

William C. Battle, Oral History Interview – JFK#2, 3/2/1970
Administrative Information

Creator: William C. Battle

Interviewer: Dennis O'Brien

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Biographical Note

Battle was Presidential campaign coordinator for Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky for John F. Kennedy (JFK) in 1960 and Ambassador to Australia from 1962-1964. In this interview, Battle discusses the internal politics of the Virginia delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1956 and 1960; his appointment as ambassador to Australia; conflicts, both active and political, that arose in the South Pacific during his tenure as ambassador, including West New Guinea (West Irian), Malaysian independence, and the Vietnam War; Australian politics and politicians; and military cooperation between the U.S. and Australia, among other issues.

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William C. Battle – JFK#2

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Second of Four Oral History Interviews

with

William C. Battle

March 2, 1970
Charlottesville, Virginia

By Dennis O'Brien

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'BRIEN: Well, I think the logical place to begin is just simply with...

BATTLE: How did I get there?

O'BRIEN: ...the question: How did you get there? Well, first of all, how did you first meet John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]? When did you first meet him?

BATTLE: Generally—I can't pinpoint the day—it was during World War II in the Solomon Islands at Tulagi. As I recall it,

[-1-]

I was a little ahead of him in PT boat training, but he beat me to the Solomons because he was sent out as a replacement officer to a squadron already there. I picked up a new squadron and trained with that new squadron in New York and Panama, and then we took it to the islands. So he was there when he got there. But we were operating together. It was a close-knit group of young men that had very little demarcation between officers and enlisted men. It was all volunteer, a small outfit, generally living under rather



stringent conditions. Everybody was very close. We became close friends. I was skipper of one of the two boats that ultimately picked him up when we finally found the 109 [PT 109].

O'BRIEN: What were your impressions of him at this point? Did you sense that he had any kind of destiny in politics?

[-2-]

BATTLE: Well, I don't think we ever particularly thought about that. Actually Jack was quite interested in politics. Some of the time, depending on the condition of the islands that we were working in, we would live on the boats, which was pretty close quarters, and some of the times we'd live in tents on the beach. Well, at Rendova, for instance, I can remember graphically that he used to involve himself at night when we weren't on patrol, in deep, you'd say, political, governmental discussions or governmental philosophy, discussions of history. He was quite interested in it, much more so than the rest of us. And he knew a lot more about it than the rest of us, had the background.

O'BRIEN: When did you reestablish contact with him after the war?

[-3-]

BATTLE: Well, I expect it was when he went to Congress. I don't recall chronology too well, but I do recall visiting with him in his office in Congress. I recall—you know little things stick in your mind—that Jack, like all the rest of them, was a very casual fellow among friends. One time I recall visiting him in his office, and he had his shoe off, and he had a great big hole in his sock. I told him it was time he got married; he was at that time a bachelor, living a bachelor's life. Obviously, nobody was looking after his wardrobe for him.

O'BRIEN: During those years that he was in Congress, and then later in the Senate [United States Senate], at any time did you get involved in any speculation as to a political future for either yourself or him?

[-4-]

BATTLE: Well, yes, we did because my father [John Stewart Battle] was in politics in Virginia, you see. At the Democratic Convention [1956 Democratic National Convention], when Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] was first nominated, the Virginia delegation was very much for John Kennedy for vice president. I wasn't at that convention, but I was in touch with Jack by phone. He had called me and because of our past association, I think, my father was very much interested in Jack. He and Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] both at that point were getting along beautifully with the Virginia delegation. Dad went with Jack to see Stevenson to urge him to leave the

Convention open as to who the vice presidential nominee should be. I expect that was the first time that we really discussed it.

After the Convention, he wrote a very nice letter to me expressing his appreciation for what Dad had done, saying that he knew it was because

[-5-]

of our past association. And of course from then on the die was cast; he was a national figure, and we'd stay in pretty close touch.

O'BRIEN: Well, in terms of the Virginia delegation, now in '56, their getting along pretty well, does this mean that he was getting along pretty well with Senator Byrd [Harry S. Byrd, Sr.] at this point?

BATTLE: Yes. Yes, it does. And he was very popular in the Virginia delegation and amongst the really old guard Byrd people. You see the delegations were seated right together at the convention and Bob and Jack were both very popular. One man who ultimately came to be probably not a friend of theirs is an old senator from Dansville, State Senator Landon Wyatt [Landon R. Wyatt]. He was very much for him at that time. Now, let's see, would this have been at '56 or '52?

[-6-]

O'BRIEN: Fifty-six. We were talking in terms of the Byrd machine. I guess it's kind of a naïve question, but what are we talking about when we're talking about the Byrd machine at this point?

BATTLE: Well, it's something that you can't document. Senator Byrd had profound influence over the people who were in political life in Virginia. And it was one in which there was no middle ground. Either they were all against him or they were all for him. And, of course, he maintained his contacts through the courthouses around the rural communities of Virginia.

He was not, in my judgment, the affirmative political boss that so many people seemed to characterize him. He was the world's greatest predictor. His modus operandi was to wait and see which way it was going, and then that's where the

[-7-]

blessing went. Anointment was not his method, which a lot of people don't realize. But if there were people within his group struggling for nomination to a particular office, for instance, his practice would be to wait until he was pretty certain which way the wind was blowing and go accordingly. Very cautious, and I guess you've got to say that almost a negative-type leadership rather than positive-type leadership, unfortunately, characterized his time in the Senate. Very few proposals carry Senator Byrd's name—much opposition.

O'BRIEN: Was it held together with patronage?

BATTLE: Well, yes, but not to any great extent. Patronage in Virginia compared to other states is almost nonexistent. It was held together through the courthouses and the clerks, the judges, commissioners of revenue, treasurers—people like that, who ran for

[-8-]

the local offices. Actually it was made possible because of a restricted electorate. We had an awfully small number of people qualified and of those qualified, a small number participated. I think the conditions gave rise to this. We've had good government. If not the most progressive government, it's been honest. But, now, we're copping the sins come home to roost. The fact that it was restricted and people weren't encouraged to come into the Party— young people weren't encouraged to take part in the considerations and any deliberations—is basically one of the big reasons for the Republican surge in Virginia. Plus the fact that over the years, the Democrats—because of the national Democratic Party—state Democrats inherited the support of the blacks and the labor and, in return, gave nothing to the

[-9-]

national Democratic Party. And this year, of course, the blacks and the labor, in my judgment without good cause, said, "We've had enough, and we'll just defeat the nominee just to show you we can do it." And they did, very effectively.

O'BRIEN: Well, I've heard suggested that the Byrd machine was held together too because it was composed of really a rather restricted group of families within the state, I mean in terms of the people who actually were in the machine. Is there any truth to this?

BATTLE: Well, I suppose that's another way of saying what I was saying: that they didn't allow new blood to come in unless they toed the line a hundred percent. If you look at the state legislature, say, back about '56 to '60, you'll find that there was an outstanding group of young Virginians elected. And

[-10-]

by and large, they've all quit. They haven't been defeated. They quit because they just didn't want to do obeisance for twenty years before they were listened to—Toy Savage [Toy D. Savage, Jr.] of Norfolk, Kossen Gregory. Well, Bill Spong [William B. Spong, Jr.] was amongst them and Army Boothe [Armistead Boothe].

O'BRIEN: Now, putting it into terms of presidential politics and state politics, let's for a moment go back to '56. You were talking about this young

group of people. Are these people in the Convention at that point, and how do they react to the candidacy, let's say, of Adlai Stevenson and Kennedy and Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] for the vice presidential spot?

BATTLE: Well, I doubt that many of them, the young legislators, went to the Convention. I think so many people in Virginia at that point just felt that it was a foregone

[-11-]

conclusion that Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] would be re-nominated and reelected, and why go to the great expense of going to a convention? They probably had difficulty. I don't recall this as a fact, but my guess would be that anybody who really wanted to go could get to go because there was no real enthusiasm about it.

The Convention before, of course, we'd had the very severe floor fight on the loyalty oath. Actually, that's when my father was governor. Byrd, as far as anyone can tell, was hoping that we'd get kicked out. As a matter of fact, when Dad made his speech, which ultimately resulted in our staying in and the others staying in, it was a race for the microphone between him and Tuck [William M. Tuck]. And if Tuck had gotten there, he would have given a hellfire and damnation speech, and that would have been

[-12-]

the end.

O'BRIEN: Well, in those years—we're talking in terms of the Byrd machine a little bit here—is there an ideology, in a sense, that holds the Byrd machine together in those years?

BATTLE: Probably not so much an ideology as government by slogans, maybe platitudes, if you will. Pay as you go. That was the one slogan that kept things.... Keep Virginia out of debt. You know, no debt is tolerable in any way, shape, or form to a state government.

I guess this is understandable because just before the Civil War, Virginia embarked on a heavy debt structure for transportation to build railroads and canals. And, of course, the war came along and those properties didn't pay off, the debt was still there. When Senator Byrd took over in the early twenties,

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it was a great burden. We had tried to refinance it time after time and failed. The taste was still there as to what can happen to a state that does get into a debt they can't pay. In fact those bonds were just paid off very recently, pre-Civil War bonds. So it was the idea of pay as you go.

And with that philosophy, of course, we began to see a heavy debt build up at the local level, cities, counties, and towns, in order to run their schools, under the philosophy that all this should be done locally. As a result of that, of course, you have a great disparity over the state and in the public school system. Now we're paying the price both as a result of integration and a result of improved communications and everybody in Virginia knowing, no matter what part of the state they're in, what's happening in

[-14-]

other parts.

O'BRIEN: Well, now, after the '56 convention, among the Virginia delegation and among the Democrats in Virginia, do you sense any awareness or any interest in promoting the campaign of Senator Kennedy for the presidency in 1960?

BATTLE: No, not really. On a national level, the Democrats-for-Ike movement was stronger than ever. You see, that had started four years previous. Virginia had been overwhelmingly for Eisenhower, and it was perfectly apparent that that would be the case in '56. That's what did happen. I don't think, really, that anybody much believed that he could pull it off at that point until now. When I first became involved with him, people thought he was just pretty ridiculous, the political types in Virginia. Of course, their energies and their activities and the way they would go after

[-15-]

political nominations were quite different from anything that they were going to see in the next four years from the Kennedy team.

O'BRIEN: Well, when do you begin to sense that this is serious business on hand?

BATTLE: Oh, I think right then, that '56 move he made. I thought that was particularly strong. He showed great strength for a relatively unknown candidate, and also tremendous attractiveness if you compare him with anybody else available. Somewhat the same situation that you have today in the nation, in the national Democratic Party. Where is the leadership? Who are they going to turn to? It's complete chaos. If a Jack Kennedy were available today, he could move very aggressively.

O'BRIEN: What do you do in those years? Are you beginning to expand that campaign organization?

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BATTLE: I can't really remember. I don't remember the chronology at all on

that. [Interruption] I don't recall, really, the first time I became involved from the point of view of, "Okay, we're going after the presidential nomination." There are a lot of things that I do remember without knowing the time. For instance, I remember setting up a luncheon at Jack's home out in Georgetown with Harry Byrd, Jr. [Harry F. Byrd, Jr.], just to talk about it. Now, when this was—it's got to have been '59.

O'BRIEN: How did that luncheon go?

BATTLE: It went beautifully. It went beautifully. And this is probably the beginning of another story, you know, that they'd want to do on politics.

O'BRIEN: Sure.

