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Biographical Note

Beasley, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Administration from 1952 to 1965, discusses recruitment of minorities to the Interior Department, the Division of Inspection, and discusses the Interior Department during the different presidential administrations he worked under, among other issues.

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By D. Otis Beasley

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Oral History Interview

With

D. Otis Beasley

December 15, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Mr. Beasley, you were the Administrative Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior during the Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] years. You had held that post previously in the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration, had you not?

BEASLEY: And prior thereto, in the Truman [Harry S. Truman] Administration.

MOSS: Right. Now let me ask you this as a lead-off question: What was the impact on the regular personnel in the Interior Department with the coming of the Kennedy Administration?

BEASLEY: I would like to preface that by mentioning briefly what my role was in the Interior Department. The position which I held was created in 1950, and it was a result of a recommendation by the Hoover [Herbert Clark Hoover] Commission that a secretarial officer of career status be appointed to each of the executive departments to facilitate the transition of administrations, as between secretaries of the same political party, but more particularly when there was a political change in the executive branch. Quite a bit of support and argument was

made in favor of such a career assistant secretary, and it was adopted. I held that position at the time of the change of administration in 1961, so I was more concerned with the ease with which you could bring about a transition within a large executive department (as Interior was and is) with a minimum of interference with the normal functioning of the department.

Going back to your question, it's my opinion that the favorable reference made by the President on a number of occasions before he became President and after he became President that brought dignity and prestige to the federal servant; it brought about an attitude on their part in which they felt that they would be working in a favorable atmosphere. And they had no reason to be concerned about the average career employee, recognizing, of course, that when there is a change of administration there will be a certain turnover, particularly in the political appointees and on occasion at lower levels, because of redirection of programs. But because of his reference and particularly the reference he made in his State of the Union message on January the 30th, ten days following his inauguration, it brought about an attitude on the part of the federal employee that he was going to be associated with an administration that had some respect for the federal civil servant.

MOSS: Do you recall any ways in which this heightened morale was manifested by employees of the Interior Department?

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BEASLEY: I always tried to keep close to the federal employee through associating with them at all levels, participating in employee activities, appearing before employee groups, and discussing with them how they thought they were being affected, what their attitude was on the Administration, change in administration. It was most favorable in every instance. While there was, as will always be the case, some concern about what the attitude would be on the part of political appointees that were taking over their area of responsibility or having some impact on their area of responsibility, they felt, as an employee, they'd been recognized as an important segment of the total government and that they would not be affected because of any political change.

MOSS: Now, on a slightly different subject, you mentioned that you were in a position of continuity within the Department, and during the transition you had a particular role to play. What did you do, say, in the way of setting up briefings with the new political appointees and this kind of thing? Was this part of your function?

BEASLEY: That was part of the function. However, talking generally, it varied from one Secretary to another as to who he wanted to be responsible for the briefing. I will have to say that the Kennedy Administration had its own briefing experts, and the position I held was not looked on as the primary source of briefing. Nevertheless, as the new appointees came in, there was an opportunity and a request on the part of most of them to seek my advice and suggestions as to what would be their primary problem areas and what would be my suggestion. This was especially true of the key personnel within the area for which the program assistant secretary was assigned.

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MOSS: All right. Now let me move to another topic on the list. I'd like to talk about the Budget Bureau, over at the White House, a bit. Can you identify any particular person in the Budget Bureau who was sort of the Interior man at the Budget Bureau, who had cognizance over Interior matters generally?

BEASLEY: There were two levels that you could identify as having substantial responsibility, authority and influence on Interior matters. One was Carl Schwartz, who was Assistant Director for programs in the Natural Resources field. More particularly and immediately concerned with Interior matters was a chap by the name of Harry McKittrick, who was responsible for the Interior review group.

MOSS: Okay. What about Sam Hughes [Philip Samuel Hughes]? Did he get into the act much?

BEASLEY: Sam Hughes at that time was primarily responsible for legislative matters. While he had a great deal to do with legislative matters pertaining to the Interior Department, as far as I was personally concerned my input was not too great. I would only review legislative proposals with respect to the personnel requirements for the projected programs as well as the cost of executing the program.

