

**Timothy Naftali**

Hi, I'm Tim Naftali. I'm Director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California. It's April 25, 2008, and I have the honor and privilege to be interviewing Walter Hickel for the Richard Nixon Oral History Program here in Anchorage, Alaska. Governor Hickel, thank you for doing this with us.

**Walter Hickel**

I'm glad to be here. I'm glad to help, and all that history you were talking about seems like it was yesterday, but I have a good memory of those things that happened.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, Governor Hickel, let's go back to Kansas, and tell us a little bit about how you learned, how you learned to --

**Walter Hickel**

Well, I was born dyslexic. I couldn't read, and this is when I went to a little school in Kansas. It was taught by two sisters, and it was 1925, six and seven, and they didn't know what dyslexia was in those days. They couldn't figure it out. So those two sisters, Sister Flavian and Sister Seraphine read to me for one hour a day for four years. That was my education, and the textbook they used was the Old Testament, and the Old Testament, you know, gets right to the point. It doesn't say maybe this, maybe that, and that changed my whole way of life because that's why my writing and my talks and everything get right to the point. It doesn't say, well, maybe this or maybe that, and it really helped my life, that four years of one hour a day of them reading the Old Testament, because the Old Testament gets right to the point.

**Timothy Naftali**

You are and were a scrappy guy.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

You won a boxing, a couple of boxing tournaments. Tell us about your most famous bout.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, the little town of Clafin had a little newspaper called the Clafin Clarion, came out once a week, and I read in there where they had, they were going to have a boxing tournament in Salina. That was about 70 miles away, and at that time, nearly 70 years ago, that was a long way from home. So I told

my mother, she says, "Well, yeah, okay," and I got a friend of mine that had a Model A Ford, and I went down to the high school and borrowed a pair of basketball shorts and a pair of tennis shoes, and I went to Salina, Kansas, 70 miles away, and if you won that tournament that took you to Hobbs, New Mexico, and if you won that it took you to California. I said, "Mom, I'm going to go." She didn't say we can't do that or anything like that. There's nine children in the family, I was the oldest boy and two older sisters. And I went down to Salina, Kansas and that was a big town for me, you know, our little town was only about three or 400 people, and I won the state championship, four fights, and from there, if you won that, you went to Hobbs, New Mexico. And there was an old fellow there that dragged me around and he says, "I'll take you down to Hobbs." And if you won the Hobbs, New Mexico thing you went to California, fight the California champion in 1940. Well, I won the Hobbs tournaments, three fights, and then I went to California, and I fought the California state champion. And that one, it was four rounds instead of three, amateurs were only three. And he broke my nose the first round, and I wanted to quit, Billy McClain [phonetic sp]. He says, "No Wally, stay in there. If you ever hit him with your right, you'll kill him." "I can't breathe, I can't breathe." Anyhow, I stayed in there and the fourth round, if it hadn't been a fourth rounder, I would have lost it. I kept leaning way back so he couldn't hit my nose, and I looked up underneath, and I saw it when he raised his elbows like this, you know, to hit me, I could beat him. And so I saw him raise his elbows a little bit, I came right underneath there, hit him so hard it raised him clear off the floor, and he collapsed right at my feet, and I was the California Champion. So the point I'm making, ideas -- don't look down the road to find out what the trouble is. Focus at the moment and clean it up.

### Timothy Naftali

What did you do during the World War II?

### Walter Hickel

I was up here -- that was 1941. I came up here in October 1940. I wanted to get to Australia I have to tell that story, and so I went down to the steamship company, and I told them my story. I was just a kid, and this guy was old. He looked like my father. He took a liking to me. I was just a kid with no money. I said I wanted to go to Australia. He said, "Fine, let's see your passport." I never heard of a passport. I says, "I don't have a passport, but I'll buy one." He said, "No, young man. You don't buy them, you apply for them." "Well," I said, "where can I go without a passport and visa and everything?" I wanted to go to Australia. He named Guam, Philippine Islands, Virgin Islands, Panama Canal, Hawaiian Islands. The last place he mentioned was Alaska. I had never thought about that. And I says, "How far up in Alaska can I go?" He said, "If you came in here a couple weeks ago, I could've taken you to Nome." I had never heard of Nome. He said, "We can take you to Seward." I said, "I'll go to Seward," and he said -- I didn't have any money. He says, "Find your way to Seattle, and I'll get you on that boat, and we need about \$40, \$50, and we'll give you two meals a day." And they put me down in the engine room in a hammock, and they had a porthole about that big, and I hung in that hammock, and I got my meals. And then we were starting to come across the Gulf, and I saw those mountains. I was trying to get my head out of that hole, and a lady saw me up there. There must've been two or three hundred people on that boat, and I was down in that engine room, and she yelled, she said, "Young man, I'll get you up here. You've got to come up here." And it was coming into Cordova, and I got up there on the deck, so and it's the first of November, 1940, and I saw those mountains there and, boy, that's when I made a deal I kept all my life, and he kept his. I said, "You take care of me, and I'll take care of you." He's kept his word, and I've kept mine.

**Timothy Naftali**

Wow, so you were here during World War II?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, I was -- no, I got here, and then -- I got here in, yeah, the end of '40 and then in '41, early part of that, I wanted to go back home. I got married here, and I wanted -- my wife had never been to the United States or anything like that, and so I said, "Let's go." So in August 1940, we took off for Kansas, and that was a long trip, and we just got back in Kansas when World War - Pearl Harbor happened, and I couldn't get back. There was no way I could get to Alaska, and so I got a job with -- I'd been working with the Department of Interior down at the railroad, and that was, it looked like an important thing to Kansas, you know. And so I went to work for Beechcraft Aircraft as an inspector, aircraft inspector, and so I got married in up here, and then my wife got sick in 1941 or '42, yeah, it was, and I'm the kind of guy that never had money or anything, so I heard of Mayo Clinic, I'm going to take her to Mayo Clinic, I'm going to get this woman saved. Well, I got her to Mayo Clinic. Everybody helped me out, and she died in six weeks. And right before she died, I'm sitting by her bed watching her, I'm talking to her, and about an hour before she died, she's talking about, she's raised up here, about the Strutts [phonetic sp] girls, and there's four of them, and I knew Mr. Strutts, he worked down at the railroad where I did. And she made a statement about an hour before she died, just talking. I'm sitting there listening to her and she's talking about the Strutts girls, and then she said that Erma Lee [phonetic sp] is such a nice girl, and then she died. I couldn't get her back up here. I buried her in Kansas, and six years later I brought her back up. And I went into a coma kind of, because I was just young. And I heard her what she said right before she died, that Erma Lee is such a nice girl and I broke out of that coma, jumped out of bed like this and I said, "I'm going to go back to Alaska." I had a little baby, and so I got back up to Alaska, and they put me in the military out here as an aircraft inspector because I'd been at Boeing with, not Boeing, but in Kansas --

**Timothy Naftali**

Beechcraft.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, that's right, Beechcraft. And anyhow, I was at the base, and I just took that thing. I said, this young fellow I met there, I says, "Do you know the Strutts family?" He says, "Yes," he said, "I think the last one died or something like that." I said, "Well, that's not true." So I'm over at Kashim Club eating, and I saw a young girl sitting over there. I walked over there, didn't -- I said, "Are you a Strutts girl?" Her eyes got bright as heck and she says, "Yes, my name's Erma Lee. You married Denise." And that was all, she didn't know, and she's my wife today. So I work on ideas and things like that, just things happen and so, and that's how I got to Washington. That's how I saw -- I knew every President since Franklin Roosevelt. I mean, since Franklin Roosevelt, except Kennedy, I didn't meet him.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you meet -- you met Truman?

