

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

GERALD L. WARREN

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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[Note: This interview was not edited prior to Mr. Warren's death.]

Q: Today is 13 October 2014. It is Columbus Day and this is an interview with Gerald L. Warren. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Gerry.

WARREN: Yes.

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

WARREN: I was born in Hastings, Nebraska, in August of 1930.

Q: All right, let's talk about the Warren side of the family. How did the Warrens, where did they come from?

WARREN: Well, that is a good question. You know my brother and I have talked about this. We never asked the right questions of our father or our uncle or our grandfather and now they are all gone, so we are trying to put it together. He has macular degeneration so I am trying to put it together. This will be an interesting session here this afternoon, Genealogy on the internet. They referred to themselves as Scots Irish Pennsylvanians, which I think meant they came from middle Europe. They were farmers and they were escaping the many wars, the 100 Years War and that sort of thing. They first went to the Netherlands and they stayed there for awhile. Their aim was to get to the New World. Then they went to Scotland. They stayed in these places maybe ten years before they moved on. Then they went to Ireland. All those places left their imprint on them.

Q: And the name had obviously changed.

WARREN: Of course, I don't know what it was in the beginning. I think in Scotland it found its place in Warren. There are Warrens in Scotland. They are working folks and farmers up around Edinburgh. So then they got to the United States.

Q: Do you know about when?

WARREN: Oh boy, in the late 18th or early 19th century I think. They went obviously to Pennsylvania for some reason unknown to me. Then they headed west. They wanted to

farm and they wanted space. They got in their Conestoga wagons and headed west. It was a long, arduous journey obviously. They got to the Missouri River. They stopped to rest and they inspected the soil. They pulled it out. It was rich and black and moist. And they said we have got to stay here. So they stayed along the Missouri River in Nebraska near Nebraska City for awhile and then they spread out. My dad was born in a small town. His father was a truck farmer and in the spring they would carry their produce to Lincoln from Nebraska City which is about 50 miles or so, maybe less. In a little town along the way they stopped long enough for my grandmother to have my father. Then they went on their way again. So they stayed there until Dad went through university, the first one in the family to become a teacher. He was a teacher, but he wanted to progress so he got a degree. Then he went to join some of his family out in western Nebraska in a little town named Cambridge. He got a school out there, small one room, and taught and studied and taught and studied. That is the way he got his degree over time. He didn't get his master's until I was four years old. Then he became a superintendent, and was a superintendent of schools all the rest of his career.

Q: Where was he getting his degrees?

WARREN: The University of Nebraska is where he got his master's. That was where it was presented. He really studied for it at Nebraska Wesleyan, a Methodist college in Lincoln.

Q: All right, on your mother's side where did her family come from?

WARREN: Well pretty much the same. They came out, they spent more time in Ireland than any place else. Where they started I haven't gotten that far on the internet. I lose interest quite frankly. They came from the British Isles. Williamson was the name, and it sounds like an English name to me, and I don't think it was an adopted name. I think it was the name they came with.

Q: What kind of farming did both sides of the family do?

WARREN: Well a lot of wheat in western Nebraska, a lot of corn. In season soy and that sort of thing but it was grains primarily.

Q: Well when you were a kid in the 1930's you were born in the middle of the depression. Where did you live at that time?

WARREN: Well gosh, my dad being a school superintendent moved the family quite often. Every time these small school boards changed, they wanted a new superintendent, and had some reason not to want to keep the old one. Dad moved on a lot. When I was growing we lived in a little town called Inland, Nebraska, which is outside of Hastings in the central part of the state. Very near a WWII ammunition dump. It existed for many years and I remember they didn't get rid of it until two decades ago. Then he moved to eastern Nebraska to a little school, and then a little bigger school, and then a bigger

school. We lived in one or two little towns before I went to school. Then I went to five schools both elementary and secondary.

Q: Very much the pattern of the military.

WARREN: Very much so.

Q: In the first place this must have been pretty difficult as a kid wasn't it?

WARREN: No, it was wonderful. You got new friends. At first it is rather frightening to move into a new town and learn the ways and the mores and that sort of thing, but then it was great. I have this terrible habit and still do. When I left the place, I left the place. I just turned my back and went. I didn't keep track of folks back there. I wish I had. But it wasn't tough; I enjoyed it. So did my brother.

Q: What do you recall about what were you up to as a small kid?

WARREN: Well first the depression and then the war. The war was very influential. First we did all the kid stuff. We played baseball after school in the summertime, every day.

Q: I might point out that the baseball was not organized.

WARREN: No, it wasn't. We organized it.

Q: Yeah, I grew up in the same era.

WARREN: We would find an empty lot and ask the owner if we could use it. Somebody's father would bring in a back hoe or tractor and smooth it out for us. Then we would just play. The kids would come however many and we would play. In the evening there were neighborhood kids games such as flag football, We didn't call it that but it was something like that, a lot of running games. We were active a lot. Then when we weren't playing baseball we would play cowboys and Indians with whatever guns that we made ourselves. Then when the war came along things became serious. I was 11 in 1941. My father immediately tried to enlist and they told him no. You are 41 years old in the first place. In the second place we need teachers and school superintendents. You are doing a better job here than you would be in Europe or wherever. He didn't like that but he accepted it. In the afternoon after school we would sit in our living room and he would read two newspapers cover to cover. Then we would go to the map that was pinned on the wall and trace the progress of the troops particularly in Europe. That was it. It was pretty much concentrated on that. By that time I was doing more organized sports, but we still had neighborhood games. But things got more serious for some reason. Our heroes were our neighbor boys gone off to war. We admired them.

Q: I assume the radio was a big part.

WARREN: Oh yeah. We listened to the radio every day.

Q: Were you sort of getting a good geography lesson? I certainly did.

WARREN: Very much, it was amazing. Better than everything else we could have gotten. Of course we learned about the United States. We learned about England and Italy and Morocco and then North Africa, and then central Europe and, of course, the Pacific. We knew nothing about the Pacific.

Q: Yeah and then all of a sudden all of these islands that we never thought about loomed large. Were you much of a reader?

WARREN: Yeah I was.

Q: What sort of books did you like?

WARREN: Oh Jack Armstrong the All American Boy type of books. There was a series of books about the Naval Academy. Navy Blue and Gold was one of them and there were two or three others I remember. We read a lot but I don't remember much about what we read other than those. Oh of course Mark Twain and all of that.

Q: Were you following the exploits of the Soviet Armies at the time?

WARREN: My father was. I didn't really understand the nuances. He was very much worried about the Soviets. I was like a lot of American boys who saw Papa Joe [Stalin] in the pictures with the deteriorating FDR. He had a war machine but it didn't bother me.

Q: What about the schools you were going to in Nebraska? Was there much of an ethnic mix?

WARREN: No. Very homogeneous, white, farmers. Abraham Lincoln, if I may give a little aside here, Abraham Lincoln really changed Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, parts of Oklahoma with the Homestead Act. The same day he signed that during the Civil War, he signed the Land Grant College Act. That just made the Middle West. Nebraska had all of this land. It is a pretty big state, long, not too deep but long. It had all this land and no people. So the state fathers wrote to foreign capitals in Europe and Scandinavia and the British Isles and asked them to send people because we had homesteads. We explained homesteads to them and how long they had to work before it was theirs. They came and Nebraska has towns called Belgrade, Valparaiso, Moscow. Well this polyglot came into Nebraska: a lot of them Swedes, a lot of Czechs, a lot of Germans. Czechs became Bohunks of course so we were affected by all of that. The food they brought with them was not too bad you know. Nebraska is still that way. It has a lot of Swedes, a lot of Swedish influence, but it has everything else.

Q: Well when you were a kid was the Civil War on a lot of people's minds still?

WARREN: It was. More in my parents minds than mine. I tried to learn about it as I matured. But I remember thinking about it particularly on Decoration Day. Decoration Day was a big day in middle America.

Q: Decoration Day is when the townsfolk went out and decorated the graves.

WARREN: It is now called Memorial Day. The whole town would go out. In some areas there would be band concerts at the cemetery.

Q: I know I was a Boy Scout and I used to march in the parade.

WARREN: You saw everybody, and everybody seemed to have a Civil War grave to decorate in that little cemetery. So you learned about it that way.

Q: Was there much sentiment one way or another? Did it show up about blacks and whites.

WARREN: Quite a bit. There was a struggle in Nebraska over who to support. The Union forces won out and it was fairly bitter. The Ku Klux Klan existed in Nebraska until the 1920's.

Q: It was rather prominent.

WARREN: It was. It was harmless. I mean there were no burnings or hangings or lynchings in Nebraska. There were further south, but it was just a bunch of kids acting out with a gun on their hip. It was very dangerous but it was harmless. My dad, bless his soul, at one point in his life was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. I knew him as the most tolerant inclusive wonderful man who did things for all sorts of people. I can get into that later, but this was a phase, and so the lingering effect to me that I noticed was in this one little town, you know, a black family lived outside of town and had a truck farm. They would bring their produce in a horse drawn wagon. And everybody knew them and everybody liked them. But they had to be out of town by sunset. No blacks in this little town after sunset. That was fairly common.

Q: What about the movie theaters and all? I mean were they, blacks didn't go to a night show?

WARREN: Well we didn't have night shows. Our movie theaters were our parks where they hung sheets and this flickering camera projected the cowboy films primarily. But there was nothing like that. They just didn't come. They had very few in our area. The Blacks in Nebraska tended to go to Omaha. There was a rather large black population.

Q: Was there a native American element in Nebraska?

WARREN: Well there was, but I didn't notice it until much later.

Q: Well did any of these ethnic groups I don't want to say dominate but were big enough to be apparent?

WARREN: Beyond the blacks, white Anglo Saxon Christian. Not protestant but Christian.

Q: Where did you father and mother fall politically?

WARREN: My mother was very modern, but she never declared in my hearing about party preference. My dad voted for Franklin Roosevelt. He was a registered Democrat. He voted for him twice. The third time he said no. Two times is enough for anyone. He liked Roosevelt. He liked everyone else out there but he didn't like the WPA and the CCC and all those make work programs they ridiculed so much but were so important.

Q: Yeah, they really accomplished quite a bit.

