

Samuel E. Belk, Oral History Interview – JFK #2, 6/1/1974
Administrative Information

Creator: Samuel E. Belk

Interviewer: William W. Moss

Date of Interview: June 1, 1974

Place of Interview: Waltham, Massachusetts

Length: 88 pages

Biographical Note

Belk, a Foreign Policy Officer, National Security Council [NSC] from 1959 – 1965, discusses the division of labor within the NSC, its relationship with the Department of State and Department of Defense, Latin American and African affairs, and McGeorge Bundy, among other issues.

Access

Open.

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Gift of Papers and Other Historical Materials

of

SAMUEL E. BELK, III

to the

John F. Kennedy Library

I. Introduction

- A. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions hereinafter set forth, I, Samuel E. Belk, III, (hereinafter referred to as the Donor), hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America, for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library, my papers and other historical materials (hereinafter referred to as the Materials) which are described in Appendix A, attached hereto.
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- B. Upon the expiration of the period referred to in paragraph II.A., above, it is the Donor's wish that the Materials be made available for research use as soon as possible, following their deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of their contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure or harass living persons, and to safeguard the interests of the United States of America. Accordingly, the Director of the John F. Kennedy Library (hereinafter referred to as the Director) shall have the Materials reviewed and shall close the following classes of material:

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- (2) Material relating to investigations of individuals and other sensitive personal matters.

- (3) Material containing statements made by or to the Donor in confidence, unless in the judgment of the Director the reason for the confidentiality no longer exists.
 - (4) All other material which contains information or statements that might be used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass any living person.
 - (5) Materials containing statements or information the divulgence of which might prejudice the conduct of foreign relations of the United States of America.
 - (6) Materials which are security-classified pursuant to law or executive order, or which contain information the public release of which would adversely affect the security of the United States of America.
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- A. Subject to the restrictions imposed herein, the Director may dispose of any of the Materials which the Director determines to have no permanent value or historical interest or to be surplus to the needs of the John F. Kennedy Library, provided that prior to any such disposal the Donor shall be notified thereof and, at the Donor's request, the Materials proposed for disposal shall be returned to the Donor.

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- A. During my lifetime, I retain to myself all literary property rights in my writings in all papers and other historical materials donated to the United States of America under the terms of this instrument or which may be included in other collections of papers deposited in the national archival system. After my death, all said rights shall pass to and become the sole and exclusive property of the United States of America.

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- A. In the event that the Donor may from time to time hereafter give, donate, and convey to the United States of America, for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library, additional papers and other historical materials, title to such additional papers and other historical materials shall pass to the United States of America upon their delivery to the Archivist, and all foregoing provisions of this instrument of gift shall be applicable to such additional papers and other historical materials. A description of the additional papers and other historical materials so donated and delivered shall be prepared and attached hereto.

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A revision of arrangements governing access to these materials or other provisions of this deed may be entered into between the Donor or his representative and the Archivist of the United States or his designee if it appears mutually desirable to revise the procedure herein stipulated.

VII. Signatures

Daniel E. Belk III

_____, Donor

Date: January 14, 1975

Pursuant to the authority of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, the foregoing gift of the papers and other historical materials of the Donor is accepted on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions hereinbefore set forth.

acting James E. O'Neill
Archivist of the United States

Date: June 23, 1975

VIII. Description

APPENDIX A

(Attached to and forming part of instrument of gift of papers and other historical materials, executed by Daniel E. Belk, Donor, on January 14, 1975 and accepted by the Archivist of the United States on June 23, 1975).

Description of Material Donated

(Note: The Library staff will complete this section after inspecting the material)

APPENDIX B

The following additional historical materials are donated to and accepted by the United States of America pursuant to paragraph 5 of the instrument of gift of papers and other historical materials, executed by Samuel E. Belk, III, Donor, on January 14, 1975; and accepted by the Archivist of the United States on June 23, 1975.

Recordings of oral history interviews, and corresponding transcripts, with Samuel E. Belk, III, conducted by William W. Moss, on May 31, 1973, June 1, 1973, May 6, 1974 and June 3, 1975. Five reels.

Samuel E. Belk III
Donor

1 November 05
Date

Allen Weinstein
Archivist

11/05/05
Date

Samuel E. Belk - JFK #2

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Carl Kaysen's role and relationships in the National Security Council
7	Division of labor in the National Security Council
9	African affairs
12	Volta Dam project in Ghana
15	Latin American affairs
17, 21	McGeorge Bundy's relationship with Walt Rostow
18	Security Council's relationship with the State Department
18	Belk's assessment of Rostow
20	Alliance for Progress
26	Rostow's appointment to the State Department's Policy Planning Council
28	Thanksgiving Day Massacre
31	Historical assessment and rewriting of the Kennedy Administration
33	Belk's assessment of Bundy
41	How Bundy ran the staff in the National Security Council
44	Flow of information in a bureaucracy
46	Bundy's relationship with John F. Kennedy [JFK]
48	Bay of Pigs Invasion
51	Bundy's relationship with Dean Rusk
53	President Kennedy as compared to President Eisenhower regarding foreign affairs
63	African foreign affairs
69	Bureau of International Organization Affairs & the United Nations
79	National Security Council's relationship with the Defense Department
80	McGeorge Bundy's relationship with his brother William Bundy
82	Vietnam

Second Oral History Interview

with

Samuel E. Belk

June 1, 1974
Waltham, Massachusetts

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: Okay.

BELK: He is a most extraordinary man. Who are we talking about now?

MOSS: We're talking about Kaysen [Carl Kaysen] right now.

BELK: We're talking about Kaysen, Carl Kaysen.

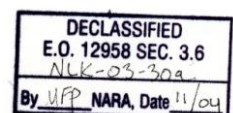
MOSS: It's my impression he was brought on primarily for the economic side. Is that correct?

BELK: He was brought on for the economic side and other things. Carl had a very far-ranging mind; he had a very creative mind, a very hard – why I like the term a very hard-nosed mind.

MOSS: What do you mean by hard-nosed? It gets tossed around a lot.

[-1-]

BELK: When Carl.... Well, Carl is a very good he's very good to give an illustration



of what I mean by hard-nosed with Carl because if Carl felt that he knew something, if he had a point that he wanted to make he would make it in a very forceful, sometimes almost brutal, way. I've heard him, for instance, with George McGhee in the State Department, on another matter, drive his point home using language and using argumentative techniques that you were just incapable, his adversary would just be incapable of coming through. Carl was good in that way. I thought really in some instances he was too hard. I felt it was a considerable overkill in the way he would make a point that he could have gotten there much sooner and easier, certainly, by using other techniques.

MOSS: How much of a sense of urgency was part of this overkill do you think, and how much a reaction...

BELK: I don't think it was a sense of urgency I think it was just his way of doing things.

MOSS: It was.

BELK: Kaysen among, let's just say among the second and third level people who encountered him, he was a fearsome character oftentimes. He was mean.

[-2-]

They considered him ruthless, and as a matter of fact he was ruthless. He was never ruthless with me. I got along with Carl just fine. He was really a very sensitive, sweet guy when you were with him by himself, on a lot of subjects. But he would barrel through on a lot of budgetary, military matters. And he also gave you the impression – and I'm not saying he did not have the blessing of the President – that he was speaking for the President: This is what the President wants, and this is what we're going to have. Period. And, sort of, I don't give a damn how you bring it off, but this is the way you do it.

MOSS: Okay. Why was it necessary to do that with these second and third echelon people?

BELK: Well, not necessarily, just second and third echelon people. Mostly Carl dealt with first echelon people. Mostly Carl dealt with first echelon people, at the assistant secretary level and upon most things. On some things he'd go further down. Well, it was necessary because they dragged their feet; they didn't move fast enough. Carl did not have the patience to negotiate with them, to argue with them gently

[-3-]

for several hours. He would rather tell them to do it and save that time. I suppose it's debatable as to which is the best technique. He left a lot of wounded bureaucrats around. But he did get things done. It was my feeling that he could have gotten the same thing easier with, in some instances, being a little more polite than he was. Sometimes he left scorched

earth behind him, no question about it. In that way he was most unlike Bundy [McGeorge Bundy]. He had... Carl lacked the style that Bundy had. He lacked the style that the President [John F. Kennedy] had. He lacked the style that a lot of other Kennedy men had. He left people very antagonistic toward him and oftentimes toward an issue because of the way he got it done. And he left them resentful. You could argue that if you leave people antagonistic and resentful then they're really, they're not going to do as good a job. Now, I can't point to a specific thing that turned out that way, but I'm telling it to you this way mostly to give you the impressions I have of the man.

MOSS: Okay. Can you recount the incident with McGhee

[-4-]

for instance? Can you recall what the issue was?

BELK: I believe it was on the Congo, and I can't recall the substance of the telephone conversation. But I was with Carl once when he was talking to George McGhee, and it was one of the hardest most merciless telephone conversations I've ever heard from Carl's end of it. It reminded me somewhat of George Patton in combat, you know: the language, the way it was done, the finality of every statement. And McGhee was no small man in the government. He was, I think, at that time an undersecretary, and I think the subject was the Congo. And McGhee is.... In all fairness, George McGhee could sort of drive you up the wall with chitchatting about something and not making any progress on it, you know, on the one hand, then the other hand kind of diplomatic language, if you'd call it diplomatic language. It was very tiresome to many. It was very tiresome to me. But whereas I know Mac would have led him down the road forcefully, but in an unantagonistic way, Carl declared total war on him and obliterated him. It was quite something to hear. And I've seen Carl do that in meetings, also. As President

[-5-]

Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] would say, "Let me make one thing perfectly clear." I'm not knocking Kaysen. Kaysen got things done. He's an exceedingly intelligent man, and this is his way of doing things. He could be very blunt. And also, for the record, he also could be terribly nice and very perceptive, very sensitive to some people, to some situations. I think he was very impatient with, oh in this instance, a fellow like McGhee or some of the fellows in the Pentagon who really didn't think very fast or very well, and so Carl would then do their thinking for them and tell them where they stood and tell them where he stood and then tell them what we were going to do. You know, "Here's the whole problem. If you can't carry your part of it, I'll carry your part of it for you; I will also carry the President's part of it and then I'll tell you what the end result is." See he'd do the whole thing right there and then, then it was done. He would leave some colonels, military men, civilians in the Defense Department sort of shaking their head, boggle-minded at what had happened to them, but it had happened and was over with and Carl was in the car going back toward the White House and they were standing there picking

[-6 -]

up the pieces.

