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Miels, Assistant Administrator, Congressional Liaison, United States Department of Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), 1961 – 1963, discusses his work in the HHFA and his criticisms of Robert Weaver as an administrator, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Hugh Miels

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Hugh Miels – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

HUGH MIELDS

October 21, 1968
Washington, D.C.

By William M. McHugh

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MCHUGH: Mr. Miels, could you tell us about the circumstances of your appointment, please?

MIELDS: Well, I was nominated for the job of Assistant Administrator for Congressional Liaison fairly early in '61, that is, right after the election, by a group of mayors: Ben West of Nashville, Tennessee; the mayor of Atlanta, Georgia at that time—I'm going to have to recall his name somewhere else.

MCHUGH: Was that Allen [Ivan Allen, Jr.]?

MIELDS: No, no that was before Allen, this was a very well-known mayor who—well, I just drew a blank

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on his name. But there was Mayor Dick Lee [Richard C. Lee] of New Haven, Connecticut, Mayor Barr [Joseph M. Barr] of Pittsburgh, and oh, I'd have to really check the records to—but basically they were a large group of mayors.

MCHUGH: And they belonged to—what was that?

MIELDS: They were all members of the, what was then known as the American Municipal Association; it's now known as the National League of Cities. I was also supported by the people on the Hill. Although this was more informal kind of support—because members don't necessarily like to support individuals out of their home state—I had support from Joe Clark [Joseph S. Clark] and old Congressman Henry Reuss [Henry S. Reuss], Congressman Rains [Albert M. Rains] of Alabama (Reuss was from Milwaukee), and support from Senator Muskie [Edmund S. Muskie]. But basically, it was the mayors themselves and my boss Pat Healey [Pat Healy], who was the Executive Director of the American Municipal Association; John Gunther, who was the Executive Director of

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the Conference of Mayors [United States Conference of Mayors], or an assistant at that time, the General Counsel; Bill Phillips [William G. Phillips], who was the Staff Director for the Democratic Study Group and—well I'm sure the record would show a good measure of support on the part of local governments generally.

MCHUGH: I see. Now you said—well, first of all let me say, you began on April 28th, is that correct? At least that's when it was announced?

MIELDS: Right. I might also add that I was very much involved in the pre-election work with the Democratic National Committee; and I was working with Adam Yarmolinsky, and Adam was also a supporter in terms of his particular job. Yarmolinsky and I also—well, Adam worked directly with Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] on the talent scout operation, and I worked with him in terms of coming up with the names of people who I thought would be capable of handling the other top jobs in the Housing and Home Finance Agency operation.

MCHUGH: I see. Was there anyone working with you on the names of people for the HHFA [Housing and Home Finance Agency]? Was that...

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MIELDS: You mean other than...

MCHUGH: Yes.

MIELDS: Well, no. Yarmolinsky was the liaison guy that I had, that I worked with as part of the Shriver operation.

MCHUGH: Where did you meet him? How frequently were you in consultation with him?

MIELDS: Oh, fairly frequently, right after the election, because we were working with Yarmolinsky during the election on a committee which had to do with the problems of the cities. You see, I had actually gotten involved before the Convention and before the nomination, working on the platform. I was in Los Angeles as a representative of the American Municipal Association along with Gunther, who was representing the Conference of Mayors. And we worked very closely with the platform committee, which was chaired by Chester Bowles [Chester B. Bowles], and the secretary of that platform committee was Jim Sundquist [James L. Sundquist], who was Senator Clark's Administrative Assistant. So we actually managed

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to get as a part of the platform of that year, for the first time in the history of any platform, a separate section on the problems of the cities and that section was called "The City and its Suburbs." And Ed Logue [Edward J. Logue], who was also very close to Bowles, was with us representing at that time the interests of the cities generally, but at that time he was the development administrator for the city of New Haven. That was before he went to Boston. So I had a long history of involvement...

MCHUGH: Were there any particular disagreements or conflicts or problems that arose in working out what to put into the platform on the cities?

MIELDS: Well, I don't think that there were any that proved inordinately difficult as witness the fact that we did get a very fine platform statement. As usual, as I think has been the case in the conventions subsequent and precedent to that one, there's not a real driving kind of interest in city problems as far as the platform committees are concerned.

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I don't believe there's been a platform statement equal to the one that we got in '60. No, we did quite well.

We worked very closely—although everything that had happened as far as the executive sessions of the committee were concerned were privileged, I think Sundquist found our availability to be extremely useful. And I'd say 90 percent of the language that was finally passed was language that we developed in conjunction with, working with him. Some of the draft material that he initially provided came out of documents that we had furnished him. So we considered it a very successful venture and we had a whole lot going for us: I knew Sundquist very well because I had worked very closely with him when Clark was on the Banking and Currency Committee [United States Senate Committee on Banking and Currency]; and Ed Logue had been an assistant to Bowles when he was Governor of Connecticut and also when he was Ambassador to India. So we had a very good preliminary basis for moving in and working on the platform

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committee. So I had that kind of relationship with the people who were concerned. And Yarmolinsky was involved and working with the National Committee [Democratic National Committee] at the time we were trying to develop a much more—develop a great recognition on the part of the party itself as to the problems.

Now you remember the advisory committee that was established to the National Committee under the chairmanship of Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]. This was during the last two or three years of the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration. Well Mayor Lee was given the assignment of chairing the sub-committee on city problems, and I was working staff support for that committee. And we had meetings in Philadelphia and I think Pittsburgh and a few other places where the committee got together, went through reviewed policy statements which were recommended to the advisory committee to be passed on to the National Committee on problems of the cities. And that was all, again, precedent to the actual work we did with the platform committee in Los Angeles.

