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ROBERT A. MacASKILL


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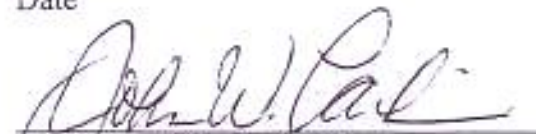
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Robert A. MacAskill, Donor

July 14, 1009 [sic 1998]

Date



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Date

This is an oral history interview with Reverend Robert A. MacAskill of the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The interview was conducted on June 11, 1998, at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. Interviewing Reverend MacAskill are Dan Holt and James Leyerzapf of the Eisenhower Library.

MR. HOLT: I'm Dan Holt, Director of the Eisenhower Library and today is June 11, 1998. We're in the Eisenhower Library with Reverend Robert MacAskill, and also present is Jim Leyerzapf, an archivist with the Eisenhower Library, and Kathy Struss who's with our audiovisual department. First of all, when did you become pastor of the Gettysburg First Presbyterian Church?

REV. MACASKILL: I became pastor of the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church in May 1957, and I served as pastor almost thirty years and retired in 1986.

Q: Do you recall your first contact with President and Mrs. Eisenhower?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, I do. Originally it was through correspondence. Knowing that I was to come to Gettysburg as the pastor, I did have some correspondence with President Eisenhower. My second Sunday, which was May the 8th, 1957, I was aware that they would be in service and they had as their guest Field Marshall Montgomery so we had an interesting exchange there.

Q: Whose father had been the Bishop of Tasmania, if I remember right.

REV. MACASKILL: I believe so.

Q: What was the correspondence concerning?

REV. MACASKILL: The correspondence was of pretty general nature. He was aware of the committee on ministry being active in the pursuit of a new pastor and they would, through our newsletter and other correspondence and church publications give reports as to how that committee was proceeding. So he kept aware of that and when it was known that I had received the call he was notified about that. He sent a letter welcoming me to Gettysburg as pastor of the church.

Q: Did you meet with President Eisenhower privately?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes.

Q: In the early days?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes.

Q: Who arranged that?

REV. MACASKILL: Well, I would arrange it through his secretary, Brigadier General Robert Schultz; he was my initial contact when I would want to contact the office, and if it was really of a personal nature I would be referred to him and he'd kind of screen and he'd give me advice and suggested times and whatever. But I was always able to get in contact with President Eisenhower. By the way, when he left the presidency he was really addressed as General Eisenhower, because he was a five-star general. But he would, you know, welcome you in your greetings as President or General.

Q: How much contact did you have with Colonel Schultz?

REV. MACASKILL: It was not really an intimate contact but it was kind of an official contact. He knew who I was and I knew who he was and we kind of knew our areas of interest and the boundaries of the contact and so forth. So I would not just pick up the phone and have a general conversation with him, but it was more or less official nature that he knew when I contacted him it was something that I wanted to be brought to the attention of President Eisenhower.

Q: Did you have much contact, any contacts, with other members of his staff in Gettysburg?

REV. MACASKILL: Rusty Brown was his secretary and I did have a good contact with her and she would also help in the clearance and information that I might want.

Q: Any impressions of Rusty?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, she was a very gracious person and very friendly and very outgoing and added kind of a human element to the whole staff procedure and bureaucracy, you might say.

Q: Did you ever visit with Mrs. Eisenhower alone, or was it always with General Eisenhower?

REV. MACASKILL: I would visit with her on occasion alone, yes. Usually when I would visit with her would be at the Eisenhower Farm. That's where they did their social contact and usually he did all his business arrangements at the Gettysburg office. But I would call her on the phone and in church affairs and so forth I would have some association with Mrs. Eisenhower.

Q: Did she participate in any church activities, programs, or such?

REV. MACASKILL: Really not. Neither one of them were really able, or free, to actively participate because if they show undue interest in one, to one group, or one concern or another, why, others are wondering , "Why can we not do that?"

Q: They would have had to sit on every committee and participate in every program.

REV. MACASKILL: That's right.

Q: How often did they attend church? Fairly regularly when they were at Gettysburg?

