INTERVIEW III

DATE: January 11, 1984

INTERVIEWEE: MARY LASKER (MRS. ALBERT LASKER)

INTERVIEWER: Clarence Lasby

PLACE: Mrs. Lasker's residence, New York City

Tape 1 of 2

ML: [People aren't] interested in the subject of health unless they're sick themselves. And nobody ever asks me anything about how anything happened, how we got a billion dollars for heart research. Nobody ever asks; they don't know it and they're not interested. They don't say why don't we have more, because people are still dying of heart disease. Why don't we spend more money on the chemistry of arteriosclerosis and just dissolve it? Now, that seems inconceivable.

CL: Let me try to take you back for a little while to 1960. Maybe you'll remember that you and Mike Gorman were able to get written into the Democratic platform an idea to have a heart conference at the presidential level, and President Kennedy had called such a heart conference but it was a disaster. I wondered if you remembered any of the reasons why it didn't turn out well. It was called the Bay of Pigs Report.

ML: It was at that time that it happened?

CL: Yes. The report came in at the time of the Bay of Pigs.

ML: My heavens, did it ever take place? I can't remember.

CL: It did take place, but it didn't turn out as you and others had hoped, I think.

ML: You mean it didn't cause anybody [to become] interested in getting legislation or money?

CL: It didn't really help very much, and shortly thereafter you decided to try to get another committee, the Heart-Cancer-Stroke Committee that met in 1964, and Dr. [Michael] DeBakey--

ML: Was the chairman.

CL: --was the chairman of it.

ML: Are you a friend of his?

CL: I'm not. I hope to interview him though.

ML: Oh, you must interview him.

CL: Did you recommend him to be the chairman of the committee?

ML: Undoubtedly. I knew him through having been on the Heart Institute Council with him.

CL: Yes. He was on the advisory council I think with you for many years. What kind of person was he? Is he as dynamic as he seems?

ML: Well, he's terribly intelligent, very, very skilled with his hands, as you know, and highly intelligent, very public spirited. He had a mother who--they lived near an orphans' home, and the mother wanted him to sew, make clothes for the orphans, and that's how he learned sewing, sewing for orphans or helping remake some clothes, do something that was needed about orphans, because his mother felt so sorry for these poor children.

CL: I see.

On this Heart-Cancer-Stroke Committee, from everything I can

tell, it was really your committee in the sense that you were responsible for setting it up and most of your friends were on it.

ML: Who? Was Johnson president?

CL: Yes, Johnson was president.

ML: Well, I knew Johnson at that time and I had been one of his supporters. Johnson really was very moved by illness and disabilities, especially in older people. Most of them are the ones that have heart [problems] and strokes. He was devoted to his mother. His mother wasn't always well and he was interested in doing anything he could to help older people. He said, "We've got to have rooms made so they're easier for women to live in and kitchens designed better." And he said, "Listen, I'd introduce a bill that we had to have certain kinds of requirements for kitchens for the buildings we're building for older people, but I need staff for it. There's a man that used to work for Burnie [Burnet] Maybank." Have you ever worked in the Congress?

CL: No, I haven't. I wish I had. I haven't.

ML: Oh, you would be wonderful. I'm going to get my nephews to go and work in the Congress, because I didn't know a thing about it. I didn't know a thing about it until I got there.

CL: You learn faster than I think anyone there ever has.

ML: Well, I had a brilliant husband who had been the assistant chairman of the then-Republican National Committee, and I finally got him interested really in Johnson, and he voted for Johnson the last election. But he was originally a Republican. But he was very, very highly intelligent about most things, and interested in medical research,

too, especially in research to prevent premature aging. He gave money to the University of Chicago for research in diseases of aging, and also gave them his estate and golf course. They got somebody called [Albert] Baird Hastings--you've never heard of him, I wouldn't think--to be the head of it. Well, pretty soon he got tired of Chicago and they didn't support him enough, you know, give him enough space, so he left and went to Harvard. I don't know what he's doing at Harvard, if anything now. So they finally got somebody else and they didn't do much with that either. Huggins [?]--you remember about Huggins, he was president of the university--came to my husband and said, "Listen, Albert, can't we use that money just for the general purposes of the university?" So my husband [said], "Well, do it." If he'd asked me I would have said, "You're crazy."