**Walter Hickel**

Yes.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about meeting Harry Truman.

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, Harry Truman, I'll never forget that. I went to see him in 1952. And I went to Washington because it was going to give us a statehood bill that gave us nothing, you know, nothing. Three million acres of land, and they're just going to sign it. I told the President, you know, talked to him a bit. He says, "Young man," he said like this really simple, "They're not going to listen to you," and then he said, "Hell, they don't listen to anybody around here." And so then I went to see Eisenhower two years later, and I got in to see him, and I took some people with me. And the statehood bill had passed the House and gave us three million acres of land. He was going to sign it, the President, and I told him why he couldn't do it. I didn't just say, "Mr. President, please." I just told him why he couldn't do it. And a short while later, I got up to leave, and he says, I'm trying to think the exact words he said now, but I'll think about that, Malcolm.

**Malcolm Roberts**

"Well, young man -- "

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, yeah, I'm talking to the President of the United States in the White House. He says, "Well, young man, at least I'm glad you think I'm an American." But we won, that's how we got the statehood bill. And he asked me how much land did I think I needed, and I didn't know how much we had. I blurted out, "A 100 million acres," and they were going to give us three million, and the bill had already passed the House. And so I fought that battle, and I told them why we couldn't make it on three million acres, and that's how we ended up getting 103 million acres. I said, "Don't kill the bill. We want statehood, but we need more land." And the President of the United States, he finally gave us the land. So the point I'm making, ideas are more powerful than money. I could have been a big, rich man up here, and I couldn't have gotten that through if I thought it was for my own benefit. But I was just a kid. I told him to two and two is four, and that's how it went, and that's why when even Nixon took me to Washington, I didn't want to go. I kept it short. I'd say what I wanted to say and I wouldn't say, "Well, I think Mr. President," or anything like that. I would just say, "This is the way it's going to be."

**Timothy Naftali**

How did you meet Richard Nixon?

**Walter Hickel**

I met Nixon when he was -- I met him -- I'm just trying to think now. In 1952, I went to Washington to see -- in '54, I went to see Eisenhower, and he was the Vice President. And I told Eisenhower this

story, why we couldn't, and Nixon saw that, boy, that young guy believes. And then he ran for President in 19 --

**Timothy Naftali**

'60.

**Walter Hickel**

'60, yeah, and I got, I told him why we had to get certain things done and stuff like that, and I'd just get to see him, and he listened. And then when he asked me to become Secretary of the Interior, I'm trying to think of something before that.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Well, one of the fun things was you were a Republican National Committeeman, and the party threw you out of the convention in '64 because you wouldn't go with Goldwater. You wanted Nixon.

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right, and I was -- we changed the law here because we didn't have any votes to elect our National Committeemen by popular vote. And I should have ran as an independent, but I ran as a Republican, and I got elected, and I wasn't just a National Committeeman like Markisaw, Kansas [phonetic sp]. I went right to the top, and that's how I met Nixon. He liked me. He listened. He listened.

**Timothy Naftali**

And did you choose the Republican Party because you came from Kansas?

**Walter Hickel**

No, I am not a Democrat. I wasn't a Republican. I was an Alaskan. I told everybody that, but there was no political party, and so the National Committee, I was a Republican, and then I could never get back in again after that. I tried to run for the office of Governor in '63, and I ran as a Republican and couldn't make it. So in 19, what year was that --

**Malcolm Roberts**

'90.

**Walter Hickel**

1990, I was in Japan, and I got a call from a guy here, and he says, "Wally, come home." He says, "You could file for office and run for governor." And he said, "The law says that if a political party has been accepted by the people, they can change who they run for governor or lieutenant governor, but they have to do it before the primary." The deadline was Friday night at 5:00, and I got here at 4:00 Thursday, went down to the courthouse, and they had all the papers lined up. Even the court

[unintelligible] was there to sign this, and that's why I ran as an Independence [Party candidate]. And it was the Independence, not independent, Independence party that agreed their governor was going to resign and I could take their place, and I signed that, and that's why I ran as an Independence. I'm the only elected governor in the history of America that was an Independence Party, and their constitution says that -- their main part of the Constitution says that we secede from the union. But I won the election, five weeks, five weeks time, I beat them all.

**Timothy Naftali**

Why didn't you run as a Republican?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, there was no opening there. There were Republicans running and Democrats running and independents running, but no one ran as an Independence, and so they couldn't stop me.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Tell Tim who was your first call after you were elected that year.

**Walter Hickel**

Nixon, I think it was, yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

President Nixon.

**Walter Hickel**

President Nixon called me. He said, "Wally, we've been following that election since the day you started, and you came in first."

**Timothy Naftali**

[inaudible] and its 1990 that he called.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, he called, that's right.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, let's go back to 1968. Let's go back to '68 when --

**Male Speaker**

Can you hold on a second? Straighten his tie real quick.

**Walter Hickel**

Pardon?

**Timothy Naftali**

They're just going to --

**Walter Hickel**

You know, the amazing thing, if you say what's in your heart and not just what's in your mind, it's amazing how it affects people, and I always said things that my little guy would tell me to say. And I told you, sort of a little man, didn't I?

**Timothy Naftali**

No -- well, you did, but tell us the story of the little man.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, the little man -- I always call him the little man -- and the New York paper, the "New York Times," I have it at home. On the front page, it would be on the front page, there's a picture of me with a little guy sitting on my shoulder. They told this story and half of the front page of the "New York Times" told the story about me and my little guy, and if I could have been a billionaire from Chicago I couldn't have got that done.

**Timothy Naftali**

In 1968, Richard Nixon, former Vice President, is running, and you were chosen to be one of his surrogates.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a little bit about campaigning in 1968 for Richard Nixon.