WARREN: Oh they did, but they were a source of great ridicule in that part of the country. So from that time on to my knowledge my dad never voted for another Democrat. But he never changed his registration. He never changed it to Republican. You didn't have to in Nebraska.

Q: How about religion?

WARREN: Methodist.

Q: Was it important?

WARREN: Very. Very important in my family. In many villages we lived in they found the superintendent of schools a house to rent that was right next door to the Methodist parsonage. So we grew up with the Methodist minister as a neighbor and the kids as people we played with in a number of towns. We maintained contact with those folks over time. Our family life was centered on home, school, and church in equal forces.

Q: What about in school, let's just say grammar school. Did you find yourself liking some courses and not liking others?

WARREN: Oh yeah, but I didn't concentrate much on school. When I was young, I was the superintendent of school's kid, you know, so I found myself on the teacher's lap a lot. I was smart then. I picked things up quickly. I read a lot. In high school I didn't but at that time I did. So I progressed and I knew what we were doing and I knew what we were learning, but I didn't concentrate too much. I don't remember homework. If there was I didn't do it.

Q: How about high school. Did you go a school or did you skip to different schools too?

WARREN: What do you mean by that?

Q: In other words did you go to one high school?

WARREN: No I went to two.

Q: Which ones were they?

WARREN: Papillion, Nebraska, a small town near Omaha. Now it is a suburb. It is a bedroom community for Profit Field of SAC headquarters. It is quite a bit larger now than it was then. I went two years to Papillion, and then my dad moved us to St. Edwards, Nebraska, in the central part of the state in Boone County. Really the Boondocks when you think about it, near Norfolk which was Johnny Carson's hometown. That will orient it for you. Those were the two high schools I went to. I was a good student but I didn't put any effort into it.

Q: How about I mean as so often mathematics is usually the line, they either like it or they don't.

WARREN: Well I skipped mathematics. I just got enough to get along.

Q: Well as a high school student considering your later appointment, did newspapers play much of a role?

WARREN: Sure. I was editor of the school newspaper in St. Edward. I had a pal in Papillion. We were about 13-14 years old. This pal went to our elementary school and then he went to the Catholic high school. But he and I would talk sports all the time. We knew the batting averages of every player in the major leagues. Of course there were considerably fewer in those days. I think there were 12 teams or something like that. But we knew the batting averages and the ERA of the pitchers. We talked about it. His father was the publisher of the weekly newspaper in Papillion. So we went down there; his name was Butch Miller. We would gather at his house on the important days of the year: the World Series, the Indianapolis 500, Kentucky Derby. He would have a blackboard there and we would put the entrants on the blackboard with the odds if that was pertinent. Then we would listen to the event with all of our chums. He and I would write about it for ourselves. So each of us went into the newspaper business. We never changed our minds from that time on what we were going to do.

Q: Did you have a favorite football team and a favorite baseball team?

WARREN: Well we listened to the blue network and the re-creation of baseball games, primarily from Chicago, occasionally from St. Louis. So those two teams were special. My first major league baseball game that I saw was a Cub game in Chicago. We were on our way east. If I may break in here. My dad he made about \$100 a month. But that was just for nine months. He only taught for nine months according to the school board. He did a lot more than that. Anyway he would save money to get to Chicago. Near Chicago

we had some sort of relative, I can't remember who it was now. He would work on his farm. This would be in August, so it would be harvest time and dad would make enough money to continue the trip. Well he took me into Chicago to see a game. I had heard Chicago games and I knew all the players and the pitcher was Claude Passeau. I was so thrilled to see Claude Passeau pitch a major league ball game. Wow, I was really hooked.

Q: What was the team?

WARREN: Cubs. So that was the baseball team. I didn't tumble to professional football until one of my classmate's brother in St. Edward went on to great glory at the University of Nebraska and then became a New York Giant. Then I began to concentrate on pro football, but not until I was a senior in high school. Football was college. Football was the University of Nebraska. Terrible teams in the 40's and 50's when I went to school, but we were loyal. We went to every game.

Q: How about in high school, dating. What was the dating pattern like?

WARREN: That is funny. There wasn't much. Choir practice. Both the Methodist and the Presbyterian Church seemed to have choir practice the same night, and then we would meet and pair off and drive back and forth down the main street. That was pretty much it. You know I walked a girl home from time to time, and stood at the street corner and talked to her by the hour. I didn't have a real date until following church camp. I was in Papillion and I met this wonderful girl at church camp. It could have been Papillion and I was 16. I took the car, my dad gave me the car and I went to Omaha and picked this girl up. She lived in this swanky part of town. I said, "Oh I am out of my league here." Her name was Gerri Smith. We went to see the Ice Follies. Then I took her home and drove home. I got back around midnight. I didn't date very much except for those instances.

Q: You mentioned cotillion. Could you explain what that is for somebody who might not know.

WARREN: It was Papillion, which is French for butterfly. This was the little town I lived in near Omaha. We went to dance classes. We went to Omaha, six or seven of us with an adult of course. I sort of learned to dance, but we didn't have cotillion.

Q: In that era young boys and girls they weren't organized dances but it was essentially a teaching event.

WARREN: It is still going on under a different name in some towns. In San Diego, my daughter and son went. But you would have to go whether you wanted to or not. You would sit there and pout until the leader or instructor was able to con you into dancing with a girl

Q: Yes I can recall. I went to one in Annapolis run by a Miss Lazenby. She would barge into the men's room and shoo all us little boys out of there and make them dance. Well

did you in high school find that your following the news both politics and overseas events.

WARREN: Definitely. My high school years were 1944 to 1948. So boys were coming back, or they weren't and we were talking to them about their experiences. We followed the post war period in Europe very closely. We argued politics all the time. I was a flaming liberal. We had long and arduous and twisted arguments about social welfare and so on.

Q: Do you attribute the influence of your mother to your liberalism?

WARREN: My father and mother both. They were so giving of themselves to other people. Extraordinary. I have great stories about both of them, what they did for kids and other people.

Q: Do you recall the use of the Nuclear bomb in Japan?

WARREN: Well, yeah, and we had the traditional argument about that, was it necessary. My father was firmly of the mind that it was. It shortened the war and saved a lot of lives both Japanese and American. But it was a big topic. It exploded in '45 about the time I got into high school, and then SAC was nearby and the big airplanes flew in and out.

Q: SAC meaning Strategic Air Command.

WARREN: It was at Offutt Field in Bellevue, Nebraska, which was about 15 miles from Papillion. So yeah that was a big topic.

Q: Did you find yourself attracted towards the military at all?

WARREN: I maintained my interest in the navy but I never thought about the military as an occupation or a vocation at that time. My goal was to go to the University of Nebraska and get a journalism degree and spend my life in Nebraska at one of their major newspapers hopefully ending up at the Omaha Herald which was the biggest paper in the state. That is what I wanted to do. I never thought about going anywhere else.

Q: Did you follow any developments in the Soviet Union at all?

WARREN: Well we began to, particularly after the division of Berlin and the Berlin air corridor.

Q: That was '47-'48.

WARREN: I was still in high school. That was the beginning of our distaste for the Soviet Union and our view that it was an enemy of freedom and democracy.

Q: Well then you graduated from high school when?

WARREN: 1948.

Q: So where did you go?

WARREN: Lincoln, to the University of Nebraska. I spent the next four years there.

Q: What was the university like particularly your first view, how did it strike you?

WARREN: It was huge. It was polyglot. It wasn't homogeneous at all. But I trended toward the fraternity life which was homogeneous. There were Jewish fraternities, two of them, but no black fraternities. No blacks in any fraternity, and few blacks in school for that matter.

Q: Did you get involved with fraternities?

WARREN: Yes I did.

Q: What fraternity was that?

WARREN: Sigma Nu.

Q: Did you find you were sort of in the mainstream at odds the outlook on politics and all of that?

WARREN: You know that is strange because in 1948 people were still coming back from the war, getting out of the service, people who had served in WWII, so they had a great effect on us. I at the time of course was still a bleeding liberal and got into a lot of discussions at the student union over coffee or lunch about politics.

Q: How did the election of 1948, this is when Truman surprised everybody by winning. How did it affect the school or the student body?

WARREN: Well there was a great deal of interest. It didn't really affect the student body. They were pretty evenly split between Dewey and Truman. There was great glee when Truman held up the Chicago Tribune and then when Truman imitated the radio commentator, H. V. Kaltenborn.

Q: Dewey Defeats Truman, yes.

WARREN: That was wonderful, we loved it.

Q: What sort of activities did you get involved in on campus?

WARREN: Well after enrolling and settling in to the fraternity, I went straight to the student union to the basement where the Daily Nebraskan was put together and offered

my services. So I was a reporter for the school newspaper. My activities other than social centered around the Daily Nebraskan. That was it. I didn't do anything else. I didn't want to do anything else, journalism was it.

Q: You mentioned in the fraternities, Jewish fraternities. Particularly after WWII and what was coming out about the holocaust and all was there any, why would there be Jewish fraternities?

WARREN: Most all of the other fraternities were formed in the South. Sigma Nu was founded in William and Mary and the South had pretty rigid views about the separation of the races. So Jews were not invited to main line fraternities. They had to have their own because they were coming in great numbers.

Q: I went to Williams up in the liberal north and we had restrictions too.

WARREN: Yeah, I am sure. We had great interchange between the guys. I had great friends in the Jewish fraternity.

Q: It was obviously happening, probably nothing hit the middle class more than the GI Bill. But was it being remarked upon as being...

WARREN: Oh yeah because the situation I just mentioned the boys coming back even in '48 getting out of the service. They affected us a lot. We followed them because they were mature. To our regret we wanted to drink like they drank and we wanted to smoke like they smoked and all of that.

Q: I was class of '50 in college and I am sure you had the same feeling that not only was the partying a little heavier but also there was a lot of mature or pretty mature body of experience within the students themselves over time. When history was being taught someone would say "Yes but when I was at the Battle of the Bulge," I mean I feel we were much more mature college students than say some today.

WARREN: Well I like to think that but not at first. Not at the beginning. Actually picking up on something you said, there was very little discussion of what they did in the war. Very little. They didn't want to talk about it. They wanted to study and party.

Q: Was there the equivalent of sort of the campus reds at the school?

WARREN: Oh yeah. Yeah there was. But it was minimal. Very little impact. Nebraska from that standpoint was fairly sheltered, never really got into the question of red infiltration and all of that.