At any rate, of course after my husband died, people representing the trustees of the university came around to see me to see if they couldn't get some more money. Well, I said, "I'm very mad at the university because they didn't use the money that he gave them for the purposes he had given it. You got nothing accomplished anyway." That was really true. Anybody that was there at the time would admit it. So they decided that I was probably right, they wanted to name a chair after him. They named a chair of immunology after him and I went to a very nice dinner they gave. All the Chicagoans came out to see this. A very nice man called Tostesson [?]--you probably know him; he's a dean at Harvard--was very pleasant. I never speak. You've heard more from me than most people have ever heard in a lifetime. He made kind

of a speech and I had to reply some way, and I said, "Oh, thank you, Dean. I just want to tell you all that I have been very mad at the University of Chicago because they did so little with the gift that my husband made for medical research in aging. Then I decided I would go and get federal money for these purposes, because they have more money than individuals anyway." So when Tostesson got up he said, "That was the best thing that ever happened. When you got mad at the university was the best thing that ever happened to it." Of course, they spend tens and hundreds of millions of dollars of federal money all through their medical school. Everybody laughed. They didn't know what he was talking about, but that's what happened. None of them knew that I was really a lobbyist in disguise. They thought we were having a fight or something. But it's really true; the university has gotten hundreds of millions of dollars from the Institutes of Health.

CL: With President Johnson you once even went to him and told him about a new drug that was being worked on called atromid-S.

ML: Yes.

CL: Do you know if he responded in any way? Did he ever mention his heart?

ML: He was always interested in anything that would be good, would help people to live longer and have less pain, live happier lives. He got the bill. I got him a staff. I had to get staff for the President of the United States to get the bill that he wanted passed on more convenience for aged people in housing legislation that he had started. But he was very, very compassionate about older people, especially I

think it was triggered by his mother. But generally he had great interest in helping people. He liked children, of course.

CL: Did he ever mention his own heart problems to you or the fact that he'd had a heart attack earlier, or did he keep that quiet?

ML: I think he might have mentioned it once or twice and I said to him, "All right now, Lyndon, you've got to go and see Mike DeBakey, because Mike DeBakey is really more knowledgeable. He's right near where you are." And so nothing happened. But one day I was down in Texas at their ranch when George Wood was there. Wood or Woods? You know the firm--?

CL: George Brown of Brown and Root?

ML: Root and Wood, was it?

CL: I think it was Brown and Root maybe, George Brown.

ML: All right, George Brown. I said, "George, I know that here you've got somebody right there in Houston who is the most skilled person, has wonderful judgment, highly, highly intelligent, and you don't get Lyndon to go. I've tried to get him to go. Now you've got influence with him. Get him to go." He got him to go. DeBakey examined him. Debakey, I said to him, "What about it?" and he said, "Well, I don't think an operation would improve him sufficiently to take the risk." All the doctors that he had seen in Mayo's and everyplace, they said, "Don't have an operation." Of course, at that time there was not this little tube that Dr.--the doctor from Cleveland--has since invented. What do you call it? It's a thing that goes in here.

CL: It's a catheter that they put into the heart, and then they can do what they call a bypass operation.

ML: A fine thing for me to forget, the name of the man, because we just gave him the Lasker Award.

At any rate, nobody had any ideas. Of course now, everybody would know to do all kinds of things to help him with things like beta blockers, like inderal, all kinds of new things that have come as a result of the heart legislation.

CL: That's right.

ML: Well, he died of heart disease. He didn't stay alive long enough for him to know that he had helped, but the thing that he helped a great deal about was that he agreed that there should be centers for the treatment of cancer, heart and stroke.

CL: The regional medical program.

ML: The regional medical program. Well, without him I never could have gotten the bill passed. Nobody would have introduced it or couldn't have passed it in the floor of the House or the Senate. But as he was for it, he had a lot of friends. He also had a lot of boys who worked for him like [Joseph] Califano was working for him then.

