is it you people always go to TWA for service? Why don't you let Pan Am put the steps up to your airplane, and the movies, take picture of them and the press?" So I got to thinking, hey, this might be a good thing. If we get a little more support, it'd make our job a lot easier. [Laughter] Also KLM in Holland. When I went to KLM, they had fantastic kitchens. They at that time were cooking all the food served on KLM airplanes, freezing it, which was a fairly new technique for freezing entrees and all your side dishes. They were putting them in cases, shipping them all the way to the southern tip of Africa to be returned on KLM scheduled aircraft.

Q: Good Lord!

SNIDER: Of course any time I got near an in-flight facility, I wanted to go see it because it was an education and it helped me to do my job. But KLM also had some artists in marzipan. Everytime I'd go over there to Amsterdam they would make me a beautiful floral centerpiece of, generally roses or something like that, in the appropriate colors in marzipan. And you could set it on the table. Four feet away, you couldn't tell whether it was real or not. And Mrs. Eisenhower loved those. And they were always on a

little etched tray; and when we landed at Orly, I would send the tray to Marnes-la-Coquette. And it would come back empty in a couple of days so that the next time I went to KLM or to Amsterdam I could return the tray to KLM. But this was all free. At that time there wasn't all this nonsense about gratuities. But what are you going to do when someone gives you something that's impermanent. Like flowers and so forth. Or candy. You're not going to turn it down. In fact, I had no reason to turn it down when it wasn't presented to me. It was presented to the General and Mrs. Eisenhower.

Q: There's pretty much a common thing, then, if your flights took you into Amsterdam, KLM was very apt to do this sort of thing.

SNIDER: Oh, yes.

Q: Now on board were you cooking on a gas range or were you cooking electrically?

SNIDER: No, electrically. You see, you have a fire hazard with gas. We had ovens and we had the plain old hot-cups that heated water, made chocolate, and soup and stuff like that. But at that time we only had a two-burner stove, which we later augmented to a four-burner stove. And considering the fact that we didn't have too many passengers and too many crew, I think the total complement of the aircraft was less than thirty if I remember right. I could

count it up; four, eight, twelve, sixteen--I think the maximum we could carry was thirty-two and that would be using the divans in the State Room for seats which we normally didn't do, because that's where the General would relax in flight. So that's the most people we ever had to cook for. And sometimes it took a little bit of managing to be sure that you got everything to come out at the right time.

Q: Right. I can imagine it would.

SNIDER: Particularly at breakfast. You couldn't be cooking bacon and have a couple of skillets on with eggs when you only have two burners. So what we would generally do in something like that we'd cook the bacon in advance. And that worked good too, because if people smelled bacon cooking, they all get up and get out of the bathrooms and they're sitting there waiting to eat by the time you get ready to cook the eggs and make the toast.

Q: Yes. Meanwhile you're keeping that bacon warm in the oven.

SNIDER: And then as we put the eggs in the skillet, put the bacon in beside it. Get it good and hot, and put it on the plate. Of course we always tried to keep our plates hot--in a warming oven or even just with hot water and wipe them off, because the secret to a good breakfast is a warm plate. And, by the way, as I remember now, Mrs. Eisenhower told us that the best breakfast she'd had

since she left home, were the ones she had on the airplane, which was not any secret at all. It's a little bit more difficult. But I didn't like my eggs cooked in butter. I thought they had a lot more character when they were cooked in bacon grease. So we'd skim the bacon grease until it was clean. Bacon grease or bacon fat, whichever term sounds least indelicate to you. But we cooked her eggs in--or everyone's eggs in bacon grease. It's a little bit more trouble keeping them from sticking because bacon has sugar in it, and sugar's the element that causes things to stick when you cook. And this made us happy, too.

Q: Was the General's favorite steak? If he had his choice, is that what he would usually want?

SNIDER: We generally had steak because we had learned that--well, even before we went with General Eisenhower, we'd learned that--I don't know, when you're flying with somebody--and I've said this many times for publication--when they're on the rubber chicken circuit, they're either going to get chicken, chicken à la king, or roast beef, because that's the easiest thing to serve at a banquet. So we tried to avoid those items in flight.

Q: Knowing full well what their routine was going to be in whatever capital they were in.

