

Timothy Naftali

Hi, I'm Tim Naftali. I'm Director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. Today is May 15, 2008. We're in Washington, D.C. And I have the honor and privilege to be interviewing Dan Schorr for the Richard Nixon Oral History Program. Hello, Mr. Schorr. Thank you for doing this.

Daniel Schorr

My pleasure.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about your recollections of Richard Nixon as a congressman.

Daniel Schorr

Well, when he was a member of a committee of the House of Representatives. He was a member of the House led by Chris Herter. And they made a tour of Europe to see how the Marshall Plan was working. Among places they came to were Holland where I was living, and they had a press conference, and I met them, but I must admit to you, at that time I was paying attention to Herter. Nixon was not a very big name at that point.

Timothy Naftali

You go to Russia in 1950 -- Soviet Union in 1955.

Daniel Schorr

In 1955, CBS sent me to Moscow to reopen the bureau, which had been closed during the Stalin days. And as a correspondent in Moscow I had a very interesting time, including helping to arrange the first television interview with Nikita Khrushchev that Khrushchev had ever given. So it was -- that part was interesting.

Timothy Naftali

Since Khrushchev figures prominently in the Library, tell us what it was like to meet Nikita Khrushchev.

Daniel Schorr

Khrushchev was a -- seemed to be like a bumbling kind of peasant, except that he was very intelligent and knew exactly where he was going most of the time. I'll give you one little anecdote about Khrushchev, who really enjoyed banter with American correspondents, or including myself. In October 1956, he returned from vacation at a time when war was looming in the Middle East, and the Soviet tanks were marching into Hungary in order to suppress the revolution there. When Khrushchev turned up at a diplomatic reception, I had heard that the Soviet Party Central Committee was going to

meet and make some drastic decision about moving troops to heaven knows what, but they wouldn't tell us if it was true or not. And so I said to Khrushchev, "How was your trip, vacation?" "It's fine." "What did you do?" "Oh, I went hunting." "Really, where?" "In the Crimea, and I had Tito there as my guest." "Oh, interesting. Do you think that perhaps I might be able to go hunting in the Crimea?" He says, "With Alice, of course, a motion to [unintelligible]." But no, I said, "I have a problem. I actually was planning to leave on vacation tomorrow, but my capitalistic boss at CBS back in New York say because of these rumors of a Central Committee meeting you can't go. And I don't know what to tell CBS. Maybe you can help me." He lowered his voice, in kind of a confidential tone, said, "Let me see if I understand your problem. The [unintelligible]. You want to go on vacation when?" "Tomorrow." "For how long?" "Two weeks." "And you were afraid that in those two weeks you might miss a meeting of our central committee?" "Exactly, you got it." He said. "You can go on your vacation. I said, you mean it's not [unintelligible]. If absolutely necessary, we will have the meeting without you."

Timothy Naftali

You were PNG'd the next year. You were sent -- you were asked to leave the next year.

Daniel Schorr

Yeah, and in 1957, I came home to appear on Ed Murrow's Years of Crisis Roundup with all the foreign correspondents, and when it came time to go back to my post, they refused me a visa. That was their way of expelling me, but in order not to make a big thing of it, wait for me to leave the country, and not let me come back.

Timothy Naftali

Please give us an anecdote about Edward R. Murrow, since you were one of the CBS people at the time when he was at his peak.

Daniel Schorr

I'll give you a personal anecdote about Edward R. Murrow, quite a personal one. When I came back after my first few months in Moscow and sat with my esteemed colleagues, Eric Sevareid, Howard K. Smith, David Joe Menser [phonetic sp] feeling a little bit not up to the par -- I was young man, and but I did my best. So when the show was over Ed Murrow, who conducted the program, went around in a little semicircle. We were all sitting in a semicircle. He was the inside of that semicircle. He went to one person after another and said something nice. He finally came to me, and looked down at me and said, "Schorr, you'll do." That was his understated way of saying something nice. It made me feel good.