**Walter Hickel**

I campaigned for Nixon because Nixon really was a different kind of guy than people thought. Nixon had some strong ideas, and they were pretty good. And he always liked my explaining about the owner state in Alaska. He'd always tell me, "Hey, tell me about the owner state again." Even before I was back

there, and after I got back there, and in the Cabinet, he'd always listened to what I had to say, and I'd say it in nothing flat, you know. And so we changed the world when they were going to make a state with 43 acres of land, nothing, you know, like that, and I changed all that. We got the -- how much do they need? I said 100 million, and we got that, and now Alaska is the only place on earth that's owned in common that has democracy. Russia's owned in common. China's owned in common. I'll be in China in about ten days. Africa's in common, you know, and the oceans are in common. Space is in common. But the United States and Central Europe, and I've taken it to London, I've taken it all over the South America, to everybody, this idea of what I have for the common of the world. And it is now, it's really getting its way, even -- and I took it to the U.N. twice, and Boutros Boutros-Ghali at the U.N. said, "This is the direction the U.N. has to go." Countries like problems, not political ties, and the United States and Central Europe does everything by politics and economics, and it doesn't work in China. It doesn't work in Russia. It doesn't work in Alaska. And I took it to every President until we got the right kind of a statehood bill. We've got a good bill, very unique spot, we're owned in common, and the world, especially the United States and Central Europe, don't understand the commons. They think it's communistic, but the commons -- 84 percent of the world's owned in common. And so the economic interests of the United States and Central Europe, they run it with economics wherever they go, and they call Russia the Evil Empire. Reagan started that, and I knew Reagan, he's a good guy. I said, "They're not an Evil Empire. Go over there. It's the biggest country in the world. They're friendly, they're understanding." The reason he calls it the Evil Empire because the money people here in the United States can't own the stuff in Russia. They can't own it up here. There would have been no Prudhoe Bay if I hadn't been governor in '68, and I says, I took them up to Prudhoe Bay, ARCO, the others pulled out, and they told me why they weren't going to drill. They won't drill because they don't own it, and I says, "Harry, drill or I will." And he says, "Governor, you will?" I said, "You're goddamned right. It's our land and our oil." And no one teaches that in the United States. They do in Russia. They do in China. But the United States don't teach the commons. They think everything is economic.

### Timothy Naftali

In '68, where did you travel for President Nixon? Do you remember?

### Walter Hickel

All over the country, wherever he asked me to go, I just went and talked. And see, Nixon was really a little different kind of a guy. He liked my thoughts, and he always supported ideas like that. But the Republican Party, in order for him to get that nomination, see, he had to be like them, you know, and he took me back as secretary, and I turned that down. He called me right after he got elected, and I said, "No, I can't. I've got to make a living." Nobody ever paid my way to Washington or anything. I just took what little money I had and did all that, and he said, "If you don't come back Wally, you won't get that oil line." So I went back, and that's how we got the oil line.

### Timothy Naftali

You mean the pipeline?

### Walter Hickel

Pipeline.

**Timothy Naftali**

He told you if you didn't come to Washington to be secretary --

**Walter Hickel**

We wouldn't get the oil line because who would fight as hard as I could or make it as simple? That's the reason. I'd been through all that and it's just like the gas line. I'm writing op-ed pieces and everything like that and telling them, and we should have -- you see, the Arctic is not rich in natural resources like the United States. They have wheat, corn, cotton and all that stuff above the ground. The Arctic is the richest spot on earth -- not just Alaska, I'm talking about the whole Arctic Ocean -- in oil and gas and diamonds and coal and all that stuff, under the ground. But they're all owned in common, and that's why they don't ever develop this thing, and that's why they call Russia the Evil Empire. And I've taken that to Presidents, and the leaders of Russia really understand me on that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Governor, tell us a little bit about your confirmation hearings in 1969.

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, that went on for I don't know how long. It was about a month, wasn't it? Yeah, and they tried to tie me into everything, and that didn't bother me a bit. I just whipped them. It was a tough deal. I'd go home and just be wringing wet, and they'd bring all the opposition in and, you know, take me down and put me down and -- but if you stay, if you say what's in your heart and two and two is four, and those politicians today that try to keep everybody, that two and two is five, minus one is three and a half, plus one's four and a half, plus one half is five. Two and two is four, you see my point? You keep it that way, and you win. I learned that as a kid when I couldn't, I couldn't read or anything. I learned to say those simple things, and those sisters taught me that, you know, the Ten Commandments. They're simple and simplicity and belief. If you talk and read a man's face right, your face reflects your heart. The eyes reflect your mind, and I read people. The eye reflects the mind. The face reflects -- I came up with that. And if you say it clear, your face reflects your heart and your eyes reflect your mind, and I've taken that to every President since Franklin Roosevelt, except Kennedy, and there's no problem.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a bit about -- did you ever, during that 30 day period, just think, "Oh, my God, I don't need this. I'm going to go back to Alaska. I've had it."

**Walter Hickel**

No, I don't give up. I believe and, you know, you look at history. George Washington set up a great country, and then Lincoln came along and he says, "This won't work, slavery," and he got shot. And then Teddy Roosevelt came along, and he had a great thought, Teddy Roosevelt. He died in 1919. In 1920, they passed I'd like to say the most Communist act in the world, the Mineral Leasing Act. All the energy resources now in government hands shall forever stay in government's hands. Does that sound

like Kansas? Boy, and I really supported that because the resources up here, and that's why we own them, and we're the only country in the world quite like this and so I, okay --

**Timothy Naftali**

We're just going to change the [unintelligible] I move my hands a lot when I talk, but so do you Governor, so we're even.

**Walter Hickel**

I understand that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Thank you, we have 30 minutes on each tape?

**Male Speaker**

We've got at least 40 on each tape.

**Walter Hickel**

[inaudible] any way you want to.

**Male Speaker**

We've got twelve minutes left.

**Walter Hickel**

Malcolm can help you.

**Timothy Naftali**

Great, thank you. Governor, you are confirmed, and then there's the problem in Santa Barbara, off the coast. What do you remember of the oil spill off of Santa Barbara?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, we had to get the government involved in that. My God, that was, I didn't realize how massive an oil spill that was until I went out there and took a look. My God, that was a disaster, but they were trying to cover it up, cover it up, cover it up. I said, "Face it, we're going to clean this thing up," and it was a battle, even with the White House.

**Timothy Naftali**

With the White House? Tell us about that.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, they didn't want to get, they didn't want to make it look like too big an event, you know, and I said, "Just tell the truth about that. That's the biggest disaster I've ever seen happen by the private sector." And that oil was just -- I'll never forget when I went out and flew over that thing, and that oil was all over that place. They took me out in a plane. I went down from Washington and went out down there and, hey, and if you get, if you speak to reality and don't just say, "Well, it's not too bad. It's not too bad." Oh boy, that was a disaster.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who were you talking to at the White House? Was it John Ehrlichman or John Whitaker?

**Walter Hickel**

I generally talked to whoever wanted to listen, but the President always wanted to listen. He always wanted to know what Wally thought, very different kind of a thing. Ehrlichman was kind of a chief of staff guy, and I understood him, but I didn't get along with him very well, you know. They thought I was too visible.

**Timothy Naftali**

But Ehrlichman, at least, shared your interest in the environment, didn't he?

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, yes, he did, that's exactly right, and they became good friends, even when I left. But no matter -- at that level in the United States, the economic interests have a big problem. They have a big influence, and I listen to them, but they didn't tell me what I was going to do, and that was a different thing.

**Timothy Naftali**

So the White House, at the time of the Santa Barbara spill, wanted you to downplay?

**Walter Hickel**

Downplay a little bit, and so I flew out there and got a plane and went over there, and they told me they just had a little spill. Oh my God, and I called the White House right after that. I said, "This is a disaster." I said, "You've got to face it. It's a disaster," and it was a disaster. And the people in Santa Barbara, when I went up to see them, they were really angry that the United States wasn't really moving that fast.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, then the Federal Government changed the rules, didn't it offshore, the leases and --

**Walter Hickel**

Yes, that's exactly right, and they used to just write things as the corporate structures wanted them, and we wouldn't do that up here. And it was -- that Santa Barbara thing changed the whole image the United States on the environment. It changed a lot. Oh my God, they didn't think much about the environment, the farmers and stuff like that, but that brought it to the head, and I just -- well, I didn't keep it going. I'm just saying that's what we have to face.

