

Timothy Naftali

I'm Tim Naftali. I'm director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. It's January 30, 2008, and I am with my colleague, Paul Musgrave. We're in San Diego, and we both have the privilege and honor to be interviewing Ambassador Bob Ellsworth for the Nixon Oral History Program. Ambassador Ellsworth, thank you for doing this with us.

Bob Ellsworth

Glad to be here.

Timothy Naftali

I'd like to start by asking a bit about your World War II experience. You were a kid, but you did serve in the Navy, I believe.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

In World War II. Tell us where you served.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, let me tell you a little story from 1993 that takes me back and answers your question. 1993, Bill Clinton was the new President of the United States and Jiang Zemin, the new President of China. So Clinton invited Jiang Zemin over to Washington for a state visit, and he came. And there was a state banquet in his honor at the White House one evening, but that noon, the Asia Society from New York came down and gave a big lunch for Jiang Zemin in one of the hotels in Washington, to which I was invited. And before the lunch was a VIP reception, to which I was invited, and I found myself standing next to Bob McNamara, the former Secretary of Defense. And we were just making conversation. He, making conversation, asked me if I had ever been to China. And I said, "Oh, yes." And he said, "Well, when?" And I said, "January and February of 1946." He said, "'46?" He said, "What were you doing in China in 1946?" "Well," I said, "I was the engineer officer on a minesweeper operating out of Shanghai, and we were sweeping the magnetic mines that had been laid by our own B-29s at the closing days of the war." And he said, "You may or may not believe me when I tell you that I was the systems navigators for those B-29s laying those magnetic mines." So that was, that was the high point, not the story about McNamara, but the minesweeping was the high point of my Navy career in World War II. And we were just cleaning up after --

Timothy Naftali

I was going to say, that would not be the first time you cleaned up after Bob McNamara.

Bob Ellsworth

That's true.

Timothy Naftali

You also served in the Korean War.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, well --

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about --

Bob Ellsworth

Well, the Korean War came in the summer of 1950, and so I was still quite young and unmarried, and I went back into the Navy, returned to active duty, RAD. They had initials for it. And was again assigned to the minesweepers, and served a couple years on the minesweeper. Then I got a shore job in Naples, Italy, where I spent the last of my Navy time in a very interesting job in Naples.

Timothy Naftali

What did you do?

Bob Ellsworth

I was the executive officer of the MSTS, Military Sea Transportation Service industry, service office in Naples, and that was at a time in 1950 -- 1953, by then, when the White House had decided in its wisdom, and they were correct, that the attack on Korea was a feint and a prelude to putting additional pressure on Western Europe. So, if you'll recall, Germany was admitted into the -- to become a nation rather than occupied zone, and was invited to join NATO and did join NATO, and was invited to rearm and did rearm. So all of Western Europe was being rearmed. And a lot of the rearmament came through the Mediterranean. And we sort of were the traffic cops for the baby carriers that were given to Italy, the tanks that were given -- sent over to Turkey, and a lot of the ammunition and artillery that came into Leghorn in Italy, and then by rail up into Germany. So that's what we did.

Timothy Naftali

This is also when we were actually adding to the number of troops?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes, big time.

Timothy Naftali

Big time. We added to the number of troops in Germany.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

You had later, in a number of interviews we've looked at, you've talked about how this experience in World War II and the experience in Korea shaped some of your thinking about foreign affairs.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, yes, I thought it was easy to get shaped by those experiences, because the conclusion that I drew was that in order to avoid war, you had to be strong militarily and forward thinking and forward acting in your diplomacy and in your international politics. So the rest of my life, I've sort of tried to be those two things.

Timothy Naftali

Let me ask you about -- there was a debate about whether this was a feint by Stalin or not, giving the green light, if you will, to Kim Il-sung. You are reasonably confident that that was, indeed, what happened?

Bob Ellsworth

I am, and I've read in the papers -- I'm not a professional historian as you are, but I've read in the papers that a lot of the documentation that's been unearthed in the Kremlin since the collapse of the Soviet Union, bears that out.

Timothy Naftali

But at the time, people felt that this was at least --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes, absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

When did this sense of immediate danger in Europe dissipate? Because at a certain point, at a certain point we stop thinking they were going to invade.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, gradually it declined, the feeling of intensity about an invasion declined. And that was -- we were conscious of that, of course. Later on, when I was ambassador to NATO, we were very conscious of that. But we attributed that to the success of NATO, if you will, the success of our military posture, and doctrine and strategy, that that diminished the chances of the Soviets thinking that they could successfully -- so anyway, it weaves into the whole concept of deterrence.

Timothy Naftali

Which we'll get to later. Did you meet Richard Nixon when he was Vice President?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, yes, I met him in 1960 when he was Vice President campaigning for President, because he came out to -- into my district in Kansas, which included Kansas City, Kansas, and we had a giant rally for Nixon at the Kansas City National Guard Armory, and I was on the stage along with the two senators from Kansas and the governor of Kansas, and that's when I met Nixon. He was -- he's well known for having been a marvelous politician, and so that was when I first met him. And subsequently when I was elected, I was in Washington during the period of time that he was considering whether or not to challenge the results of the 1960 election. And we talked about that briefly.

Timothy Naftali

And is it -- the story we've heard is that Dwight Eisenhower encouraged him to challenge the results of the '60 election.

Bob Ellsworth

I hadn't heard that.

Timothy Naftali

Can you remember what the debate was like?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I was certainly on the side of those who were encouraging him to challenge, but I mean that was a feeling that was pretty widespread among Republicans at that time. But his judgment -- I was convinced in the final analysis that his judgment was right, and that it would have been too destabilizing to the country and to the international system at that point in time to have had a big challenge.

Timothy Naftali

Were you with him in Washington, having these discussions or --

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, in Washington. I was a newly elected member of the House or was back in Washington after the election before we were sworn in as members of the House, at orientation sessions and so forth. So, yes, it was around at that time.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember other people being involved in these discussions?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, Bob Dole, and I don't remember the names of other people. There were quite a few.

Timothy Naftali

And did Bob Dole agree with your assessment?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, he did.

Timothy Naftali

And what was it about the results -- I mean, where did you think there was likely to have been --

Bob Ellsworth

Texas and Illinois.

Timothy Naftali

And where did you get this sense that something wrong had happened? Were you getting reports from people you knew in Illinois saying there is something --

Bob Ellsworth

No, I wasn't. I had what you might call secondary sources, which was the gossip among professional politicians at the time.

Timothy Naftali

Well, I'm going to hand off to Paul, and he's going to take you through the '60s. Fellas, just stop the tape for a minute, please, and I will switch this. [unintelligible]

Paul Musgrave

This is Paul Musgrave. I'm taking over for Tim Naftali. So we were just talking about the 1960 race. How did you decide to run for Congress?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, well, the congressional seat in the area where I lived had been taken by a Democrat in 1958, and it looked like a marvelous opportunity for a young, ambitious lawyer, which is what I was, to move into politics. I had been the chairman of the local county central committee of the Republican Party, and I had been active in campaigning for governors and so forth, but this looked like a real open opportunity for me, which it turned out to be. It was hard work, and had to overcome a lot of challenges, because I was not located in the population centers of the congressional district. But nevertheless, that's the answer.

Paul Musgrave

Had your parents been Republicans? How did you get involved?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes, and my grandparents, and I was a long-time Republican, from the top of my head to the bottom of my shoes.

Paul Musgrave

Had you ever met Alf Landon?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes.

Paul Musgrave

And was this your first race?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

Okay. There is also another ambitious young lawyer running for Congress that year, out of Brussels, Kansas. Had you met Bob Dole before?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, anybody in Republican -- or in politics in Kansas knew who Bob Dole was. I mean, he was a war hero and very popular statewide in that regard, but then as an active Republican, chairman of the central committee and so forth, I had been to state conventions and met him and so forth.

Paul Musgrave

So what were your issues in the '60 race? What did you challenge?

Bob Ellsworth

Federal aid to -- well, I challenged the incumbent Democrat on job creation and I had statistics, and, you know, you can do that if the statistics bear it out. And that was a very popular issue. Then the question was, was I going to support the Eisenhower administration's ideas on Federal aid to education, and I did. And that was a question, because it was slightly off center for a Republican doctrine to be supporting Federal aid to education, but I had no problem with it.

Paul Musgrave

So tell us about the rally that you organized for Vice President Nixon.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I didn't organize it, I took part in it, but it had been organized by our great national committeeman, Harry Darby. And it was a giant rally in the National Guard Armory, the kind of thing that went on all the time in Kansas City, Kansas, which was a population center in the district. And big rally, and thousands of people in attendance, and Nixon and Harry Darby and our two senators and our governor and me, and I don't know -- that's about all I can remember of it. I do remember that Nixon typically opened his presentation after he got introduced by Harry Darby, by reference to the forthcoming weekend's high school football games, and the anticipation of who would win and, oh, you know, he was very sharp on that.

Paul Musgrave

So you're sworn in --

Bob Ellsworth

And by the way, he carried that district by a huge margin and the whole state by a huge margin.

Paul Musgrave

Did the football team win?

Bob Ellsworth

Pardon me?

Paul Musgrave

Did the football team win?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, I don't have the faintest idea.

Paul Musgrave

January 1961, you were sworn in, you were a new member of Congress. We have a letter that Vice President Nixon on January 16th wrote to you with advice for a new congressman. He refers to himself as a senior statesman and says he'd like to give you some advice. Was this the sort of relationship that you kept up throughout the middle '60s?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, in the first place, I don't remember that letter. I'm not -- I'm sure that he did that for us new guys, but he would come back to Washington every now and then as he prepared to shift his residence out to California and got ready to run for governor. And he came back several times in '61, and would have a breakfast or a lunch, and would invite us to chat and talk about politics and have our pictures taken. He was very, very popular among Republicans. And we always were eager to have our pictures taken with him. So that kept up. And then, of course, came his decision to run for governor of California against Pat Brown in 1962, and then came the Cuban Missile Crisis, which so frightened, I guess, the voters, that they kept everybody, as far as I know, who was in office seeking reelection in office. I mean, I benefited from it; Pat Brown here benefited from it. It was a crushing blow to Nixon, but that was what happened in '62.

Paul Musgrave

What were the feelings among the congressional Republicans about the '62 race for governor? Was there a sense that Nixon was out of it or that he would come back?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, well, it took a while for Nixon to begin to send signals that he was going to move to New York and get out of politics and so forth, and then in 1966, if I can fast forward here, I had run for the Republican nomination for a Senate seat in Kansas against a sitting Republican senator, and I can go into the reasons for that, but it's not too interesting, but in any case, I was defeated, but then after that election was over, the nomination, I came back to Washington and then I was invited out to campaign for the Republican governor who was running for reelection. And I got on a plane, this is in August or -- I guess August or September of 1966. I got on the plane to fly to Chicago, and then I would transfer to a plane down to Kansas City. And our plane was delayed. And, of course, the stewardess came on the PA system, said mechanical problems have delayed our departure for just a few minutes. And then pretty soon she came on and said, mechanical problems have still delayed our departure for a few more minutes. And the third time, and then all of a sudden the door popped open and in comes Nixon and Rose Mary Woods. And that was the mechanical delay. So he sat down -- they sat down in the two

seats in front of me. They were flying to Chicago. And so after we took off I reached forward and tapped him on the shoulder, and he said, "Oh, Bob, come on up and sit by me and let Rose Mary have your seat," so that we shifted seats. And he was flying to Chicago also to transfer and go out to California. But during that flight from Washington to Chicago, we talked about '68, and so after a while he said, well, when -- "In January, after the first of the year, come up to New York to my law office and let's talk more, because we got to do something." So I said, "I'll do that."

Paul Musgrave

Did Rose take the aisle seat on this flight?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't --

Paul Musgrave

The other seat?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, right, yeah.

Paul Musgrave

I'd like to rewind a bit, if we can, and go back and talk about the Republican caucus and some of the more prominent members or people who later became prominent. When you arrived in Washington, what were your feelings about Charlie Halleck?

Bob Ellsworth

Negative.

Paul Musgrave

Too reactionary or too disciplinarian --

Bob Ellsworth

I don't -- I hate to go into it all, but there was a question about his credibility.

Paul Musgrave

When did you first meet Congressman Ford, Gerald Ford?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't remember when I first met him.

Paul Musgrave

Do you remember your impressions of him --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, what a nice guy. Smart, honest, reliable, very savvy.

Paul Musgrave

Melvin Laird?

Bob Ellsworth

Same.

Paul Musgrave

And then in '62, of course, Don Rumsfeld is elected.

Bob Ellsworth

Right.

Paul Musgrave

And did he make an impression on you as part of the freshman class?

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah, he did. He was very bright, very abrasive with a smile, and quite an impressive young fellow.

Paul Musgrave

And you joined a task force looking at NATO. What prompted you to run a campaign on domestic issues? And you'd had experience, obviously, in the Army and thinking about foreign affairs. What prompted you to make NATO such a large part of your work in Congress?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, it's one of those things that I can't remember the details of exactly why, but it seems inevitable, as I look back on it, that I would have been naturally and inevitably drawn to that idea.

Paul Musgrave

What were the prominent issues with the alliance at that time?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, was the alliance going to come up to meet its commitments and was it going to be effective at deterring the Soviets and -- from a military attack, and also from having political influence in Western Europe?