MOSS: In other words, you were responsible for the costing and resources evaluation for programs suggested by the political people.

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BEASLEY: That is correct. I always tried to avoid becoming engaged in the policy consideration for the program because it was outside the scope of the position. I thought, in conforming to the objective of the position, it would be in the best interests not to interject myself in policy unless a specific question was presented.

MOSS: Right. This is one of the rather difficult areas for students of public administration to really grasp, because the budget end of things is a potential power source for an individual or for a group and they can control programs by squeezing budgets and this sort of thing. What's your philosophic reaction to this position?

BEASLEY: There's no question that whoever has something to do with the processing of budgets can have a tremendous influence on the extent to which a program will be authorized, funded and executed. In my experience in the Department, I was involved at one time when the Secretary of the Interior had an understanding with the Director of the Bureau of the Budget that anything pertaining to the

budget had to be taken up through the Assistant Secretary for Administration because he looked to this person to keep him fully informed on any considerations that would have some impact on the programs to be funded. On the other hand, there were secretaries that permitted Bureau of the Budget representatives to negotiate directly with Bureau heads or program assistant secretaries, which resulted in many cases in not even the Secretary being knowledgeable in what was being done to set in definite posture programs that he might have different thoughts.

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MOSS: How would you characterize the Udall [Stewart L. Udall] administration in this regard?

BEASLEY: It was one of the worst of the four secretaries that I served under in permitting the Bureau of the Budget to function with what many people call "making end runs" around the secretary.

MOSS: Yes, this is my understanding of it as well. Could you perhaps illustrate that with an example? This would be useful to somebody studying the period.

BEASLEY: As you no doubt are aware, the Department of the Interior is quite a diversified department, and its responsibilities and many of its programs are in conflict and have contrary objectives. Consequently, if there is a situation prevailing whereby there can be negotiations between people at high levels responsible for budget decisions dealing directly with a program area that may not be the one in which the Secretary wanted to place the greatest emphasis, quite frequently this could result in a diversion of limited funds available for the Department's budget to be prepared. Funds that were really wanted for a more desirable program or a program which the Secretary placed the highest priority on, it would result in a diversion of funds for that purpose into an area which he did not have as much emphasis on.

MOSS: On the subject of allocating funds, it must have been a rather tough nut to crack when the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation came in and you had to pull funds from the Park Service in order to get the new Bureau going. Would you reminisce a minute or two about that?

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BEASLEY: That is certainly a good illustration of what I took a lot of words to try to state. It is true that the recreational program, which Secretary Udall was most concerned with, in order to get it established and functioning at a level which he had envisioned, it was necessary within the limited funds available, within which the Department's budget had to be prepared, to de-emphasize programs in other areas. You mentioned the Park Service. It certainly curtailed the extent to which the Park Service

development would have otherwise gone, but it also resulted in other programs like the Fish and Wildlife Service suffering in order that sufficient funds could be found for the Outdoor Recreation program.

MOSS: Did it make it more difficult since the new Bureau was established by Executive order and had not been authorized by Congress? What, it was a year later that you finally came up with the legislation to authorize the Bureau, is that not true?

BEASLEY: It made it more difficult to process through the Bureau of the Budget and Congress requests for appropriations to finance the Outdoor Recreation. In the case of the Bureau of the Budget, when they are looking for some reason to deny funds, it doesn't make much difference what that reason is, they will take advantage of it. But more particularly, the Congress is, as you know, very jealous of its prerogative in authorizing programs for the Executive branch to administer, and they were always very reluctant to appropriate funds for a program developed within the Executive branch without authorization through the Congress.

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MOSS: In a related issue, the Land and Water Conservation Fund proposal was one that was put forward to fund some of this kind of thing, and the business of user fees and so on came into it, too. You had quite a problem with the user fee question, didn't you? Did you get involved in this at all?