**Timothy Naftali**

Did it change your thinking about the environment?

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, I've always had that kind of a thought. I lived in Alaska, and I saw the great exploitation here. I got here in 1940, coming out of Kansas. I couldn't believe. I'm a kid, but I'm a visionary. I couldn't believe the exploitation I saw here. I just couldn't believe it. You know, I'd go down and talk some place in the south 48 and tell them, yeah, there's nothing up there. It's just coal country, and they used to get me. They didn't have any idea the riches of our country.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about the origins of Earth Day.

**Walter Hickel**

I can remember, it originated about 19 -- I can't remember, 41, 42?

**Timothy Naftali**

[unintelligible] 1970, well, actually it's 1969.

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, '69, yeah, [inaudible]

**Timothy Naftali**

Gaylord Perry.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, I was probably secretary.

**Timothy Naftali**

Yeah, that's when you were secretary, and you wanted to make Earth Day a national holiday.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember anything of that?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, yes, I threw it out there, but there was no press or anything that grabbed the idea, and the leadership in Washington didn't quite grab that idea, but I saw it. Earth Day was a very -- and I think, Malcolm, you were with me on Earth Day.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Yeah, you sent out 1100 employees to get involved when the rest of the Cabinet was told by Agnew not to get involved.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, Agnew was the guy that got [unintelligible]

**Malcolm Roberts**

And you went ahead, you sent me to Cal Tech. We spread all over the country --

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right. I didn't, it didn't bother me. I knew the Vice President very well, and I knew the President, and if they had a different thought, I wasn't going to drop mine, you know.

**Timothy Naftali**

Why was Agnew against this? Do you know?

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, a lot of economic interests and all that stuff. You would have to be in the Cabinet. Like I said, I'm still the only guy in the history of America that served in the Cabinet didn't live in the United States. And the economic interests, they can handle the House and Senate, they're political. But the Cabinet's kind of independent, and that's why Nixon always supported me. He didn't [unintelligible]. He really supported me, and the Cabinet has to tell the facts. There's 11 Cabinet members, the President, and the Vice President, and I'll never forget the Cabinet meeting once, and Henry Kissinger was a very bright guy and highly influential, and I brought up Russia because we're close to Russia. And they were very good friends of mine at a Cabinet meeting, 11 Cabinet members, and I remember he cut me off one time, and he says, I was talking about, "Well, Mr. Secretary, that's a half a world away, Russia," and I didn't raise my voice. I just looked up and I says, "No, Henry, I can see it." That destroyed Henry Kissinger. He was a great adviser at the top level. If he didn't know anything except for the United States and Central Europe was, and he disappeared. I just looked at him and I says, "No, Henry, I can see it," and I can see it. I go to Nome and you can see it, Russia. It's not a half a world away. He's supposed to be so brilliant. He doesn't even know what a globe looks like.

**Timothy Naftali**

But he wouldn't let you go to Russia?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, I understood that. I know that, but I finally went on my own, you know, what the hell?

**Timothy Naftali**

But you wanted to go to Siberia, didn't you?

**Walter Hickel**

Yes, well I went, and I saw the president of Russia. It was in '72, I think, wasn't it?

**Malcolm Roberts**

Well, you saw Yeltsin in '92.

**Walter Hickel**

'92, yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Your first visit to Russia was '81.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right. Yeltsin, he loved my ideas. He didn't know the depth of them

[unintelligible]

and, but Russia now is a great friend of ours, and she wants to make a country like Alaska. They're owned in common. They can't make it like a state in the union or some other spot, but Russia is a big country, and its people are friendly as hell. I've been all through Russia, and it's not an Evil Empire.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about -- you did get to spend quite a bit of time with Jean Chretien of Canada.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, oh yeah, he was a great friend of mine. He -- see they're owned in common and he got to see me when I was talking [unintelligible] and asked me to come down. And Canada is owned in common. We're owned in common. The oceans are owned in common. Space is owned in common. But the academic world of the United States and Central Europe is all economics. That's all they talk about.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a little bit -- well, let's talk about a few of the other issues that you faced as Secretary of the Interior. Let's talk about Native Americans. What did you know about the Indian issue before you started?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, I always took that as the Indians knew the commons, they understood that. The country is for everybody, not just for one tribe.

**Timothy Naftali**

I was going to focus mainly on the issue of terminating -- the policy of the United States had been termination of tribes, and the Nixon administration actually changes that policy, although it happens while you were secretary. Do you --

**Walter Hickel**

I saw no reason why they couldn't have tribes.

**Timothy Naftali**

Termination of the reservation.

**Walter Hickel**

Yes.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember the Alcatraz, when Alcatraz was taken by Indians in 1969?

**Walter Hickel**

Yes, I remember that. See, the Indians were never listened to at a high level. They thought it was an obsolete thing, you know, a hundred years before and stuff like that. They weren't recognized, and all those groups of people like that should be listened to because the tribes weren't communism. They weren't anything. They took care of each other, you see my point, the tribes? And when the governments come in and try to destroy those tribes, they didn't have a solution to it. The real solution was the owner state like Alaska, and I knew the native people up here, and they're great people. They know how the Arctic works. They know how this thing works, and if you don't recognize that, you're going to have a real problem.

**Malcolm Roberts**

You need to talk about your role in helping President Nixon understand the native land claims.

**Timothy Naftali**

We're going to just change -- that'll be great. Let's just, they're just changing the tape, and then we'll --

**Walter Hickel**

The native land claims --

**Malcolm Roberts**

-- they have no legal claim. We bought it out right, et cetera, et cetera, and budget said, "They have no financial claim. You know, they were paid -- "

**Walter Hickel**

And I said it was a moral issue.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And then the President said, "Well, let's hear from Wally," and you said, "Mr. President, I agree that there's no financial or legal claim. It's a moral issue."

**Walter Hickel**

That's right [unintelligible]

**Malcolm Roberts**

And he says, "I'm going with Wally."

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And boy, he got behind it from there and we had it settled --

**Walter Hickel**

You see, what happened is economics. They don't ever take into consideration the individual thought, you see, and that's what I took to the President.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about that. Let's talk about the native claim issue in Alaska.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, the native land claim thing, they were trying to settle it with a few acres and stuff like that, and I told them, I said, "It's a moral issue. It is not a legal issue. There is no legal issue here." And so we finally got the native land claim. We got 103 billion acres.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Forty-four million acres and \$1 billion.

**Walter Hickel**

And \$1 billion, that's right, and the economic people, good friends of mine, they said, "We don't owe them anything." I says, "Jesus Christ, if you owned it, would you give it up?" And they look at me, you know, strong economic people, academic people, they didn't really understand why we were trying to give the native people up here this, and really, we finally got it all. We own Alaska.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about that Cabinet. Is it at a Cabinet meeting where the President said, where you said it's a moral issue to the President?