CL: Yes. Of course, you had Senator [Lister] Hill, who was a good friend of yours, too.

ML: I had Senator Hill. Senator Hill was absolutely marvelous. Have you talked to him?

CL: No, I haven't. But I have been in his papers.

ML: You've seen his papers?

CL: Yes.

ML: Somebody's writing a life about him. I hope they're doing a good job.

CL: I do, too. I think it's a lady in Birmingham.

ML: A lady, yes. He was fantastic. Without him we wouldn't have anything like what we have now, because he was both chairman of the Appropriations [subcommittee?] and chairman of the committee on legislation. If you could interest him in the legislation, you could get the money.

CL: I see. You seemed usually able to interest him in the legislation.

ML: I was able to interest him, but you know why? He was named after Lord Lister. His father had been Lister's pupil, and he was named after him. But what he got going was even more important in a very big world sense than Lord Lister did when he found out how to prevent infections. But he never got into the details of anything like that, he never would go out to a laboratory or anything like that. Never. Neither would Johnson, of course.

CL: He left you to do that, I guess.

ML: Yes. And if I told him, well, all right, and I thought so, he thought, "well, I agree with her in general." And Mike Gorman was very friendly with him, too.

CL: Yes. John Fogarty also was helpful, but he didn't seem to be quite as close as--

ML: He wasn't as powerful as Hill, not nearly. But unless you could get John and his committee to agree, you had nothing, because you had to have the House and the Senate agree or the President couldn't sign the

bill. One day Hill said to me, "If you can't get John Fogarty lined up, I can't do anything anymore." That was that. So I had to think up how to line up [Fogarty].

CL: Was it usually fairly easy to get Fogarty lined up, or did he sometimes lean more towards the NIH and Shannon?

ML: He was against more money for a long time. After a while, gradually, gradually he got interested in the whole subject.

CL: You had some problems sometimes with James Shannon and the NIH as well.

ML: Oh, Shannon was against everything we were doing.

CL: Have you ever understood why?

ML: I think he felt somehow or another that he must have been jealous of the fact that we could get something done. You see, I was friendly with these people. If they would help me, I would help them and I would get other people to help them. Now, such a diabolical thought never crossed Shannon's mind, that he should do anything to help them. But they had trouble to be re-elected; they had terrible expenses. And of course none of those doctors had any money of their own, but they could have made some small effort. Even a few hundred dollars is often gratefully received on the House side.

CL: He sometimes seemed almost to get Johnson's ear. I remember a famous meeting--well, two famous meetings that President Johnson had. On the first meeting, you had asked the President to direct the NIH to start looking for more results, to try to get some practical results.

ML: Yes. Absolutely. And Johnson went up to the NIH and asked them a lot of specific questions, and they were infuriated that anybody should think they could get results on cancer or heart in this short time. In the whole history of mankind nothing had been found. They were very angry about this; Shannon was very angry that anybody should expect results. That's bureaucrats. Have you had any experience with bureaucrats in the state?

CL: Only university bureaucrats and sometimes they're as bad as any.

ML: That's something, too, yes.

CL: In fact, I sometimes think Shannon was perhaps an academic bureaucrat in some ways.

ML: Yes, he was. He was. He was very--of course the fact that I was a woman made me terrible, terrible.

CL: You think he resented the fact that a woman had so much influence?

ML: Oh, sure. He resented the fact that I had influence and that I was a woman. If I had been another doctor, then he could have influenced me. Of course, I thought that he had the power to have all the ideas and to go and see these people and take the bother to really try to sell them on something. But as far as I know, he never got in to see Johnson. He did become rather friendly with John Fogarty, but such troubles [as] we had were made by Shannon.

But one day we went to Senator Hill. Shannon was supposed to--don't let this be available to the general public.

CL: All right, I surely won't. It will be kept away.