BATTLE: Jack was very direct and forthright about what he was going to do. And Harry was

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equally congenial. They were good friends actually, socially. The thing that I recall vividly about that luncheon was that Harry's summation at the end, as we were standing in the front hall of this Georgetown apartment getting ready to leave was that he could not make any commitment. As he sized it up, he was very fond of Stuart Symington [Stuart Symington II], but he had no chance. Number two, that if Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] were a candidate, he would very much have to be for Lyndon Johnson. Jack acknowledged that, said, "Well, of course you will, but I hope very much that he isn't, or if after that's over and I'm still in, you'll be for me," in effect. Harry's remark was not conclusive in any way, but very, very direct was, "We all have the highest regard for you, and there'll be no problem," or something like that.

Then, of course, history shows that from Virginia's point of view, Harry (and I suspect I had a

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lot to do with it, too) was a very strong supporter of Johnson. I was not for Johnson at the convention, but I was very strong for him as vice president for no reason more. I didn't know Lyndon Johnson. But I felt strongly that the Byrd group should aggressively support a Kennedy-Johnson ticket if Johnson couldn't make it. Harry and Dan Daniel [W.C. Daniel], who was Harry's right-hand man and who's the congressman from the Fifth District in Virginia, managed Johnson's campaign at Los Angeles. They were that close to a full rapprochement.

I guess the next vivid recollection of actual participation was in the winter. Bob called me and asked me if I knew of anyone in Kentucky. They were having trouble getting into

Kentucky. Earle Clements [Earle C. Clements] was very much against them. Could I help them down there? See, I'd worked up in

[-19-]

West Virginia at the law school. I had gone to work with the Columbia Gas System [Columbia Gas System of West Virginia]. I only knew of one guy in Kentucky who turned out to be very significant, Louis Cox. I called Louis. Louis had not met Jack, but just because of our close friendship, he set up a dinner at the Pendennis Club in Louisville at which everybody who was anyone in Kentucky, including Earle Clements, came. It was a tremendous thing. Jack, Bob, and I flew down there. I'll never forget it. It was in the middle of the night, and ice was breaking off the wings of the *Caroline* all the way. We finally got in there, we were delayed. And there was a right good party going on when we got there. But that was the night that Jack first made his move into Kentucky, and he picked up some pretty reasonable support. Miss Lennie McGaugin was there, all of them.

Everybody made nice little statements except

[-20-]

Earle Clements. He talked awhile, and then he looked at Jack, talking about the United States Senate, and he said, "Senator, I'm sure you will agree with me what there is no one in the Senate who isn't qualified to be president. And there's no one in the Senate who's too big to be vice president," obviously pushing him into the second spot behind his buddy, Lyndon Johnson, which was Clement's move.

O'BRIEN: In terms now of the structuring of the Virginia delegation in 1960, what are the factors that go into—well, Senator Byrd holding the delegation the way he did?

BATTLE: Right. Well, the Virginia delegation was selected in convention at Virginia Beach. I had been talking with Senator Byrd, senior and junior, and Dad had gotten enthusiastic about the thing. And we were interested—and this is a little

[-21-]

aside that has never been written about—we were very much interested in having an unstructured delegation not bound by the unit rule. And Howard Smith [Howard W. Smith] was for this. Quite a few people were for this. And I talked to Harry, junior, about it, and he was very skeptical of John Kennedy's ability to get votes. We had agreed that a good yardstick would be his run against Wayne Morse [Wayne L. Morse] in Oregon, which was the day before our convention at Virginia Beach, that primary up there. And the returns would be coming in the morning of our deliberations and convention. But he would be guided to a great extent by Jack's showing against Wayne Morse in Oregon.

Well, the night before, I think it had been pretty well agreed amongst the Byrd organization (that is Burr Harrison [Burr P. Harrison], Smith, Robert Tuck, Dad, the Senator himself) that we would not instruct the dele-

[-22-]

gation. The next morning, the morning of the convention, I saw Harry going into the convention hall, and I caught him. I had just gotten the first returns which showed Jack running well ahead of Morse, and I wanted to give him this. He was very visibly upset, and he said, "It just doesn't make any difference now." "What do you mean, it doesn't make any difference?" "Have you seen the morning paper?" "No, I haven't seen it." It disturbed me.

Well, to make a long story short, what had happened was that Governor Almond [James Lindsay Almond, Jr.], who was then governor, who had had a violent split with Byrd, senior, had been interviewed the night before and, I think innocently, but they thought deliberately, had just commented that he was for an open, uninstructed delegation. This was the headline in the morning paper: "Almond Supports Uninstructed Delegation."

Being political animals that

[-23-]

they were, they apparently, the Byrd organization group read into this an effort by Almond to preempt them and to take credit for Virginia's delegation going, for one of the first times in many years, uninstructed. And so they had said, "Okay, we'll show them." And by George, they made the instructions so tight that had Lyndon Johnson dropped dead at the convention, Virginia would have had to support him. There was no way out.

And the record will show that ultimately Jack Kennedy's nomination was made unanimous, but that isn't so. Virginia never did cast its vote for Kennedy at that convention. That was strictly the Byrd-Almond fight; Kennedy had nothing to do with it. But this made it awfully difficult for us. And ultimately we had quite a few votes in the Virginia delegation for Jack, but we could never cast them.

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O'BRIEN: Does the Byrd-Almond fight get into the presidential campaign at any time after that?

BATTLE: I'm sure so. Yes, sure, because Almond comes out very aggressively for Kennedy after he's nominated. Of course, he's for Johnson all the way down the line at the Convention, vigorously, aggressively, outspoken. But later on he got into the campaign with both feet, which made it that much more certain that Byrd would go the other way.

O'BRIEN: This must've made your role in this thing rather difficult trying to....

BATTLE: It was difficult, plus I was a member of the Virginia delegation. But I

was also working with the Kennedy forces as a coordinator of Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky, I believe. There were some duties in West Virginia. You see Jack had called

[-25-]

me earlier that year and asked me if I'd go out to West Virginia and help in the primary. Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] and I worked southern West Virginia—Kanawha River south. There are a lot of stories there that would make history too.

O'BRIEN: I'd really like to get to those not today, but sometime in the near future. Just one thing I'm curious about at this point. Of course, there are two issues that are bothering people in Virginia at this point. School desegregation is one. And also, I would imagine that the question of Kennedy's Catholicism too was of major concern.

BATTLE: I think that ultimately beat us.

O'BRIEN: How is this affecting, in a sense, the minds of people in the Byrd machine and in Virginia Democratic politics before the primary as far as

[-26-]

the Kennedy candidacy?

BATTLE: When you say before the primary, you mean before the convention?

O'BRIEN: Right.

BATTLE: I don't think that those things were a real bother, because Senator Byrd had sold the state on the theory that Lyndon Johnson was by far the only man that was acceptable. It was all pro-Johnson. Nobody else was really considered. After all he was Texas, he was southern, and he was going to do just what all of us wanted him to do, all of them wanted him to do. It was such an aggressive, affirmative move by the Byrd organization that it wasn't necessary to really consider these other factors. I don't recall any hostility to Jack Kennedy because of his being a Catholic or being from Massachusetts or for civil rights.

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That's before the Convention. Of course, after he received the nomination, these things began to crop up.

O'BRIEN: Did the West Virginia primary have any visible effect on Democrats in

Virginia?

BATTLE: Yes, I think it did. I think it showed that he could win against tremendous odds. I think it did a lot to dispel the Catholic issue, because in some of those back counties of West Virginia with the different religious cults almost, branches of churches and things, Catholicism was really a dirty word. You can't believe it, but I really ran into people that thought that the Roman Catholic stemmed from the Romans who crucified Jesus. I mean I was told this in Mingo County. Sarge and I finally came up with a theory which worked pretty good: "Well, gee whiz, you all are mixed up. This boy's an

[-28-]

Irish Catholic." And to those little fellows down there, that's different. "He's not a Roman, he's an Irish Catholic." [Laughter] It was really that silly out in West Virginia. But I think that his win there, with the polls initially showing him so far behind, and the nature of the state, did help tremendously in Virginia.

O'BRIEN: Just one question which will sort of provide something for me to get into when we start doing a little background work on Virginia politics and do some more in the future: how was patronage handled after Kennedy did become president? Who was making the recommendations?

BATTLE: I was. And here again—it was a very difficult situation—neither of the senators had supported Kennedy. In fact when we were coming on strong, and we were coming on

[-29-]

strong in Virginia.... I think the Harris [Louis Harris] polls at the beginning of the campaign had showed that Virginia was the worst state in the Union as far as Kennedy's chances were concerned. And right at the end, the polls were right up against: 51-49, or something like that. That's when they changed their schedule, and Kennedy made two appearances in Virginia the last week of the campaign.

But when we were coming on strong, Blackburn Moore [E. Blackburn Moore], the Speaker of the House of Delegates [Speaker of the House of Delegates of Virginia] and Senator Byrd's man—I mean this is the whip of the organization—wrote me a letter, which I read in the newspaper long before I received it, saying that he was reliably informed that, if elected, President Kennedy would appoint a Negro as a judge of the western district of Virginia and would I

[-30-]

please enlighten him on that. I've still got the letter, but I don't remember the exact wording. Of course the only thing that we could say was that, "The President will appoint the most

qualified man after consultation with the local bar associations of the area involved,” something of that sort, “and American Bar Association.”

But that had a profound effect. This showed, number one, where the Byrd sentiment was. It really raised the racist flag in southside Virginia, which is predominantly a Democratic issue in this state. That and the Catholic issue, which cut deeply. People today won't admit it, but even in northern Virginia, the supposedly sophisticated area of the state, it was strong up there. Between the two.... What did we lose? Forty thousand votes, forty thousand-odd votes

[-31-]

in Virginia, swinging twenty-five or thirty thousand?

O'BRIEN: At this point, were labor unions as well as, lets say, organizations which were black, in any of the cities in Virginia, a major factor in Democratic politics, or a factor?

BATTLE: They were a factor. The more or less liberal group established what they called the straight-ticket campaign, and they ran their headquarters separately. It was bad judgment, and I think that it was prompted as much by some individual, personal, political ambitions as it was.... It certainly wasn't, "Which way do we get the most votes?" Francis Pickens Miller, who'd been always an anti-Byrd man, headed it up, was one of the heads of it.

Of course, as far as I was concerned, there was no reason for it, because I was managing the Kennedy campaign. I wasn't running for or against Byrd or any

[-32-]

of his friends. I was running Kennedy against Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon]. And we could have done a lot better job had we been coordinated. But I think that they, for their own reasons, wanted to stay separate and wanted to keep their group probably away from me, away from our group.

O'BRIEN: Was this the equivalent of a Citizens-for-Kennedy movement here?

BATTLE: Oh, no.

O'BRIEN: Or was there another separate citizens group?

BATTLE: There was. It never did get off the ground. Let's see, wasn't Byron White [Byron R. White] heading that up nationally?

O'BRIEN: Yes.

BATTLE: Because there was really no need for it in Virginia. There was no area

in which it could operate that wasn't being covered otherwise. You know, they had people

[-33-]

here and there set up, but the straight-ticket group was the labor, black, basic anti-Byrd group. The regular Democratic campaign committee, which I was chairman of, tried to cover all of this.

O'BRIEN: Did you have an success with Senator Byrd at all?

BATTLE: No. It really got worse. This brings us back to the patronage thing. I could have run down the congressmen: the first district congressman was not active; the second district congressman supported him; the third, no; the fourth, no; the fifth, no; sixth, no; seventh, no, and very regrettably, because this was Burr Harrison, who voted for Jack and said he would, but was very fond of Jack and has told me many times since that the one big political mistake he made was letting them talk him out of supporting

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Jack Kennedy against Richard Nixon aggressively. The eighth did not: that was Howard Smith. The ninth did, Pat Jennings [William Pat Jennings]. Pat supported him, not as aggressively as he might have; but that ninth is the southwest where the religious issue was very deep. And Pat carried that area by thirteen thousand. I think Jack carried it by twenty-five hundred or three thousand. Just my recollection.