MOSS: We've sort of covered the operating staff if you will. There's one aspect of this I want to get a little more clearly through and that's this sort of division of effort within the staff. I have a general impression, for instance, that Forrestal [Michael V. Forrestal] handled the Far east, that Komer [Robert W. Komer] handled the Middle East, perhaps South Asia as well, I'm not clear on that. You, for a while, had Africa and then Brubeck [William H. Brubeck] had it. Is this the way that you remember it, and does it go any further as far as specialization is concerned? And where does the responsibility stop, in a way, and where do you pass it on the Bundy and the President?

BELK: Well, let me talk about how it happened in the staff internally first, as I remember it.

MOSS: Okay.

BELK: And then we'll get into how it went to the President. The staff was very flexible. Bundy never denied anyone the opportunity to make his views known on an area that wasn't assigned to him. Let me use Komer as an example. Komer had ideas about the whole world. And a lot of them were very

[-7 -]

good and very helpful. Because Forrestal was assigned to the Far East, did not mean Bob wouldn't get into Far Eastern matters at our staff meetings, you know, with all fours, be right in there. He knew something about it; he had something to say about it; he had an opinion, and these opinions were accepted and made a part of what we were doing.

MOSS: But would he have any of the follow-up action?

BELK: Usually not, no. That would fall to Mike. He would have input at staff meeting, but it was Mike's assignment, especially in this instance when Mike was sort of the rather special link we had with Governor Harriman [William Averell Harriman]. Mike would be the follow-up man. Mike would do the actual work. But Komer's views or my views, Bundy's views, Ralph Dungan's views, if he had one, and he often did, Arthur Schlesinger's [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] all this would come out in staff meetings. There was never any feeling, I think, on the part of any of us that we wouldn't listen to someone else just because he had the assignment himself, because his name was added.

MOSS: Okay. We have Africa taken care of by you and then

[-8-]

by Brubeck.

BELK: The way that happened was this. In the first year Walt Rostow [Walt Whitman Rostow] was there and Walt was very high on Africa. And in all of these interviews, whatever it will sort out, that in the Bundy area, Bundy was primarily, Bundy was interested in the whole world, and he thought about it in that way. He never thought about it, he never compartmentalized it very much when he thought about it. But he was primarily Western Europe, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] big Far East things, big power politics, the big power things, what was naturally attractive to Bundy and which he knew best. And a continent like Africa, this is what Walt knew best. The whole underdeveloped world was Walt's beat that first year: Latin America, Africa, Asia, the poor countries. And I worked – I can't remember just how I got into African affairs, I think though it was one afternoon when Walt Rostow saw a fellow named Kewanooka, from what is now Nyasaland [Malawi], marvelous African fellow who has since been killed in an automobile accident, but Walt knew him personally.

[-9-]

And Walt couldn't see him right away. Walt got me on the telephone and he said, "Sam, listen I've got this fellow, Kewanooka coming in. He's an African; he's a wonderful fellow, and I can't see him right away. Would you see him and talk to him while I finish what I'm doing?" He said, "I wouldn't ordinarily ask you to do this but this man is my African brother. I really love him and I don't want him to feel that I'm neglecting him." So – and I think this is how I got started in African affairs – so I went down and talk to Kewanooka, who was a marvelous fellow – it's not worth going into here but – talked to him and then I hit it off so well with him the two of us went in to see Walt And we suddenly got talking about Africa and then Walt started talking to me about Africa and I found it fascinating because I didn't know anything about it. And Barbara Ward came in one day and we talked about Africa. And just, little by little, I got into African affairs. And suddenly I was the man for Africa on the Bundy staff working mostly though, that first year, with Rostow. A lot of Africans came in you know. It's amazing how many Africans Senator Kennedy had

[-10-]

Known on the Hill and knew them by first name. They knew him. The chemistry between the Africans that we met and the whole idea of the Kennedy administration was just great, very exciting. A lot of them came there, the first and second years especially. And they were very, very thrilling times because I had been sitting there watching Africa, you know, just lie there asleep during the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] years and then suddenly it opened up. And for me, not knowing anything about Africa, not only were we in an entirely new field of foreign affairs, but suddenly I was meeting very exciting people from a part of the world that I'd thought very little about. Africans are very fascinating people, and they were especially exciting to meet with Walt Rostow because Walt had carried on a correspondence with a lot

of these fellows, Hastings Banda [Hastings Kamuzu Banda], the whole group of them Nkrumah [Kwame Nkrumah], Mboya [Thomas J. Mboya], all of those Walt knew by first name. The President himself knew a lot of them, or he knew about them. And this was a very lively new area and very rewarding to work on. I used to, when I had time,

[-11-]

I stacked up books in my own house thinking to myself, “My God, here you are in African affairs and you don’t know a damn thing about the continent. You’ve got to learn.” Going through these books on weekends, when I could grab enough time, to get a little background on some of these countries that I was dealing with firsthand. We were dealing with the Volta Dam project in Ghana, very exciting, a think that was already going on as a matter of fact before Kennedy came in. And I inherited that and did some work on it.

MOSS: It took you about a year to come to the final decision too, didn’t it.

BELK: That’s right. It went on and on and on. Yes.

MOSS: I was reading the file on that not too long ago and I noticed that the two people who seemed most dubious about it were Robert Kennedy and Douglas Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon].

BELK: Oh, yes. That’s right.

MOSS: Do you remember that?

BELK: That’s right. Yes, they were. They were. That’s exactly right.

MOSS: Do you remember....

[-12-]

BELK: And during the first year it was very hard for someone like me. I didn’t know Bobby. I sort of knew him in the hallways and chatted with him several times during that entire period, but I really didn’t know Bobby Kennedy at all. And Dillon, I suppose I shook his hand half a dozen times in my life, but I didn’t know him as a man. But I would hear through Walt, through Mac that Bobby or Dillon didn’t, really didn’t think very highly of this. It was very hard for me then, not knowing the men and not having a piece of paper to go on, you know, a position to meld that into whatever work I did on it, which was really the piece of paper that was going to the President. So I always felt that I could depend on Mac to, you know, to catch anything that didn’t exactly fit in.

MOSS: As I recall, their opposition didn’t come through in memoranda or anything of that sort...

BELK: No, it didn't. It didn't.

MOSS: It was in the NSC (National Security Council) meeting when they were talking about it.

BELK: Yes. That's right. That's right. And I know, I think, I'm almost certain I said either to Walt or to Mac, I said, "Now look, you know I really can't handle

[-13-]

the Dillon-Bobby Kennedy thing because I don't know what that is. I know they have misgivings about it, but that isn't spelled out to me clearly. I'm not sure what it is. It may be terribly valid so we ought to be very careful." Especially.... Well, I didn't know Bobby very well, but I had a high regard for Douglas Dillon, and if Dillon had misgivings about something, I would take it very seriously indeed, very seriously. So that's how I got into African affairs. And then when Walt went to the State Department, I held on to African affairs for a period of time and then gradually turned it over to Brubeck because UN [United Nations] affairs got bigger and bigger and bigger. And after the Bay of Pigs, you know, no one wanted to, we had to be very careful with Adlai Stevenson. And this is understandable because he was put in a very awkward position during the Bay of Pigs, and we had a lot of rebuilding to do.

MOSS: Brubeck didn't come over from State until late '62 or early '63, I believe.

BELK: No, it was in '62 I'm almost certain.

MOSS: Was it '62?

BELK: I'm almost certain it was '62.

[-14-]

MOSS: Okay. I had...

BELK: And then during the interim I carried Africa along, with the UN. And I don't know just when the transition took over, but it was not sort of turning over the files in one day. It was letting him take over as he could.

MOSS: Was there anybody on the staff... Excuse me. [Interruption] Okay. On this division of effort thing, even though you had Africa, Komer had Middle East and Forrestal had Far East, I don't see a similar arrangement on Latin America. What happened there?

BELK: Latin America went from pillar to post. There was an ongoing general concern for Latin America on Bundy's part, as there was for every part of the world.

There were three fellows in the White House that got heavily involved, at one time or another, and sometimes together in Latin American affairs. These were, Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin], Dungan and Arthur Schlesinger. I don't think it was ever divisioned at all among them as to who was doing what. They were all interested in Latin America, they were all following it in a general kind of way and sometimes very intensely.

[-15-]

How the Alliance for Progress came about really should be, that will be told by Goodwin and Arthur and Dungan because I know when it happened and listened to it and all of that, but I'm not really the one to recount that.

MOSS: I'm just curious about the daily follow-up person on the staff.

BELK: Well, no finally we did have such a fellow, Bob Sayre [Robert M. Sayre], who came over from the State Department, a foreign service officer, and he was the Latin American man, so on a day-to-day basis the consistent, the ongoing man for Latin America. He's now an ambassador down there.

MOSS: Do you remember when he came in?

BELK: I don't remember when he came in. He came in, I would guess, in the middle of '62 or maybe late '62, something like that. I think he came in after Brubeck, but I'm not certain. He was a very quiet, he was very able, very soft-spoken, low silhouette kind of fellow and very much a foreign service type line officer, very – I'm not knocking him he was very able, he just was not as outgoing or as visible as some around the White House in

[-16-]

those days. But the primary ones in our area were those three.

MOSS: Okay. Let's turn to Walt Rostow for a minute or two. We have at least one report of he and Bundy not meshing well, that while they got along fine, their styles were just so different that it was an impractical situation and that Bundy really didn't want Rostow there. Do you have any feel for this?

BELK: Yes, I do have a feel for it. I do have a feel for it. And there's a lot in what you say, and I think I can comment on that. On the matter of Latin America also during that first year, Walt got into it also, you know, it being a poor area, an underdeveloped area. He was very interested in that point of view.

MOSS: Was anybody really looking for building countries to a take off period and following...

BELK: Oh, that was sort of what we were talking about in those days. Walt was so flamboyant and eloquent about getting to the point of take off and all that. We all got caught up in it. And it was rather good, it was terribly good for the

[-17-]

Government of the United States because we hadn't talked in an enthusiastic way about the underdeveloped areas of the world before. During the Eisenhower years they were looked upon as charity patients, you know, the poor bedraggled Africans and Asians and all that, and sort of, and what you do for them was by way of charity. We started thinking about them in a different way, just as I started thinking about Africans in a different way. Here were very exciting countries, very exciting people, some old civilizations. We started thinking about the underdeveloped countries in a different way. And I think this is largely due to Walt Rostow.

