

HOTFOOT #54 -- Margot Perot, November 20, 1981

KF: I met Mrs. Bouvler today and Emily Bayloff, and spent some time with Ruthie.

MP: She's nice.

KF: Yes, I made her cry. But I bet I won't be able to make you cry.

MP: No way.

KF: All right. Tell me when and where you were born.

MP: I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, November 15th, 1933.

KF: Tell me about your parents. What did your father do?

MP: He was a banker. This was just about the time of the depression, of course. He was in the same bank with his father. He was the president of a bank, of the Hazelwood Savings and Trust Company in Pittsburgh. It was a sort of suburban bank. We grew up -- or rather I was born in very prosperous conditions I guess you would say. Lots of servants. So I hear. I was just a baby. After that there was the closing of the bank, the depression. That could have happened before. It didn't affect my father. I was about two or three years old and his bank was closed . . . And so we moved to a small town outside of Pittsburgh, and that's

MP (CONTD): where I really grew up, in a town called Greensburg.

KF: And what did your father do after the bank closing?

MP: He was with another bank. He wasn't very happy there. And then when I was about 12, he began losing his eyesight. He had detached retinas in both eyes at the time. He eventually became blind. About that time when he was having failing eyesight he landed in the advertising business, a firm called Brown & Bigwell. And it was a very fortunate thing. He liked to sell. He found that very . . . He had a very outgoing personality and it was something he really enjoyed doing; and it was such a complete switch from what he had been doing. He, as it turned out, this was a wonderful thing for him because he could keep on working even after he was blind. He had somebody drive for him, and he visited businesses and talked about their advertising. The company sold everything from calendars to leather goods for gifts, and just all kinds of small things like that. So that's how he _____.

KF: So you started off prosperous.

MP: I always had a very comfortable upbringing. My mother had inherited a substantial amount of money. I went to private women's colleges and lived well but not wealthy.

KF: Were you first in the family? First child?

MP: No, I'm last. I have four older sisters.

KF: Just the five girls. Okay.

MP: I would say it's a very close family, very happy family. I remember nothing but happiness. Except my father's problem.

KF: What kind of things did you do together as a family?

MP: For a while we lived out in the country, out from town, on six acres. There were farms all around us, although my father didn't farm. It was a wonderful place to grow up with woods and fields and gardens . . . So I remember being far enough away from my friends, and my sisters were in the same situation. We had each other to play with when we were young, and that was the good fun . . . We had so much fun together and we still talk about things we did.

KF: Did you learn about pictures at home? Painting? Or did that come later?

MP: My mother was always very interested in them. Although I don't say that I'm so knowledgeable. I've always been interested. She was very interested in taking us places -- museums. We went to Pittsburgh . . . She liked music, I think really music was more her . . . She loved the opera. She played the piano. We all sang around the piano. It was wonderful.

KF: Were you clever in school?

MP: I did well in school. I was always on the honor roll till I went to college, and I think I had other kinds of

MP (contd):

interests there. I slipped a little bit in college.

KF: Where did you go to college?

MP: I went to Galisher College, which is where my mother went, in Baltimore, and my older sisters. That's a woman's college of about 750 students. It has now about _____ . Small liberal arts.

KF: What did you major in?

MP: Sociology and anthropology. Which is peculiar now.

KF: That was well ahead of the times. What made you interested in that?

MP: When I was a sophomore in college I remember thinking that I wanted to do social work. I wanted to do something for other people. I was very lofty and I was very idealistic and very . . . The courses were very interesting. The professors were good and Baltimore was a city with typical big city problems. And so we had lots of field trips . . . It just interested me then more . . . I have really lost interest in being a social worker, and particularly after I met Ross and we were going to be married. That was not exactly the kind of career. I think if I had remained unmarried for a long time I might have gone into that. Instead when I graduated from college I taught school.

KF: Tell me how you met Ross.

MP: I met at him at the Naval Academy, and a very good friend who was going out with a good friend of his, she said, "You must meet _____. You'll like him so much." I said, "No. I won't have another blind date." Freshman year in college you just do that kind of thing so much. Thank you, never again. But she prevailed. She said, "Come with me. I'm going down there this weekend and there's an away football game." Normally when you go to the Naval Academy you're there for the whole weekend, from Saturday morning until Sunday afternoon. And she said, "Now this is different. They're going to be away for an away football game, the whole brigade goes and comes back." She said, "We won't be there until Saturday evening; and if you don't like him, you can leave first thing Sunday morning." I said, "Oh, all right." But, of course, when I met him we had such a good time . . . We went to a dance that night. I stayed the whole day the next day. And there are a lot of interesting things to do at the Naval Academy.