REV. MACASKILL: I would say frequently, not regularly, but frequently because they would be, maybe in California part of the time, or Augusta, Georgia, or travelling elsewhere with other responsibilities but they were frequent attenders.

Q: Would you say that on those, for those periods of time when they were in Gettysburg that they came most Sundays, when the opportunity was

REV. MACASKILL: Right, I would say that if they were in residence they made it a point to be in attendance and they

would always notify me the day in advance. Secret Service would let us know that they were coming and that arrangements were to be made, so we had a good working arrangement.

Q: I was just going to ask if this created some unusual problems for you and the congregation. Were there others?-- I mean, when they did show up for church were there press corps, were there hangers-on out front, that kind of thing?

REV. MACASKILL: One of the best ways to see President and Mrs. Eisenhower would be to come in church and they would be seated in the pew. They had a designated pew and the manner in which they would come, the Secret Service would bring them to the front entrance of the church and then they would be greeted there by ushers and brought up to their pew. Mrs. Eisenhower would then enter the pew and then President Eisenhower would be seated on the end of the pew. At the close of the service I would leave the pulpit area, walk down the aisle, and stop by the pew and President Eisenhower would step out and then I would walk with Mrs. Eisenhower to the narthex and he would follow behind. Then at that point Secret Service would pick them up and take them to their limousine. Then there would be throngs of people out in

front, the press and the media and the tourists in Gettysburg and so forth. So that would be one of the best places to be with the Eisenhowers, in the worship service.

Q: How'd the rest of the congregation accept all this?

REV. MACASKILL: They were very understanding and very cooperative in every way. And I was careful not to say, "Well, we're very happy to have President and Mrs. Eisenhower with us today." They didn't want that type of recognition, we respected that. So it was kind of, they wanted to be just a part of the congregation and so we tried to deal with them in that manner.

Q: Did President Eisenhower ever express to you any preferences for the worship service, or particular hymns, or bible passages, or discuss possible sermon topics?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, he did. I did have early on a listing of his favorite hymns and I would seek to work them in when appropriate, and the occasion and so forth. He was careful not to try to suggest to me what I should be preaching about or anything like that. And in my preaching I was careful not to, so to speak, "Now I have the President here, I'm going to tell him what he should be doing or shouldn't be

doing." So I had to watch my remarks but I tried to be as objective as I could and he was one who, I remember once in speaking with him, he said, "I come to church to get something out of the service." And often when I would speak with him about that he would bring out an aspect of the sermon that I didn't think he would be interested in at all but he did grasp that and then he would talk about it. So I would meet with him, usually on a Monday morning, at his office there on campus.

Q: What do you think he meant by "get something out of the service?"

REV. MACASKILL: Well, the worship experience and the whole, the singing, other participants in the service. It was a nice experience for them to come and feel the fellowship and the community of that household of faith. And it was, hopefully, enriching for him and enriching for others to have him with us.

Q: Do you remember his favorite hymns? To see if they match with what we have in our records?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, "Oh God Our Help in Ages Past, Our Hope for Years to Come," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus;"

some of the old gospel songs; "I Love to Tell the Story" and, of course, patriotic songs--"America the Beautiful," "America" and things like that. He had a broad spectrum of hymns that he enjoyed.

Q: You mentioned this in passing earlier--the scope and nature of his participation and supporting the programs at the church. We have evidence in our records here that he was a generous contributor to the church but we know things like, he anonymously presented a fifty-star flag to the church. Do you remember that incident or why that was done?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, I remember. One of the members of our church who was a pharmacist in town, his name was Paul McDonald, made the suggestion early on, when Alaska became a state during his presidency, Hawaii became a state during his presidency, that we have a fifty-star flag. And that flag was flown over the Capitol and it came through the auspices of our congressman, George Goodling. Yes, George Goodling at the time; his son, Bill Goodling is currently our congressman. It was presented, not publicly by President Eisenhower, but it was presented, acknowledged, and it's a part of the appointments of the sanctuary--that fifty-star flag.

Q: So it's still in the sanctuary?

REV. MACASKILL: Oh yes, it's still there.