Timothy Naftali

You come back to this country. What -- when did you cover Richard Nixon in Poland?

Daniel Schorr

In 1957, no 1959, Nixon went on a trip to Moscow, where he had his famous kitchen debate with Nikita Khrushchev. I was not then allowed to be in Moscow. I was still PNG, persona non grata. I did, however, wait for Nixon, who went from Moscow to Warsaw on the way home and spent a few days

in Warsaw. So I was very close to him on his trip to Warsaw. I thought he handled this all very expertly.

Timothy Naftali

Can you recall an anecdote from that particular visit? That was a long time ago.

Daniel Schorr

I'm almost, that was a very long, 1959. The only anecdote I recall of Khrushchev -- when Nixon was in Moscow, Khrushchev had him as a guest at a dinner and let it be known to Nixon. Nixon said at one point, "You ought to really see the United States sometime." And Khrushchev said, "That might be very interesting, Mr. Vice President, but I cannot go as a simple tourist. I would have to be invited." And he was really angling for an invitation, which he subsequently got to come to the United States. But at that point Tommy Thompson's wife, the ambassador's wife was sitting next to Khrushchev and hearing the conversation about saying he wanted to go to the United States but couldn't go as a tourist. And she said, "But Mr. Khrushchev, we're not talking about official visits. We're trying to tell you you're just, you should see America as it is. And we'd like you -- " He said, "What would you like me to do, to put on a disguise for the occasion?" She said, "No, a simple wig would be enough."

Timothy Naftali

Did you -- were you in the country? Were you in this country when he came on his visit?

Daniel Schorr

Oh yes, I was with him every step of the way. I was working for CBS and was assigned with others -- assigned with others, and we went to all the way out to California.

Timothy Naftali

Were you there when he almost left because he was so angry at Polson [phonetic sp]?

Daniel Schorr

He was very -- well, what happened was that the Eisenhower administration, which was worried about appearing to be too friendly with Khrushchev assigned Henry Cabot Lodge to go everywhere that he went and to act as the of kind of a truth squad. He'd stand up after Khrushchev spoke and he would say, "Yes, but..." so on and so forth. And that irritated Khrushchev a great deal, who thought he was a guest of honor. He shouldn't be treated that way. Arriving at San Francisco the big dinner for him at the Ambassador Hotel. And anything -- he whines -- he's very angry because he wants to see Disneyland. They wouldn't give him permission to go to Disneyland for God knows what reasons, the state department. And so he got up and inveighed against the state department for depriving him of his chance to see Disneyland. He said, "What do you have there, rockets? Why can't I go there?" All a very big snafu. Then he said, "If you continue to treat me this way, then I can go home." And then he turns to an airplane designer in his audience, Tupolev and says, [unintelligible], "How long will it take me to get home from here by direct flight?" Tupolev stands up and says "14 hours, comrade." "I can go home in 14 hours." Everyone gets scared and thinks he's going to walk out, but he doesn't walk out.

The next day, they call off Henry Cabot Lodge. No more truth squad. He gets on a train from Los Angeles to go up to San Francisco, and he bubbling, how he came to the car where the reporters are. He's bubbling happy, bubbling, bubbling happy. Now there's an anecdote there, but you're not going to be able to use it. But I'll tell it, and you cut it out.

Timothy Naftali

We can't use it because of the swear words?

Daniel Schorr

Because you can't use it because of the language involved.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, that's okay. You wouldn't be the only one to use it. Go ahead.

Daniel Schorr

Okay, Khrushchev comes back to

[cell phone ringing]

Timothy Naftali

I'm sorry. See somebody's actually -- someone right there heard this and said you cannot -- no, I'm just kidding. Let me just get rid of this. Go ahead, please.

Daniel Schorr

Khrushchev comes back to the press car on the train going from Los Angeles to San Francisco. And by now Henry Cabot Lodge has been called off. He comes back triumphant to the press. He says, "You know, your Mr. Lodge he tried to fart and he shit in his pants."