Paul Musgrave

Were you concerned about the growing involvement in Vietnam affecting the alliance?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

How did you see it playing out? What were your concerns about --

Bob Ellsworth

My concern was that our political leadership in Washington had not really thought through what the reasons should be -- what our national interest was in Vietnam. The ideological reasons given by Rusk, mainly, was that we had to stop the Chinese Communists, that they were a threat, and that this was the place to stop them. And I just -- I didn't -- my view was that that was not believable, and that I never could figure out what we were doing in Vietnam, frankly. I mean, it's all a long time ago, but I thought that our national interests were not at stake in Vietnam and that they were at stake in Western Europe.

Paul Musgrave

Did you find a receptive audience for that idea or --

Bob Ellsworth

No, no, but that was okay. I thought it was right. By the way, I continued to have that view on into the '70s, even when I was in the Pentagon as assistant secretary of defense, and never got anywhere with it. But now I'm sure I was right, looking back. But that's all past history.

Paul Musgrave

The 1964 election for Republicans was -- I think it's fair to say that it was a reverse, especially for Republicans in the House. You've told a story about how you and a few other members convinced Gerald Ford to run for the leadership against Charlie Halleck.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

Can you tell us that story? How did that come about?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, there had been such a huge disaster for the Republican Party in the election in 1964, not only at the Presidential level but in the Senate, and in the House, and at the governors and at the state legislatures. And we in the House, what could we do about it? Well, we could replace the minority leader. And it wasn't difficult to decide to do that. And so we -- the main difficulty we had in doing that was convincing Ford that it was doable, and in the final analysis he said, "Well, look." He said, "I've got a skiing vacation scheduled with my family for Christmas. And if you guys can put it together, why then when I come back, we'll talk some more and make a decision then." But he was hard to convince, very smart position to take.

Paul Musgrave

Who helped you count the votes?

Bob Ellsworth

Rumsfeld, [Robert] Bob Griffin from Michigan, [Albert] Al Quie from Minnesota -- I don't want to leave anybody out -- Charlie Goodell from New York, and I. Those were the five. And my particular contribution was that I noticed and proved it to all of them that there -- that over half of the Republicans in the House had come in since 1960, so that there were a lot of new people, a lot of young people with no commitments to the old hierarchy. So --

Paul Musgrave

Were you worried --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, and Laird helped us, too, but he wanted to stay in the background, which was wise, and so we allowed him to stay in the background.

Paul Musgrave

Did he think that you guys were taking too big of a risk, or did he just want to hedge his bets?

Bob Ellsworth

Just hedge his bet. No, he thought it was doable. And I think that his view on that, in the final analysis, was what was persuasive to Ford.

Paul Musgrave

After 1964, after the election, did you feel that the party was becoming too conservative or swerving too far to the right?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

Can you tell us about the Wednesday Group?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, the Wednesday Group was created -- wasn't that created before 1964?

Paul Musgrave

Before '64, and you were meeting, I think, throughout that summer, at least.

Bob Ellsworth

Probably, it was fun. It was a nice group of people, very enjoyable. Brad Morse, Massachusetts, was, I think, the leader. I don't know whether he was the President or had a formal title at all, but he was certainly the political and intellectual and personality leader. I can't remember who the others were.

Paul Musgrave

1966, you decide to run in the primary against Senator Pearson?

Bob Ellsworth

Right.

Paul Musgrave

Did former Vice President Nixon help you in that race?

Bob Ellsworth

He did. Very interesting, because during the primary campaign in 1966, not by -- it was just a coincidence, he was invited and accepted to go to Kansas City and make a speech to the National Association of Political Cartoonists. I don't know the name of it. And, of course, I heard about it. And I called up his office and asked if I could come, and he said, "Certainly." And I went and took part, and he had me seated at the head table, and mentioned me and so forth, and then he made this hilarious speech to the cartoonists, which they appreciated. You could have a lot of fun with that. And that, to me, and to the people in the -- in the Kansas City area and out through the state, because Kansas City

was so dominant in the culture of this whole state, was a big signal. And he knew it. So I appreciated that.

Paul Musgrave

Did he give you any advice on how to run against the senator?

Bob Ellsworth

No, at this event or any time else, he never gave me an endorsement, but the non-verbal communication was pretty strong and clear.

Paul Musgrave

Kind of the arm around the shoulder type of --

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, exactly.

Paul Musgrave

So now we're caught up with the story about meeting --

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

-- the Vice President and Rose Mary on the plane. Did you go out to 20 Broad Street around the 1st of January?

Bob Ellsworth

I did.

Paul Musgrave

What did you talk about?

Bob Ellsworth

Talked about the Presidential campaign. He wanted to know if I thought he should run. And of course I did. And we talked about the campaign.

Paul Musgrave

What were his feelings at that time?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, he thought it was a good opportunity. And that the war and that -- at the momentary -- the momentary economic situation with inflation, so forth, and the big wins of the Republicans in Congress in the '66 election encouraged him to think that he could engineer a comeback and that the stars were aligned in the right way, if you will. He didn't use that language, but -- so he was optimistic about it, but recognized that it would be a big challenge, of course. And we arranged, then, for me to begin coming up to New York, I think, on, let's say, Sunday afternoons to meet with others in his apartment on 5th Avenue, and the rest is history.

Paul Musgrave

What were his feelings about the organization, the structure of the campaign? He had had such a hands-on role in 1960.

Bob Ellsworth

The main theme was, everybody said Nixon can't win. He asked me, for example, to go and talk to Senator Knowland,?? the former Senator Knowland of California, and sound him out and see what he thought, which I did. And Knowland said, "Nixon can't win." Of course he said also, being a good Californian, he doesn't have a base, because he no longer lives in California. So the theme was Nixon can't win, among Republicans. And Nixon said, "What we have to do, therefore, is to win everything we enter. We have to enter all the primaries and win all the primaries, and that won't prove we can win the general election, but it will prove that we can win something." So that was the main -- I would say the main strategy.

Paul Musgrave

What was your title at this time? Did you have a title, or were you just an informal advisor?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't remember if there was a title at this time.

Paul Musgrave

Was he worried at this point that --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, the title -- well, the title question was an interesting question, because he had, as chairman -- help me with the name of the guy that he had as chairman.

Paul Musgrave

From California? Dr. Parkinson?

Bob Ellsworth

Dr. Parkinson, is that it?

Paul Musgrave

C. Gaylord Parkinson.

Bob Ellsworth

That's right. And he was -- he was not -- he didn't work out, quickly. It became obvious that that was not going to work. Then I think, I'm not sure -- well, no. Then he got a senator from Oklahoma to be the chairman --

Timothy Naftali

Governor Bellmon, right. He was running for senator the next year.

Bob Ellsworth

Bellmon, right.

Paul Musgrave

Yeah.

Bob Ellsworth

And Bellmon worked hard at it and stayed with it for quite a long time. And I think I may have had a title in there sometime. And anyway, then he got Mitchell from the law firm to come in. Mitchell was a great pillar of strength, you might say, to Nixon. And he had Maury Stans raising money. And somewhere in there I became the national political director. I ended up with that. So Mitchell was the chairman, the overall head, and Stans was raising money, and I was -- I always thought it was amusing that I could be the national political director for Richard Nixon, who was the mastermind, and in my head, I said to myself, "Well, you're just the gofer for the national political director." But title was national political director, ultimately.

Paul Musgrave

Did you feel that there was an effort by Mr. Nixon, candidate Nixon, to reach out to the different factions of the Republican Party?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, sure, absolutely, absolutely. And at one point, it was before the convention in '68 but after we had won all the primaries. And so he took me to Phoenix to introduce me to Goldwater. Of course Goldwater knew exactly what was going on, that this was a gesture to Goldwater from Nixon to show that this, that his guy, Ellsworth, who had been a Scranton supporter, was decent enough to make a courtesy call on Goldwater. So we had a very nice little chat. But then Nixon asked Goldwater if he would please, hoped he would, come to the convention. And at that point, Goldwater got very angry, because he said if any of those Scranton people are there, looking right at me, he said -- and the veins in his neck grew large and his face turned purple, and he didn't say anything untoward, but he was in a rage. But in any case, so Nixon, yeah, reached out to everybody and, of course -- oh, and by the way also in '68, he had me -- because I had been for Scranton in '64, Nixon asked me and I arranged for a meeting between Scranton and Nixon, and Nixon -- I thought I had Scranton organized to endorse Nixon. And I told Nixon that I couldn't guarantee it but that I thought it would work. And it didn't. And that was a big disappointment. But in any case -- so he did, yeah. He reached out to -- across the board and, of course, the ultimate reach-out was after the election when he was the President-elect and was convinced to invite Kissinger to become his national security advisor. You know the story, probably, that Kissinger said could he think about it for 48 hours, and Nixon, of course, said yes. And then Kissinger called David Rockefeller and told -- no, Nelson Rockefeller, and told him that, and Nelson Rockefeller said, "Are you out of your mind?" He said, "Get on the phone and tell him that you'll take it." And then there is another funny little story that I learned just the other day from a person. Then Kissinger went to John McCloy and asked McCloy if -- what he thought about whether he should accept Nixon's invitation. And McCloy immediately said to him, "Well, the fact that you've come and asked me means that you've already told Nixon you're going to do it." So he said, yes, of course, go ahead and do it, that you had already done that. But anyway, that was the ultimate reach-out.

Paul Musgrave

I want to ask you about some figures in the campaign, John Mitchell, you've already discussed, and Governor Bellmon and Dr. Parkinson. What was the -- what was the role of Pat Buchanan?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, Pat Buchanan was an intellectual stimulant. He wrote speeches. He was very valuable in staff meetings and private meetings with Nixon and was a great contributor. I'm not saying that I agreed with his stuff, but he was very, very, I think, important and enriched the whole operation and gave it a lot of vitality and heft that otherwise it would never have had. And of course his counter weight was Ray Price, who was, I think, much more sophisticated and much smoother and just as talented or maybe more talented as a speechwriter, but didn't have the sparkle and the push and the iron determination to bulldoze you, if you will. But the two of them together were a wonderful team.

Paul Musgrave

You, Pat, and Ray all accompanied, before he was officially a candidate, the former Vice President on his trips in 1967. I think that you went to Europe.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, I went to Europe and the Soviet Union and Singapore and India, Pakistan; and Ray Price was on some of that, too, yes.

Paul Musgrave

What was that trip like? What was the former Vice President trying to do on that trip?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, obviously he was trying to polish his credentials as a sophisticated expert player, knowledgeable, familiar to and with world leaders.

Paul Musgrave

Tell us about some of the foreign leaders, the world leaders you met on that trip.

Bob Ellsworth

McMillan in London, Heath in London, the Shah in Tehran.

Paul Musgrave

Tell us about the Shah. What was he like?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, very kingly, pretty smart guy. I don't know what to say.

Paul Musgrave

Well, did he and the former Vice President talk about anything in particular? They spent -- I think they spent a lot of time together on that trip.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, I don't have any specific recollection. Of course, the Iranians have thought of themselves for 3,000 years as the strategically dominant power in that region, and so at that time, and subsequently, they were very interested in allying themselves with us, because we were far away from them, and we were enormously powerful. You have to remember, it's not easy for us to put ourselves back in history, but at that time, we were still in the glow of the aftermath of World War II when the United States had all the gold in the world, we had all the industrial capacity in the world, we had all the military power in the world. We had all the farm capacity in the world, except just subsistence farming. And it was a completely different world. And in the late 1960s, it was still very much in that glow of perception and of self-feeling and of the feeling of others, and so these Iranians, oh, they loved it, you know, to be associated with us. So I think that was the main point.

Paul Musgrave

I know that Tim will want to pick up on that thought when we get to the '70s.

Bob Ellsworth

Sure.

Paul Musgrave

I wanted to ask about the stop in Romania, which must have been kind of a surprise.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, it was. Ceausescu, who everybody knows and knew at the time was a monster, was nevertheless a very charming, very engaging, pleasant fellow to be around. And, oh, Nixon seemed to enjoy talking with Ceausescu, and Ceausescu talked about hunting, and Nixon was not a hunter, but he somehow engaged in the conversation like a good politician would, so --

Paul Musgrave

Did you meet with anyone in France?

Bob Ellsworth

Pardon me?

Paul Musgrave

Did you meet with anyone in France?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't think I did. I don't think so.

Paul Musgrave

So, moving into 1968, candidate Nixon officially declares in Manchester that he'll be running against George Romney.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

And it's apropos that we're sitting here, I should note for future listeners, that it's a week before the California primary, I think.

Bob Ellsworth

Right.

Paul Musgrave

And, of course, there is another Romney on the ballot. What was Nixon's perception of the field, the other Republicans in the, in the race? And what was his perception of the race? Because, of course, this was not a time when most delegates were chosen by primaries.

Bob Ellsworth

No, they were chosen by caucuses and by central committee meetings in the states. I don't remember how many primaries there were, but there were not many.

Paul Musgrave

Fifteen.

Bob Ellsworth

Is that it? Fifteen, yeah, so his perception of the race at that time was that it was a race between him and a Rockefeller cat's paw named Romney. That was his perception. And so when Romney collapsed, before the New Hampshire primary, we all thought it was all over, but we knew somehow that it wasn't really. But it was a great relief. And fast forward, then, to the convention in Florida, we discovered, well, the days before the balloting, that Rockefeller and Reagan had set up telephone communications with each other direct and we, of course, interpreted that as a pincer's movement against us. But anyway, back in New Hampshire, we thought, oh, what a relief that Romney's out.