Q: In September of '63, President and Mrs. Eisenhower, according to our records, attended a state church rally in Harrisburg. Do you recall that? Were you there?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, I made arrangements for that, yes. And the speaker was Franklin Clark Fry, who was one of the leaders of the Lutheran Church of America. It was an ecumenical service and he came to Harrisburg at that forum and was so recognized in attendance there. But he was very much interested in the concern of churches for peace and ecumenicity and goodwill around the world, so he entered into that by his presence and involvement.

Q: In June of '63 the Gettysburg church started a major renovation and we know that Eisenhower wrote a message for the program in the church bulletin. Do you recall that? Was he, did he offer to do that or was he asked?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, we asked him. We developed a brochure for that program and for the dedication, and asked him to make a comment about the church. He said that, "This church is very simple in design and architecture. It does reflect

the tradition and heritage of the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church," and he was "glad to be a part of this new facility which helped to provide services to the people of the community and the outreach of the church."

Q: In that same year, in '63, President Eisenhower sent a letter on to you that he had received from a college in Michigan that suggested the Presbyterian Church do something for Marina Oswald and her children. And he evidently agreed something should be done. Do you remember that, or how that turned out?

REV. MACASKILL: No, I don't. I remember, generally speaking, but I cannot give the details on that specifically.

Q: It rather surprised us when we were looking through the files that he had forwarded to you this letter from this Michigan college administrator and saying [in his covering note], "Maybe this isn't such a bad idea, that something ought to be done here." But there was no additional correspondence and we didn't know how that turned out.

Q: Many historians have been interested in the nature of Eisenhower's faith--and Billy Graham has written about this

a little bit--which to some historians it's rather elusive to try to determine what his faith really was or the nature of it. Some have characterized it as very simple, a civil-religion type of approach. Some have even said it was more like an 18th century deism than contemporary Christianity. What impressions do you have of this matter?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes. I think he had a very strong faith in God. One of his favorite psalms was the 121st Psalm: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence comes my help. My help comes from the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved, he that keepeth thee will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy shade on my right hand." So he had a strong, a good knowledge of the Bible and particularly the Old Testament--some of the warring elements there, you know, the militaristic aspects which he had pursued. I understand, I can't quote this for sure, but that he had read the Bible through three times by the time he was twenty-one years of age. I don't know if you have any record of that or not.

Q: I don't know but it's a fascinating story.

Q: I've never heard that referenced before.

REV. MACASKILL: His faith was a very uncomplicated, simple type of faith, very direct. He was a believer in God. My impression was that he sensed that his life was a partnership with God and that had evolved from the strong faith that had been imparted by his parents who were god-fearing people. They were from the River Brethren background and that was typically his background. He did not officially unite with the church until he had become president. One of the first things he did on being elected president was to unite with the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. The pastor of that church was Dr. Edward L.R. Elson. He had been a chaplain during his military career and they had established friendships. When Eisenhower was elected president, then, their home was the White House in Washington, D.C., so they attended, became members of, the National Presbyterian Church. There he was baptized and made public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of life. Then while they were members of the National Church, when they would come to Gettysburg on weekends or vacation periods or even recovering from illness and so forth, they would attend the Gettysburg Church. When he left the presidency in 1961--February 1st--then he officially united with the Gettysburg Church and that's when

I became officially his pastor and I was until his death in 1969, Mrs. Eisenhower's until her death in 1979. But his faith was very direct and simple and uncomplicated and he believed in the sovereignty of God. In that respect, you might be interested to know that when we had this dedicatory service of our church in 1963, we had a week of services, starting on Sunday, and the speaker was Reverend Eugene Carson Blake, who had been the stated clerk of our general assembly. And in the evening was Dr. Don McCloud, who was a professor of homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary. Monday night it was the dedication of the organ and that was performed by Dr. Klippinger, who was an organist of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg. Tuesday was Presbytery Day and he was invited to speak and I invited him to come. And he spoke on religion in public schools and education. It was quite unique and I think perceptive how he dealt with that. He said, "We do have religion in the schools. When you realize that ninety or ninety-five percent of the teachers, the personnel, administrators and so forth have some religious background, whatever that might be. And that they do give expression to that faith and to that commitment through whatever they teach; see, whether it's a coach in athletics, or a music teacher, or a home