Timothy Naftali

Yes, yes. Oh, that's classic Khrushchev. Do you remember the trip to the Iowa farm of Roswell Garst?

Daniel Schorr

Yes, yes, Garst farm.

Timothy Naftali

Yes, yeah.

Daniel Schorr

Garst had been in the Soviet Union, and it counseled them to grow corn, which the Russians didn't use. He kept them to lay a lot of land in Siberia and Kazakhstan for corn. And Khrushchev, who went to Garst's farm in Iowa to express his gratitude for the advice he'd gotten from him.

Timothy Naftali

Did you cover Khrushchev the next year when he banged his shoe at the United Nations?

Daniel Schorr

Yes, yes.

Timothy Naftali

Since that's a famous event, what do you remember of that?

Daniel Schorr

I remember it very, very distinctly. This had to do with whether or not China, Communist China, would now be allowed to take over the position of China in the Security Council. There was some people resisting that. Khrushchev, who was having problems with China's communists, thought he could sort of make a big gesture by ranting and so on, how can you keep this great country out of the Security Council? It is said that -- I could not quite see him as he sat there. Some people say he didn't really hit the table with his shoe, but he did take his shoe off, I know that. What he did then is not quite clear in history.

Timothy Naftali

Did you cover Richard Nixon in the 1960 campaign?

Daniel Schorr

No, no only in the -- 1960 campaign.

Timothy Naftali

Yes.

Daniel Schorr

No, I did not, no. Where was I in 1960? I had to be out of the country.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, did you cover him in the '68 campaign?

Daniel Schorr

I covered him -- I covered him at the -- with other CBS correspondents, took part in the coverage at the Republican Convention. I did not travel with him. I did not have a primary role in covering him in the election campaign.

Timothy Naftali

He gets elected. Why does he get so annoyed with you? He knows your name. From the tapes, we know that Richard Nixon knows your name. Tell us a little bit about covering --

Daniel Schorr

As we know from the tapes, also Nixon in the first place didn't like the press as a whole. In one case he said in the presence of Bill Safire, who's a speechwriter, he says something about, "Remember, the press is the enemy." That's a phrase from Nixon. So he didn't like the press in general, and I guess he rather specifically didn't like me because I reported things that got under his skin.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember some things from the first couple years of the administration that you reported that -- big stories for you?

Daniel Schorr

What I remember, what became the start of a very famous FBI incident, what I remember was that at one point Nixon made a speech to Knights of Columbus, a Catholic lay organization in New York. This is shortly after the Supreme Court had issued some opinions that the Federal Government could not provide financing for parochial schools. The ever-political Nixon in this speech said, "I've had great Catholics working for me. There's John Mitchell, who's a Catholic, Rose Mary Woods and kind of I have great regard for the Catholic schools. And you can rest assured that I will nevertheless, in spite of the Supreme Court, I will be able to provide Federal aid to these wonderful parochial schools." Well, I had the -- I was given the assignment. We were to carry a clip of this film the next night on the evening news. I was given the assignment of finding out what it was that Nixon planned to do for the parochial schools.

And so I called the education department. I called a whole lot of people, and nobody knew. Finally, I called the lobbyists for the Catholic schools and said that, "Do you know what it is that President Nixon is planning to do for you people." They said, "No." "If it were not for my turned collar," he said, "I would tell you that what Nixon says is bullshit." So I went back and got on the air and said that everybody who knows anything about education or anything said they had no idea what it is Nixon can do. And it looks as though he's only saying this for purely political purposes. There isn't anything, and the Supreme Court says so, and there's no way out of that. As I understand it, Pat Buchanan, speechwriter who had written the Knights of Columbus speech, hit the roof and went into Nixon and told him, he said, what can we do about this guy?" At that point, it's my understanding from having gone to a lot of tapes published and transcripts -- at that point Nixon said, "Call J. Edgar Hoover and tell him to get something on this son of a bitch." "Aye-aye, sir." And the next day he went down from

there his Haldeman, and it was called -- calls Hoover, and says, "The boss would like some background on a correspondent named Dan Schorr."