Q: Did you have ROTC?

WARREN: Yes. Both ROTC and Naval ROTC.

Q: Did you get into that?

WARREN: I did. I was in Naval ROTC until I overslept one morning and missed an examination and I got tossed out, much to my mother's disgust.

Q: Well then what courses in college did you particularly like?

WARREN: Journalism. It goes without saying. History, English, political science. That is about it.

Q: Well that covers quite a broad sweep. It certainly is what you need to be a good journalist. Did you have any feel about the Soviet Union at the time?

WARREN: Yes I did. As I mentioned earlier we watched with great interest what was happening in Berlin. That formed my belief that the Soviet Union was a menace to democracy and freedom. Most of my friends felt the same way.

Q: Did the weight of the nuclear threat was it heavy on you at all? Did you think about it much?

WARREN: Well we talked about it, but we didn't think about it very much. I don't know that we saw it as a threat at the time. It was a fascinating subject. I am sure there were folks that were afraid of the effect long term , but I didn't talk about it very much.

Q: Well another thing besides world events that comes through as often talked about and I was wondering if you did or not was sort of theology. Is there a God?

WARREN: No, we never talked about that. There was very little sign of the effect of theology or religion among my fraternity. Our church was a rather large church in Lincoln. I went for about a year and then the minister went on to become a bishop and the replacement was more hard line, and I dropped out.

Q: Again in college what was the dating pattern that you found?

WARREN: Well the big deal was the Saturday night movie. We could walk downtown to the theater. We went to have a hamburger some place. The big deal was to go to the Cornhusker Hotel to have a hamburger. Then we'd go to a movie. We went to a lot of movies.

Q: I have always been and still am a movie buff. It certainly caught the bug early on. What was your favorite stars.

WARREN: Well, Gary Cooper, Ray Milland, Who was the very Suave Englishman?

Q: David Niven?

WARREN: Well yes, Niven was a favorite. On the female side it would be Ingrid Bergman and Bogart and his wife, Lauren Bacall.

Q: Was your goal still to get into a local newspaper in Nebraska?

WARREN: I zoomed through the chairs of the Daily Nebraskan faster than usual. I was editor in my junior year, and that was unheard of then. You were usually editor as a senior usually second semester senior. That left me with nothing to do in my senior year. So the summer before my senior year began I went down to the Lincoln Star which was the morning newspaper and applied for a reporter's job and got it. The Lincoln Star was edited by a very ardent Democrat who was broad minded to a point. The editorial line in the paper was very democratic. My favorite journalism professor was an editorial writer on the paper. I had a lot of chums. So that summer I worked the night shift on police and fire and I chased ambulances and that sort of thing. I took pictures of fires and had a lot of fun. I bought my first automobile. That was a 1937 Plymouth with a stick shift on the floor. Of course I had to have something to follow them. I got a place to live, supported myself which was wonderful, both to me and my parents. I continued to do that during my senior year. My senior year I had already eaten up most of the journalism classes so it was devoted to catching up on things I had to take to graduate but didn't want to take like Spanish and chemistry and economics. I cleaned those up barely with the help of some tolerant professors who allowed me to miss a lot of classes in the morning because I overslept as I do today.

Q: Well in the time both in high school and in college did your family get much chance to travel outside of Nebraska?

WARREN: We took three trips. Once when I was about five we went to the west coast in an automobile that always boiled over on the hills. It was a Hudson Terraplane. Then we went again in 1939 to the West Coast. In 1941 we went to the East Coast and that was it.

Q: Did you thirst for foreign travel?

WARREN: No. I didn't. I don't know why but I didn't. I was fascinated by Washington and the workings of Congress and the interplay between journalism and politics. Even at that time it was very interesting. No I didn't aspire to go overseas at all.

Q: How did you feel about the union movement because at that point it was very much a dividing line between people's thoughts.

WARREN: It was. It wasn't that big a deal in Nebraska. Our paper wasn't unionized. There wasn't a guild, so I really didn't give it that much though. I read about it. I read about Roosevelt's actions and Truman's actions with great interest. I felt the militant union movement was very foreign to me the way I grew up in Nebraska, but I didn't give it a lot of thought.

Q: Then you graduated in 1952.

WARREN: 1952. the Korean War was ripe and so in my senior year one of my fraternity mates was a naval reservist, and a recruiter. So he came to a few of us and said, "Look you can get into the naval air cadet program by qualifying in certain ways. Otherwise you are going to be carrying a gun in Korea and you don't want to do that." I said "You are right," and signed up. I had to go to Kansas City for a physical and for an examination of some sort and I qualified and was accepted. I went to Pensacola, Florida, in July of 1952. That was my first real extended stay outside the State of Nebraska.

Q: How did you find officer training?

WARREN: Well it was interesting. We had a drill instructor from the south about 5'2". A prototypical drill instructor. He didn't like officers to be, and he treated us like we were at Quantico. It was amazing. I enjoyed officer training a lot. I really for the first time in my life started to study, concentrate on things like navigation, engineering, which were foreign to me, but I had to have it. I knew it was going to save my life.

Q: So how did you find flying?

WARREN: The first hop I got sick. The first flight with my instructor I got sick into my glove because I didn't want to take my helmet off. He saw what was going on and said open the window and throw it out, which I did. We came back, and I thought, whoa, do I want this or not. I looked around and saw all these other guys from everywhere in the United States, everywhere. I really learned about the U.S. States in pre-flight and in flight training. The South, the differences in New York area for example. The West Coast, let's go to the beach. It was marvelous. But there were a lot of misfits I thought, and they were doing pretty well in this program. I thought to myself if they can do it, you can do it. So I stayed and the next time up it was OK, and it was OK from then on.

Q: So what part of the naval air did you gravitate toward?

WARREN: I finished basic training in SNJ and then went into advanced training in an F6F Hellcat, the plane that won WWII. I got my wings, carrier landings, what a thrill. I didn't understand it but what a thrill. Landings and catapult take offs. I really enjoyed that. I have never had such an exhilarating experience. So I got my wings, and my mother came down and pinned them on. I took her to New Orleans and took her to strip shows which she enjoyed because they were high class strip shows. Then I was sent to Kingsville, Texas for jet training. Then the war ended. I mean it was terrible. I was so angry literally because the carriers were coming home. They were only taking the top pilots out for jet training for carrier duty, and I was not one of those, and I knew it. I stayed within my limitations. I enjoyed jet training a great deal. I loved flying jets. So quiet it was wonderful. They sent me to a small auxiliary air station south of San Diego right on the Mexican border. The plane I flew for the next three years was the F6F. The same plane I trained in, I flew it for the next three years.

Q: What was it designed for? Was it a trainer?

WARREN: We were putting up drones. There would be a land operator sending signal to the drone taking it off and then about 60 feet I would come zooming in behind it and take it on up. It was great flying, daredevil flying. I loved it. I flew over Mexico downwind. They don't do that anymore. I had a lot of fun, but I was chagrined that I was not in jets. So mixed feelings. I missed carrier duty. I wanted to be on a carrier but I wasn't.

Q: Were you planning on making the navy your career?

WARREN: No. I thought about it, and of course I was named administrative boss, which meant you signed all of the papers in the enlisted men's chart. When they did certain things or were promoted I had to sign. Then as an auxiliary duty I was the justice. I wasn't the adjutant, but I was involved in military justice. I took the offender as far as Captain's mast. If he failed captain's mast then he went on with a real court martial, with a real attorney representing him. Apparently I did pretty well because there was a great push to have me stay in the navy. My eyes were going, I knew that. We memorized the eye chart. It is still the same today. I see it every time I go into my optometrist. It is the same chart. I can do it by memory the 20/20 line. But I knew that I was not going to be able to fly more because you couldn't fly with glasses in those days, even multi-engine planes in the military. I didn't want to stay in the navy if I couldn't fly, so I said no. I want to get back to journalism. So I did.

Q: So you were discharged from the navy when?

WARREN: In 1956. July-August of '56.

Q: Now during this time had you developed a significant other?

WARREN: No, I had not. I didn't even do much dating during that time. I don't know why. I thought about that, but I didn't do much dating.

Q: Well had the West Coast attracted you?

WARREN: Well what happened was I went home and spent time with my parents. They were living in a little town near the Platte River in Nebraska. My dad would take me golfing. One day in the middle of August I was on the golf course. It was hot, Nebraska hot. I couldn't get my breath. I thought I was going to die because it is different in California. I got back home and told my parents I have got to go back to California. I can't live here. I am sorry I would love to. I wanted to be a Nebraska journalist but I can't. So I went back to the West Coast. Dad got me a car. It was a 1956 Ford sedan, a small one. I drove back and visited friends in the LA area and then went up to San Francisco to visit friends. I stayed there for about six months almost. I went to work for a small weekly newspaper in Marin County in Mill Valley right across the bridge from San Francisco. I was enamored of San Francisco. The girl I wanted to date had a job at the Chronicle. That was another attraction. I was not making much money. I was spending a lot of my savings in addition to what I made. I pretty soon ran out of money. While I was

in San Diego I had been offered a job in the San Diego Union editorial training program at a certain bureau in the boondocks. I didn't want that. Besides I thought I was a big deal and I didn't have to be trained. Little did I know. So around December I was running out of money and I called my contact at the Union and asked, "Is that training position still open?" He said, "Let me check." He checked and apparently there was some discussion, no we don't want any more. Yes this guy is a good guy, come on. So they accepted me and I went into the training program in the newspaper, not in one of the little bureaus thank goodness. I did everything, and so that is how I stayed on the West Coast.

Q: So then you are working for the Union.

WARREN: The San Diego Union.

Q: What did the training program consist of?

WARREN: Well we had a training officer, and we went from area to area in a newspaper. We started off as a general assignment reporter. Sent copies of my stories to the training director and then I would sit down with him and he would critique my stories. That was pretty much the education part of it. Then I went City Desk, to the County Desk, to the Copy Desk. I spent quite a bit of time on the Copy Desk. Then back to the City Desk.

Q: What is the Copy Desk?

WARREN: That is where all of the wire service and City news, city produced news went through the Copy Desk where it was edited and the end lines were written. Then it was sent down to the composing room. I spent quite a bit of time there but for some reason the editor thought I was going to be a good editor. So he pulled me off that and put me on the City Desk and I would fill in as assistant city editor. In due time I became city editor of that paper.