MOSS: Okay. Because in hindsight people are saying, well here came the professor with his abstract theories and so on, trying to impose them on real situations and really it didn't work.

BELK: Oh, that's what the State Department would say. That's what the foreign service said. Now that wasn't it at all. This was *a* way of doing it. No one was more flexible or more reasonable about doing it another way than Walt Rostow.

MOSS: Okay.

[-18-]

BELK: At least, you know, his whole idea of reaching the take off point and how you move from an underdeveloped country into a developed country, how you move from a starving diet to a high protein diet. All of these were very good ideas. And that's the way Walt saw them. Nobody ever tried them before. It had never been done. But at least it was an idea. And he would, I'm quite sure, be the first to say, "I really pose that as a question. Isn't this the way to do it? In some countries this is the way and it's worked and it seems to be *a* formula, perhaps of many that you would use to bring the underdeveloped countries into a better economic status and so they can have a better, higher quality of life.

MOSS: Because the picture we get is one of Rostow saying this is *the* way we are going to do it across the board...

BELK: No, no that's wrong. That's wrong. That's – I know a lot of people who took it that way and they were so accustomed to having a hard formula for something, you know: one, two, three, four, always doing it in that way and the government was set up that way. Well, as a matter of fact,

[-19-]

Some of the new men thought about it that way too, and they weren't terribly favorably disposed toward Rostow. They were rather inclined to say "Of course, this is the Rostow formula." Well, the Rostow formula was one of the most flexible things you possibly could encounter. You know, this was this man's forte, Walt Rostow. He was a wonderful man, but his forte was in dealing with the underdeveloped parts of the world. This excited him terribly. He was very creative there. And this is that kind of thing that I would give anything if Walt had stayed in it rather than going and getting so heavily involved in something like Vietnam as he did. Which I honestly don't think was his bag at all.

MOSS: Do you think perhaps he might have had been the man to run the Alianza (para Progreso)?

BELK: Oh, I think so. Yes. I think that would have been a great thing to do. If the President had... Looking at it in hindsight of course, if Walt could have been top man on the Alliance for Progress, maybe once and for all we could have formulated a good, lasting, consistent policy toward Latin America which we have not had in modern times; we've

[-20-]

never had, and we don't have yet. It's one of the great tragedies of our foreign policy. The Alliance for Progress was a very good, very good idea, a little dazzling sort of as an idea which needed a lot of infrastructure built up under it to support it and make it go and make it last. Now Walt understood that. If he had been top man for that, that had been his mission in the Kennedy years, this would have been one of the most important things that we could have done. It would have been one of the most important things that could have been done for this country because something still has not been done.

MOSS: Let me ask you a little bit more about Rostow's operating style, what he was doing and, to get back to my original question, his relation with Bundy which I don't think we really...

BELK: Yes. We'll get into that right now. His relationship with Bundy during that first year was one of the most exciting things I've ever been a part of in government or really in my life was to work with Bundy and Rostow during, let's say, that first six months. This is really very thrilling if you are, if you like foreign affairs to begin with as

[-21-]

I do, and if you like articulate intelligent men who believe in progress and were devoted to it and who were working for a man as exciting as President Kennedy; I'm here to tell you it's awfully difficult to imagine an assignment in the world that could have been more exciting

than that. Now, it would not have been that exciting, that rewarding if you'd had two men working at odds. They simply were not. They were working together and the harmony was deafening. It was so great during those first months. It remained that way, but, mind you, the whole administration was sorting itself out and the way the President was going to govern the country, so there were sorting out in other areas as there was in the Bundy staff. Walt was, Walt's manner of working was quite different than Bundy's. This is all right, you've still got a splendid end product. He was a man who was not as adept to day-to-day operational things, I think, as Bundy was, a man more reflective, a man who would take longer to get to a point than Bundy would take. Let me, for just a second, talk about three men and see if

[-22-]

this helps as I think it will. Henry Kissinger, during the period that he was there, took forever to get – it was the long, long paper; there were long meetings, very Germanic in his approach to things. It took him too long to do business on a day to day basis with the President of the United States. That's all there is to it. That kind of thinking, that kind of intellect really belonged in an institution of learning, or in the government it would have belonged in I & R [Bureau of Intelligence and Research], in State or in the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] in the estimates area, that kind of thing. There wasn't that much time that close to the President. Alright. He, the quality of his work, absolutely splendid, no question about it, and I had high regard for him there. And meeting him, as I did on a number of occasions, I know talking to him about foreign students he's really a terribly exciting man to know. But it took him too long. He didn't fit there. His way of doing things didn't really fit in that particular area.

Walt also, was much more suited to being a

[-23-]

counselor of the State Department than he was working that close to the President, even though the President liked him very much. I mean the two of them, Walt was so articulate, he had a sense of humor, he was warm, he was a dear man as well as being that intelligent, you know, a highly attractive human being. But to work in the fast, clip, hard, confident way that the Bundy staff had to work in, Walt really, he fitted yet he fitted better somewhere else. Am I coming through all right on that?

MOSS: I think so. I think so.

BELK: Many men, many men, many very intelligent men simply cannot work competently that fast. Bundy himself could. Bundy had the background when he got there. He had the confidence when he got there. He had the style when he got there. He knew how to do things. And he could do something very quickly and very fine and very big, and know that he'd done immediately the right thing. Many men simply aren't equipped to work like that. If they have to work that fast then they go away thinking, "Good heavens, what have I done?" And they try to reconstruct the thing in a kind of

[-24-]

academic kind of way to be sure. And until they do that, they don't feel confident about what they've done. Bundy didn't have to do that. And that's all there is to it. This is one of the most extraordinary things about this man; his background, his own intelligence, all of this equipped him in the rarest kind of way to serve a President like President Kennedy.

MOSS: This is very interesting because Halberstam [David Halberstam] for instance, to drag in his name looks at this and sees it not in terms of true capacity but as arrogance as hubris...

BELK: Halberstam is entirely wrong.

MOSS: Okay. Tell me about it.

BELK: He doesn't know what he's talking about.

MOSS: Tell me about it.

BELK: He really does not know what he is talking about because that's what Halberstam didn't see. I tried to read Halberstam's book, and I really laid it aside because even though it's been ten years it's really rather an infuriating book. We're on Walt Rostow though. Maybe we ought to finish Walt and then let's come to Mac because I have strong feelings about what we seem to be getting

[-25-]

into. I think on the whole matter of Walt's going over to State, it was a matter of really very, it was practical that he do that. Now I think it was Bundy's judgment that this is the way it should happen. I don't think he did it out of dissatisfaction for Walt; I don't think he did it because he didn't like Walt. I think Bundy simply thought his own staff, his own operation, would run quicker as *he* saw it, with a new arrangement. And after all, if you're going to be chief of staff, you have to do it your way. And this is what Bundy was doing.

MOSS: Any insight into why Rostow went to the Policy Planning Council?

BELK: No, not really. Just how that decision was made I don't know. But you see this was the thinking part of State. And when Walt went over the understanding was, "Well at least we'll have a Policy Planning Council that has a real brain in it," you know, top flight intellect, and Walt could pick his own men. He took Bob Johnson [Robert H. Johnson] with him from our own staff, a man also much better suited for that than to work directly over the Bundy staff.

MOSS: Sort of the first time since Kennan [George F. Kennan] you really had

something going?

[-26-]

BELK: That's right. Yes. That's right. We looked upon that as an opportunity for the State Department. A real plus for them in getting Walt over there who would – everybody knew he had the ear of the President. Everybody knew the President liked him. Everybody knew he'd been over in the White House for a year. And you put him right there in the middle of the State Department in a policy position, not only head of the Policy Planning Council but also the council of the department. That was a prestigious appointment, and we viewed it as an opportunity and also as a rearrangement that made very good sense.

MOSS: Do you have any insight...

BELK: Everybody can't, everybody couldn't be that close to the President. And I think there was – very devoted to both Bundy and Walt during that time, that period especially – I think it was quite practical that Walt go over there, and he have another kind of relationship to the President not through Mac. Because the way he did things was so fine within itself you didn't want to change Walt Rostow just to fit him into a particular kind of staff.

[-27-]

MOSS: Was there any discussion amongst the staff prior to the so-called Thanksgiving Day Massacre about what was going to happen in the rearrangements and so on?

BELK: Oh, some. But I can give you my own view there. Yes. We knew something about it. But, I think if you had waited as long as I had waited to do something meaningful in the government and you were working with someone like Bundy and like the President and like Walt Rostow, whatever rearrangement they made I was perfectly willing to accept. If they had decided that I should go back to the CIA and do something there, if I could have given Bundy the support he wanted from somewhere else in the government, I would have been perfectly willing to do it, and I would not have felt knocked down at all.

MOSS: What I'm more after, I think, is the notion that the White House in general, the President in particular, Bundy in particular, were dissatisfied with the staffing as it existed in the summer and early fall of 1961. They knew some changes had to be made. They knew they need somebody in the assistant secretary for Far East slot. They knew that Bowles [Chester Bowles] was a problem.

[-28-]

BELK: Yes.

MOSS: How much of this did you get into talking about and how did this impact on the staff? Was this indeed dissatisfaction and they knew they had to make some other arrangements. How keen did it get?

BELK: It didn't get terribly keen. It was really a matter of that whole area of the new men discovering what they had, you see. When Mac came aboard, he and Walt came aboard, they found that they had me, they got Bob Komer. They felt that they had inherited the whole OCB [Operations Coordination Board]. They got rid of that right away. There was no problem about that. It was a matter of shaking down and of getting people in the right spot so that you could get the job done best. And there was no feeling this inevitably would run, would become the rumor in the State Department, "Oh, they've really fallen out among themselves and heads are going to roll," and that kind of thing. It was not that kind of thing as I remember it or as I saw it at all. It was a matter of rearranging people so that you could get the job done better. And the whole

[-29-]

matter of Chester Bowles is a splendid, towering figure of a man who works out awfully well in some places, in other places he wouldn't.

MOSS: Okay. Now I get the impression that he came over to the White House in effect to do the kind of job that Rostow had been doing with the underdeveloped world, and yet this didn't quite pan out.

BELK: No, it didn't, and I don't know why it didn't pan out. I really don't know. He didn't do it that way and I don't know the background of that, I really don't. I was so busy, during those days mind you, I was so busy myself working, doing my staff job, that I don't know what happened there. So that was on the political level also, far.... Bundy would have known. It's one thing that we never talked about. It came up from time to time, the name would come up and I know oftentimes that sort of thing would come up at a staff meeting or with Bundy, and I really wouldn't know what he was talking about, nor was there time to find out what he was talking about because it didn't bear on what I was doing and I was as rushed as anybody else.