Paul Musgrave

When the --

Bob Ellsworth

And I even tried at the convention to entice Romney to endorse Nixon right then and there in exchange for a wide variety of goodies in the government, but he wouldn't.

Paul Musgrave

What is delegate hunting like? How do you convince -- in some of the big states you go to the governor or to other influential politicians. How do you swing a delegation? Because you were a part of that effort, trying to, I guess, keep the line in '68.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I don't know that there is an easy mechanical answer to that. You have to go around and talk to your friends, and when you don't have friends, you have to make friends and talk to them, try to find out who to talk to. I made a big mistake in Nebraska, I remember, talking to the wrong guy, and Senator [Roman] Hruska found out about it and called me up to his office and chewed me out for not talking to him. Well, okay, so -- but it takes a lot of travel. Driving around in the winter of '67, '68, in Ohio one day, driving to Columbus to talk to a friend of mine in the House, I can't remember his name, House member from the Columbus area, because I had -- my intelligence was that he was -- that he was influential with the delegation. And he was. But, oh, so you get on a plane and you don't have staff and you don't have anybody arranging it, and you get a rent-a-car and you drive through the sleet. So it's -- but it's catch as catch can, because each situation is so different. But as I say, you talk to your friends, or you make new friends, or both.

Paul Musgrave

It's a very different situation from a Presidential primary these days.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes.

Paul Musgrave

Candidate Nixon wins the nomination. And now there is two other -- eventually the Democrats, after the '68 convention, nominate Vice President Humphrey, of course, and then George Wallace enters the race.

Bob Ellsworth

Right.

Paul Musgrave

What were your feelings after watching the '68 Democratic convention?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, my feelings after watching the Democratic convention were that they had damaged themselves politically, very seriously, and I don't want to fast forward on you, but you mentioned Wallace, and Wallace was in the race, and so was Gene McCarthy in the race. And we were able to help both of them, thinking that that would help us win electoral votes. And you remember, or -- what the outcome of it was. The popular vote was very close. Nixon got 43.2 percent of the popular vote, and Humphrey got 42.6 percent of the popular vote, which, if my arithmetic is correct, is only six-tenths of a percentage point difference. And Wallace got 12.9 percent. But the Electoral College vote was very different. Nixon got 301 electoral votes, and Humphrey only got 191. Wallace got 46 but that didn't matter, because the gap was already so big. But we couldn't see that exactly after the Democratic convention, but we thought that they had damaged themselves badly, and then the campaigns went

forward, and forward, and forward, and then the Vietnam war became a big issue, and Humphrey made his "risks for peace" speech in October. I can't remember exactly when. And I don't know where we were, our campaign, but we had a knockdown, drag-out, blood-on-the-carpet meeting and discussion about what Nixon should do -- Nixon took part, in this hotel suite, wherever we were -- in response to the Humphrey speech. And the decision was finally by the candidate, that we didn't need to -- shouldn't do anything. What could we do? We couldn't do anything that would help us, although this would help Humphrey, that we, nevertheless, were okay. Fast forward to the day after the election when we all knew the returns. And I can't remember where this was, whether it was in the airplane -- couldn't have been in the airplane coming back from Los Angeles to New York. Must have been in New York somewhere. Nixon told me, "Bob," he said, "If our election had been on Sunday instead of Tuesday or Wednesday instead of Tuesday, we might have lost." And I said, "How's that?" And he said, "After Johnson announced the cease-fire on," let's say Thursday, "then I," Nixon, "was on the TV call-in show from Burbank on Friday night. And the lady called in and wanted to know what the cease-fire meant politically and to our effort in Vietnam, and I was primed for that, and so I said, 'Well, it was a big mistake, because the Viet Cong are using the cease-fire to resupply their troops in the south down the Ho Chi Minh Trail with ammunition and supplies.'" And that caused a huge reaction in the public. And Nixon's popularity rose quickly, then, over the weekend. And then Johnson came out and attacked Nixon, saying it's "Tricky Dick" again, and he's not right, and here are the facts, and so forth, and then my, Nixon, popularity began to go down, but we caught the wave just at the right time on Tuesday, which I thought was very interesting. And it shows the extent to which after all is said and done, the publicity about the war and the final analysis may have been the deciding factor in the outcome of the election.

Paul Musgrave

The '68 campaign is a huge topic, and I want to go back in a second and talk about some of the events earlier in the year, in particular about who President Nixon had thought in January and February '68, would have been the Democratic nominee. But first I want to ask, to your knowledge, did President Johnson ever speak to candidate Nixon about the Vietnam War during the campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

Not to my knowledge. If he did, I was not aware of it.

Paul Musgrave

Going back to January '68, we've covered the Republican primaries. But, of course, for the Democrats, it was a traumatic year even before August. Who did Nixon think that he would be running against in November?

Bob Ellsworth

Gee, you know, I have to say, I don't have any independent recollection of that. In retrospect, it seems to me that we all thought it was going to be Humphrey, but I could be wrong. I mean, it was Humphrey, and he was the Vice President, and you would think --

Paul Musgrave

But President Johnson hadn't withdrawn from the race until after New Hampshire.

Bob Ellsworth

That's true. Yeah, that's true. Well, again, in retrospect, it's so easy to just say, well, Humphrey and -- or to say, even, that we thought Johnson would withdraw. I can't say that.

Paul Musgrave

What was the campaign's feelings about Senator Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, in the early part of 1968?

Bob Ellsworth

I think it's accurate to say that we did not think that he would be a successful candidate for President.

Paul Musgrave

Was candidate Nixon particularly worried about him or did he ever mention it?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. I don't know worried. He was disdainful. Maybe that's a sign that he was worried, yeah.

Paul Musgrave

When Senator Kennedy, the night he won the California primary, when he was assassinated, what was the feeling among your colleagues in the Nixon campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

Would you repeat the question?

Paul Musgrave

The night that Senator Kennedy was killed, what were your feelings when you heard the news?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I don't remember. I really, honestly, do not remember what my feelings were, other than, you know, shock. How can -- what's going on here in this world of ours? But other than that, I don't remember.

Paul Musgrave

And just a few weeks earlier, of course, Martin Luther King Jr., had been killed. How did you respond and how did the campaign respond?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, the question was quickly, should the candidate, our candidate, go to the funeral? And that was a subject of very intense debate and discussion for several days.

Paul Musgrave

What do you recall the resolution as having been?

Bob Ellsworth

You know, I don't remember.

Paul Musgrave

Dwight Chapin has told us that there was, I guess, almost a secret visit to the King family.

Bob Ellsworth

I don't -- I didn't know about that. I was very strongly in favor of his going to the funeral, but I don't remember what the resolution was.

Paul Musgrave

You've mentioned elsewhere that many people had talked to, before he was officially a candidate, the former Vice President, about the Vietnam War and what America's policy should be and what his position should be during the campaign. What were his feelings on that before he started speaking publicly, and did they change as the year went on?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, as far as I could detect, his feelings were that we had to win. I think it was as simple as that.

Paul Musgrave

Did you feel that you particularly disagreed or agreed on the issue?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, I did. I felt that our being there, our going in and our being there, was not supportive of our national interests, and that there should be a plan for withdrawal, and that it would work and succeed. But I didn't advocate that loudly, because nobody else thought so and certainly the candidate didn't think any such thing. He wanted to win. I went with him to Vietnam, by the way. That was one of the

places we went, to Saigon. We went out in the helicopters and had dinner with General Westmoreland and with Ambassador --

Paul Musgrave

Was it Bunker at that point?

Bob Ellsworth

No, no.

Timothy Naftali

Lodge.

Bob Ellsworth

Lodge, yeah.

Timothy Naftali

Lodge.

Paul Musgrave

Speaking of Lodge, because he was, of course, involved in the 1960 campaign --

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Paul Musgrave

What was your feeling about Ambassador Lodge at that point?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, Ambassador Lodge is a great American and a very smart man and very successful in many ways, but as a candidate in 1960 for the House, Republican ticket, I was horrified that he had selected Lodge to be his Vice Presidential candidate, because it seemed so -- seemed to me so alien to what I thought were the interests of the Republican Party at that time.

Paul Musgrave

What were your feelings later about Governor Agnew and his selection?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I argued against it.

Paul Musgrave

Were you in favor of Robert Finch?

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah, I was basically in favor of John Lindsay, which, in retrospect, seems weird, even to me, but I did finally advocate Finch for the lack of anything else. Now, the Agnew story is an interesting story. When Romney withdrew -- what was it that happened? Rockefeller withdrew?

Paul Musgrave

I think Rockefeller withdrew, but didn't call Agnew --

Bob Ellsworth

But didn't call Agnew. That was it. So we immediately -- we being Nixon, Mitchell, and I, said, well, let's see if we can talk to him. And so they asked me to go up to Baltimore or down to Baltimore, because we were in New York at that time, Annapolis, down to Annapolis. And I called down there and said who I was, and Agnew's office talked to him, and then he said come on down and have supper with me. So I went down and had supper with Agnew in the governor's mansion and made the pitch. And he said, okay, and I went back -- I mean to endorse Nixon. And then I went back and reported that to New York, and then they worked out the details. And so then at the state convention, I was sent down to monitor, to see that he did control his delegation to be in favor of Nixon, which he did. And later, I found out that in private conversations, Mitchell had spoken to Agnew about -- in exchange for that, in politics, you have these exchanges, that the first slot on the Supreme Court would be something that he could be considered for. Well, then it was all overtaken by events. But your question about Agnew stimulates me to remember that nice little incident.

Paul Musgrave

We've heard a story, I think Theodore White tells it, and we've heard versions of it elsewhere, that you and several other people, I think John Mitchell, Finch himself, were considering the potential alternatives for Vice President. I think George Romney must have been on the short list at that point. How did you settle on Agnew? Who made the call for Agnew in the final analysis?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, of course, Nixon did, but I think -- I'm sure, I don't think, I know that Mitchell was the deciding factor in Nixon's decision- making on Agnew.

Paul Musgrave

Had Nixon offered the job to Finch before Agnew?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't think so. No, I don't think so.

Paul Musgrave

I want to touch on something that may be a [unintelligible] or may not be. As you know, a lot of people have said that Anna Chennault played a role between the Nixon campaign and the South Vietnamese. Did you ever hear anything about that? Did you have any particular feelings about her?

Bob Ellsworth

I've heard about it. I can't tell you where I heard about it or from whom or when, but I certainly have heard about that. My feeling about it is probably not true, but who knows?

Paul Musgrave

Are there any other stories from the campaign in 1968?

Bob Ellsworth

There are probably a hundred, but my age is such that I can't recall them anymore, I mean anymore than what we've talked about.

Paul Musgrave

What was it like when you won the election, when President Nixon won the 1968 election?

Bob Ellsworth

What was it like? It was wonderful. Although, you know, it was also mixed with kind of a psychological letdown, which Nixon often spoke about from his campaigns. After you win, there is a post-victory blues that sets in, is the way he described it. And there is something to that.

Paul Musgrave

It must be nicer than losing an election though.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, is it ever.

Paul Musgrave

What was the transition like? There was a deadline imposed, as I recall, for selecting the Cabinet and selecting a lot of the advisors, and there were a lot of people crawling around the Pierre Hotel. What was that like? How did you work in the transition period?

Bob Ellsworth

It's kind of a blur. I remember that Rumsfeld wanted to talk to Nixon and called me, and I think I helped arrange a conversation with Nixon. And Nixon asked me what I would like to be in the administration, and I told him I would either like to be secretary of the treasury -- deputy secretary of the treasury or ambassador to NATO. And he immediately said that in order to be deputy secretary of treasury, I'd have to clear it with the secretary of the treasury, who was a banker from Chicago, I think.

Paul Musgrave

David Kennedy?

Bob Ellsworth

David Kennedy, and I said I'd really like to be ambassador to NATO. And, oh, there was a wonderful meeting between Nixon and a group of African-Americans who were led by Bayard Rustin. And Bayard Rustin and these other guys came in and met with Nixon, and they didn't throw darts at each other physically, but Bayard Rustin I remember talking about the lumpen proletariat. Do you know what the lumpen proletariat is? I mean, I didn't know at the time. Nixon did. He knew what he was talking about. Anyway, it was kind of a hilarious meeting, but anyway, that's -- you asked for some stories, and that was a story from the transition.

Paul Musgrave

The interesting thing is I think that actually David Kennedy succeeded you as ambassador to NATO.

Bob Ellsworth

He did, two or three removed, I think, yeah.

Paul Musgrave

Right, so you come in. For a while you hold the post of working with the independent regulatory agencies.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, I was assistant to -- and I had a conversation with Haldeman about that, and he said he wanted me to be something on the White House staff, and I said I wanted to be an assistant to the President. He didn't want that, but he agreed to it then. And so I was an assistant to the President. And I picked up on some of the regulatory leftovers from the Johnson administration for six months because Laird, who was secretary of defense, was faced with a meeting in June of the nuclear planning group at NATO. And he wanted the then sitting ambassador to be there to hold his hand and guide him through that meeting, and he said that's what he wanted, and I said, fine. So I waited until that event had happened, and then I went over.

Paul Musgrave

Okay, I'm going to let Tim pick up on that. I want to ask one last question, and that is about Bob Haldeman.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Paul Musgrave

When did you first meet him?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I remember meeting him in New York in the middle of the winter because he was wearing a big fur hat with earflaps down. And I think we had dinner. I think that was the first time I met him. When it was exactly, I don't know.