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, it's a moral issue, sure. They made a legal claim, but there is no legal claim up there. There's no economic claim. We don't owe anybody anything, and I said, "I agree, there's no moral issue." I mean, no legal issue, no legal issue. It's a moral issue. You can't take the land from those people that had it for

hundreds of years or thousands of years. They lived here, born here, but the United States will come together, and the one time they really had a problem was with England and settling, and England understood a little bit of that. I took this thing to England several times, but we changed the thinking of the academic community. They have to talk about the realism, not just what somebody thinks they should do.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us, please, about protecting the whale.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, the whale, you know, is a great fish, and I think they should be saved, not just to get the whale oil. You know, they said, well, they were going to kill the whales so they could get the whale oil for all this stuff. And I says, "Well," I said this, "What's going to happen when there's no whales left?" "Well, we'll have to find a replacement." I says, "Find the replacement now. I'm going to put those whales on the endangered species list." And I won that battle. I just said, "We're going to do it."

**Malcolm Roberts**

Who were you up against?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, most of the Cabinet, and I don't know the exact --

**Malcolm Roberts**

It was State Department, NASA, and Henry Kissinger.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, Kissinger, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

He was against it because of the Japanese? He didn't want to anger the Japanese?

**Walter Hickel**

Part of that deal, yeah, and all that, but they don't see the big picture. They see the short economic picture that they're going to capture that whale, and, boy, I tell you, that was a hell of a battle, but -- and I wasn't taught how to fight it. That little guy comes out and says, you know, and we won that battle.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember talking to President Nixon about the environment?

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, yes, he came a long way around. He liked my thoughts about it.

**Timothy Naftali**

But initially he wasn't that supportive of it?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, he was, no, it's because the power of the Cabinet were on the other side, you know, the guys sitting in there, the economic people. I was the only guy that really was an owner state kind of a guy. I understood it. They, the Cabinet in Kentucky or New York or California or Kansas, they all just talk economics. You see my point? It runs on that. When I talk about the ocean, the owner state, and the whales and stuff like that, no school taught it. And so that's why I started to put it in all the schools, and that's why, right now -- and I took it to the U.N. in 1994, didn't I? 199 --

**Malcolm Roberts**

First in '72, in Stockholm.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, Stockholm, I took it and the United Nations said, "This is the direction the United Nations has to go." Countries are like problems and not political ties, and the U.N. is doing that in Africa now. Africa is sitting down there by itself, and the U.N. is really trying to bring Africa together to keep from being so exploited, but see, it's so far away from what I call Western civilization. And I've been down to Cape Town three different times over ten years, and I spent a month there three different years over ten years, and, God, that's an unusual country. It's rich as hell, but its people are poorer than dirt. I mean, I have a son that spent 17 years there, and Africa, south of the equator -- north of the equator, Europe moved in there and cut those little countries up there -- but south of the equator, I went to Cape Town three different times, and I stood there at the end and it finally dawned on me, there's nothing here. Cape Town is as far south as San Francisco is north, and if you look at a map of San Francisco and took all the country out of there, Seattle, Canada, the United States, everything, that's South America. South America is all water, and so that's part of the reason for it, and the world doesn't teach reality. It always teaches what economics wants to teach.

**Timothy Naftali**

Governor, tell us about -- you were mentioning students in schools -- tell us about how the Department of the Interior tried to encourage and improve the teaching of the environment in schools. You started something called the SCOPE.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, that's right.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us what you recall of that because, of course, it leads into your famous [unintelligible]

**Walter Hickel**

I was trying to, Nixon supported me in many things I wanted to do, and I was trying to -- it's hard for one guy in the Cabinet. If I were President, it would be easier, or some kind of leader. I was just a kid out of Alaska, but I put SCOPE in there for them to understand the environment and the complexity of the thing. And I have, like I said, never in school, but I have 14 honorary college degrees from some of the great universities in the country, but they don't teach reality. They just teach what somebody tells them to teach.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a little bit about your reaction when the President called you to tell all the members of the Cabinet that the United States would be going into Cambodia.

**Walter Hickel**

I says, "There'll be a revolution." I couldn't believe it. I went home crying, and I -- were you there too?

**Malcolm Roberts**

Yes, I was there.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, I couldn't believe it. Why was he going into Cambodia? It had no reason that made any sense, and Lincoln saw a lot of that, and that's, and Lincoln was trying to get the world straightened out right, and, hell, they finally shot Lincoln. And Teddy Roosevelt, I told you that story. He saw it and --

**Timothy Naftali**

So what did you decide to do when the President tells you that he's about to tell the nation that we're going into Cambodia?

**Walter Hickel**

I said, "There could be a revolution." I said that. I said, "You're going to have a revolution here. This isn't going to work. Why are we going in there?" I raised all those points. Malcolm, you might remember.

**Malcolm Roberts**

I do. They were talking about all the weapons that they were going to find in caves underground --

**Walter Hickel**

And they didn't find anything. I said, they were going in, and they thought Cambodia was going to start a revolution against the world. They went in there. There was nothing there. They found -- I remember, I said, "I want you to tell me what you find," and they found some empty shells, bullet shells. I said, "They were probably hunting ducks," you know. But you see, what gets me is America's got to understand that the real world is owned by everybody, and they only look at the economic interests, especially from New York out to the Midwest. The Midwest sees it a little different. The West sees it a little bit different, but they don't, they're starting to teach the reality. It's been about 40 years since I took it on.

**Timothy Naftali**

Now, Governor, again, when you come home, you're crying, or you feel, you're very upset. When do you decide that you're going to write the President a letter to tell him he needs to talk to the students of this country so that we don't have a revolution?

**Walter Hickel**

I came home and I told my wife, and I don't remember if I told you or not.

**Malcolm Roberts**

You asked me and someone else to do a first draft, and you didn't use a word we wrote. You did your own.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, I wrote him a letter because I had sat there in meetings. They always have Henry Kissinger and all these, Volpe and all these guys sitting in there do another side, and I just finally said, "This isn't going to work," and I'd leave. Because they weren't -- he liked my thoughts, but he always made it look like he was listening to everybody.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Well, Governor, you asked for a meeting and they --

**Walter Hickel**

In the White House, yeah --

**Malcolm Roberts**

Deflecting you off and your sons from colleges all across the country, your six sons were calling, telling about the revolution going on out there.

**Walter Hickel**

It was chaos. At that time, we needed a guy like Teddy Roosevelt. Nixon is good, but we needed somebody saying, "Now this is enough." You see my point?

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about a young man named Mike Levitt.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, I'm trying to think. Mike Levitt -- Malcolm, help me on that a little bit. I know --

**Malcolm Roberts**

He was your White House fellow at that time, from UCLA.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And he and I were the ones who did that first draft of that letter.

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, that's right. Yeah, well, there was the young people and even the older academic people. When I'd go around to the colleges, they liked what I was talking about, but it takes a real top leader to change America's thinking. It took more than just -- well, when I wrote the book, "Who Owns America," it's the only national bestseller ever written in Alaska. That book is -- should now -- we've got to take that and, the "Crisis in the Commons," and get that to all the kids. I'm trying to get it all around the world, but those two books are not some idea I'm trying to sell them. It's reality. Have you ever read "Who Owns America"?