SNIDER: Especially if you picked them up at eleven o'clock at night and bring them back from London or something, which we rarely did, by the way. We generally stayed. But anytime after someone has been out to a dinner or they're going to a banquet, we avoided those things because we felt that they wouldn't be well accepted. So steak is always a good answer. And there are several different kinds of steak. One steak we used to serve and he did like was plain ol' rib steak. I mean, not a Delmonico, but the whole rib steak with the tail on it and boneless. And, well there isn't to my opinion, there isn't a more tasty piece of steak in the world than rib steak.

Q: When you could get that in place of liver!

SNIDER: Well, you could always get it in the commissary and it wasn't too expensive. We tried to keep the cost of meals down.

Q: Because they had to reimburse you for those meals.

SNIDER: We had to collect from each person for each meal. Of course, if it was household, we didn't worry about it until after we were back. If the General picked up someone or quite often he'd pick up a few GI's or officers or their wives, or someone going the same direction and give them a ride, give them a lift. And, of course, if they were official guests like Clare Booth Luce or Lord Ismay or someone like that, then we knew that he would stand that

tab himself. But if it were someone semi-official or unofficial, then we had to collect from them before we landed or it's gone.

Q: Yes. Yes. Were any of them shocked?

SNIDER: No. No--

Q: Or did they all pretty much understand what the routine would be?

SNIDER: Well, we preface our collection with a little remark that we had to maintain a mess fund on the aircraft, and that the price of their meal would be such and such. And the price was never bad. Because we're buying at commissary prices or wherever we could buy at reasonable prices and there was no markup. Or there was a slight markup, but that was only to maintain the fund. In other words, if we'd make a trip and we'd deplete the fund entirely, then we'd have to start over next month and start charging a dollar for a steak. We'd have to get up to a dollar and a quarter until we got enough money. So we always tried to keep it so the fund was reasonable. We never got over a hundred dollars for instance, because we didn't need it.

Q: Yes. So that allowed you to buy ahead when you needed to do that or wanted to do it.

SNIDER: We'd buy enough for a trans-Atlantic crossing which was normally all we needed. Because before we got to the States or to the end of the trip we would have reimbursed our fund.

Q: Now when he came back to run for office, did you come back on that flight or did you remain there at Orly? I remember that you said that you continued on with General Gruenther.

SNIDER: Yes, we brought him back on that flight because I remember the President of France, and in fact I have pictures at home of him shaking hands with the President of France and the U.S. Ambassador and several other of his staff at Orly Airport. In fact, for that one instead of leaving from the Air Force MATS terminal, we left from the main terminal at Orly.

Q: I see. A little more ceremonial.

SNIDER: Oh, yes. This was the official French departure and it was run to their likes--I don't know by them but certainly the way they wanted it done.

Q: Did you ever overhear him in that period shortly before he makes the decision to come over--was he ever discussing it on the aircraft? Discussing running for office in your presence?

SNIDER: I have heard people mention it. The staff mostly. But, no, I don't remember ever hearing anyone saying to him "When you

get to be President, you can change all this" or anything like that. Or even hinting that he might run for President, although there was an overwhelming aura that--well, that's not the right word--everyone seemed to think that he would run for President, but this was only at the last minute before he decided to come back. I remember he had General Snyder who was his physician, General Persons, Colonel Schulz. I don't remember any of them discussing it with him, at least not in our presence. And we were in and out of the State Room on the aircraft quite a bit.

Q: I assumed that you would be. I assumed so.

SNIDER: Yes. I used to see some pretty good card games. Let me qualify that--some pretty good bridge hands played by General Eisenhower and General Gruenther. In fact I used to stand and watch them because I liked to play bridge, too. And they were--they made a pretty formidable pair when they played partners.

Q: Yes, that's what I've heard too. That they were just pure death when they were teamed up like that.

SNIDER: They were tough.

Q: In watching their style of play, and you know what it's like to watch people playing bridge, playing poker, and almost anything, did the two of them kid around much or was it pretty much a quiet and full attention on the game?

SNIDER: Well, it was a game of concentration because first of all General Gruenther is a master bridge player--

[Interruption]

Q: Yes, you were saying when the interruption occurred that General Eisenhower was a pretty capable player, high-class player actually or could have been, and so therefore these bridge conversations were focused strictly on the game. They played that game pretty much seriously.

SNIDER: Well, to a veteran bridge player I've never seen them kid around too much, because the nature of the game doesn't permit it. The people who play bridge, they wouldn't do anything to give any indication that they were signaling, and therefore bridge is a game that they played without too much conversation. Not--I don't mean solemn or austere, but certainly serious.

