INTERVIEW I

DATE: JUNE 15, 1970

INTERVIEWEE: LEONARD MARKS

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Marks' office in Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

F: This is an interview with Mr. Leonard Marks in his office in Washington on June 15, 1970. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz. Mr. Marks, let's talk a little bit how you ever came to be in communications in the first place. You have a background somewhere in there as being a law professor. I was asking you about how you came to be in communications.

M: I was assistant General Counsel of the Federal Communications Commission during the war years. When VE Day rolled around, I gave notice that in six months I would be leaving. So in January 1946 I resigned and began the practice of law in Washington specializing in the field of communications.

F: And you stayed with that then until the 1960's?

M: Until the President appointed me as the Director of the United States Information Agency, I practiced in that field.

F: Right. Did you get to know Mr. Johnson during that interim period? When did you first get acquainted?

M: I met Mr. Johnson about 1947. Would you like to know how?

F: Yes.

M: We were retained by Judge Roy Hofheinz in Houston who had left the bench and was trying to establish himself in the radio field. We handled some of his affairs rather successfully. One day he called and he said that a friend of his, a congressman from Texas, was interested in the radio business because his wife had a small station in

Austin. They had some problems on which they would like to have some advice. So he introduced me to then-Congressman Lyndon Johnson. From that time until 1965, when I left the practice, I was counsel to the radio station KTBC AM, FM, and TV and other interests which the Johnson family acquired.

F: Well, as you know in the campaign of '64 and some previous campaigns for lesser office, the unique position of KTBC in a fairly sizable middle-size town as the sole TV outlet was a matter of some concern at least to opponents. Now I have picked up a story and I would like to know whether you were involved and whether you can throw any light on this: that at the time that television began to make its impact and licenses began to be distributed that Austin primarily had three radio stations, KVET, KTBC, and KNOW. And according to one story, Mrs. Johnson or Jesse Kellam or someone suggested since TV installation obviously was going to be expensive that the several stations there go together and more or less form a consortium to handle TV together, but that the other two stations didn't want to get into that sort of expense commitment and therefore left the field opened to KTBC since obviously someone was going to go into TV in Austin then. Were you in on that at all?

M: There were some preliminary discussions which never advanced very far. Let me tell you how Mrs. Johnson decided to get into the television business. It sticks out in my memory as a very clear experience. When the FCC opened up television channels, many large companies felt that it was not a worthwhile investment. As a matter of fact, the Columbia Broadcasting System decided to turn in permits that they had. Other large organizations followed suit, including the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company which was a pioneer in Pittsburgh.

F: I remember it sort of left it to Dumont to some extent in the beginning.

M: Well, primarily NBC was the leader in the field of television, but the other companies said, "Oh, they're interested in selling sets, and that is the only reason they are investing in the building and operation of stations." You must remember there were very heavy losses in those days, and it took a visionary to see the possible profitable operation. Well, at that time I became convinced that the way of the future was television, and I discussed the matter on many occasions with Mrs. Johnson and Jesse Kellam and others of the station. There was a memorable Sunday when I was asked to come to the Johnson home on Thirtieth Place Northwest Washington and spend a couple of hours going over pro's and con's, and what it would cost, and what the risk would be. That meeting lasted all morning, all afternoon, and well into the evening. And I pointed out the hazards, but I also pointed out what, in my judgment, were the opportunities for rendering a tremendous service. I said that there would be an impact on the community that radio never could make, that I felt that this would become the dominant source of information, and that if the Johnsons were to stay in the communications business it was essential that they go into television. Just when we were ready to break up, Mrs. Johnson said, "Well, I agree with you. If we are going to go into it, let's go into it and do it right. It may take everything we have, but it is a gamble that I want to make." Mr. Johnson, then Senator Johnson, said, "Well, it is your money, Lady Bird, but I have to say if we are going to make a contribution to the community, this is the time to do it. And it may turn out to be as successful as Marks indicates." So the decision was made to go ahead and file an application. There was no opposition. There was no competition because no other group in the community wanted a VHF television station. You must remember that there were UHF channels,

and there were some companies who felt that the future would be in UHF not in VHF, for which KTBC was going to apply. And so they applied for UHF. We applied for VHF. The commission granted all applications for the community at that time, without a hearing, without any competitive consideration, because there was no competition. We bet on VHF; they bet on UHF.

F: Which slowed their timetable considerably.

M: Well, their judgment proved to be wrong because UHF has been slow in developing. Sets were not immediately available. Advertisers didn't have the confidence in UHF. The coverage is not as extensive, and so, therefore, an investment in UHF did not prove to be as good.