Using the word background, as it turned out, was a terrible mistake. Because background has a very specific meaning to the FBI. It means a background check on somebody who's going to be appointed to some government position. And they must have been very surprised at the FBI because they thought, Nixon wants to give him a job. The next thing you know, the next 24 hours the FBI fanned out all over the country interviewing everybody I knew. Interviewing someone who went to school with me. Interview my boss at CBS. And eventually sending the FBI agent to interview me. He said, "Mr. Schorr, can we get some -- on your education?" I said, "What is this about?" He said, "Well, sir, you know this is kind of check that we do when you're in line for a position of trust and confidence in the United States government." So I laughed and said, "You've got to be kidding." This administration give me a job? It can't be right." I said, go back and say if I know what the job is then I'll give you the interview. He went back, advised his superiors. They called the White House and, in short, said he doesn't know of any job and is not cooperating. What do you mean he doesn't know of any job? You called him? Suddenly they realized it. They sat around, had a damage control meeting with Chuck Colson, Ron Ziegler - press secretary - and others. "This is going to get into the papers, and what do we do when it gets into the papers?" Bill Safire had gone into Nixon and made his suggestion to him. Safire said, as he later told me, he believed what they said about this had been a mistake. They should have interviewed me first. He believed it. He went in, he said, "Why don't you put out a memo, Mr. President, saying from now on we will never again conduct a background check on anybody until he knows and agrees to have that check done." But they were not sure that anybody would buy that, but they were willing to go with it.

There was a press conference, and then Ziegler said, "I wish to inform you that through a big error they had this, went through getting all this stuff on Schorr. There was an error, and the President said never again." People on the whole didn't believe it. The story leaked out, got onto the front page of the "Washington Post." Eventually Haldeman, Ehrlichman, all had to answer questions about it before the House Judiciary Committee during the impeachment inquiry. And I'm very proud of one thing, that when the bill of impeachment was written with three articles, article two was abuse of Presidential power. And then under that, specifics about he called the FBI to interview a correspondent when there was no reason for it, and that was it. And then eventually Nixon was not -- the impeachment did not go through and Nixon resigned. And this takes me to 20 years later. I didn't see Nixon after that for 20 years. But 20 years later I was at a dinner with Nixon at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where he was giving a report on a recent trip to the Soviet Union and a meeting with his friend Boris Yeltsin. And when the dinner was over, I could not resist going up to him and saying, "Mr. Nixon -- I never did call him Mr. President -- Mr. Nixon I'm not sure you remember me, but -- " And he interrupted me. He put his hand on my shoulder, said, "Sure, Dan Schorr. I damn near hired you once."

Timothy Naftali

Did you hear the story that when they had to do damage control that you were being considered for a job with the committee on economic -- environmental -- bipartisan environmental board? Did you hear that? Did they tell you?

Daniel Schorr

Yes, they -- what they did was they went to the personnel office and asked what was a job that was open now, which conceivably could have been filled by Dan Schorr? This was Malek who was a personnel director. He then called Russell Train who was the head of the Council on Environmental Quality. Now, like I said, that there is job open at the Council. He went to them and said, "We would like you -- we would like you to support us when we say that Schorr was being considered for a while for a job handling media affairs for the Council on Environmental Quality". Since that time, Train has called me to apologize to me for that. Fred Malek, whom I've seen in Aspen has also apologized to me. So life goes on.

Timothy Naftali

What were you doing on -- all of this happened in 1971, I believe.

Daniel Schorr

1971 was the FBI business, yes.

Timothy Naftali

1972, what were you doing on June 17, 1972? What do you remember from that day?

Daniel Schorr

Everything. I was -- I had covered a whole lot of things, but after the -in into Watergate they decided this was going to be an assignment by itself. And so Walter Cronkite suggested that I be named CBS's Watergate correspondent. And so I was named for it. And one of the things I benefited from that is that Emmy award behind me was given to me for covering Watergate. What was your question?