ML: I went to Hill, probably with Mike Gorman, and said, "Listen, Mike, if we have another four years of Shannon then I don't know what's the use." Mike said, "I agree with you. You ought to go up and see the President." I said, "He's the only one that can stop it," because [Wilbur] Cohen had the appointment. So I called up Hill and said, "Will you go up and see the President with me?" He said yes. I asked him what time. Well, whatever time, it didn't suit Johnson. Johnson was like a great baron, you know, and all the senators are like almost his vassals, because you know the President can ruin your career by not appointing the right judge or whatever. We had a conversation [about] how Shannon didn't want to get anything accomplished specifically as far as we could make out, and we told him how he did the reverse of everything that's common sense. So he picked up the phone and he said, "Get me Cohen, Wilbur Cohen." He said, "Listen, Wilbur, you going to reappoint a man called Shannon?" and I heard Cohen say yes. He said, "Don't reappoint anybody that you haven't got agreement from Senator Hill and Mrs. Lasker." That's how to make yourself unpopular.

CL: Yes, it is, if the word gets back. Shannon also I think tried to block Dr. DeBakey's artificial heart project as I recall.

ML: Oh, yes. Someone had made one.

CL: What did you think of Cohen? Was he very much involved in what you were trying to do?

ML: He was very energetic. I was interested in national health insurance, which we actually have in Medicare, Medicaid. We don't have it in the

form that I had thought we would get it in, but that was Johnson. Johnson made the deal with McGee. You remember Senator McGee [Robert Kerr?] of Oklahoma?

CL: Yes. Right.

ML: Without Johnson we never would have the insurance we have now.

CL: Cohen seemed to be very interested in delivery of health services.

ML: He was very interested in how that was arranged. He was very opposed to what we had conceived as the national health insurance, which was the Murray-Wagner-Dingell Act [Bill]. What we got wasn't that, but what we've got has paid for an awful lot of sickness. Been cheaper to have spent more money on research.

CL: Let me ask you this question, Mrs. Lasker. It seemed at the time when President Johnson was in office that his years were going to go down as really great years for medicine, for fighting disease--

ML: They are.

CL: And if you look at the number of acts, maybe as many as thirty or forty health acts of various kinds were passed. And yet at least thus far, historians have not given him very much credit for--

ML: Well, they don't know anything about it usually. I was there. None of them had the ideas for the act, or had the idea of how you could get them carried out or what would happen. They didn't know how to get the money. You see, I could get the money from Hill. Nobody ever heard of money like what we have now or what we got from Hill for medical research. We have now over a billion dollars for cancer

alone, about a billion for heart. Unheard of. And no doctors think in those terms.

But I happen to have been married to a man who really invented modern advertising and who was used to dealing with all kinds of businesses and knew the costs of everything. When he said to me, "What do you want to get accomplished in your life?" I said, "I want to eliminate tuberculosis." It was then tuberculosis, or heart, cancer, arteriosclerosis, I forget, something else, mental health something. Plenty of things. He said, "I tell you, you don't need my kind of money for that, you need federal money, and I will show you how to get it." That's how I got going, on federal money.

CL: Who came up with the idea--I've always wondered about this--of the fact sheets that you began turning out way back in 1946?

ML: Oh, main cause of death and disability are killers--?

CL: Yes. That's right. You turned out a little sheet of information. That was a brilliant idea, because--

ML: Oh, that was my idea. Oh, well, I got sometimes my husband's agency--my husband unfortunately gave his agency to his men in 1942, so I didn't have the services of that agency. But then other agencies were kind enough to help me and do some drawings and layouts for me. But nobody had any facts together. The reason doctors never got anyplace was that they never had any facts.

CL: That's right. You almost usurped the field, in fact, on providing information.

ML: Yes.

CL: There's that wonderful story I think that you've probably heard, about the secretary during the Eisenhower Administration who talked to you and then sent his aide out to check your facts, and he ended up checking Mary Lasker's fact book because it was the one thing available.

ML: Where he could find out anything.

CL: That's right, and that seemed to be successful all the way up through to when you put out that very large volume under President Johnson, some ten thousand copies. "Does Federal Research Pay Off?" I think it was called.

