

Timothy Naftali

I'm Tim Naftali. I'm Director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. It's April 25, 2008. We're in Anchorage, Alaska, and it is snowing, and I have the privilege and honor to be interviewing Malcolm Roberts for the Nixon Oral History Program. Malcolm, thank you for doing this.

Malcolm Roberts

It's an honor.

Timothy Naftali

How did you get to Washington?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, I came up as a journalist during the Fairbanks Flood in 1967. Being a Canadian, you'll know the "Toronto Globe and Mail." They had written an editorial during that flood saying, "Why would anyone want to live in Alaska? They have earthquakes; our great earthquake was in '64. They have floods, it's colder than hell." Why would anyone -- so our editor was from Toronto. We were based in LA, and he said go up there to find out. So, I came up and landed first in Juneau, spent a day following Governor Hickel around, had breakfast with the family at the mansion and spent the whole day with him, wrote some stories, caught up with them again in Fairbanks and wrote this story, "Why would anyone want to live in Alaska?" And I was just totally smitten by the attitude of the north and the frontier spirit and all that. And our magazine folded in the end of '69, and Secretary Hickel heard about it and asked me to come out and see him. So I flew out to Washington, D.C., and his press secretary said, "The secretary has three jobs in mind for you," and there was some sort of regional position in San Francisco, et cetera, et cetera. But I walked into his office and he said, "Well I've got a story to get to America, do you want to help me? And I said, "Yes sir." And he said, "Well, what grade can we give him?" Joe said so and so. "Well, raise it one. When can you get on the job? Congress is about to go into session again, I need you here." I said, "Well, I've got a VW bug back in LA. I was planning to go back -- " "Go get it, bring it out here, let's get going. Before you go, I'm going to give a speech to the American Petroleum Institute, all the top oil people. Do a draft for me." So, I did one. He read it, came out and said, "Perfect." And we've been on the same wavelength ever since.

Timothy Naftali

So, you came in on board as a speechwriter. Tell us about the office. Who's working with you in Governor Hickel's office, then Secretary Hickel?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, there was a large staff of people of many different talents. There was the bank of

secretaries, about four or five out in the front. They used to have an average of one bomb threat about every three or four days, and one secretary -- there was rotating secretaries -- who would get the phone call, she would always get the bomb threats. Somehow that jumps into my mind. His scheduling secretary, I mean assistant, Dave Parker, had a major role in the daily life of all his operations. We had a couple of different top, chief of staff people. When I was there, it was Pat Ryan from Alaska, self taught, tough, good instinct, talent. We had people who were on the legal side. We had a legislative team. You know, there was enough for six of us to be fired the day after the President fired Secretary Hickel. We got lined up and fired. Actually, I was on my honeymoon, but I got the words pretty soon.

Timothy Naftali

So, you weren't there the day that Fred Malek came into the office.

Malcolm Roberts

No, I missed that. I was on the beaches of Jamaica, and I wasn't giving it a thought. Actually, no, I was getting ready for marriage, our wedding, in California.

Timothy Naftali

But it mustn't have been a surprise.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, it wasn't a surprise. Ever since the secretary wrote his letter to the President following the Kent State killings, we thought that right then, there may be a firing, and there were a number on his secretary staff who felt he should resign and go back to Alaska because the primary election was about to begin, and he could have still filed and won the governorship again, which would have been the politically smart thing to do. I was one of those who argued for him not to resign, because it would make his letter look like a stunt, something to promote himself or something he would build on, because he was extremely high visibility and popular after that letter became public. And I felt that his integrity would be strengthened if he would hang in there. And we got a whole lot done that summer, a wonderful list of things. Banning all new billboards from Federal lands, you know, these terrible billboards you still see in the desert -- those all go back prior to Hickel's decision. I think that's when we got the alligators protected, that were being poached in Florida. And his last thing he did as secretary was signing the order to put all eight species of great whales on the endangered species list, the first action like this of any country in the world that really started the ball rolling to save the whales.

Timothy Naftali

Were you there when he got rid of the jet port in Miami?

Malcolm Roberts

I wasn't involved in that issue, and I remember it, but I don't remember it because we wrote

about it later or in the battle.

Timothy Naftali

Which issues did you work closely on?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, I helped with the setting up with student councils on pollution and the environment. This was in reaction to the young people of America who sort of had been awakened by the Santa Barbara crisis and wanted to get involved. And while the message, particularly from Vice President Agnew, but from the White House in general, but particularly the Vice President, was that the young people were being disloyal and unpatriotic with their protest against Vietnam, and that somehow, the environmental movement was tied in with this unpatriotic feeling. Secretary Hickel had six sons, three or four of them were in college or university at the time, he was in touch with them regularly, and he knew in his own gut that this was not the right analysis. These young people were seriously concerned about the environment and about the war.

So, he had us set up SCOPE to bring in the young people, and every month or so, we would have the leaders of this organization from across the country come in from the universities and brief us on their issues and so on, and it gave them a chance to take their concerns right to the top. It really was a wonderful concept, and we had a special team that ran that but I was one of the team that worked on the creation of it, worked with the SCOPE students. I got to travel with the secretary and staff his trips, the most notable of which was with his counterpart in the Canadian Cabinet, Jean Chretien, the minister of northern development and Indian affairs, and they did a trip from our East Coast right up, I guess we went to Montreal, and then we went up to Cape Dorsett, then right up Baffin Island -- I'm now maybe losing which is which -- Resolute Bay, you know,

[unintelligible]

. Anyway, right a long and then to Prudhoe Bay, where there was just stacks of pipeline. They were like pipes, it was just like honeycombs, waiting for the pipeline that hadn't yet got its go ahead. And so, we toured that, came back to Anchorage and so that was a fantastic trip, looking at the Arctic. Both of these men believed in the Arctic's role in the future in terms of meeting resources and believed that we could develop our resources and protect the environment. They both had that similar kind of philosophy. It was a great trip.

So, I did that, did a lot of outreach to some of the hostile people in the student, national student community. I was a graduate of Princeton, and Princeton invited the secretary to come up and speak, and they threw vegetables at him throughout the speech, and he just kept on going. It was, you know, a terrible scene. We had -- the organization of student editors from colleges across America had a conference, and the secretary was scheduled to speak. Before him Robert O. Anderson spoke, who is the head and founder of Atlantic Richfield Company, who made the discovery at Prudhoe Bay, and a student poured a can of oil on this top executive's head while he was speaking. In fact, Robert O. Anderson was the president for years of the Aspen Institute. He invested heavily in solar energy. I mean, he

was really a renaissance man. It was that ugly side of the youth revolt at that time. I remember one young man got up from the back of the hall and said, "Mr. Secretary, population is a problem. We need sterilization." And the secretary told me later, and I think I can say this now, he said, "I didn't say it, but I was tempted to say it, 'Yes, and we should have started with your mother.'"