**Timothy Naftali**

I sure have. I read it before I met you.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

Governor, tell us about getting fired by President Nixon. How did that happen?

**Walter Hickel**

He just, I can't remember the exact thing but he just called me in and -- Malcolm, can you help me on that a little bit?

**Malcolm Roberts**

Remember, George Shultz called you for a budget meeting over in his office, in the executive office building, and as soon as you got there, he walked you over to the Oval Office.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, [unintelligible] Oval Office, and Nixon fired me.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And Nixon, as we understood him, Tim, he didn't really like confrontation. He started talking about decorating Christmas lights and --

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, that's right.

**Malcolm Roberts**

-- and the Rose Garden. Finally, he was --

**Walter Hickel**

He was so crazy. I finally said, "Mr. President, get to the point." That's right, that's right, that's right. I told him to get to the point, you know, I don't want to sit there and all that mucky bath. If you're going to fire me, fire me. Hell, I'm just going back to Alaska. And, you know, you go over the top and you win, and when I got back here, hey, half the world started supporting me, you know. It's a funny thing like that, and history even shows -- don't take this wrong. I'm going to tell a story. Jesus Christ come over to save the world, and they finally put him on a cross and killed him, you know, but his ideas kept going, you see my point? Because he believes in what he was doing and Moses was the same kind of a guy, you know. They believed, but they had no academic thing then. But the academic people are all controlled by money, and it's just a -- it started off wrong there, damn it. America was founded as a great country. They had homesteading. They had all that stuff. They were trying to help people and pretty soon in a hundred years they got all mixed up in this economic thing and then Franklin Roosevelt really tried to save it. He really tried, and he did a pretty good job getting people thinking, you know, a little bit. And Teddy Roosevelt's the same way.

**Timothy Naftali**

When you were Secretary of the Interior, you were not supportive of creating an Environmental Protection Agency. You wanted the Interior Department to be in charge of the environment. You lost that battle. Do you remember anything about that?

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, I lost the battle, but I said if you get someone in there that will look at the total picture, you can call it anything you like. But they didn't want me in there because I had an idea, and still have it today, and that's how we formed Alaska and stuff. And I had an idea of the commons and the oceans and all that stuff, and not just what somebody in Salt Lake City thought or Denver or -- that was all economics.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about individuals and personalities. Tell us what you remember of Spiro Agnew. What do you remember of the Vice President?

**Walter Hickel**

He was completely against the system we have today. Spiro was a great guy, but he wasn't free. And the thing that I learned, being in the Cabinet, that when they get right to the top that they are no longer free, and by free I mean free to say what they totally believe. And they were good guys, but they wouldn't -- and they'd come and see me because I think they wished they could say it like I said it. I think that, and I'd go talk to them, and he always listened.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about Romney. What do you remember of Governor Romney?

**Walter Hickel**

Romney was a good man. He was a believer. He was, he had, not that it makes any difference, but he had sort of a religious belief, and he could tell if somebody was telling what they really thought. And Romney was, Romney would have made a pretty good President, but he couldn't have got elected I don't think.

**Timothy Naftali**

What do you remember of Volpe?

**Walter Hickel**

Volpe, I remember him pretty well. He was a pretty good supporter of me in a lot of things, but they weren't going to lead. And even the Cabinet, you know, I'd speak out and Nixon, he'd listen.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us a little bit about what it was like in a Cabinet meeting with the President.

**Walter Hickel**

Well --

**Timothy Naftali**

Did he have all of you talk, or did he just basically do the talking?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, it depends on -- he gave everybody a chance. I would get right to the point. Romney had a tendency to pretty much get to the point. Agnew always said -- Agnew was as -- I don't know what he believed in, but he didn't lead the American thought. The reality of a country -- America was founded as a great country. Like I said, Washington started it. Lincoln really tried to save it, got shot. Teddy Roosevelt really fought right to the death, and the Mineral Leasing Act changed a lot of things, but it took hundreds of years. And so I got there, when I put Alaska together, and fought that battle, it took me, I started in '52. When did it finally become a state? '69?

**Malcolm Roberts**

In '59, we became a state.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, but I took that and got America to think about the reality of the Arctic, you know.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Tell him the rest about the Cabinet meeting. You sat right opposite the President, didn't you, or one over?

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And you often have described that.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, well those meetings were good, but I didn't feel like they got to the point. They wouldn't get to the point, you know, and I'd talk to the President about that, and he'd listen.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let's talk about your trip to Micronesia. Do you remember that? You went a long way.

**Walter Hickel**

Did you go with me?

**Malcolm Roberts**

No, that was Edgar Kaiser who went with you.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, we went to Micronesia --

**Malcolm Roberts**

You advocated that they should have their own democratic elections and run themselves.

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, yeah, yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And that pissed off Kissinger.

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, yes, that's right. See, they should have been a unit of themselves, and Kissinger and those guys didn't want that, they didn't want it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, I think they were interested in military bases there.

**Malcolm Roberts**

That's exactly right.

**Timothy Naftali**

That's what they were -- they wanted to retain military bases in Micronesia. You went very far, and I think they had to get you a car out there, and a man named Ron Walker --

**Walter Hickel**

Ron Walker --

**Timothy Naftali**

-- was your advance man for that.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, I forgot about that. I did so many things as secretary.

**Timothy Naftali**

Let me ask you about the pipeline, because the pipeline, the Alaska pipeline was important to you. How did you weigh, I mean, the pros and cons of the pipeline, because it did have an environmental impact, didn't it?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, the oil line -- I finally said, when I took him, "Drill or I will." And the oil line, it was a success, but it was -- we should have built a bigger pipeline, and we should have done a lot of things, but I won the battle of getting a pipeline, and that didn't solve all the problems.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Governor, tell about that meeting you had in your office as secretary with the three majors, the heads of the three major companies.

**Walter Hickel**

I can't remember it all.

**Malcolm Roberts**

That's where Exxon says, "There's not going to be a pipeline."

**Walter Hickel**

Oh, yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Because [unintelligible] "that's not in our best interests."

**Walter Hickel**

[inaudible] Exxon told me why they weren't going to build the pipeline, and I get up, that's when I say, "Mike",--

**Malcolm Roberts**

That's right, Mike Wallace.

**Walter Hickel**

"Mike," Mike Wallace, I says, "Mike, god damn it, you come back and sit in that chair." And he turned around, and he came back and sat down and said, "I'm not going to do this. I want a man sitting in that chair who I can deal with," you know. It was Exxon, and that's when we got somebody to finally come in and we got the pipeline going. They weren't going to build a pipeline. You know why they weren't going to build it? Because they couldn't own the oil, they couldn't own the gas. I made them drill when I was Governor the first time, and then we drilled, but -- and even today yet they're still fighting that battle. And I've got a plan, and I've talked about it, and I've taken it to top level, international and everything, and you see -- I told you Alaska's resources are under the ground, and the world doesn't understand that I can see Russia, I told that story. And they don't understand this thing, but they can't own the resources up here, and I know how to make it work that you can do it.