[-30-]

MOSS: You didn't have much contact with Bowles then when he was...

BELK: Practically none, practically none.

MOSS: ...even on the Africa business.

BELK: No, no, not at all.

MOSS: Okay. Well, let's turn to Bundy then and talk about his operating style and the whole Halberstam thesis and so on. You say that the Halberstam thesis is wrong. How is it wrong? Maybe it's the...

BELK: Well, I really can't use that as a take-off point because I read a little bit of Halberstam's book and, you know, I, over the years since '63 I've read all those books and a lot of them have misinformation in them, a lot of them are wrong. That's all right they're all new. I studied history a long time myself in the universities and am somewhat inclined to a historian's point of view. And these things will change. It doesn't worry me a great deal. Halberstam's – so I don't know what Halberstam's thesis is. I know a little bit about it, but I laid it down. I really didn't want to continue reading it because I've had too much of it and I think from what I read he was entirely wrong. And let that take care of

[-31-]

Halberstam. Halberstam didn't interview enough people. He dealt with issues oftentimes in the wrong way when he didn't know the people that were involved. He left out whole parts of it. It's very bad, comic-book-type history. That's what it is as I read it, and I didn't read all of it. I don't want to use that as a take off point for anything because I have a great lack of respect for that book.

MOSS: Okay.

BELK: The problem with a book like that is that he writes exceedingly well for the reading public today with a lot of emphasis on the adjective rather than the verb and the noun, and it's an attractive book for modern reading America to pick up and read. It seems to be very true. It seems to be very authoritative and well written, and it's unfortunate for the time being that a book like that has come out, but there may be more of them. But I don't think, I know they won't be borne out by history because the facts are all available. That's the reason you've got this library here. The facts are available and in the long run why it will all sort out just like everything else and you'll have the

[-32-]

truth of the matter. His assessment of Bundy as a man is as wrong as anything possibly could be. Now, I'm very subjective on this. I have my own estimate of people. I have to see them the way *I* see them, and I see Bundy as really a rather rare kind of American. I suppose I look back quite a lot to England for the kind of man that I admire most. And I have to say this because then you'll know, then you can see the backdrop of my own thinking. I lived in England for a couple of years when I was at school at the University of London, London School of Economics [and Political Science], and I like England. I like the way they, I like their statesmen, I like English history. I love American history, I love my country and all of that, so it's not a matter of choosing things English over things American. It's simply that...

MOSS: You don't want to be tagged as an anglophile.

BELK: Well, I am an anglophile, but I'm an American first and an anglophile after that very much so indeed. But when Bundy first arrived on the scene at the White House, I know after the first weeks of working with him, inevitably we'd come away working with this man thinking of Harold Nicolson who I'd

[-33-]

known in England. He reminded me of sort of Duff Cooper [Alfred Duff Cooper] or people like the younger Pitt [William Pitt]. All of these people would go running through my head. I thought of Gouverneur Morris. Bundy had a style. He had a quick wit. He had a depth of intellect that made him totally confident of what he was doing. He was confident. He was there when it takes most men several days to get there, you know. And that was the magic of working with the man. It could be... Well someone who hasn't, who really didn't know him very well, they could even think that he was superficial, you know, a lightweight because he worked so fast. But this man did not work fast without knowing what he was doing. When Mac talked to you about arms control in Africa, as he did once or twice and which he's probably forgotten, he still hadn't forgotten the Roman Empire. He thought very large all the time. He thought very deep. And he was right. He knew what he was talking about. He was polished, he was a man of exceedingly high quality, a man who I suspect might well have received much

[-34-]

more acclaim, notoriety, national notoriety in Europe than in America. I don't think Mac comes off terribly well to common Americans, to the common man in America. Now, I'm not knocking the common man in America because he's very fine. But Mac is very high quality. He's a man of very high polish, intellectually and otherwise, and you don't meet one like him very often. Now, if you put McGeorge Bundy together with a man like Kennedy, a very bright, dazzling Irishman, and you have the two men working together, you have a rare combination indeed. I can't think of the time in American history when we've had such a combination, and to be as close to them, to work with them as closely as I did is a rare, rare opportunity. It was totally rewarding. Mac Bundy demanded a degree of excellence from me as no one ever has. He brought out things in me that I didn't have before. And it wasn't just a matter of finding the facts and making the analysis. It was the overall way in which we operated.

MOSS: You have a...

BELK: It was the substance, it was the style, it was the way of doing it, and most importantly of all,

[-35-]

we never forgot this, what change is it going to bring? What's going to be the end product? How will things be different? How will things be better?

MOSS: Okay. This is an extraordinarily rational kind of thing going on. What happens when a man like Bundy comes up against essentially the irrational, which is I see – at any rate and I'll inject my own thing here – as having succeeded the rational approach. You have the general ferment in this country and so on; you have Bundy's coming up against the New York situation from his Ford [Ford Foundation] position; you have the Chicago seven trial and all this kind of thing sort of taking over and succeeding. What happens? Can the rational really deal with that at all? [Interruption] Okay. Let me put it a little differently. How does the realistic, logical mind of a Bundy come up against, as you say, the freaky day-to-day things that seem to be basically irrational and sort of which we've had quite a spate really within the past ten years. Can you think of occasions on which this happened and could illustrate how he met this kind of thing?

[-36-]

BELK: Oh, yes. I think Mac felt very – these things didn't disturb Mac greatly. This does not mean that he didn't care about them because he cared about them very deeply. But, I think in things like that, let's say oh some of the irrational things the Blacks have done, some of the irrational things a lot of groups in America have done, some of the far-out thinking, I think he would feel, I'm quite sure on this, that this is the kind of thing you have to go through, but it does not mean that it is going to last for all time. Mac had a very deep sense, very real sense of history. And history doesn't happen in a day or a week or a year. I know, I talked to him a little bit about the March on Washington, about the whole matter of the Blacks in this country and all of that. There are a lot of people who felt Mac had no sense at all that that was even going on, that he didn't care about it. Nothing could be more incorrect. He felt very deeply about it. And he in his own mind was very close to it. It wasn't the kind of thing that he dealt with from day to day. He was busy on a lot of other things. But these are things that happen in a

[-37-]

country, in a situation, as history takes place. They come, they happen, they go away, they certainly happen and things are different after that. And then you work on what you've got after that. But they didn't disturb him. He didn't disassociate himself with them at all.

MOSS: Okay. This is what I want to get at because I haven't really...

BELK: He had a very, he had a very, he was very sensitive about Blacks in America. I don't think he felt that this was his forte, he wouldn't have at that particular time anyway because he had people really out there carrying the banner like Arthur Schlesinger and all those, you know, who were much more active much more vocal about those subjects than Mac. But Mac was very sensitive to them.

MOSS: Because I get the impression that he would not only be disappointed in a deep way that this kind of thing is going on, but it would be disconcerting and that it would paralyze his application of solutions, or his even being able to find solutions in a given situation, simply because it was not consistent with his view of the world.

[-38-]

BELK: No, I think his approach to these, he might well regret that they did some things the way they did them. Now, I'm not speaking of just the Blacks in this country, I'm not thinking of, let's say, some of the countries in Latin America and all of that, the sort of out of control areas. I think he would regret they did some things the way they did them, but that this would not at all deter him from trying to find a way out of it. And I think whether it be domestic Americans or whether it be people abroad, his first thought would be to get together with them and talk it out and to find out which direction they want to go and what the situation really is. Oftentimes sort of in a situation of revolution, whether it be in this country or whether it be abroad, you go through a period when nobody seems to know where he's going. The whole thing has no shape. The whole thing has no direction. It seems to be out of hand. His thought in a situation like that would be to try to find direction, and he wouldn't avoid it at all, and he was not insensitive to that kind of thing. This is where people like Halberstam and a lot of people I've talked to

[-39-]

about Mac since are just utterly and completely wrong. They see him as an establishment man, a man with money – which I don't really think he has, I don't know, it doesn't make any difference – a man who is bright, a man who is accepted, a man who has everything short of the type of prince of the realm and some think that he thinks he's got that. And all this is very incorrect thinking.

MOSS: Why do you think they have this impression? What has led to it?

BELK: Mac's style of doing things is a very, is a highly polished one. If you have the style that Mac has, which I happen to admire, and you have an intellect to back it, I come back to what I said earlier, you don't find very many people like that in this country, and he rather confuses a lot of people. They haven't got the equipment to appreciate that kind of American. Now, Mac would be... The English understand Mac readily, you know, they have no problem with him at all because they've seen that particular kind of man more in that small island than we see him emerge in this large country. It's harder

[-40-]

for that kind of man to emerge in this country than it is elsewhere.

MOSS: This is beginning to sound like fuel for Richard Hofstadter's thesis on anti-intellectualism in American life. Okay. Let's talk a little bit more about the practical way in which Bundy ran the staff. You mentioned yesterday, or you described the way he would put a problem before the staff in a staff meeting. Could you do a little more of that? How would he deal with you as one on one for instance in a particular area? The Congo comes to mind readily simply because I'm more familiar with it. If you can think of something more illustrative or that comes to your mind more readily, do.

BELK: I don't think Mac had.... If there was anything that became apparent in working with Bundy it was that he didn't have a formula for doing things. All problems were different, the size of the problem usually was different or, if it was in a different part of the world, the issues were different. It involved different people. And to have a kind of set formula for dealing with a problem or with the staff it

[-41-]

was almost, it just wasn't there that's all there is to it. He's a creative man, and he would take the issue and the people and where the problem was in time and deal with it in that way. On the staff level, if we really had a very hard, important problem, maybe one that was breaking, like shooting in the Congo or a revolution in Latin America, something like that, all the staff got into it in one way or another. And we didn't have to necessarily make a.... The staff was ready to run in such a way, in such a democratic way by Mac, that I could lean and say, "Hey, listen. I don't know what you're talking about. What actually happened?" You could do that in that staff and some, Ralph Dungan would lean back and say, "Well, look Sam, this is what happened: yesterday so and so and so and so and so and so...." They'd bring another staff member up to date so then maybe he could, at least he would know what was going on whether he had anything to offer or not. There was no.... It was very informally and democratically run. And most of the men sitting around that table – it was a matter of personal friendship also. You didn't feel as I have had to feel in ever so many meetings back in the State

[-42-]

Department that, you know, if sort of it's not in your job description, you don't get into it. If it's not in your job description, you're not responsible for it. On that staff you could get into any of it. And if you were taking up too much time, Bundy could make you aware of it, and he never had to bust your head open to let you know it. We were all very sensitive to each other.