BEASLEY: I'm quite familiar with the user fee because it has been a subject which the Bureau of the Budget has sponsored for a number of years. I served on a sub-Cabinet committee during the Eisenhower Administration to review the whole subject of user fees and to make recommendations regarding programs for which there should be a fee charged to the beneficiary of the program. This move on the part of the Bureau of the Budget was reactivated during the early days of the Kennedy Administration, and it is true that Secretary Udall, in order to finance the Land and Water Conservation Fund, was amenable to fee increases in order to obtain concurrence in fees to be charged for admission to the national parks that would go in the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

MOSS: In the matter of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, what do you know of the origins of the proposal?

BEASLEY: As I recall--and I'm quite certain that this was one of the thoughts in Secretary Udall's mind as to how he could get approval for his Outdoor Recreation program, recognizing, and having served in Congress, that it is difficult to get a program launched if it's going to cost money. I'm confident that it was his thought if he could come up with some idea as to financing at least in part the cost of the program, it would improve its chances of being accepted. I believe that, without a doubt, that

Secretary Udall could be solely identified with the idea of a Land and Water Conservation Fund.

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MOSS: All right. Taking it a step further, do you recall when this was first mentioned to you and what your area was responsible for in the way of developing the proposal?

BEASLEY: It was mentioned in one of the early discussions of the idea of the Recreation program. On a number of occasions, including conferences in Secretary Udall's office and discussion of plans at luncheons, which were held quite frequently in the Secretary's own dining room where we would have present the secretarial staff, he mentioned the need to increase fees to be charged for visitors to the national park areas. I recall suggesting to him that there were two thoughts on the subject of fees to the Park Service, having recalled in many instances where there were reports of families visiting park areas (with a family consisting of the wife and three or four children) obviously traveling on a limited budget, would drive up to a park area and, having to pay five dollars, would decide that they could not afford that, and they would not enter the park. There were many other reports of this nature....

MOSS: I've done that myself.

BEASLEY: And a lot of people feeling that since the parks were developed at public expense, no one should be denied the opportunity to visit these great areas and enjoy the beauties that they possessed.

MOSS: Right. This was explicit, was it not, in the old 1936 or '38 act for the Corps of Engineers construction, I think. I think it was almost explicit in the law, if I recall.

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BEASLEY: I'm not sufficiently brilliant to comment on that.

MOSS: While we're on it--I just happened to mention the Corps of Engineers--but perennially, particularly since the first Hoover Commission, the proposal or the thought of incorporating the Corps of Engineers into the Interior Department has been entertained. What observation do you have on that proposal?

BEASLEY: Well, you might include the Forest Service in it also. Having been confronted with this question on many, many occasions when I appeared before groups to give an address or talk which would later be open to questions from the floor--invariably this question would come up, referring back to the Hoover Commission recommendation for consolidation of functions that had some

relationship--I always gave this particular answer: that both the Corps of Engineers and the Forest Service, for all practical purposes, were independent agencies, and they were accustomed to reporting to any higher supervision. Of course, the Corps of Engineers being in the Department of the Army, you have a Secretary of the Army that is concerned with military problems and not civilian activities, the result of which was that the head of the Corps of Engineers never found it necessary to discuss matters with the Secretary of the Army. The same thing applied to the Forest Service in that the Secretary of Agriculture was concerned with farm problems and programs associated with the agricultural segment of our economy. Consequently, the Chief of the Forest Service never felt himself under the real influence of the Secretary insofar as decisions affecting the Forest Service. I still feel that these were the paramount reasons no progress was ever made effecting the consolidation of these activities into Interior.

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MOSS: Right. On the other hand, it leaves you with the problem of coordinating the efforts of these relatively independent outfits. What you just said about the Forest Service and the Corps of Engineers could almost be said of the Park Service in Interior as well, and yet all these have to be coordinated. What instruments are set up to effect this coordination?

BEASLEY: Well, within the Department of the Interior there have been various techniques employed in the past to bring about coordination within the Department, the effectiveness depending on the interest of the Secretary in bringing about the greatest degree of cooperation possible. It's not possible to have perfect coordination because of, as I indicated earlier, controversial programs and some objectives being inconsistent with the objectives of other bureaus. Insofar as coordination of the Corps of Engineers programs, as well as Forest Service programs with Interior where there is a great deal of relationship, there has been on occasions no coordination whatever to other instances where a sincere effort was made by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to bring about some coordination, but, again, the Chief of the Forest Service, not feeling that he is too strongly supervised by the Department of Agriculture, would not conform to the efforts of coordination. I guess Secretary Udall did about as much as anyone to bring about such coordination with the Forest Service, but I had it mentioned to me on a number of occasions by people in the Forest Service that, "We're appearing to work with the Secretary, but he will not be here forever and our efforts are not going to be too strong."