KF: What was appealing about him as a young man?

MP: He was so funny. He had the best sense of humor of anybody I ever met. I would laugh so hard. That's what I remember when I look back. I say far more now . . . He's much more serious now than he used to be, although he still plays practical jokes. But he really said the funniest things. He was so different from anybody I'd ever known. He was the first Texan I'd ever known. He just had a very different sense of humor. He loved to laugh and joke. He was much more outgoing.

MP (CONTD): He was so different from anybody I'd ever visualized that I was going to fall in love with. Really, it was a surprise. But I remember thinking the first day I met him that I'd love to live in a ranch in Texas some time. I started thinking about, in those terms.

KF: He had you half way up the aisle by then. He had you thinking like that.

MP: Isn't that funny? I don't know he knows.

KF: How soon after that did you get married?

MP: A long time after that. I was really awfully young. I was only 18, which made me -- It was young for me. It took me a while to grow up and mature. I'd never been away from home much, and I really wasn't . . . The last thing I thought I would do would be get married very young. I had thought I wanted to travel and have a career and do all these things long before I'd be married. He was a senior. He graduated the year I met him, and so he immediately went on a ten-month cruise around the world on a destroyer. So I didn't see him at all.

KF: But you wrote.

MP: Um-hmm.

KF: Does he write good letters?

MP: Wonderful letters. And I still have them. Much to his chagrin. He just hates the thought that those letters are

MP (CONTD): around.

KF: Really? Why? Are they too romantic?

MP: Some. Some are romantic. Not so much that as I think he just thinks they're just sort of revealing. _____

_____. You know how you think back, and "Oh what did I say back then?" I don't think anything specific.

KF: And when you read those things you sound so young to yourself. So you got married . . . Now, it was after he finished in the Navy, was it?

MP: We were married in 1956, and he had one more year. We moved to Rhode Island, the Quonset Naval Air Station, where he was living. He was living on a ship, of course. When we were married we had an apartment, and again I taught school. I taught school one year before we were married at a boys school in Baltimore. Then we were married and I taught school in the public schools. _____. A lot of moody children.

KF: Did you teach a particular subject?

MP: No. I taught the fifth grade. I was coming in in October, and so I really filled in the fifth grade, and then later taught the second grade. Then he got out of the navy, in June of 1957. So we were only there a few months.

KF: And he went to work for IBM. And became rather a good salesman. Now what were those early years like?

MP: Very happy, particularly the first year in the Navy. That was fun. That was so carefree. There were so many people our age and we had a wonderful time. Some friends of mine went to Bermuda, flew to Bermuda to meet the ship one time, and that was fun. Three or four days. You know, just a nice carefree thing to do. It was always exciting to go on board the ship. Of course they were away a lot. This was during the Suez crisis. I don't remember when the . . . 1956, and so the ship was sent out about eight weeks, and we had no idea of when it was coming back. So many of the children in my class had fathers on the ship. Other teachers had husbands on the ship. It was such a big aircraft thing. So it was a very exciting time. That's a very romantic time . . . you write him and you don't know when he's coming back, and then the band playing on the pier and all the children and wives waiting for the ship to come in. It was all very fun even though the period he was gone was difficult. I missed him, but there were a lot of Navy wives and do things that were fun. Made the time pass quickly.

KF: How did you feel when he left _____ to stop EBS?

MP: I guess he took a chance in a way, and yet he had a job with Blue Cross. He was managing their whole data processing department, so he was doing that with the understanding that he was also starting his own business. He was doing that part time, and that provided an income. So it's not, as some people very abruptly start something. You were always very comfortable financially.

KF: It didn't feel like taking a huge, great risk to you at the time.

MP: That's right. We had two children at that time. In fact, we had saved money. We always did. We were rather careful, particularly when we were young. I remember how we spent _____ money, save it, and be very practical, with two small children. I saved my salary from teaching. In fact, when he left IBM we went off to Hawaii for a couple of weeks. Had a wonderful vacation. So we certainly weren't too frugal there. We had no real money worries.

KF: You didn't have real hard times.

MP: No.

KF: That's nice. Okay. Let's talk about when this Iranian adventure started. You knew most of what was going on most of the time.