economics teacher, a science teacher, philosophy, or whatever. They are in that manner expressing their faith." So he says, "We do have that presence in the school." And so he said, "It's not so essential that we just mandate that there be so many verses of the Bible read each day or a prayer offered." He said, "There are opportunities for those expressions to take place in the current situation." And I thought that was quite perceptive; he saw the church as the body of Christ and each member of that church gives expression to his or her faith in their daily work and their activity and so a teacher has that direct contact and acceptance by their students, you see, and can communicate that in very effective ways. So I thought that was quite perceptive on his part.

Q: I'm going to suggest this question, I'll let Jim follow up on it because he's more versed in this than I am. You've already mentioned the River Brethren, but did Eisenhower ever discuss the religious background of his family home which, of course, was very strong, or his parent's affiliation with Jehovah's Witnesses or the Russellites--the Russellites movement seemed to be of more interest to Ida and David than anything else. Did he ever discuss this?

REV. MACASKILL: Not in detail, but I was aware of that background. In that regard, you might be interested to know that Layton Ford, who is a brother-in-law of Billy Graham, is a fine preacher. He's a Presbyterian pastor and in my book he's a better preacher than Billy Graham because, I like his style and--not denegrating Billy Graham at all, certainly,--he has a fine manner of presenting his message and he has the type of crusades that Billy Graham has. He was conducting a crusade in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania at the farm show arena--a week of services. Mrs. Graham, Billy Graham's mother, was to be there one night and to address the assembly. So I was contacted by a representative of, Layton Ford is his name, that if it would be possible for Mrs. Graham to come and see President Eisenhower, and would I make that arrangement? I said I certainly will make inquiry about that and I called him. I talked with the president about that and he said, "I'd be delighted to see Mrs. Graham." So she came to Gettysburg and I remember we hosted her at lunch time I should say, and then right after that we had arrangements to go across, it was a restaurant right across the street from his office on the campus. She met with President Eisenhower and they talked and seemed to observe that they were the same generation and so forth.

But, Billy Graham has a brother by the name of--George Graham, I think, is his name. He is a dairy farmer in Charlotte, North Carolina. When Mrs. Eisenhower was once asked one time what she thought about her sons, she said, "Which one?" Her five boys, you see. Mrs. Graham, of course, has as much regard for her other son as she does for Billy Graham. They talked on that basis, you know. But it was interesting to hear them exchange views and talk about interests and personalities that were of interest to both of them.

Q: Jim, do you have anything on this? Because you've done more research on that than

Q: Oh, it's just that more and more researchers, biographers, are looking into the childhood years and, of course, during the war the media exploited Ida Eisenhower's affiliation with the Witnesses, for obvious reasons--he's the supreme warrior and that is a pacifistic sect and so forth. Very little of the family correspondence was to survive so it's hard to get a measure of to what extent the boys were exposed to the Brethren influence and to what extent . . . because they took up with the Witnesses, apparently, right after Paul's death, the one boy, in '94,

'95, 1895, so Ike was rather small when they were already affiliated with the Witnesses. We've checked Sunday School rolls for the Brethren in Christ church in the first decade of this century, and the impression it leaves one is that every Sunday those boys were sent to Sunday School and, presumably, church, the Brethren church. But it's really an open question as to whether David and Ida went. They seemed to have kept the tradition going that way, yet they were pursuing the Russellite meetings at the same time.

REV. MACASKILL: Is that right? That's interesting.

Q: Of course, every biographer wants to know, "How much influence did that have?" How would you take a measure of it anyway? But his religious background is being studied more and more and people are trying to get some sense of whether that had some impact on him, did he ever comment about it, and as I say, it's very elusive. There's a little bit of evidence here and there.

Q: Did he ever bring up the issue of this pacifism in his background with you?

REV. MACASKILL: Not to any great extent, no. No, he didn't.

Q: Do you think that, with all his years in the military and where religious services are rather simple and very direct and chaplains are, you know, you're a Protestant chaplain, usually. You do Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, whatever.