Q: Yes. I wanted to differentiate between their probable style of play and the kind of play that you and I and our wives might have where there would be quite a bit of gossip and news exchanged and a much more social occasion, let us say.

SNIDER: Well, it was a sociable game of bridge. There was some conversation involved, but it wasn't--when it came to the bridge, it was solid bridge. [Laughter]

Q: That's the impression you get from [C.L.] Sulzberger too who writes about that period of time in his diary, because he occasionally kibitzed bridge at Marnes-la-Coquette at exactly that same time and watched Gruenther and Eisenhower play. And I got the impression they played it pretty much to win. How about your relationship with Bob Schulz during this period of time? Bob get in your hair or--?

SNIDER: Oh, I had known General Schulz since, I think when he was a Major. I made a couple of trips, and I don't remember the nature of these trips either, but domestic trips in the States with General Eisenhower. I liked the guy. I always did like him. He had a good sense of humor. I would describe him as a little bit flighty because he didn't always explain, and I have a tendency to do that myself, didn't always thoroughly explain and lead people on into the next logical stage of doing things. He'd say do this, and do that, and we did it. In fact, I saw General Schulz ten days ago. Had a few pleasant words with him. He wasn't the easiest guy in the world to work for, but I've worked for a lot harder. [Laughter]

Q: I see. Not easy in the sense that he took that job, I think from the time he got it until the time he relinquished it--that long association with the General--he took it very seriously--

SNIDER: Oh, yes.

Q: --and he always wanted things done and done right now or done yesterday.

SNIDER: Everything that he wanted done was for the General. That was primary in every thought he had I think from the time he woke up in the morning 'til he went to bed at night. And this was clear when you worked with him, with General Schulz. You knew this. And you conducted yourself accordingly. He was dedicated to the General and to Mrs. Eisenhower, too. And in a lesser respect to the entire household.

Q: Now I want to ask you something about coming back with them, but first let me ask you to just consult your memory. Have we overlooked any story connected with either General or Mrs. Eisenhower or that period of time that you're flying them in SHAPE? Anything tragic or amusing that comes to mind?

SNIDER: I don't remember any tragic things. I do remember an anecdote which I've related before that maybe I could clarify. We always served--on an aircraft you didn't use wide soup bowls or salad bowls because of the possibility of them spilling. Our soup bowls and salad bowls were identical, and we would always serve the soup and salad first. And we wouldn't serve the two courses at the same time. But I remember that General Eisenhower had a habit of picking up his bowl with both hands and drinking the dregs or the remainders. [Laughter] And this always got a few looks out of the

corner of the eye of the people who were sitting with him. And I've watched him and so has Sergeant Woodward who was with me at the time. It was amusing to watch some of the other high-ranking people watch him pick up his bowl, look at him, look at the other people, and then pick up their bowl and do the same thing. [Laughter] And he would put his salad in the same bowl. It was all right with him. Once he'd drunk his soup, he'd put his salad in his same bowl. And I thought this was a very homey touch for a man of this stature.

Q: Yes. And I can't tell you whether that was typical of Kansas when he was a boy or not. I don't think I've ever run across that story before.

SNIDER: I don't think it was typical, because as I've related it before, up until that time Emily Post said you don't even tip your soup bowl with your hand to get the last spoonful out.

Q: And spoon away from yourself and the whole etiquette bit. And he picked it up.

SNIDER: Right, Right. Exactly. But with the coming of the war and shortages of food, everyone ate every last scrap of food. And I guess he did get all of it. Maybe he learned it in England when they had all the food economies, but--

Q: Could be. Yes. It would be interesting to check that with some of the officers who were there. Maybe that's exactly what they did and why they did it.

SNIDER: I guess.

Q: Now on the flight back from Paris to the United States, he's accepted the idea of running, and he's coming back to do that. Who came back on that flight? Just broadly as you remember it.

SNIDER: Oh, boy. That would be difficult to say. I just remember the General--

Q: Mamie was with him.

SNIDER: General; Mrs.; and Rose Woods, Mrs. Eisenhower's maid.

Q: Oh, yes.

SNIDER: I believe she was on that. I'm not sure whether her sister was on that flight or not.

Q: Mike?

SNIDER: I forget her last name.

Q: Yes. So do I, but I know who you mean. Mrs. Eisenhower's sister who we think of her as Mike [Mrs. Gordon Moore]. But anyway I can provide that name for you. Now Bob Schulz was on it?