MP: Um-hmm.

KF: You knew that Simons was here in this training.

MP: Yes. He said very little, but I knew he was here. I think he hated to even tell anybody, but I knew it and young Ross knew it. I vaguely knew that they were out at the lake doing something. I didn't realize though they were collecting all the material till later. I didn't know just quite the extent of operations until it was over. _____ here for a good reason.

KF: Now before Ross went to Teheran, you spent a weekend in London together. Is that right?

MP: Um-hmm.

KF: Right before he went to Istanbul?

MP: The sequence of events as I remember it is that he got a call in Vail that the men were in prison. He was really upset and left immediately to go home. And that's when he made the arrangements with Frank Simons, I think, just because . . . the third plan in case all their negotiations fell through. I stayed in Vail with the children that week after Christmas. Then we came home and I don't remember much until, for the next two weeks. Of course, he was busy with Colonel Simonsen. The usual routine here. Then he said he was going to Iran; he told me he was going to Iran. He didn't tell the children because they were seeing nightly television newscasts about the turmoil over there. He said, "Don't worry. I won't take any risks." So I really didn't.

KF: You really didn't worry?

MP: I didn't worry much. It was . . . I had that terrible sort of knot in my stomach knowing he was gone, and just that uneasy feeling. When he said he wasn't going to take any risks, I really believed him. I didn't realize quite what he did go through then, and the risks he did take. I talked to him on the phone I'm pretty sure. I was talking to

MP (CONTD): him regularly, which made me feel _____.

He called and said he might go to London, and he may come home, that he may go back to Iran. So he said there's nothing going on right now. Let's meet in London. And so I left in the middle of the week and we were there three or four days. I'm not quite sure how long we were. Then after that I went on a cruise with my mother, which we'd planned for months.

KF: After the three days in London, where did Ross go?

MP: He came back here.

KF: And then it was a little later he went to Turkey.

MP: That brings us up to about the first week of February, and I was gone that week with my mother and a friend and her mother. We came back about the 9th. And it was the 11th. I remember when I got back, I always hated to bringing up about Paul and Bill because I knew it was on his mind all the time. But I remember one Saturday night, that Saturday night when I had come home. I said, "How are things? What's happening?" He said, "It's supposed to be tomorrow." And he really said it and just . . . I was very tense. This was not like him at all. You could tell he was just very uneasy. And the next thing I knew . . .

KF: Had you come home that Saturday?

MP: Friday.

KF: You came home on Friday.

MP: And the next thing I knew he woke with a telephone call on Sunday morning. We were in bed, I remember, and he was talking to the man in Teheran and he was so excited because they were in the hotel room. And I remember he said, I was half asleep but you could hear their voices, and he talked to both Paul and Bill, and he said, "You better get out of that room. You've got to leave that room. Don't stay there." I do remember that. And they did. And then it was either, I think it was late that afternoon that he went to . . .

KF: He went to Washington that day.

MP: That's right. He went to Washington.

KF: But tell me about the three days in London because I think Ross felt that within the next week or so he might be risking his life. He really . . .

MP: Yes.

KF: But you perhaps didn't feel that way.

MP: No, I did feel that way at that point. I knew that if he went back . . . and then it finally dawned on me when he came back, I realized what he'd gone through. I don't know if he told you this or not. He had an enormous amount of cash with him, which was so peculiar to me, and it was really sort of like a spy novel. When I realized just what, the kind of preparations he was making, and going in and out of the country, and paying people off. This kind of thing.

KF: Was this in London that you noticed that he had a lot of cash?

MP: He had an enormous briefcase. I guess I'm not telling anything I shouldn't. I guess you know about all . . .

KF: Everybody had a briefcase full of hundred dollar bills at that time. But I didn't know that Ross did as well. So I suppose you saw the . . .

MP: I couldn't believe it. He said, "Don't worry." I said, "Shouldn't you check that or do something with it?" and he said, "Oh no." I remember he'd lock it and put it in the closet. He was really pretty casual about that. Then he told me, of course, about _____ . I was so glad to see him. I really missed him. It's hard to be away from him under those circumstances. He hadn't had to take even many business trips so it was unusual, and so much going on. It was an emotional time. He had so much on his mind.

KF: Did you think he might go back, go into Iran and not come back after that?

MP: I didn't think that he wouldn't come back.

KF: Okay.

MP: You're worried about all these things, but I don't think _____.