[laughter]

He didn't say it, thank goodness, otherwise that would have been a headline. But those were emotion charged times. And then the whole moratorium, the march on Washington -- what was it? I forget how many tens of thousands marched on Washington, and that's when the secretary wanted to go out and speak, but the White House wouldn't let him. But they sent their representatives in. They talked on the phone with the secretary, then we brought them in to the secretary's office to talk, the leaders of this movement. At least there was somebody in the Cabinet who cared about him and was listening. So, that's what I admired about Hickel's instinct of how to react in that situation.

Timothy Naftali

Did you find people your age in the other departments? Were you talking to them? Like HEW was supposed to be one of the, was actually supposed to be the main outreach to some of the student groups. Were you interacting with people your own age in other departments?

[Male Speaker]

Will you straighten your tie please?

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, sure. Well, yes, somewhat. My, sort of, closest friend in the Interior Department was the White House fellow. His name was Mike Leavitt. And he had that network of White House fellows, every Cabinet officer has one shadowing them. And so, we were in touch with them through Mike and there were a lot of likeminded young people in all these other departments, but they were jealous of us because we had the secretary who not only got it, he had the guts to stand up and articulate it. And so that was the way I was in touch with them.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about the effect of Kent State on the office and then how the letter was written please.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, it was a devastating impact, because, you know, we had seen this building, this pressure and this frustration in the young people. And Pat Buchanan, who was, I believe, a speechwriter at that time in the White House or for Agnew, I don't know, but the Vice

President, I mean they were just throwing out these lines that were just totally polarizing the young people. And then to have the state troopers of Ohio fire on these young people protesting at Kent State was just a terrible tragedy. I mean it was just terrible. I don't think it hit anyone that I knew harder than it hit the secretary. Because his kids were on these campuses, and he had been doing all this work to try and turn -- he still believed that he could turn the White House. He thought that he could turn them on this issue, and then here's these killings. And he tried to get in to see the President, and he couldn't get in.

So that's why we got the word, Mike Leavitt and I, that the secretary wanted to do a letter to the President on this whole situation. And we were asked to do a draft of a letter, which we did, and we sent it to the secretary's office. It never saw the light of day, not one word of it. The secretary wrote his own letter, and it's a marvelous letter. It's in his book, "Who Owns America?" And it's -- you know, he always treated President Nixon with great respect. He always thought he had, first, a great deal of intelligence and ability, and, secondly, extraordinary opportunity in the world to make a difference. And so, he kept pushing him towards these issues of the youth, the environment, energy policy, and so on. And so, the letter's written with respect, but it obviously wasn't written to be released to the public. I mean, he said, "Mr. President, you need more time one-on-one with your Cabinet." He just felt that if he had more time, he could help redirect the way the President was going at that time. He just had that confidence and that belief. However, the story, the letter, was leaked. Dave Parker, his assistant, top scheduling assistant, hand-carried the letter to the White House. But there were copies sailing around our office while the final draft was being done and everything, and somebody got that to Bobbie Kilberg. Help me with the name of the newspaper; it doesn't exist anymore. It was not the "Post," but the other major newspaper at that time.

Timothy Naftali

In Washington?

Malcolm Roberts

Yeah, in Washington, D.C., and it was banner headlines the next day.

Timothy Naftali

I think it's the "Star," "The Washington Star."

Malcolm Roberts

"The Washington Star"? I'm not sure. Anyway, the "Evening Star" or something like that. Anyway, it's in his book. So, this was all a shock, and we all wondered who leaked the letter and no one seemed to know, and the secret's been kept ever since.

Timothy Naftali

Do you think Bobbie knows?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, Bobbie got the letter. She probably knows because unless it was faxed, but we didn't have faxes in those days, unless somebody slipped it under her door. But I think she probably knows.

Timothy Naftali

You thought you'd all be fired after that, didn't you?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, we didn't really know what the outcome was going to be. We're still -- the secretary and a number of his really incredible idealists. We really believed that we could turn, and we believed that that was kind of our mission, to turn President Nixon on these key issues, and we were just hanging in there. So, we didn't know it was going to happen but when he decided he wasn't going to resign and we weren't fired, we just plunged ahead with the agenda until the fateful day in November when -- I mean this was after the White House, in its political, you might say, I don't know, political maturity or cynicism. They used Hickel all over the country. I flew with him -- we flew all over the country helping in the off-year election. All kinds of -- we campaigned for the first President Bush when he was running for the Senate in Texas. He didn't win that one. We went to many of them, and they used the Hickel name and record and everything else to promote these individuals.

And then after the election, which came out quite well for the Republicans. It was November 25 -- I remember because it was my birthday, and I was having lunch at the secretary's desk with him in his office, and I was about to take a plane to California to get married. And we were talking about all these issues, but I think it was the Sunday before that, "60 Minutes" carried an absolutely bombshell of a segment on Hickel. Mike Wallace did it, and there was a number of us in the secretary's office talking with Wallace and the secretary about whether he should do this show. Well, I knew if he did this show, it was all over. That's what my gut was telling me. But my gut was also telling me that the secretary's instincts were true, and that's why he had gotten there, and so that he had to make this call.

And so, they were talking about different issues and that's when Mike asked him. He said, "Well, have you ever considered resigning?" And he said, "Mike, if I go, it's going to be with an arrow in my heart, not a bullet in my back." And Mike said, "Let's tape it." And Wally says, "Let's tape it." Yeah, they filmed for several hours and put together this -- someday you'll have to take a look at it. It's so powerful, and when I watched it, I lived in an apartment in Arlington, one of those old apartment buildings, and I sort of looked out the window towards the White House to see if the smoke was coming out from it because I knew it was all over. And Secretary Hickel called me and said, "Well, Malcolm, whatever happens, if my wife Erma Lee, or your fiancée Cindy have to take in laundry, we're going to keep fighting for what we believe in. And I didn't come here to stay here. I never had Potomac fever. I came here to do a job and to stand for what I believed." And I said, "Right on, I'm with you." So, that was earlier in November, I guess -- I'm not exactly sure on that date -- but then on my birthday, I had lunch with him, went to the airplane, and he got a call from George Schultz, who was the director of the budget to talk budget. He said, "Would

you come over?" So Wally went over to Schultz's office in the executive office building and walked in, you know, there's that long connection to the White House, and they walked in the Oval Office. And I would have to review his book of who was there. I think it was -- in fact, I'm not even sure who he met with. He might have met with John Ehrlichman first or something, and they wanted him to resign and he said, "No way. The President hired me, and he's going to have to fire me."