ML: "Does Medical Research Pay Off in Lives and Dollars?" And by that time--well, for instance by this time the vaccine for polio had been made and given to everybody, so that cut the deaths and disabilities from polio and that certainly saved money for people in the country. We got our facts from--I had tried to get James Murray--do you remember him?

CL: Yes, I do.

ML: --to do a big bill on facts, major facts about major crippling diseases. Well, one agency was already insisting on a little bit more money. Well, if they had employed a good advertising agency to do the pictures and the charts they would have been much more effective. But of course none of the doctors cared about how many people died.

CL: That's right. Shannon, during the Heart-Cancer-Stroke hearings--

ML: Have you seen him recently?

CL: No, I haven't.

ML: He has cancer of the throat.

CL: Oh, I hadn't heard that.

ML: How did you know him? Seems funny you should know him.

CL: I've just read so much about him and read what he testified to and that kind of thing.

ML: The reverse of what I say, didn't he say the reverse of everything I'd say?

CL: Virtually, yes. In fact, during the Heart-Cancer-Stroke hearings he made a comment that even if we could take care of heart disease by diet and drugs, it would only be 10 or 15 per cent of the people and it still wouldn't take care of the fundamental cause. And a doctor pointed out to him that that would save a hundred thousand lives a year, and he made a comment to the effect that "Well, I don't get interested in statistics because everyone has to die of something." That was a strange kind of argument to make. He just wasn't interested in saving fifty, a hundred, two hundred thousand lives a year.

ML: He wasn't. You see, the other thing, the thing we did do saved a tremendous number of lives, because we never used to have anything you could do about high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a large cause of heart attacks and strokes. Some boys working for Merck found out how to make drugs that would control blood pressure. That all took place. They probably had some federal support, I don't know that Merck got federal support for that, but the men that did it may have had federal support in their schools, something. But at any rate, it was done and it did drop the death rate stupendously.

CL: That was probably the first great victory for heart disease.

ML: Very big, yes. Well, of course, the polio victory was very big, not in numbers, not anything like the numbers--there were never so many deaths from polio fortunately.

CL: Yes. Well, you were involved in the origin of the Heart Institute itself. It seems to me you and Florence [Mahoney]--

ML: Yes, I was very involved in the origin of the Heart Institute. I was friendly with Claude Pepper, and I said, "Listen, I have a good bill for you." He said, "What's involved?" I said, "We don't have any research in heart, the main cause of death." He said, "All right, I'll introduce it on Valentine's Day." He did and it passed, and we couldn't get the President to sign it because--that was Truman--he was touring the country for his campaign, and we found that the bill was stuck in a bureaucratic drawer someplace.

CL: How did you find President Truman? Was he generally in favor of health?

ML: Oh, yes, he was. He'd been a--was he a federal judge or was he just a state judge?

CL: I think a state [county] judge in Missouri.

ML: Well, at any rate, he saw many sad cases of life, and he was very sympathetic to people's problems and sympathetic to the idea--in a general way he was sympathetic to more health education, more research, more--just generally sympathetic.

CL: And health insurance, he made the great struggle there but failed.

ML: Health insurance was--but listen, without that struggle Johnson would never have--people used to be scared of it in the Senate because the

doctors would be so threatening. He and McGee [Kerr?] really got the bills passed, you know, Social Security. Medicare pays tremendous money to people.

CL: Yes, it's a revolution unlike anything there's ever been.

ML: It's marvelous.

CL: Well, during the Eisenhower years you must have been disappointed, because it was impossible to get anything--

ML: I didn't get anything done with him to speak of. Wait a minute. What did we do in the Eisenhower days?

CL: You were able to get increases in the budget, but it--

ML: Oh, we got more money in the budget.

CL: More money, but the President himself--

ML: Amazing that you can remember all this. This is Truman era.

(Interruption)

Yes, but he [Eisenhower] wasn't a bit interested in medical research himself, not a bit. He had a doctor also who wasn't, and if I would go to see the doctor with anybody, he was totally disinterested.

CL: Was that Dr. [Harold] Snyder?