MR. SNIDER: Oh, yes. I'm sure he was. My memory doesn't serve me that well, but that would have been the typical group that we had. Now, whether we had John and Barbara and the kids, I don't remember. Because it was more or less an uneventful--it was sort of a sad trip really.

Q: Oh, it was?

SNIDER: Well, I mean they're leaving, and Mrs. Eisenhower did shed a few tears. Leaving the home that she'd spent so much time--I remember particular her commenting on something about her nice home in Marnes-la-Coquette that she hated to leave because she had done a complete redecoration job on the interior inside the home.

Q: With the help of the French.

SNIDER: Yes. Yes.

Q: And it's a very lovely thing as I think--

SNIDER: I don't know quite what extent was done, but I know there was a lot of care taken.

Q: Yes. Well, it was an extensive thing. Well, for one thing, as you probably know, a home meant a great deal to her.

SNIDER: No.

Q: She had had so many of them.

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SNIDER: Ah, military homes.

Q: Right.

SNIDER: I hate to move now because of it.

Q: Precisely. I can understand that.

SNIDER: And giving it up to someone. Of course, he was being replaced by General Matthew Ridgeway; and giving up a home to someone--you've spent a lot of time on your home--I bet you wonder if they're going to take the same care of it--or appreciate it as much as you did.

Q: What did he call you, Colonel? Did he refer to you by your military rank or--?

SNIDER: He always called me "Sergeant." And Mrs. Eisenhower commented one time though. I've had a nickname of "Snuffy" since I was in junior high school, which is phonetics, "Snuffy" Snider, and so on. And so when we first met she asked our names and I said, "Well, I'm Sergeant Snider. People call me 'Snuffy'." I said, "My first name is Dwight." And she said, "Well, we always call him Ike so we'll never get your first names mixed up." [Laughter] People used to ask me, "Were you named after Eisenhower?" I say, "Yes, a long time after him." [Laughter] There was no connection. In fact, I hated the name Dwight until General

Eisenhower became well known, because most people couldn't even pronounce it. And nobody could spell it. So that's one of the reasons I had the nickname. And then after he was President, it doesn't bother me nearly as much. In fact, I named one of my sons Dwight and he loves that name.

Q: Yes. He gave the name credibility--

SNIDER: Yes.

Q: --for a lot of you. Did you work with him, fly with him, after he returned and became President?

SNIDER: I made the last flight that the former President made on the jet after I'd returned to the United States, gone overseas, come back again when he returned from California after his terminal illness, I was in charge of that passenger service on that flight.

Q: For heaven's sakes.

SNIDER: And I didn't even--he was quite ill. And there was a doctor and nurse in attendance at all times in the State Room, and he was on the couch. And I didn't think it was a good time to go up and talk to him, at least--

Q: Right.

SNIDER: I wish I had, but I just didn't feel that I should do it under the circumstances.

Q: Yes. It's a pity you didn't. You didn't even think to have your name sent in.

SNIDER: No, I thought about that. I'm not a publicity seeker. I thought, "Well, maybe I could ask the nurse if she could tell him that I'm on board." He did catch a glimpse of me in the cabin but he was preoccupied, and he might not have recognized me. It had been several years. But I wish--now I wish that I had just to see what he would have to say. He might have said, "You're the guy I fired a long time ago." [Laughter] Which I don't think he did.

Q: He probably would have said something because he had a phenomenal memory for people and faces. I've encountered that in stories before. Years passed and he'd take one look. He'd walk into the Pentagon, and in this case the woman had worked for him in 1935, and this it I think after he came back in 1945. She was in the lobby just to catch a glimpse. He saw her. And immediately arrowed right over there and called her by her first name, and what have you been doing with yourself. Glad to see you again.

SNIDER: Well, I've seen him do that on the airplane, or if we get off the airplane, welcome the party and go around greeting several people--

Q: Recognize people and call them by name.

SNIDER: I think--General Gruenther was a little more adept at that than Eisenhower.

Q: Oh, really?

SNIDER: Oh, yes. I thought he was. But there are some secrets to that. If a general officer has a good aide, and I won't put the onus on anyone by saying this, if the general officer has a good aide, and he has some people visiting, the aide quite often will show him pictures of the people and say this is so and so. Because I've seen it done.

Q: Yes. Yes.

SNIDER: But I've never seen it done with General Eisenhower.

Q: Thank you very much, Colonel, for this delightful interview.