Timothy Naftali

Well, I wanted to know what you remembered of June 17, 1972.

Daniel Schorr

Well June 17, 1972, all or practically all the news reporters at CBS were down in Miami Beach covering the political conventions. There were some people who said there's a probably a bigger story in Washington today than there is anywhere at a convention in Miami Beach, but they were committed to it. They had to play it out. And so, I mean it was when we came back from it. In August we came back from the convention that then Bill Small, who was the director of the Washington Bureau, said, "We've been sitting out here covering this goddamn convention, and the "Washington Post" and even the "Times" are running away with a story, which CBS should be covering. We want now a real effort to get with it. And so with the help of a lot of other people we really began to specialize in covering Watergate.

Timothy Naftali

CBS is the first news bureau to have a television report, a long one, of Watergate. In October of 1972, CBS is the very first network to do an hour-long program on Watergate.

Daniel Schorr

That's right.

Timothy Naftali

Can you tell us what you remember of the decision? That was a big decision that --

Daniel Schorr

Well, yes, the decision -- actually the one who inspired it, I think, was Walter Cronkite. Cronkite had a done a couple of very long takeouts, which you don't usually have on a half hour program, which had been very well received, one on the environment, one on something else. He was looking for subjects that lent themselves to extensive coverage. So it was he who came. One day I was called in. They said Cronkite would like to see one or maybe even two long documentary roundups on Watergate. Now, I must say to be frank, it was not that we were breaking new ground as such, but what we did, however, was to take what was a local newspaper story and make it a national story. I mean that -- the people at the "Washington Post" will be the first to say that our contribution was. And they took something, which they were covering and doing awfully well. So in these two 20 minute, I think, 20 minute segments we're covering everything including how it was financed and everything we could find out. And we went on the air with the first of those on a Friday night, as I recall.

The White House hit the roof. I think it was Chuck Colson who called Bill Paley and threatened him with loss of license to various television stations if they didn't stop that. And Paley actually tried to cut out the second, after we'd been on the air once, the next was supposed to run on Monday. Apparently for a while he tried to keep up from putting it on the air until the argument was made to him that on Friday night we had announced that the next segment would be Monday, and if we don't do that we're going to have trouble explaining it. And so Paley said, "Okay, I see your point, but can you cut it down some? Can you make it less than it was?" And they did that. They took this from 20 minutes, cut it down to 10 leaving out a great deal of material. That was one of CBS's finest hours, which turned out in the end to have a not-so-fine little moment there.

Timothy Naftali

And this was in -- this was just before the election.

Daniel Schorr

This was October, a few weeks before the election, yes.

Timothy Naftali

What parts of the Watergate story did you

? I mean, you covered it for a long time. What are the parts that you broke yourself?

Daniel Schorr

Probably, let's see -- one thing I broke was, let's see, the Watergate grand jury was meeting. And we didn't know what they were doing. And there had been -- the five burglars had been tried. And that seemed to be the end of it, but it looked as though [unintelligible] really the Washington editor. And then, hold on a second, I get tired some, I just slip in -- and so I took on the job of trying to find out what was happening in the grand jury, which hadn't been heard from in some time. I got a source. Don't ask me, not today.

Timothy Naftali

No, no, I never would, no, no.

Daniel Schorr

But I got a source told me that the grand jury had wanted to indict Nixon and that the special prosecutor then said that you cannot indict a President while he is in office. You can indict him after he leaves office but not in office. But the foreman of the grand jury said, "Well, do you want to do something now?" And the special prosecutor said, "Well, what you can do now is name him as an un-indicted co-conspirator. And that's what they did. And that was a secret until I broke the story.

Timothy Naftali

What was the White House's reaction? Did they call Paley again?

Daniel Schorr

I don't know.