ML: Yes. Nice man. Nice-looking man, but not interested. Eisenhower, of course, was full of charm; he had a great deal of personality. But not interested in this area of things.

CL: Did you ever get an opportunity to talk to Kennedy?

ML: Oh, yes. I knew Kennedy and I know Ted better, and I knew their friends, I know their mother. Their mother has visited me in the South of France. I know their sisters. But there's one institute

that I had nothing to do with, and that was the institute for Child Health and Human Development. Eunice Kennedy [Shriver] got her brother Jack to get that bill passed, and there was always money for that, strangely enough. She would go to her brother or to his budget director or whoever she thought was going to put in the money, and it was her brother, and the brother would give the money she more or less asked [for]. She really got that done.

CL: I remember in about 1961--

ML: How was it you got interested in all this?

CL: I actually got interested in it because I developed heart disease and I had to have a bypass.

ML: You've had a [bypass]. Who did it?

CL: I had it done in Houston, but it was with one of DeBakey's people named Morris [?]. He worked with Dr. DeBakey for many years, and he did it seven years ago now.

ML: Listen, DeBakey thinks that arteriosclerotic plaques [?] are really, that there are viruses in it, and if we could get something that would lice [?] the viruses, we could get rid of them. It's a chemical. It's a solvable problem.

CL: Did you ever talk to DeBakey about the cholesterol issue? I know you were very much for getting drugs to control cholesterol, but he never seemed to be quite sold as much on--

ML: No, because he's the greatest surgeon in the world, and if there's suddenly a drop or two of oil that will make the whole thing go away and he didn't do it, where are you?

CL: That's right. Where are all of the surgeons, I guess?

ML: That sounds mean, so don't say that.

CL: Well, realistic.

ML: Yes. Oh, yes, that's one reason we're going to have trouble to get a vaccine, which is the next thing I want to get, against cancer. Can you imagine the hell that will be raised by surgeons?

CL: Yes, because the money involved is almost beyond belief that surgeons can make in this field.

ML: Yes, it is, isn't it? But they're not going to want it. You can only charge so much for a vaccine.

CL: That's right.

ML: Well now, what else? Are you getting more than you came for?

CL: I'm doing very well. You remember this well.

Another thing that you were successful in, I have written down here, was the establishment of the Eye Institute, where again there's been remarkable success.

ML: Yes, they've had some advances. I want an advance against the atrophy of the eye as people get older, so they can't read, and there are other kinds of severe eye problems unsolved, but they've solved a lot of things.

CL: When you were working during the Johnson Administration, you were successful most of the time, but occasionally there were critics. You may remember the article by Elizabeth Drew [?] in the Atlantic magazine.

ML: She never interviewed me.

CL: Did you get upset on something like that?

ML: Yes, I was very annoyed, especially as most of her facts were wrong. In the first place, I didn't inherit as much money as she said I did. The worst thing that can happen to you is for people to think you're richer than you are. Terrible, because then they think, "oh, well, I'll get some of that." She was just plain poorly informed by-- probably she talked to some of the staff around Johnson who didn't want us around.

CL: Yes, or maybe even around to some of the Shannon people it sounded like.

ML: Oh, yes, that was like Shannon.

CL: When I read the article I was astonished, first of all, how wrong it was.

ML: Yes. Atlantic Monthly had another kind of rehash of the same thing. That was written by Drew, too, and I've since never been interviewed. Still full of absolute nonsense.

CL: That's strange.

ML: Isn't that strange?

CL: You would think the first thing she would do would be to come and talk to you.

ML: I went to my lawyers when it first came out, and I said, "Listen, this is character assassination, and I'd like to sue the Atlantic Monthly." And my lawyer said, "Oh, listen, by the time we get through with that you'll be sorry you ever thought of it."

(Laughter)

CL: Yes. Lawyers are usually right about things like that.

ML: They don't want to do anything like that.

CL: Yes. Well, it was an astonishing article.

