

"Harry caught it right away, and he told MacArthur, 'You go ahead and land first. We've got plenty of gas. We'll wait for you.' And that's what happened. That's what we did."

Mr. Truman: "MacArthur was always playacting, and he wasn't any damn good at it. I knew what he was trying to pull with all that stuff about whose plane was going to land first, and I wasn't going to let him get away with it.

"So I let . . . I made it quite clear that he was to go in first, and he did."

I understand that when you did get on the ground, there was another delay.

"There was. After we landed, there was a welcoming party there on the ground, but I looked out the window, and MacArthur wasn't there.

"Even after we stopped the engines and they opened up the door of the plane, the bastard still didn't show up.

"So I just sat there. I just waited. I'd have waited until hell froze over if I'd of had to. I wasn't going to have one of my generals embarrass the President of the United States.

"Finally, the son of a bitch walked out of one of the buildings near the runway there. He was wearing those damn sunglasses of his and a shirt that was unbuttoned and a cap that had a lot of hardware. I never did understand . . . an old man like that and a five-star general to boot, why he went around dressed up like a nineteen-year-old second lieutenant.

"I'll tell you this. If he'd been a lieutenant in my outfit going around dressed like that, I'd have busted him so fast he wouldn't have known what happened to him.

"But I . . . I decided to overlook his getup, and we shook hands and arranged . . . we had a meeting. I got there on time, but he was forty-five minutes late, and this meeting—it was just between the two of us, you understand and was the only one like that.

"When he walked in, I took one look at him, and I said, 'Now you look here. I've come halfway across the world to meet you, but don't worry about that. I just want you to know I don't give a good goddamn what you do or think about Harry Truman, but don't you ever again keep your Commander in Chief waiting. Is that clear?'"

"His face got as red as a beet, but he said . . . he indicated that he understood what I was talking about, and we went on from there.

"I didn't bring up what he'd written to the Veterans of Foreign Wars; I didn't have to. He did it. He said he didn't know what had got into him, and that it had been a mistake, and nothing like that would ever happen again.

"I didn't mention 1948* either, but he did. He says, 'Mr. President, I was just taken in by the politicians, and I apologize for that, too. It won't happen again. I've learned my lesson.'"

He seems to have been very apologetic and contrite that morning.

"He was. He was. When you were alone with him, he was a very different kind of fella. Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. But . . . I've known a few other fellas like that, and when they're out in public, it's an entirely different story. They're always playacting out in public.

"I asked MacArthur point blank if the Chinese would come in, and he said under no circumstances would they come in. He says, 'Mr. President, the war will be over by Thanksgiving and I'll have the American troops back in Tokyo by Christmas,' and he went on like that.

"We must've talked for an hour or so, just the two of us, and I believe I made it more than abundantly clear to him that I was his Commander in Chief and that he was to obey orders and keep . . . not issue any public statements of any kind that hadn't been approved by me personally.

"He was just like a little puppy at that meeting. I don't know

*That year nobody knew much about MacArthur's views on anything, but the *Chicago Tribune* and the Hearst press thought they knew enough to be sure he wasn't one of your left-wingers and to start trying to drum up support for him.

In mid-March MacArthur, with his usual flair for understatement, allowed as how, "In this hour of momentous importance . . . I can say, and with due humility, that I would be recreant to all concepts of good citizenship were I to shirk any public duty to which I might be called by the American people."

Since he was on active duty in Japan, he couldn't do any active campaigning. His name, nevertheless, was entered in the Wisconsin Republican primary. He had, after all, once gone to school in Wisconsin and was appointed to West Point by a Congressman from that state, although he hadn't been in Wisconsin or anyplace else in the United States for eleven years. Some people even said he was the state's favorite son.

On primary day, however, the general got only eight of the twenty-seven delegates, and that more or less finished off talk about the duty the general wouldn't be able to shirk.

which was worse, the way he acted in public or the way he kissed my ass at that meeting."*

Mr. President, at the second meeting with MacArthur, the one with General Bradley, Dean Rusk from the State Department, Philip Jessup, Ambassador Muccio, and all the others, I believe he said that no more than sixty thousand Chinese troops could be got across the Yalu River because the Chinese didn't have any air power to protect them. And he also said that he had had complete cooperation. The official statement of what he said reads, "No commander in the history of war has ever had more complete and adequate support from all agencies in Washington than I have."