Paul Musgrave

How did you work with him on the campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, he and I, over time developed a kind of an antipathy towards each other, which was mutual. But he did good work.

Paul Musgrave

All right, well, you are about to go to Brussels, and Tim is about to take this chair back.

Timothy Naftali

Thank you, Paul.

Paul Musgrave

Thank you.

Timothy Naftali

We're a tag team.

Bob Ellsworth

I want to tell you, I want to tell somebody --

Timothy Naftali

You tell the future, future research.

Bob Ellsworth

-- about my two meetings with Eisenhower during the campaign.

Timothy Naftali

I was going to ask you about Eisenhower. Go ahead.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah, it was very interesting. Nixon wanted Eisenhower to feel that he was being given as much information and felt as much inside in the loop about the campaign as possible, as he wanted to. So he called Eisenhower out here in California. Eisenhower was at the Palm Desert, and asked him if he could send me out. Well, Eisenhower had met me a couple of times before when he had been President, so forth, and I had been a congressman, just for a few weeks before he left and while we were members of Congress. So he said, send him on out. So I flew out to Palm Springs and briefed Eisenhower. This was early, before the New Hampshire primary even, about the campaign. And then I came back and Nixon said Eisenhower called him up and said he liked Ellsworth, and he said, "Please tell Ellsworth that he should keep me informed, himself, about what's going on in the campaign." And I told Susan the other day about that. Oh, she thought that was historic. So I made a note to myself to tell you about that.

Timothy Naftali

Did you --

Bob Ellsworth

And then a couple of other times, too.

Timothy Naftali

Please tell us about that.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, vague, I remember going up to Gettysburg one time, maybe twice all together.

Timothy Naftali

I was going to ask you, did you -- were you in contact with Mel Laird during the campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, sure, Laird would come and join the campaign. He was a great addition to the campaign, ebullient personality and smart, yeah.

Timothy Naftali

He told us that he had, that he was responsible for the concept of the secret plan to get out of Vietnam.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, good, good for him.

Timothy Naftali

But Nixon didn't have a secret plan. He never said that.

Bob Ellsworth

No, I know he didn't say that, but that was what everybody gathered.

Timothy Naftali

And do you remember why they gathered it?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, he said something on TV. I can't remember exactly what he said, his exact words. But Safire has always made a point of saying that Nixon never said that. You can parse the words, and you can see.

Timothy Naftali

Did you have a sense that Nixon was going to do something with China before you went to NATO?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, of course.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us --

Bob Ellsworth

Well, he wrote an article in "Foreign Affairs" in what, fall of '68.

Timothy Naftali

'67.

Bob Ellsworth

'67, and he -- yes. And by the way, not only China, but Nixon told me and told a lot of people, including Laird, that he was going to get out of Vietnam within six months of his inauguration. And I think he really meant it. Found out he couldn't do it; it was one of the big disappointments. But China, yeah, that was not a great secret that he was going to do something with China.

Timothy Naftali

So you weren't surprised in '71?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, I was surprised. I mean, you know, in a specific sense. I was ambassador to NATO at the time, and the NATO people were stunned. They liked it, but they were amazed.

Timothy Naftali

Well, we'll get to that in a moment. I want to ask you about whether you recall -- you were an intermediary with the Soviet Embassy after Nixon was elected.

Bob Ellsworth

A couple of times, yes.

Timothy Naftali

With a man named Yuri Chernyakov.

Bob Ellsworth

Chernyakov, yeah, Chernyakov. I remember him.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us a little bit about what you remember of that.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, and -- the minute that Romney withdrew, I was in Washington, and I called Nixon in New York and asked him if he didn't think it was a good idea for me to go over there to the embassy and talk to him and explain what that meant, because it greatly enhanced the probability that Nixon could win the nomination and presumably the Presidency. So he said -- gave me permission to do that. And I went over, and I guess that's who I met with, nice fellow. And I met with him also, to talk about -- then we

started talking about politics, American politics. And I met with him at -- in the hotel in the tea room of the -- what's the big hotel up there? So many big hotels.

Timothy Naftali

You mean the Plaza?

Bob Ellsworth

Plaza.

Timothy Naftali

Or the --

Bob Ellsworth

Plaza, and talked to him, and also the relationship continued more or less with the embassy, and then I remember after the election, Nixon, now the President-elect -- Dobrynin came around to my house, one evening at my invitation, and wanted to just talk. And I brought him up to date on what was going on in the transition, so forth and so on.

Timothy Naftali

Wasn't one of the concerns that LBJ would have a last-minute summit with the Soviets, and the Soviets wanted to know what the Nixon team thought of this idea?

Bob Ellsworth

I didn't get that request from them.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, one more issue that came up before you went to Brussels. Do you remember the Japanese textile issue?

Bob Ellsworth

Vaguely.

Timothy Naftali

This was a campaign promise that candidate Nixon had made regarding South Carolina, textile protections --

Bob Ellsworth

Roger Milliken.

Timothy Naftali

I'm sorry?

Bob Ellsworth

Roger Milliken.

Timothy Naftali

Roger Milliken?

Bob Ellsworth

Big textile guy in our country; I think he's still alive. But he was a real power, Roger Milliken, in the textile industry in the Carolinas, North Carolina and South Carolina. And after the convention, when we were out here in San Diego, organizing ourselves for the campaign, catching our breath from the convention, Roger came out and wanted to talk to Nixon about textiles. And Nixon called me in and said to Roger, "This is Bob Ellsworth, and I have him here as a witness of what commitment I'm going to give you so that you'll know it isn't just me, but one of my staff." And so that was the background to the Japanese textile question I guess you're asking.

Timothy Naftali

And his commitment was --

Bob Ellsworth

I don't remember -- well --

Timothy Naftali

To protect --

Bob Ellsworth

To protect Roger Milliken in the textile industry, I'm sure. I don't remember details, but obviously, that's what it was.

Timothy Naftali

Because Kissinger writes about the fact that you and Flanagan both put pressure on him to do something about this very early on in '69, right after the election, to get to the Japanese and get them to accept, I guess it was a quota issue.

Bob Ellsworth

I'm sure.

Timothy Naftali

All right, you have a choice of whatever job you'd like. It doesn't mean you're going to get it. And you choose deputy -- either deputy secretary of treasury or ambassador to NATO. Why was that -- why did you want to become ambassador to NATO?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I felt that I knew Nixon's thinking on NATO. Remember, in '67, one of the things that happened during his tour around the world, part of which he had me on, was in London. I took him around to the International Institute for Strategic Studies and introduced him to those guys, particularly to Alastair Buchan, who was the director at that time. And Buchan explained to him, at Nixon's request, what the politics, the geopolitics, if you will, would be of a strategic arms deal with the Soviets. And Buchan said it would be welcomed by the Europeans, but at the same time, they would be very anxious that we and the Soviets were negotiating things over their heads. And so Buchan said to Nixon, in the spring of '67, "You must be sure when you do this, that they are -- that they feel as if -- the Europeans feel as if they are -- their interests are being taken care of. They won't be parties to the negotiation, they can't have a veto, but they got to be assured that you're not negotiating away their national security over their heads. And so, I mean, Nixon associated that thought with me also, because I had taken him around there. So I knew that that was what Nixon -- and Nixon actually said that back to me when he finally asked me to go over to be ambassador to NATO.

Timothy Naftali

Well, the idea of a strategic arms agreement was in the air. Glassboro, the Glassboro summit --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, sure.

Timothy Naftali

But what's really interesting is the shift, because the last great arms control agreement was not bilateral. It involved the British, the test ban treaty. So what was happening is you have a shift to where the basic discussion is now just bilateral. It's just the Soviets and just us. So it makes sense why the Europeans were concerned.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes, and basically -- say, again, basically they wanted to see strategic arms reduced, the nuclear terror reduced. But they didn't want it to be at their expense.

Timothy Naftali

What were they thinking about ABM systems at the time?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, that's much too esoteric for the Europeans, I'm sure.

Timothy Naftali

Oh.

Bob Ellsworth

I mean the ABM agreement was part of the 1972 agreement. Offensive arms and defensive arms, so it was all wrapped up together.

Timothy Naftali

Because it was truly in the air, though, in '69.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes, oh, yes, oh, yes.

Timothy Naftali

Congress is about to vote on whether to support it or not.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

I wanted to ask you about whether -- did you play any role whatsoever in Mel Laird being asked to be secretary of defense?

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, I also wanted to ask you about the trip that you took to Singapore. Did you meet Lee Kuan Yew?

Bob Ellsworth

I did not.

Timothy Naftali

You did not meet Lee Kuan Yew. Did you go to Japan on that trip? Where did you go, when you went to -- you said you went to India.

Bob Ellsworth

India, Pakistan, Iran, having come from Singapore -- I did not go to Japan.

Timothy Naftali

Okay. You go to Brussels. Not long after you arrive, Willy Brandt becomes the chancellor of West Germany. How does that change the issues that you face? Ostpolitik is going to come -- how does that change the mix?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I don't know that there is any great secret about it. He had a completely different attitude toward the East, Ostpolitik. It was a different set of problems. It was not a showstopper. But, yeah, it was a different -- completely different atmosphere created by Willy Brandt.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us a little bit, from your vantage point, how you tried to manage this new challenge, because again, it really was a major challenge. What do you remember doing to try to make things work?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I don't have any particular -- I don't remember any particular event. My mind is whirling, trying to think of something, but in the, just in the usual conversations in the corridors, at our weekly luncheons of the ambassadors, in the exchanges of instructions back and forth, and the dealing, and reading and working with the press, and, of course, particularly with the German ambassador to NATO, and -- but I don't have any special event or events that I can recall arising out of the Willy Brandt.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember an effort on our part to discourage the West Germans, or at least to slow them down before the treaty of Moscow of August '70, was signed?

Bob Ellsworth

I'm sure that happened, but I can't --

Timothy Naftali

Just wanted to know if you had an independent recollection of that.

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Another big change that occurs, Richard Nixon, in his writings, gives the impression that he assumed that Charles de Gaulle would be around for a while. He admired Charles de Gaulle. Of course Charles de Gaulle's understanding of NATO was quite different, too. What effect did his disappearance from the scene have? Again, it occurs, you know, shortly after you arrive. Do you have any recollection of --

Bob Ellsworth

Momentarily, a lot of us thought, well, now maybe France can rejoin NATO, but that was only momentarily. The French did not change much. And I remember discussing it with a number of French people and a number of journalists, all of whom said, "Look." They said, "The door's open, but what French politician can go out on to the floor of the assembly and beat his chest and say I'm rejoining NATO? There is no political advantage to any politician for doing that, so it's not going to happen, at least not now." So it was only momentarily.

Timothy Naftali

Am I -- are historians right in assuming that Richard Nixon had great respect for de Gaulle?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes, absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember discussing de Gaulle with him?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, oh, yes.

Timothy Naftali

Can you draw -- I mean it's a long time ago, but can you draw on any of those discussions?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, he thought -- he would say de Gaulle is a great man, he's a great leader, and then he would analyze how it was, what were the skills that de Gaulle deployed to be a leader. And one of the

interesting things that he noticed about de Gaulle was that de Gaulle was very careful economically, shall we say, with his public statements, and then, of course, Nixon, during the time that he was running for President, was very economical about his meetings with the press. And he would let events go that normal politicians would need to drop, to jump in on and talk about. And he would know. He would not. He would wait months sometimes. And then he would have the AP come in and give him a one-on-one. And big effect, you know. But he thought, he thought de Gaulle's skill at withholding himself, if you will, from the public and from the press, unless he could see precisely how it was going to advantage him, was a great model for Nixon.

Timothy Naftali

From your perspective, describe the jousting between Bill Rogers and Henry Kissinger. You're sitting in Brussels. How did that affect your work?

Bob Ellsworth

It affected my work by causing me to be very -- to not pay much attention to Bill Rogers, the secretary of state. It was obvious to anybody that that was not where any influential or significant power was. I worked well with the underlings in the State Department. You had to. But that was the main effect.

Timothy Naftali

And how were your relations with Mel Laird?

Bob Ellsworth

Excellent.

Timothy Naftali

And --

Bob Ellsworth

Ofentimes when I was in Washington, I would go over to the Pentagon and just have a one-on-one with Laird, just for fun. And it was fun for him, too, I think.

Timothy Naftali

Describe for us, if you would, please, the relationship between Henry Kissinger and Mel Laird.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh. Laird would do whatever he wanted, and then publicly make fun of Henry for being frustrated. And Henry would fume and say, "Laird, whatever Laird wants he can go up on the Hill and that afternoon there is a law passed." So they were high-spirited and serious rivals on things, but it was, it was not an unhealthy rivalry, I think.

Timothy Naftali

From your perspective, how did Richard Nixon handle this rivalry? How did he manage it?

Bob Ellsworth

That's a tough one. I was not -- I don't have a perspective on that. I'm sure he knew Laird very well. He came to know Kissinger very well. I'm sure he handled him with -- I don't know. I really don't know. I can't imagine.

Timothy Naftali

Had your European colleagues done homework on you? Did they know that you were a critic of the Vietnam policy?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't know that, but I assume so.