KF: Let's go back to Sunday, February 11th, and the week that followed. Ross went to Washington on Sunday, took off

KF (CONTD): for the Middle East 9:00 Tuesday morning. Were you in touch with him subsequently?

MP: Yes. He had a radio in the plane.

KF: That's right. A single side band radio, so he could call you.

MP: He would call to that communications office, the _____ that they had set up, which I never really saw. I never went over to the office during that week. So I didn't see, but I knew because they were really monitoring that radio night and day. So they would switch me over at the house and they would patch in or whatever they call it. So I had a few conversations with him. Or he would give a message . . . So I didn't have nearly the worry that . . . and I knew that he was in a fairly safe place at that point. I really didn't worry about his safety. I was more concerned that week with the whole thing around the men.

KF: Did you know what was going on?

MP: Yes.

KF: So, once again, you probably knew more than anybody except the inner circle.

MP: I would think I probably did. But you know, I was in a fortunate position. I knew just where he was and that he was safe. I saw one of the girls . . . It was interesting. My mother was visiting that week. She stayed the next week

MP (CONTD):

after our cruise. Life went on just as it would normally go on. I would take her to different things, and we had an evening when the whole school went to see the exhibit at the art museum on Pompeii, wonderful Pompeii exhibit.

KF: Which school is this?

MP: This was Harkety, the girls school. So I took mother to that, and when I was there I saw Cynthia Gaden, and she really had something to worry about. And there we were going through our usual . . . There were children, it was just as though everything were normal. And she looked as white as a sheet. Then I realized what she was going through. Of course, she hadn't heard from him. She just knew he was on his way . . .

KF: Do you remember what day of the week that was?

MP: It was Valentine's Day, the 14th.

KF: So you also knew that the American embassy had been overrun.

MP: Um-hmm. And it seems to me we knew how they had searched the plane, the 747 in Teheran.

KF: No.

MP: Not yet?

KF: That was the following Saturday.

MP: When the _____.

KF: No, that was the Saturday. That happened the day before everybody arrived.

MP: Are you sure? Because they met . . .

KF: They met in Frankfurt, flew to London . . .

MP: That's right. Well, we just knew. You know how bad things were. But she was the one that had much more on her mind and much more worry because he was actually out of touch.

KF: And the phone lines were down that day as well. So they hadn't been able to make their calls, their check calls, and nobody really knew where they were.

MP: That was the difficult thing, when the men started out to not know where they were and what they were doing out there. _____, that was the worst part.

KF: I expect you went to the airport to meet them all on the _____.

MP: Oh, yes.

KF: Were you on one of the buses?

MP: Yes. When they all got on, Colonel Simons was there, and they all had those blue stocking caps on and they looked

_____.

KF: What was Ross wearing?

MP: He looked gaunt tired, but he had a sportcoat on or some kind of thing.

KF: You say he looked gaunt?

MP: Gaunt. He looked really worn. I've seen him in times of tension, when he went for instance to Laos that time, for the prisoners of war, when they were coming home. He had been up for 24 hours and it was an ordeal, and this was very similar sort of thing. _____ . And he did go home and to sleep but he was really exhausted. I think they had all slept a little on the plane. He had been up prior to that those few days and then after.

KF: After this you got to know Simons quite well, which may not be very well. Nobody seems to have really got to know Simons, but you spent a lot of time with him anyway. But that was after his heart attack I think, is that right?

MP: He was here and then he left to go to Vail. Did Ross mention that to you?

KF: Um-hmm.

MP: That he was skiing? And that's where the heart attack occurred. He came back. He had been here just a day or two. I can't remember how long, maybe two or three days before he left, and the next time I saw him was in the intensive care unit of the hospital. He seemed to really appreciate

MP (CONTD): . . . I didn't know how he was really sort of a _____ . When you're that sick, you don't really want to see people you don't know well, and yet Ross felt we should visit because he had no one else. And I remember holding his hand or putting my hand . . . You wanted to extend some feeling of warmth, and I think he really appreciated the feelings that people had for him. As soon as he began to feel a little bit better, he was reading everything about his illness. He was very interested in every little detail, much more than most people would be. He wasn't squeamish about. . . Most people would just not want to know the details but he . . . and went through such an ordeal. There were so many tests that were _____ terrible thing. But then he began to feel better. He kept insisting that he only slept three or four hours a night and so why not come down and play poker with them, and so some friends of mine and I did that. I told you what he said about his years playing poker in the army. I'm not a very good poker player but I have some friends who play quite a bit, but they play all these ladies games. It was so funny. All these crazy names like Red Dog and . . . Do you play cards?