Q: It's ecumenical by definition.

REV. MACASKILL: Right, right.

Q: Do you think it had a real influence on, like you were mentioning earlier, he looked at this as very simple and uncomplicated. Do you think a lot of that is from his years in the military, of seeing this procedure

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, that was really his church before, as a member--I mentioned officially identifying, taking membership in the church. He was a regular attendant in military chapels. That was his life and wherever he I understand they lived some forty places during their married life, Ike and Mamie. So they then entered into the chaplaincy services and that did indeed give him an ecumenical outlook and liberated him from any sectarianism or denominationalism as such. And I'm sure it contributed to his broad outlook in world concerns.

Q: During the 1960s Eisenhower was outspoken, especially in print, like in some of the Reader's Digest articles, on what he saw as signs of moral decline in America. Did you ever discuss that with him--issues like race relations, and crime, and poverty, and youth, and the "decadent" youth from that time period?

REV. MACASKILL: You mentioned the youth. One of the last articles he wrote was for the Reader's Digest and he spoke about the youth. He said, "The world will soon be yours to do with as you will. I urge you to approach the task with courage and boldness and the joy of challenge in your heart, and faith, with human dignity and justice. I, for one, believe in you. Good luck then. Go forth in that spirit." So that was kind of a direct quote, the interest he had in youth in America. Interestingly enough, I happen to be a battlefield guide in Gettysburg and I meet people of all places and sorts of conditions. The youth, which I deal with considerably, always liked to stop by Eisenhower's office, and he would come out. No matter what group or how large the group, he would come from his office and meet with them on the campus in front of his office and he would speak to the youth. They were all enthralled and interested to

hear him and see him and to hear what he would have to say, so he always maintained an interest in youth.

Q: Did he ever discuss racial issues that went with that time period in the 60s?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, he did. He was very much aware of the tension and the cleavage that did exist. But being part of the military that was one of the first groups to desegregate, and he realized that the efficiency of any command had to respect and recognize the contribution of each member, whatever race or creed or nationality. The effectiveness of that unit was dependent upon the individuals working together. So it's kind of a broad and accepting spirit and concern that he had.

Q: How often did you visit with the Eisenhowers, or particularly President Eisenhower, during the last years of his life? Did you see him at Walter Reed?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, I saw him in Walter Reed and I was aware of His last year was basically spent in Walter Reed Hospital and he was very much interested in the religious aspect of life and his faith, concern, and I would talk with him and pray with him and so forth. I was careful

not to interject what views or positions I might have, but kind of direct his thought and channel it in manners that might be of help and a constructive nature to him. But he was very receptive and interested and, hopefully, tried to apply his faith and religious interests in his daily life. It gave him a lot of time to think and meditate and to remember a lot of things that had transpired in his life. In that respect, I think it had a healing manner in his life and was kind of a final chapter, you know; it kind of wound down and he was able to share these concerns not with pressure, any media pressure, you might say, being exerted upon him.

Q: Did you attend the funeral service at the National Cathedral?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, I did. I attended with his physician, Dr. Harold Johnson in Gettysburg. And we were in the cathedral and world figures were there, like DeGaulle, and Nehru, and, let's see, Diefenbaker, and Supreme Court justices, congressmen, governors, and so forth; senators, and persons from the, Bob Hope was there I remember, and George Murphy from the entertainment world, and Arnold

Palmer from the sports world. So it was quite a national tribute and celebration of his life.

Q: Did you help arrange any of the service there?

REV. MACASKILL: No, I did not. I was not involved in that.

Q: Just generally discuss the services here, the respective roles of yourself and Pastor Dean Miller from Palm Desert, and the former Chief of Chaplains, General Luther Miller, who participated in that, and your keenest memories or the things that stand out in that day for you here.