So then you come down—what are you going to do about the patronage? I wanted very much to see him build up a reasonable backing in Virginia. I wanted very much to see the appointees be people of quality rather than political hacks. Of course, Bob was handling most of this at the time, and they looked to me. And I set up a committee which.... We met pretty religiously, and I had hoped that it would

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be something that would be effective. And it was effective as far as getting good people, but apparently it didn't satisfy the politicians.

That committee was made up of the Governor, because he was the Governor, Lindsay Almond, the Party Chairman, Tom Blanton [Thomas H. Blanton], who was a very good man to work with, and he was a Byrd man; and Sidney Kellam [Sidney S. Kellam], the National Committeeman, who was a Byrd man from way down South. And we screened all of the jobs. Previously, you know, the congressmen and people like that—the Democrats, were not getting the postmaster appointments and things like that in little rural communities. They were going to people who had voted Republican on the national ticket. And this we wanted to put a stop to.

I met with the congressional delegation and tried to tell them as nicely

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as I could that we wanted to go along with all of their recommendations and wanted this to be their prerogative, but we hoped that their recommendations would include those who had supported Kennedy. This turned them off pretty quick. And over the years, I hear back that if the appointments were real popular or if Byrd would be talking to people that liked the particular appointment, that's fine, it was his man. If it was somebody they didn't like, well, you know, Battle's calling all the shots with Kennedy. What can you expect?

But as a result, we did mighty well, I think. We had very first class people in as U.S. Attorneys; the judicial appointments were excellent. Judge Bryan [Albert V. Bryan] moved up to the Court of Appeals; John Butzner [John D. Butzner, Jr.] went on; Tom Michie [Thomas J. Michie] went on the District Court. John Butzner is now on the Court of Appeals [U.S. Court of Appeals]. All on merit,

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really. I'm rather proud of it. I think the first black man that served in the U.S. Attorney's office since the Civil War was appointed in Norfolk.

O'BRIEN: Who's that?

BATTLE: A fellow named Mason [Thomas B. Mason]. The same name as the U.S. Attorney for the western district.

O'BRIEN: Well, we'll depart from that for the time being and go on to your appointment as ambassador to Australia. How did this come up?

BATTLE: Well, from time to time, Bob or the President would say, "Well, you're the only one that's not doing anything." And I really hadn't thought about doing anything. This was something that I wanted to do and believed in. Once it was done, I was very anxious to see the state come along so that

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four years hence, it would be an effective factor in Kennedy's reelection rather than sitting it out again. I think the only call that I made to the President after his election, after his inauguration—we talked right much, but he usually initiated the call. But the only one I made was when he appointed Byron White to the Supreme Court [U.S. Supreme Court]. And I called Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln] to tell him, to give him the word, for what it was worth, that I thought it was a great appointment. He'd make a fine justice. See, Byron was our intelligence officer during the war.

O'BRIEN: Yes. That's what I understand.

BATTLE: And she said, in her usual way, “Well, he’s standing right here. You tell him yourself.” So we got to chatting. At that point, he reiterated, “Well, now you’re the

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only guy that isn’t doing anything. You’ve got to come on and get going.” And he named off some things.

O’BRIEN: What were they, just out of curiosity? What were your alternatives?

BATTLE: Oh, gosh. Well, Bob had previously mentioned quite a few positions in Washington: the Chairman of the Federal Power Commission and things like that, none of which, you know, I really had a great interest in. But Jack—the President—on this particular occasion, mentioned ambassadorial posts: Pakistan, Canada, Australia, [inaudible], I remember, and probably others. He was the kind of guy that you just couldn’t say no to. He’d find a way though.

On this particular occasion, I remember he said that he’d just received a letter from Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy], who was on that trip through

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southern and eastern Asia, saying that she had observed the workings of our embassy and that Bill and Barry [Frances Barry Battle] ought to be in one of them, or something like that. Well, you know, that makes you feel pretty good. You think, well, maybe she’s right.

So I’ve always been fascinated with Australia. I didn’t get there during the war, but I asked him to let me think it over and I’d give him a ring back. We chatted about it and decided it would be a very exciting thing to do. So I went up and talked to him. Here’s the interesting part of it. You see, this was in ’62, early ’62. “Why?” I mean, “Why, do you want me to go to Australia? What is there that I can do that you can’t get somebody else to do better?”

And he really put it down. He talked about Prime Minister

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Menzies [Robert Gordon Menzies] as one of the most effective leaders in the Commonwealth of Nations in the world, for that matter; about the emergence of Australia as a power in Southeast Asia; about the problems that we would face with the Philippines; and about Vietnam. And that it would be important to him to have someone who was personally close and wasn’t bound by the hierarchy of the State Department in a listening post as critical as Australia.

O’BRIEN: He was looking for, then someone that was close and was political rather than....

BATTLE: Yes. And you know, this position had been open for quite a while. And Griswold [Erwin N. Griswold] wanted it desperately, the dean of the law school at Harvard. Jack mentioned this to me. And I'm sure a lot of other people did, because I later came to find out

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that it was the most sought-after post, really, from nonprofessional types. And I expect it still is.

O'BRIEN: When did you first encounter the State Department on this? What kind of a reaction did you get out of them?

BATTLE: Not much of any. Of course—let's see now—Averell Harriman [William Averell Harriman] was Assistant Secretary for Far East at that point. And, of course, he was always terrific. He was delighted, I think, to have someone that had a little background a little broader than just career State Department, he being a political type himself. And he was a tremendous help to me. Bill Bundy [William P. Bundy], of course, was his assistant, very helpful. So I think the State Department, from that point of view, was extremely helpful. Now the briefings that I had to undergo, I didn't learn anything.

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O'BRIEN: Yes. I'd be interested in those.

BATTLE: I didn't learn a thing. They'd give you the people you had to call on, and before long you'd just feel like that it was a status symbol that one's name was on the list that the future ambassador had to come in to see him so they'd know what they were doing. But that really was a waste of time. Now, in a country different from Australia, that might be different, but I didn't feel it was particularly helpful or enlightening or that I got anything that would stand me in particularly good stead.

I did stop off at Hawaii, and Admiral Felt [Harry D. Felt] was CINCPAC [Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific] then. And I had an exceptionally fine briefing there. He just was terrific. They're set up for this type of thing. I went to their briefing room, and they had the whole

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thing set up, beautifully done, impressive, and it made an indelible impression. So that the things that they told me were really very helpful. And, of course, Australia was just emerging from the nationalistic, very definitely isolationist position that the Labour Party had taken them after World War II. And their presence and their participation in the area security of Southeast Asia was going to be quite important, and developed to be quite important.

O'BRIEN: Well, in going through your briefings, let's say, in State and CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and Defense [Department of Defense], do you sense that these people really had an understanding of the content of Australian politics and....

BATTLE: I think so, because there wasn't anything complicated about it. I think so, yes. What I learned—and

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I don't remember how long the briefings took—it could have been done in a day and a half and I'm sure it took two weeks.

O'BRIEN: Did you see Secretary Rusk [Dean Rusk] at all in this process?

BATTLE: Oh, yes.

O'BRIEN: What do you recall from that meeting?

BATTLE: Well, of course, the Secretary was quite busy at that time. He has always been extremely high on my list. He was then, and he remained very, very high as a gentleman and as a team man and as a very, very fine public servant.

O'BRIEN: Well, I suppose when you went there, the big thing was, what—West New Guinea?

BATTLE: Yes, that was the critical thing. And the ANZUS Treaty [Australia-New Zealand-United States] was something that was very critical at the time. Australia needed reassurance on the question

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of whether ANZUS would cover New Guinea. Of course it did. And there was no question that I went with the authority to talk and to go to New Guinea and wherever it was appropriate to emphasize the ANZUS Pact [ANZUS Defense Pact]. Although I must say that my judgment was that we were very sorry that circumstances had arisen that we were called on to spotlight this agreement again, because it's a difficult agreement. It's so encompassing and so broad. I mean, they can get into any type of scrap in the Pacific area, and we're pretty well obligated to take measures.

O'BRIEN: I understand that came up again in the meetings between Menzies and Kennedy in 1963.

BATTLE: Yes, I'm sure it did. Of course, it did. And Menzies reported to

Parliament and you can get the full content of that from.... I may have those things, as a matter of fact.

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That's right. Well, Menzies was over here before I was confirmed, and I met with Kennedy and Menzies at the White House. It came up at that point, and Kennedy reaffirmed our position. But it was very definitely a matter of discussion during the months in which Sukarno and Indonesia were hell-bent on destroying Malaysia. I think it was much more of a topic then than it was on West Irian, because nobody really took the Indonesia threat against Australia particularly seriously at that time, although the New Guinea people and the people in Papua New Guinea, wanted reassurance, and the government wanted reassurance.

But the real problem was, what if Indonesia and Malaysia get into it, and Australia is committed to Malaysia? That's when Menzies and Kennedy had their expansive talks on it, and Menzies reported back to Parliament that he had had a complete and very

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satisfactory understanding with the President. And, as I recall it, to the effect that we expect the Commonwealth nations to look after Commonwealth problems, and he approved that. But if it develops a greater scope than the ANZUS Pact, we certainly are bound by it.

O'BRIEN: Even though Australia is attacked outside of the territorial limits?

BATTLE: Pacific area is what it says. Anywhere in the Pacific area is what that treaty says. You see, it was negotiated right after World War II in order to allay their fears that we had made a mistake on the Japanese peace treaty. The feeling between Australia and Japan was just unbelievable, even when I got there. I believe it was '63, and it may have been as late as '64, that the first Japanese ships came into Sydney Harbor, the first ones that had been in Australia since World War II. And

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they were really on guard for a very severe crisis that didn't develop. And, of course, economic conditions have changed things now. Japan is right up at the top among Australia's leading trading partners, and the economic interests have overcome this. But there was just tremendously strong feeling there, and that was the genesis of the ANZUS Pact.

O'BRIEN: Well, getting back to the West New Guinea thing, now what's the attitude of the President? What's the attitude of the State Department at this point, in going out there, towards the settlement of West New Guinea?

BATTLE: The attitude is that we are not going to get involved. We support Indonesia insofar as it can be done peacefully. But let there be no

mistake, that if Sukarno uses it as a method of creating a diversion from his internal affairs; in other words, if he wants to drive the Dutch

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out by force, we're going to have to take a different view of it.

Now, I recall that Ambassador Suadi [Andrew Suadi], the Indonesian ambassador to Australia, came by to see me not too long after I'd gotten established there, and to talk to me about this, principally because the Asians looked at me as a very close friend of John Kennedy. And this is the way it played down there. We talked just as friends, which we had come to be. He had been a general. Actually, I don't think he was in too good a favor with Sukarno, but he did have strong connections with the Indonesian army.

I knew the conversation would be reported, of course, and I was very, very blunt with him. I said, "Andy, you fellows.... The agreements have already been worked out, the treaties are there, and it's perfectly clear that the

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Dutch withdrawal has been proposed and agreed to. It looks to me like both of you guys, Luns [Joseph Luns] on the one hand and Sukarno on the other, want to make it look for political reasons like they were pushed out and like you did the pushing. If you get into a war, which is inexcusable and unthinkable at this time, we're going to have to recheck our position. And we will not tolerate any aggression, any unnecessary violence on your part."

I'm told, subtly, that the thing was reported very accurately and did have some effect. Whether it did or not, I don't know, but I suppose we had our means of finding out what was reported. I never did press that point too hard. But I was relating this on one of my trips back to Washington, and a fellow who had a position to know said, "Yes, that's the way it was reported back

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to Jakarta."