KF: No.

MP: I wish I could remember them all. I'll have to ask. And he would laugh at these funny games because in the army they just played the straight five card whatever it is that

MP (CONTD): men play. I think it cheered him up.

KF: But now when he came to live here must have been when you really got to know him.

MP: Yes. But I was awfully busy, too. I had a lot of things going on. But he was very interesting. He always asked me what I was doing. I was then chairman of the committee at the school concerned with long range planning, and it was taking a lot of my time and thought, and he was awfully nice to ask me about it and advise me. I was having to plan meetings. It was something new for me, something different. It was a trustee committee. He showed more than a polite interest and really delved into it with me. He was awfully nice about that. We had long conversations but it's hard to reconstruct them. I can barely remember many. There are so many times something will remind me of something he said.

KF: Did he talk to you about Lucille?

MP: He really couldn't talk about that _____.
But it was just such a surprise to me that they'd planned all these years together and he was finally going to _____.
She still just couldn't quite grasp the fact she was gone. It was a real shock. He didn't _____.

KF: Did you get any sense of what the two of them found in each other?

MP: No.

KF: Did he . . .

MP: He never talked in a personal way, not really.

KF: Talk to you about his sons?

MP: No. He talked to others about his sons but not to me.

KF: About his parents?

MP: No.

KF: Did he tell you about his life in the military?

MP: He told lots of war stories.

KF: What kind?

MP: He told us about . . . For six or eight weeks he must have spent at least -- maybe longer -- in an island in the Pacific where his job was to get the Japanese. It was an aircraft watching tower or unit or whatever it is. They were always reporting back apparently on military activity, and his mission was to get this tower. I can't think of military terms to explain it. He studied it for weeks.

KF: Some kind of observation post or radar.

MP: That's how I understand it. And they finally did.

KF: He told almost everybody about that incident, and I wonder if it was really a rather formative incident. Is that

KF (CONTD): the one where he climbed up the cliff?

MP: That wasn't the same one.

KF: It wasn't?

MP: Was it?

KF: I don't know.

MP: I was thinking maybe it was, but that's how they . . .

KF: There was one where he climbed up a cliff -- and different people tell this story in slightly different ways -- but either he left his men behind or they climbed up with him. But he got to the top of the cliff at night and one of the Japanese was out and was a guard. He killed this man with his knife and took his gun and killed all the others in their sleep and blew up the observation post and walked back down the hill. Now that story I've heard in one form or another from several people. Does it sound more or less like the one?

MP: Yes.

KF: I wonder . . .

MP: And then he would tell different aspects, because he talked about living out in the jungle a long time and the men wanted to fish, and he said no we won't take any unnecessary chances at all, and so they lived on whatever they found in the jungle.

KF: And was that why he didn't like bananas?

MP: I think that was it. And, of course, he told us in detail about the Santay Way, about the planning of it, and landing, and _____ and killing people, men as they came out.

KF: They came out of the barracks.

MP: Of course, a lot of these things I would just . . . I think Ross, I think anybody more oriented to the military would remember the details much more. I sort of tuned out I think a lot of it.

KF: What did you think about the man who told those gruesome stories?

MP: I was delighted that there was somebody like him to do those things. I have no feelings that way. I just thought he was a real hero. He was such a sensitive person . . . He's the kind of person that wouldn't hurt a flea under any other circumstances, and I think he truly loved his country. I think he had a real sense of honor. I don't think I'm saying this in just that I idealize him, but I think this explained why he did what he did. I think he really had that devotion to duty, that you don't see very often.

KF: But he was kind of driven, don't you think? He was obsessive.

MP: I never felt that it was an unhealthy thing.

KF: No.

MP: He was terribly smart, terribly intelligent. I think he thought everything through, and I think he would have avoided violence if at all possible. He was not one to go out and . . .

KF: And pick fights.

MP: Or do anything that was unnecessary in that department.

KF: He wasn't that sinful.

MP: No. And he wasn't . . . I just don't think he would hurt _____.

KF: But he obviously drew in his own mind, he seems to have drawn a very clear line. There's the enemy and you shoot them. And then there's the rest of the world and you behave like civilized man.

MP: I felt that he was a professional. I think that was the word I felt. He was a professional soldier. He knew what he had to do, and so he detached his own feelings from that. He did that just as you would . . .