Timothy Naftali

So tell us about what they were saying to you about our Vietnam policy.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, they didn't like it because it drained our forces in Western Europe of the best non-commissioned officers, and the best junior officers and the most -- what depended on -- what they depended on for real deterrence in the structure of the NATO forces in Europe. And that was the main job of the SACEUR, the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, who was an American Army officer named -- general named Andrew Goodpaster. And that was his main job, going around and keeping the Europeans from getting too anxious about the drain on the military forces that we were imposing because of our need for combat troops in Vietnam.

Timothy Naftali

To what extent did they interpret Vietnamization as perhaps an excuse for the United States to draw down its forces in other places, too? Were they -- did they like the concept of Vietnamization?

Bob Ellsworth

They didn't believe it for a minute, that it would have any effect on anything.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, they thought it was PR?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

What did you think --

Bob Ellsworth

It was not fair to Vietnamization, but that's what they thought.

Timothy Naftali

What did you think of Vietnamization?

Bob Ellsworth

I hoped it would work.

Timothy Naftali

And what do you know of the origins of the concept of Vietnamization? Is this something you had talked to President Nixon about?

Bob Ellsworth

No, I think it went back to Clark Clifford, when he was secretary of defense, when Vietnamization started. And Laird picked it up and carried it forward. I think the Europeans basically thought that nothing would work in Vietnam, that they had noticed for years how the French failed, and I don't think they expected -- they hoped we would not fail, but I don't think they expected us to not fail.

Timothy Naftali

Did you, and eventually this will all be declassified, but -- and I'm not asking for classified information, but I want to help future scholars look. From your vantage point, did you write any think pieces about our Vietnam policy, or did you stay away from it, know that people weren't going to agree with you in Washington? Did you try to shape it at all from Brussels?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't remember trying to shape it from Brussels, but I do remember when I came back in to the Pentagon, Schlesinger was the secretary of defense. I would discuss this with him, and when he would go over to the White House, I would say, please make this argument, dadadadadada. I didn't write a think piece, but then he would go over and then he would come back and he would say, in his Schlesingerian way, "I made the argument, and they didn't buy it."

Timothy Naftali

We're going to talk about that period, but since you raised it now, do you remember one or two of the issues? Specifically what might one of these recommendations have been that they didn't buy? Do you remember any?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I'm sure -- I don't remember, but I'm sure that what I would suggest -- recommend was that they get the planners going on how -- on a plan for decently withdrawing quickly, and not at some daydream future time. But I can't remember the specifics.

Timothy Naftali

There is some debate among scholars about an alert in 1969 that Nixon pressed for.

Bob Ellsworth

'69.

Timothy Naftali

Nuclear alert --

Bob Ellsworth

In '69.

Timothy Naftali

-- to send a signal to the Soviets that we mean business.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

Do you recall an alert in the fall of 1969, a nuclear alert?

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Again, the argument is that Nixon wanted the Soviets to think that he was capable of anything.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I understand that, but I do not have a -- I do not have a recollection of any nuclear alert in the fall of '69.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us, though, about Nixon's desire to convey to the Soviets that he was capable --

Bob Ellsworth

Well, he would say to people, "We got to keep them off balance. We got to make them think that I could do anything."

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember a discussion about possibly using tactile nuclear weapons in Vietnam?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about --

Bob Ellsworth

During the campaign I remember that, that somebody said that Johnson was proposing that, and what would -- what should the Nixon campaign's reaction be, and I remember saying that I thought it was a bad idea, but that we should try to find out more before it happened so that we would know better what to say, and, of course, it never happened, but -- I do remember that being talked about as an idea that was afloat in the Johnson administration.

Timothy Naftali

But you don't remember it as perhaps being something that the Nixon administration floated in order to scare the North Vietnamese --

Bob Ellsworth

I do not remember that.

Timothy Naftali

When do you start hearing about triangular diplomacy, about bringing the -- using the Soviets and the Chinese to put pressure on Hanoi to negotiate seriously with us? When does that idea, I mean, start -- you start hearing about it? When do you start hearing about it? When do you start seeing --

Bob Ellsworth

In the mid-'60s, when I'm a member of the House, I began to hear about that.

Timothy Naftali

Who was talking about that? Who was -- who were some of the proponents, or it was just in the air?

Bob Ellsworth

It was just in the air. I do vaguely remember -- oh. I remember talking about that with Chernyakov, the DCM, at the Soviet Embassy, during the campaign, and maybe even with -- maybe even with Dobrynin after the election. I do remember it happening some time with those two serious men, and they all said that they didn't have any. Chernyakov, particularly, spun it out in detail, that they had no influence in Hanoi and that they couldn't even consider it because they -- it would be a waste of time, and they had no influence, and he spun it out in detail about how little influence they had and why one should believe that they had no influence. And I reported that back to Nixon.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us a little bit about the state of deterrence when you're the ambassador to NATO. To what extent had the nuclear umbrella frayed by that point?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't know how to answer that, except to say that I remember the British minister of defense, Denis Healy, defending deterrence and saying how necessary it was that we maintain -- the argument was between full deterrence and minimum deterrence. Minimum deterrence would be the West just having five or six weapons, enough to be horrible, but not enough to do serious military damage. That was minimum deterrence. And maximum deterrence was enough to have -- to be able to sustain a first strike, and have the second strike capability to go back and do serious military damage. And Healy would argue against minimal deterrence, minimum deterrence, that it was necessary to have maximum deterrence because if there was only a 1 percent chance or even a half of a percent chance of the Soviets launching a military -- a nuclear attack, that you had to be able, just even in that small chance, if that happened, to deal adequately with it, and here was the only way to deal adequately with it, and so on and so forth. So he was very supportive of the full spectrum deterrence, escalation control, all those wonderful concepts and phrases. And who knows who was right? I mean it's a different era now.

Timothy Naftali

It's going to be a big issue for you when you come back to public service in '74, but to what extent in this period, '69 through '71, did you see the Soviet build-up of strategic weapons and begin to get concerned about it?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I was already concerned, and so was the President, because he -- that was part of the reason why he felt we needed to have a strategic arms limitation agreement with the Soviets, because of their build-up. So, I was already concerned. And so were all the Europeans. I mean everybody was. It wasn't widely discussed in junior high classrooms, but knowledgeable people were concerned.

Timothy Naftali

When do you first start talking about Détente with -- is it in the '68 campaign?
Are you talking about Détente with candidate Nixon? When is this concept -- when do you start -- was this a concept that shaped what you were doing in Brussels?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't recall. I'm sitting here and my brain is saying that a lot of that discussion, or that discussion was set off when Willy Brandt became the chancellor. Worried about Détente, that's like people saying, "Oh, we should have Détente" or people saying, "Let's worry about it." But I don't remember a specific --

Timothy Naftali

So what you're saying is that we are actually getting out in front of the West Germans, because ultimately the concept of Détente is going to be associated with Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

But you're saying that it may have been something that percolated out of Europe?

Bob Ellsworth

I think so. I definitely think so.

Timothy Naftali

The word itself is French, but --

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah, I know.

Timothy Naftali

What were the big issues for you, as -- we've talked about deterrence, as U.S. ambassador --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, the big issue was the old original Nixon issue of when we negotiate with the Soviets on strategic arms limitations, we've got to make sure that the Europeans know what I'm doing and why, and I need to know what they're thinking and feeling about it, as we go along. And so, you know, he actually set up a series of consultations so that our negotiators would stop in Brussels on their way to the Nixon negotiation in Helsinki or wherever it might be, and also stop on the way back. And, of course, I constantly gave my colleagues all kinds of, I hope, insights as to what was happening, and there was some resistance on the grounds that, well, we don't know if we can trust you guys to make a deal that won't hurt us, our national security by weakening your nuclear posture which is part of our national security. Some of it was a constant dialogue that was going on all the time.

Timothy Naftali

Did you notice -- I mean, it's always a problem for American policymakers in Europe. There is a chasm between what European leaders are saying to you and what they're saying to their own people, particularly in this period, when anti-Americanism was on the rise. Do you recall the European statesmen saying, "Please understand that what we're saying at home is not what we're, what we're saying to you"?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I don't remember anybody saying that to me in those terms, but it was certainly widely understood that that was okay and that was the way -- that was the procedure.

Timothy Naftali

This had nothing to do with defense, but it had a lot to do with our relationship with the alliance. Do you remember the consequences of the new economic policy of August 1970, when we slapped a tariff on imports, 10 percent tariff? We went off the gold standard when John Connally --

Bob Ellsworth

No, I don't remember any furor in Europe about that, but I do remember furor about the chicken war, which was a war between the Georgia chicken industry and the European poultry industry. Don't ask me to give any detail about it, but that was a much bigger political, geopolitical thing than the new economic policy gold standard and so forth.

Timothy Naftali

I think I noticed that you got a doctorate from the University of Ottawa, 1969.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

So let me ask you about relations with the Canadians.

Bob Ellsworth

But that wasn't the University of Ottawa in Canada.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, it was Ottawa, Kansas?

Bob Ellsworth

That was the University of Ottawa in Kansas.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, tell us about the relations, because as part of your responsibility, you're not just dealing with Europeans, you're dealing with the Canadians.

Bob Ellsworth

Canadians, yes. The Canadians -- the big problem with the Canadians was, at a certain point in time -- this is interesting. They wanted to pull their troops out of deployment, not get out of NATO, but pull their troops out of their deployment in the central front in Germany. And that was a big problem. And so the SACEUR, General Goodpaster, worked very hard on that, made the case that they were good troops, among the best, and that we couldn't afford to be without them, and he worked that problem very hard, and I helped out a little bit, too, talking to the Canadian ambassadorial staff and the ambassador himself, who was a wonderful guy. I can't remember his name, but in any case, yeah, that was the big issue with the Canadians while I was at NATO.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember, there was a meeting of the wise men, I believe it was about -- it was at the time that Mansfield proposed his amendment to remove American troops from Europe. And you came back to the United States, Goodpaster came back to the United States, I believe Dean Acheson was involved in this discussion. Do you remember that trip back to discuss the consequences of the Mansfield effort?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, Mansfield would do that every six months. Every time there was to be a meeting of the NATO foreign ministers, which was twice a year, he would put that resolution into play in the Senate, so I don't have any particular recollection of one of them. I may have done it two or three times, or several times, and Goodpaster and Acheson and so forth, but it happened every six months.

Timothy Naftali

I'm not asking you to get inside Mansfield's brain, but was it a ploy to get the Europeans to take more responsibility for their defense?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't know.

Timothy Naftali

Why did you decide to leave -- you go into private sector.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

What occasioned that decision to --

Bob Ellsworth

Well, after all, I had been engaged actively in politics for Nixon, with Nixon for -- well, since early '67, and here it was '71, and I needed to get out and take a little breather and do something else.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember the consequences of our policy in Cambodia? How did the Europeans react to that?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, they were horrified. They thought it was a big mistake. And why did we do it, and you can't get away with that sort of thing. But Buzz Wheeler was the name of a four-star general who was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he came over to Brussels and explained it to a meeting, one of the big meetings with military and political people there, probably a meeting of the defense ministers, and did a masterful job of explaining it, and really calmed all the -- didn't dispose of the protesting and the disagreements, but completely tamped it, completely tamped it down.

Timothy Naftali

What did you think of the policy in Cambodia?

Bob Ellsworth

I thought it was okay.

Timothy Naftali

You --

Bob Ellsworth

I thought, militarily, we had to do that. And I may not have been well informed about it, but that's what I thought.

Timothy Naftali

But at some point, you did -- I remember, in one of your interviews, you did say that you were disappointed we took so long to get out of Vietnam.

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I had been thinking that since the mid-'60s, since I ran for the Senate in Kansas and got defeated.

Timothy Naftali

What might we have done differently to get out?

Bob Ellsworth

Now you're asking me to do a professional planning job on the fly here. I can't do that.

Timothy Naftali

No, but at the time what did you think?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I did not have a plan at the time, either. But I knew that there were ways to plan, and by the way, it goes back to what Nixon told me and many others, about getting out within six months of his inauguration, harder than you think, harder than I thought, harder than he thought. What can you -- how can you get out? The Vietnamese wouldn't let you out. And they never did let you out. And so -- in all honesty, I have to say it was undoubtedly much harder than I supposed it was. But that's what I thought anyway.

Timothy Naftali

You go into the private sector. You go to Lazard Freres?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

One question, we noticed you were involved in and you helped create a consortium for the Iranians. Did you do -- do you remember doing some work for Iran?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I tried to. I tried to create something with Iran, but never went anywhere.

Timothy Naftali

Did you keep your hand in the pot during this period --

Bob Ellsworth

Well, at one point -- yes. At one point, Haig, who at that time was either deputy chief of staff or chief of staff, called me up and said that Nixon wanted me to go over to Malta and negotiate on behalf of the British, the status of forces and the arrangements between the British fleet and the Maltese, because there was a socialist prime minister named Dom Mintoff who had been elected in Malta, and oh, how he hated the British, because the British had beaten up his father and had tortured him in jail. So he was going to throw the British fleet out and let the Soviet fleet in. And the British minister of defense, Lord Carrington, couldn't stand Mintoff, so he asked somehow, Haig or Nixon, maybe, to send somebody over there to try to calm things down so that -- anyway, they ended up with me, and I went over, and in the middle of being a Lazard partner, and did that -- it was great fun. I think I actually went over two times to negotiate and follow up and work something out between the Maltese and the British fleet.