F: Did you primarily work with Mrs. Johnson on this, or did the Senator take an active hand himself? Did he tend to defer to her in business decisions?

M: Primarily I worked with Jesse Kellam, because it was his responsibility to gather the information to make proposals. When we had the material in position to present to the FCC, I would go to Mrs. Johnson and discuss it with her. It was her stockholding. Senator Johnson did participate, was aware, but it was always in a husbandly fashion rather than in an ownership fashion. He scrupulously avoided any contacts with the Federal Communications Commission because he felt that in his position as an official of the Senate he would not want to be involved in discussions. It would not have made any difference because there was no competition and there was no question raised about the qualifications. But he at all times deferred to her and would frequently say, "Well, it's Lady Bird's station."

F: You would refute then the charge sometimes leveled that he brought heavy

pressure to bear on the FCC and maintaining his position in the Central Texas area?

M: I certainly would refute it. There isn't a word of truth in it. And it was interesting to me. Several weeks ago I had lunch with the former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Rosel Hyde, who had served in that commission for over thirty years. As a matter of fact, he was general counsel and I was his assistant. I entered the commission when he was in a subsidiary or lower capacity and I was his assistant. So I have known him for all of my professional life. We were reminiscing, and he said to me, "Leonard, you should feel very complimented because the file at the commission which has been most thumbed and most scrupulously examined is that of KTBC. Newspaper people, professional politicians, those who thought they might be able to find some hint of influence or pressure have just examined that file from page one to the end. And they have examined me," said Chairman Hyde, "and talked to every man on the staff that had the slightest connection." At no time has anyone ever been able to find anything that was improper. It is interesting to note that in the years in which I acted as counsel for the station at no time did we ever engage in a hearing A, against KTBC, B, against KTBC. At no time did we ever ask for a special consideration, with one exception. That exception involved the move of radio station KTBC from its location to a new location because they were losing their lease and had to get out. I filed a request that the application be expedited and considered earlier than its normal turn. That request was turned down. So you can look back over the record of 25 years at the FCC, and you will be

unable to find any support for any inference or any allegation that there was pressure by the Johnson family.

F: KTBC in a sense then was a pioneer.

M: It certainly was. It was a pioneer in bringing television to the community. It was a pioneer in bringing FM to the community. It brought higher power and the best of equipment to the community so that the service rendered would be the ultimate.

F: Did you get to know President Kennedy or Senator Kennedy through Senator Johnson, or was this developed independently?

M: I met Senator Kennedy in the 1960 campaign. At the time I was acting as an aide in the campaign for Senator Johnson, who, as you know, was running mate on that ticket. I handled radio and television matters, that is the placement of time, the purchase of time. I also handled some scheduling for him. When he participated in a nationwide television broadcast, I would make the necessary arrangements and coordinate with the Kennedy staff. That is how I met Senator Kennedy.

F: Then you became, as I recall, a member of the Board of Directors of COMSAT [Communications Satellite Corporation].

M: That's right.

F: Did this bring you in contact with the Vice President?

M: I was appointed by President Kennedy as original incorporator along with twelve other men. I know that my name was brought to President Kennedy's attention by Vice President Johnson. He knew of my experience, as I related it to you, and recommended me, and I was appointed. During my service as incorporator and subsequently as director of COMSAT, I did on occasion work with Vice President Johnson, who was in charge of the Space Council.

F: Did you get the feeling that President Kennedy, when he was naming a board or some group with multiple membership, say a half dozen or more, deferred to the Vice President on a sort of quota system that the Vice President should have the opportunity of recommending one or two or three people or simply that the Vice President recommended people to him the way that other people of influence around the President make their recommendations?

M: The latter was the impression that I gained. And as a matter of fact when I was appointed, I naturally thanked Vice President Johnson for his support and his confidence in me, and he told me that I was the only one that he did recommend. He knew of my background and felt that I could serve with distinction and said that he felt that I would not let him down.

F: In 1960 when he had this abortive campaign for the nomination for presidency, were you involved in this?

M: Yes, very much. I was responsible for trying to get delegates in the East, and I must say that his humor rose to the occasion. I had Massachusetts and Rhode Island and Vermont and New York.

F: You didn't have any easy task, did you?

M: And when we would report almost on a daily basis our success, he would say to me, "Why can't you get delegates in Massachusetts? What are you doing, sleeping on the job?" But I did work in that capacity prior to the Los Angeles convention. I was one of six people chosen to work on the floor of the convention as a liaison between the Johnson camp and the various delegations.