KF: But now why he chose that way of life. And although he was awfully good at it, he didn't finish up General which

KF (CONTD): you'd think he would have liked to do.

MP: He was a very honest person. He would no more have played the politics game to get a promotion. Totally honest. I think that probably explains why he was never a general. He was not diplomatic. He was not tactful. He'd say exactly what he thought, which I think probably . . . I'm in admiration for this man.

KF: Made his superiors uncomfortable.

MP: He made people uncomfortable because he could see right through anybody who was phony. He was remarkable about that.

KF: That's interesting. It brings to mind somebody else. That was said to me of somebody else recently, and it was a completely different man. Someone was telling me John Lennon was like that. Richard Lester who directed those Beatles films told me that John Lennon at first made him uncomfortable because if ever he tried to put on airs or say anything that was phony, Lennon would have no compunction about saying . . . you know, that's all rubbish, don't talk to me like that.

MP: The favorite things he would say -- not favorite things -- he would always say, "Hold it. Say that again." if somebody would . . . He'd say, "Let's go back over that again." I heard him say that a hundred times if I heard him say it once. "Hold it." Whether he was laughing or dead

MP (CONTD): serious. I told you about our conversation -- I don't remember details particularly -- but he had the ambassador all figured out.

KF: Sullivan?

MP: Sullivan. He knew him from way back. I never questioned his judgment on something like that, as you do with many people telling you things _____ if he was that bad or that . . . I totally believed everything. He was very convincing. I had a lot of admiration for him, and there wasn't any situation where he couldn't get right to the heart of the matter, whether it was . . . Just in ordinary conversation, just things, issues, current issues, the news, whatever it was. All the conversations he had with Ross when I'd be listening. He knew the people. At one part of his career I'm uncertain about was the time when he was in Turkey. Do you know anything about that?

KF: He was training, helping to train the Turkish army. They had . . .

MP: He had experience with the Kurds.

KF: I suppose he must have had, because he spent two years . . . They lived two years in Ankara and a year in Ismiah and that was his job -- it was training, at least in Ankara it was. In Ismiah it was, it may have been something a little mysterious. But they were three years there. That's

KF (CONTD): what they did. And the whole family lived there. Of course, what he was really up to, who knows? They were probably covers for _____. But what intrigues me is why he was like he was. Now he had . . . We all know that he was very smart, very determined, scrupulously honest, had the ability to be ruthless when he thought it was right to be ruthless. Also had phenomenal charm. He charmed everybody. You thought he was terrific. All the men thought he was terrific; all the women thought he was terrific; all the children thought he was terrific.

MP: Absolutely. I think most people recognize when there's somebody truly genuine. There's no pretense. He was exactly as he was. There were sides to him I guess, and yet you didn't feel that he was at all phony. I guess I keep getting back to that. And he knew people. He could figure out things. _____. Just anything. He knew the Kurds. He used to talk about them at length. He was interested in history. He knew all about . . . He had a retentive mind. I'd give anything to have a mind like that.

KF: I wonder if you would really. Because something makes a person that meticulous and that busy, and most people do some jobs well and some badly. He was a man who if he was going to do a job, he was going to do it well. If he was going to be a gunsmith, he would learn all about it, and he would do it well. Most people have successes and failures.

KF (CONTD): He was scrupulously honest. Most of us try to be honest, and then sometimes we tell fibs.

MP: Try to appear better than we are.

KF: So we try to be better than we are, but he . . . Everything he did, he did with such enormous energy. He doesn't seem to have been able to do nothing. He couldn't sit down and goof off as far as I . . . Hanging out would have been a word . . . (SIDE ENDS)

MP: Wasn't he always probably conscientious about everything he did as he was growing up? Did his brothers say that? Does this go back? Was he . . .

KF: No.

MP: Was he meticulous about everything he did and think it out?

KF: No, his brothers didn't say that. As a young man, Art Simons was a very strong/^{young}man, bookish. They liked school; they studied; they both studied hard because they liked school. They both fought every other boy in the neighborhood. They were strong and intelligent -- that combination was there from the start. But it was after the war that Art became something very unusual. As a young man he was a nice and rather noticeable young man, and then after the war he became what people called The Bull. He became really outstanding personality.

MP: He left the army and then went back. Is that correct?

KF: Yes.

MP: He became a civilian for a while?