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We had also worked very closely with the National Committee during that period on getting Kennedy's first—or drafting Kennedy's first major urban speech. And we had originally projected it for Baltimore. He was going to walk through the slums there. And then we lost that opportunity, but the thing was rescheduled for Pittsburgh, and he actually made a major speech on urban problems. And that was the major speech that he developed in which we had a hand in shaping in terms of substance. Sundquist, actually, I think who was then with the Campaign Party, did have a hand in the penultimate draft. We did arrange for mayors to come in from all over the country to Pittsburgh. We handled the logistics of it and Kennedy did come; he did deliver a good speech. It was a speech that, as I say, was largely shaped by us.

MCHUGH: Did Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] or others make many changes?

MIELDS: Yes, Sorensen got involved, and one of the stories that Sundquist tells about his discussions

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with Sorensen on the speech is that Sorensen objected to the inclusion of a recommendation that we create a department of housing and urban development. And he said, "What do we need that for?" Jim made the case for it and persuaded Sorensen to leave it in. But that speech did include calling for a department, and Sorensen was tempted to take it out and Sundquist was the guy who prevailed in that particular issue. So that was I think a kind of interesting...

MCHUGH: What reason? He simply felt it unnecessary? That was basically....

MIELDS: Well, I think the problem didn't want to commit him to it at that moment, and it may have been that Sorensen himself was not completely persuaded that this was a particularly good idea. I think probably that he was—I really can't suggest why he said what he said, except that Sundquist felt that he had hit a very crucial point with him, and my interpretation of what he has said to me since was that we almost didn't get him to endorse it at that time. Now I don't

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know how that would have affected the future course of events.

MCHUGH: So your next contact was that you were working with Adam Yarmolinsky helping to choose people for HHFA?

MIELDS: That's right.

MCHUGH: And where were you getting the names, generally, of these people?

MIELDS: Well, I had been in the business of renewal and housing since 1948 when I began my professional career as a planner with (actually a planning analyst which is not a design oriented, but basically social, political, resource type guy) for the planning commission in Milwaukee. And then, after I had worked there about three years, I went with the housing authority as their economic analyst and had come to Washington in '55 as the Assistant Director for Urban Renewal with what was then called the National Association of Housing Officials, which is now called the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. So I had probably a unique, not totally unique, but fairly unique kind of experience and knowledge of what was happening in other cities and who were the capable and who were the men who were

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producing and who were the guys who were running the best programs and who were the men with the greatest amount of experience.

So I was in a fairly unique position in that regard. I was able to suggest names and I must say that some of those I suggested actually were appointed; Bill Slayton [William L. Slayton], for example became the Assistant Commissioner of Urban Renewal. And Bill actually got involved because I urged him to, and of course he made it on his own because he was a highly qualified guy. I sort of said, "The way things look you ought to get involved, you ought to throw your hat in." And I certainly recommended him highly.

MCHUGH: Who did you recommend him to? Weaver? [Robert C. Weaver]

MIELDS: No, to Yarmolinsky and he went in, now, Weaver of course, made the final decision. But Weaver's decisions were limited; I mean, he didn't have the free range of choices; he had to pick from a closed list.

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- MCHUGH: Closed in what sense?
- MIELDS: It was limited by people who were previously approved, generally, by the talent scout operation.
- MCHUGH: I see. So in other words, if Weaver had someone who was not on that list, who he might want to bring in that would have proven difficult.
- MIELDS: Yes, I'm not sure it would have been impossible, but it would have been difficult. In my own case, he had an attorney from I've forgotten just where, which I think he might have preferred and which certainly some of the people over in the White House would have preferred.
- MCHUGH: Why would he have preferred him?
- MIELDS: Well, I don't—well maybe that isn't a correct statement. I can't really attribute that to Bob except that my own appointment was delayed probably a month while they were arguing about the relative merits of the other nominee. Now, not to my knowledge—they may have been two or three other people they were considering.

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- MCHUGH: Was that Cy Brickfield? [Cyril Brickfield]
- MIELDS: Yeah, he was the White House choice. I mean, I believe he basically would have been preferred by the Irish types in the White House.
- MCHUGH: Why would he have been preferred by them?
- MIELDS: Well, they knew him and they didn't know me. You know, you always sort of like people you know, at least...
- MCHUGH: Where had they known him from?
- MIELDS: I don't know. I really don't. I never found out and I never really pursued it from that stage except that my information was, and I'm not sure I was getting it all because conditions in that kind of... When you're in this early process of appointment, the situations are very fluid, and people who presumably can give you information change from—guys who may be nominees or candidates are actually appointed, and then their whole frame of reference changes, and they may be in a position to find out additional information or they may themselves change their

own

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mind about who they want to support and why, because they're starting to set up their own alignments. So the Brickfield thing was the guy, and I think he's over in the VA [Veterans Association] now or went over to the VA, I'm not sure.

MCHUGH: Was there anyone in particular in the White House who was pushing him?

MIELDS: I think it was Donahue [Richard K. Donahue], but I'm not sure and I could never find that out. As I say, I really didn't pursue it. I attribute the fact that I was selected to the fact that I had very strong support on the part of the mayors, and they had to do something for the mayors after they appointed Weaver, because, as you know, Weaver was certainly not the mayors' choice for Administrator. [Laughter]

MCHUGH: In spite of all his housing background and his professional—well, education, they were not particularly....

MIELDS: No.

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MCHUGH: Why were they?

MIELDS: Well, they would have preferred a mayor for one thing.

MCHUGH: They would have preferred a mayor?

MIELDS: Oh, definitely. They would have preferred a guy like Klutznick [Philip M. Klutznick] who was much more identified with actually having done things in the business and had had some successes behind him. But Dick Lee, for example, would have been much preferred and probably—well, Klutznick was the guy whose name was being bandied around a great deal.

MCHUGH: What was his first name?