Timothy Naftali

That was --

Daniel Schorr

I think by that time they weren't calling anybody. I mean by the time we reached 1973, 1974, they were really struggling for breath, and they were not playing games with reporters anymore.

Timothy Naftali

Let me ask you -- I don't want to tire you out, but can you give us an anecdote about covering Henry Kissinger? Can you give us an anecdote about covering Henry Kissinger?

Daniel Schorr

Covering Henry Kissinger?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah.

Daniel Schorr

Oh yes, which one do you want?

Timothy Naftali

You were on the enemies list.

Daniel Schorr

Right.

Timothy Naftali

Did you have your tax return audited?

Daniel Schorr

My tax returns were audited for the first time in my life, yes. Thank God, I had paid my taxes.

Timothy Naftali

Since -- what was the full -- I mean what happened? Do you remember? Did they send you a letter? Did they call you?

Daniel Schorr

Yes, they called me. Supposedly, this is at random. They usually will call and say, "We need an appointment to talk to you and go over with you because it's been decided to audit your tax returns." That's the usual thing they say, but I'm not clear the IRS had any knowledge of anything special. They were told by the White House, put this guy on your list for audit.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember what year that was?

Daniel Schorr

That was 1970 -- that was 1973.

Timothy Naftali

Because the White House actually put you on the list in '71, so it took them a while. Tell me please about -- give me an anecdote please about Henry Kissinger, covering Henry Kissinger.

Daniel Schorr

Henry Kissinger -- Henry Kissinger won the Nobel Peace Prize along with the head of North Vietnam for bringing peace to Vietnam. And there was a tremendous reception for Henry -- we still call him Henry -- for Henry at the State Department. And at this reception, a little lady, not very young anymore, walked up to Kissinger and took his hand in her two hands and said, "Mr. Secretary, I simply wanted to thank you for saving the world." He looked back at her, and he said, "You're welcome."

Timothy Naftali

Were you there?

Daniel Schorr

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

What do you remember of covering the invasion of Cambodia? You weren't there, but I mean here, covering here and the reaction in the country in 1970 --

Daniel Schorr

Well, the reaction in the country, I mean, yes, there was the shooting at Ohio State University, where they killed one or two people - where they killed four people. There were people who were in the government telling me they were going to resign in protest against this. And some did -- few of them did, and a few of them didn't. For me, what we were covering when it came to Cambodia was covering the profound reaction of the nerves. For some reason Americans seemed to be more upset about Cambodia than about Vietnam. It was sort of on top of everything else. And that became part of my story.

Timothy Naftali

Did your sources tell you they were surprised at the American reaction to Cambodia? Your White House, your sources, you know wherever they were.

Daniel Schorr

No, anybody who might tell me would not be in very good -- big position.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, okay. Tell me about -- tell us about covering the resignation. When did you find out the President was going to resign?

Daniel Schorr

Well, we come to that day in 1974 when the pressures were very heavy on Nixon. They were getting ready for impeachment. In the case of CBS, there was going to be a meeting with the Speaker of the House to set down the ground rules for covering the impeachment procedure in the House. Somewhat to my surprise, while most networks sent their news directors for what appeared to be a very technical meeting, I was surprised to see Arthur Taylor, the President of CBS Inc., in Washington, asked what he was here for. He said, "I'm going to that meeting." I said, "Oh, it must be something interesting for somebody of your stature to be coming in for it." "Yeah, yeah, yeah," he said. Then before the meeting was held, the announcement came that Nixon was going to resign. I later saw Arthur Taylor again. I said, "So you don't have to go to a meeting now. Now that Nixon's resigning I guess that's the end of that." And he indicated not quite. He said he was terribly worried that in his resignation speech, Nixon would lash out against television networks, particularly CBS, and that Taylor was trying to avert that.

