

PERSONS, WILTON B. (OH-334) 163 pgs. w/Name Index PRCQ (M)

Active in the Eisenhower campaign of 1952; Deputy Assistant to the President, 1953-58; The Assistant to the President, 1958-61.

DESCRIPTION: PART I: Relationship, professional and social, with Eisenhowers (1931 through early 1940s); Persons as Congressional liaison for Assistant Secretary and later Secretary of War [Harry Woodring]; Congressional inspection tour of European atrocity camps/liaison with Eisenhower (1945); post-war associations with Eisenhower (Chief of Staff, NATO); early discussions with Eisenhower on subject of Presidential candidacy; Persons' role in the campaign; Leonard Hall as a politician and campaign organizer; Eisenhower's attitude toward Secret Service; Eisenhower's Korean trip; observations of 1952 campaign (attitudes of workers and press, Nixon incident and "Checkers Speech," Eisenhower's attitude toward Nixon, Senator Joseph McCarthy's denunciation of General [George] Marshall and Eisenhower's response); Persons' role in the new administration as Congressional liaison; Persons and Senator McCarthy; Persons' staff (Bryce [N.] Harlow, [Gerald] Jerry Morgan, Jack [Z.] Anderson, [Edward A.] Ed McCabe, Jack Martin); Senator [Robert] Taft and the Eisenhower administration; Eisenhower and Republican legislative leaders; [Charles A.] Charlie Halleck; Persons' relationship with Congress; Persons' background in Congressional liaison (1920s on); Persons' list of helpful Congressional members (both Republicans and Democrats); Eisenhower's preparations for political office; comparison of General George Marshall's and Eisenhower's styles of leadership; Eisenhower's awareness of importance of White House-Congressional relationship; division of work on liaison staff; White House staff attitudes; the daily White House staff meetings; Eisenhower's attitude toward applying pressure to individual members of Congress; Eisenhower and the Mutual Security Bill; Persons' access to the President; Persons' techniques for handling members of Congress; Joe Martin, Charlie Halleck, and Congressional leadership.

PART II: Eisenhower's insistence on being fully advised; Eisenhower's concept of staff work; Eisenhower and decision making; Persons' relationship with [Sherman] Adams (including personal friendship and admiration for Adams, Adams' character, Adams as a political target, details of Adams' resignation, the Goldfine case; the President's reaction; Adams' lack of popularity; Persons as Adams' successor; Congressional feelings about Adams; continuing friendship between Persons and Adams); shifting assignments of White House staff; Persons' role as assistant to the President (Eisenhower's view/Persons' view); Persons' thoughts on Vice-President Nixon (including value of Eisenhower's policy of keeping Nixon thoroughly informed; personal relationship between Persons and the Vice-President; reactions to Eisenhower's heart attack, 1955; carrying on government business while Eisenhower was incapacitated).

PART III: President's social activities: with Vice-President and others, for relaxation, problems of arranging time for; Eisenhower's reactions to interruptions; his temper (the "brown suit" days); relationship between Eisenhower and Taft: effect of Taft's death, Taft's importance to administration; Congressional matters: the Bricker Amendment, the Mutual Security Bill, relations with Democratic congressmen, confirmation problems of Admiral [Lewis] Strauss, Margaret Chase Smith, relations with Senators [William F.] Knowland and [Everett] Dirksen, the Joe Martin-Charlie Halleck

controversy; Eisenhower's working methods; the 1954 Congressional elections; question of Eisenhower's candidacy for 1956 election; Milton Eisenhower's influence on the President; Persons' role in campaign; Eisenhower as a campaigner; Eisenhower's concern for able leadership in government; arguments for Eisenhower's running for a second term; Eisenhower's relationship with department heads and Cabinet members; Eisenhower's interest in rebuilding the Republican party after the 1958 Congressional elections; Eisenhower's thoughtfulness (addressing the President in private, an Eisenhower painting for Persons); Eisenhower's closest personal friends; Eisenhower's Cabinet meetings (format and procedure, dominant figures); Robert Anderson; Fred Seaton; Eisenhower and General [Douglas] MacArthur; Eisenhower and the Little Rock issue; White House involvement in the Civil Rights Act of 1957; Eisenhower's views on civil rights; relationship with General [George] Marshall; naming the Marshall Space Flight Center; Eisenhower's views of Senator Joseph McCarthy; Persons' list of Eisenhower's major achievements as President: ending the Korean War, maintaining peace, stopping Communist expansion, the Interstate Highway System, the St. Lawrence Seaway project, stopping of inflation, civil rights statute, space program initiation; Eisenhower's concept of defense and the reorganization of the military services; Eisenhower's desire to strengthen fiscal responsibility in government; Eisenhower's views on Vice-President Nixon as his successor.

PART IV: The appointment of Persons (Eisenhower) and Clark Clifford (Kennedy) to supervise transition of power between administrations; meetings between new appointees and incumbents; the career White House employees; keeping President-elect Kennedy briefed; keeping Eisenhower informed; success of transition process; impressions of the President-elect; the election defeat of Nixon; Persons' role in the 1960 campaign; effects of Eisenhower's illnesses; importance of the post-Presidential Eisenhower; Eisenhower's work habits; Eisenhower's relationship with [James C.] Jim Hagerty; Persons' personal contacts with Eisenhower after the Presidency; the Berlin crisis (1959); Eisenhower's opinion of Premier Khrushchev; the U-2 incident; Eisenhower's relations with the press; Persons' brother, the Democratic governor of Alabama [1951-54] and Persons' Southern Democratic family background; Persons' friendship with Mrs. Eisenhower.

INDEX

[Columbia University Oral History, interviews by John Luter, June 22, 23, 24, 1970]