Tape 2 of 2

ML: She [Florence Mahoney] had always been interested in health problems, not as a scholar or anything, that she'd have gone to medical school or anything like that, but she was interested in problems, especially in mental illness. Now I was interested in mental illness, too, and we finally--she read some articles by a man called Mike Gorman that were very, very good, attacking some state mental hospitals. She got him to do a series about the Florida mental hospitals because her husband ran the Miami paper. They were very good. And she said, "Let's get him up here in Washington and see if we can get any legislation in Washington. As long as you've got a Heart Institute, you could get a mental health institute." So we did. The Mental Health Institute may turn out to be the biggest thing of all, and the Neurology Institute, because they have to do with the brain, and if you don't have brains you're at a great disadvantage. For instance, people who have dementia, Alzheimer's Disease, or any of the diseases of forgetting everything, those are terrible for the people and for the people with them, the family. I don't know if you're interested in that area.

CL: Yes, I am.

ML: So she was friendly with [George] Smathers of Florida, and Smathers helped us and we got an arthritis bill. His father had arthritis, and it was a time that ACTH and cortisone were just being used on people

with arthritis. Smathers' father could get up out of bed again for the first time in many years, so that was a great pleasure. Of course, they have side effects; you can't take it forever. We got another bill through the Congress this year hoping that if you go back over what they did, and if you look closely into the whole business of cortisone and analyze carefully the blood and the output of people who are failing on their cortisone or getting better on their cortisone, they might get the precise segment of the cortisone that's harming or doing good, and you might be able to make a product that would be a perfect product, neither harm people but would still be able to be good. We got the bill passed. We had a hell of a time because doctors didn't want that either. And we didn't get much money for it, only about forty million dollars; that's going to take more than that. (Laughter)

CL: That's a start though. Forty million more than there was before.

ML: Well, yes. Then the man that's the head of it really isn't interested in arthritis, and it's a very bad [situation]. You know, the people who make the appointments in the president's office never know who they appoint, the professionals they appoint, and they themselves are not terribly interested necessarily. If Johnson would interview the people, he'd know right away they really weren't interested in the subject. He would have known. He was very smart about what people were like and what he could get them to do. He would have said, "Well, listen, I don't think you're really deeply interested in this. This isn't one of your major objectives in life." The man would

probably have to say, "No, you're right, but I'd like a job. I could do it," or something like that. But Johnson would go by his feeling, and people in the appointments were like Shannon. You knew Shannon?

CL: No, I've just read all of his material.

ML: Oh, for God's sake. He's against everything, wasn't he?

CL: Yes, he was.

ML: No vision.

CL: No broad vision.

ML: No vision.

CL: What we'd call tunnel vision.

ML: He absolutely hated us.

CL: What about Anna Rosenberg? She worked with you early.

ML: Yes. She knew senators that we didn't know, and she would introduce us to senators mostly, and sometimes congressmen. I met President Truman through her. She knew or she arranged that the head of the Democratic--there's always a chairman of the Democratic Party--who was a friend of hers, named something like Harrigan or Hammerhan [Robert E. Hannegan] or some name like that. I can't remember it now. She said, "You ought to go and see Truman and see what you can do with him. Now is the time." I said, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to go." She said, "I know this man. I'll get you an appointment." She did. And it was the day that the bomb had dropped on Japan. I came in there, and he thought he had to excuse himself to me--just by himself. Isn't that extraordinary?

CL: That is. Because thereafter he always was on the defensive about it.

ML: He said we would have lost fifty thousand Americans more, he told me, if we don't do this.

At any rate, then I said, "I want you to be the first president that sends a health message to Congress. Health is a subject people are deeply interested in, and it's been practically overlooked by the Congress. I know that you are very sympathetic because you've been a judge and seen terrible things happen to people that weren't curable or fixable at the time." He said, "Yes, that's true." I said, "In addition, I want national health insurance." He said, "Well, that's more complicated." Sure as hell was.

(Laughter)

CL: It was, wasn't it?

ML: So anyway, we got them to have a report written by Vannevar Bush, who had been head of a wartime council on science research, and it was called--

CL: National Defense Research Council or something? Oh, "Science, the Endless Frontier."