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MOSS: Did you get involved in the work on the revision of the old A-47 Budget circular, speaking of coordination and that kind of thing?

BEASLEY: Yes, I was involved in that.

MOSS: Henry Caulfield [Henry P. Caulfield, Jr.] headed the staff committee on

that.

BEASLEY: That is right. And when I say I was involved in it, I was not too closely identified with it because Henry Caulfield took that under his arm and pretty much became the spokesman for it. He was not a person that would work through staff units.

MOSS: Did this happen frequently? When you had a problem come up, a problem area, was it assigned a sort of a task force without going through regular staff....

BEASLEY: On many occasions. Yes, that is true.

MOSS: Good. Okay. Let me shift to another subject that is important, I think, and this is the question of the implementing of nondiscrimination in employment of personnel. The Park Service, for instance, had the reputation of being a lily white outfit. Perhaps the same thing could be said for the Geological Survey, things of this sort. What efforts were made to try and get a balance of race within the Department?

BEASLEY: The two areas that you mentioned had the lowest number of minority groups employed of almost any segment of the Department. There is an adequate explanation for part of this, and that is, in the case of the Geological Survey, it's a scientific and technical agency. The facts are that minority groups never prepared themselves educationally in these scientific and technical fields, therefore there were none available for recruitment.

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In the case of the Park Service, a very similar situation prevailed in that their employees are specialists in particular fields, some of which are technical and scientific and others are closely related to the sciences, such as historians and biologists. On the other hand, as probably prevails generally throughout the government, there had not been a very great effort made to give special consideration to minority groups in employment.

I think Interior has the most unique record of any agency in trying to combat this. In 1962, someone, without coming through the normal channels, got the Secretary Udall to sign letters to all of the Negro colleges, particularly in the South, suggesting that they have their students apply for summer employment in the Department. When there was not a single reply to these letters, Secretary Udall asked me what could be done. I suggested that we send recruiting teams to these universities with an offer for a position to anyone interested in working in a summer job in the parks and meeting the requirements as to age and some other fairly unimportant qualification requirements. This recruiting team signed fifty-five Negroes to work as summer employees in the park system. The members of the recruiting team would visit the deans of the various segments of the school and have him call in his promising students to see if they would be interested in very definite assignments. These schools were

highly impressed with this technique in that they said they had been flooded with communications but never no concrete evidence that they would be rewarded. While fifty-five was a very low number, it was a step in what I think was a good direction. Out of that fifty-five, only twenty-nine reported for duty, and I think this was because there was still some doubt in their mind, "Well, is this a sincere effort on the part of the government to give us employment opportunities?" Of the twenty-nine only two were rated ineligible for reemployment.

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This was followed up in 1963 by another team of recruiters in which something like a hundred and fifty were signed up, indicating that word had gotten back that, "This is an opportunity that has some significance." And we have some records where the students went back and modified their curriculum to meet the requirements for permanent employment in the Park Service. This led not only to extension throughout the Department in summer employment, but it has been widely adopted by other government agencies. To me, this is one of the highlights in positive action taken by the Department to bring about a substantial improvement in implementing the program for equal employment and to avoid nondiscrimination charges.

MOSS: On a somewhat related subject, you said over the phone that you didn't know much about the Alaska Railroad personnel situation, but what about the business of collective bargaining amongst federal employees in the federal service? I simply lit on the Alaska Railroad because that seems to come the closest to a genuine labor situation that you had. Now, what else goes on in this field?