So, they met with the President, and the President started talking about Christmas lights in the Rose Garden and all sorts of stuff, you know, because that was under the care of the Interior Department. And finally, Wally said, "Mr. President, come to the point." And so then the President said, "Well, you've been my adversary on a number of things," and I don't know the exact words -- but then they put out a statement that I thought was very revealing. He said, "There's a lack of mutual trust," mutual trust. So, he didn't just cut off Wally's head. He did it with some respect. And Wally came back to the Interior Department and had a press conference. He gave a wonderful statement that's also in his book about how the President had every right to fire him; he hired him. He would never -- he would wasn't going to criticize the President. He was proud of his record, what he stood for, what he accomplished, but he had to do it his way. And so, that was the firing.

Timothy Naftali

You were fired while you were away on your honeymoon.

Malcolm Roberts

Right, right. Yes, my wife and I, actually, we had a weekend in Tahoe, because my wife lives near there in California, and when we got back to her family home, there was a stack of letters from the secretary's office -- telephone messages, rather. So, I called up the secretary and I said, "Secretary, what do you want me to do?" He says, "Twenty-six publishers want me to write a book. I want you to come and help me. Do you want to help me?" And I said, "Yes, sir." "How soon can you be here?" Pause, I say, "Well, in 20 minutes we're leaving for the airport to fly to Jamaica for our honeymoon." "Go to Jamaica. Call me from Jamaica." So, we ended up in one of my best friend's family's cottage on the beach of Ocho Rios, with no phone. So, I didn't hear anything for about a week. Finally got a telegram that said, "Call soonest, return soonest." And I don't know when I heard that I had been fired, but it was all over as far as I was concerned. I wasn't interested in staying after that.

Timothy Naftali

What about your colleagues, the other five or six? Had any of them really wanted to stay on?

Malcolm Roberts

I don't really know; I doubt it. I think they probably all considered it kind of a badge of courage. We had some wonderful people, our legislative liaison fellow -- boy, I'm reaching for names now, Tim, I can't remember -- but outstanding dedicated people. And they'd been through a number of these battles and admired the secretary tremendously. So, I think all of us left with our heads high, our consciences intact.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us a bit about what it was like when buses were around the White House. You were there for this really very tense period. Of course, a lot of these young people who come to these museums have no idea what it was like in 1970 in Washington. Tell us a little bit about the tension in that city then.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, I get out in it, you know, I just, being in my early 30s and looking younger than I am, I just sort of dressed like one of the kids and got out there just to see what was going on and seeing if it was, you know, if we were going to see D.C. in flames and, you know, what was going to happen. There was, you know, tens of thousands of young people, sort of, milling, sometimes kind of running down streets. It was scary; it was very scary. Chanting, it was the hippie era just after the '60s, and the hippie busses and camping out on the Mall. It was wild. You know, you felt like we were on the brink of some kind of a revolution.

Timothy Naftali

People your age then were divided, not everybody could understand what this was all about. Tell us again. Help a 17-year-old or a 16-year-old today understand why there was a big difference between a 23-year-old in 1970 and maybe a 30-year-old in 1970 in the way that they looked at the world.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, I don't know that I would make that distinction. I mean, the 23-year-old was getting drafted. The 31-year-old, 32-year-old, had lived through the '60s. The '60s were an incredible decade, I mean, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the environmental movement breaking loose there at the end that we were a part of. This was a time of change, and the young people had taken the lead in the change. It was a time, you know, following Kennedy's assassination, Kennedy's Presidency and assassination, where the Peace Corps was founded, the feeling that young people can make a difference. That was a common thread. I don't know if I would make that distinction between the 20s and the 30s.

Timothy Naftali

But there was certainly a line between people in their 40s and 50s and those younger.

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, yes.

Timothy Naftali

Why did Wally Hickel get it?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, you know, I've worked with him on and off now for 30, 40, 38 years. And, you know, I've often tried to figure all this out, and I don't know that I've still figured it out. He does have a very wonderful sense of judgment. He's one of those people, and I think great leaders have to have this ability, can make a really tough decision without all the information. You know, crises, in a crisis, your President, or whoever, doesn't have all the information. They've got to make a tough decision. Wally's decisions were 90-some percent on the mark.

Now, not in terms necessarily of his own survival, but in terms -- in the long term, if you look back at them, you know, his support of the American Indian, his opposition to the petrochemical plant in South Carolina where they were really going to pollute an estuary. And he's from a business background, and you'd think you'd want to support these new jobs and the economy and everything else. Well, fine, but you're not going to do it. He says you can use the water, but you have to return it like you found it. That's the cost of doing business. He's never gone for the stuff about you can buy the right to pollute. It's still going around today, these carbon credits and stuff. He's always, "No, don't pollute." He's just got these gut, common sense, raised on a farm during dust bowl Depression years in Kansas, and the only thing I can figure out is that his parents always supported him and let him make his own decisions and run with things. I mean, he was driving a gangplow with four head of horses when he was eight years old. I mean, this is tough, tough work. And he'd tell us about a storm coming over the horizon, the lightning, and the horses getting spooked, and they'd come galloping. And he's got a little red wagon, and he's holding it behind him in his little red wagon, and he comes racing back to the farmhouse. And his mother comes out and pulls up and suddenly the sky clears. And he says, "Mom, mom, it was lightning." "Walter, it's fine. Have no fear, go back to work." You know, this is Depression days, everybody works, and you got to deal with your fears. And, Wally, I don't know of him ever being afraid of anyone or anything. Fear is not part of his deal.

Today, we're in a battle with Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips, and BP over what happens to the Alaskan natural gas at the North Slope and a pipeline. He is leading the battle against those oil industry -- those oil companies, companies that he encouraged to come in here years ago. But their responsibility is for their shareholders. Alaska's Governor, Alaska's people, have to take decisions for the best of Alaska and Alaskan people. And so, he leads that battle. I mean, they come into this hotel where we're sitting right now and cancel all their business here. They do it every couple of years, and the staff of the hotel, they get furious. Wally says, "Don't worry about it; it's good for business," you know. Stand for something, you know, have some principle, you know, that's just in him. So I've talked on here, but I don't know if I could analyze why. But that's --

Timothy Naftali

You've helped us a lot.

Malcolm Roberts

Okay, okay.

Timothy Naftali

Just through example and some allegory, actually. Tell us what --

Malcolm Roberts

Can I just take another sip of coffee?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah, take another sip. And we're going to --

Malcolm Roberts

The Tibet thing, with the Sudan thing, Darfur, we're going to meet with an executive to Sinopec, one of the biggest oil companies in the world, who's operating in Darfur.