MIELDS: Phil Klutznick. He was not a mayor of anything, but he was a Chicago developer who had been quite successful and was identified generally with the cause of moderate and low-income housing and well-regarded by the Chicago people and the housing people generally. But Weaver's selection was not dictated by his abilities or knowledge in the field of housing but was a civil rights decision that was totally unrelated to whether or not he'd be a good

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Administrator. It was considered a real coup to bring a Negro in, and this was a guy who was not disliked by anyone in the white community and was generally well-regarded by the Negro community—although that, I think, probably has changed. I would be interested in seeing how the rank-and-file in the Negro community or the black militants and even some of the less militant but still more liberal elements in the black hierarchy would regard Weaver's performance to date. He was certainly not my candidate and I've known Bob for—oh I think since '56 or '57 when I was on a census advisory committee, a housing census advisory committee of his, and had known him then.

[INTERRUPTION]

MCHUGH: We were discussing—well just where were we? I was just about to ask you a question. Well, generally...

MIELDS: Oh, I know what we were talking about, that I knew Weaver and I had been on his committee with him and of course Weaver has a fine reputation

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and had one then and I think he still does. My problems with Bob have nothing to do with Bob the man, but Bob the administrator, Bob the advocate, and Bob the leader. He has no charisma; he's not a leader. He's a splendid guy, a great raconteur—knows more stories than any man I've ever met—got a great sense of humor, he's got a good mind, but he's not an aggressive advocate type that we felt we needed. I was shocked when I heard he was appointed, and I was shocked when I heard the basis for his appointment.

MCHUGH: Who told you the basis for his appointment?

MIELDS: Well, Adam Yarmolinsky had advised me before it was announced that it was going to be Weaver. We had always suggested Weaver to be the FHA [Federal Housing Administration] Administrator; we thought that would be splendid because that would strike the fear of God into the real estate guys and the home builders and it would have its impact as a civil rights kind of move

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on the part of the President and at the same time it would have put a guy who was quite knowledgeable in. And he could have worked well with the tougher type at the top as Administrator (and a more knowledgeable administrator) because Bob was—he's not....Well, he can't pull a bunch of guys together; he's a very introverted person in many respects. He plays it very close; you never know what he's thinking, very hard to figure.

MCHUGH: Do you know who was especially influential in...

MIELDS: You mean the guy who recommended him to the President for that? Ralph [Ralph A. Dungan], what's his name?

MIELDS: Dungan.

MIELDS: Dungan is the guy who is credited with saying, "Let's make him administrator on a civil rights basis nothing else," as I understand it. You'd have to talk to Yarmolinsky to verify that, but that's pretty much as I recall it.

MCHUGH: And the President appeared to go along with it?

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MIELDS: Yes, obviously he did. You know Bob's credentials are very, very impressive, and if you're taking a guy on paper—and I know that he talked to him and so on, but to me....I can't fault the President on this because I don't believe that he understood what he was getting into when he became President and what it takes to administer this establishment, and few presidents do. I think Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] probably would be the best equipped to make the judgment of all the people I've run into.

And I, at that time, despite five years in Washington, was a little naïve about the bureaucracy, about how you run one and how you develop an effective kind of operation within one of these major departments. It's probably the most difficult kind of challenge or assignment you can get, and I'm now totally convince that to take a guy who has no governmental experience at all at the federal level and to bring him in and make him an Assistant Secretary or Secretary

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is an absolute mistake. Few of them—McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] was one of the exceptions—but few of them understand the absolute necessity of maintaining your own options and your own freedom to make decisions during that first two or three months you're in while you understand what it is you're about to do. And most guys get totally caught up in the bureaucracy and the procedures that dominate bureaucracy and by the time they understand a little about the mechanism they're dealing with they've been entrapped; it's a form of entrapment. They've been caught up in a series of...

MCHUGH: You mean taken over by the bureaucracy?

MIELDS: Yes, that's right.

MCHUGH: What do people mean when they say you were taken over by the bureaucracy?

MIELDS: Well, it's like entrapment. It's like you're—and it's not, I don't attribute that kind of a motive, motivation to it, except that you get in and you start dealing with individuals

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who are important to you because you don't know how to make a budget or where the budget is, who does what and on what basis and you may not be entirely clear about how the law's been interpreted; and you start making decisions on the basis of backgrounds and on the basis of staff support, which is a part and has been a part of the bureaucratic arrangement; and suddenly you find you've made decisions and you've depended on rationalizations that sort of commit you to a course of action, an administrative pattern, a personnel pattern, which it would be hard for you to change, or to manipulate.

MCHUGH: Could you give me an example of that?

MIELDS: It's hard to, do, for example—and I'm not going to specific in terms of names—but for example, in the instance of my experience in HHFA was that many of the new suggestions that were made or suggestions that were made during staff meetings (some of

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the early staff meetings which Weaver invited bureaucrats to; that is, high level bureaucrats) he would be inclined to believe what a budget guy said about the impossibility of doing this thing or try this route because this guy would say, well, the legislative history is such, or in the past we haven't done it that way because, or because he'd say our involvement here should be minimal and we shouldn't do this; it may cost us too much money, or he would say Thomas [Albert Thomas] (who was then the chairmen of the subcommittee) would never accept that. Well, of course, these are all unwarranted generalizations, at least in terms of a new Administration and a new President. And these bureaucrats can't understand and can't know, despite whatever relationships they've had in the past with committee people or with the Hill, that those same conditions are going to prevail in the course of a new Administration.

And Weaver accepted many of those judgments very early in the game, to my horror—to my utter horror. I mean, I was horrified that we

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had a bureaucrat, a career bureaucrat who was not a Schedule C, in some of these meetings because they have all kinds of lines of communication and there are a lot of slippages and leakages.

MCHUGH: Who was that?

MIELDS: Well, meaning, who was...

MCHUGH: The person you were referring to.

MIELDS: Oh, I'm referring to several who were.... You see, he had some executive assistants that he kept on from the Republican—from Al Cole's [Albert M. Cole] shop: he kept Al Cole's secretary; he had all of his top administrators or administrative people, your Assistant Secretary, your Assistant Administrator for Administration, his budget officer...