I then recall that Arthur Taylor had campaigned for Nixon up in what university was in New England and was himself a Nixon supporter. So the idea that the President of CBS was negotiating with the White House on what Nixon might or might not say about networks I found, if I can say so, disgusting. The outcome of this I could see when the CBS bureau chief in Washington, Sandy Socolow, walked through the newsroom office to talk to us. I was standing looking at the newswire. He said to me, "Dan, tonight when Nixon makes his resignation speech, would you try not to be too vindictive?" I said, "Sandy, what does that mean?" Well, I found out what it meant later. When the evening came I could hear my colleagues -- Cronkite, Seavreid, Rather -- all saying various versions after the speech that this was Nixon's shining hour, the way he conducted himself in his speech. I thought that was pretty disgusting too. I, who had covered Watergate from beginning to end, was not called to sit in the studio and talk about it because I was part of the Watergate crowd, and they were looking for somebody else. That probably led to my departure sometime later from CBS. They thought that it was impermissible that I should criticize CBS as a CBS correspondent. I thought it was impermissible that they should do what they did.

Timothy Naftali

And did you -- you said that to them at the time?

Daniel Schorr

I said it.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us again, for the kids coming to the museum, who are going to learn about this for the first time. What effect did John Dean's testimony have on the whole decline of --

Daniel Schorr

John Dean's testimony was quite crucial. First of all, it was John Dean who exposed the existence of the so-called White House enemies list, which out of the first 20, I was number 17 right ahead of Paul Newman -- it was really very flattering -- and right behind Mary McGrory, not bad. Where was I?

Timothy Naftali

I was asking you about John Dean's testimony and the effect that it had on climate and on the whole case.

Daniel Schorr

Let's see where I can pick up from.

Timothy Naftali

He is the one who revealed the existence of the enemies list. That's how you started.

Daniel Schorr

John Dean is the one who revealed before the Senate Watergate Committee, which was conducting its hearings, revealed the existence of this enemies list, of which I was number 17 out of 20. He was also the one who testified as to what really went on in the White House during Watergate. He was the one who said that he had warned Nixon that there's a cancer on the Presidency, and it's growing. I have no doubt in my mind that without John Dean, there might never have been an impeachment, and Nixon might never have been forced to resign. John Dean was quite crucial.

Timothy Naftali

Well, but what about the tapes? What role did the tapes play? The White House tapes, the existence of the tapes and the smoking gun tape. What role did they play in what happened?

Daniel Schorr

They played the final role. You mentioned a word that was applied to them, that is to say the smoking gun tapes. First of all, something which must have been very damning, because they had Rose Mary Woods erase it, 18 and a half minutes where we never will know what's on it, but we can assume that it was something which was damning for the Nixon administration. And the tapes eventually came out. But that was now then propelled in it by what John Dean had already said. This -- indeed, in the end, the final blow was the Nixon tapes, which made clear, among other things, that Nixon had tried to get the CIA to take responsibility for Watergate in order to get it off his back. I mean that was -- you want to speak of cover-up, the President is ordering the CIA to cover up for him. That was probably the one thing that put the last nail into the coffin of the Nixon Presidency.

Timothy Naftali

What were you doing the day he resigned? Where were you?

Daniel Schorr

On the day he resigned, I was in Washington. That's what I just told you about.

Timothy Naftali

But you --

Daniel Schorr

About the night of the resignation. We covered that.

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, I know, but I meant -- you didn't go on that TV show. I was wondering where you were. Were you actually in --

Daniel Schorr

I just told you I was in the office waiting to be called, along with Fred Graham, who was the other person covering Watergate. We're sitting and waiting for someone to say, come on. We just sat there.

Timothy Naftali

I also wondered if you had been in the East Room when he gave his farewell speech that day.

Daniel Schorr

No.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, tell us about covering the pardon.

Daniel Schorr

Covering --

Timothy Naftali

The pardon. Pardoning -- President Ford's pardon.

Daniel Schorr

The pardon?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, did you cover the pardon?