Q: Where did the Union fit in the political spectrum?

WARREN: Oh it was arch conservative. The adopted father of the publisher was a Chicago area utilities magnate. Who wanted to run for office so he formed a newspaper. That was within keeping with our traditions in those days going back to Hamilton and Jefferson. He was an arch conservative. So the kid who inherited everything became even more conservative. Since we were in San Diego, he hired as his editorial gurus former military officers, captains in the navy, admirals in the navy, generals in the Marine Corps and that sort of thing. So it was a very conservative newspaper, much more conservative than I was, but it was in San Diego, so that is not bad.

Q: Well how long did you work as a city editor?

WARREN: Five years.

Q: That is quite an important job isn't it?

WARREN: It is a great job. I think it is the best job in the newspaper. Because you have hangers on. We had a small staff but a good staff. I think I used them well.

Q: OK, what are the basic decisions that you are making as city editor?

WARREN: Well, what stories to cover other than the obvious ones, the fires, the murders, the big accidents, the city council board of supervisors and that sort of thing. Where you ought to array your troops, your reporters, and then oversee the first editing of their stories. The decision of where the story should be placed. You lobby for A-1 for certain stories. And some are played there and some are not. Then you would make up the B section, the Metro section for example. That was your responsibility.

Q: Where did San Diego itself sort of fit in the political spectrum?

WARREN: Well at that time in the middle 50's it was still dominated by the navy. The cultural boards, the boards of the museum and the libraries and symphony and that sort of thing were dominated by former military officers. They had a great political effect. So San Diego was quite conservative. Parts of San Diego you drive through or walk through the neighborhoods you think you are in Nebraska. But it is a big town. In fact it was a small town that was becoming a big town. It was about 350,000 people at that time. Now it is well over a million. So it was a conservative area and the paper had a controlling effect on that, at that time.

Q: You are right next to the Mexican border. Was there a Mexican influence?

WARREN: Oh yeah, which began in the navy. I will never forget my first duty in the navy as officer of the day which really was a night job. You sit up in this office at night until a certain hour and then you can go to bed. The executive officer said, "Here are the keys to the armory and you can hand out the guns at certain times." These were old armory infantry rifles. I asked, "Well what about the ammunition?" He said, "We don't give them ammunition. They might shoot the wetbacks coming across the strip." So I began to learn about the Mexican influence on the United States at that time and develop my views on immigration. But at that time the Mexicans came up for a specific job. They had a relative in Los Angeles or San Francisco or Chicago and that relative found a job for them, contacted them and they came up. They didn't come up looking for jobs. They came up because they had a job in the fields or as a domestic servant.

Q: You wouldn't say the paper was anti influx?

WARREN: The paper didn't touch it, didn't look at it, didn't consider it, didn't study it at that time.

Q: How about racial? I am thinking black-white type of thing.

WARREN: Well we didn't cover them. If you were black you couldn't get your picture in the San Diego Union at that time unless you were a star athlete or convicted of murder. Otherwise you were just forgotten. It wasn't just the paper; it was the whole town. Blacks had their area. There were certain cabs that would go into the black area and other cabs wouldn't. They just wouldn't go in for whatever reason. So they were generally ignored.

Q: How did you find the reporters? I mean were they more liberal than the administration?

WARREN: Oh yeah, then and now. If you are going to be a reporter on a metropolitan newspaper, you wanted to make a difference. You wanted to change things and conservative publishers don't want to change things. So there is a great dichotomy. Good reporters stayed there because they liked the town. They had groups in San Diego. Their family liked it. They liked their schools, the kids liked it, so they didn't move. Some did and went on to the east coast to great acclaim.

Q: Well did you find yourself in competition with say Los Angeles?

WARREN: Not at that time. We knew our place in the 50's and the early 60's and that was San Diego County. That was ours and the Chandlers who owned the Los Angeles Times made a deal with the Copleys who owned the San Diego Union and the Tribune. They were not going to come down below Camp Pendleton and go above Dana Point. We are fine. No problems. They made that deal. Some of us admired the L.A. Times at that time because they were doing a good job. We stole a lot of ideas from them, but it didn't have much other effect.

Q: Did you find much pressure from the top of dealing with political scandals particularly if the scandals involved the wrong people?

WARREN: Yes. The worst experience was going in to my editor and saying we have solid information about a scandal in the city council, involving C. Arnold Smith who was the richest man in San Diego and the Yellow Cab Company. It is solid. The editor said, "I will get back to you." Then he called me in and said, "Don't touch it. Let it go." I said, "I can't." He said, "You had better or you won't have a job." So we did and that was the scandal of the San Diego Union. That was a big scandal in San Diego. It hit the Wall Street Journal, page one, before we had the story.

Q: Well I am looking at the time. I have got to quit now. But we will pick this up the next time in the late 50's. You are on the San Diego Union and is there anything else issues that we might cover at that time. Race Riots, juicy murders.

WARREN: There is a lot of that.

Q: We can talk about that and then move on.

WARREN: All right.

Q: OK, great.

Q: OK, today is 10 November 2014, with Gerry Warren. We left it last time in this period before you came to work for government when you were running the San Diego Union. Were there any major occurrences you would like to talk about in San Diego? You said there always were.

WARREN: Always. That is the news business. I wasn't running the paper, I was city editor of the paper. Well, major in Washington terms is different from the way it was in San Diego terms. There were a couple of things that were important symbolically or metaphysically I guess. When I was still an editorial trainee before I was really hired, I was assigned to the late shift copy desk. I was to stay there until the home edition came out. I didn't wait for the final edition but the home edition to make sure there were no real glitches or glaring mistakes or that sort of thing. I was sitting there one night and I hear the wire services machines ringing bells at me which it did when they had a major story. I was alone in the shop at the time. So I rushed in there and found that the Russians had launched Sputnik.

Q: What would have been around 1955.

WARREN: No, 1957. So I called down to the composing room and told them to be ready to stop the presses when we got this thing settled. Then I called across the street to the bar and asked them to send back any compositors and reporters and editors who might be there. I was about to call the news editor when he walked in. He had heard it on his car radio on his way home. So he and I made page one based on that story, which sticks in the mind of a young reporter like me so I thought I would mention that.

Q: I think it is important for people looking on us. Now space is so everyday-ish. But I mean the United States was absolutely confident we were ahead of the game and all of a sudden the Soviets put this thing up. We really felt beaten. It was a crushing period.

WARREN: For us. I thought later in reflection wow what if the Germans had developed the atomic bomb a week before we did. What would history look like today. The other one was when I was a reporter. A clipper ship, remember when we called the Pan-Am Clipper, a four engine airplane.

Q: Yeah it had a seaplane hull and would land in water.

WARREN: No, this was land to land. But it was the first sort of intercontinental capable airplane. So there was one flying from San Francisco to Hawaii which was about the limit of its ability, and it went in the water. It was a big deal. There were 200 people on board or so. Somebody asked the Navy's help and the navy said, sure. So they assembled a carrier task force at Long Beach. Meantime they had called around to see if anybody wanted to put reporters on. The AP did and we did because of the importance of the navy in San Diego. Because I was an old pilot they chose me. So I went out and got aboard

that airplane and immediately assumed the rank of a commander or something like that. I had privileges to eat in the officer's mess or wherever I wanted to. The admiral and I became pretty good friends. We got there and found bodies. That is all. I went out with a squadron of planes from the San Diego area on one of the searches. They each had a square to cover, and they overlapped so they wouldn't miss anything. This was tedious work for the pilots and their crews. They did this and they found first one and then two and then a lot of bodies. So they started bringing them aboard the carrier and put them on the hangar deck. An AP reporter took a picture and flashed it. It was on page one of almost every newspaper in the country. A couple of people recognized me standing there. That sticks in my memory. We were there and I was dictating. The navy nicely gave us a couple of channels that we could use.

Q: Communications channels.

WARREN: Yeah. I would try to dictate a story on the bodies coming in. The news editor said, "Don't worry about composing a story. We can do that for you. Just tell us what is happening. So I did in rapid form. We beat the LA Times which pleased me a great deal because the raison d'être of the San Diego Union was to beat the Times. By the way the carrier was The Philippine Sea.

Q: Did your paper cover any significant racial problems, blacks or Mexican problems?

WARREN: Well there were no Mexican problems. There were Mexicans, what we called at that time wetbacks, and I will give you a little anecdote about that later. But they were not a problem. They were not standing around on street corners waiting for jobs. They didn't come to the United States without the promise of a job. They went through San Diego in most cases. So there was no Mexican problem. The San Diego Union being as conservative as it was at that time was ignoring the civil rights problem, the marches, the sheriffs down there and all the things that were happening. We decided that was because there were some outside agitators down south. So we ignored it. Our staff and I were very uncomfortable with that. Most of us knew what a huge story that was. I didn't at the time. I was wrapped up in San Diego and was about to be married, and all of that so it passed right over me. The answer to your question is no, we didn't cover it adequately. It came to San Diego in the form of a protest at the Bank of America. It turns out that the Bank of America vaults was where the San Diego Union secret history whatever that was, I never saw it, was being stored. Our publisher said we have got to do something about this, but they always did the wrong thing. They didn't recognize the Afro American race. If you were black in San Diego in the late 50's early 60's, to get your picture on page one you had to be an athlete or a criminal, otherwise it didn't make it, whatever happened. The whole city was that way. They had certain taxis that went into the southeast where blacks were congregated.

Q: What about obituaries?

WARREN: They didn't die as far as we were concerned.

Q: Well this was true, I think the Washington Post was that way. I mean this is very typical.

WARREN: Well I didn't know what was going on. It passed me over. Along with that I missed the entire revolution of the 60's, the social changes, the cultural changes, the changes of drug of choice and all that. I just missed it.

Q: Once there how about your reporters? I mean were they coming onto the scene with fire in their bellies or what?

WARREN: Oh yeah. But if they had no other reason to stay, they would leave rather quickly even though we hired good people. Some had reason to stay. They had families, kids in school, their wives didn't want to move. So they just swallowed it.

Q: Well the University of California, were they turning out a different breed of cat?

WARREN: Aha, they weren't there then. They weren't formed until the 70's. That changed everything.