O'BRIEN: Well, on dealing and going out...

BATTLE: I think there's one other thing that's important on this West Irian, and this only came to me secondhand, but I think it's accurate. I know it was reported back to Canberra this way, and it had a profound effect there. Their Ambassador to the United States, Howard Beale, approached the Secretary of State, Mr. Rusk: "By God, what are you fellows going to do? How many troops are you going to.... When are you going to send troops out there to stop this crazy guy, Sukarno?" And the Secretary said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, how many troops are you prepared to commit?" And that was the end of the conversation. Because they weren't prepared; they didn't have anything. They didn't have any aircraft that were what you'd call first-line aircraft. They

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didn't have any naval force; they didn't have any army. And I think that confrontation and that realization, when it really sank home in Australia, which was again in the early '60s, had a great deal to do with the political turn of the Menzies administration from traditionally inward-looking things to one of international stature and defense, and participation in security agreements in Southeast Asia.

O'BRIEN: This must've been kind of tough for you, though. You're going out there and telling the Menzies government that they're going to have to eventually give in to the Indonesians on the West New Guinea issue.

BATTLE: Yeah. [Interruption] I'm groping now for recollection.

O'BRIEN: That's okay. I have another shot at this, you know. We can edit it out and we can....

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BATTLE: The agreement initially—and I was pretty well up on this at the time when I was there—that the Dutch were pulling out of all of the East Indies except West Irian, and the withdrawal from West Irian would be negotiated within so many years. That's my recollection of it today. Is that reasonable?

O'BRIEN: Oh, yes. As I understand it...

BATTLE: I had read that thing and reread it, and it looked to me like the whole intent was that the Dutch were leaving and, my gosh, if they would leave all of the wealthy parts and then struggle and scrap over West Irian, it just didn't make any sense at all. And certainly not for us to get involved in militarily.

O'BRIEN: As I understand it, Bob Kennedy.... Well, I was just curious about Bob Kennedy and the sort of thing that he gets involved in

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in going to Indonesia. Do you ever get any insight? Are the Australians worried about Bob Kennedy's associations with Sukarno?

BATTLE: Yes, they were worried because they had not been accurately informed on what he told Sukarno, which, as I recall, was just about as blunt as

it could be put: “Mr. President, you make war, and you’re going to lose a friend.” Now, I don’t know how that’s been recorded. But that was my understanding from—who was ambassador?

O’BRIEN: Howard Jones [Howard P. Jones]?

BATTLE: Howard Jones, and from Bob himself. Now I never could say this because it was classified, and we didn’t want it out. But I was able to skirt it a little bit and make very strong statements that we were not encouraging and certainly would discourage, in the strongest possible

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terms, aggressive military action by Indonesia. And on the other hand, in the event of trouble in Papua New Guinea, that any invasion of the border rights there would constitute a breach of the ANZUS treaty. Now with these two statements, I think we were able to weather the storm a bit. It was an uneasy period, and it was an unhappy period in our relationship, but I don’t think it got to a period of being bad because we had these things that we could do.

O’BRIEN: Think back to your appointment. I understand the Australians—of course, this is something since—but they would prefer a political ambassador, in a sense, someone who has White House connections, over a kind of person of the State Department type.

BATTLE: I would like to think that was a result of mine because they didn’t look kindly on mine at all, initially.

O’BRIEN: Oh, is that right? What kind of resistance did you get there?
[Interruption]

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BATTLE: Now where were we? Oh, the professional as....

O’BRIEN: Yes, the professional as a diplomat.

BATTLE: Actually, I think Menzies had wanted a career diplomat when I went, although he was always too good a leader and statesman to say such a thing publicly. I think they were a little bit miffed that a young guy that never held any post before, particularly after this one had been vacant for quite a while, would be sent out. Actually, the press greeted my appointment with the phrase “Kennedy Appoints Amateur from Dixie.”

And when I was sworn in at the White House by the President, I made a comment which apparently got me off on a good start in Australia, that I noted their reception, and I

hoped very much they'd be as sorry to see us leave as they were to see us coming. And the average Australian is a very "fair go"

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type fellow. And I think the connections with the White House proved themselves out in many things that came up during our time there which were a tremendous number of things.

O'BRIEN: Was there very any attempt on the part of the Australians, in regard to this West New Guinea issue, the West Irian issue, at all to, in a sense, trade off support, particularly in the Laotian crisis and later in Vietnam, the development of things in Vietnam, for supporting....

BATTLE: Nothing that I recall. Nothing at all that I was connected with. I think, had they been taking that course, they would have done it through their embassy here rather than through me over there.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever get involved with.... As I understand it, Australia attempted to dump the West Irian thing into the United Nations.

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And there was some resistance on that on the part of the Indonesians, mainly.

BATTLE: I just don't recall. That rings a faint bell, but.... That's really not Menzies' method of operating. He knew that if something went there, it would just be debated for months and months and months.

O'BRIEN: What kind of a person was Menzies?

BATTLE: He's one of the most able, articulate, charming guys I've ever met. He can be tough. He can be brutal. He's got a real good ego, but he backs it up. Wonderful sense of humor. Actually, I think if we were successful, a great deal of it had to do with the fact that we almost became his protégés while we were there. He was not inwardly happy, I'm sure, with the appointment. But I think I was the only guy under sixty-five or seventy they'd ever had down there.

The first

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night he came up to dinner—he and Dame Pattie [Pattie Menzies] lived right across the street from the American embassy. He came in and he made this comment to my wife, "My dear, the most remarkable change has taken place, just wonderful." She said, "What is that?" He

said, "You know the sign at the entrance down at your gate?" "Yes." "It used to say, 'Private, No Admittance.' Now it says, 'Slow, Children Playing.'" [Laughter]

That was, you know, a little thing, but it was the beginning of a very warm and a really affectionate relationship indeed. He came over here after he retired and lectured at the law school at the University of Virginia for two months.

O'BRIEN: Did you have something to do with that?

BATTLE: Yes. We set that up over a brandy one night at the embassy. Seemed like a great idea

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at the time and it was. My thinking on that trip was that frankly, this guy knew Vietnam. He knew the situation. He was the leader of a country that had a great deal at stake in that part of the world. And it was very apparent that the war was becoming and would become more unpopular because it was so removed and President Johnson wasn't articulating the situation very well. And my thought was, this was a great vehicle to get him over here, but his real contribution could be in going around the country talking and telling people just what was at stake and what started this thing, and are these things that are being said fact or fiction? Which is right and which is wrong?

O'BRIEN: What kind of person is Barwick [Garfield Barwick]?

BATTLE: Barwick is a brilliant constitutional lawyer.

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He is a feisty little guy, probably the most able man in Menzies' cabinet, and undoubtedly the man that Menzies had hoped would succeed him. But because of his feistiness and some degree of arrogance with people whom he didn't know, he just didn't make it politically.

O'BRIEN: How were his working relationships with, not only yourself, but other people in the United States government?

BATTLE: Our relationship was excellent. We got along fine. I didn't take offense in any way at his type of humor, which oftentimes you could say was arrogant or downgrading to the other guy. I mean, you've got to be able to laugh at that. I don't believe that our State Department ever gave Barwick his just due. And maybe this was his fault, because he would tend to pop off sometimes and make statements much too blunt and much too

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strong under the circumstances. I felt that he was an awfully good man. He was carrying two portfolios; he was Minister of External Affairs and Attorney General. But he was practical and smart, and we worked very well together in both of those capacities; we had treaties to negotiate, agreements to do, things that involved the Attorney General's office, and some that involved external affairs. We were very, very close friends, I must say.

O'BRIEN: How about Harold Holt [Harold Edward Holt]? Did you have much contact with Holt at this time?

BATTLE: Not that much. Holt was treasurer. We didn't have too much going in that area. Holt just didn't impress me as the type of man that would follow Menzies in the manner in which Barwick might or McEwen [John McEwen] might. Of course, McEwen didn't have a chance because he was in the minority party. But I always classed Barwick and McEwan as the real strong people in that cabinet. Fairhall [Allen Fairhall] was an awfully good man, but probably not of the

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intellectual capacity of these two fellows.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever have a chance to meet any of the opposition Labour Party people? I was thinking of Calwell [Arthur Augustus Calwell].

BATTLE: Oh, yes. Calwell just really didn't have it. He was a nice old guy, and he loved to tell you about his mother being from Pennsylvania, things of that sort. But as a leader, as a strategist, a political planner, he was not effective. Whitlam [Edward Gough Whitlam] was much more aggressive, much brighter, well educated, who was a member of the Labour Party for political expedience. That's where he saw his future. Gough Whitlam's background really was more of the Liberal Party, but there again, that set him aside in the Labour Party because many of the parliamentarians were actually laborers. They were what they said. It was not a labor party that was held together by intellectuals, such as the British Labour

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Party. The intellectual in the Labour Party in Australia was unique indeed, and that was Gough Whitlam.

O'BRIEN: Well, in terms of important things that came up and maybe this is the unusual one rather than the usual one, but perhaps in some of the important things that happened regarding the Malaysian issue or the West Irian issue.... But let's take one, for example, the Cuban Missile Crisis—who did you deal with when you really had something important to say?

BATTLE: Menzies.

O'BRIEN: You went directly to Menzies rather than to Barwick first or....

BATTLE: Well, put it this way. It depended on how important. We had such a relationship six or eight months after we were there that it was no problem, if my communication came officially or unofficially from the White House, from calling up the Prime Minister and

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saying, "Sir, may I see you at your office or at home?" Or, "Would you drop in for a drink this afternoon on your way home?" And there was never more than a two-hour delay in seeing him. Of course, the Cuban Missile Crisis is one of those situations.

After receiving the communication from Washington as to what was going on—this thing took everybody by surprise. I was in Adelaide—and I'll tell you a little joke that maybe we'll take out.... But after I get to the heart of the thing. I delivered all of the background to the Prime Minister before it happened. He had a cabinet meeting right after Kennedy's speech and had made up his mind where he was going. It was in support of the President. And one of his ministers raised the question at that meeting, "Shouldn't we wait to see what England does?"

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England hasn't taken a position on this. Shouldn't we wait to see what the Cabinet there does?" His position was, "Absolutely not. If we act affirmatively, it will make it more difficult for them to do anything else." And I think he was the first one to cable in complete support. I don't know how the cables were received, but I'm sure that, because of the timing and so on, his government was right at the top in their support.

I remember I was to give a speech in Adelaide, my first speech there, as a matter of fact, in South Australia. A very Victorian place, where only men are allowed into these certain clubs, and so on. But they changed the rules and let ladies come this time, but they put them in the gallery. I had a speech on something that, you know, I had to scrap after this hit the papers that morning. And I just talked off the cuff

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on John Kennedy as I knew him, and his responsibility, his leadership, that this was a serious thing that we didn't know where it was going, and if it was going to happen, better now than later.

A little old lady came down, just typical of what you'd expect, lace around her throat, very Victorian. She trotted up the aisle after it was all over. She was just in love with the young man in the White House, just in love with him. She was there to reassure me that he was going to do what was right, you know. And I agreed with her. I never will forget her. She turned away to walk off. She looked around, and she said, "Well, young man, just one bit of advice. Keep your pecker up." That's, to her, to keep your chin up. [Laughter]

O'BRIEN: Yeah. I've heard that comment before, from Australia. I was wondering whether at

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any time you got involved with.... Getting into the Malaysia thing, which I suppose was probably one of the most important things that happened there, there's a number of pressures on the formation of Malaysia that generate. I was thinking mainly of the Philippines: well, first of all, the Philippine reaction to North Borneo. Do you ever get into this discussion with the Australians in concern to their claims?