Timothy Naftali

Has he met with Putin in Russia?

Malcolm Roberts

No, he never has. He's always wanted to, but he was the first speaker -- Putin set up something called The People's Chamber in '06 -- Wally Hickel was the first speaker to The People's Chamber. It's 130-some eminent Russians who were looking at alternate strategies for the future of Russia. He was the first speaker, you know, and so, he's always wanted to meet with Putin, but it's never happened.

Timothy Naftali

Were you with him when he met with Yeltsin?

Malcolm Roberts

No, I helped him prepare the paper he took with him. In fact, it's right here, it's called, "Russia and Alaska, Family of One." And if you turn it over, it's in Russian on this side. And in it is a picture of him giving -- we had a surplus of pink salmon that year. He gave it to the Russians. And here he's presenting it to a Russian sea captain.

Timothy Naftali

This was when he was governor.

Malcolm Roberts

When he was governor last time, and that's when he went over to see Yeltsin, in about '92 or '93, I think.

Timothy Naftali

What can you remember of your office's role in shaping President Nixon's Indian Policy Statement of the summer of '70, which included giving back Blue Lake?

Malcolm Roberts

Intimately involved, I mean, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is part of Interior. You know, we had a special assistant -- secretary had a special assistant for Indian Affairs, Morris Thompson, who later became head of the BIA. He's an Alaskan, very close friend of mine, since deceased. And so, I'm sure we were involved in all of those drafts, and the White House had some individuals -- did you mention earlier that Leonard Garment was -- yeah, he may have been in charge of that policy. I mean, he was a big-time policy leader in the White House. But we were very much involved.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember when -- this is the time when the Ash Committee came with its recommendation about EPA, and the department was actually reluctant to see a new entity, it wanted to be the Department of the Environment as well as everything else. Do you remember any of that?

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, yeah, the secretary was very strong on that. He felt that you needed to have a balance between your development and environment. If you set up a department that's strictly environment, they become an advocate for the environment, and he felt if you have it in one department, you can have some balance, and you could not go overboard. And we've seen that. I mean, here in Alaska we see it all the time. The rules and regulations can be so extreme and out of touch, particularly with the Alaska environment, that it's just burdensome. And many times, business can't operate under those rules and regs. So, you know, there was some logic to that opposition. It's funny, though, he was the first person to be offered the job of EPA administrator, which he turned down, which Ruckelshaus took, of course.

Timothy Naftali

Why didn't he take it?

Malcolm Roberts

I don't know if I can remember exactly why. I think -- wasn't that in the Nixon administration?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah.

Malcolm Roberts

Yeah, and I think he didn't want to be part of that scene. He was offered -- or at least they were considering offering him secretary of energy, also, because that department was created after we left.

Timothy Naftali

So they considered giving him this job after he was fired?

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, yeah, oh, yes. And this is one of the other things I'd love to put on tape here, is that Wally never held any grudges about the firing, and, of course, I was pissed off. Can I say that on the Nixon Library tape?

Timothy Naftali

You can say anything

[inaudible]

, anything you want.

Malcolm Roberts

Okay, I mean, I was pissed off. I mean, Wally went there, you know, with a good heart. He didn't want to leave Alaska. We'd just discovered oil up here; we were transforming the state. He had so much ideas, things to do. He wanted to build a railroad to the North Slope and do all kinds of things. He wept, actually, when Nixon made that call and said, "You're going to be the next secretary." He knew he had to go then. Now I've lost the question in my mind, shows I'm getting old, too.

Timothy Naftali

No, no, I was asking you about how it was he would have been invited to be the first EPA Chair.

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, yeah.

Timothy Naftali

And then you said, "He never held a grudge."

Malcolm Roberts

Yeah.

Timothy Naftali

You were pissed off, but he wasn't.

Malcolm Roberts

That's right, thank you. Yeah, that's exactly right. He never was, and so, you know, when they dedicated the Nixon Library, he was there. When there was time -- he was asked for a contribution, he made a major contribution. I think his name's carved on the wall with the others. At President Nixon's funeral, he was invited and had a place of honor. He just had a gift for separating friendship from policy and ideology and never harbored any -- I never heard him say anything negative about President Nixon. I mean, sometimes he was frustrated that the President didn't go forward with some of his ideas, but I can't remember a certain time where he badmouthed him or called him any names or anything, never.

Timothy Naftali

Can you tell us what you remember of trying to make Earth Day a holiday?

Malcolm Roberts

Yes, and I was quite involved in that. We were quite excited about this. You know, our SCOPE, Student Councils on Pollution and the Environment, that we had on campuses all across the country, we thought this was a wonderful concept that Senator Gaylord Nelson had come up with. I can remember having dinner with him and Secretary Hickel and Senator Gruening from Alaska, and Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, all at Gruening's home, fabulous dinner, and that table was incredible discussion. And Nelson had this idea, and he picked Arbor Day, you know, the day for planting flowers, the 22nd of April. Well, somebody told somebody in the White House, or the Vice President's office, or whatever, that, that was Lenin's birthday and that somehow this was part of all of this communistic, or whatever it was, movement on the campuses of America. We couldn't believe this. And Wally began putting in his speeches, not very wise, but he began using this line, "We cannot tear this country together." That was a Hickelism; that's just a perfect Hickelism. "We cannot tear this country together." And, of course, he was talking about Agnew. So the thing mounted and mounted, and, you know, there was --

Timothy Naftali

-- because that sounds like a great dinner. I wish I --

Malcolm Roberts

It was a great dinner.

Timothy Naftali

Let's go back to that dinner. What was this dinner all about? I mean, what an amazing group of people. Was it a dinner to talk about environmentalism?

Malcolm Roberts

Yeah, I mean, Ernest Gruening, our senior senator, who was really a marvelous man. And Ernest Gruening was a newspaper, magazine editor. He was a physician. He was director of the Department of Territories for FDR, all of these issues. He worked under Ickes, the curmudgeon secretary of the Interior, who, I think, wanted to get him out of D.C. and made him territorial governor of Alaska. But he had since, after statehood, gotten elected in his own right to the U.S. Senate. And, although he was a liberal Democrat, and Wally was a maverick Republican, they just hit it off, they were great friends. And Gruening would often drop in on the secretary and say, "Hang in there, Wally, you're on the right track." So he hosted this dinner, and, you know, I could check my notes to see if I have any notes on this dinner. It was the kind of thing I would write down about. I mean, these were some of the most prominent people in the awakening environmental movement. William O. Douglas, of course, the Supreme Court justice, was a passionate, passionate -- I want to tell you a thing about that in a second -- believer in the environment, and just vicious with anyone who was opposed to his views. Gaylord Nelson, the leader in the Senate for the environment, he and Scoop Jackson were probably the two top -- Scoop wasn't at that dinner. Gruening, Hickel, they were all around the table. And it was obvious Gruening was getting together those people he respected who were leading the environmental fight, so I imagine that the plans for Earth Day were already well in motion by then.