Q: I am talking about the free speech movement and everything.

WARREN: Oh I see, the free speech movement. Of course I was treading a fine line on the free speech movement as far as my publisher was concerned. We had to cover it because it was happening in our area. The campus did come to San Diego in the 60's I guess. I lived on a cul-de-sac in La Jolla, my wife and I at the time. Down at the bottom of the cul-de-sac lived the chancellor of the University of California San Diego. He and I were friends. Next door to me was a professor of philosophy who was pre-eminent in the leadership of the free speech movement and a bitter enemy of the chancellor. So I would sneak down to the chancellor's house and he and I would talk. He would tell me what was going on in a way the Lindley rule, do you remember that? You could say what was happening but you couldn't quote the chancellor or anybody else. We got away with that for quite some time. This philosophy professor after having supported the target at UCSD was the flag pole. They wanted to take the American flag down. Veterans who were still there were protecting the flag pole. There were blows delivered on both sides. The veterans stood fast and they didn't get to the flag. The professor was inciting not riot but between peaceful protest and riot, somewhere in there. Until his son moved up to the front of the ranks and was hit rather forcefully by an ex-marine. The professor went into the chancellor and said, "My son has been hurt. You have to do something." Well, anomalies abound.

Q: Well I probably have the names wrong but the University of California San Diego had one of the pre eminent philosophers. I want to say Marcuse.

WARREN: You are quite right. I never had the guts to ask our Marcuse if she was related to Herbert.

Q: As somebody who read the papers and all I was surprised when I was in Europe young people were quoting him all the time and all this. He was basically an unknown. Who is he?

WARREN: Well we didn't cover him in San Diego, even though he was a pre eminent leftist. He was a demigod to...

Q: Oh yes absolutely. You had Marx, Engels and Marcuse.

WARREN: That is right. He was a thorn in the side of my friend the chancellor as well. Those were tense times.

Q: But they didn't play out in the newspaper.

WARREN: No. He was persona non grata in my newspaper.

Q: Just to get a feel for the dynamics. Were there certain subjects when you were an editor you would say we just don't touch that. Was it done just by shrugging shoulders or deliberate policy.

WARREN: This is how it was done. We were covered because we felt that was our journalistic duty. We would write a story and the story would go somewhere in the maw of that newspaper. Somewhere in there was a representative of the publisher who read every word. And if there was something that he didn't like on behalf of the publisher, he would call the editor and say, we can't run this. The editor would call me and I would go in and he'd say we can't use this. Don't touch it. I would argue for certain cases. Of course I lost. That editor, by the way, was Herb Klein. Very interesting. I don't mean to speak ill of the dead.

Q: Well was there any, I was thinking about it but if there is something we don't cover, you know we don't want to cover that, so somebody sits on it, down below in the bowels of the reporting thing flip a letter off or something off to...

WARREN: No, there was none of that.

Q: No ties to Salem, no ties to Washington somebody leaking that?

WARREN: That may have happened from time to time I wasn't aware of it. But the reporters fumed. I fumed inside. I couldn't let it come out because I was a representative of the publisher. I was on the executive payroll and all of that, but there were certain reporters I could confide to over drinks across the street. They were very difficult times.

Q: Was there sort of any outlet the reporters could have to sort of get the news out?

WARREN: No, not in those days. There was no alternative newspaper in those days. Very modest television coverage: four stations, three network oriented and one

independent as I remember, four or five. They wouldn't go to TV because we were bitter enemies. There was no social media in those days.

Q: It is really interesting because one could keep the wraps on.

WARREN: Oh yeah, and they were kept on. I went to work in the White House in January, 1969 right after the inaugural. That cloud of _____ stayed with me. I didn't tumble to what was happening outside because I was working all the time. I was in the White House or traveling with the president and not observing what was happening to the culture. So whether youth started to protest and President Nixon acted poorly and vigorously I didn't recognize it for what it was. The youth were ahead of the country and were representing the country. They were bad representatives but they got the message across. I didn't realize that, so I felt attacked along with the President I remember standing on the steps of the executive office building during the march around the White House. There was a ring of buses around the White House with troops, National guard Troops inside, armed. Young people marching around the outside, throwing things, whatever they could find, over the buses. We felt those who were loyal and union were for President Nixon in those days unless you were one, civil service or two, loyal. Because we didn't believe the president was doing anything wrong. As a matter of fact we believed his Vietnam policies were good and were right for the country. I still think they were.

Q: I have to say I did too.

WARREN: So we felt trapped. We felt unfairly attacked. Then of course that loyalty continued through the things that followed. It was increased by China. The China trip was a great triumph. I know we will get to these things later. This all pertains I think. So when it was all over I can't believe the President said what he said in that June 23 meeting. I had to read the transcript before we put it out and it was like I was slugged in the stomach. It was just awful. I knew that was the end. That was the smoking gun. I was just crushed as were many of my good friends whom I see once or twice a year. So that is over. I spent a year with Mr. Ford thank goodness. Then I go back to San Diego. I will get back to present thought now. The publisher has died. His wife has taken over. She is no Kate Graham. She didn't have an editorial background as Kate did. But she knew something was desperately wrong and she interviewed editors and reporters. They were very frank with her about what was happening and why, and they didn't like it. So she decided to clean house. She got rid of the person between the editorial department and the publisher's officer. Got rid of that former navy captain or marine general or something. She fired the president of the corporation because he had attempted a coup during Jim Copley's final days. She was quite resentful of that. She called me to come back and make a newspaper out of what we had. So I did. I met with her and the first thing she said and the first thing I said was ombudsman. We need an ombudsman to force these issues out.

Q: Was this the time these issues were becoming...

WARREN: It was very nascent at the time. As a matter of fact my ombudsman was the first president of the ombudsman group, whatever they called it. He stayed very active in it. I supported it even after the publisher decided I was going too far. Excuse me for that very long story.

Q: Oh no, we will be coming back to that. It does tie things together.

WARREN: And to underline my naiveté in those days, I came back in September and in December we had a party for the staff. It was at the Stadium club of the San Diego Stadium. I am sitting at the bar. The bar is here and there is a partition and the tables and the eating is back in there. I said to my secretary, who was sitting next to me, "What is that smell. Something must be burning." She said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yes. What is that terrible smell?" "You idiot, that is marijuana." I didn't know what it smelled like.

Q: Well let's move back to early days. Richard Nixon he had been around a long time. I knew my mother hated the man because he was responsible for getting rid of I think it was Jerry Voorhis. We lived in San Marino. A classmate of mine in sixth grade was Johnny Rousselot, the head of the John Birch Society and an extremely conservative.

WARREN: A very strong supporter of President Nixon.

Q: OK we had a break and now we are back with Gerry Warren on the tenth of November. Gerry let's talk about Richard Nixon. Did you have any contact with him during the time you were in California he was quite a major figure.

WARREN: I was there at the end of '56 but I wasn't covering politics. But I did cover part of his campaign for governor in 1962. I knew, therefore, Ron Ziegler and Bob Haldeman and others. I met Nixon and he knew who I was at that time I think. So it was just a reporter-potential governor type of relationship. I never spoke to him more than once or twice.

Q: Was there any buzz about him in the ranks of the people you dealt with pro or con?

WARREN: Well there was a lot of con. Just your mother who didn't like him. A lot of people didn't like him. He ran a tough campaign against Voorhees and a tough campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas for the senate. That was very damaging to him because not only was he destroying a Democratic icon. She happened to be a woman and it was bad. But I had become a recent convert to the Republican party at that time. Fresh in my mind was what I felt to be the excess labor union controlled Democratic party in California. I tended to side with Richard Nixon. We had a lot of conversations over lunch. I retained many of my social liberal stands as a Republican and I felt Richard Nixon was that kind of Republican even though he ran those tough campaigns.

Q: Historically he is coming through as much more of a moderate and pragmatic, and in social matters really quite a president.

WARREN: So we had a lot of conversations about it.

Q: But was there, you know one of the things of California one thinks of Hollywood and Hollywood is not necessarily the stars, it is the money people in Hollywood. Was it sort of the feeling that you have the big money people in the movies and many connected to universities as the opposition.

WARREN: Yeah it wasn't as prominent in Hollywood in those days as it later became. Richard Nixon had support among the producers and owners of companies and that sort of thing, but he had an awful lot of opposition. That was one of his targets if I can use that word. It became more serious than it was at that time. As his actions later proved, he was becoming quite angry in those days.

Q: Did the West Coast establishment which the unions were part of pay much attention to what was happening elsewhere in the United States?

WARREN: Yeah as long as it wasn't a social liberal campaign of some sort. We were very good about covering the major movements in the United States. Population shifts. We didn't cover demographic shifts because they weren't really apparent at that time. But yeah we were nationally minded and we were internationally minded as well.

Q: Well in a way there were only the San Francisco Herald...

WARREN: The Chronicle and the Examiner.

Q: ...that were not considered very internationally. They were considered rather poor papers. The Los Angeles Times and the San Diego Union seemed to have at least in my non professional opinion seemed to carry much more weight.

WARREN: Well, in terms of gravitas, I think you are accurate.

Q: What did you think about the Los Angeles Times?

WARREN: Well, it was a top newspaper even before it became a good newspaper. Tough opponents if you looked at it that way, and we did. We felt we were competing against the Times on many stories. That was well before the young publisher too over. I forgot his name.

Q: Otis Chandler.

WARREN: Yeah, he was Buffy's son. Even after he took over it was awhile before things really changed. I think if I could look into the DNA of the LA Times the whole paper began to change when the Washington bureau became serious. The Herald Tribune stopped printing in New York and somebody got into Chandler's ear and said, "Go up and hire those people and put them in the Washington bureau and you are set." That was right, and many of them went to work for Chandler in the Washington bureau and they

were very serious and very good. I think that reflected back on the newspaper as a whole as it began to take on more girth. It was slowly dropping its reputation as a company town newspaper and became very vigorous in pursuit of this.

Q: How does your connection with Washington develop?

WARREN: Interesting. I had only visited Washington once as a child with my parents and once with a girlfriend right after President Kennedy's assassination. I was at that time flying around the country selling ___ news service. I happened to be in the Washington area and this girl friend happened to be there. She was from San Francisco. One of her uncles was Paul Fay who was very close to John F. Kennedy and was Assistant Secretary of the Navy at the time. I remember having an almost all night discussion with him over scotch about John Kennedy. He convinced me of Kennedy's merit as far as a person, and American and as a leader. I didn't profess that to any great insight, but I tended to feel that way even after I found out about his philandering. But to answer your question only briefly had I experienced anything in Washington.