BATTLE: No, I don't think we did. I don't think on an official basis. Of course, we talked about it. We discussed, you know, informally these positions, but.... This was Marcos [Ferdinand E. Marcos], wasn't it, after he had defeated Macapagal [Diosdado P. Macapagal]? I recall it very definitely, the dispute and the followup, but it didn't seem to be something that was really going to take place [inaudible], a confrontation.

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O'BRIEN: Well, when Sukarno makes it apparent in late 1962 that he's going to oppose the formation of Malaysia, what are the Australians saying to the United States? What is the United States saying to the Australians at this point? I understand that they were a little slow to really take any action. Are they waiting for the United States to....

BATTLE: Well, just to give you a general picture. They were saying to us, "Look, I'll play this full with Malaysia. We can't do any more in Vietnam than we're doing." And we were saying, "We can understand that right now. By the same token, as of now we are viewing Malaysia, Indonesia, as a Commonwealth problem." And they're saying, "Okay." And we're saying, "If it really gets out of hand, then, of course, ANDUS will be triggered. But we believe that our

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presence and our resolve, which is shown by being in Vietnam, will be a very constructive force in preventing this from happening," in effect. I think you put it all in one little cup of tea, and that's about the way it comes out.

But you know, there were constant skirmishes in Borneo and Singapore between the police, the British Gurkhas, what was left of them, and Australian troops on the one hand, with the Indonesians guerillas on the other. They were forever going across into Singapore, and over into Borneo, too. It was a whole lot closer to war than people in this country generally realize.

Malaysia had no military. The Indonesians had, what?—a hundred million people, a well-equipped if ill-trained army, a great big cruiser that they'd gotten from Russia that they couldn't run very well,

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and many aircraft that they couldn't fly very well, but still and all they could be very effective. And at that point, Australia was not armed in any way. You could probably get the figures on it, and you'd be surprised at the number of men under arms that they had and the nature of their fleet and their air force.

O'BRIEN: Yes, I understand they were in pretty sad shape.

BATTLE: That's, of course, what gave rise to their purchases of the Mirage fighter from France, the TFX/F-111 from us, which I was in the middle of negotiations on, the five or six guided missile destroyers they're buying from us, the cooperative logistics agreement that we entered into with Australia to provide a pipeline and parts to help them do this; plus many, many other more minor military areas of help and assistance and cooperation.

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O'BRIEN: Well, are the British and the Malaysians putting much pressure on the Australians for help and support during late '62 and early '63?

BATTLE: I can't answer that as far as the Brits are concerned. I don't see how they could, because they were in the process of pulling out. And this, of course, was one of the things that to me made it very important that we maintain our resolve and our presence, because with the British gone, it's just like asking Sukarno to move. The Malaysians, of course, were trying desperately to get whatever support they could. Tunku [Abdul Rahman, Tunku] and Menzies had a great relationship. Menzies thought he was a grand old boy and not very bright, you know. [Laughter] But some of his underlings were considered to be very capable. Who was it? Razak [Abdul Razak, Tun]? Was he one of them?

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O'BRIEN: Tun Abdul Razak.

BATTLE: Menzies, if you really want to do that phase of it, you want to get his statements to Parliament. Have you got those?

O'BRIEN: No, but I've seen them. There's a book that's just been published that's got a good deal of Menzies' parliamentary statements. There's a

dissertation, too, that I looked at not too long ago that has quite a bit in it. So I think it's documented in a sense.

BATTLE: He made a very, very detailed and direct statement to Parliament in support of Malaysia, complete support, and spelling out agreement and understanding between President Kennedy and himself on the ANZUS Pact.

O'BRIEN: This comes, as I understand it, in '63. I was after—wasn't it—the plebiscite they held, or the U.N. [United Nations] survey they had, or something in that.... I was wondering,

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was there anything—let's say, did you go to him, just prior to his making that unequivocal statement in support of Malaysia, and did he get the assurance of the United States before he did it, of support?

BATTLE: Well, I'm sure he had assurance from us on the ANZUS treaty on this question. But certainly assurance, or complete understanding which he concluded was assurance. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that it's all set down chronologically in that.... You might save that tape while I look here for just a minute. [BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I] The thing that was very sensitive when I arrived here was our support of England's entry into the Common Market.

O'BRIEN: Right. I'd really like to get into that.

BATTLE: Of course, we were supporting it. On arrival, that was one of the questions that was put to

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me, and it was one of those things that I'd been adequately briefed on, and I was able to give our position, which didn't sit well in Australia. The Deputy Prime Minister apparently was misquoted or said in jest that the United States should keep its nose out of other people's business.

O'BRIEN: This was Barwick?

BATTLE: No, McEwen. And of course, the reason was that his constituency was the one that would be most affected by a lessening of the Commonwealth preferences, preferences on trade that England gave to Australia. So then I was on, with my wife, "Meet the Press" down there, and I was put this question very bluntly about Mr. McEwen making this statement. I handled it by saying that I

certainly appreciated his opinion on this, and that as one who has been close to politics, I could understand that the people

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that he represented felt very strongly about this.

On the other hand, I thought it was important for them to know what the United States has at stake, and whether we wanted it or not, here we were classed as a leader of the free world, and we were spending billions of dollars a year in the defense of Europe, and had a million people over there, armed, and families. England was one of the strong allies, and we were very anxious to see, number one, Europe take over some of this responsibility and England to participate in it. And as regrettable as it was that some of the preferences would probably have to go, this was their problem with England, and ours had to be viewed on a very much higher scale.

Here again, a statement that Menzies liked tremendously, because here was a political conflict between Menzies and

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McEwen. And he called up—and he's not given much to compliments—to say that he thought Barry, my wife, and I had handled the program brilliantly. And I knew I had said something he liked rather than something brilliant. [Laughter]

O'BRIEN: Well, that came up in the meeting that you had with Menzies and George Ball [George W. Ball] here in Washington with the President, didn't it?

BATTLE: Oh, yes.

O'BRIEN: There was another thing, too, that I was curious about, and it's something that has sort of continued. There's always been a question there about Quantas [Empire Airways, Ltd.], hasn't there, and the air routes across the Pacific?

BATTLE: Yes.

O'BRIEN: What is the politics of that, domestically, here? Did you ever get any insight into that?

BATTLE: No, I didn't. They had a very good man that was handling it for Australia. I believe his

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name was Anderson. Is that right?

O'BRIEN: I don't know.

BATTLE: But he was negotiating on all of those things, and it just didn't come across my desk. It was Pan Am [Pan American World Airways System] and the French, Air France, and Quantas, all of them struggling for the route, Sydney-Hawaii-California. And we had some little line that was serving Hawaii to Tahiti, or something of that sort, didn't we?

O'BRIEN: I don't know.

BATTLE: It was probably owned or controlled by Pan Am. That was one of the routes that was wanted, into Tahiti and out. But I didn't get involved in that on any large scale.

O'BRIEN: The myth has always been that Pan Am has, as I understand it, sort of frozen other airlines out, and they've done it through influence at this end. Did you ever see any

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indication of that at all?

BATTLE: My impression is yes. But that's strictly an impression because I think that one of the arrows in their bow was a so-called independent line that ran down to Tahiti. But my understanding was that this was not so independent after all; it was probably Pan Am controlled.

O'BRIEN: Right. Well, you didn't come over in 1963 when, as I understand it, Menzies came over to see President Kennedy?

BATTLE: No.

O'BRIEN: Did you get any insight into what he intended and what he was coming over for at that point?

BATTLE: I don't remember. I don't remember that. I'd have to go back some place and review that.

O'BRIEN: Well, some of the things—it seems to me the Test Ban was beginning to jell about then, wasn't it?

BATTLE: Yes.

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O'BRIEN: Was that ever....

BATTLE: That probably was part of it, but I think that—'63?

O'BRIEN: Malaysia?

BATTLE: Malaysia has got to have been in it; Vietnam has got to have been involved.

O'BRIEN: Well, Harriman made a visit, was there for the ANZUS meetings.

BATTLE: Harriman came up for ANZUS, right. And that was right at the time that the [REDACTED] northwest cape was very much in politics. And it's the first time, apparently since World War II, that a major campaign, national political campaign, was conducted on foreign policy rather than on the dole or who was going to get how much for each additional baby; you know, subsidies. Menzies made this judgment. Menzies had a majority of one in Parliament. With the coalition with the Country Party, he still

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only had a majority of one. And he made the decision to go to the country and to use this as his issue.

The Labour Party had taken a strong and, I thought, untenable position that, number one, we don't put any military installations on Australia's soil; number two, we oppose this one particularly because it violates our nuclear-free southern hemisphere doctrine, which is that no nuclear weapons or deterrents or anything else should be put in the southern hemisphere; and that a message could be sent from this place to a Polaris sub that would set off a nuclear war.

Of course, this just gave a guy like Menzies all the room he wanted to run with ridiculing the nuclear-free southern hemisphere, as if the equator were some great barrier across, that would... Russian or Chinese. China was the country they feared most. A missile would hit that barrier and fall dead in the Indian Ocean.

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And asking us to defend them at every turn on the ANZUS and to help them fight the war of South Vietnam and all of these things, without giving them even a communications base which was going to be used jointly by the two nations. He took this and made quite a thing out of it.

Harriman was out just before that. And I remember Calwell came over to visit with Harriman and protested our setting up this facility. And Harriman told him very bluntly, "Mr. Calwell, maybe you'd better get some new friends then. You want us to do all these things, but you won't even permit us on this remote part of Australia to put up a communications

station. Perhaps you ought to look for new friends.” It’s the bluntest comment; an old governor would make them, you know. But Calwell was so far off base in his position, he was just

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wide open for it. And he had begun to wake mentally. He’d lost his grasp, apparently. Just didn’t come off very well.

Menzies, of course, came back with a solid majority of about eighteen. I remember at dinner one night telling him that before the election, which was run purely and simply on that one issue, the American partnership in defense—he knew I wasn’t a career man, and I was vitally interested in politics—and the toughest job I’d had since I’d been in Australia was to see this fascinating political campaign going on, which involved my government and my people and his government and his people, and not be able to take part in it. And he looked at me, and he twinkled, and he said, “My boy, you can take part. Just don’t let the other side know it.” [Laughter]

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O’BRIEN: That’s one thing I was very interested in. Okay. How is Menzies as a politician?

BATTLE: Brilliant.

O’BRIEN: Sort of professional about it?

BATTLE: Oh, he’s brilliant. He’s a brilliant politician. He’s made mistakes like everybody else had made. I suppose his low point was the violent speech at the U.N. on the Suez crisis. But then when he tells you what he went through and how close his team had come to negotiating a solution to that thing with Nasser [Gamal Abdel Nasser] under the Eisenhower years, I can see some reason for his strong feeling on the subject. You know, he was head of the negotiating team that was sent over by Churchill [Winston Churchill] to negotiate with Nasser.

O’BRIEN: Well, now you’ve had a chance to work very actively in national and state politics,

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and while you were in Australia, you were an observer of Australian politics. What do you see in some of the similarities and some of the differences between the two?

BATTLE: Well, I guess you’d have to say that our politicians in America are much more political than they are in Australia. On the other hand, the

political parties in Australia are much more effective than they are in America, in the United States. They have their very strict party disciplines down there, of course. And their leaders, their prime minister is elected from Parliament, from the dominant party. They think that's much the best.

Of course, down there, as in some places here, a fellow can run from any electorate he wants. He doesn't have to be a resident. The executive is subject to questions on the floor.

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He sits on the floor of Parliament with his cabinet every day when Parliament opens, and they have a question period. The opposition asks anything they want. Actually, this is much more of form than it is of substance because if it's anything technical or tedious, they don't get an answer.