MCHUGH: That was Frantz.

MIELDS: Frantz, John Frantz.

MCHUGH: Who was the Assistant Administrator?

MIELDS: Oh, Lew... The Assistant Administrator for Administration is Lew—I can't think of it now.

MCHUGH: That's not Weinstein?

MIELDS: No, no, no, no. Weinstein was...

MCHUGH: That name just popped into my head.

MIELDS: Weinstein is an assistant to Frantz.

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And I know that guy. Lew was—Lew Williams [Lewis E. Williams] was his name. Lew Williams was the guy.

MCHUGH: And the secretary's name was—you said he kept the secretary?

MIELDS: Oh, Kay Warman [Katherine R. Warman]. And then there was another gal there, who was still there, as far as I know.

MCHUGH: And these people you feel he would have done better...

MIELDS: Oh, no, he shouldn't have had them in. First of all in his entire career, he never held a meeting of his political appointees.

MCHUGH: Now when you say this, what did you just mean when you say his political appointees?

MIELDS: I mean the top policy people who were either presidential appointees or his appointees as without having gone through the Civil Service bit. These are the top level of his assistant administrators. He never met with his assistant administrators and commissioners. He had a commissioners' meeting every Monday in which

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he and the General Counsel and the Deputy Administrator and the commissioners were in but which he did not permit any of the assistant administrators in. We were actually asked not to be there. I was asked to leave once by Mr. Conway [Jack T. Conway] and that was after I was in the Administration a week or two. And it was then that I decided that I was not going to stay there any longer than I had to.

MCHUGH: What was the point of it, not allowing assistant administrators to be present?

MIELDS: Ask Weaver when you interview him. I really don't know.

MCHUGH: You really don't know?

MIELDS: No, I really don't. Well, I think it was a form of snobbery, I would guess. I find it very hard to comprehend that because this was an exceedingly complicated kind of operation we were involved in. And there was never any sense of group effort, team developed

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in the agency, never. And there isn't now, never has been under Weaver. He has never managed to develop that kind of loyalty on a broad basis and interest and involvement. And as I say, he's got no charisma at all, never had—nice guy, but no charisma.

MCHUGH: And you say he had a meeting of commissioners, but you feel that this did not suffice to any great degree to unite the constituent agencies?

MIELDS: No, it didn't unite the constituent agencies. And after all, I know policy is developed on a much broader basis than just out of the constituent or out of the commissioners, but he had an opportunity—it seemed to me, he treated his own Office of the Secretary in a different way than he treated the constituent commissioners. And even when he met within his own office—that is, the political appointees in the Office of the Secretary never met with him separately.

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MCHUGH: Your complaint is partly that you met on a very formal basis?

MIELDS: The commissioners met on a very formal basis every Monday. But no one else was allowed in, except the General Counsel and the Deputy Administrator and now and then the Assistant Administrator for Program and Policy, Mort Schussheim [Morton J. Schussheim]. Now, I don't know if you've talked to Mort, or if anyone has, but Schussheim was very close to Weaver; I mean, they were very close friends. And Schussheim had come down very early right after Bob or with Bob and worked with him.

But there was never any effort made to really get these political guys together and to say, "Alright men, this is why we're here, and here's the kinds of things that I want to do, and here's why I want to do them. And while I recognize that we are a disparate group in terms of background and our interest, this is the kind of show I want to run." He never did it. The only guy I know,

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the only guy I have any familiarity with that actually did that kind of thing, you know, among the secretaries, was—I think Gardner [John W. Gardner] did it, but on a more intellectual basis, not political. But Gardner did apparently run better policy operations in that regard. And Cohen [Wilbur J. Cohen], I know does it with considerable skill, from everything I've heard.

My own feeling is that secretaries, the guys they... Unless you bring in an old hand like Wilbur Cohen, bringing these in, or a guy who intuitively has the kind of corporate experience that McNamara had—I shouldn't say intuitively. I think McNamara intuitively did the right thing, but I think, in part, it was based on his knowledge of how corporations work and how important it is to really control the elements within the corporation if you're going to run a really first class operation because I don't think that in these corporate deals—corporate structures are a hell of a lot different than, in terms of the best way to run

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them, than a government bureaucracy. The guy who runs them best is the guy who understands how they function and knows the people and the parts and can control them. And a presidential appointee who comes in out of the blue, from Ipswich or Los Angeles or anywhere else, even if he is a good business guy, unless he understands government structure or maybe has had some good corporate experience—and McNamara came up through the ranks so he's a good infighter—you've got problems.

Now, I know several of the secretaries personally. I know Tony Celebrezze [Anthony J. Celebrezze] quite well. When he came in, I tried to get him to understand this, but I find that even your best friends when they become secretaries or assistant secretaries view you somewhat differently, you know, after they've been on the job two weeks than they did the week before they went on the job, and particularly if you're a representative of an

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interest group. So, well I don't know how much relevance this has to your oral history, but it's my view of how you make these departments work. You know, I'm looking forward to another crack at it.

MCHUGH: You mean in congressional liaison.

MIELDS: No, no. The Congressional Liaison thing was just an excuse to get in. I would have preferred to have been in on, say, program and policy; that would have been of as much interest to me as Congressional Liaison. But in the liaison job I did spend as much time working out with local governments as I could, because I felt those were the links with the Congress from the local side that were just as essential as the direct kind of relationship that you deal with.

MCHUGH: Was Jack Conway doing any of this sort of thing—trying to unite the agency on policy, presumably that Weaver...

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MIELDS: No, I've a very high regard for Jack's abilities, but I found Jack was as much a centrifugal element and force (and you know what I mean, blowing it apart not pulling it together) as anybody else, because he's a guy who is power conscious, preoccupied with power—he had his own lines into the White House with Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and Donahue, and who didn't want to jeopardize them, who wanted to strengthen and enhance them. And then you had Forbes [Fred A. Forbes], who was then the Assistant Administrator for public information, and he had been with Kennedy in West Virginia and so on, and he was trying to maintain his more political type relationship with the White House. And then you had Milton Semer [Milton P. Semer], who was General Counsel, and Milton also had his own interests to pursue. These guys of their very nature were not guys who liked to develop tight team efforts because individually they were strong people who were trying to establish

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their own power bases.