BEASLEY: I don't want to mislead you as to what I may know about the collective bargaining with the Alaska Railroad. I only had reference to the period of time after it was transferred to the Department of Transportation. One of my earliest experiences after I became Assistant Secretary for Administration was trying to resolve a lack of agreement between railroad management and union representatives on the wages and other conditions affecting the employees of the Alaska Railroad. I was personally involved in what you might call trying to mediate these differences at the departmental level because the employees always had the right to appeal to the Secretary when they were not in accord with the position of the management of the railroad. As is the case, I'm sure, with any disagreement between employees and management, these negotiation sessions were difficult, but I think that in most instances the employee groups felt that they had ready access

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to the high levels of the Department for the consideration of their complaints and in most instances were satisfied with the results of the decisions made. I recall the first decision was complete acceptance of the union position on the negotiation. In other instances they were not always successful, but there was compromise, as is often the case.

MOSS: Is there anything peculiar about negotiating under the federal service that makes it different from the open market situation?

BEASLEY: Very definitely, in view of the requirement, or prohibition of employees striking to persevere in their demands for benefits. I always tried to keep this in mind, that the federal government had to be completely fair and above board in its dealings with the union. I learned early in my responsibility in this field that railroad management frequently took a position that it did not think that it would prevail in but they thought they needed for bargaining purposes. I always said, "I think the government should come forward with its minimum requirements and its maximum offer so that the union cannot accuse it of being unfair in attempting to settle any disagreement." I found that this was quite rewarding over a period of time.

MOSS: You were able to affect this, then. You were able to convince the management people that they should do this, and they avoided the escalation....

BEASLEY: I'm not sure they did avoid it in subsequent instances, continue to take positions that they would have been agreeable to agreeing upon.

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MOSS: How about the other side of the fence? Did you get any indication that the unions were prepared to take advantage of this kind of policy that you advocated?

BEASLEY: I wouldn't say they were inclined to take advantage of it, but certainly they would always set as their goal conclusions which I felt that they didn't really anticipate to win or be victorious.

MOSS: Well, this is standard in any negotiation, practically. It's almost in the nature of the beast, isn't it?

BEASLEY: Yes.

MOSS: Let me talk for a few minutes about the Division of Inspection. This is something that it's very hard to get a grasp on, partly because of the delicate nature of the thing, the legal nature of it, and yet it's an important area, particularly--we were talking earlier about the Drew Pearson, Jack Anderson muckraking kind of thing, and somehow you have to get into the record just what the real story is and was. The Kennedy Administration, particularly, seems to be very clean, with the possible exception of the helium contract question, and even that was not a venal kind of thing. What particular problems did you have in the Division of Inspection during the Kennedy years?

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BEASLEY: I would like to preface reference to this particular period to the record of the Interior Department in the field of investigations or inspections, whichever term may be preferable. Since and during Secretary Ickes' [Harold LeClaire Ickes] time, the Department had a rather strong investigation program, because Secretary Ickes was strongly opposed to any wrongdoing within the Department, and he had this investigative staff to investigate any charges of wrongdoing and impropriety on the part of employees. This program has continued since then, except that it was changed to incorporate a broader function known as inspection. This grew out of the Eisenhower Administration because of his confrontation with some scandal in the Housing Administration on loans that were made in excess of the actual cost of the projects that were financed with federal funds. He thought there should be an inspection program to detect and correct before too late anything that could result in wrongdoing.

This program, having continued under President Kennedy, I think there should be mentioned his early statements having to do with a conflict of interest. As you know, in '62--I think it was February--he issued a memorandum making reference to the conflict of interest statutes and provided guidelines which would avoid situations in which conflicts of interest could develop. He issued another one in 1963, following some changes in the statutory provisions on conflict of interest laws, which I think, without having researched it, that the legislation may have grown out of his memorandum in 1962. But President Kennedy did do more in providing the criteria as to what constitutes conflict of interest and what constitutes the proper guidelines for the expected ethical conduct of federal employees. To me, this had as much as anything to avoid any instances of manipulation or scandal that we unfortunately find rare but too often in government activity.

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MOSS: All right, let me take it on a slightly different level, and that is on the lobbying level. This is short of conflict of interest, and yet there are common interests or issues in which both the government bureaucracy and an industry, say, have a mutual interest. How do the lobbies operate on a department? What happens here? It's widely publicized how they go and operate in Congress and so on, but the question of operating on an executive department is not so well known.