Daniel Schorr

Yeah, well shortly after Nixon's resignation, I went on vacation to Aspen. And on the way back from Aspen, we drove from Aspen to Denver. We went up to Independence Pass, and until we got up to Independence Pass -- it was Sunday morning. Until we got the Independence Pass, we couldn't hear our car radio. When we got to the peak there, the radio went on. And as the radio went on it was President Ford has just announced the pardon of ex-President Nixon. So I heard about it when I was in a car on my way home from vacation, they didn't wait for me.

Timothy Naftali

No, they did not. Is there another anecdote from this period that you would like to share with students and scholars that would give you, give people a sense of that Nixon period and what the country went through? Let me -- while you're thinking of that, let me help. What were you -- how did you cover the Saturday Night Massacre? Did you cover that?

Daniel Schorr

I was among those who covered that. As I said, Fred Graham, who was our legal affairs correspondent, had a part of the action. And he and I covered it more or less between us.

Timothy Naftali

Anyway, go back to --

Daniel Schorr

When the Saturday Night Massacre happened, we were all rather appalled, but I must say, it was after the Saturday Night Massacre, if I may take a little credit, that I happened to have a lecture that I had to give at the University of Delaware. The question was asked of me, "What do you think is going to happen with Nixon?" I said, "Well, as a CBS correspondent, I should not be involved in making big predictions, but I do not see a way that Nixon can get out of this now, and I think it's only a matter of time before Nixon goes." And I felt proud of that.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us a little bit about -- did you cover the Spiro Agnew matter?

Daniel Schorr

No.

Timothy Naftali

No, you didn't cover that. Did you cover the Yom Kippur War at home? I mean the American government's reaction to the war.

Daniel Schorr

Yeah, but that -- Yom Kippur -- we were all doing, you know. There were radio things to do, television things to do. We had to parcel it out, and there were three or four of us in the Washington bureau who were doing different parts of it at various times.

Timothy Naftali

Television news is changing in this period. Television news is changing in this period. Tell us about how it changes. What is the effect of Watergate, if any, on the way people covered the news?

Daniel Schorr

Well, let me answer your question a different way. The long-term effect of Watergate -- I have, until recently, done a great deal of lecturing at universities, including schools of journalism. And almost invariably, when it comes to the question period, they say how do we get to be investigative reporters like Woodward, Bernstein? And to all of them I've had to say Watergate and the forced resignation of Nixon doesn't repeat itself, nor does every conspiracy have to be a conspiracy at the top of the Federal Government. And I would advise you to learn about other things that need fixing, like what needs fixing in every community where the poor are very badly off, where there are homeless people and so on. I found in some cases, it's -- thank you for that. A lot of them, kindly, didn't take to it. They really wanted to set their sights on being another Woodward, Bernstein, making history, being played in the movies and all of that. That went on for the next 20 or 30 years after the end. It put a real damper on journalism, except for anything involving one great big piece of investigative reporting, which we don't have one of every day.

Timothy Naftali

One last question. Why was the field so open for Woodward and Bernstein in '72 to make their mark?

Daniel Schorr

The field was open for them. Mind you, the night of the break-in I was in Miami Beach, but it was clear that what opened the field for them just happen to start on a Saturday, when the police arrested the people who were going through the Watergate offices of the Democratic National Committee. And so the story was typically covered by whoever happened to be available at night. George Herman was on duty in Washington. He had the story, continued with the story until we came back from Miami Beach. Now once again, I've forgotten what your question is.

Timothy Naftali

The question is why was the field open to Woodward and Bernstein?

Daniel Schorr

Woodward and Bernstein had very junior positions at the "Washington Post." Nobody thought at the start that the fact that five people are arrested in the Watergate Building was more than a little local, metropolitan story. So as I believe, Woodward and Bernstein, but I think both of them were taken off the metropolitan desk. And it was, you go to the police station. They find out what they know and all the rest of it, and we'll have a story. And they did that. It was because the story was not immediately seen in these great dimensions, that it was given to a couple of junior people who really had the thing to themselves and did wonderful work with it.

Timothy Naftali

Mr. Schorr, thank you for your time.

Daniel Schorr

Pleasure.