Timothy Naftali

Were you in touch with Nixon in this period when you were in the private sector? Did you interact with him? You just mentioned Haig, but did you --

Bob Ellsworth

I don't think I did interact with Nixon personally.

Timothy Naftali

What are your recollections -- you were out of the government during some of his most difficult moments. Did you participate at all in the discussion about Gerald Ford being selected?

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Did you talk to Mel Laird at all when Laird came back to be sort of a domestic advisor?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

Can you tell us what you recall of that?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, one time Laird was on "Meet the Press" at the NBC studios in Washington. And I went over and walked in and said who I was, and Laird said, "Oh, there's Ellsworth. Come on and sit down," and so forth. So I -- and we talked about what he was going and how it was going. And it was a disaster, of course, but anyway -- that little conversation.

Timothy Naftali

Did he tell you at that point that he thought that Nixon would have to resign?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, I don't remember that he told me that. Somehow I think we both knew that. And we may have sort of with floorboard movements or something -- I think we knew that.

Timothy Naftali

Somewhat linked to the problems that Richard Nixon faced in '72, '73, '74 is campaign practices. Do you remember Murray Chotiner from the '68 campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

What did he do in the '68 campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

I remember one time he went up to New Hampshire and meddled around, and it was not helpful. But everybody knew who Murray Chotiner was, so --

Timothy Naftali

Who did he work for?

Bob Ellsworth

That's just it, I think he worked for Nixon. Who else could he work for? He wasn't working for me. And he really was quite unhelpful.

Timothy Naftali

Well --

Bob Ellsworth

What he did I don't remember, but it was not helpful.

Timothy Naftali

Well, do you remember Dick Tuck doing things for the Democrats, pranks?

Bob Ellsworth

I've read about it in the newspaper.

Timothy Naftali

Well, what role did pranks play and stuff like that play in the '68 campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

In the '68 campaign not much. In the '72 campaign it was a different kettle of fish. I always say that in the '68 campaign there were no hanky pankies. And I've been corrected on that by several of my friends who said, "Well, not much." So there was, I suppose, some.

Timothy Naftali

Well, how much was Nixon worried about his being bugged? Because later he would say that he felt he was being bugged by LBJ and -- do you remember that being a concern of his during the '68 campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

I do not remember. But I wouldn't be surprised if he was bugged by LBJ. I'd be surprised if he wasn't bugged by LBJ. But I don't remember him discussing it with me.

Timothy Naftali

So why -- how would you explain to a historian, if a historian said, "Well, the '68 campaign Nixon knew was going to be close. It was going to be a tough campaign. Why were there no hanky pankies in '68 and yet there was hanky panky in '72 in a campaign that ultimately he would, you know, he would trounce his opponent?" What do you think changed?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, that's a very good question. I'll have to think about that and get back to you. I can't spin it out right now. But certainly it's true. And I think it's a real interesting question. And I don't know the answer.

Timothy Naftali

Did Bob Haldeman play a different role in the '68 campaign than he played in the '72 campaign? I know you weren't in the '72 campaign -- from what you've read and what you're folks have said to you.

Bob Ellsworth

I suppose so, but I can't --

Timothy Naftali

Well, how important was he? What was he doing in the '68 campaign? What was Bob Haldeman really doing?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, he was managing -- he was really -- we all counted on him to manage the schedule and make sure that the trains ran on time, if you will, if I can put it that way. And he was very good at that, made a big contribution.

Timothy Naftali

Did he manage the budget for the campaign in '68?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't know the answer to that. I had the sense that Mitchell was managing the budget for the '68 campaign.

Timothy Naftali

Len Garment told us that Mitchell was reluctant to become the campaign manager. Do you remember that? Can you --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes. I think it was Mitchell negotiating. I think he wanted to be the campaign manager.

Timothy Naftali

Oh, you think he wanted to be --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, absolutely. But, I mean, and the chance to be -- Mitchell's ambition was to be the deputy President. And when he became attorney general, it was a disappointment, because he didn't have the propinquity to the President that he -- but he nevertheless was determined to be the deputy President, even from the attorney general's office. But that's way ahead of your question. Going back, I'm sure that he could envisage all of that ahead. And so he was negotiating with Nixon by feigning reluctance. He may have been a little reluctant. It was a new game for him. But his self-confidence was such -- I'm a great admirer of Mitchell, by the way. His self-confidence was such that he would go ahead and do it after he'd negotiated the deal with Nixon. And then I wasn't privy to those negotiations or to what the deal was. But I'm sure there was a wonderful deal, wonderful for Mitchell.

Timothy Naftali

Deputy President? Did he have policy preferences? Did he want power?

Bob Ellsworth

Power.

Timothy Naftali

And you say that with such confidence.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

Did you have conversations with Mitchell about this?

Bob Ellsworth

No, you didn't have to have a conversation with him about it. You could just see how he worked.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us a little bit about it.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I can't --

Timothy Naftali

Well, who were his key aides? Or did he just work directly with the President?

Bob Ellsworth

He worked directly. He was disdainful of all of us. He wasn't disdainful of me; I shouldn't say that. But he was disdainful of -- yeah, once or twice he was disdainful of me. "You get over there and tell your President" dadadadadada. You know, that kind of -- he was a tough guy and a smart guy. And he had his anxieties and his uncertainties because, as I said a moment ago, it was a whole new game for him, politics. Not a whole new game, because he'd played New York politics pretty successfully as a bond attorney, but he was a very interesting man.

Timothy Naftali

What was the source of the antipathy between you and Haldeman?

Bob Ellsworth

"I do not like thee, Dr. Fell. The reason why I cannot tell. But this I know and know full well, I do not like thee, Dr. Fell." That's the old chant that one can only fall back on sometimes.

Timothy Naftali

What brought you back into government?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, well, it's complicated. Anyway, Jim Schlesinger asked me to come down and be the assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs. And I couldn't resist. Perhaps I should have resisted, but I couldn't resist. So that's what brought me back in.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember the maneuvering to get Strom Thurmond to support Nixon?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

Could you tell us a bit about that, please?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, in the spring of '68 we were having one of our -- we had regional meetings all over the country. We were having a regional meeting in Atlanta. And so Nixon wanted Strom Thurmond to endorse him. But Nixon didn't think Strom Thurmond was ready to endorse. But he said, "Invite Strom Thurmond to be a speaker at our regional meeting in Atlanta and see if he'll come. And if he comes,

that'll be a good sign." So somebody, I don't know who, called up Strom and invited him to come. Maybe Nixon did, I don't -- it doesn't matter. Strom came and gave a talk to the delegates. It was very impressive. They liked it. I mean, they needed that. So then Nixon says to me, now, he said, "I'm going to ride out to the airport with Strom in our car." He had a driver and everything. And he said, "I want you to come along to be a witness, because I'm going to ask him to endorse me. And he's going to ask for something in return, and I'm afraid it's going to be to support freedom of choice," which at that time was the code word for sending your children to a private school and still getting paid, freedom of choice. And he said, "I can't do that." He said, "I can't do that and win the Presidency. I can't agree to that. So I want you to be there for a witness to what happens." So, okay, and so we get in the car, Strom sitting on the left-hand seat in the back and Nixon in the right. And I'm sitting on the jump seat. And we'd chat and so -- and Nixon's sweating profusely because he's nervous about this discussion. So he says to Strom, in nice circumlocutions, but nevertheless, "I would like to have you endorse me for President. Could you do that? I need you." And Strom says, "Dick," he said, "you'd make a great President." And he said, "I'd love to see you be President. And I would like to endorse you." Stop, Nixon says, "What would you like me to do?" And Strom leans forward and says, "I want you to promise me never to let up on them Communists." And Nixon said, "Okay, it's a deal." I mean, he was just relaxed, he just drained -- attention just drained out of him. That was all. And so the deal was made and Strom did endorse him. And then Strom came to the convention and went around and talked to all the delegations and so forth, very effective against Reagan, who was a threat at that time. Okay, now fast forward to what we were talking about before, which was the SALT Treaty, part of which was the ABM Treaty. And there was a big furor in politics and in the intellectual arms control community about, "Well, you got to give this more -- you shouldn't be so demanding of the Soviets" and so forth and so on. And so Agnew got into the debate on the side of the softies. And so Nixon didn't know that, but that's what Agnew was doing. And so then Strom calls up Nixon from the Senate and says, "Dick," -- no, he says, "Mr. President," -- now he's calling him Mr. President -- "did you know that your Vice President is up here running around undercutting your policy on the ABM part of this treaty?" "No," said Nixon, "I didn't know that." "Well," says Strom, "The reason I'm calling you about it is because you promised me you would never let up on them Communists, and that would be letting up on the Communists." "Oh," said Nixon, "Don't worry about a thing. I'll take care of it right away." So your question stimulates quite an interesting little --

Timothy Naftali

It sure does. And you heard about this -- because at this point you were in the private sector, right?

Bob Ellsworth

I guess. I don't remember where I heard about Strom calling up and invoking the pledge to not let up on them Communists.

Timothy Naftali

Well, how sensitive -- it's remarkable that that's what Strom asked him to do. How sensitive was the issue of civil rights for candidate Nixon?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, very sensitive, very sensitive. And there had been earlier a meeting, a dinner meeting, in the Hay Adams Hotel, the little dining room there, with Nixon and 10 or 12 of us younger people. I remember Jim Battin of Montana was present and I can't remember -- he later became a district judge. And the question was, I think, still -- no, it couldn't have been. I think it had to do with civil rights. It had to do with going to the King funeral. It had to do with those issues. This is in the spring of '68. And Nixon finally said to several of them, "I can't do this. I can't do that." Because he said, "Then I can't govern this country." And that's basically what his attitude was toward Strom Thurmond, possible asking him to support freedom of choice a little later in the spring.

Timothy Naftali

He couldn't -- I'm sorry --

Bob Ellsworth

Couldn't do the various things that these guys at the dinner party were talking about and urging him to do about the civil rights issue.

Timothy Naftali

In other words, they were urging him not to be as liberal on the issue?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

So there's --

Bob Ellsworth

Nixon was -- Bob Dole said the other day, now in 2008, "Nixon could never be nominated by the Republican Party. Now he's much too liberal." Think of that. I'm sure it's true.

Timothy Naftali

I was going to ask you, do you remember -- we found a newspaper article where you complain that the Democrats had sent hecklers -- I think this is the New Hampshire primary. Do you remember being concerned about Democratic dirty tricks during the '68 campaign?

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Okay.

Bob Ellsworth

I'm not saying it wasn't the case, but I don't recall it now.

Timothy Naftali

And the last '68 campaign question that came to mind, do you recall when you were having this discussion, when Nixon was thinking about whom to choose to be Vice President, do you remember George Bush's name coming up?

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Okay.

Bob Ellsworth

There was a big breakfast meeting the morning after the nomination of Nixon. And then the next morning there was a breakfast meeting up in the penthouse of the hotel where we were staying. Senators were there, campaign chairmen of regions were there, I was there, so forth and so on. And so Nixon opened the floor for discussion of who should be the Vice President, as if it hadn't already been decided. And a number of names, Lindsey and Finch and Agnew were the three names that were mentioned at that breakfast meeting. And so then the meeting was closed, and within about five seconds it was announced that Agnew was going to be the nominee. And then there were Agnew t-shirts and baseball caps and everything, suddenly all printed up. So that was kind of --

Timothy Naftali

At the time, did Agnew have a reputation for being a moderate?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, he'd been Rockefeller's -- Rockefeller had wanted him to run for President, hadn't he? I don't know. Anyway, yeah, he was supposed to be a moderate. But I have always thought that the reason Mitchell pushed him so hard on Nixon was because of Agnew's speech to the blacks, chewing them out in public as the executive of Baltimore County for shirking their responsibilities and being black. I mean, you know, it was a very appealing speech to a lot of whites. And I think that's why Mitchell thought he'd be a good candidate for Vice President.

Timothy Naftali

What should I read between the lines about Mitchell's thinking about civil rights?

Bob Ellsworth

I think Mitchell -- no, well, I don't think Mitchell cared much about civil rights. But I think he did think that there was, just as Bill Clinton did the other day, thinks there's still a lot of white backlash to be gained politically from making it a point about who's black and who's not.

Timothy Naftali

That's interesting because in the story you just told us, candidate Nixon believed that if he -- in '68 -- if he played on white backlash, he couldn't govern.

Bob Ellsworth

If he blatantly played on white backlash, and if he said things some of the anti-blacks really wanted him to say and do. But this was different, because Agnew's moderate reputation covered over with a thin patina the famous speech he had where he had chewed out the black leaders.

Timothy Naftali

So do you think that Nixon sent some code words out to white backlash to get their support in '68?

Bob Ellsworth

I wouldn't be surprised. I can't tell you a phrase or a paragraph or a sentence in which he did that, but I think he was glad -- he was concerned about Wallace.

Timothy Naftali

What was his thinking? I mean, what was his philosophy? Where was his center on this issue? Or was it a political matter for him?