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, when I learned of the death of President Eisenhower I was contacted by the army to conduct the services here in Abilene. And mindful that there would have been a service in the National Church, tailored it in a manner that would appeal to the people in Abilene and the midwestern part of the country and so forth. So I kept that in mind and participating with me in the service, as you mentioned, were Pastor Miller and the Chaplain and others. So we had come to Abilene the day before, just kind of rehearsed the procedure and the procession that would be attendant to his service. I remember going through the streets of Abilene and there were soldiers about every

twenty-five yards. As the hearse would pass then these soldiers would snap to attention and so forth, out of respect, and so forth. Then we met on the steps of the library here and it was indicated that he was buried in a G.I. casket, and it was a very windy day here and they had to really finally tie the flag on the casket. It was being, you know, disheveled and so forth so they discovered that the best way to do it was just kind of tie it around the casket. But I was told to bring the message for that occasion and the text I took was from 2 Timothy, the fourth chapter, verses six through eight, "The time of my departure is now at hand, I'm now ready to be offered up. I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I've kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me and not for me only but for all those who believe a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give to those that love his appearing." So that gave me a very natural outline for my remarks. He fought a good fight, he was a soldier and he knew the elements of warfare and strategy and planning and all of that. And he had finished the course, that which started some, almost eighty years ago in Denison, Texas and up into Abilene, Kansas. He had remained true to the course that was set before him. And that was inculcated into his

faith by his parents, which I indicated early on, had taught him an early love for God and a reverence for the scriptures. So he sensed that he was not alone throughout his journey, wherever it would be, in America or around the world, that he was a co-worker with God and that his presence is always near and his strength could be relied upon. And then he kept the faith and it was a simple, uncomplicated faith, "the faith of our fathers living still in spite of fire, dungeon, sword," and so forth. He said that it's the faith that sustains the soldier in Korea or the European theater or whatever, and it's the faith of all people as a result of their trust in God. So he kept that faith and that was a sustaining factor in his life, so that served him through all the periods of his life and through the experiences and vicissitudes and trials that he encountered, and that kept him on course. And I think that he had lived a full and very productive life. So those were kind of the basic outline to my remarks that I made at his service. But another interesting thing at that service was I noted that slipping in behind where the families were gathered there--and Nixon was president at that time--was former president Lyndon Johnson. And he had come here, and I said to him, "It's good to see you, Mr. President." And

he said, "I would not have missed this. He was a very dear friend of mine." Even though they might have been poles apart politically, Eisenhower relied upon Johnson to help engineer his legislation. Johnson knew the mechanics and the operations of the senate and government and that was not in Eisenhower's background experience. He knew how to delegate that authority and to rely upon his judgment and his leadership in implementing legislation that he proposed and so . . . and he left almost as suddenly as he arrived; he did not want to detract from the attention of others there, but he came to Abilene to share in that service. And then, too, I recall going to the Meditation Chapel and Chaplain Miller conducted that part of the service and we waited outside and that kind of finalized the services here and then we met with the families, all in a social reception after the service.

Q: We have the military plan for the funeral which was, what, Jim, two hundred pages long or something like that?

Q: It's about that, yes.

REV. MACASKILL: Is that right?

Q: And as with anything well-planned, something always goes awry. Are there any anecdotes you remember from all of this planning and maneuvering that strikes you at this point? I mean, something had to go wrong someplace in this, I would think.

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, the flag incident I mentioned there, they had to try to deal with that. But as you say, that was pretty well organized and planned and rehearsed and all that sort of thing. I didn't detect any major flaw or anything, but also there was this unexpected appearance of former President Lyndon Johnson, but other than that it was very memorable. And you really couldn't, I mean, you weren't aware of television cameras at all. They were all secluded and you just were not aware of being on television. But it was nationally televised.

Q: The funeral for Mrs. Eisenhower - how involved were you with the planning, actually, for that and your role here for that funeral?

REV. MACASKILL: Very similar to what I had with President Eisenhower and they followed somewhat a similar procedure, the place of burial was the same and so forth. But what I tried to do there is emphasize the distinctive role that she

had as a wife of the president and as he saw her role as being supportive and encouraging and helpful to him in every way. Not to grab the headlines or to upstage him in any way--that was her basic thought in all their relationships. So she had a tremendous influence and was a very significant part of his life and services. Actually, after his death she kind of emerged. Now that she was the only Eisenhower living and the spotlight then focused on her, and she seemed to sense that that was now an opportunity for her to share her concern and interest in any way, in any productive way that she could. Even in the life of the church, after the services she would then remain and talk and mingle with the congregation much more than she did when he was president.