BEASLEY: Well, if we're going to use the term lobbying in its broadest sense, it would include any conferences between non-government personnel interested in legislative proposals and people in the government that will be involved in the consideration and the drafting of such legislation.

MOSS: It certainly has a wide range. There's no question....

BEASLEY: It has a wide range. It's a question of to what extent is there influence on the part of these conferences between the two groups. I always considered,

when I was in the government, that any organization or any citizen had the right to visit with any federal agency and express their interest in any subject they want. If that constitutes lobbying, then I'm all in favor of lobbying. The real danger comes when there is an attempt on the part of any person or group of persons to influence the thinking process of a federal agency on legislative matters by giving them gifts or entertaining them, which could be considered as improper. And this was one of the things that President Kennedy dealt with in his guidelines having to do with the acceptance of gifts or permitting themselves to be exposed to entertainment that could be construed as improper.

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MOSS: What about a different kind of thing, and that is where the government agency in part or in a majority of a study, say, relies upon the technical advice of an industry, the technical support of an industry? This seems to me to be a very difficult situation in which it's rather hard to check on the amount of influence that is involved in the technical presumptions.

BEASLEY: I have very definite thoughts on that aspect of the problem, because when the government is making decisions regarding activities for which it is going to be responsible for the administration, it needs all the advice it can get. I don't know of any better source for advice than people that are experts in the field or are acquainted with the subject matter. Where are you going to get these experts, and where are you going to find people that are acquainted with the subject matter? If it means a representative of an industry or an industrial group, I think you have no alternative but to seek their consultation on that. And it's been my experience that there is rarely an instance in which a person representing an industry attempts to influence the thinking of the Department. They are completely objective and are trying to assist the Department in arriving at the right conclusion. I have served in sessions where there have been representatives from industry, and I've been really impressed with the sincerity of their efforts to try to avoid any accusation that they were trying to benefit their particular company or the industry of which its company constitutes a part of the group.

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MOSS: On the matter of the helium contracts, what went wrong on that? GAO [General Accounting Office] jumped all over you for that one, didn't they?

BEASLEY: Yes, the GAO jumped all over it, and a thorough review of those contracts by the inspection process of the Department disclosed that they were in most cases very bad contracts and resulted in profits far in excess of what was ever contemplated. If I had to assign some reason for this outcome, it would be because these contracts were never subjected to adequate review in the Department. The people responsible for the helium program in the Department and the program assistant secretaries and their staff negotiated these contracts without them ever being subjected to an examination by the financial experts in the Department.

MOSS: Do you know if there was any pressure to get the contracts concluded and that haste was the cause for this oversight, or what?

BEASLEY: I think you would have to say that had something to do with it, but I don't think it was the sole reason for it.

MOSS: Now, Mr. Beasley, you have served under, what, four different presidents in your career with the Interior Department. Would you, just for the record, reminisce about each of the four of them? I think this kind of thing is very valuable since you could see across a span. Most of the people we get in touch with, of course, come in and go out again once the administration is over, but you have a rather unique contribution here, I think, to talk about all four administrations.

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BEASLEY: It was generally my policy never to attempt to assess the good or the bad of the secretaries that I worked for, because if the purpose of career status of the position and the importance of continuity and the responsibility that were to be realized, I always felt it was necessary to refrain from becoming too closely involved in the good points or the bad points of the particular Secretary. Of course, I was appointed in the late months of Secretary Oscar Chapman's [Oscar L. Chapman] tenure in the Department, as well as the late months of President Truman's tenure in the White House. I still look upon that period of time as one in which the total management of the Department was stronger than it had ever been and stronger than it was at any subsequent time with which I was associated with the Department. There was some reason for this. While it's not generally recognized that President Truman was greatly concerned with the management efficiency of the federal government, he really was, but this was never made known as one of the highlights of his activity in the White House. I don't know why he was so much concerned with the effectiveness of management. It may have had something to do with his experience when he was in the Senate on investigations. And, of course, Secretary Chapman was a strong believer in effective management of the Department.