**Timothy Naftali**

You have. Let me ask you about, you took a stand against the supersonic transport, the SST.

**Walter Hickel**

Supersonic transport?

**Timothy Naftali**

Yeah, you, yes, you thought it was -- you had to look at the environmental implications of the SST. It was a very expensive idea, and President Nixon supported it, and you were against it. Do you remember that issue at all?

**Walter Hickel**

I'm trying to get that. Malcolm, do you remember --

**Malcolm Roberts**

It's in "Who Owns America," that whole battle, Governor. I don't remember the details, but I remember you clashed with the White House on it.

**Walter Hickel**

I fought the White House on a lot of things that, what I call the public-owned, and a lot of it is owned by nobody and nobody runs it. The ocean's a perfect example. The Santa Barbara oil spill is a perfect example. The United States didn't have the foggiest idea what to do, and they think too narrow. There's nothing wrong with billionaires. There's nothing wrong with millionaires, but they think the whole world is just how we make our money. And I've taken it to the U.N. and said, "We have to think about how do we make a life? How do you build this thing?"

**Timothy Naftali**

Governor, you left Washington at the end of 1970. You missed Watergate completely. When Watergate happened, what did you think? Were you surprised?

**Walter Hickel**

I think it was bound to happen. It was bound to happen. You can't keep doing things like that with a democracy, if you really get to the bottom of it.

**Timothy Naftali**

Why did you think Watergate was bound to happen?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, because they weren't telling the real truth about what was happening to America.

**Timothy Naftali**

Who wasn't?

**Walter Hickel**

The people weren't.

**Timothy Naftali**

The White House?

**Walter Hickel**

I mean, the White House. The White House, the Cabinet, and the political part of the White House.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember working with Haldeman?

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

What was he like?

**Walter Hickel**

Well, he was owned by the other interests. Haldeman was a pretty nice guy and so was Ehrlichman, but they -- that's a different breed of cat, you know? It's just, you could take a group of women that understand the family and understand those things, how you build a family, and they'd give you better thoughts than Haldeman and Ehrlichman because they were just so --

**Malcolm Roberts**

The women, just as we were leaving Washington, D.C., Erma Lee said, "The White House is going to eat itself alive."

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right.

**Malcolm Roberts**

She predicted Watergate.

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right. You see, there was no concern for reality. No one had a heart for the poor and the poor citizens. And the poor aren't poor, they just don't have the opportunities or the help from the top and --

**Timothy Naftali**

Governor, tell us about Hirohito's visit.

**Walter Hickel**

I can't remember exactly.

**Malcolm Roberts**

The Emperor, when the Emperor of Japan came through.

**Walter Hickel**

He came out to my house.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Well, yeah, it was just about a year after you'd been fired, and the White House called and said, "Can we do a reception in your home for the President and Mrs. Nixon and all the top Cabinet [unintelligible]?"

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, and the Japanese, I've always been friendly to them. I have -- maybe you know this. I have the highest award Japan can give, the Grand Cordon of the Sacred Treasure. And I'm the only guy to receive that that wasn't at least 70 years old, and because I took Japan not as a foreign nation but as a need of resources, and that's how I got the gas, the natural gas to them way back in the 60s. And I'd go over and see them and always met with them at the top level. The Japanese understand community, you know, and that's why I'm going to China now, because China wants to -- I'll go into that story later.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us about talking to Richard Nixon after you were fired. You spoke to him when you became governor for the second time. Did you keep up with him at all?

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, he always was -- in fact, when I had the Emperor here, he flew up here and they were out at my house together. We had Nixon and all those guys and --

**Malcolm Roberts**

In fact, he had asked you to walk out to the plane on the tarmac with him to greet the emperor.

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, that's after I was fired. He knew that Japan and I were good friends, not political or otherwise, but just ideas, and that was an amazing thing. Kissinger was out there too.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Oh yeah, but the governor, you never lost your friendship with Nixon. That's one of the thing I always admired about both of you.

**Walter Hickel**

No, I -- when I disagree with somebody -- strong, medium, or violently -- it doesn't mean I don't like them. Their ideas don't quite fit, and all I do is I keep my ideas going the same way with President Truman as I do with a President today, you know.

**Timothy Naftali**

But you're a student of character and personality. As you said, you look into someone's eyes. How did Nixon's personality differ from, let's say Eisenhower's personality or Truman's?

**Walter Hickel**

Nixon really wanted to be a human to people. He really -- but he didn't -- his advisers were wrong and advisers are not always picked by the President. They're picked by special interests that send them in there, and of course, when I was governor and secretary, I appointed my own.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Nixon chose his own advisers.

**Walter Hickel**

Pretty much, pretty much, but Nixon, he talked to me and listened to me, and he --

**Timothy Naftali**

Did you find him awkward sometimes?

**Walter Hickel**

Maybe a little bit. He didn't know exactly what direction he went, but when you get his advisers close to him, they were all against the normal thing even you would think about, you know, they influenced him a lot. And I knew him when he was in Washington, I knew him afterwards, and I don't know how to explain it. It's like a family. They have ten kids. They like all the kids, but the kids are different. But they try to keep them together, and that's all I ever did with whoever was at the White House. I wasn't, I didn't tell them they were a bunch of bastards. I just gave them my thoughts and my ideas, and it works. And when I saw the President, I didn't walk in there, "Oh my God, I'm going to see the President." I didn't feel that way. I just --

**Timothy Naftali**

Were you angry when you were fired or did you expect it?

**Walter Hickel**

It didn't make me a damn bit of difference. Hell, I'm just going home.

**Timothy Naftali**

When the stories came out and Jack Anderson, and I guess it was Jack Anderson's columns, about your interior designer and changing your office and that, did you feel that the White House was leaking to get rid of you?

**Walter Hickel**

I don't remember.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Wasn't that early on?

**Timothy Naftali**

That was early on, yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

I wasn't there yet.

**Walter Hickel**

What did I do? What was I doing?

**Malcolm Roberts**

You remodeled the workout room and the [unintelligible] apartment.

**Timothy Naftali**

You got a sauna. Oh, sorry.

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right, I worked out every day. I remember Nixon in the Cabinet, in a Cabinet meeting he says, "Wally takes an hour and a half to work out every day, and if you want to see him at midnight, you can see him." But he knew I was working out, you know, I do that. I wasn't going to quit working out just because I was a Cabinet officer. If I was going to walk around in my shorts and down Main Street when I wasn't a Cabinet officer, I was going to do it when I was a Cabinet officer. You know, I didn't change, and that's -- I learned that from my family, you know? I don't know how to explain this, but I never pretend to be something I'm not. I don't. I'm not trying to say I am an academic genius, because I never even went to school. But I'll tell you, God gave me things beyond a lot of people, and that's to see the clarity of the future. I think that way.

**Timothy Naftali**

So you weren't going to change, even as a Cabinet secretary, you were Wally Hickel, and you were Wally Hickel, and that was that? Love it or leave it.

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right, and Nixon knew that. He knew that, and I knew many Presidents. And it's an odd thing, but I was a kid in Kansas, I mean Alaska, and I'd go back there. I could see the President because I wasn't going to say, "Mr. President, I think, Mr. President, I think." I'd tell him, "This is the end result," you know, and especially the statehood thing. Oh my God, I fought that battle.