Q: But then what happened?

WARREN: Then I had developed a friendship with a very prominent PR professional in Los Angeles whose firm was very close to Richard Nixon's chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman. I don't remember how I met them but I did. His name was Cliff Miller, and he was pretty important in my life. When the Nixon staff was being formed after the election they were headquartered in the Pierre Hotel in New York. There was this question about Herb Klein, where to put him. What job to give him, that sort of thing. He did not want to be press secretary because he had been press secretary to the vice president. He had in his mind this job that he finally created that became the director of communications. He didn't want to be press secretary, but he was so important to Richard Nixon at that time that they had to create something for him, so they created this job. Then they named Ron Ziegler press secretary. Ron at the time was about 29, I think. He had some advertising experience under Bob Haldeman, but no journalism, none. So they thought they needed a newspaper person. They cast around and Bob called Cliff Miller in Los Angeles and said, "Can you look around and give us some suggestions. Cliff immediately said, "Well I suggest you talk to Gerry Warren." So they said, "Well get him back here," which is the way they operated. This was in December of 1968.

Q: This was the Nixon/Humphrey election.

WARREN: Quite right. So Cliff called and asked if I would be interested in talking to the Nixon people about a position of deputy press secretary for President Nixon. I was growing a little stale in my job. It was good timing for me, so I said I would be very interested. So they flew me back to New York, and I went to the Pierre Hotel. I waited. I was just there waiting to see Ziegler. He was as disorganized then as he was throughout his life. So he had a briefing. I sat in and watched his briefing. He finally went to lunch in the basement of the Pierre.

By that time I was in a turmoil. I didn't know what was going on. He talked to me. I had a salad of some sort. His own significant question, his only question of substance relating to the job was this. "Could you be loyal to me rather than Herb Klein," because he was working with Herb all of these years. I said, "Sure, if you hire me I will be loyal to you." I think I had shown that in my loyalty to publishers, even if I did not agree with them in most cases. He was convinced and said, "You are in. I am going to announce you this afternoon." I said, "You can't do that. For one I have to talk to my bosses, and more importantly I have got to talk to my wife. More importantly than that you have to talk to the boss." So he took me up and I met John Ehrlichman for the first time. I had known Haldeman slightly as a reporter knows a representative of a candidate. Ron said, "This is my guy for deputy press secretary. I think he should see the President." So they talked to me and they were testing the same ground that he had tested. My loyalty to Herb Klein. I guess they were convinced so they took me in to Richard Nixon and introduced me. He said, "Well, I know Gerry." So we talked about southern California. We didn't talk anything of substance. He said, "Fine, fine," and told Haldeman to go ahead. So I got on the phone and talked to my editor. I was assistant managing editor at the time which was a created job, a nothing job. I was terribly discontent. So I talked to the editor who was my former city editor and the publisher's representative who was a navy captain, I got on a conference call and told them what was happening. I told them of the undue speed in this process but that it was going on and it was going to be announced in this afternoon. This was right after lunch, maybe 1:00, so it was still quite early in San Diego. The navy Captain was a very wise guy. His loyalty was to Jim Copley and to make sure that nothing appeared in the San Diego Union that would embarrass Jim Copley among his friends. He did that well, but he was a former newspaper man and he knew what was going on. He said, "Let me give you some advice. Don't take anything personally. Don't get mad. You are going to get mad but keep it inside, and keep your relationships. Don't burn any bridges." I found that to be the best advice anybody gave me before I went to Washington. So that is how I was hired.

Q: OK this might be a good place to stop. I do want to ask you, you are moving on to your job in Washington. But did you see any issues or anything that was thrown up that you might see that you might not be able to go with Nixon?

WARREN: No, none of that. As a matter of fact it was just the opposite. He was the most strategic minded and experienced man to move into the office for a very long time and none since have been as experienced or as strategic minded as he was. He formed task forces on the domestic side and on the national security side and they churned up the issues. Then he got people who were expert to write pieces on those issues. He went over them and said, "I don't agree with this but I do agree with that." He was very pragmatic. Almost progressive in his views. He put out two books in the campaign, Nixon on the issues foreign and domestic, two separate books. I thought sure this is great. He is going to be fine. Regardless of his past this is going to be fine. I had no trouble with Richard Nixon at that time.

Q: Now as a Foreign Service officer Nixon came across very nicely. I mean in my oral histories his time as vice president he was a very solid and he knew his theme. George W Bush was another one.

WARREN: George H.W. Bush.

Q: Yes, George Herbert Walker Bush. He was the sort of person you could send out to confront somebody and you know they knew their territory.

WARREN: Well he of course was a Nixon man and Nixon got him started in his progression. Remember, as Vice President Richard Nixon had to represent Dwight Eisenhower overseas a lot because of Eisenhower's illnesses. So he went to a lot of funerals, and he didn't waste time. He met with the in party and met with the foreign and prime ministers and with the opposing person, so he got views from both sides. In private practice of law between 1956 and 1968 he traveled a lot and continued to make contacts.

Q: Again and again I have interviewed people who were, say, ambassadors in various places and Nixon came through. Many people were treating Nixon as though he was old news and all, but basically they came away very impressed, because he would sit down with a legal pad and fill it up with all sorts of the right questions to ask and all.

WARREN: He was well prepared. In foreign affairs he was very well prepared. Unknown to the body politic he was equally prepared in domestic areas.

Q: It is a shame but basically personal traits, not nasty but paranoia or whatever you would call it.

WARREN: Loyalty. Loyalty to John Mitchell.

As many famous quotations were. It started out as a list of people that the president did not want invited to White House functions. Rose Mary Woods, his private secretary, kept that list because all of the invitees, people who were proposed to be invited went to her. She had to approve or disapprove. So it wasn't an enemies list to begin with. As the Watergate issue developed there were a lot of enemies on the list, but there were a lot of other people on the list as well.

Q: Were you aware of them?

WARREN: No, I was not aware of that list until much later.

Q: Were there any sort of idiosyncrasies dealing with Nixon and the media and all that you had to be aware of?

WARREN: Well the fact that he didn't make small talk. He didn't know how to do that. That was a problem when he tried to schmooze with the reporters. I remember the first New Years Eve he asked Ron who asked me to put together a small group of reporters to

go over the EOB the Executive Office Building office of the president for drinks and conversation. That was done and Manolo Sanchez, his valet, mixed the martinis. Apparently they were quite good. I didn't have one. There were people there, the wire service, Helen Thomas from UPI, Frank Cormier from AP, who the president had a great deal of respect for throughout the administration, throughout Watergate. I think he held them in some different niche of respect. As a matter of fact, Helen's marriage to Doug Cornell, who was an AP reporter at the White House, the announcement was made by Mrs. Nixon. The wedding was in the White House. Helen didn't become a patsy for the President at all. I mean she was tough throughout, bless her heart.

Q: Were there any personalities including Helen who sort of stood out as people with their own opinions and all?

WARREN: Well there were a lot of them. Most of them as a matter of fact. But there were some stand out reporters. John Osborn of New Republic was admired and respected by all the press corps, as was the man from Chicago, not the Tribune but the Sun Times or Daily News, and I can't think of his name now. I will fill it in later. He had a high respect. The Time Magazine White House specialist was highly respected and stood out. So those people were the sort of stars of the White House press corps. The irritants in the press corps hadn't developed.

Q: I was wondering whether there were people who you almost had to keep the president away from?

WARREN: No but there were people I had to keep away from the president. That was my job. When we took a pool into the Oval Office for the signing of a bill or some such ceremony, I would often be told don't take Sarah McClendon for example in there. Don't let her on the pool. There was another man from the Long Island newspaper who was a good friend of mine. He was kept out. He was kept out of the China Trip as well.

Q: What had they done?

WARREN: They had written things. The president got a news summary every morning. Pat Buchanan the speech writer then was in charge of that newsletter. He found negative pieces by reporters and he mentioned those in the news report the president got every morning. So he knew who was after him, so to speak.

Q: Well did you feel as you were there at the beginning of the presidency, many of the relationships and attitudes towards Nixon had been established long before, but did you see a tide sort of turning against the president or was it already there?

WARREN: During the 1968 campaign some of them had really wooed the press and I thought did a pretty good job. So he had developed, friendships is not the word, but a level of respect with many in the press corps that later was dissipated by Watergate.

Q: Well before the Watergate, did you feel that the president was doing all right or pretty good or not so good on major issues like Vietnam?

WARREN: Well the staff, to a person I think all thought he was doing a splendid job. He just didn't deal with Vietnam he dealt with school segregation in the South. He arranged the Charlotte Mecklenburg Agreement that ended segregation in elementary schools. President Johnson had taken care of the high schools and the colleges. So the elementary schools had to be dealt with and the president did that. The president established the EPA. He had a string of domestic successes as well as his foreign policy preoccupations.

Q: Was there a feeling of the south was up for play as far as domestically?

WARREN: Well, politically, certainly. That was quite evident to me and I think to the press corps. There was the general opinion the Southern Strategy. The choice of Spiro Agnew as vice president was part of that. He was from a border state. Maryland was a border state in those days. I wouldn't call it that now. I will just tell you a little bit about the announcement of the Charlotte Mecklenburg agreement. I was given one paragraph to announce this with no back up and no answers to the follow up questions. All I could do was to refer to that one paragraph, and it was very awkward. I think that was because of the Southern Strategy. I think it was because he didn't want to offend those in the South who were opposed to this.

Q: Well did you find that when the president would make his speech or do something you were part of a group that was sitting around trying to fine tune things to keep the south, the white south happy?

WARREN: No, I wasn't a part of anything like that, and I wasn't aware of that going on either.

Q: Well it was a very difficult thing. I know when Johnson was working on his civil rights campaign he used Mrs. Johnson, Lady Bird to go to the south and talk feeling the southerners would be less offensive towards a lady than towards him.