Chapman was, of course, succeeded by Secretary McKay [J. Douglas McKay] under the Eisenhower Administration. I was greatly impressed with Secretary McKay. I continue to emphasize that he wasn't the bad Secretary of the Interior which he has been recorded by most people--well, practically everyone else, I would say. Secretary McKay was another person extremely dedicated to public service, and he emphasized at his first meeting with the employees of the Department that they were the ones that were the most important people in the federal service because they were the ones meeting the public from day to day and it was whatever image they gave the federal service that would determine the support for the federal government. But Secretary McKay was identified with a giveaway program based on two or three decisions. He was

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not responsible for those decisions with which he was charged, but he always took the viewpoint that he was responsible for any decision made in the Department regardless of who made it. I recall after he left the Department of the Interior to run for the Senate from Oregon against Senator Morse [Wayne L. Morse], during the campaign he was being confronted with the charge that he continued to issue oil and gas leases on wildlife refuges after he had publicly announced there would be no more oil and gas leases. He asked me, as the person being responsible for investigations, if I could conduct an investigation to determine why those oil and gas leases were issued against his prohibition for them being issued. I said, "Secretary McKay, I can conduct such an investigation, but I can tell you now who did it without having to go through that," and he said, "Who is it?" And I told him. He says, "Forget it. I will suffer the consequences." He didn't want to embarrass the individual that was responsible for it. I would rate Secretary McKay as one of the better Secretaries of the Interior insofar as an understanding as to how you run a large organization and business type enterprise, which Interior is in many respects.

He was succeeded by Secretary Fred Seaton [Frederick A. Seaton]. Fred Seaton ran the Department largely with the support of about three or four people. There was very, very little attempt to utilize the total machinery of the Department in administering the affairs of the Department. Decisions were frequently made involving areas that were unaware of the decision until after it had been made. This creates some chaos in a large organization.

Secretary Udall's administration was marked by some of the same deficiencies as I have described for Secretary Seaton.

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MOSS: Right. Are there any other areas that you would like to talk about that you think are important? Looking at it from the point of view of somebody fifty or a hundred years from now who's looking back on the Interior Department, what do you think they ought to know about?

BEASLEY: I actually haven't given any thought to what might be incorporated in such a coverage. As I indicated earlier, I tried to avoid any documentation or to remember too vividly some of my experiences because having seen articles written by previous officials, I never did want to become subject to any inclination to take advantage what I always considered confidential relationships. On the other hand, that seems to be the popular thing to do today, to write articles or publish books on the experiences with prominent officials of the federal government.

MOSS: Right. One last question that I have that--it's an area you may not have any reflections on--but I've run across a committee, an interdepartmental committee, that nobody else seems to be able to give me any information on, there isn't much literature on it, and that's the Ball Committee [George W. Ball] at the Under Secretary level, ostensibly, at any rate, made up of the Under Secretaries, who would get together and talk about routine policies rather than the crisis things. Are you aware of this at all?

BEASLEY: No, I'm unfamiliar with that committee. I do know the Assistant Secretaries for Administration had an ad hoc group at one time for meetings on occasion to discuss management activities in the federal government. There's the Budget Officers Conference that does it at a lower level. And then there was the Executive Officers Conference, which was a formal constituted group. I'm not surprised that there may have been an Under Secretaries group. I would not believe that it would have been too successful because there's such a wide variation in the

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role played by Under Secretaries. It varies from practically no role to that of being almost the Secretary himself.

MOSS: What is your view generally of interdepartmental committees as a structural solution to coordination?

BEASLEY: I don't think they are too effective unless they are designated for one particular subject area. They may serve and can serve some usefulness there, but to have such an organization for general purposes I never did conceive to have any particular beneficial results.

MOSS: Okay, I have no more questions. Do you have anything else you want to add at this point?

BEASLEY: I have none in mind at the moment, Mr. Moss.

MOSS: Okay, fine. If anything should occur to me in the future or to you, would it be possible to get together again?

BEASLEY: Sure, you can feel free to call me.

MOSS: Okay, fine. I'll review things, and if there's anything in which I think you can be helpful, I'll get in touch with you. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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