**Timothy Naftali**

Tell us what it was like to work with George Shultz. Do you remember working with George?

**Walter Hickel**

George Shultz was a pretty good guy to work with, and I can't remember -- wasn't he missing at a meeting once or something? I can't remember, but George Shultz was a pretty good in-depth thinker about the total, pretty good. He didn't quite speak like I did, but George Shultz -- and he wouldn't say real short sentences in front of the President, you know. He kind of -- you'd have to sit in that Cabinet to see the guy that said two and two is four and the one that said two and two is five, you know. They'd try to be sure they didn't upset the President.

**Timothy Naftali**

When you were at the Department of the Interior back in '69 and '70, was ANWR, was that an issue then? Drilling in the northern part of Alaska?

**Walter Hickel**

Yes, I'm trying to think of -- I can't remember. Malcolm, what -- I became Secretary of the Interior after I was governor.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Well, it really came up when the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, ANILCA, passed in 1980, and they had a special provision on there for the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. That's when the whole ANWR thing began to be studied, and they reserved the right for Congress to decide whether to open it or not. Okay, we fought the ANILCA bill --

**Walter Hickel**

That's right.

**Malcolm Roberts**

-- because it was too extreme from our viewpoint. And then we've inherited this, you know, this many, many year, decade, battle.

**Timothy Naftali**

But when you were governor -- when Governor Hickel came back for the second time, the first Bush administration was pushing ANWR, wasn't it?

**Malcolm Roberts**

Yes, but not like the current President. The current President has done more in terms of, you know, political capital to try to get America to understand ANWR. George Bush, Sr. was for it, but not -- and so was Reagan, but not really --

**Walter Hickel**

George Bush, Sr. was a lot broader thinking, and then his, -- I'm trying to think, George Bush, Sr. -- and this present Bush doesn't quite grab it. He doesn't quite -- his --

**Malcolm Roberts**

You should tell Tim about your letter to the current President Bush after the invasion of Iraq.

**Walter Hickel**

I don't remember that.

**Malcolm Roberts**

You said, "Mr. President, next time skip the war and go right to the Marshall Plan."

**Walter Hickel**

That's exactly right.

**Malcolm Roberts**

And then he was in the White House getting an honor two weeks later, and the President came over and said, "Wally, that was a great letter."

**Walter Hickel**

That's right, that's right, I remember that now. Because I get those ideas and I just do it, you know? And that's why, if I might say, the Japanese always like me to come over, because I get right to the point, and the Chinese, 30 years later. And now I'm going to China for a very unusual thing a week from Monday at their request, and I think I told you about that, yeah.

**Timothy Naftali**

So Governor, is there a story from the Nixon period or about Richard Nixon that you'd like to preserve for the library that we haven't discussed or brought up?

**Walter Hickel**

I'm trying to think of some things that have happened between Nixon and I. Can you think of any Malcolm?

**Malcolm Roberts**

Well, I was thinking when you were, when he was running, putting together his campaign and you met, I think it was in Oregon, and you said, "Senator, you're going to be the next President." And I mean, you just had total belief. You totally believed that this man had both the ability to win and to be a good President. I mean, that's why you went. You really felt Nixon had a remarkable chance and didn't criticize him after he was fired.

**Walter Hickel**

You see, my problem with a lack of education and everything gave me, and pardon the expression, but God takes care of that. I have visions that top people of Europe come over and see. "What do you think Wally?," or Japan or Korea or China or every place. And so I had, yes, I had dyslexia real bad and everything, but other things come along, and I've never, I'm going to say it, I've never met a person that talks as clearly as I think, you know, just right to the point. And those that do, I listen, and I find the ones that really listen, really listen are the leaders of Russia, leaders of China, Japan and those countries that are -- England's a little different. They're sort of closed and -- but Canada and --

**Timothy Naftali**

What lesson did you take from your two years in Washington, if any? What did that period teach you?

**Walter Hickel**

That we have to have leaders that are leading for what they totally believe in and not just what the economic interests want.

**Timothy Naftali**

And do you think Nixon led --

**Walter Hickel**

He was pretty close. He was, and he -- Nixon would listen to me, and he's the one that, he called me right after he became President, when I wasn't going to go there. He said, "Wally, you've got to come back." Nixon liked to have me in the Cabinet, I know that, and he didn't pat me. He didn't overdo it, but he liked my thoughts. He liked to just sit and talk.

**Timothy Naftali**

What about John Mitchell?

**Walter Hickel**

John Mitchell was a pretty good man. Yeah, he, but if someone crossed him too deep, he could fight. You know, John was a good man. Yeah --

**Timothy Naftali**

Because he was the one who called you before to tell you that the President probably --

**Timothy Naftali**

Go ahead, governor. You've got a story for us.

**Walter Hickel**

Senator Montoya, and he was a hard guy to handle, and so I sent him a telegram. "Fuck you, strong letter follows," and boy, that changed a lot of things. I did that.

**Timothy Naftali**

Was that about Blue Lake?

**Malcolm Roberts**

Yes, it was, yes, it was.

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah.

**Malcolm Roberts**

Because he had written a scathing letter to the secretary after the secretary had met with the elders of the tribe and had decided to give Blue Lake back, this religious location, to the tribe, he wrote this scathing letter, and the secretary hadn't replied. And one of Nixon's rules was, if it was a senator on your committee, you replied, so Dave Parker kept bugging the secretary to answer this letter. And he says, "All right, Yvonne, take this down. Fuck you, strong letter follows." I think it got into somebody's column, too.

**Walter Hickel**

I'm telling you, things like that change everything. They're real. And I was born that way, so it's not -- that's the way it is.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember meeting with the elders of the Taos tribe to talk about Blue Lake?

**Walter Hickel**

Yeah, I remember those meetings, and I remember -- you see, I didn't have to meet with them because I understood that. But the Senate and the House in Washington were economic. The executive branch is -- I mean, they're more real, but until Washington gets -- and they're starting to straighten that out.

**Timothy Naftali**

Do you remember talking to someone named Leonard Garment on the Indian issue, because he worked for the President on that issue and I know he was important --

**Malcolm Roberts**

Very much so, very much so.

**Walter Hickel**

I talked to so many people I'm just trying to think. And I'm 89 years old now. It's kind of hard to --

**Timothy Naftali**

That's okay. I hope, at 89, if I'm still around, I can remember as much as you.

**Walter Hickel**

Well, I'm going to look young like this when I'm 104.

**Timothy Naftali**

Well, we'll do this again in another 15 years.

**Walter Hickel**

Did I ever tell you, when I told my mom when I was a young boy, "Mom, I'm going to live to be 120." I'm just jumping up and down. She just laughed. Well, that's how old Moses got, you know, in the Bible, and I suppose [inaudible] why can't I live to be 120?

**Timothy Naftali**

We'll do this again in 20 years and see how you're doing.

**Walter Hickel**

Okay.

**Malcolm Roberts**

That's a deal. I won't be here, but have a great time.

**Timothy Naftali**

Governor Hickel, Thank you very much for your time.