And so that was you know, polynucleated in terms of power centers and that makes it very, very difficult. It certainly didn't ease the thing, the problems Weaver had. The team itself that was put together in the Office of the Administrator, in retrospect, made it very, very difficult for him to pull it together. Although I think the basic—initially these guys Conway and Semer were nominally loyal to Bob, but then there was that point, just in the final year of the HHFA, where, you know, it was common gossip in the agency, that for all intents and purposes Semer was running the show, and that Bob had retreated back into his own office and was sort of holding forth there and finishing his book and doing some of the

more academic—following in more academic pursuits. Whether or not I could prove that by actual example I don't know; I know that Milton and I have had some very strong differences and still do.

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MCHUGH: What did you differ over with him initially?

MIELDS: Well, this is not....The issue was not the differences, the issue was—because all the time I was with HHFA, Milton and I were quite close and my office was here and his office was over there. We have subsequently fallen out. But that was a great educational experience for me too, that fifteen months I spent there, probably the best education I've ever had in this whole business.

MCHUGH: Why especially was that?

MIELDS: Well, because it taught me you have to deal with bureaucracy at arm's length; you have to understand what your agency is, what capability it has, and where that capability is before you can do anything about reorienting it or improving its own capability in dealing with the mission it has. And also the best to control an agency, I think, is to keep the bureaucrats off balance

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and a little nervous and afraid of you. And you can still command a high degree of loyalty with that kind of a—I mean, it's got to be a tighter shop than a happier ship; more tight than happy is important. And also, you know, every bureaucrat respects a guy who knows what the score is. The tendency is for policy guys to leave too much discretion in making basic decisions, budgetary decisions with career bureaucrats rather than making those decisions themselves or even questioning judgments that are made. I honestly believe that there wouldn't be any change in anything if you said you were going to make every move you're going to make in the future on what you did in the past.

MCHUGH: Did you feel that....Well, did Weaver have the confidence to make some of these decisions on the budget? I mean, in a sense, was he informed of the various steps that would be involved

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to have made the decisions himself, rather than to have left them—was he leaving them to Frantz?

MIELDS: Oh, yeah. I think Frantz and Williams had tremendous control.

MCHUGH: And you feel this is a control that Weaver should have had?

MIELDS: No, well, he had it; he just didn't utilize it. The question is—in the last analysis, the secretary can do almost anything he wants; in the last analysis, all he has to do is decide that he's going to exercise the power he has. So really, what you do is you lose it by default; you lose....And this can be institutionalized to a point where you really can't recapture the initiative you had when you came in.

MCHUGH: Now you said that when you came you had some naïve ideas as to how things should operate in the bureaucracy, but they changed subsequently?

MIELDS: Well, as I say, it's naïve to assume that everybody that goes into these things has the same set of

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goals that you have. And I have identified very completely over the years with—because of my associations with the National League of Cities I had identified very closely with local government and with local government officials and identified with the goals that they had established in terms of housing and renewal and what they were looking for for their communities. And I naturally assumed mistakenly and naively assumed—that the Conways of this world and the Semers and all the rest and even the Weavers have a similar set of goals that relate to public policy. And they don't to the extent that they differ and to the extent that you're involved with people who are using their positions to move on to other or bigger and better positions, who don't really—aren't focused on the overall objectives of what I thought this agency should be focused on. To that extent, you kind of get

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some rude awakenings. And you see my background was quite different than theirs: I've much more of a commitment. Weaver is a Negro and Weaver's commitments are quite different than mine in terms of what he wanted out of this agency. And...

MCHUGH: What do you think he wanted out of this agency?

MIELDS: I think he's got a....First of all, he's very happy about being the first Negro, and he just really wanted to survive that and be the first member of the Cabinet and survive that. And even his own—you know, the Negro community closed ranks behind him for Secretary. Now he's written his books, and he's going to be President of Baruch University [Bernard M. Baruch College], and he's achieved all of his—probably all of his dearest goals, but the record of the inroads that have been made on housing needs is a dismal one and that's his record.

He's inclined not to be as aware of the problems, the everyday

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kinds of problems although he worked for New York, that you face at the local level and the kinds of people that you have to deal with and the kinds of obstacles that you have to deal with at the local level in order to achieve your program objectives. So his goals in my terms were not really important. Your personal goals are important; it's important that you personally feel that you are an achiever. You've got to evaluate what you've done against what you set out to do. I suppose in his own terms he was a rousing success, but in mine, he wasn't. He hasn't left us with a hell of a lot.

MCHUGH: When I spoke to you on the phone you mentioned that some of the mayors who were supporting you wanted someone in a policy making position. Now could you say to what degree you could say this would have been a policy making position?

MIELDS: What, the Assistant Administrator for Congressional Liaison?

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MCHUGH: Yes.

MIELDS: Well, that was another aspect of it. As I told you, the title to me wasn't important, it was being in as an Assistant Administrator. And as it turned out, much of the legislation that was in the '62 or '63 housing act was stuff that we had built up a need for during the fifties during the Eisenhower Administration. (Or was it the '61 act, I guess it was the '61 act.) I mean if you go through the record, you'll find that 90 percent of everything that was in that were in previous bills that we had put in and what adjustments that were made in that process don't relate to policy.

I had a relatively small output, was not consulted on policy issues, which was again a thing that I had resolved that I would get the hell of out there just as soon as I could. Actually I turned, probably more pressures on by working out in the boondocks and through the public interest

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groups than I was able to interject in through, you know the regular process of having impact on Weaver or on policy generally. Or again Conway, and Semer were maximizing their own impact on Weaver and Schussheim, yes or no; it sort of depended on what area you were dealing with.