WARREN: I am sure there were folks on the White House staff and were in the administration, cabinet officers and sub cabinet officers, who were not sent to the south to make speeches or announcements because the reaction to them would have been negative. So that went on. That was arranged by the domestic council. I am sure if any group sat around fine tuning the president's position on any issue it would have been the domestic council or the national security council.

Q: So how would you pick up. Let's do the domestic side first?

WARREN: Well at the beginning of the administration I would pick up on that by accident or when I was issued one paragraph about Charlotte Mecklenburg which was not enough. As time went on I developed friendships with members of the domestic council staff who would call me from time to time and tip me on things. Everything that went to

the president from that staff went through one office. I developed a working relationships with a man in that office who would tip me and I would say send me a copy. Often he did, so we were prepared.

Q: How about on since my organization is a foreign affairs oriented group, how about how did you handle the foreign press? What priority was given to it.

WARREN: Early on not much. Then we realized the importance of the foreign press and I was assigned to deal with them and take some extraordinary steps to meet their needs and exceed their needs. But they generally met their schedule thanks to the protocol office in the State Department. The protocol office would assign somebody to the foreign press and they would get them to the White House on time and wherever else they had to go for a signing or a speech. So the foreign press we learned quickly was very important.

Q: Did we have a close or reserved relationship say with the British press and all?

WARREN: Well the British press is sui generis. It kind of stands alone. It is going to be cocky and snippy at anybody.

Q: Certainly including its own.

WARREN: Oh of course. It took pleasure in publicizing and making ridiculous some of the little mistakes we made on that first trip and on others. We always went on our round the world trips and we always stopped in Poland or Romania or one of the Eastern Bloc countries. Then we would stop in England. We were at Middelndorf Air Force Base which was U.S. Property at that time. There was a whole hangar full of the press, and they were pretty raucous. My job was to correct the text of the president's remarks with the prime minister in advance to make sure that no mistakes were made and that it was handed out. The problem was we had a court reporter who was oriented towards the past. The prime minister at the time was Harold Macmillan. He typed at the top of the transcript, Remarks of the President with Prime Minister Harold Wilson who was Labour. Macmillan was Tory. That just erupted in the hangar where the press was working. I could hear it. I was two to three cubicles away. I got back as many as I cold and we corrected it and we sent out a new one. It was handled but in many newspapers there was mention of this.

Q: What about the French press?

WARREN: Well that depended a lot on the president of France at the time and on the event. After that first trip to Paris our next trip was for de Gaulle's funeral. The president was effusive about praising General de Gaulle and his accomplishments. The press corps during the funeral period was muted and respectful. The next time we went, after the de Gaulle's Funeral, was for Pompidou's funeral because he died rather quickly. Then it was a different atmosphere. There was respect and somberness for the de Gaulle memorial service. For Pompidou's funeral in Paris itself and among the French press there was jocularity. They didn't know this guy. They didn't really owe him anything. He was here and he was there and they were going to bury him. President Nixon picked up on that.

Paris shut down for de Gaulle's funeral service but for Pompidou's funeral it went on with business as usual. The President found himself campaigning again. He worked the crowd in Paris before and after the funeral. He made one of his famous gaffes on that occasion. Here we were in Paris for Pompidou's funeral. The president spoke to the people who wanted to meet him and greet him. He at one point said, "This is a great day for Paris." Well it wasn't a great day for Pompidou.

Q: Well did you feel there was any difference between our relationship as transmitted through Nixon between our relationship with France and England, or Great Britain?

WARREN: Well the president respected the tradition of a special relationship with England. He was still developing a relationship with France that had been fractured by President Johnson. So there was a difference, but actually the French press were more respectful than the British. Everybody was more respectful of the British press.

Q: Well in many ways I think that Nixon and his approach to things which was much more you might say theoretical and sort of almost French looking at things in a strategic way and all. Maybe that didn't translate.

WARREN: No, I don't think theoretical is the right word. He was pragmatic and he had a strategic plan whenever he went to Europe, but I don't think that ever caused problems between the leaders of the countries.

Q: How about the role of Henry Kissinger? Did this give you problems or not, or did he jump into the spotlight too often or not?

WARREN: Well that happened. But early on my biggest problem was understanding what he was saying because of the low guttural pronunciation of his, Kissinger. So I would have to correct the transcript of his remarks and I would have to listen to a tape over and over again to make sure I was getting it correctly. I didn't want to make a mistake with Kissinger.

Q: Did you have any feel for Nixon and how he related to various countries?

WARREN: I wasn't privy to any formal discussions by the National Security Council or staff, but it would come to me by my network. I had built up a network over the years. It was clear that Madame Nehru didn't like him and he didn't like her either. Our visit to Delhi in some year in July, I will have to look it up, was somewhat of a disaster. We landed at high noon. It was 115 on the tarmac and a slight rain was falling. Madam Nehru said in her welcome remarks, "Mr. President you have come to India at the wrong time of the year and the wrong hour," and the meeting went downhill from there.

Q: Did you go on any trip to the Soviet Union?

WARREN: All of them. I mean both of them.

Q: How did they go?

WARREN: The first one was smooth. Brezhnev was welcoming. He was interested in the glow of the SALT treaty. He was very welcoming and everybody who dealt with the press in the press office was respectful and warm. We were given certain privileges that were somewhat unique. The next trip which just preceded Nixon's resignation was just the opposite. They were cold and not helpful at all. On that first trip though I must say the security forces didn't share that feeling of camaraderie and respect. They treated our press corps and Mrs. Nixon very badly. My press advance man was arrested and was being taken off before the embassy interceded.

Q: Do you have the feeling that we, were you getting anything from the embassy and press people saying why they were doing this?

WARREN: It was just the way they were. That is the way they operated. They really didn't like the press, especially the press following an American president because we required certain things that other people didn't. When he went somewhere we wanted the press over here. The security people would rather have the press out of there. So it was a constant battle.

Q: What about the Middle East? Was this at the time this was not as dangerous a place was it?

WARREN: Oh yeah, '73 war. It was pretty dangerous. The president did not visit the Middle East until 1974 just before he resigned.

Q: That is when Nasser died wasn't it.

WARREN: When Nasser died we were on a trip to Italy. We could have very easily diverted but he didn't do it because of his respect for Israel and fear of tipping the balance of the United States' relationship with Israel. In those days between 1969 and 1974 Henry Kissinger was our highest ranking officer to visit Israel. He did a lot as you know in the shuttle diplomacy.

Q: How did our embassies and our ambassadors and all did they play much of a role in these foreign trips in your perspective?

WARREN: Unfortunately they didn't play enough of a role. Our advance team, both the press advance team and the President's advance team, would go in and meet with embassy staff and say these are our requirements. The staff often would say you can't do that because that would offend the French or whomever. Our people would say we are going to do it. We are going to do it. That turned off a lot of Foreign Service officers over the time.

Q: When you say we are going to do this was there much thought was it getting up the backbone or was it arrogance or professional need or what?

WARREN: It was a need arrogantly expressed. The President wanted to go to certain places and speak to certain groups and the embassy had their list as to where the president should go. Now that is not what the White House staff wanted or the president. So there was a clash in almost every country we visited.

Q: Did you get involved in any of these things?

WARREN: No I didn't. Only in the aftermath. When I would need something from my counterpart in the embassy it was sometimes a dicey proposition because they were offended and I understand. Their wishes were to make this a smooth visit of the American President to their country and not ruffle any feathers. The White House, their agenda was to ruffle feathers if necessary.

Q: Was this necessary though?

WARREN: No, but those who planned the president's progress through these countries thought it was and those are the ones who prevailed.

Q: In many of the oral histories I do so often they talk about the early years after a president has been selected and say these are campaign workers often in their early 20's and full of themselves.

WARREN: Oh, no question.

Q: And would go around speaking saying well the White House wants this, you know the normal replay should be I have never talked to a white house before.

WARREN: That would have been Garry Trudeau's response.

Q: What did you find within the press side of things the ability to sort of intrude the real world and let's figure out what our overall goal is rather than to just annoy people.

WARREN: Well the overall goal of the White House staff was what the president wanted. That often is not what the ambassador wanted.

Q: I would think that the president wanted goodwill when you go to Belgium or whatever country it is. I take it this is...

WARREN: He wanted goodwill with the prime minister or president whomever he was visiting. He didn't necessarily think much about goodwill in the embassy.

Q: Yeah but usually the embassy wants goodwill with the people. They are not trying to prove something themselves. Did you sense sort of tension when the White House went to a country with the embassy. I have heard it described by saying one presidential visit is equivalent to one earthquake.

WARREN: Well I am sure it was. We disrupted their routine. We disrupted their concept of wonderful relationship between the two countries. To achieve what the president wanted to achieve. That was number one for the White House staff. If they had to roll the embassy staff, they would.

Q: Did you have any problems with demonstrations against the president in various countries?

WARREN: Oh yeah. Right now I can't give you any examples, but that happened and we would try to explain it away in our press briefings, but we were never very successful.

Q: Well did you feel the press and the media were getting more hostile, the foreign press, as the Nixon administration continued?

WARREN: Well I think they reflected the hostility of the U.S. Press corps following the president, but the hostility didn't reach the level that it reached here in the United States which was something.

Q: How would you describe your role in the...

WARREN: My role was the care and feeding of the White House press corps and to make sure they got where they needed to go to view the president signing something or meeting with people, this group or that. The folks who went out with the press corps would deal with me as well as the press secretary. My role was to make sure the press office was functioning properly, to make sure transcripts were done. I edited them to make them as correct as possible. So that was pretty much my role. It was the care and feeding of the press corps.

Q: I am just trying to think of were there any as the Watergate business developed, did that change everything?

WARREN: Not everything. There was still some level of respect among the foreign press, but as I said earlier the foreign press pretty much reflected the animosity of the U.S. Press corps against the president. But it didn't rise to the level of hatred.

Q: Was Henry Kissinger, how did that work out? What was your observation of the relationship between Kissinger and Nixon?

WARREN: I thought it was very close and it proved to be. I saw no friction between the president and Mr. Kissinger both when Mr. Kissinger was national security adviser or secretary of state. None. There might have been some but I didn't see it.

Q: What about with Haldeman and Ehrlichman?

WARREN: A lot of friction between Haldeman and Kissinger particularly. A lot.

Q: Was this personality or...