Bob Ellsworth

Political matter. I think morally that he -- you got to remember that the black/white situation had been rigid in this country for a very long time, ever since the Civil War. You got to remember that after the Civil War was over, the South nevertheless had lobbied here in Washington -- well, we're not here in Washington -- had lobbied in Washington with the Union government, to allow -- okay, we don't have slavery anymore, but we need to allow, you need to allow us to have white supremacy. And the White House responded, okay, you can have white supremacy as long as you can enforce it. And that deal had held clear up to the 1960s. And I remember talking to Bobby Kennedy when I was in the House. And some children of one of my constituents had gone down to Louisiana to help with voter registration and been arrested by the sheriff down there and been put in jail. And they'd called me and so I called the Attorney General Bobby Kennedy and told him. And he said, "Well," he said, "We told

them not to go down there, but that if they did, they were on their own." And he said, "We can't do anything and we're not going to do anything. But you tell your constituent to get in his car and drive down there and explain to the sheriff who he is and he'll let him out," which he did. But, I mean, that was the deal still under Bobby Kennedy until the Kennedy brothers decided it had to change. So, I mean, these politicians in the '60s were still very much in the grip of the deal. I call it the deal, white supremacy as long as you can enforce it. And there was a lot of political hay to be gotten out of that, maybe still today.

Timothy Naftali

What do you remember of Bryce Harlow?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, what a charming guy, smart, charming, witty, very effective, very good tactician.

Timothy Naftali

We've interviewed a number of people who've said that he was extremely effective in the Eisenhower period, but the game was different on the Hill in 1969 and '70 and that's why Bryce Harlow fades away.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, maybe so. That's much too subtle for me. I wasn't paying that much attention.

Timothy Naftali

Okay.

Bob Ellsworth

My contact with Bryce Harlow was that he was really very charming and a brilliant little tactician.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, Schlesinger brings you back into government.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

What are the big issues for you?

Bob Ellsworth

Vietnam. And SALT, to some extent, but Vietnam.

Timothy Naftali

The agreement has been reached by this point, though, with the North Vietnamese.

Bob Ellsworth

With what?

Timothy Naftali

With Hanoi.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

We have told Hanoi, or at least we have hinted at Hanoi -- certainly told Saigon -- that if Hanoi does not live up to the agreement --

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

-- we are going to do something.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

But we don't.

Bob Ellsworth

Right.

Timothy Naftali

What happens? What do you remember of this?

Bob Ellsworth

That's a very good question. And oh, how I wish I could answer it by telling you things.

Timothy Naftali

Well, let me help.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, thank you.

Timothy Naftali

All right -- no, because we talked about this --

Bob Ellsworth

I can't remember what happened.

Timothy Naftali

Well, I just want to know what you recall, because we've interviewed James Schlesinger, and Schlesinger feels that in the summer of '73, the rider to the appropriations bill, the rider in fact that was supported by Gerald Ford, which said the United States shall not do anything militarily in Indo-China, made it impossible to -- that and Watergate -- made it impossible to do anything really, militarily, against Hanoi from that point on -- to bomb. Obviously we didn't have any troops. I just wondered if that resonated with you.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, yeah, it does not resonate in my memory. But hearing you say it, I would say that the little legislative tactic was not nearly as significant in hobbling the President's ability to order military action as Watergate was, because I don't -- I mean, there were a lot of riders and so forth passed in that era, one after another. How many were there, so-called "somebody from Massachusetts" amendments? Over and over again, and the President in the exercise of his power as commander in chief could ignore them, but not when it got to the point, as it did in the time you're talking about, when -- there were two things. It was Watergate and there was the situation on the ground in Vietnam, which was very, very bad. And the two things together -- so I wouldn't agree -- I can't remember the rider that he's referring to, but I would not agree that that was a major factor all by itself, or even with Watergate.

Timothy Naftali

When do you return to government? When does Schlesinger bring you in?

Bob Ellsworth

Timothy Naftali

'74, I think.

Bob Ellsworth

When did Nixon resign?

Timothy Naftali

August.

Bob Ellsworth

Of '74?

Timothy Naftali

'74.

Bob Ellsworth

Okay. I came in in the summer of '74.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, so, we don't have any more troops in Vietnam.

Bob Ellsworth

Right.

Timothy Naftali

Were you involved at all in the Cyprus -- dealing with the Cyprus problem, which was happening at the same time?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, yes.

Timothy Naftali

Could you tell us, please?

Bob Ellsworth

Cyprus.

Timothy Naftali

Yes.

Bob Ellsworth

Kissinger asked me and one of his deputies in the State Department to go over after the Turks invaded, and shuttle between Ankara and Athens, and try to prevent war from breaking out, try to get them to agree to cool it, which we did. And it was funny because the Turks did attack with an aircraft, a navy vessel, but it turned out to be a Turkish naval vessel, because their IFF didn't work. So, that was the only big casualty of the so-called war. But we did, we met with the war cabinet in Ankara, and then we'd go back and meet with Ioannides, who was the dictator of Greece, and his war cabinet, back and forth. And we did -- either we or the gods or somebody prevented war between the two.

Timothy Naftali

Did you speak to President Nixon at all during that summer of '74?

Bob Ellsworth

No, no. Oh, I take it back, yes. On one occasion, right after I first came back, I went over with Schlesinger to the White House for a meeting in the Cabinet Room with the President and so forth, Kissinger and so forth. And so, of course, I'm not sitting at the table, because I'm only an assistant secretary, but I'm sitting back against the wall, right behind where Nixon is going to sit. So Nixon then, after everybody was assembled, Nixon comes in. And he looks at me and his face lights up like a neon sign. And he smiles and he says, "Bob," and shakes my hand like an old politician, "What are you doing here?" [laughter] So I said, "Well, I'm your new assistant secretary of defense." "Oh, good!" he said. So that was -- yes, I did speak to him, but not about anything other than that.

Timothy Naftali

Wow. Do you remember any of James Schlesinger's concern about chain-of-command issues in the summer of '74, in the last weeks of the Nixon administration?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, he was concerned about chain of command. Whether he should have been or not, I don't know, but he was. And I think maybe rightfully so. He did not want anybody pretending to speak for the President, bypassing him as secretary of defense in any kind of a military order or command.

Timothy Naftali

My understanding is that he was particularly concerned about General Haig.

Bob Ellsworth

I don't know. He didn't say that.

Timothy Naftali

But you do recall that he was concerned about this?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

And he was also worried about a General Cushman.

Bob Ellsworth

I never heard the name.

Timothy Naftali

Where were you on August 9th, 1974? What do you remember of the day that President Nixon resigned?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, I don't remember where I was. I remember seeing it on TV. Where could I have been? In my home, in my office? I don't know.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, new administration. Did you have a sense from your vantage point that -- how did things change, besides the fact that the portrait of the President changed very quickly?

Bob Ellsworth

No, no, the whole atmosphere changed. I think that it was a great relief to the nation that we had a new President and that Watergate was, not over, but not as neuralgic every single day, every single hour, as it had been for so many months. So, big change, and of course Ford began to get ready for the election of '76. And he abjured Détente. And he did all those things that we know about. But it was a big change.

Timothy Naftali

How did we send a signal to the Europeans that we were -- you know, how did we tell them -- I mean, do you remember, since you were somebody who knew European leaders, were you involved at all in trying to reassure them that, you know, the country was all right and had good, strong leadership?

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah, I assume that I was enlisted in that and made some calls and sent some greetings, but I don't remember the details of who or what I said.

Timothy Naftali

Please compare and contrast President Ford and President Nixon.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, yeah, that's a good question. And it leaves room for a lengthy essay, which I'm sure you don't want on this.

Timothy Naftali

Well, just what do you think? What comes to mind? Please.

Bob Ellsworth

Nixon, for all his faults, was a big thinker. Ford was not. Nixon, for all his thought faults, was a sharp intellect and a smart guy. I don't think, for all his beautiful qualities, Ford was those things. Nixon was tougher. Ford was not so tough. I guess one could go on at some length here, but I think that those capture my impressions of the two men, both of whom were fine men and good-hearted men, and wanted to do the right thing all the time. Nixon, it occurs to me, was a brilliant poker player. It's very important to understand that about Nixon. And Ford was not a poker player. He was good at politics, but he was not a poker player.

Timothy Naftali

Can you -- since we can't always assume our audience plays poker very well, why is that an insight into understanding?

Bob Ellsworth

It's an insight because in poker you have to know the value of your cards. You have to be able to judge the value of the other players' cards without having the slightest knowledge of what those cards are. You have to do it by reading their faces, the faces of the players, and knowing them for some time and how they react. And then, above all, you have to be able to judge what you can do and what you can't do with your cards against theirs, and get the maximum benefit from your cards and give them the minimum benefit of their cards. And Nixon was awfully good at that all the time.

Timothy Naftali

Was the man you met in the '60 campaign, who came to Kansas, who campaigned for you and you campaigned for him, the same man that you knew in the White House?

Bob Ellsworth

Of course, it's the same man. Different position, different circumstances in domestic politics and in the world, and more severely wounded and more fully healed later than earlier. So all those differences.

Timothy Naftali

What shape was Détente in in 1974 when you came? Was the policy succeeding?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, in my judgment it was.

Timothy Naftali

How were the relations between Schlesinger and Kissinger?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, they were difficult. Two towering intellects, two gigantic egos, and a specific event that really roiled their relationship -- R-O-I-L-E-D -- roiled their relationship. And that was in the Yom Kippur War, the fall of 1973, when the Israeli forces were in dire straits, under attack by the Egyptians. And Schlesinger prepared, and was ordered by Nixon to send, substantial bundle package of reinforcements and help to the Israelis to rescue them from dire straits. And Kissinger, negotiating with the Soviets, didn't want that to happen quite yet. And so he insisted and got the President to go along with it, that Schlesinger stop for a period of time doing that. And then Schlesinger came under criticism for doing that. And his reply was that you can't move very fast when your shoes are nailed to the floor, by which he meant Kissinger. And ever since then, relations with them have not been as good as they were before.

Timothy Naftali

Well, in his memoirs, Kissinger blames Schlesinger.

Bob Ellsworth

Of course.

Timothy Naftali

The President didn't play much of a role in that.

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Because that was the Saturday night -- that was a very difficult time for President Nixon.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

The intelligence community comes under fire in the period that you are at the Pentagon. And you begin to take a special interest in it. Tell us what you recall of the mistakes the CIA was making in assessing Soviet military power.

Bob Ellsworth

Well, they were underestimating it, in my judgment and in the judgment of a lot of people, underestimating it and thereby endangering our ability to take precautionary measures by maintaining our force levels and by the way we talked and our diplomacy and so forth. So, a lot of us thought, particularly in the Pentagon, and led by Schlesinger, that they were making a big mistake in underestimating the magnitude. And it was all very, very, very highly technical. You got into purchasing power equivalencies and how to measure things and so forth. And it was -- I thought it was a serious matter.

Timothy Naftali

Did Kissinger share the concerns that you had about the kind of intelligence he was getting from the CIA on Soviet military power?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't know the answer to that.

Timothy Naftali

You've written about the role that the directorate of operations of the CIA played in sort of shaping the way the CIA approached its mission. Was the CIA receiving the same data you were and just interpreting it differently from you?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't remember writing anything about the director of operations at the CIA.

Timothy Naftali

You wrote, years later, you wrote an article with Ken Adelman, jointly --

Bob Ellsworth

I don't deny it, but I don't remember it.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, it's okay. But what I'm interested in is, this is really significant because this debate over, this arcane debate over estimates is going to become quite public in the Team A/Team B conflict. And of course it's going to be a very big issue in the '80 campaign. Ronald Reagan is going to run on this sense that we have systematically underestimated Soviet power. But let's go down in the weeds for a minute. What had caused this? What do you remember? Why was the CIA underestimating Soviet power? Was it a matter of interpretation or bad intelligence or what? What do you remember of that?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, my recollection is that it was not purposeful and that it was not ill-intentioned, but that it was basically a matter of wishing that things were this way rather than that way. And therefore -- you know how people are. I mean, we're all that way. What we wish for is that we see. And I think that's what you had in the case of the CIA, not with any bad intention and not with any malign meaning, and not with any intentionality, but just because that's what they wished for.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about the withdrawal from Saigon in '75. Was there anything that we could have done?

Bob Ellsworth

No, in my judgment, no. No, absolutely not. I got calls from friends in New York who had employees over there in Saigon and wanted me to help save their employees. And there wasn't anything I could do. But the answer to, is there anything we could have done, that's not the answer. That was just me. But there isn't anything that the country -- that I think our military could have done except plan ahead better.

Timothy Naftali

Do you recall any debates in this period over force levels that were influenced by this uncertainty about Soviet military power? I mean, were there suggestions that you and Schlesinger were making that were not being approved because people did not accept your assessment of Soviet military power?

Bob Ellsworth

I do not recall any such. There may have been some and would have been more in the future. But I don't recall any at that time.

Timothy Naftali

Do you recall what role George Bush played as DCI in trying to improve the intelligence situation?

Bob Ellsworth

No.

Timothy Naftali

Let's fast forward to Richard Nixon's post Presidency. Tell us about -- did you travel with him to Russia?

Bob Ellsworth

I did.

Timothy Naftali

Can you recall --

Bob Ellsworth

Soviet Union it was.

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, that's right. Can you recall those trips for us?

Bob Ellsworth

In the spring of 1991, spring of 1991, he and Dimitri Simes and I went over to the Soviet Union and visited various leadership people, Khrushchev and -- I mean, not --

Timothy Naftali

Gorbachev.