Normally, a congressional guy is not a policy guy but I went in for no other reason than to affect policy and I know substance and I could operate in HUD or in HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] or in Labor or in Commerce in a policy position and know what I was doing. And even if I operated as a congressional guy....As a matter of fact, one of the big problems you have with the a lot of the congressional types is

they don't know program so they start bargaining or making promises on the Hill that they can't keep or they shouldn't keep even if they could deliver.

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MCHUGH: Was this a problem in HHFA, particularly, during that time that you were there?

MIELDS: No, not really. I didn't have many problems because I had a limited kind of piece of the action. To the extent that I controlled congressional relations, I had no problems.

MCHUGH: To what extent did you control it, would you say?

MIELDS: Well, you know, I picked up the usual flow of inquiry from the Hill from different members who were unhappy about one thing or another or wanted some action. I had a good three or four people on the staff who were pretty experienced. I could deal with the individual members, would go up and cool them off.

MCHUGH: What sort of things would come in, say, an average day? What sort of problems would you be handling?

MIELDS: Oh, people were unhappy about the fact that their local community had applied for something and wasn't getting any action on it, or that a release

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was made and they didn't know about it, or that they wanted to have a meeting and they wanted somebody up or that they had a meeting and somebody didn't show that should have shown to explain what the programs were all about or provide them with information about program operations, or to complain about the fact that the city or their community or country hadn't been treated quite the way they thought they should. It's basically case work.

At that time the state of the art was less White House oriented than it became subsequently—where the White House now makes a lot of decisions about release dates and so on and sequence, priorities and so on than was the case when I was there where I made the decisions by and large if they came up.

MCHUGH: When you're speaking of release dates now are you speaking of approval of projects and things like that?

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MIELDS: Yes. Final approval on these things—signing off even by an assistant secretary is still subject to final signing off by the political guy who will say it's appropriate or inappropriate at this time. For the most part, these things flow slowly but surely towards that point where they are released. I had hired a gal from Clark's office to be my administrative assistant and she knew the score and where she had a problem, basically, where she had a problem, she'd come in and I'd take care of it or I would call a member and talk to him about it. You know, you get in and guys are basically unhappy about the fact that somebody else released the information or they read about it in the newspapers; they don't like reading about those things in the newspaper.

MCHUGH: So who else was involved in congressional relations?

MIELDS: Well, every commissioner gets involved in it, and then the, PHA, the Public Housing Agency had a relations

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officer whose name I forgot so did FHA.

MCHUGH: FHA, that was the Federal Housing Administration.

MIELDS: Yeah, Burton Wood. And CFA, Community Facilities [Community Facilities Administration], didn't have one because I was really that and all the others and then we just worked up a deal where all copies of correspondence would be referred in and we tried to elaborate on that. But it doesn't really...

MCHUGH: Did you coordinate the operation?

MIELDS: To the extent that there were questions of substances, substantive substance questions raised by members to a guy like Wood or this guy down in PHA, well that might be raised with me. And basically I made my own judgments and decisions as to releases and how they'd be released and who got it first.

MCHUGH: Did you have any conflicts with Semer on this at all?

MIELDS: No, not really.

MCHUGH: Did Fred Forbes have any role in congressional

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relations particularly? In the Eisenhower Administration....That would have been one job.

MIELDS: Yes, public relations and congressional liaison.

MIELDS: No. Fred didn't really—I never had any problems with Fred because I don't operate quite that way. If Fred wanted to do something that I didn't see any reason why he shouldn't—it wasn't a question of prerogative at all; it wasn't a question of well, you know go ahead Fred.

MCHUGH: But Ashley Foard was also involved in Congressional Liaison, was he not?

MIELDS: Foard? Foard? What Foard? Not Ashley Foard, Ashford was Deputy General Counsel.

MCHUGH: Oh, excuse me. Well, was Semer involved in congressional...

MIELDS: Oh, surely he's always—he's a great meddler.

MCHUGH: But I thought well perhaps because the operation seemed to go more into Semer's office.

MIELDS: Well, it went into Semer's office when I left.

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MCHUGH: Oh, I see.

MIELDS: And that was because he was—you know, the physical proximity and everything else, it seemed to me you might as well go into Semer's office because no other guy could have survived, I didn't think. So I said to Weaver when I left, "You might as well give it to Milton."

MCHUGH: Well, was that because of his presumed familiarity from his work on the Banking and Currency Committee?

MIELDS: Well, sure, he's operated on the Hill. He was doing—you see, again, it's this whole question of maintaining a relationship, past relationships with members like Sparkman [John J. Sparkman] or Muskie or anybody else. And you're always trying to build up a reservoir of good will and credits. And the tendency is for a guy like Semer and a guy like Conway to maximize that kind of relationship, to try and use it, further it, exploit it, to develop a real line of credit.

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It works both within the Congress and with the White House because, you see, the Administration is not the White House and all the agencies, the administration is, many things, it's the White House, your agency and its other agencies and they are all operating with a different set of goals. And it's only when your goals sort of coincide, that you're really operating.

MCHUGH: Well, did you feel that they were supporting—say in HHFA, was there a feeling that we are supporting the President's program, particularly?

MIELDS: Well, there's a lot of—there is this problem of the President's program, which is dictated from a somewhat different set of requirements than the program of the agency, which is dictated by another set of problems and needs. The White House has a set of political needs it's attempting to serve; it also has to relate program to program and establish priorities between programs;

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and it has an Executive arm, the Bureau of the Budget, and those guys try to rationalize all this nonsense so that some guy can stand out there and say that it makes sense.