We used to argue back and forth as to which was the best. I don't know which is the best. Some pluses on one and some on another.

O'BRIEN: Do you think that Menzies got any better understanding of American politics by this relationship that you had developed with him, seeing that you were basically a political ambassador?

BATTLE: Yes, I think he did. I think that his associations previously had been very much on the Republican side: New York, Wall Street bankers, people that we helping him

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finance down there. He had great admiration for Felix Frankfurter because of his intellectual capacity; they were great friends. Felix was probably the most liberal person he ever talked to. He had great respect for Dean Acheson [Dean G. Acheson] and was a great friend of Harriman's. But I'm not sure he—politically, he certainly didn't see eye to eye with Dean Acheson. Naturally, because Acheson for so many years thought that if it were not Europe, it wasn't worth the time. But he became a great admirer of John Kennedy's. And he was admittedly a Nixon man during the election inasmuch as he could.

O'BRIEN: Right.

BATTLE: He was tremendously impressed with Kennedy's intellect; with the fact that he could get a straight, quick answer out of him; that whenever he went to talk with him, Kennedy knew the subjects, had a wit; that he was in depth, too.

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And this he hadn't found true with Ike and subsequently he didn't have that communication with Johnson.

He felt and expressed himself to me many times that Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis was his single greatest step toward world peace that was taken in his time. It called a bluff; it proved, certainly for that period, maybe for a longer period, that there was a point beyond which Russia would not go. We learned a great deal, and it took great courage to do in that way. He said this time after time.

And this led, to me, to an interesting discussion I had with the Russian ambassador shortly after the Missile Crisis, who was one of their top boys, too. I expressed my relief and pleasure that our nations hadn't gone at it. And he, without any embarrassment or sensitivity at all, said, "Oh, well, that was unthinkable." He said, "We were just

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testing your young president to see how far we could go." He said, "Your country and mine can never afford a nuclear exchange." Then he got very serious. He said, "We would both lose, and the have-nots would pick up the pieces." Of course, I just got the impression he disliked the have-nots more than we did.

O'BRIEN: In taking in terms of the have-nots, did you ever get any indication of, perhaps, through the Soviet ambassador, Soviet attitudes towards China, either there or the war in Vietnam?

BATTLE: No. They were so guarded, one doesn't know. You know, you read these melodramatic things that are supposed to take place. Certainly it's true that the Russian embassy down there was a key listening post, for Russia. And it certainly is true

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that they've had their Skripovs [Ivan Fedorovich Skripov] and people like that. While I was there, they got the key secretary passing secrets, of all things, in a graveyard in Sydney. I mean, the meeting was that clandestine, at night. Booted him out.

O'BRIEN: This was an Australian secretary.

BATTLE: No, it was in the Russian embassy, a Russian who was secretary at the Russian embassy in Australia.

O'BRIEN: I see.

BATTLE: He was a spy.

O'BRIEN: And he was spying on the Australian government?

BATTLE: Yes. Or any other western power he could get to.

O'BRIEN: This was Skripov?

BATTLE: Well, there were two of them. One before, and one while I was there. And Skripov was the one while I was there. Who was the one before? It was a very famous spy case.

O'BRIEN: I don't know.

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BATTLE: Well, anyhow, there were two of them. One of them while I was there. We found the first Russian ambassador and his wife to be very decent folks. He was an older fellow. He obviously had family in Russia that he was concerned about. She was just delightful, a matronly-type person that liked the children, and you could tell that there was a great yearning for her own children. She would come up and visit from time to time. My wife and our kids got to know her pretty well.

Then one of the ladies that worked there, whom I never met, whom Barry thought very highly of, used to go on picnics with them up on the river. All these people just seemed so desperately lonely and craving for some sort of friendship. And this latter gal was finally found hanged in the backyard of the Russian embassy one morning. Nothing more said about it. I don't

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know.

And then the new ambassador came. I don't have the book on him, but I understand he was one of their top secret service types. And he was the one I was talking to about the Cuban Crisis.

O'BRIEN: Getting on to the issue of Communist China here and all. I suppose this was of some substance in your.... [Interruption] I think the point is, does it come up in the context of your ambassadorship?

BATTLE: Yes, it does. Actually, it comes up in several contexts. One, a matter of keeping them informed on our position with reference to admission to the U.N., and a position that Australia supported, and probably not without some political problems at home. But they did. And secondly, Australia's then practice—I suppose, it's continued;

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I don't know—of making very significant wheat sales to Australia [China], and our opposition to any trade with Communist China.

Australia's position, and I thought quite well-taken position, was that this was not a thing of military significance. If they didn't get the wheat from Australia, they'd get it from

somewhere else. And that they weren't doing what we were afraid they might do, of giving them long-term credits which in the future could be used as a pressure vehicle against Australia to do thus and so on the admission question. They were very careful to keep their credit short term and current. You can well imagine that the sale of wheat through the wheat board, if the payments weren't made, would become a political problem. People wanted their money, and so on.

O'BRIEN: So in your judgment, the main reason that they do not recognize Communist China, and they

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take the position in the U.N., is because of their alliance with the United States?

BATTLE: Certainly they respected our position. Whether that's their main reason, I hesitate to say, but it was certainly a significant thing in their thinking. At the same time, their trade missions and their wheat board and people of that sort were granted reasonably free travel through China. And they had a pretty good book on China.

O'BRIEN: Is that book, in a sense, useful to...

BATTLE: I think so.

O'BRIEN: ...U.S. intelligence sources?

BATTLE: I think it is useful.

O'BRIEN: This goes into this area of military cooperation which, at least on the surface, looks like there's a good deal more in the way of military cooperation and developments in the direction of military cooperation, while you were there as ambassador. What role do you play now in the context be-

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tween the Defense Department and the Australian Defense Ministry, and the other agencies that cooperate with each other?

BATTLE: Actually, the role was really rather significant. It may have been by happenstance, because of the areas in which I found people that were very congenial and became good friends. The chief of the air staff, Val Hancock [Valston Eldridge Hancock], who selected the TFX/F-111, was a very dear friend and still is. Shurger, who was head of the Joint Chiefs, was a good friend. Harrington [Wilfred Hastings Harrington], the Chief of Staff, Navy, was a good friend. All of these

people, as well as Fairhall, who was then Minister for Defense, were extremely friendly with us and realized that there were some things that I could help them with in Washington.

Or course, in building up their defenses they had to look to us. I mean, they had an unfortunate experience with the Mirage and with their dealings

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with France on that. Shurger made the deal, and he was very frank to admit that it was a wrong deal. They had trouble with delivery; they had trouble with spare parts; they had all these problems that they thought perhaps they wouldn't have with us, and with our interest in the area. So I didn't participate except very superficially in the arrangements for the guided missile destroyer. I was involved to some extent.

I participated very significantly in the arrangements with the Defense Department on the financing and the terms of the F-111 sale, which was to give them, interchangeably, first delivery with us and the cost figures that they could handle. When I came over here, I negotiated this one or at least told, I think it was Gilpatric [Roswell L. Gilpatric] at the time, what I thought—and Nitze [Paul Henry Nitze] was involved in it—would

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be palatable for the Australians.

I had found out that this was their number one plane that they wanted. A lot of people thought it was the Phantom or the Vigilante or some of those that were current then. And at that time we were trying to get them to take a big bomber that we had in excess that we would send them over there to fly around on election day for Menzie's benefit. They wanted this one. Hancock had gone all over the world, looked at every airplane that would be available, and selected this one, actually, when it was still on the drawing board. Timetable-wise, performance-wise, being his main considerations.

O'BRIEN: There was some pretty sharp competition between the British model and the TFX.

BATTLE: Oh, yes, and this was a real political problem, too, because the air ministry sent their top man down to make the pitch to Australia. I'd

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forgotten about that. Very definitely. But the problem was whether or not that aircraft would ever be built. And apparently the Australians found out that there was a very real question as to whether or not it would be built. I believe that was the basic question involved.

O'BRIEN: Well, the Canberras were a very short-range bomber which they had, weren't they?

BATTLE: Yes, that's right. They were medium bombers.

O'BRIEN: Did we actually offer them the use of planes for a while?

BATTLE: Yes. This was—I was trying to think. It was a...

O'BRIEN: Probably the B-47s.

BATTLE: B-47s. That's right. And we made them a very good offer for that, with adequate support. And we had several of them over there. This was during the campaign of the parliamentary election that Menzies had called.

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And it had quite a significant effect to have that big bomber flying around at a time of distress in Asia, the VLF question being very much in the forefront, and to show what we were willing to do to help them, when the main issue was taking a role in defense and partnership with the U.S., or staying isolationist and staying out.

O'BRIEN: Well, in the development of some of these—many things. I guess there was cooperation on everything from spare parts to various small arms weapons systems and things like this—are you pretty much on top of this? Or are these negotiations that are going on....

BATTLE: No, I was pretty much on top of it. They were going on with other people there involved, but I kept abreast of them. The Defense Department sent out their team on cooperative logistics when they were working out that agreement. When we were in

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the final stages of negotiating a status-of-forces agreement, some people from State and Defense came up.

But I was involved, apparently more aggressively than most ambassadors get involved in this type of thing. But I wanted to be an activist. I wanted to work with them, and I thought I had something to offer. When we got into a problem on their beef imports from this country, I was able to pick up the phone and call Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] and get the thing established, because it was taking place in Congress, and it was a bill that was going to definitely change materially the trade balance situation and would have been very harmful to our tobacco interests. Rather than send a cable that ultimately finds its way to some desk in the Department

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of Agriculture, you can call them up directly. The same was true with the status-of-forces agreement and many of these others.

O'BRIEN: So, as ambassador, your ability to sort of cut through the bureaucratic red tape...

BATTLE: I think it was helpful.

O'BRIEN: ...was a very useful thing to....

BATTLE: It was to me. Sure.

O'BRIEN: And Menzies had full realization that you were able to...

BATTLE: Yes. I think so. And I think that's probably the reason that President Johnson went forward and sent a close friend of his.

O'BRIEN: As I understand, the U-2 is operating out of Australia in these years. Are you fully informed about what they're doing and....

BATTLE: I knew what they were doing, and I didn't press the point. I had enough other things.

O'BRIEN: As I understand it, they were doing some surveillance of Indonesia, weren't they?

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BATTLE: Well, I guess they were. And actually, I think they were also taking high-altitude air samplings and things of that sort. But you know that they were looking around while they were doing that.

O'BRIEN: Sure. As I understand, there's an agreement on chemical-biological testing, too, with Australia in Woomera. Is it Woomera? I don't know how to pronounce it.

BATTLE: Woomera. I was not aware that they used Woomera for that. They may now. We were working in conjunction with their army in some of the very remote northern areas in this field of chemical warfare. I knew it was going on. I knew we had our teams up there. Their chief would stop in and brief me, but I didn't become involved in that. Woomera was more the missile range that tracked the satellites and....

O'BRIEN: Oh, I see.

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BATTLE: Actually, when one of the boys was orbiting, we were Woomera, and we'd look at a chart and see his heart beat and see.... I mean, it was just really a tremendous setup. And it was also the place that they had their ELDO [European Launcher Development Organization] rocket which they were trying to fire, that really never did amount to much.

O'BRIEN: Was there much exchange of information or cooperation on—of course, back here at this time, they had the counter-insurgency, sort of, fad. In many ways it was a fad that was beginning to develop, or a phase. Were the Australians ever involved in any exchange of people in counter-insurgency....

BATTLE: I would say that, just my general impression was that, at the proper levels we had complete exchange of information.