ML: That was it, yes. And what happened then? Roosevelt [Truman?] was president and I got Anna [Rosenberg] Hoffman to tell Roosevelt [Truman?] to tell Bush to do this thing and what should be the policy of the government in health for the next few years. Well, there was nothing saying we shouldn't do anything about it, but there was nothing saying we should spend a few hundred million dollars on the subject, which was what was really needed.

CL: Yes, that's right.

ML: You ought to read that. You know so much about this you ought to read it, "Science and"--you've read it?

CL: I will.

ML: Well, this was done really because I agitated Anna Hoffman to get the President to ask Vannevar Bush to write it.

CL: Now she didn't work with you much after the fifties, or did she continue to be active?

ML: Oh, we were really best friends. She died, you know, this fall.

CL: I didn't know that.

ML: And she died of cancer of the lung. You see, if we had had more money earlier it's conceivable it could have been reversed. Because the people that are really on the frontiers, on the cutting edge of things now in cancer, think that we'll eventually have a cancer vaccine, as soon as we find more viruses. We have one human virus now. What we need is about five viruses that represent all the different parts of the body that get cancer. I know a man at Merck that has a capacity at the moment--he made the measles vaccine; he's one of the most famous virus [vaccine?] makers of the world--and I said to him, "I'll get you the viruses. I haven't got it yet, but I intend to. And if we give them to you, will you make the vaccine?" He said yes. So when I get them, I'm going to go and tell the head of Merck, "Listen, you've got this in your hand. You only need a little money. If you need more money, I can get you more money," because it's the thing most wanted in the world, isn't it?

CL: Yes, it is.

ML: Is there any one thing you'd like to hear on a headline or on television more than that there is a safe, effective cancer vaccine?

CL: That would be the greatest blessing that there could be.

ML: That anybody could make for anybody else. It will be made before 1990, maybe before 2000. I'll have to give myself leeway.

CL: Right. You've learned over the years that you have to give some leeway.

ML: Yes. I don't get it all on the same day.

CL: Well, you tried. You did more than anyone else did to get it the same day.

ML: I tried to get it the same day. Well, that's why I like DeBakey so much. He wants to have it the same day.

CL: He does. He has that same dynamic spirit.

ML: Only thing is, he doesn't speak loud enough so you can hear him.

CL: You mean he actually does speak in a low tone?

ML: Very low. My sister arranges our awards, and he's the chairman of the jury. Neither of us, and none of us, can get him to speak into the microphone. But in conversation he wants it.

CL: Isn't Mr. Gorman that same kind of driving, get-it-the-same-day type, too?

ML: Oh, yes. We have another one, his name is Terry Lierman, who is a brilliant boy, who used to be the clerk of [Warren] Magnuson's committee when Magnuson was chairman of the full Appropriations Committee. He knows everything, you know, the mechanics of everything, all the people in everybody's office. He knows all the people. He really is

very able. But Gorman has been very faithful over all these years. Without Gorman there would be no--without the mental health bill there would be no anti-depressing drugs or tranquilizing drugs. All of the drug business largely came from work that had been initially financed by the National Mental Health Institute.

CL: He still works for you, does he, in Washington?

ML: He works for me in Washington.

CL: That's wonderful. That has been a long association, back to 1949 I guess or somewhere around there.

ML: Oh, yes. Yes, 1949, that's right. You're fantastic to know so much.

CL: Well, I've been through so many of the documents that some of these dates stick.

ML: Did you know Dr. [Monte M.] Poen?

CL: I've read his book, but I've never met him.

ML: Has he got a book written?

CL: He did get a book out on the Truman years, yes.

ML: In health or what?

CL: Yes. It's about the health insurance struggle under the Truman Administration. It's a good book [Harry Truman Versus the Medical Lobby: The Genesis of Medicare].

ML: Is it?

CL: You're mentioned in there many times I would say.

ML: Well, now, I ought to have that book, but I don't know where it is. I bet it would be hard to get. I'd have to write to him to get something. I've got to have him--you know what he did? I would do a

session like this that would be typed, send it to him, and then he would edit it and make it shorter.

CL: I see.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview III

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