Timothy Naftali

Now, tell us about the role you think the office of the Vice President played. You were just starting that when the tape ran out.

Malcolm Roberts

Their role in what? Oh, in terms of Earth Day?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, they were out to try to -- they were afraid of it. I mean, they really saw America turning extremely left, and anti-war, and, for all they knew, communistic. And the fact that this Earth Day was on Lenin's birthday, that was all they needed. Oh, man, they went ballistic, and Agnew gave speeches. And then he had a meeting with a number of the Cabinet and sort of warned them against getting involved. Well, Wally spoke up. He didn't, you know, really fight him, but Wally Hickel has the belief that if you hear something and you don't speak up, it implies consent. So he spoke up and he disagreed, but his was the only

department that got involved. He had two invitations himself to speak, and I think he may have had staff that accepted both of them. And so Secretary Volpe of Transportation filled in for him at Johns Hopkins, and got a standing ovation, by the way, did a great job. Wally spoke at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. But there were 1,100 of us from the department on campuses and other events across the country. I had the honor of speaking at Caltech in an open forum outdoors. It was a fantastic experience. And the young people, of course, thrilled that the Interior Department would have the guts to stand up and stand with them to turn people's thinking about the environment. I mean, Rachel Carson had just written her book in '64, and this is just six years later. I mean, the environment was a new concept, you know, in human thought in many ways.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us why -- when I look at the history of the Alaska Native Tribal Settlement, it's interesting, why didn't it get -- you didn't work on that much in your time at Secretary Hickel's and Secretary Hickel's. It's actually something that's solved after Secretary Hickel leaves office. Was it you just had a lot on your plate? Or were these negotiations not going anywhere in that period?

Malcolm Roberts

We worked on it a whole lot, and Wally's key role was in a meeting when President Nixon was trying to decide where to come down on this. I think, in his own heart, he wanted to support this, but he had a representative of the Attorney General's Office -- I'm not sure who it was. I don't know who the players were but, also, Office of the Budget, and I think it was maybe Stans from Commerce, and Wally from Interior, and maybe one or two others. And the President went around and asked what people thought. And the fellow from Justice said, "There's no legal claim here." I mean, we got Alaska in a treaty with Russia. And we paid -- what was it? -- \$7.3 million for it. You know, they don't have any claim, which today's natives and Alaskan natives then disagreed with, but that was their argument. The fellow from Budget said, "No, we don't owe them anything, any money-wise; it's not an economic issue." And then the President said, "Well, let's hear from Wally." And Wally's response was, "Well, I agree, it's not a legal or a monetary issue. This is a moral issue, Mr. President." And he said, "I'm going with Wally." And that decision made the difference for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement, because Nixon really was the champion of that. Now, Wally went on to testify before a number of committees on the Hill for it, and, you know, Udall, his predecessor, had bid for a \$10 million settlement. Wally came out for \$500 million or something, and he just shocked everybody -- I think that may be in the book. But he had learned and understood it, because he was governor just before that.

The Alaska Federation of Natives was formed just about the time Wally was elected governor. They hadn't always gotten along well, but he formed a special committee of Alaskan natives, financed by the state, so that they could meet, and so they came from all over the state, time and again. It was through that Rural Affairs Committee that he established that really gave them the means to form their strategy and be successful.

Timothy Naftali

And then this was ultimately its result after he leaves?

Malcolm Roberts

Yes, it was in December of 1971 that the bill was signed by President Nixon. They had a ceremony out here connected by, I guess, telephone in those days, at what was then Alaska Methodist University, and they had the top Alaskan native leadership, and they invited Former Secretary Hickel. The President wanted him there, and I went with him. And we stood there as the President made his talk and gave Wally credit. I mean, this is the man he'd just fired the year before -- gave Wally credit for his role in it, and thanked, of course, all the native leaders, and signed it. That was a historic moment up here.

Timothy Naftali

What role did Senator Stevens play that you can remember?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, he was right in there, and Senator Stevens brought a lot to the Senate. I mean, he had been the solicitor at the Interior Department, and he knew a whole lot about Interior Department issues, and Alaska issues, and so on. The main -- no, I'm now getting confused with the ANILCA, which was another nine years later -- but I'm sure he was in there playing a major role.

Timothy Naftali

Well, what side was he on in ANILCA, so to speak?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, he was for ANILCA. And the ANILCA, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, set aside about 120 million acres, adding to what we already had, to 150-some total, which is the size of Texas, that were put in what are called conservation system units. That's parks, refuges, et cetera, et cetera, which basically make it impossible to harvest resources from it, I mean, in terms of mining, or oil and gas, and those other things that Alaska's economy's always depended on. Now, Alaskans love the environment, that's why most of them live here, and they want it protected. But they also need to have an economy going, so they wanted more balance. And we felt that the law that came forward in 1980 was still so extreme.

And a bunch of us up here, including Governor Hickel, tried to stop ANILCA in '80 because Reagan was looking like he was going to get elected that November, which he was. He beat Jimmy Carter. Ted had, sort of -- he'd been assigned by Scoop Jackson the task of overseeing ANILCA. He went to every markup. I think there was 65 or 100 markups. I mean, he went to every one of them. And he fought and won a lot of battles for Alaska, but he also lost a lot of battles for Alaska. And so, we were running full-page ads back here

called "Senator Stevens, Come Home" -- he's never forgotten it, either, he just burns over that -- because we thought he'd gotten out of touch with what Alaska needed. And many of us, like myself, we were all for an ANILCA, but if it had balance and if it wasn't blocking off. Right now you can't build a pipeline or a highway or any transportation or utility system across the state without getting an act of Congress, because it'll go through one of these units. And we've proven through ANWR that you can't get an act of Congress that has anything to do with development if it's in Alaska. So it really locked us up.

Timothy Naftali

So that's what locked up ANWR, right?

Malcolm Roberts

Absolutely, ANWR was part of that Act. ANWR, the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge is, I think, it's 18 or 19 million acres up in the northeast corner of the state. Nine million of it was set aside as what we call Big W Wilderness, which is part of the Wilderness Act, where you can't do anything. But, you know, you can camp on it. You know, but it's very difficult, unless you're subsistence hunting and fishing, there's very little you can do there. And it has the largest untapped oil and gas field in North America, just a sliver of it at the top. That's the 1002 area, it's called, that the big fight continues today is all about.