O'BRIEN: That's another point, too, on this exchange of intelligence. Does Australia depend on the United States as a source of—let's say, while

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you're there as ambassador—intelligence information?

BATTLE: I wouldn't say they depended on us. They had very effective groups of their own. Certainly there was an interdependence. We had people on their teams, and they had people on their teams. We would disseminate information and sift it out together.

O'BRIEN: I have a few questions on some economic problems. I noticed this....

BATTLE: Are you getting what you want?

O'BRIEN: Oh, yes. Very definitely so. I think it's very good in many ways, particularly the observations on politics.
When the Kennedy round came up on the negotiation of tariffs and some reciprocal agreements, as I understand since, there's been a lot of criticism in Australia if they didn't try to go to reduce that 25½-cent tariff on a pound of wool. Did you ever get involved in that at all?

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BATTLE: Yes, very definitely. One really unpopular speech I made was before the New South Wales Chamber of Manufacturers. They asked me to

speaking on the Trade Expansion Act [Trade Expansion Act of 1962] and the Kennedy philosophy of freer trade, cutting down artificial barriers, helping to develop the underdeveloped countries, and so on. And, of course, I was talking to the industrialists of Australia who had gotten very fat on a high protective tariff, the agricultural people, who had gotten very fat on not only the protective tariff, but on very strict quarantine regulations. And these folks weren't particularly interested in seeing their sacred cow slaughtered. But I think the government had come to the conclusion that these artificial incentives, such as tariffs, quarantine regulations and trade preferences, Commonwealth preferences, were not in the long-run

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interest of a vigorous economy down there. And what you do about it is another question, and a very serious political question.

But wool, tobacco, and beef were all contained in one agreement that we had negotiated earlier, way back there. And they had gone—mixing percentage on tobacco—from about two percent up to 49 percent. So it wasn't a one-way street at all. Of course, we had a tariff on their wool, and we had quotas on their beef.

Beef became a difficult problem. I never have known exactly why. I think it was that the cattle associations back here almost priced themselves out of the market because of the type of farms that were really raising cattle, you know, so many of them for tax purposes. You had to find a scapegoat, and you had to blame the poor market on somebody, and they blamed it on the beef imports from

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Australia. In talking to American cattlemen, I found out that a lot that was being said in Australia was quite true, and that is that the American beef people didn't understand the Australian program. A lot of this went to the labeling of meat. I mean, what was meant by choice or something else didn't mean the same in one country as it did in another. And actually, what they were sending in was purely manufacturers' beef and beef to be used for ground meat, and things of that sort. I wasn't choice stuff.

But we had our problems with that, that night that we got McEwen and his chief, Allen Westerman, to meet with Bill Rodman and myself—Rodman was out agricultural attaché—and we met the night through, working this thing out and called in to Freeman. He took the proper steps in Congress that it didn't erupt.

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We were able to keep the mixing regulations on tobacco within reason. We were able to give them what they needed on beef. And wool just continued to be a bit of an argument. They are very effective in what they can do down there. It's still a small nation.

I remember Allan Westerman, who again is a very delightful, close friend—comes by to see us every time he comes to the country now—was the Secretary of Trade and Industry. I questioned him on the agreement that we'd made on beef. "What's going to happen, you

know, Allan, on this yearly quota when we get up to two months before the year is out and you've used up your quota and some people are going to want to sell beef in the United States? Are we going to get another flap? He wasn't a bit worried about that. Apparently, he felt he

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could control, through the year, the bottoms that were available to ship that beef to whatever part of the world he wanted to send it. He wasn't worried about overproduction at all, he'd send it elsewhere.

O'BRIEN: You also have the problem of investment. Not the problem, but a lot of U.S. investment goes into this area.

BATTLE: Yes.

O'BRIEN: What do you see there? What's the factor for that investment, the sudden surge of investment?

BATTLE: Well, at that time, it was a very real opportunity for tremendous return. It was a country that was just beginning to develop. The price times earning ration was nothing compared to what ours is. Opportunities for modernizing and upgrading manufacturing equipment, the technical

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know-how that would increase production, a protected market, a market that wasn't hampered in any way by antitrust legislation: all these things resulted in rather considerable profits to the successful manufacturer.

And so the American money was going in there. It was a country as big as the United States, with only eleven million people. A stable country, one of the few stable countries in the Asian area. General Motors—Holdens [Holdens, Ltd.] sells automobiles from its Australian plant all over Asia. Send them to India, sends them all around.

O'BRIEN: What role does the ambassador play in this kind of, basically, private arrangement? Did you do anything in the way of encouraging for the Australians investments in their country?

BATTLE: Yes.

O'BRIEN: Or vice versa? Did you....

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BATTLE: Well, when I first got there, I found that our businessmen gave the

embassy a pretty wide berth. They wanted to do their own job. I felt that if we could work out a practical system that would be appealing to the businessmen, there were tremendous services the embassy could render. And so we did try to get closer contact with the business community. We did try to find out when businessmen were coming through, responsible people that we could help. I think, in quite a few instances, we were able to do this and create a better attitude between the business community and our posts abroad.

This wasn't unique to Australia. Any of these people that you talk to really aren't particularly interested in going in to talk to an economic counselor that's just going to give them

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statistics and some theoretical approach to things. But if you could have the particular minister in for lunch that operated in the area that these people were interested in, if you could direct them to the government leaders in the states to which they were going—government still plays quite a role in business in Australia, much more so than it does here—it could be very helpful. I know that the traffic at the embassy in this particular area picked up tremendously during the two and a half years we were there.

O'BRIEN: Does the balance of payment problems and this interest equalization tax and any of these things get involved in the context of your....

BATTLE: Let's see. The interest equalization tax—what was the date of that

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enactment?

O'BRIEN: It was in '63, I believe, wasn't it?

BATTLE: Well, it was late '63.

O'BRIEN: I'm not sure of the date, but it seems to me it's late '63.

BATTLE: It didn't have that much effect because, you know, that only applies to ten percent or less, I think, of an investment. It doesn't apply to a loan in some circumstances. And what our people were doing would be to come down there and either buying out a plant, which the Australians didn't like, or in partnership with an Australian concern, or a group setting up new operations in which they'd have a lion's share of the investment, much more than any ten percent. The Australians encouraged American investment if it brought in something new, if it

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added new jobs, or it was, in effect, something different from buying out an existing concern and having the simple effect of taking the profits from Australia to the United States.

O'BRIEN: Yes. They're quite concerned about that, aren't they?

BATTLE: Yes.

O'BRIEN: In going back over it, what do you consider some of your more successful efforts in either recruiting capital in the United States to go into Australia, or in helping, let's say, a good, legitimate American business get established in Australia? Is there anything that stands out in your mind?

BATTLE: No. There were any number of things that happened that we were involved in, but I don't think that there's anything that could be

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reported as really significant.

O'BRIEN: Well, what time do you have, just out of curiosity?

BATTLE: 12:30.

O'BRIEN: Well, I would like to get back to you again sometime. And I know that you have a 2 o'clock appointment....

BATTLE: Hell, I can go on. I can do anything I want to do.

O'BRIEN: Well, fine. I don't want to take you away from your lunch hour and a chance to get out, so....

BATTLE: Well, that doesn't bother me.

O'BRIEN: Well, that's fine. Let's go on then. Did the question of the Pacific Free Trade Area, I understand that at one time was.... Did we attempt to push on the Australians the idea of a Pacific Free Trade Area?

BATTLE: That just strikes a remote chord. I don't

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remember much about that.

O'BRIEN: Where's the investment going that's going into Australia in those years?

BATTLE: Well, a great deal of it's going in manufacturing. A lot of it in oil and gas and mining. American Metal Climax [American Metal Climax, Inc.] has a big operation in iron ore. Cleveland Cliffs [Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company], people like that. Alcoa [Aluminum Company of America] has a big bauxite operation down there. And a lot of it's going now in agriculture. King Ranch and people like that have brought tremendous holdings. David Rockefeller [David Rockefeller, Sr.] of Chase Manhattan [Chase Manhattan Bank], people who've got big holdings in western Australia.

O'BRIEN: Well, backtracking a little bit, getting back to the TFX issue. You said you had been deeply involved in the TFX thing. We talked about it a little. Did the purchase of the TFX ever cause

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any internal crisis or any real problems in the Australian government?

BATTLE: No, it was a question that was banted around a bit by Labour, by the opposition. And I'm sure that there were efforts made by the other aircraft companies to have Australia go a different route. I think the only really serious flap was a result of the British aircraft that was being considered for the same role.

O'BRIEN: In regard to Vietnam and Laos, you had both problems there when you were ambassador; both things were going at that point. What was the Australian attitude towards Vietnam? Were they anxious for the United States to become militarily involved in....

BATTLE: I think so, yes. I think that certainly the Menzies government felt that, and this is particularly true after the Cuban Missile

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Crisis, which they viewed as a real wedge in the China-Russia relationship. It appeared down there that China was very hopeful that Russia would precipitate the nuclear war. They would be one of those who would pick up the pieces. Menzies and his people felt very strongly that this was just an expansion of communism from Peking: warlike, aggressive, militarily-oriented communists that would find it intolerable to live within any free state or free people in the middle of it, and that it would just be a creeping thing coming down through Asia, and much against their national interest.

So they were very concerned that we be involved, of course. They had their advisory teams there from the beginning, in small numbers, but the man in charge of their guerilla warfare unit up there, a fellow named Colonel Saran, apparently was one of the most

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respected people there.

O'BRIEN: Does he have any difficulty in getting them to make an actual physical commitment of people or resources in Vietnam...?

BATTLE: Well, I think the commitment was made before I got there. Their people were up there in small numbers. We had a rough time of it with one of the splinter political parties—Democratic Labor Party, I guess they called themselves. It was a Catholic-led group which reacted pretty violently to Diem [Ngo Dinh Diem] in Saigon. We were given credit for the assassination and coup and everything else.

O'BRIEN: Did you ever get mixed up in Australia's immigration policies at all? Is this something that the U.S. embassy ever became concerned with?

BATTLE: No.

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O'BRIEN: How about the test ban? Do you remember anything about the attitude of Australia towards the test ban?

BATTLE: Well, it was very pro, very pro. I think here again the Australian ambassador to the United States is the first signature on that agreement.

O'BRIEN: In your dealing with the embassy there, and not only that, but in Washington, what is your feeling as an outsider and as a person who was a political ambassador towards the foreign service, the embassy staff you had there, the people you're working with there, the career type people from Washington? Did ever have any difficulties with them?

BATTLE: Not really difficulties. I guess the question you always put to yourself when you come in from the outside is, How many of

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these people would I hire if I were hiring for my private business? And I can't say that my reaction is any different than if I'd gone into a corporate office or something of that sort. I think that the biggest problem in the Foreign Service is the tendency to look down the same pipe all the time. I think the fact that you're graded by the fellow that's up above you has a tendency to destroy initiative and independent thought. I found so often, much more often than not, that when I truly wanted, and I always wanted, an objective evaluation, I'd usually get what someone thought I wanted to hear rather than what they

really thought. I was one that insisted on knowing the bad as well as the good, and I found it was very hard to get at facts if you just listen to people.

O'BRIEN: Did you have a pretty good DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]?

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BATTLE: I had a good DCM. The first one was Bill Belton [William Belton], who was quite good and very, very popular in Australia. And he was one of those unique guys that I usually felt was telling me the way it was. He was very helpful. The second one, Jack Lydman [Jack W. Lydman], was an entirely different type from Belton. He was an extremely bright fellow. His whole sphere of influence and interest was Indonesia and those countries of old Indochina. He probably didn't relate to the average Australian nearly as well as Belton did. On the other hand, he certainly knew the area of Asia well, and he spoke Indonesian and all the dialects up there. He's now our ambassador to Malaysia. I expect he's doing quite well.