MOSS: There's another phenomenon in bureaucracy and that is getting used to telling the boss what he wants to know. This has been used disparagingly...

BELK: We never did it.

MOSS: ...particularly in the military. But the question is what ideas did you have of what Bundy needed to know? What were the kinds of things that you knew that you had to bring to him and to other members of the staff? Where were the...

BELK: We knew what was needed. We knew what was needed in that area to make that area effective for the President. If you work there for a time you know what is needed. You know what you need to get from the rest of the town, and that's what you give him. If it's bad – you know, that's an

[-43-]

area in which you don't play around with not telling the truth and not facing things exactly as they are. You can't afford to. We were talking earlier about sort of anybody who works in that area having a sense of country, having a sense of national concern. And if you worked on security council matters long enough, that's the way you learn to think. You learn to think in 360 degrees and you dare not think any smaller than that on any issue.

MOSS: Let me go on a little sidetrack for a moment. You were talking also yesterday, and I think it was off tape, about the way people in the bureaucracy can, in effect, hid information that they don't want to go forward because they know it will spoil their own vested interest, in effect, if the information goes forward. Did you run into cases like this where either State or Defense would try to keep things from you?

BELK: All the time. All the time. I ran into it more during the Eisenhower years than I – well in that, during the Eisenhower years during the year and a half I was there during the Eisenhower – than I ran into it later. Because in the military especially, and in State, anywhere

[-44-]

you look in government, they can do that kind of thing. The armed services can do something with missiles without telling you, and that is very dangerous in a democratic state. The armed services can do a lot of things with the military that can be dangerous to a democratic state and not even realize it really, oftentimes that's the dismaying part of it. But you've got to know what the military, especially what the military establishment is doing.

MOSS: When you'd come up against this how did you handle it?

BELK: Well, when we came up against it in the Eisenhower administration, you would just, we usually or – let me speak from my own experience. I would get to the point that I would suspect that I was not being given the full picture. But it was very hard for me to prove it. Now, when Kennedy came in, and because of General Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] and some colonels like Ewell [Julian J. Ewell] and like

Legere [Lawrence J. Legere] that came over from JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff], I never felt that we were not getting the full picture. I'm not sure that we were. I think we were. And I've

[-45-]

known Larry Legere now since and there's never, there has never been any indication at all that the military wasn't completely candid with the Bundy staff. There may have been instances, and Mac would know, that I don't know about. But once and for all it seemed to me that we had our lines deep into the Pentagon mechanism, and with McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] sitting there, such as we'd never had before.

MOSS: For instance, on the Congo situation and with the Greene mission to the Congo to look over the ANC, the Congolese National Army. You had your lines into that pretty well did you?

BELK: I think we did as I recall. As I recall it we did.

MOSS: Let me ask you to expand on the relationship between Bundy and Kennedy then, and begin to talk about Kennedy a bit more. You've sketched the essence of it I think. Could you talk about the two men together, times when you viewed them together in conversation and that kind of thing.

BELK: Well I didn't have a lot of opportunities to experience this, and it almost always revolved around the visit of a foreign dignitary, an African or U Thant-

[-46-]

Well, no, U Thant came during the Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] years – an African or the National Academy of Foreign Affairs. And when I saw the two men together it was usually very businesslike, very businesslike, very friendly. I get my strongest impressions on how Bundy and the President worked together from, I suppose, the mood that Bundy would be in after he'd met with the President, which was almost inevitably a very bouncy, happy one. And you could tell that, you had no alternative but to think that here he enjoys doing this, not only is Bundy good at it but he enjoys going in there. He likes to work with him, and he comes away feeling good about it. Or, if there were terribly serious problems, you'd get the reflection of gloom and trouble through Bundy from the President. I'm thinking now especially of two matters that I wasn't really that much involved in. But I did see Bundy during that period, during the missile crisis and the Bay of Pigs, especially the Bay of Pigs. The Bay of Pigs distressed him terribly. They felt, I'm quite sure they felt they'd been had and indeed they

[-47-]

had. They had been had by their advisers, by the older gentlemen left over from the Eisenhower administration that filled the pipeline so full that they took the risk of following through on their recommendations and it was wrong.

MOSS: What were you doing while the Bay of Pigs was going on?

BELK: My whole association with the Bay of Pigs was very, very small. I know that I saw *a* piece of paper on Bundy's desk – did we put this on tape yesterday?

MOSS: I don't believe so.

BELK: No. This Bay of Pigs took place during a period when I was working sort of elbow to elbow with Bundy over in the Executive Office Building. He still had his office there, and I was helping him with his inbox and doing a dozen and one other things that he asked me to do and a lot of things he didn't ask me to do that I knew had to be done. And there was a piece of paper which made it clear that the whole Cuban operation was not only under consideration but very close. And I didn't know – I knew something about this

[-48-]

from the last months of the Eisenhower administration, not a lot. It always had troubled me. It had troubled me from the long experience in CIA, and it troubled me also because so much military was involved and because I really just, I'd had, my experience with the military had been one that left me very distrustful and suspicious of them. And I said, I pleaded with Bundy, "Look I really don't know about this, but for God's sake be careful, be sure that the military and CIA are telling you the truth. Get CIA really into that thing and don't just take the word of the military, because it really worries me."

[TAPE I SIDE II]

MOSS: Okay. We're back on now.

BELK: Okay. Bundy took me seriously. He said, "I will, and thank you very much for urging me to be very careful about this." And he was holding it in his hand. That was my sole contribution to the Bay of Pigs thing which was in essence, "For God's sake be careful."

MOSS: Okay. Now after that. After it broke.

BELK: Now, when it happened, during the whole period of the Bay of Pigs, I said to Bundy, "Look. All of

[-49-]

this is breaking around you. You take care of that. I'll man your phones. I'll take care of the rest of it. And if you're really needed on something, then I'll tell you. Why don't you forget about all this. Forget about all the rest of it. You take care of that." And that's exactly what happened.

MOSS: Can you describe his – you said he was worried about it – can you describe more about his attitude and how he appeared to you?

BELK: No, because Bundy spent practically all of his time across the street in the White House, and when he came back I really didn't bother him, except to say, "Listen. Just continue to forget about everything else. You're not needed." And I didn't question him about him because, you know, I'd gone through two periods sort of like this, times of crisis in CIA. There's nothing more troublesome than having some staff guy say, "Hey, what's going on?" I didn't ask him what was going on. He needed his time, and I didn't have anything to offer him. The top men from State and Defense and all were working right there with the President. I did not have background in depth enough to make a contribution except to hold

[-50-]

the line for him on other things which is what I did.

MOSS: What about the missile crisis situation?

BELK: The missile crisis situation; Carl Kaysen and I ran the rest of the world, and everybody else was involved in the missile crisis.

MOSS: Okay. Let me ask you a little bit about Bundy's relationship with Rusk [Dean Rusk] and with McNamara. Let's take Rusk first. What do you know of that situation?

BELK: Most of that has been said in one way or another. When I was together with the secretary and Bundy, I never saw any – it was all right. They did business, proper business and in the things I was involved in and everything turned out just fine. There were no irregularities in it at all. I did through get a lot of playback from second and third level people in the department who either admired Bundy very much or they loathed him or were afraid of him. And a lot of them would put themselves into positions of speaking for the secretary, you know, "The secretary's not going to put up with this very much longer. You people are doing what we're supposed to be doing. That's what we're paid for. We're the trained experts in it. Who do you think you are?" That

[-51-]

kind of attitude which I ran into quite a lot in meetings in the State Department, especially smaller ones. When I had something that I had to do and I had to do it with them, I had to get information from them and in the process of getting that and making them hold up their end of it, oftentimes one would run into a very, very angry, resentful, unforthcoming kind of situation especially with the Foreign Service. But in those days, if you worked on Bundy's staff, they may have disliked us very much indeed, but they were responsive to us, and usually they were totally responsive. They didn't try to keep things from us. They were afraid to.

MOSS: Were you indeed doing things they should have been doing?

BELK: Oh, I think if we had had, if we had had a very good State Department, if it had been manned by good men across the board, we wouldn't have had nearly as much to do. We would have been more transmittal, a staff transmitting what they did to the President, if there had been any reason for us to exist at all. We existed as that kind

[-52-]

of staff during the Eisenhower years when we went along with the wrong assumption that the State Department could do those things. And so we transmitted what they did to the President and what they did to Gordon Gray. But they weren't doing anything.

MOSS: So what sort of things were you doing that they weren't?

BELK: We were doing.... Well, let me approach it from another way. We had a President who wanted to get involved in foreign affairs who wanted himself to participate in foreign affairs. That's where our role stemmed from. President Eisenhower did participate, but he was perfectly willing to let his secretary of state and the department carry the ball, and he would do almost entirely what they wanted him to do. I don't recall a single time during the year and a half I was on Gordon Gray's staff when the President went counter to the Department of State and Defense. And if there was a disagreement between the two departments, between the two secretaries it was usually resolved one way or another by Mr. Gray behind the scenes. Then the President was given

[-53-]

something to do and he did it. Now, this is not the way President Kennedy operated at all. He was very much into everything. He knew a lot of the Africans, as I said earlier, by first name. He knew a lot of the Europeans, he knew the issues. He didn't look upon NATO as just a list of countries and that they have maneuvers now and then. He knew what NATO was, its strengths and its weaknesses before he came into the White House, just as Bundy did, just as Arthur Schlesinger did, just as a lot of the others did. You had a White House staff that was very determined to be a part of foreign affairs. And, indeed they were and to conduct foreign affairs differently and better than had been done before. So that's how we came into it. We

did a lot of things that the State Department would have done during the Eisenhower years, or I would guess, during the Truman [Harry S. Truman] years.

MOSS: Let me turn it the other way. What was State not doing? What frustrated you about the State Department operation?

BELK: I think what frustrated me most about the State Department operation was that if you had an

[-54-]

important issue requiring a presidential decision, a presidential view, a presidential approval, something like that, they would come at you in the most laborious way with a long memorandum, a background paper, all of that, sometimes not even having the recommendation in it, seldom. Or even if it had a recommendation, usually it was very much along the lines of leave things alone the way they are, approve of what's going on rather than doing something new, rather than an initiative on the part of the United States, the strongest country in the world, which was in a unique position to take initiatives for the betterment of a lot of situations in the world. And the State Department simply wouldn't come through in that way. The papers they sent forward were very ho-hum, very much as they were, with a little bit of improvement, but very much as they were in the Eisenhower years. Now, President Kennedy was a man who believed in progress, who believed in moving forward, and that if you couldn't, at least try. The State Department didn't think that way.