Q: So she was conscious of a new role, as it were? She was very conscious of that?

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, a new role. Right, and she tried to fulfill that very graciously and faithfully.

Q: Did you see her very often after the president died?

REV. MACASKILL: Not often, but I would really call her on the phone more than I'd go out and see her. A member of our church, Dr. Starrett, was her personal physician there in

Gettysburg after President Eisenhower had died. He maintained a pretty close contact with her.

Q: Jim, I skipped over some of the questions we had. Is there anything we need to go back to and ask in more detail? Or do you have anything you want to offer that we haven't?

REV. MACASKILL: I might say that, you know, he was the only president to have offered a prayer before his inaugural address. And that prayer really set the tone for his administration. We have an embossed copy of that prayer on the walls of the, what we call the Eisenhower Lounge in the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church. On the death of President Eisenhower, Mrs. Eisenhower then wanted to do something in memory of President Eisenhower and the suggestion was that she give a lounge--that was her suggestion. And, of course, the church was very open and receptive to that and she agreed to pay for the furnishings and the interior decoration--all that was involved in the furnishing of that lounge. And in the lounge we had some memorabilia of Eisenhower's and, of course, as you know he was a fine painter. We have prints of his paintings there and I mentioned the prayer, there's an embossed copy of that prayer and I'd just like to share that with you because

that, to me, is kind of the essence of his thought and concern of his faith. "Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the executive branch join me in beseeching that you will make full and complete our dedication to the service of people in this throng and their fellow citizens everywhere. Give us, we pray, the ability to discern clearly right from wrong, that all our words and actions may be governed thereby, and especially, give us concern for all the people, regardless of race, or creed, or calling, that all may work for the good of our beloved country and to thy glory. Amen." So that kind of set the tone for his administration and he sought to follow those precepts.

Q: When a wreath is laid here on his birthday every year that prayer is always read.

REV. MACASKILL: Is that right?

Q: Yes, in the crypt, usually by an army chaplain. Anything else that you can think of that we should know or wish to offer or, Jim, do you have anything?

Q: I really don't.

Q: You have a remarkable memory.

REV. MACASKILL: I appreciated, of course, the privilege and the association I was to have with the Eisenhowers, the enrichment that they brought to the Gettysburg community and to the church itself, and, of course, to the nation and the world. But he was a unique individual and I remember Mrs. Eisenhower was once asked what was her impression about her husband - his integrity, his character, his honesty and his dedication. And I think he sought to fulfill that in every role that he was called upon to play in his role as a citizen, soldier and a leader. I'll say that when the annals of the twentieth century are written he must emerge as one of the two or three top leading figures of our nation, you know. Not only a leader in war, but in peace. And everyone can say, regardless of political affiliation, "I like Ike." He had that tremendous appeal and acceptance by all our people.

Q: I have to really ask this question. Did he really tell you the truth about his golf game?

REV. MACASKILL: I was careful not to explore that.

Q: You're his minister, I mean, who else could he confess to, that "I moved the ball too much." Did he ever discuss

his leisure time or, that probably never came up in . . . I was really curious.

REV. MACASKILL: Yes, I was careful not to explore some of those things! By the way, his caddy in Gettysburg is a member of the church there. And I've been with him on occasion when he will tell about the role that he played as a caddy and how he had a close association with Eisenhower and he knew the warts and all.

Q: I'll bet he had interesting stories to tell.

REV. MACASKILL: He had a hole-in-one there in Gettysburg. I don't know if you knew that or not.

Q: Yes, the year before he died.

REV. MACASKILL: So he had some interesting stories to tell about that. But he was interested in athletics and he was very athletically inclined, I know, as a youth here in Abilene and at West Point. He was injured, I know, when he was at West Point but he maintained a good interest in athletics across the years.

Q: That's all I have.

Q: It's really all I have.

Q: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

REV. MACASKILL: Thank you. It was a pleasure to share with you.