Timothy Naftali

And where does the governor stand, or where did the governor stand on that?

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, he's been for opening it up from the beginning. It was well known before ANWR was established. Eisenhower first established it as a wildlife range, and when it became a refuge, then it was set aside in this particular category. But the Inupiat of the North at Kaktovik and so on, they've always known that there was oil there, and the median estimate from the USGS, and so on, is 10 billion barrels of oil, and who knows how much natural gas. Our oil line is only half full now, less than half full, and that oil, you know, seems to me that America could use a little more energy, not that we don't want alternate energy, but what do you do in the interim? And so, Governor Hickel and I and others have long believed that we should open ANWR, but just that one sliver, and with, you know, very strict rules and regs.

Timothy Naftali

Were you there when Governor Hickel was sponsoring more national parks? He had a -- Parks for People, I think.

Malcolm Roberts

Yes.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about that.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, it's a favorite one for him, because the idea was to provide parks near where people live. And when he took this to Nixon, like so many other things he took to Nixon, Nixon loved it and supported it. And I remember going to New York City -- Mayor John Lindsay was mayor then -- and walking the streets with him, and talking about the sort of pocket parks where people could get to, and one was created near New York City. And these were identified all across the country. These were very small parks, but they're near the people, so that was that program.

Timothy Naftali

John Whitaker told us that President Nixon mentioned to John Whitaker, at least, that he remembered growing up and there not being parks. And so, he actually felt a personal commitment to this idea of having accessible parks for people.

Malcolm Roberts

Yes, absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

Did the governor have this kind of conversation with President Nixon?

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, absolutely. In fact, I think he took it to him in the Western White House in San Clemente after we did that trip with Jean Chretien in Portland. I didn't go with him but -- yes, I did go with him, but I didn't go to the meetings. But we flew down to Southern California, and they had the Cabinet meeting in the Western White House there. That's when Wally presented the Parks for the People -- is that what it's called -- program, and the President loved it.

Timothy Naftali

I think one of the issues was also that, under LBJ a lot of parks had been created, but without land, that a park was announced but, in fact, the Federal Government still hadn't acquired the land to run the park.

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, my God.

Timothy Naftali

So that that was one of the challenges that the Department of the Interior faced under Nixon, was actually to build out these parks.

Malcolm Roberts

Hmmm, I'm not familiar with that.

Timothy Naftali

Have I missed a Hickel initiative that you'd like to talk about, that your office worked on?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, you know, you asked him about Micronesia, this whole approach to the territories. Having grown up, up here as an adult in a territory, he had a great affinity for the Micronesian people and really started in motion the change in their government to a more Democratic system. I'd like to tell my version of the whale battle.

Timothy Naftali

Please do.

Malcolm Roberts

There was a fellow that -- he had worked with me on the magazine I had worked on, and he had been a Gold Medalist in the Rome Olympics as an oarsman. His name was John Sayer. And he ended up at Fish and Wildlife in Interior when I was there in the secretary's office, and one of his passions was whales, and he followed it and understood it. And so, he kept sending up to me these things, you know, "Secretary's doing a good job, but he needs to look at the whale issue." And so, we briefed him on it, and he was all for it. You know, there was still a whaling industry in this country, and it meant shutting down some businesses, people losing their jobs, and so on. But that's when he had this meeting where there was a showdown with the state department, Kissinger -- who wasn't secretary of state then, he was the security advisor -- and NASA. And they said, "Well, we certainly hope you're not going to put the whales on the Endangered Species List, because we need the whale oil for the space program." It's a very, very fine oil, and that's where Wally -- and Wally is wonderful in negotiations. He always has been. He's a great negotiator, and he's quick on his thought. He says, "Well, what are you going to do when there are no more whales?" They said, "Well, we'll have to find a substitute." "Well, you find that fucking substitute, because I'm putting them on that list." He did; he signed the order the day he was fired. And as a result of that and these other things, he was named by the U.N. as one of six observers to the first United Nations Conference on the Environment, took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. I mean, it was Margaret Mead, Rene Dubos, Lady Jackson, and Wally Hickel, and somebody else. And in his second book, you'll see an account of him sending me over there to sort of do some advance work, and we had the idea -- because Wally was just a private citizen.

He just didn't want to go and be an observer, said, "Let's get something done." So he wrote a little booklet with some of the content of his -- chapter in his book, called "The Cry of the Whale," with a resolution to take before this assembly of some 60 nations. And I got there, and a friend of mine was a staffer to Morris Maurice Strong, the Canadian who was the secretary general, outstanding guy, and he got me in to see Strong. And I said, "You know, Mr. Secretary, we've got this resolution we'd like to see put before it," and Strong really liked it. And I think they had something in the works, but the conference was in crisis, because Russia and America didn't want multilateralism. They wanted to just, in between countries, handle these environmental issues.

And so, we began talking, and -- I forget who came up with the idea, maybe my friend, Wayne Kines, from Canada, or maybe it was secretary general -- of having a whale march to bring its attention to this conference. So I said, "Okay, I'll take that on." And I met with the young people, there were thousands of, sort of, hippie anti-Vietnam kids gathered there on a farm south of Stockholm -- they called it the Hog Farm. And I got to know them, and I hope I can remember the names -- the head of Project Jonah, a woman, who was there, and the guy who wrote "The Whole Earth Catalogue" was there, great character -- and the three of us took this on. And I went out and bought chicken wire and black plastic, rolls of black plastic, and they said, "We'll get the crew down at the Hog Farm to build your whale." And they took a hippie bus, and they covered it with this plastic, and they created a tail with the wire, and wood, and everything. Then they got whale cries, you know, the music from the whale to whale, and they broadcast it out the front, and they put a big smile on the whale and everything else. And then former Secretary Hickel and his son arrived in Stockholm just in time, and we had a big rally down at the Hog Farm. And Strong flew in for it, and Wally spoke, and it was fantastic. And then the next day we had this march, and it was some deal, I tell you, because, you know, through the streets of Stockholm, you know, pretty conservative country, you know, here's all these ragtag young people, led by former Secretary Hickel.