So you're always sitting in an agency saying, "Well, I've got to do this for the President, that's important. And then, on the other hand, for the good of this agency and these programs, we've got to do this in addition to that." Or, "To hell with the Bureau of the Budget. We're not getting a fair shake here and we've got to go out and build up pressures to get a better allocation of money or to get this part of the program accepted by the President." When you're dealing with the President's agents, you've got a different set of problems than if you're just dealing with the President himself. Where you can go in and say, "This is what I think we ought to do." He may say, "Well, by God, I agree. Let's do it." Then all these other guys will fall into line.

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MCHUGH: Do you think there was any case in your work with HHFA where this was true?

MIELDS: I don't think that Kennedy was ever faced with a real meaningful set of alternatives in terms of, "The program really ought to go this way and not this way." I think he generally understood what Weaver was putting to him, but what Weaver put to him is not necessarily what I would have put to him, or what people who are more committed to the kinds of goals that I'm committed to. The thing is, is that there are so many bureaucratic constraints and restraints and policy making, that a President is never really faced, in a department like HUD with a full range of options. Very frequently what he gets is something that's been thought out in the bureaucracy and then in through the Bureau of the Budget.

MCHUGH: Did Kennedy or anyone in the White House, attempt to circumvent this at any time, particularly?

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Ever try to find if there were other alternatives?

MIELDS: They seldom do in this business, in the housing and urban development, because people from the outside generally are not strong enough or interested enough to try and make changes in basic policy.

MCHUGH: How about a person like Lee White [Lee C. White] or Sorensen?

MIELDS: It's important to try and cultivate and develop people that important and that close to the President to do these things—I mean, to support your position—and that's part of your strategy. If you had a guy like Sorensen who was not really on your side—if he was neutral that was one thing; if he was negative you'd have a tough time making it. Sorensen in particular, because the President generally respected his judgment.

MCHUGH: You mentioned things that Weaver would have been presenting to the President. Did he have much contact with the President?

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MIELDS: Very nominal from everything that I can gather. Again, I can't say from any knowledge of the facts that he ever had a heart-to-heart talk with the President. I'm inclined to think that he didn't, but he may have. You see, the thing is, from the standpoint of program development, whether you're in housing or in labor or in environmental protection, health services or what have you, is that if you are in a position where you can go to the President and put his options before him and then argue rationally for what it is you want—every agency can't do it, and some are more privileged than others.

Some guys can so that's why you want strong advocates and good leaders. A guy like Stew Udall [Stewart L. Udall] is a guy who got largely what he wanted because he was an advocate, and we didn't get all the things we wanted by a long shot because Weaver wasn't. Interior, if you look at the record, has materially

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enhanced its own range of programs and its own status during the Udall stewardship because Udall is a strong advocate guy and he's got a lot of guts—he feels guts—and because he identifies with people and with things that tend to be accepted as the goals of our civilization, conservation and so on, for the good of things.

In some instances you can develop a position and try to run it through an agency, the bureaucracy, and get knocked off. Take as a case in point the Clean Air Act and the fact that there were enforcement provisions that were subsequently put in which were accepted. We fought—and I was very much involved and I wrote the first copy of the Clear Air Act.

MCHUGH: How did you come to get involved in that?

MIELDS: Well, because I'm involved in everything that has to do with urban, at one time or another I probably had more to do with environmental legislation in the United States than anybody

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else in the country with the exception of my associate Ron Linton [Ronald M. Linton] and a few guys on the Hill and Senator Muskie himself. It's an area that I'm expert in in a legislative sense, not in a technical sense, although I know the technology. But I put together...

MCHUGH: That was Vernon Mackenzie's...

MIELDS: Vernon Mackenzie and I. Vernon is a conservative guy; he didn't want enforcement. We argued about enforcement. We argued about what ought to be in that bill, what sort of research role the feds ought to play. The first copy that was written did not have enforcement in it, but we wanted enforcement. We then developed an enforcement section which paralleled water pollution control enforcement and you know, we were just sort of adjusting it.

Then we had some problems with Ken Roberts [Kenneth A. Roberts], who was the ranking guy in the House Commerce Committee, and he wouldn't introduce

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it. (He was being leaned on by the coal interest and coming out of Alabama, he was sort of responsive to that.) But then I got Clair Engle to introduce a version of it without—then I was trying to get Case [Clifford Philip Case] to buy the enforcement provisions as an amendment. And then we had some kind of a—something happened, I forgot what, but anyway we joined the issued out in the open. And then, I've forgotten exactly what the details were, but in any event, Celebrezze had come in, and the President called him down to Palm Springs, and this is where the President made a decision. He said, "I want a strong air pollution control bill." And when he said...

MCHUGH: Oh, that's interesting. Who had spoken to him?

MIELDS: Muskie had been getting through; all of us had been saying, "We want"—this issue had sort of come up and people were now aware of

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the dangers inherent in the whole business of pollution. And he said, "I want a strong air pollution control bill." Well that took care of the Bureau of the Budget, who had been opposed to the enforcement provisions; it took care of Vernon Mackenzie, who is a wonderful guy and one of the outstanding experts in the business, but who is shy of enforcement because he had ideological hang-ups about the states ought to be doing things.

MCHUGH: Oh, really.

MIELDS: And, by God, that was interpreted as "strong" meant we were going to have enforcement.

MCHUGH: What about cases where...

MIELDS: And that was a case where the initiative came off the Hill and off of interest groups that wanted the strong air pollution control bill. That legislation was never reviewed by the Bureau of the Budget, never had a chance to comment on it one way or another because

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we never gave them a chance. And we passed it. The Clean Air Act has no input, no constructive input, by the Bureau of the Budget.

MCHUGH: Well, you mentioned this business of—well, for instance, Vernon Mackenzie wanted states to take action, but what about the case where a mass of air is moving from one state to another in the case of, say, jet planes and things of that sort?

MIELDS: Well, we've got...

MCHUGH: That would seem to be provided only by the Federal Government.