"I believe he did say something like that, yes."

The complete account of that meeting came in very handy the next spring after you'd relieved MacArthur and he was denying that he'd said, among other things, that the Chinese wouldn't come into the war with any force. It was very fortunate that a Miss Vernice Anderson was next door to the Quonset hut taking notes, although nobody knew that she was taking notes. Officially, that is.†

*In Mr. Truman's *Memoirs* the last of three paragraphs describing that meeting states: "The general seemed genuinely pleased at this opportunity to talk with me, and I found him a most stimulating and interesting person. Our conversation was very friendly—I might say much more so than I had expected."

I wanted to ask Mr. Truman about that discrepancy and many others, but I never did. The reason I never did was that I wanted our conversations to continue.

†Those notes worked out very well for everybody—except, maybe, the general, who claimed in April that he didn't know any such transcript was made, although a staff member had signed a receipt for the transcript at MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters.

The notes did not, however, surface until the general was appearing before a Senate committee that in April was looking into the reasons for MacArthur's recall. Then the top-secret classification on them was somehow lifted, and they turned up in a front-page story in the *New York Times*, written by Anthony Leviero. Leviero received a Pulitzer Prize for his daredevil enterprise in the matter.

After all, he had been at Wake Island himself, and he described the meeting as giving the appearance of one between that of an "insurance salesman who has at last signed up an important prospect . . . while the latter appeared to be dubious over the extent of the coverage." Mr. Truman was the salesman, the general the insured.

In the *Memoirs* Mr. Truman and his ghost, Bill Hillman, say of those notes: "It was not until much later that I learned that Miss Vernice Anderson, the secretary to Ambassador Jessup, was next door and, without instructions from anyone, took down stenographic notes. This fact further became known during the hearings following General MacArthur's recall, and there was a good deal of noise about it. I can say that neither I nor Mr. Jessup nor anyone else had given Miss Anderson instructions to take notes; as a matter of fact, she was not brought along to take notes but merely to have a secretary available for the drafting of the communiqué that would have to be issued at the end of the meeting."

An awful lot of protesting about accidental note taking in those few words, and

"No, nobody knew that she was taking notes; as you say, nobody officially knew it," said the President, and he smiled, and I believe he winked. The President was not much of a winker, and when he did, the wink was always so fleeting that you weren't sure you'd seen it.

"You run into good luck like that sometimes," he added.

Mr. President, I believe that at the very moment General MacArthur was telling . . . was saying that the Chinese wouldn't come into Korea in any force a hundred and twenty thousand members of the Chinese Communist Fourth Field Army had already crossed the Yalu, a lot of them with Russian artillery and tanks made in Russia.

"That's right, and of course, that was only the beginning."

Mr. President, do you think the general was lying when he made the assurances he made you, or was his intelligence just bad?

"You'd have to ask him that, but I think . . . my feeling is that he just never learned the difference between the truth and a lie. That was one of his troubles, and another was. . . ."

"Well, there's a story. On his ninetieth birthday, I think it was, somebody asked Justice Holmes, Oliver Wendell Holmes, how he figured he'd done all he'd done, been a Supreme Court Justice and a soldier in the Civil War and all of that.

"The fella that asked him, a newspaper fella, says, 'What's the secret of your success, Justice Holmes?'

"And Old Holmes says, 'Young man, the secret of my success is that at a very early age I discovered that I'm not God.'

"I told you. MacArthur never did find that out. And that was his trouble. That was one of his troubles."

Mr. President, before we're through with this series, we're going to make you one of the great storytellers of our time.

"Now, no. Don't try that. Don't try anything like that on me. Don't try to make a playactor out of me because if you do, it'll fail.

I yearned to ask Mr. Truman whatever happened to Mrs. Anderson. I hope at the very least she got a raise.

But, for reasons already noted above, I kept my silence on the subject.

As Bob Aurthur has written of the matter, "While the participant nods vigorously at Mr. Truman's injured denial that he had anything to do with stashing the secretary, or even knew she was there, the observer reflects how critical world events are sometimes conducted in Graustarkian, wondrous, and—dare I say?—simple minded ways. And why does Mr. Truman smile a little when he thinks back on how those notes suddenly surfaced when needed most?"

Bob's remarks were written back in those innocent days when Watergate meant nothing more than the name of a swank apartment house in Washington, D.C.