KF: Five years. And he was very discontented. It was as if he couldn't make it in the civilian world. He felt he wasn't making much money, and he wanted to make money. Of course that was his test of success in the civilian world perhaps. He just didn't like it.

MP: I think a true military man would be a little bored maybe coming home _____. He found his niche and he was happy doing what he was doing. That's where the adventure is really. Maybe he was a man who really craved adventure and action and things that weren't routine.

KF: Yeah, he sure was that.

MP: Understatement I guess.

KF: Let's finish up by telling me how you spend your life now. We started off at the beginning. Let's finish with the present.

MP: I don't think I . . . Well, I'm very involved with Ross and what he's doing. He's certainly the focal point of my life. He's first and the children are second. I'd be lost without him. I think I knew that from the beginning. I

MP (CONTD): just became so . . . He was so unlike the person I thought I would marry. I realized, when I realized how strongly I was attracted I was to him, I remember thinking well maybe this is just a phase I'm going through. My family felt that, that I was so involved with this Texan, but they didn't think it was anything that would last. He was such . . .

KF: What kind of man did you expect to marry?

MP: Probably somebody very ordinary, very conventional.

KF: Young lawyer from Pennsylvania?

MP: Um-hmm. Conservative. And he was so, such an interesting person. There was just something going on all the time. His mind was so fast and he was interested in so many things. I remember the true test in my own mind was when I thought that if I stopped going out with him, that we would never see each other again because he was going to a completely different part of the country in the Navy and so on, and I remember thinking I just couldn't stand that. That I had to be with him wherever he went, and that's why I thought that was the test of my own mind. I wanted to be with him wherever he was, and at that point I thought he'd probably stay in the Navy so I had no feelings about that. I just wanted to be with him. Of course, we ended up getting out of the Navy and leading certainly at the beginning, a rather ordinary life. Then a lot of things happened. I don't think you could ever predict.

KF: I started off by asking you how you spend your life now. You've been very busy this week, for example.

MP: Well, I'm involved in some boards and things like that that are probably, that are interesting, probably take too much time right now. I think I'm going to do less, but I was asked by Governor Clements to be a commissioner on the Texas Commission on the Arts, and it's an interesting group. There are people from all over Texas who are members of this commission. We meet four or five times a year. It encourages art organizations from all over the state, and we allocate the funds that are voted by the legislature to the various groups. A lot of red tape, a lot of governmental rules. It's very different from anything I've ever done, but interesting, very interesting. It doesn't take up so much of my time really. My major interest has been trustee of the childrens' school and that's taken up a lot of time, a lot more than I ever realized it would. I've been on a lot of committees. But I felt that it was worthwhile because it had something to do with the children. Indirectly the future of the school, sort of indirectly affects them. That's why I accepted it in the first place. And I think it's a healthy thing to have some interests outside the home. I think it's a good balance. So I've enjoyed it in many way, but there are times when it's demanding.

KF: I wanted to ask you about Anita. She and Simons were very close at the end.

MP: Oh, yes, it was very nice.

KF: She was, by all accounts, a rather glamorous
 _____ . He was a widower of 60. And
 when he had his heart attack in Vail, Harry -- I've forgotten
 his second name -- the doctor I saw today -- heart doctor --

MP: I know who you mean. I can't think of his name.

KF: Something with a "K". Anyway, he went up to the
 cabin and he said, "Well, I know what's happening here."
 _____ .

MP: _____ talk about that . . .

KF: Simon _____ who had had half his _____ in
 cabins and girls with Anita there. However, Simons went out
 of his way to tell one or two people that it was not a romantic
 relationship. He may have been choosing his words carefully,
 and certainly Harry was very surprised when I told him that I
 understood that it was a rather paternal relationship. Now
 actually he didn't believe that. Harry did not believe that.
 Now what do you think?

MP: I don't think . . . Well it was paternal in a way
 but I think he was genuinely fond of her in a very nice
 romantic way. I don't think there was a physical relationship
 because, for one thing, they hardly knew each other and they
 were with other people. I just don't . . . She as much as