Bob Ellsworth

-- not Khrushchev, Gorbachev. I did not stay for the Gorbachev visit, but they -- in any case. And we visited the minister of defense and the minister of interior and I can't recall all, but the highlight of the visit, I think, was our visit to the head of the KGB, General Kryuchkov, KGB being the committee on state security, a very famous old spymaster, Kryuchkov. Now this was in March or April of '91, our visit there. And in August of that year was the putsch against Gorbachev. And then in December of '91 was the collapse of the Soviet Union. But of course we didn't know that was going to happen, although Kryuchkov did. I mean, he was part of the plot against Gorbachev. In any case, we met Kryuchkov in his office on the fourth floor of the Lubyanka Building in Moscow. And by the way, when I came back

and told some of my friends in the intelligence community that we had done that, they were amazed and it took their breath away, because the Lubyanka Building and particularly the fourth floor office of the chairman of the KGB had always been something that they had dreamed of seeing someday before they died. And here I was telling them I'd been there. Anyway, the conversation with Kryuchkov was very interesting. He had an interpreter. And we relied on his interpreter, although Dimitri Simes was there and could interpret, he didn't play that role. And there were two things about that visit that were very -- three things that were very interesting.

First thing was that Kryuchkov threw the interpreter, and Dimitri Simes insists that maybe the interpreter got it wrong. Kryuchkov told Nixon that he was glad to meet Nixon, that he felt as if he had known Nixon for a very long time because they have a very thick file on him, and that he was known to them as a very rude American politician. Well, rude can be socially inept or rude. It can also be like the Rude Bridge at Concord, strong and tough and so forth. So, there was an open question as to what he meant if the interpreter got it right. But anyway, that was one thing, rude. The second thing that was interesting was that Kryuchkov asked Nixon why it was in his interest, Soviet interest, that Germany should be in NATO. And Nixon said he was going to let Ambassador Ellsworth answer that question because Ambassador Ellsworth had been our ambassador to NATO. And so I told Kryuchkov that the reason it was in the Soviet interest to keep Germany in NATO was so that we, NATO, and the United States in particular, could make sure that Germany did not feel the need to equip itself with its own nuclear weapons, which would be a big threat to the Soviet Union. And then the third thing that was interesting was, after we left -- well, third thing that was interesting was, in the meeting, that Kryuchkov at the end of the meeting said to Nixon and to all of us, he said, "You know," he said, "Today the United States is by far the strongest power in the world. It's the only strong power in the world." And he said, "That's a heavy burden for any state to have that kind of power in the world." And he said, "Beware and be careful, because it's a great burden and it's a great danger. Even the strongest state can collapse," foreshadowing the collapse of the great, strong state of the Soviet Union. But we didn't know that at the time. But that was an interesting -- and then, after we left the meeting, Nixon said, "That guy is a monster, but he's a big thinker." So, that's my little report on that.

Timothy Naftali

But wasn't this also the trip that produced a little bit of warning about the putsch? Didn't Nixon send word to Bush? Didn't you send word to the Bush administration that you'd better be careful, something might happen?

Bob Ellsworth

I didn't know about it if it was.

Timothy Naftali

Do you recall the tension between Kissinger, Scowcroft, and, to some extent, former President Nixon and Reagan and Schultz, over Gorbachev, the sense that Reagan and Schultz were too close to Gorbachev?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't remember that. I was not aware of that.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember the debate over whether to support Yeltsin or Gorbachev?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, yes.

Timothy Naftali

Could you tell us a bit about that please?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, there isn't much to tell. I was not in the government at the time that Yeltsin came to power. But Brent Scowcroft several times told me he was so worried about Yeltsin, and I guess everybody -- there was a whole lot of conversation all over the country, all over town, about how unreliable Yeltsin was, and how he got drunk and chased women, and all that, and that the TV people couldn't count on him to show up. So yeah, but other than that, no, I wasn't.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember talking to former President Nixon about this?

Bob Ellsworth

I do not.

Timothy Naftali

Did you participate at all in the famous Nixon memo, when Nixon criticized Bush's approach towards Russia?

Bob Ellsworth

No, no.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about 1993, the World Trade Center, the story that you were telling us in the beginning --

Bob Ellsworth

In February of 1993 the World Trade Center was attempted to be destroyed by some inept bombers, who wreaked some damage but failed in their effort to blow up the -- on that evening, unbeknownst -- Nixon had several of us up to dinner. He was living in New Jersey at the time. And he invited -- help me with the names.

Timothy Naftali

Andreas --

Bob Ellsworth

Dwayne Andreas, the head of ADM, Don Kendall, the head of PepsiCo, and Dimitri Simes, and Brzezinski, and me. And we went first to his home and had some cocktails and got acquainted or reacquainted. And then we all got in a couple of cars, driven by drivers, and went over to a very, very nice Italian restaurant in northern New Jersey and had dinner and had good fun talking back and forth with each other about world trade and all that Nixon had done for world trade. And Brzezinski, bless his heart, intervened in that and said to Andreas of ADM and Kendall of PepsiCo, "You guys did not do world trade. You just did special deals with Brezhnev." In any case, towards the end of the evening a waiter came in and told us that over the radio it had been reported that the World Trade Center had been bombed and seriously damaged, that it had just come over the radio. This is in February of 1993. And my recollection of our reaction to that was -- I mean, here are five people experienced in the ways of the world, sophisticated, smart -- we were aghast that anybody -- we were quite naive -- could even imagine taking on the project of bombing that icon of capitalism, icon of power, icon of wealth for the whole world. But of course, it turned out that it was true. They had. And then of course later on, many years later in 2001, they actually did destroy them. But that was a kind of an interesting evening all together.

Timothy Naftali

Last three questions. One, when in a sense you were head of the mini State Department in the Defense Department -- I mean, you were in a think tank within the Defense Department. What were the lessons of the Soviet adherence to SALT I that you hoped would shape a future SALT II? I mean, to what extent were the Soviets violating SALT I?

Bob Ellsworth

I'm sorry, I can't recall.

Timothy Naftali

Was there a concern? I mean, after all there was this --

Bob Ellsworth

There always was a concern that they would or that they might or that they had and this and that particular. But I do not remember any of those details. But the answer is yes, sure. Once you make an agreement, a complicated agreement with that that requires the other side to do difficult things, you worry about it. You monitor it carefully.

Timothy Naftali

Next question, you were involved in the Dole campaign of 1988. Do you remember Richard Nixon providing any advice to --

Bob Ellsworth

Absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

Could you tell us a few --

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah, I called up Nixon and said I wanted to bring Dole up and sit down and talk with him. At this time he was living also in New Jersey, but in a different place than in 1993. In any case, Dole and I went up. And Nixon invited us in. We sat down in a sunny, sort of solarium room that he had in that house. And he got out one of his famous legal pads, only instead of being a half or three-quarters of an inch thick, it was about six inches thick, this legal pad. And so we talked for maybe an hour, and Dole talked and Nixon talked. And Nixon took notes on his legal pad. And then we -- yes, it was a very, very rich, nice exchange between a couple of old friends, Nixon and Dole.

Timothy Naftali

Was Nixon putting his arm around Dole? Was Dole his candidate?

Bob Ellsworth

Not quite, Nixon said that his daughter Julie was for Dole and would be for Dole and would stay for Dole. Because he said she's very smart, she knows everybody, and she's very strong minded. She's not going to change. But Nixon himself did not.

Timothy Naftali

Did Nixon talk about the Reagan legacy and what Reagan had done to the Republican Party?

Bob Ellsworth

I don't think so. I don't remember if he did.

Timothy Naftali

Did he talk about Bush?

Bob Ellsworth

Probably.

Timothy Naftali

I know because I know he continued a correspondence with Bush. I just don't know if Bush was his candidate.

Bob Ellsworth

No, I don't think so.

Timothy Naftali

When was the last time you saw Richard Nixon?

Bob Ellsworth

Gosh, you know, I don't know the answer to that. I will say that we talked on the phone quite a bit up until close to his getting sick for the last time. But I don't remember the last time I saw him. It was probably -- must have been in his office, which for a while had been in the Javits Building, but then moved to some small office building out in New Jersey somewhere. And I'm sure it must have been in his office out there that I saw him, but I can't remember when it was.

Timothy Naftali

Do you recall him ever talking to you about Bill Clinton and his interactions with President Clinton?

Bob Ellsworth

No, I don't.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember some of the content of those conversations? I mean, as he was looking back on the end of the Cold War and he was thinking about what we face next, I mean, you're both realists in many ways, what, you know, what do you recall of those conversations?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, that's a wonderful question. It's such a wonderful question that I'm going to give a serious lot of time and effort to trying to recall and get a grip on the things the he said about that. I can't do it for you now, I'm sorry.

Timothy Naftali

Maybe you'll write something for the library.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

We'd appreciate that.

Bob Ellsworth

All right, I'd be glad to.

Timothy Naftali

The last question, did your friend Senator Dole ever think he might win the 1996 election?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, he did, up until -- that's an interesting question. He did think he might win the 1996 election up until the time when the then Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich engineered the rapid passage of about three major domestic social benefit bills and allowed Clinton to sign them and get the credit for them.

Timothy Naftali

And the senator said to you, "That's it for me"?

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, well, no he didn't say that, but he more or less said that, yes. He didn't say it that way; he said it by criticizing the event.

Timothy Naftali

Actually there is one Watergate related, which you may be able to help us with, a question I have. I've had to study the Milk Fund. You had to, I'm sure, deal with the milk interests in Kansas.

Bob Ellsworth

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

What can you tell us about the milk industry, why they put such pressure on the Nixon administration?

Bob Ellsworth

Well, there's two different questions. I can tell you a little bit about the milk industry. The milk industry is highly organized, really well organized. And much of the best political and legal talent in Kansas has been devoted over the years to supporting and organizing and guiding and taking care of the milk industry. But what it was about the Nixon administration that they wanted, I don't know. Connally, John Connally, was involved in that and was prosecuted. And when he hired Edward Bennett Williams, we all said, "Well, then he's guilty." If you hire Edward Bennett Williams, you're guilty. But he got off.

Timothy Naftali

Well, it has something to do with the support price.

Bob Ellsworth

Yes, I'm sure. I'm sure. I don't know, I wasn't in touch. Oh, what a question, the milk deal.

Timothy Naftali

What do you recall of the funeral, President Nixon's funeral?

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, what an interesting funeral that was. Bob Dole at that time was the Senate majority leader. And he was able to organize a fleet of transport aircraft. That's an exaggeration. There maybe were two airplanes that the Air Force provided. And he invited a bunch of us to fly out and back with him. And so a bunch of us did, senators, former senators, staffers, wonderful groups of people. And so out we flew. We gathered on the steps on the plaza, on the east side of the Capitol early in the morning and got on buses and went out to Andrews Air Force Base and got on the airplanes and flew out to California. And on the way out, I was assigned to sit next to Gordon Liddy. And so I made conversation, I asked him about how his radio -- he was a syndicated radio guy at that time -- and how many stations did he have, and how much money did he earn, and all those questions. And then I said, "Tell me about how you saw Watergate." So he gave me a wonderful story about how John Dean's paramour had been on the photo list of the escort ladies of the Democratic National Committee, and that that's why we had to break in and steal stuff. And so, anyway it was an interesting story. I can't remember all how it worked. So I said, "You got to come up with me to the front cabin." So I went up and there were a lot of senators, including Strom Thurmond and the guy from Oregon and a lot of people gathered around. And I said, "You guys have got to hear this story from Gordon Liddy himself." So he sat down and regaled them, and, oh, they thought it was a wonderful story. And anyway, then the funeral itself -- oh, and then also on the flight up, Dole showed me a draft of his talk that he was going to give as a eulogist. And I made some suggestions, which he was grateful to have. He used them and he gave a wonderful talk. The main suggestion I said he had to -- in his draft he said, "History will regard this --" I said, "People don't want to know what history is going to do; they want to know what you think." So he changed it to give himself the role of commenting on Nixon's role. And then, of course, the funeral, you know about the funeral. It was a splendid event. What was it -- oh, and one of the people who was there was John McCain, whom I knew very slightly. And I found myself at one point in the reception standing next to John McCain and his beautiful wife. And so I

introduced myself. He introduced me to his wife. And I asked him, I said, "Why are you at this funeral?" I said, "You've got things to do in Washington; you've got things to do in Arizona. Why did you bestir yourself and take the time and the trouble to come out for this funeral?" And he said, "Because Nixon got me out of jail." He said, "Operation Rolling Thunder is what pressured the Vietnamese to let us go free." And I hadn't realized -- it was the December bombing that Nixon ordered -- I hadn't realized that, but I thought that was rather touching. So that was an incident at the funeral. And then, flying back, I had a long talk with McGovern, who's on the plane also. We talked about the '72 campaign, and we talked about what he was doing now and so forth. So it was a nice -- the Nixon funeral was a great experience.

Timothy Naftali

Are there any anecdotes that I didn't or --

Bob Ellsworth

Oh, one other thing. I was seated right in front of Don and Joyce Rumsfeld.

Timothy Naftali

Oh?

Bob Ellsworth

And Clinton, you remember, at the Nixon funeral said, "History should only judge Nixon on the basis of his whole record, not just one part of it." And I turned around to the Rumsfelds and we all three just burst out laughing. And Joyce said, "He would say that, wouldn't he?" Okay.

Timothy Naftali

Have we missed -- have Paul or I missed an anecdote?

Bob Ellsworth

I had a list of them before you came and I think we've covered them all.

Timothy Naftali

Well, Ambassador Ellsworth, thank you very much for your time.

Bob Ellsworth

Thank you.

Timothy Naftali

You've been very patient.