MOSS: So what did you do when you got one of these

[-55-]

ho-hum papers?

BELK: When we got one of those ho-hum papers, we usually then, if it had the secretary's own memorandum on it – and sometimes Rusk's memoranda were fine, they were good, sometimes they were not – then it would go forward. We did not cut off the secretary from the President, but we would cap it with a memorandum saying, "This is in essence what this batch of papers says. Here is the background" – which might be a paragraph as against the State Department's background booklet on a problem – "and here is the recommendation." All on one sheet of paper. The same way with.... And on that the President could act. You could then do business in a limited amount of time on issues that the State Department would take forever to act on.

MOSS: Would you go back to the State Department and get them to rework the material?

BELK: No. Almost never. It would take too long. It would take them six more weeks to do it, and then you'd either have to go over and do it for them, be on the

telephone with you saying, "Well, now we said in the first memorandum so and so and

[-56-]

so and so. That's really the way we feel." You see. And you get into the whole matter of trying to change them and arguing with them. And it's too time-consuming. We worked very fast, and we worked very fast in most instances with full confidence. That's something that many people can't understand. We worked fast, but we knew what we were doing. We had done our homework. We already knew what the issues were. And we didn't have to go through all that. You don't have to.... If you're going to see a guy... If you're going to see President Tubman [William V.S. Tubman] of Liberia, you don't really need to spend all the night before reading about Liberia and about President Tubman. For anybody who's followed Africa at all, they knew something about Liberia. They know that Monrovia was named after James Monroe who had a rather fancy plan about sending American Blacks back to Africa. If you have any education at all, usually you know those things. And the matter of asking a President like President Kennedy to go through those thick background Eisenhower-type briefing books simply was unnecessary. We didn't have time for it.

[-57-]

MOSS: There was a question on the tip of my tongue. What was it? I can't remember. I'll have to go to the next one. Oh, I know what it was. Was this even across the board in State or were there some people who were better than others or some...

BELK: Oh, there were some that were better than others. One of the most rewarding things that you could see throughout the government, which I mentioned to Mac now and then, a thing that I could see that he didn't, was the excitement and the thrill that a lot of fellows, let's say my own age, of my own generation of the President's own generation that were sitting there in government as 02s or GS-14s, 15s, 16s who were in the supergrades, who had longed to do something in government that would be worthwhile. They were educated, thinking, caring men who had never had an opportunity really to show their intelligence, to use their intelligence, to move forward, to realize something of their own dream of what this country could be like and what this country ought to be doing in the post war years. A lot of people in government had lived through the two Eisenhower administrations

[-58-]

longing for that kind of thing and a lot of them had given up hope. Some of them had turned into what we called deadwood. Some very good friends of mine were, in fact, had in fact turned into that kind of government officer. They were much more interested in building their houses or where they were going to travel abroad next summer than they were in their jobs, because their jobs in government had become sort of exercise without hope, you know.

All right. With the arrival of the Kennedy group, they reacted in a variety of ways. Some of them, which is well known and will be chronicled for all time, some of them with great suspicion and distrust and dislike of the whole Kennedy operation, as they called it. Others saw it as sort of their last chance, you know. Some that I knew very well in CIA and State, they really agreed on their own initiative – I didn't have to tell them this – that this is the most exciting period that we'd ever gone through in government. Here we've got a very bright and intelligent President of our own age. He's surrounded by men like Bundy, like Arthur Schlesinger. Arthur had quite a large following in the government

[-59-]

among sort of radical Democrats. At last they're in power, at last we can do something. And I know a number of them said to me, "Look, I'm sitting down here in complete isolation. There's no way in the world I can even touch that area. What can I do?" And usually you would be dealing with them on a particular problem or so, and you'd simply have to say, "Well, do the best you can with this, and keep hoping and keep working." But a whole new life, I felt, went out through all the bureaucracy in Washington. Whole parts of it became alive and became hopeful for the first time for many years, accompanied, let us never forget, by a whole group that disliked Kennedy intensely and they thought he was crazy. They thought McNamara was crazy. They despised Bundy and saw him either as a snob or as a man who didn't know what he was doing, "that wild man." And they would see Kaysen, here was a bull that rushes in and destroys everything and he hasn't anything to put in its place, a real iconoclast, which is not the case at all. Carl always had something to put in its place. So it was that kind of thing that I saw in

[-60-]

government that I don't think Mac saw. Mac saw it now and then. He was not nearly as aware of it as I was, but I worked on it on a day-to-day basis, spend a whole morning in the State Department in a meeting in that of atmosphere and come back sometimes with something to tell him, more than often not really anything. Arthur saw some of it. A lot of people were very, very vocal about Arthur. Arthur got some bad press. He got some very bad publicity by word of mouth in the bureaucracy which didn't bother him at all. And Goodwin, all the oldliners, all the oldtimers in Latin American affairs had a perfect horror of Dick Goodwin, you know. "This Boy Scout, this idiot. All right, so he can write a speech for the President. Let him go back and write a speech for the President, don't let him spoil this whole area of the world." Well, I suppose their own view of how you take care of that area of the world was to do nothing because they hadn't done anything. "Don't rock the boat, it's Latin America," that vital piece of geography right next door to us which actually in the long run may well determine whether we're going to stay a great power or not.

[-61-]

MOSS: There's been a change at least with respect to Africa that when the bureau [Bureau of African Affairs] was set up it began to move into areas that had

traditionally been the domain of the European bureau [Bureau of European Affairs], particularly the extension of the metropolitan European areas of the colonies and that kind of thing and that there was a clash between the new Africanists and the old Europeanists on policy and so on. Did you see any of this from where you were?

BELK: Oh yes. That was inevitable. That was inevitable. They were old-liners, most of these, the foreign service officers who were handling Portugal, Spain, with the Portuguese territories right there in the middle of Africa. Oh yes there was a real bureaucratic clash there in the department between the European-oriented ones...

MOSS: How did you cope with this?

BELK: ...and.... Well, sometimes it was rather hard to cope with. I came out very strongly on the side of the new Africanists, hoping along the way that the colonial powers, mainly the Portuguese in this instance, could see the writing on the wall, over a long period of time and make proper adjustments so that Portuguese influence, for

[-62-]

instance in Angola and Mozambique, wasn't lost, that they could maintain it peacefully rather than having a black revolution in which all the Portuguese in Africa would be murdered in a bloodbath, and it seemed that that's what was going to happen. The same way with Belgium. The whole matter of Belgium and the Congo [Democratic Republic of the Congo], Europe and the Congo is a large complicated, messy subject which, I suppose.... Well, that of course is *the* example of the clash between the European bureau in the State Department and the African bureau. The Belgians wanted to keep the Congo for itself. You had Ewa, the South Africans all that, the black and the anti-blacks, that's what you had, in essence. I thought it was very unfortunate that some accommodations couldn't be made on the part of the Europeans that would have brought black Africa along in a different way than it's now going, but it simply wasn't in the cards. They were very stubborn. They did hold out. The Portuguese were determined to hold out. They're still holding out. And we felt very strongly.... I had a very interesting meeting about a half a dozen times with the

[-63-]

Portuguese Ambassador Pereira [Pedro Theotônio Pereira] during that period at Mrs. Robert Low Bacon's [Virginia M. Bacon] house. She is a formidable dowager, the sort of doyenne of Washington society and also a very bright woman, lives about a block from the White House, knows everybody and discovered that I was handling Africa in the White House for Bundy and the President. And I met with the Portuguese ambassador all the time and tried very hard to make this argument. I'll never forget them. They were the most significant, interesting diplomatic meetings I've ever had with anyone. He was really quite adamant. Here you had something of a small bloodbath going on at that very time in Angola and in Mozambique and this is verified at the CIA. This is simply not rumors. I was not operating on intelligence that

we got out of the newspapers, you know, the black-oriented newspapers. But this is hard intelligence. There were killings going on. The blacks *were* in revolt. There was strong feeling running throughout free black Africa against the Portuguese, and Ambassador Pereira – splendid looking gentleman, looked something like Velasquez [Diego Rodriquez de Silva y Velasquez] a tall, strong Velasquez portrait – would say to me “Mr. Belk we understand the blacks in Angola and

[-64-]

Mozambique. We have been there for all these years we understand them so much better than you do. We don't mind your being interested. But really this is the matter of the affairs of the Angolans and Mozambicans and ourselves. They are citizens of Portugal now. We have common citizenship.”

Then you make an argument sort of saying, “Yes Mr. Ambassador, that's true, but common citizenship is not keeping you from killing blacks and the blacks from killing you. In the long run what does this mean for you? You'll lose your influence there. They will throw you out. And all the things that you could do to help Angola and Mozambique move into the modern world to become developed areas, rather than the pitifully underdeveloped areas that they are, will be lost.” He never saw this. He never saw this. He was an interesting, fascinating experience in dealing with a very almost splendid diplomat of an old colonial power. This was reflected in the State Department, reflected very clearly. And a lot of fighting went on, a lot of fighting went on in preparing even a briefing paper for a visiting African dignitary, you know. If you were in touch with the African bureau and the

[-65-]

European bureau discovered that you were in touch with the African bureau and not in touch with them, the European fellows would get you on the telephone and say, “Listen, be very careful about... I wish you'd clear that memorandum with us. Will you tell us what you're saying?” And sometimes you would and sometimes you wouldn't. The President had his own view here. And we were an area, we could clear if we wanted to, but we didn't have to. We would get in touch with them for the information we needed. But you did that only because you knew the direction in which the President was going and the direction in which Mac Bundy was going, and you stayed true *to* that to the very best of your ability.

MOSS: In which direction was Rusk going?