And we were carrying orange blossoms, you know. This wasn't a threat on the -- but the police were all out then and, you know, the shock troops with their plastic visors. And they were arm locked; they thought we were going to throw rocks at the Parliament Building where the conference was going on or something. We came up, and we just gave them our orange blossoms, and this wonderful whale music came out, and that became a picture on the front page of the "Europe International Herald Tribune." And there's a little blue whale sketch on the front of our booklet we did, and that appeared in the local Stockholm paper, but under it, "New symbol for the U.N.?" And that resolution, or a version thereof, went through a few days later. We were up in the gallery when it did. We could see our little booklet on everybody's desk. And it sort of broke the logjam of this fear of multilateralism, and they passed something like 50 resolutions within the next week, and, you know, it was really fantastic. And it went back to that gutsy decision by America, led by Secretary Hickel, to be the first nation, whaling nation, or any nation, to put the great -- these are the big ones, the blue whale, the sperm whale, the really big ones, the eight species on the Endangered Species List.

Timothy Naftali

I had a few more questions. NOAA, since we're talking about the oceans, Commerce gets NOAA and not Interior. Do you remember that decision?

Malcolm Roberts

I think I do, and I think it was partly because of Hickel's posture and the friction that was going on. I don't think they wanted him to have it, but I think it was more personal than it made any common sense. That's my limited knowledge of that.

Timothy Naftali

Okay, when the letter comes out, when it's leaked, the secretary goes on "60 Minutes" for the first time. Do you remember discussing whether he should do it or not, because that was pretty controversial, not just the second time.

Malcolm Roberts

I wasn't in on the discussion, but I know they shot it out at his home. They did five hours of taping, and it was one hell of a blockbuster. It was a great show.

Timothy Naftali

I can imagine.

Malcolm Roberts

Mike Wallace is still a friend to this day of Governor Hickel. They last talked when we were in Moscow, and called him, and he was doing a memorial service for Don Hewitt's wife, Frankie, former wife. But Don Hewitt, you know, was the producer forever of "60 Minutes." His wife, Frankie, was a friend of the Hickels and helped save the Ford Theater. And that was another thing Wally did. He took the leadership because they were going to demolish the Ford Theater where the Ford Theater where Nixon -- I mean, I'm sorry -- Lincoln was shot. where Lincoln was shot. And Wally did the fundraising, and we saved that theater.

Timothy Naftali

When he was secretary or after?

Malcolm Roberts

Yes, when he was secretary.

Timothy Naftali

Well, is he responsible, I guess, for the National Park Service, isn't he?

Malcolm Roberts

That's right, that's right, you bet.

Timothy Naftali

So I was wondering if there were any other issues that we should address from that period. You did a lot in a very short time. I mean, you were there less than a year, weren't you?

Malcolm Roberts

Yeah, I was. Well, I think, you know, I think Nixon rightly goes down, I think, most for his China initiative, which was spectacular. He doesn't get the credit he deserves for the environmental legislation that passed and the executive leadership on the environment that took place in those years. I think, for those of us who admired him and were honored to serve in his administration, we were heartbroken that the administration didn't live up to its promise and ended up in disgrace. And to sort that out, I'll leave that to you and the historians and those who knew the whole thing better, but I just think he was a man of great ability who had warring passions and interests inside himself. I thought that his speechwriter, Ray -- help me --

Timothy Naftali

Price.

Malcolm Roberts

-- Ray Price's book is very, very insightful on that. But it was a great experience for me to have a small part in it.

Timothy Naftali

What did Ermalee Hickel say to Wally Hickel about this administration?

Malcolm Roberts

Well, Ermalee is somebody else that you might consider at some time interviewing. She is wonderful, and she expresses things very clearly. As we were leaving D.C., after the firing, she said to her husband, "The White House is now going to eat itself up." She predicted that the whole thing would unravel, and we didn't know anything about Watergate then. But there were those forces going on within the staff and so on that led to -- you know, the fact that Nixon couldn't abide having somebody, perhaps anybody in his Cabinet really shine, I think, may have been one of his weaknesses. But, anyway, his staff was certainly -- they didn't want anyone but Nixon to shine. And I think they lost some of their best people because of that.

Timothy Naftali

Tell us about the cartoonist's speech before the cartoonist

[unintelligible]

Malcolm Roberts

Well, soon after -- this is before I got to Washington -- but soon after being confirmed, Secretary Hickel was invited to the National Conference of Political Cartoonists. I think it was in Florida or something that year, and he won them hands down. And I think he talked and pulled his own leg, and, anyway, you know, he had been through that rough confirmation and everybody had called him this raper of the environment, this oilman, and everything else, which was baloney. He just happened to be trying to get Alaska on its own feet, as governor.

But, anyway, he really connected with them. That didn't mean that they let up on him, quite the reverse, they just took stripes off him. And we'll copy some of them for you, Tim; they're just marvelous. But Wally is the kind of person who has a great sense of humor, and he could laugh at himself. And so, when Herblock comes out with this cartoon called "Forward Together," where you have President Nixon and his Cabinet walking down the street for the inauguration, and Wally's coming behind, pulling his pants on because he hadn't been confirmed yet -- it's called "Forward Together" -- Wally calls up Herblock, roaring with laughter, said, "That is a great cartoon." And so, Herblock signed it and sent him the original. And he did this all through the almost two years he was in office. So we've got a collection of, maybe 50 cartoons from all over the country, signed by the cartoonists. And they start with this, just taking strips off him, being a lackey of the oil industry, to being a hero of the environment and being the guy who really started getting the oil industry in balance. And one of the ones I love most, after being accused of being an enemy of wildlife and everything, is this picture of this raccoon and these other wildlife coming running out of the forest screaming, "They got old Wally, they got old Wally!"

Timothy Naftali

Were you there when Wally Hickel cancelled the Cross-Florida Canal?

Malcolm Roberts

Barge

[phonetic sp]

Canal?

Timothy Naftali

Yeah.

Malcolm Roberts

I think I was, yeah. What the issue was, and we learned this in protecting the alligator, too, is that there's a water table that sort of moves through Florida, that keeps the Everglades

healthy, and this would have intersected that. And I believe that was one of the key issues, that it would have really ruined the environment, so Wally stood up to it and said, "No."

Timothy Naftali

Because the President had a lot of pressure on him to do it.

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, yeah, well, a lot of pressure on Ron, the secretary, too. But, you know, that's what it takes sometimes.

Timothy Naftali

One last question, do you remember interacting with John Ehrlichman or his staff?

Malcolm Roberts

No, I didn't personally, but I think of all the White House people, I think he was the one that Secretary Hickel got along with best. Ehrlichman was the head of Domestic Affairs, he had a feel for the environment, and I think he backed Wally up on a lot of his projects. I mean, he was a tremendous loyalist like Haldeman was, but Haldeman was a very cold personality in my memory and, you know, very much an efficient executive, but not much of a human. John was more of a human. They both ended up going to jail, but there was a difference between the two of them.

Timothy Naftali

Do you remember John Whitaker?