WARREN: I don't know how much personality played into it. Well to a certain extent. I remember one time Henry was being accused by somebody in the press of doing something that wasn't right. I can't really express it because I can't remember it that well. I do know that Henry went to Bob Haldeman and said, "You have got to support me on this. The White House has to support me." Haldeman wouldn't do it. After that Henry started his own campaign, meeting with significant reporters trying to calm the waters and trying to bring his prestige back up to the level it was before.

Q: Did you get the feeling later on that Kissinger and Nixon were sort of two evil Warlocks or something plotting.

WARREN: In my estimation the Watergate events were triggered by the Pentagon Papers. I felt that was irrational that we reacted so violently to that because it didn't reflect on the Nixon administration but reflected on the State Department. That concerned Henry very much. So Henry and Nixon said we have to get those folks. That is when the wire tapping began and that is when they decided to plug the leaks. How do you plug the leaks? You get a plumber. We brought in some very bad plumbers.

Q: This is a thing that strikes one when you can't end covert activities. I think this is true of any country unless it is a complete dictatorship. These are always done so badly.

WARREN: Quite right. It is almost Biblical. You can't keep anything secret.

Q: And at a certain point if you learn to either pass it off or something but acknowledge or try to dismiss something but don't keep trying to follow through on it.

WARREN: Well this was so important to Henry and it became so important to the president that they were going to follow through on it no matter what.

Q: Well it still keeps coming back all the time. I mean the reaction to things. It always gets the administration into trouble.

WARREN: No question. It is the cover up. How often have you heard that. It is not the act, it is the cover up.

Q: Did you feel this at the time?

WARREN: I felt the results of it. I didn't know about the cover up. I wasn't privy to any of the details. They didn't tell me those details because they were afraid I might spill them to the press. So the hierarchy in the White house had the view the less we tell Warren the better. So they didn't tell me much.

Q: Did you find yourself of a more liberal mind than the group close around the president?

WARREN: Good question. I would have to say yes. There was a difference between our views on the press corps and how they should be handled. I thought I needed to protect the president as much as possible but to do it in a respectful way. Many of the hierarchy forgot the respect.

Q: Did you feel that the people around the president were telling the president the truth on what was going on or did he really know what was going on?

WARREN: I have no way to answer that. I wasn't privy to those conversation. They might have distorted things, but I don't think they could withhold things from the president because it was well known. All of these attacks were well known.

Q: Did you get that the president as more and more came out and all was shown to have racial or other types of nastiness, being a nasty person? Did you have the feeling the president was really pretty bad?

WARREN: No. Those of us who had contact with the public through the press, I am talking now about the speechwriters and the press office, we kept our loyalty to President Nixon and what he was trying to accomplish. We had no information that would lead us to think that the president was bad or not bad. Just as an aside, you mentioned the racial aspect. I think it would be very interesting to see the tapes if there had been any, of other presidents. Kennedy's tapes, I would love to see those. I don't know what you would see on the Johnson tape. But you go back through modern history and I would guess that most presidents would have said certain things they didn't want the public to know about.

Q: Well I think this is true of people here at the Goodwin House the retirement home. We say things, I say things all the time.

WARREN: Me too.

Q: If you want to call it racial profiling or something like that.

WARREN: Stereotypical of groups. I know what you are saying.

Q: Well then how long were you with Nixon?

WARREN: Throughout his term until he resigned.

Q: How would you say the circle around you how did they view his departure?

WARREN: You mean within the White House staff or in the press?

Q: Take the White House staff and then we will go to the press.

WARREN: Well the White House staff was sympathetic to the president until the end. The farewell speech which was derided as maudlin by the press and other derogatory terms, the White House staff was moved by that. I am still moved by it.

Q: I was too. I mean I understand where he was coming from.

WARREN: Yeah, he said something there Every White House staff should print out and put on the wall. "Whatever you do, don't hate. The ones you hate will come back," and whatever. I can't quote it today. That is such good advice.

Q: Was there a sense of jubilation within the press corps?

WARREN: No. I don't know how much of that was respect for us on the staff because we were stricken. There might have been private jubilation. I am sure there was, not only on the press corps but on the hill as well. But I didn't know about it.

Q: Did you get involved in the Watergate business at all?

WARREN: No, not until the very end when the transcript of the tape of the June 23rd meeting was released. That was within ten days of the resignation. That was the so-called smoking gun tape. It was then and only then that I knew of the President's complicity in trying to cover up this matter. It was plain on that tape. That was like a punch in the gut. You know you hold up hope that the man you worked for so tirelessly, well not tirelessly, but so hard for 5 ½ years would somehow survive this, but he didn't of course.

Q: So then when he left what did you do?

WARREN: Well I didn't do anything. I was in a comatose state almost. I did go over and view the swearing in of Gerald Ford. I had my wife come in for his speech to the staff. Then she went back and I was invited to the swearing in. I called my wife and she came back downtown. We went to that and then I went back to the office and continued to clear out my desk. I didn't know what to do or where to do it. They had given me an office on the third floor of the old executive office building charged with liaison between what was the western White House and the Ford administration. That turned out to be listening to tirades from Ziegler on the phone. Just tirades. I respect his gifts. I respect his attempt to serve the country, but he had some problems.

Q: Well did your opinion change of Ehrlichman and Haldeman?

WARREN: Haldeman and I turned out to be pretty good friends before he died. John and I became good friends and then we became somewhat estranged as he was more vocal with his discontent with the president.

Q: What did you do?

WARREN: Well I sat around in that office. I called the cabinet one by one asking for portraits, you know, signed pictures, and I got them. They were heartwarming. Then the new Press Secretary, Jerry terHorst asked me to stay as a behind the scenes counselor to him. Which I tried to be. Nessen made it more official. He said, You stay. You do the Herb Klein job without the title. So I was in effect director of communications without portfolio. I had Herb's old office in the old executive office building and we were rather a productive little staff over there.

Q: How long did this last?

WARREN: One year. Then Helen Copley, who had succeeded her late husband as publisher of the Union Tribune, offered me the job of editor of the San Diego Union, a job that I could not possibly turn down. And it was time. We were coming up, this was 1975, late summer, coming up on a campaign. I did not want to go through another campaign. So I accepted with alacrity and told Nessen what was going on. I met with Mr. Ford and told him. He and I, by the way, had a wonderful relationship. I credit him with saving my reputation by asking me to stay on staff. He protected me. He protected me from the Nixon haters on the Ford Staff, and I appreciate that very much.

Q: I want to say there must have been real division between the Nixon people and the Ford people in that period of a year.

WARREN: Well not quite a year. Haig stayed as chief of staff and then Rumsfeld came in and Haig went back to the army. Rumsfeld stopped that inter-agency warfare. Then President Ford began to move around or dismiss many of those people who were causing the problems. It was not just in the White House, it was leaks to the press and that sort of thing. So the staff close to President Ford changed rather considerably. It didn't take Rumsfeld very long.

Q: Did you feel that after Nixon left that the White House was sort of floundering for a bit?

WARREN: Well, yes. Understandably. We floundered when we moved in, but no more. The transition was rather smooth.

Q: Well then you were with the Union for how long?

WARREN: Well I had been with the Union for 12 years before I went to the White House. Then I was editor of the paper for 20 years. This was 1975 to 1995.

Q: The press has changed so dramatically over the last 15 years. Was this a period of you seeing a great change in newspapers at this time?

WARREN: Oh yeah. Our newspaper changed immensely. We grew; we became more liberal; we became more inclusive. We began to repair relationships with the black community and the Hispanic community. We strengthened our coverage of Washington.

Our bureau was strengthened. We became more robust and we grew accordingly I was happy to see.

Q: With the Hispanic and Black communities were you presiding over certain changes and all that were taking part?

WARREN: One of the things that I told Mrs. Copley that had to be done was to try to repair the breach with the Black community and with the Hispanic community. So I arranged meetings with certain groups, church groups and civic groups. I told them what our policies were going to be. We were going to be open to all races and achievements by the black community were going to be reported on as achievements of the white community were reported on. There would be no separation. Well, they were very skeptical. But over the years we proved to do that and when I left in 1995 I thought our relationship was in very good shape.

Q: It must have been quite a change to all of a sudden run obituaries.

WARREN: Exactly. Run a feature story with them, with a picture of a Black family or a Black individual or student. In the old days, and I remember this when I was city editor, in order to get your picture in the San Diego Union if you were Black, you had to be a star athlete or a criminal. I hate to say it, but that is the way it was.

Q: Were you getting new reporters?

WARREN: Oh yeah, we strengthened the staff a lot. It was small and not very flexible when we took over and it became large and very flexible and knowledgeable.

Q: What sort of a foreign branch did you have?

WARREN: We concentrated on Latin America, and so we had a bureau in Tijuana and a bureau in Mexico City. We had no other foreign bureaus. We couldn't justify it on our budget.

Q: Did you rely on other newspapers, the Post and the Times?

WARREN: The Times particularly. It was awhile before I got the Post service, but the New York Times service we had from the start, and that was very helpful.

Q: Was southern California changing much or is it....

WARREN: Oh boy it changed immensely over those 20 years in terms of growth, in terms of demographics, political strength of the various parties. Everything changed.

Q: I was thinking of where I used to live, San Marino and all became very much moving from the right to the left.

WARREN: Well San Diego did too. A large Hispanic community was offended by the governor of California who was heavily supporting a proposition that would have stopped Mexican children who were not born in the United States from going to high school for example. That offended the Hispanic community and the Republican party has never come to terms with that. They just don't have any relationship at all. So that was one element. The second element was the University of California San Diego at La Jolla was established at that early period. So that brought in some very liberal minded professors. Brilliant.

Q: Was there a battle in California for dominant paper/

WARREN: Oh yeah. You may or may not remember the Los Angeles Times decided to take over San Diego. They sent a bureau down, a very strong bureau. The feeling among the editors was no matter how we had grown and how we had represented the area including the minorities we were a pretty mediocre paper and they were going to push us around. Well they sent all these people down and we took the challenge and we ran them out of town.

Q: How did you do that?

WARREN: They didn't build any circulation. They were spending millions on this bureau and had no way to support it. Otis Chandler, the publisher of the Times, made the correct decision that this was a waste of money, so they pulled everybody out but two or three.

Q: OK, well, maybe this is a good place to stop. I want to thank you very much.

WARREN: I appreciate that.

End of interview