BELK: That's a very good question. It's a very good question. I was never quite sure. It seemed to me when we would meet a group from the European bureau he was very much in favor of them. And when we met with Soapy Williams [G. Mennen Williams] he was very much in favor of Soapy. I honestly don't know what position the secretary had on these matters. Soapy Williams was such an Africanist, so pro-black Africa, that he was oftentimes quite

[-66-]

unrealistic. It became kind of, he became evangelical about it. It was a religion with him. I was for that too, but not nearly in the way Soapy was. Wayne Fredericks [J. Wayne Fredericks], Wayne Fredericks was much more practical along these lines. He was very much for Africa, but he was a very practical man. He also had a very fine mind. Fredericks is a splendid, splendid man, a man with great heart for Africa, and I think, for the most part quite practical in the modern world. His view I think would have been... Or let me say my view was very much like his, that you bring the Europeans around to understanding why they've got to make changes in their attitudes and their policies toward Africa for either own good. It doesn't do any good to cast the Portuguese out of Angola and Mozambique when the Portuguese really have so much know-how, so much technology that would be useful.

Soapy asked me to go to Africa with him on several occasions. I declined. I really didn't want to go with Soapy, you know. And in those years also, just an aside, if you were asked to go on a trip, you really thought very hard about

[-67-]

it. "Would I rather do that or would I rather say here and do what I'm doing right on the scene." I almost always came out feeling that I ought to stay right there. I was having a...

MOSS: Did you go on any trips?

BELK: No. I was having a very good time. Well, I did to New York. I went to the UN, but they're the only official trips I made.

MOSS: On what occasion did you go to the UN?

BELK: Never for any Security Council meeting or anything like that. We've always let the ambassador carry the ball there and he was backed up by men from the State Department. I was on the telephone to them to be sure of what happened, that kind of thing, but I didn't go up from there. The White House didn't, Bundy didn't want his men sitting out there behind Adlai or anybody else in the UN.

MOSS: There's one question on the UN that's intriguing and that's the question of Plimpton [Francis T.P. Plimpton] handling the ball on the UN bond issue. Do you recall that at all?

BELK: I recall something about it. I don't recall that this is the large issue. It might have seemed so from the files. Oftentimes the files will make

[-68-]

things seem larger than they really were. And sometimes the files have very little in them about something where you know that really was a matter of top concern.

MOSS: Let me ask you to talk briefly at least about the people in I.O. [Bureau of International Organization Affairs] and the people in U.S.U.N. [United States Mission to the United Nations] in New York. Let's take Harlan Cleveland [J. Harlan Cleveland] to begin with.

BELK: Well, Harlan Cleveland, Harlan Cleveland was, I think, one of the best men who came to Washington during the Kennedy years, a fascinating, renaissance kind of man who knew something and had an idea about almost everything. Extremely able man. A very attractive man in the way he would present a problem, in the way he handled it, his real devotion to the country, to progress, to Kennedy. To my knowledge he and Mac got along just famously in doing business. He was a very good man to have as assistant secretary for International Organization affairs during the time that Adlai Stevenson was in New York because he was in effect Adlai's boss, except that he

[-69-]

wasn't because Adlai had a line directly to the President or to Mac. And it was a.... You had to be very careful in how you handled that particular kind of situation because Stevenson was a unique man, a unique man in the party, unique man in the country, a man with a large following, a man with great pride and great intelligence. He, Adlai, wanted to be secretary of state as you know and he didn't get that. And then, when he was offered the ambassadorship to the UN, he was very concerned then as to who was going to be secretary of state, you know, "Can I work with him?" And the story goes, and I don't know this at all because I was not privy to it, that President Kennedy first had in mind making Bundy secretary of state and Adlai didn't like the idea. I suspect the two men didn't know each other. I suspect if the two men had ever gotten to know each other, they would have liked each other very much indeed, and I don't think they ever did. Because I worked with Adlai Stevenson right on through into the Johnson years and it always seemed to me that, actually, the two men never quite got with

[-70-]

each other. Bundy was very careful to take Adlai into consideration at every turn. There was an unfortunate period during the Bay of Pigs, you know, when Adlai wasn't informed. Bundy felt this very strongly. He did not try to bypass Adlai, ever. He had high regard for him, he knew the President did. He did not want to make it awkward for Ambassador Stevenson. I will no.... Let me now just guess on something because I don't know really. I don't think though, I don't think Stevenson trusted Bundy, and why, I don't know. Again, I'll come back. I think it's because the two men never really knew each other. Arthur knew Adlai well. Adlai trusted Arthur. They had a lot of conversations together. When I was handling UN affairs, I never did anything without working with Arthur and with Mac, almost always, well if it involved New York, because this is a very practical way to do it. To have done it any other way would not have been realistic because Adlai was on the telephone to Arthur quite a lot, you know, directly to another special assistant to the President. And I don't

[-71-]

think he called Bundy very often. He would on occasion, but not very often. It wasn't an ongoing warm relationship such as he had with Arthur. And if you're going to do United Nations business for the President of the United States you have to – from where I sat I had to know what Cleveland, what the bureau was doing in the State Department. I had to know what Adlai was doing. I had to know Arthur's particular role in it before I'd go to Mac who would then take it to the President. Now Arthur Schlesinger himself took some UN affairs to the President, but I don't think he ever did it without Mac's knowledge. I don't think there were any end runs there on United Nations affairs. But it was sometimes a very time-consuming, but, of course, very important thing to be sure that all these areas were at one with each other, or if there were differences, to identify them and to find out whether in fact they were differences or if it was a lack of information on the part of one of them, especially Adlai, and then get that straightened out before you take it to Bundy.

MOSS: A couple of memos in IO stick out somewhat one

[-72-]

is Woodruff Wallner and the other is Walter Kotschnig. Could you talk about them a little bit?

BELK: I know both and they were both high ranking State Department officers who dealt with UN affairs and did it very ably. My own dealings were almost entirely with Harlan Cleveland or Joe Sisco [Joseph J. Sisco] or Dick Pedersen [Richard F. Pedersen] who – who's now councilor of the department – was then in New York. Well, these were second level fellows who were very bright, very good who formulated policy. I didn't deal a lot with them. I talked a lot to them but on issues that needed presidential, needed White House action. They didn't usually get into it.

MOSS: Okay. What about Klutznick [Philip M. Klutznick] and Plimpton up at the mission.

BELK: I dealt mostly with Plimpton and even more with Dick Pedersen.

MOSS: Okay.

BELK: Dick was sort of the man on the front line in New York and as an issue would go to the Security Council or into the General Assembly. The man who

[-73-]

had all the information last who would be playing the role up there for Stevenson that I played for Bundy here would be Dick Pedersen. All of it would be brought together with him. And so I dealt mostly with him.

MOSS: How did you find dealing with that operation over there?

BELK: Very easy. Very easy, very pleasant. Very pleasant and I never perceived any, any irregularity any dissatisfaction with at least my own operation down on the Bundy staff.

MOSS: I think you pointed out yesterday, and I know I've had it pointed out to me before, that it was difficult for Stevenson to be, in effect, in New York and yet at least a quasi part of the immediate administration, a part of the National Security Council and so on, that he couldn't really be a part of that Washington scene being in New York the way he was.

BELK: Well, you know, he couldn't. He was very frustrated and it was understandable. In the first place Adlai Stevenson had his own stature in this country, a rather towering one among Democrats especially, among the President's own party, among people still in the President's own party

[-74-]

who still admired and were devoted followers of Adlai Stevenson. Well, you know, looking at it bureaucratically, Stevenson was working for the assistant secretary of state, yet there was this provision for Adlai to sit in on National Security Council meetings. Well, good grief, that is a very odd arrangement indeed when he can sit in on council meetings and Harlan Cleveland couldn't and the under secretary of the state couldn't unless he were sitting in for the secretary. It didn't make sense. It didn't make chain of command kind of sense. And we didn't look for that necessarily during the Kennedy years. We didn't adhere to chain of command always. That's one thing we felt rather happy skipping over now and then because you could get things done skipping over. But Adlai was in a very hard position up there. I think there was an attempt made, certainly there was an attempt made in the Bundy staff to involve him, to take him seriously, to give him due respect during that entire period. I think Mac made a special effort in that direction. But for his.... It was impossible for him to be

[-75-]

in New York as an ambassador with the rank only of ambassador and then be as much of the part of the scene in Washington as he wanted to be because he wanted to be a powerful man in Washington holding the office that he had. It just doesn't work that way. It couldn't work that way, that's all there is to it. If the President had wanted to make him some sort of special counsel assistant or something and then put him in New York with a deputy ambassador or something like that working under the assistant secretary it would have been different, but he didn't do that.

MOSS: On one particular episode working with the UN working with IO and the

Africa bureau all together was the incident of preparing the course of action and the program for national reconciliation in the Congo that sort of came around with the U Thant or UN plan. Do you recall the formulation of that and your participation in it?

BELK: I didn't participate in it a lot. Almost all of that was done by State. I did it, State and the African bureau and when you are formulating a plan like that it gets down into a whole group

[-76-]

of committees and that sort of thing. We didn't... we saw the plan as it emerged and had it explained to us. And I think during that period Bill Brubeck was handling the Congo. I wasn't, I was aware of it, but I was not part of it...

MOSS: Okay. The thing I was...

BELK: Nor do I think, I don't think Bill Brubeck got that much into the formulation of it.

MOSS: Because the thing I'm wondering about mainly is the, in effect the decision to play that kind of role for the U.S. to, in effect, draft a plan that would be implemented under UN auspices, in effect be a UN plan.

BELK: Yes.

MOSS: This is, this is quite an odd sort of thing.

BELK: Well, not actually it isn't. Oftentimes in the UN you will have *a* nation that will have, well, they have a good idea. Let's say the Danes will say, "Look, we think we've got a solution to this, and this is the way you do it." Whether it be the Congo or disarmament or whatever. I know this has happened in the disarmament field a number of times. You'll have *a* country that feels

[-77-]

it's got a new way of going at it. And since it's not a member of the Security Council or it's not a member of the special, the ten nation committee on disarmament, well then, it's on the outside. Nevertheless it's got an idea. It will then draw up that plan and get then a group of nations to adopt it as its own. So that's not an uncommon practice at all. *It was* our plan on the UN in the Congo, wasn't it? I mean we drafted it.

MOSS: That's right.

BELK: So that wasn't an uncommon practice. Perfectly fine way to go about it. Then

you put it into the proper councils, proper forms in the UN, and if they like it they'll take it and make it their own.

MOSS: Okay. Do you recall an issue over how strong to make the UN determination, whether in fact to back up the UN determination by force, how far that was going to go on the question of integration of Katanga. It seems to me that there was an issue within our government as to how far we were prepared to back this up in terms of...

[-78-]

BELK: There was Bill, but you know honestly this long after I'd rather.... I think the documents bring that out pretty clear and I don't think, I think you pretty much get the whole story from the documents or from Brubeck.