Malcolm Roberts

Yes, yes, fine guy, very fine guy. I think he may be one of the other closest ones to Wally in terms of supporting him on his things. I think they were good friends.

Timothy Naftali

And the real opponents to the environment that you remember, other than the Vice President, who's...

Malcolm Roberts

You know, other than some of the senators who come to mind on the issues with Blue Lake and others -- oh, what is his name? -- Mendel Rivers from South Carolina, he was a powerful member of the House who Wally got really mad regarding shutting down the BASF plant near Hilton Head. You know, some of them weren't enemies, but there were some interesting exchanges, like Everett Dirksen. When Wally -- after the oil spill, you know, he shut down all drilling right on all offshore, until the thing had been cleaned up, because

they had no regs for offshore drilling; they just did what they did onshore. And this ended up in a suit where \$400 or \$500 million -- where these oil companies had lost this money -- they sued Wally personally and the Federal Government, and that was the result just before we left, after Wally had been fired, and that's another story. But one thing that Wally put into the regs was absolute liability without cause, which means if there's an oil spill on your leased area, you've got to clean it up, even if no cause -- they prove that you did it.

Then there's third party recourse, you could go back and you could get claims against whoever really did the spill if you didn't do it, but you had to react quickly. And Dirksen called Wally up and said, "Is that constitutional?" And Wally says, "It is if no one challenges it." And I don't think Dirksen was against the environment, but that was the exchange, anyway. I don't know, I think some of the political operatives, the hard-line conservative people in the White House -- you can probably name them better than I -- they weren't really on the side of the environment.

Timothy Naftali

Were you there for the Montoya --

Malcolm Roberts

Oh, yes.

Timothy Naftali

-- response case?

Malcolm Roberts

I wasn't in the room. I wasn't in the room. But I was there at the time, and that was pure, pure Hickel.

Timothy Naftali

Tell it because we had a bit of it with the secretary, but tell us the full story.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, the thing was that the elders of the Taos Indians came to see him, and they came in all their robes. And these were like the chief, and also, like, the head religious people, and so on, and their concern was the Blue Lake, which was in a national forest, I believe it was. Now, that doesn't make sense, because the forests were under agriculture. Well, it must have been in a park area or something. But they wanted to get their Blue Lake lands back because it was part of their heritage and their religious tradition. And it made total sense to Secretary Hickel. He said, "I'll back you, and we'll see that that happens." Well, Senator Montoya, Joseph Montoya, represented New Mexico, and he was furious. The timber people and everything else, they were just fit to be tied. So he wrote a scathing letter to the secretary about this action or proposed action, I don't know what, and Wally didn't answer it. And

Dave Parker, Hickel's aide who, every day went over the schedule with him and the correspondence he had to do and so on, kept raising this question of, "When are you going to answer this letter to Senator Montoya?" And it was one of those letters you just can't answer, you know, it was just so bad.

But the marching orders from the President told the Cabinet that, if a senator writes you, you know, reply, but if the senator's from your committee -- the Interior Committee, in our case -- you've got to reply, and as soon as possible. So David kept reminding the secretary about this. Well, Wally was fit to be tied. So finally he called in his longtime secretary, a wonderful lady, a Canadian, by the way, Yvonne Lindbloom

[phonetic sp]

, and said, "Yvonne, take a telegram to Senator Joseph Montoya. 'Fuck you. Strong letter follows. Wally Hickel.'" And that's the kind of thing that pops out of this guy from his parents' tenant farm in Kansas in the Depression. It's just sort of salt of That's just sort of the earth and just hilarious.

Timothy Naftali

And he won.

Malcolm Roberts

And he won that battle, and he won that battle. There's a story I need to correct that he told you --

Timothy Naftali

Okay.

Malcolm Roberts

-- if I can.

Timothy Naftali

Sure, we'll finish with that.

Malcolm Roberts

Okay, when he went to see Eisenhower in 1954, he had already won the battle with Robert Taft two years before, Senator Taft, over how many acres Alaska would get. We were going to get three million; he said we needed at least 100 million, and from then on, every piece of legislation to give to Alaska state, we got over 100 million. In '54, the issue was that Eisenhower, who had been opposed to statehood, had turned in favor of statehood, but had decided that half of Alaska, north of what we call the Porcupine, Yukon and Kuskokwim Line, the PYK Line, would be a military reservation. They needed it for national defense.

That's why Wally went back in '54 to see Eisenhower, not over the 100 million acres, three million acres issue, like he said earlier. And 50 Alaskans went, and Wally had just been elected Republican National Committeeman, but he hadn't been accepted by the National Committee for some technicalities. But still, the chief of staff of President Nixon, Sherman Adams, called Wally and said, "You pick who gets

[unintelligible]

. You can bring 15. There'll be 16 of you." So Wally picked both Republicans and Democrats to come with him to this meeting from Eisenhower. So, but Adams said, "Okay, now, you can speak, Wally, and you can pick one other." Well, he picked John Butrovich, who's really a legend in Alaska, from Fairbanks, senator, one of the Yugoslavian crowd from Fairbanks, marvelous legislator, wonderful orator. So he picked John to be the other speaker. So Wally said, you know, he

[unintelligible]

-- John said, "Okay, Wally, you start it off and pitch it to me, and I'll take it from there." So Wally starts in and tells the President why he shouldn't and couldn't put half of Alaska in a military -- I mean, that would have been all the North Slope, what we later found the oil and gas -- the thing that makes our economy go, and everything, we would have lost all that. And Eisenhower came around and stood, sort of leaned against his desk with his arm like this, and as Wally was talking, and Wally doesn't mince words, he began blushing. And his face got redder and redder, went right up -- you know, he was bald, it went right over -- then Wally pitches it to Butrovich, and then Butrovich really rips into him. Well, Sherman Adams is sitting next to Wally, and he pulls on his coat and says, "Wally, shut him up." Wally, shut him up! Wally, shut him up." Well, Wally says to himself, "You know, how often are we going to get into the President's office? This is our chance. I'm going to let John say his piece." So he finishes. And that's when the President turned to Wally and said, "Well, young man, I'm glad you at least think I'm an American." But the Alaskans prevailed, and he backed off of that military reservation because of that meeting.

Timothy Naftali

He didn't invite Wally Hickel back into the office, though.

Malcolm Roberts

Well, he wasn't there for the signing of the statehood thing, so I don't know if he ever got invited back.

Timothy Naftali

But he got his point made.

Malcolm Roberts

He did.

Timothy Naftali

And the Alaskans benefited.

Malcolm Roberts

Absolutely.

Timothy Naftali

Malcolm, thank you.

Malcolm Roberts

My pleasure.

Timothy Naftali

Thank you very much.