MIELDS: No, the Federal Government now, as a result of the air quality amendments of '65 and '66, is now going in and developing enforcement on the basis of air sheds. And these will involve—in Chicago, for example, they're hearing right now, they started a half an hour ago on a hearing in Chicago on the establishment of a Federal Air Pollution Control Shed which

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would embrace Indiana and Illinois, about eleven counties in the two states. This is, in effect, saying that the locals are incapable or unwilling to do it, and the Federal Government is

going to impose, in this instance, a set of ambient air standards which are going to have to be achieved through a mission control.

MCHUGH: Is this likely to be effected by whichever Administration?

MIELDS: No, I think both administrations are equally—I mean, either Administration would be equally committed. The air pollution control legislation for the last few years and water, both, have been reported on unanimously by committees and passed unanimously in the Congress, which is a tribute to my friend Linton, who was staff director on the Public Works Committee under McNamara [Patrick V. McNamara]. We reported out the first set of air and water pollution control bills that had ever

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been reported out unanimously by the Senate committees—Senate Committee on Public Works.

MCHUGH: What were the interest groups, the most important interest groups that brought pressures in getting the Clean Air Act?

MIELDS: Well, basically the conservation groups and the bird watchers and that crowd, as well as the cities. I brought Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley] in to testify on behalf of the first Clean Air Act.

MCHUGH: Is that so? Is it very strong when all those industries...

MIELDS: I have a picture of Mr. Daley and myself and Mr. Fitzpatrick when we testified because I was then with the Conference of Mayors. I am now Mayor Daley's special consultant on urban programs. I worked for him on all federal programs, and he was a very strong supporter of it,

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very strong. And he's got one of the strongest mission control ordinances in the country in the law in Chicago. He's very strong, very good on his stuff. But those are the things that I want. I haven't limited myself to HHFA by a long shot, or HUD.

MCHUGH: Did he have that interest during the Kennedy Administration? Was this something...

MIELDS: Yeah. As a matter of fact, I've been working in water pollution and air pollution control almost since '56, '57, when I went with the American Municipal Association.

MCHUGH: If we could go back to your work now?

MIELDS: I just wanted to give you—I mean, the air thing was an example of how even a Secretary in the Bureau of the Budget can be circumvented by laying an issue before the President and having him make a policy decision that had

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tremendous implications by simply saying, “I want a strong bill.” And strong meant enforcement and enforcement meant turning around the Bureau of the Budget and the bureaucracy and doing something in spite of them.

MCHUGH: But where did Kennedy get his information on this?

MIELDS: As I say, it was some of the members of Congress, including Muskie, and the fact that at that point in time there was some—I don’t know whether the incident in London had occurred right around that time or not; I forgot whether that had a bearing on it. But anyway, he said he wanted a strong bill. And in that speech that we wrote for him, he had a reference to air pollution in that speech.

MCHUGH: Was the staff that you had in your office—was that adequate for your needs generally?

MIELDS: Oh, yeah, in many respects I think it was;

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in others it wasn’t. I think that if I hadn’t had so much help from Conway and Semer, it probably wouldn’t have been enough. But they were handling so much of this stuff on the basis of their own relations with members that much of the stuff that would normally have flowed into me for decisions was siphoned off by them.

MCHUGH: What part would Conway have been handling? How would that have been split up between him and Semer?

MIELDS: You see, Jack, again, would have been dealing with these guys under any pretext or basis that he could. You see, the name of the game is develop relationships with the Hill that are conducive to credits being checked off against your name, saying, “Well, Conway took care of this for me.” You don’t do this across the board, but you’re highly selective about it. That is, if you’re not looking—if you’re out

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trying to develop a support base and to accumulate brownie points for yourself, because you want to do something else. Largely, the kind of identification you see gives an individual personal kind of identification rather than a program, department identification. And there are guys—you see, there are guys that wander through government who do that. I'm not deprecating a person; I'm just trying to give you the facts about how this business works, or at least how I interpret how it works. I prefer the more altruistic types myself.

MCHUGH: Well, when you went there, how was your job described to you, what your responsibilities were?

MIELDS: Well, basically, there—I've got some stuff around here, which I'd be glad to give you if I can find it, in which I defined what I thought needed to be done and wasn't being done and what I thought the role...

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MCHUGH: Well, we'd be interested if you do find them.

MIELDS: Oh, yeah, I've got them around, it's just that I've moved a couple of times, three or four times, and I'm gradually getting my secretary here to put everything in order. And I sort of periodically get old files and start throwing them in there with marks on them that say file it this way and that way. Eventually, I'll get it all put together. It won't be too long.

My role was to advise the secretary on how to stay even with the Congress and make them like you and love you, and how do you keep them constantly advised as to what your programs are achieving on their behalf. Now what I'm saying to you is that while I had a limited kind of opportunity to tell this to Secretary, I still maintain the agency's image of being fairly responsible to the rank and file on the Hill. But I had

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a lot of help from guys—and I say help in quotes—from guys whose own personal views and goals dictated that they involve themselves to the maximum extent they could to provide services and favors to people on the Hill in relating to the programs under HHFA. And this had to do basically with, I think with their own interests in developing a personal image, not necessarily because they wanted to help me out.

MCHUGH: Did you work with the Banking and Currency Committee to any extent?

MIELDS: Oh, yeah. Well, I've always known the staff over there on both sides quite well: John Barriere [John E. Barriere] and Jim McEwan [John J. McEwan, Jr.], and Burrows [Kenneth W. Burrows] on the House side.

And basically, Coan [Carl A. Coan, Jr.], and John Lindley when he was there on the Senate side. My relations with them are excellent, always have been. No problems.

MCHUGH: You didn't have any conflicts with them?

MIELDS: No.

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MCHUGH: Did you feel that—were there any particular staff members who especially impressed you?

MIELDS: Barriere is an outstanding guy. I don't necessarily agree with everything he wants or why he wants to do it, but he certainly is a guy with knowledge unparalleled in this business. You know, as far as knowing the House of Representatives, he's really, very, very good, very knowledgably, first-class guy, professionally.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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