MOSS: Okay. Let me turn to the Defense Department, we've been talking about State, and ask you to more or less do the same job on McNamara, Nitze [Paul H. Nitze], the Joint Chiefs and so on that you have been doing on State. The relation of the Defense components to the Bundy staff. Let's start with McNamara.

BELK: I know very little about McNamara. I really am not a good source. I saw him on a number of occasions. I was present when he did some business, not very much with Bundy. Most of it was hearsay. In my own area of activity, there was not that much reason to encounter him.

MOSS: How did the staff...

BELK: I knew mostly... My impression of the whole Defense establishment, insofar as carrying on business, really was through General Taylor and his staff right over there at the White House.

[-79-]

And I thought very highly of them, especially Larry Legere, General Taylor himself, and the playback that I got from him. And I felt for the first time we had right there in the White House a small staff representing the military that were going to give the President the truth. I didn't worry about the President being hoodwinked by the military as I did in the Eisenhower years. You just get all sorts.... During the Eisenhower years you would just get fragments of information that made you so suspicious and distrustful of them that sometimes, being historian bent, I worried about what might happen under the wrong circumstances. The military could really hoodwink the executive to the point that it would get completely out of hand with whatever disastrous results. I did not worry about that during the Kennedy years.

MOSS: Someone looking flatly at the organization charts and so on and seeing a Bundy [William P. Bundy] in ISA [International Security Affairs] and a

Bundy on the National Security Council would say to himself “Ah ha. There’s a short circuit or a shortcut. Maybe a short circuit sometimes.” What was the relationship there like?

[-80-]

BELK: Oh, very good. I never thought about it in those terms, nor do I recall – I wouldn’t anyway knowing the two of them – that there was very much banter in the bureaucracy about it. I don’t think.... It just never arose at that particular time that it might be that, you know, that it might operate in that kind of way as kind of special convenience between two brothers who were in very important positions and who would like to do things, let’s say, in their own way as I would guess Halberstam would say. To me that’s all nonsense.

MOSS: What about Nitze?

BELK: Nitze? Again I’ll just have to say I know Paul Nitze and was generally aware of what he was doing. But I didn’t deal, I didn’t do that much business with him.

MOSS: With John McNaughton?

BELK: No. I knew John, had a high regard for him. I know his work. He was a rare man, but I didn’t do that much business with him, not enough to record here you know.

MOSS: Okay. There’s one topic that we were talking

[-81-]

about with Dave [Dave F. Powers] out here yesterday before we got started and that was the question – this is an entirely different subject so we change gears a bit – the question of Vietnam withdrawal in late 1963. I got an intimation from you that you knew or felt or understood that there was a prevailing thrust in the administration for the withdrawal. Is that a fair statement of what you’ve said?

BELK: Let me try to articulate this as best I can. I don’t know what the President had said. I don’t know what his thinking was on this. I don’t even know what Mac’s thinking was on it, except I can suspect what it was. During all the Kennedy years, especially during, let’s say, the last year, the whole matter of Vietnam got to be larger and larger and more and more serious. And we started then asking some of the questions that became so fundamental later. “What in the hell are we doing in that part of the world? Where are we going? What do we expect to get out of it? When do we stop escalating? When do you saw this thing off?” It wasn’t only Vietnam it was the whole area. We were losing

[-82-]

people abroad in Europe, elsewhere were beginning to be very critical of us and the position we were taking in Vietnam. The question was what do you do about it? And the answer that came to people... I distinctly recall talking to Chet Cooper [Chester Cooper] during that period and to Jim Thompson [James C. Thompson] who did a lot with the Far East. Incidentally Chet Cooper is very important during this period. I think he doesn't come out on your list. He's very important. Whether he comes through on written material or not Chet was playing a very important role and especially in this area. And it wasn't a matter, as I recall it, as to whether we got out or not, but how you get out and how soon. How do you do it without losing face? And if you do lose face, okay, you're the strongest power in the world you can afford to lose face. The one thing you can't do is to stay in there and let the war get bigger and bigger and bigger with China next door and all of that.

[-83-]

MOSS: Who was saying this?

BELK: I was saying it for one. Chet Cooper was saying it for another. I'm quite sure Jim Thompson did. And I don't know really how much, my memory doesn't tell me how much we said to Bundy about this. But, I wouldn't have said it, I wouldn't have been as likely to say it as Cooper or Thompson because it was their responsibility. I wouldn't have been as likely to say it as Mike Forrestal because, you know, he was in that area. And I know that...

MOSS: Was he saying it?

BELK: I don't know if he said it to Bundy. I don't know if he said it to Bundy or not. I don't recall a staff meeting in which we actually got down to issues on this. And would not necessarily have gotten down to it in a staff meeting mind you. It was a worrisome, consistently recurring thing, and since I was not directly, it wasn't directly in my balliwick, my own information sort of cuts off there.

[-84-]

MOSS: For instance, did you have a staff meeting before Bundy went out to Honolulu just before the assassination?

BELK: Yes. But as I recall, and I don't know, I'm not sure on this, as I recall in a staff meeting like that when you had, oh, a trip to Honolulu coming up, or before Berlin, you had a general staff meeting and then Bundy would get together directly with those involved immediately afterwards for an additional meeting. If it was a matter of the UN or Africa, it would be Arthur and me or it would be me. I would meet him afterwards and we would go into that particular item in greater detail. Because sometimes it's

quite time consuming and all the other staff members had things to do. We were a very hard-working staff. We went hard, we went around the clock. We longed for an eighth day of the week and to keep.... So that's how you would handle a matter like that.

MOSS: Let me ask you about Jim Thompson and Chet Cooper a bit because we did not touch on them yesterday. When did they come into the picture.

[-85-]

BELK: You know, I can't tell you. I would have thought...

MOSS: Because there's not much of them in the files.

BELK: Well, there ought to be one way or another. There ought to be. Chet Cooper is a strong man, a very fine man, a deep thinker, a deep, caring man, and the things he said, from the things he said in staff meeting, he was right there in the Executive Office Building, I would have thought his input would have been similar to any of the others of us except that maybe Chet, having come from CIA as did I, he may well have done all of his work and put, you know, over Mac's name so that he doesn't come out into the spotlight as others did. My guess is that he would have done it that way.

Jim Thompson? I don't know why. I know one thing that we did talk about. Jim, Chet and myself before I left the Executive Office Building in 1965, this might have been just after, just after the assassination, this might have been the Johnson period. But I think, I'm almost certain thought it wasn't.... Also, it was also

[-86-]

in the Kennedy period because I knew Chet quite well from CIA, and we liked to talk to each other on the whole matter of recognition of Communist China [People's Republic of China]. You know, everything, the tide was against holding out. The folks in the UN were very much against maintaining an adamant position as we had all during the years previously. We had to change, we had to change the vote or we were going to be overwhelmed by a vote and it was going to happen anyway as it did. And China was, you know, this was a part of the Far East picture. This was Vietnam. We talked about Vietnam. But nobody, during that period had any idea of escalating the war into the kind of war it finally was by, let's say, 1966.

I don't know what Mac's views were then. I really can't comment on that. I cannot comment on Mac's Vietnam, what Mac did with respect to Vietnam because I don't know. I know the man well enough, I know the man well enough to know that he was pained by it and that he did his best, but I don't know the issues well enough to

[-87-]

evaluate any of it.

MOSS: Okay. I have just about run out of material at the moment and it's getting on

towards lunchtime so why don't we knock this off.

BELK: Yes. Right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-88-]

Samuel E. Belk Oral History Transcript – JFK #2
Name Index

B

Bacon, Virginia M., 64
Banda, Hastings Kamuzu, 11
Bowles, Chester B., 28, 30, 31
Brubeck, William H., 7, 9, 14, 16, 77, 79
Bundy, McGeorge, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 21,
24-31, 33, 35-38, 40-43, 46-52, 54, 58-61, 64,
68-72, 74, 82, 84, 85, 87
Bundy, William P., 80

C

Cleveland, J. Harlan, 69, 72, 73, 75
Cooper, Alfred Duff, 34
Cooper, Chester, 83-87

D

Dillon, C. Douglas, 12-14
Dungan, Ralph A., 8, 15, 16, 42

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 11, 18, 44, 45, 48, 49, 53-
55, 57, 58, 80
Ewell, Julian J., 45

F

Forrestal, Michael V., 7, 8, 15, 84
Fredericks, J. Wayne, 67

G

Goodwin, Richard N., 15, 16, 61
Gray, Gordon, 53

H

Halberstam, David, 25, 31, 32, 39, 81
Harriman, William Averell, 8
Hofstadter, Richard, 41

J

Johnson, Lyndon B., 47, 70, 86
Johnson, Robert H., 26

K

Kaysen, Carl, 1-4, 6, 51, 60
Kennan, George F., 26
Kennedy, John F., 4, 7, 10-13, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28,
35, 45-47, 52, 54-58, 60, 61, 64, 66, 69, 70,
72, 75, 76, 80, 82, 87
Kennedy, Robert F., 12-14
Kewanooka, 9, 10

Kissinger, Henry A., 23
Klutznick, Philip M., 73
Komer, Robert W., 7, 15, 29
Kotschnig, Walter M., 73

L

Legere, Lawrence J., 45, 46, 80

M

Mboya, Thomas J., 11
McGhee, George, 2, 4, 6
McNamara, Robert S., 46, 51, 60, 79
McNaughton, John T., 81

N

Nicolson, Harold, 33
Nitze, Paul H., 79, 81
Nixon, Richard M., 6
Nkrumah, Kwame, 11

P

Patton, George S., 5
Pedersen, Richard F., 73, 74
Pereira, Pedro Theotônio, 64
Pitt, William, 34
Plimpton, Francis T. P., 68, 73
Powers, David F., 82

R

Rostow, Walt Whitman, 9-11, 13, 17-22, 24-30
Rusk, Dean, 51, 56, 66

S

Sayre, Robert M., 16
Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr., 8, 15, 16, 38, 54, 59,
61, 71, 72, 85
Sisco, Joseph J., 73
Stevenson, Adlai E., 14, 68-72, 74, 75

T

Taylor, Maxwell D., 45, 79, 80
Thant, U, 46, 47, 76
Thompson, James C., 83-86
Truman, Harry S., 54
Tubman, William V.S., 57

V

Velasquez, Diego Rodriquez de Silva y, 64

W

Ward, Barbara, 10

Williams, G. Mennan, 66, 67

Woodruff, Wallner, 73