O'BRIEN: Well, did you have pretty full knowledge of, and cooperation from not only the staff, but the military people that were in various capacities, and information service people, and the CIA and all these people?

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BATTLE: I think that the spirit, the morale, was always quite good. It was not a hardship post by any manner of means. Never any problem that I knew of. I guess there were problems, but—well, we got to have personnel problems from time to time, people that had been in the system too long, and things of that sort.

O'BRIEN: No embarrassing situations, though, that developed?

BATTLE: No. Just minor things. You have to stand up for yourself, or else you'll get run over top of. I think that's pretty plain. One occasion, it looked to me like they were using the post of Consul General at Melbourne for purposes of musical chairs back at the department. Somebody wanted the post that the fellow had, and without making any inquiry as to what the embassy

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thought, they made an appointment from Washington. I checked into it and found that, number one, the fellow they had appointed just would not fit Melbourne and what was needed; and number two, that he probably was in such bad health that he never would get there.

I called back and made a pretty strong protest and got nowhere with it, actually. Apparently, when the fellow came in to be briefed and talked to Harriman, it was cut off just

like that. Unfortunately, the fellow died about three weeks later. I mean, it was just one of those shocking things that for personal reasons people at the Department had just shunted him off to Melbourne so they could have his post available.

As a result, I suppose, when they filled it the second time, I got a call from the Secretary's office telling me who it was going to be and wanted to know if that was okay. And it was Linc White [Lincoln White], and of course, that was great. I mean, when you get the chief

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newsman from the State Department coming as Consul General, that goes over pretty good; it upgraded the post.

O'BRIEN: Did you use the so-called country team organization pattern for your embassy and keeping your people coordinated?

BATTLE: Yes, I think so. To some extent, we.... Of course, Australia's so big, you couldn't have meetings. We didn't have the funds. You just couldn't bring somebody from Perth or Brisbane, or even Melbourne and Adelaide, for that matter, without increasing every cent.

O'BRIEN: How big was the total embassy, an organization of that kind?

BATTLE: Oh, I wouldn't know. I suppose we had—gosh it would just be a guess—twenty-five or thirty Americans, maybe more than that at the embassy itself. But we had major posts, you see, at the other cities, particularly Sydney and Melbourne.

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O'BRIEN: During the time that you had dealings with the department, not only through the Australian desk, but through the Far East, you had two guys there, Harriman first, and then later Roger Hilsman. Did you notice any difference in the two of them? What were your reactions to both these guys in the capacity that they filled in the Far East?

BATTLE: I don't think I ever thought about comparing them, really.

O'BRIEN: What kind of a guy is Hilsman?

BATTLE: Roger is an extremely bright fellow, opinionated—I reckon with justification—aggressive, direct.... I don't know. He came up to give a series of lectures while I was there and stayed with us. Relations were very good, but I don't know that I'd be in a position to really judge what type of fellow he was.

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O'BRIEN: Was there ever any serious differences between the embassy in the Far East and the Department on any issues that, let's say, just came up, or that you'd have kicked up to the President for a decision?

BATTLE: No, I don't think so. Everything involving Australia was quite smoothly handled. We would have usual long telephone conversations on details of the status-of-forces agreement, and what you can do and what you can't do, and why you can't do it. We'd run amuck of the bureaucracy, but I don't think that we had any real violent disagreements on any basic policy.

O'BRIEN: In that post, you know, as ambassador to Australia—I guess an ambassador has a couple of roles he plays. You know, chief diplomat. He's also a kind of public relations man. In looking back and sort of reflecting on that, what do you think is most important in that post?

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BATTLE: I think that the type of person you need at that post is one who can deal most effectively with members of the Australian government and the ministry. That does not have to be an experienced, smooth diplomat. I mean, if you have one that's going to raise speculation in the practical Australian mind: "Well, is this guy telling me what he thinks, or is he just leading me on?" you're not going to do so good. I think that the direct, down-to-earth, practical approach of someone who does his homework and is willing to work, a vigorous guy. You've got to be willing to go do what's needed there.

Australia is still small enough that people in government are quite honest. And yes, if they want to, they can really take a lot of short cuts that make a tremendous difference in getting something done or not getting something done. I

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don't know that I would say it had to be a political appointee as opposed to a career man. Certainly I wouldn't say that. But I think that a good political appointee would not find anywhere in the world the job that he would be more adaptable to in the Foreign Service than that. If he's a good one. Now, if you're just getting somebody to pay off a political obligation or because he gave money to the campaign, you can fall flat on your face.

O'BRIEN: Well, I'm looking at in from the Australian, the Sydney, perspective, they had a change in presidents that takes place, which leads into, really, a couple of questions. First of all, I imagine it might be worthwhile just to pursue the reaction to the assassinations on the part of Australia. And on

the other thing, did you see any real changes in policy towards Australia or towards Southeast

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Asia as a result of Lyndon Johnson becoming president?

BATTLE: Well, the reaction to the assassination was one of just total grief. The country actually stood still for weeks, just shocked, in disbelief. There were just outpourings of sympathy into the embassy, unbelievable. Little guys, little gals, stopping by just to sign the book, tears. Probably as strongly felt as anywhere in the world.

I know we had a memorial service at the Catholic church there at Canberra. An hour before the thing started, you couldn't get inside. At the time the Davis Cup team was over there, and all those boys went with us. The Governor-General was as moved as anybody you've ever seen; he was there. We have a picture that shows the crowd outside, and standing on the outside was the fellow who'd just

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won the Nobel Prize. Just big people and little people, all very little on this particular occasion, not very big.

I don't know. I didn't see any particular change. President Johnson couldn't have been better. He absolutely said, "No resignation." Later on, he suggested that I might want to go somewhere else. When I ultimately resigned, I did so on my own motion rather than on any pressure at all from the White House.

But there was a great difference. I mean, to me, not being a career man, but being a professional representative of the President, I found that I couldn't get up the steam that I had had. I couldn't go on a moment's notice and talk with confidence that I was expressing the views of the President, that what I was doing or saying would probably have his approval. I felt further that I'd had some degree of success because I'd been the close

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friend of Jack Kennedy's, and it was in the best interests of both countries that that thing continue. And, of course, he did appoint his oldest advisor, Ed Clark [Edward A. Clark].

O'BRIEN: Well, what went into your personal decision, if I may ask, to resign your appointment?

BATTLE: Well, I actually stayed longer than I planned on staying. When I went, I told President Kennedy that I thought I could serve him better by working in Virginia, particularly with the next election. He said, "Well, we'll get you back for that." So I would have probably come back a little bit earlier than I did. I got back here about September of '64. And I timed that so I could participate to

some extent in the Johnson-Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] race, but it was not nearly as predominant a thing as had Jack lived. I probably would have come back that spring rather than that fall.

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O'BRIEN: One thing I'm curious about is, in looking back at that experience in Australia, did you feel that Australia had reached the right point of dependence? Were they too dependent or not dependent enough?

BATTLE: They're quite independent in a responsible way. Actually, I felt that the things I had gone to do, we had done. Time was dragging on my hands. There wasn't a whole lot to be done that, you know, would keep me involved. We had negotiated agreements on tracking stations and radar sites and things of that sort for NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration]. We had done the VLF station treaty. We had resolved many of the trade agreements. We had done the status of forces thing. I had participated in a couple of SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] meetings, ANZUS meetings, and things of that sort. The F-111, the destroyers,

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the cooperative logistics—all of these things had been done in a right active couple of years. And after that, and after Kennedy's death, time was dragging on me. So I wanted to get on with something else.

But the Australian outlook is one of very close friendship and mutual dependence. And this was repeatedly pointed out by Menzies, that the ANZUS pact would have involved them in Cuba, just as much as Indonesia and Malaysia would involve us in the Pacific.

O'BRIEN: Well, as you look back, did the experience as ambassador change you any?

BATTLE: Oh, I'm sure it did.

O'BRIEN: Views of politics?

BATTLE: It gave me a much broader outlook on things. It gave me a great understanding, I think, of that part of the world and what's going on over there. And one of the things that's so

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frustrating is to have your leaders, your presidents, not continue to express to the American people what is going on over there. I mean, it's something they're afraid to talk about. Why, surely, we've made mistakes in Vietnam. I came home, and I talked to Bob Kennedy, and I

talked to Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] about the mistakes I thought were being made there at the time.

But still and all, I think that the commitment was a sound commitment, in keeping with our international posture, and one that had a great deal to do with preventing the war between Indonesia and Malaysia from erupting. It caused a premature coup in Indonesia, ultimately got rid of Sukarno. I don't think there's any doubt that he'd been able to call his time rather than the pressure of our presence and the war there. If they had

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had a free run, in other words, the result would have been entirely different over there.

Now, one of the other things that had a material impact is the race question. I've never been racist in any way. Having been raised up in Charlottesville, perhaps, I'd be very much less candid than if I say, which I won't say, that in 1960 I would have found it comfortable to be at social gatherings with blacks. But it doesn't phase me at all now. Our dining room table had the colors of a rainbow, actually. In Canberra, the Burmese fellow was purple, he was so dark. You get over the visceral reaction very easily if you give yourself a chance. Our children played with all colors and types. It was very broadening for them.

Now, except to keep from embarrassing friends who feel differently, I have no objection—in fact, I'm quite at ease and at home and

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enjoy social engagements with any color person, whether or not he's colored. And I know that's one of the big advantages that we gained, and particularly the youngsters. They don't have any built-in reaction at all, which—I don't think it's regional; I think it's as much North, South, East, and West. Certainly, you know, if you haven't associated, you don't. But that certainly has had a telling effect.

O'BRIEN: Well, I've temporarily run out of questions.

BATTLE: Good. I'm glad I exhausted you rather than the other way. [Laughter]

O'BRIEN: You're indefatigable. Well, thank you, Ambassador Battle, for a very informative, and, I think, a very excellent interview on the tenure of your ambassadorship in Australia. [Interruption]

BATTLE: We'll pursue a little further.

BATTLE: Judge Smith committed to me, and through me to the President—I was authorized to make the commitment on his behalf

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to the President—that if they would not add to the numbers in the Rules Committee [House of Representatives Rules Committee], that he would see to it that any legislation that came before the committee, which the White House would tell him was significant administrative legislation, would be forthwith reported to a rule on the floor. In other words, it would be the end of the blockage.

O'BRIEN: What happened to destroy that or to check that?

BATTLE: Who did it or how it was done, I don't know. I know that Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] and the President, their reaction was, "Well, what more can you ask?" What I'm told is that Sam Rayburn [Samuel Taliaferro Rayburn], who was one of Judge Smith's closest friends until this happened, told the White House he couldn't rely on his word, which is unthinkable. I mean, the old boy was sharp, he was a political genius, he

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probably knew more about parliamentary procedure than anybody else, and he could do things. But nobody that I've ever known has said he wasn't as good as his word. This caused a mortal breach between Rayburn and Smith, which Rayburn healed or tried to heal shortly before his death when he called the Judge and came around and talked to him about it. Judge Smith told me that he finally wrote it off that Rayburn just wasn't himself because of the illness that finally was terminal. But, gosh, I was into that one up to my ears.

O'BRIEN: Well, I'd be interested in really getting into the intricacies of that.

BATTLE: That's the major thing that I remember about it, that Judge Smith had made this commitment and as a result of adding to the numbers and their not accepting his proposal, you

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will recall that all of the administration legislation died that session in the Rules Committee.

O'BRIEN: Yes, it did.

BATTLE: And this would have been avoided.

O'BRIEN: Well, let's get into that.

[END OF TAPE; END OF INTERVIEW #2]

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