MP (CONTD): said that. That there was no physical relationship, certainly not in those words. But she was crazy about him, and she thought that -- as everybody was. You know, he was very charming. But when she knew him best was when he was very sick, and she was really caring for him, and she was the kind of girl that was very warm and caring and a loving person. She was just what he needed at that time. She was between jobs and it was convenient for her to stay here for a while, and Ross asked her to because I was involved with the children and all their activities and these other things. I could get down to the hospital maybe every day, but that's not long enough. That's a visit. And Anita stayed in a hotel, the hospital hotel there. And she could go in and see him frequently. And it was a wonderful thing for him to have somebody there nearby. And she had such imagination. She brought in -- and she's a delightful person, funny and with this wonderful accent. The way she spoke was funny. Fractured English. Her emphasis on the wrong syllables. It would really make you laugh. Like when we were playing poker she'd call aces, "asses", and you know, funny little things like that. She really made him laugh. And she would bring in different foods for him, for instance, to the hospital. She'd go out and find some little something for him that would change the diet. And books and she brought him movies. They would sit and watch a movie. So she spent long hours with him. She probably had a premonition that he didn't have long to live. I don't know if he really did. He was pretty positive. He certainly didn't dwell on that, the negative, but I think they

MP (CONTD): probably had long conversations. I think he told Anita a lot about his life. They did things together constantly. When he came back here, she stayed in the guest house with him. They were great companions. And of course she couldn't be with him all the time, because she and I did a lot together during those weeks. We took long bicycle rides, would shop, and do different things. She liked to have constant activity.

KF: I wonder whether/^{if}he had recovered if there might have been more to their friendship.

MP: There very well could have been a lasting relationship I think. I think he loved her for whatever you take that. It was very nice, and he gave her a watch. Did I tell you about it?

KF: Ross told me today. Ross had great difficulty getting it engraved, and then he told them it wasn't for Ross but it was for Colonel Simons and then they did it that day.

MP: That's right. He was very excited about that. He wanted to do something for her. There was a great deal of affection. She was wonderful, had a great personality, and certainly was a godsend because we were all one big happy family. It was very nice. When I couldn't be with him or Ross. There was enough activity here to keep him busy. They'd come in for dinner most evenings, and sometimes she'd cook.

MP (CONTD): That would be something. I'll never forget the time I went out there and she was making Swedish chili, and she had him chopping up tomatoes and meat and onions and -- in the guesthouse -- the aroma lasted for weeks. But she was great because she had such imagination. He was just as involved. There he was with an apron on, and she was having him cut up all these things -- this long process of hers. And we had chili. She made so much of it. I remember months afterwards I found it in our freezer -- it was Anita's chili. This was the kind of thing she would dream up to do. And it was a day's project. So that's why she was so great. Just little things like that. And then Anita thought she wasn't getting enough exercise, and he put her on a program. And he would sit out here in the front on the brick wall while she would run, she would jog, and he would time her. He was a real task master. He didn't do anything himself though. He'd sit there and the dogs would be right there with him. And he'd have her do her exercises. And jogging. So they had a very fun relationship.

KF: I've run out of questions.

MP: What was that question, about when I told you about Ross's sense of humor I hope you don't think that's the only thing that attracted me. The thing I noticed first about him? What was it you asked me?

KF: I asked you what appealed to you and you said his sense of humor.

MP: That was the most unusual thing about him. But that wasn't all. Everything appealed to me. The thing that appealed to me about him really was his strength. I'd been with a lot of people, sort of wishy-washy, and that's the thing about him that's always appealed to me. And Colonel Simons. I like men like that.

KF: Yes, and Simons was another one.

MP: I've been trying to think of details and I was such a bystander to that week that even though . . . One of the difficult things, of course, about that week was the fact that all this was going on, all this conjecture was in the papers about where they were coming in. Did you read all those articles?

KF: I read some of them.

MP: They didn't know where he was. And I had said to my friends . . . They said, "Where is Ross this week?" And I said, "Oh, he had a business meeting in Turkey." I had no idea that it would ever be in the paper at all. I thought if any of my friends repeat that, and they know where Ross is, then they'll know which way the men are coming out. And that worried me. I had to be sure to tell my friends not to mention that. Not that they would ever be inclined to report it. But these things _____ . There was a lot of publicity.

KF: I read some of the stories, and from what I read I

KF (CONTD): couldn't see how . . . They didn't seem to give away any secrets. Or they gave them away too late. Perhaps I haven't seen all the stories.

MP: It seems to me they talked about which way they were coming out -- over land, trying to get down to the water, going south, that kind of . . .

KF: I read a story like that but it came out on Friday, by which time they had gone past . . . By Friday they were in Istanbul. . . . See, they ran that story on Friday. I didn't read the whole week, no. _____
But anyway from what I've seen I can see what the fuss is about which makes me suspect that I haven't seen it all.