F: What was your impression? Did you have an impression that if Senator Kennedy's drive had stalled on the first or second ballot that perhaps

you could get some people to peel off to Senator Johnson?

M: Definitely. I felt that if we had gotten over that second ballot there wouldn't have been any question but that Lyndon Johnson would have been the nominee. I had some interesting discussions before the Los Angeles meeting with Ted Sorensen, in which I told him that I felt that it would be a Johnson-Kennedy ticket. I must say that his judgment was better than mine. He told me that it would be a Kennedy-Johnson ticket.

F: I see.

M: Which I scoffed at but later found his prediction came true.

F: Did you have any idea that one, that Mr. Kennedy would make the offer of the vice presidency to Senator Johnson, and two, that Senator Johnson would accept it?

M: Let me tell you my association with that. The balloting ended at midnight, and we got all of our workers together. In a very memorable scene, Mrs. Johnson and Lynda thanked all of us for the work that we had done. And I must say the most thrilling emotional speech was made by Lynda, who was a youngster at that time. But it was a moving tribute, following which Jim Rowe and I decided we would get something to eat. Then about 2:30 we went to visit the defeated candidate at the Biltmore Hotel. He was very much awake, and we talked to him in his bedroom, and he thanked us for all that we had done and talked about some of the things that had happened which led to our defeat. Then about 3:30 I decided that I was tired enough to go to bed, and I said goodbye and said that I would see Senator Johnson in Washington at some time in the future. He asked me what I was going to do the next day, and I said I thought I would go to San Francisco. I had some legal business there and as long as I was on the West Coast, I thought I might handle it.

He said goodbye and wished me well and that was it. About nine o'clock the next morning I was awakened by a phone call from John Connally, who asked me why I wasn't over at the suite. I was rather puzzled, and I said, "The convention is over; why in the world would I go over there?" He said, "It isn't over; you came here to nominate a presidential and a vice-presidential candidate, and we can't run out before the convention is over." Well, I must have sounded dreary and puzzled, and I said, "Well, I am not interested in that." He said, "Well, you better be. Get dressed and come on over." And so I got dressed.

F: Still no real hint of what is going on?

M: No, and I got to the Biltmore suite, I thought maybe around 10:30 in the morning or so, and I was told to wait, that there would be developments. And then when the decision was made that Mr. Johnson was going to accept the nomination of Vice President, I was given the assignment to call on certain delegations, acquaint them with the background, determine their views, and to find out particularly what reaction there would be. Two of my delegations were Michigan headed by Soapy Williams and the District of Columbia headed by Walter Tobriner. Both of them were indignant, unhappy, and said they would not support it. And so my responsibility was to work with individual members of the delegation to convince them that this was a great addition to the national ticket and would help the Democratic Party in the November election. Fortunately, that worked out.

F: On an occasion like that you have got very influential people like Walter Reuther, Soapy Williams who are indignant. Do you bypass them and talk to other members of the delegation who may be more tractable and try to sort of build up a background of understanding, or do you go for the leadership?

M: You do both, and we found out talking to the leadership wasn't the solution. We went to the individual members of the delegation. I don't want to give you the impression that I was the one who talked to Walter Reuther alone or to Walter Tobriner or the others. But once we determined that delegation was going to be troublesome, then we sought out the individual members of the delegation whom we might know on a personal basis. We divided that responsibility among some of us who had contacts.

F: Did you get the feeling that this opposition came most from Johnson's geographical location, or was it a holdover from his having voted to override Truman's veto on Taft-Hartley, for which labor was a long time forgiving him? Where was the opposition?

M: The fact he was a Southerner. And I remember pleading with some of these people whom I had known for many many years and saying, "Please, remember I have known Lyndon Johnson since 1946, and I can assure you that his views as represented by some of those who oppose him on the grounds of his being a Southerner are not what they say. He is a liberal. He stands high on my list of people. He understands human beings. He is in favor of better understanding between North and South and the races, and he will be the most liberal man that you can elect to this office. He knows how to get legislation through. It is one thing to spout theories, and it is another thing to get an act passed. And as far as civil rights is concerned, he would demonstrate that ability when the time came."

F: Looking back, is your analysis of that failure to get the presidential nomination of 1960 the result of his having started too late late, or a more efficient Kennedy group? Why do you think he didn't get the nomination?

M: Because he started much too late.

F: He put too much dependence upon congressional power, do you think?

M: Yes, he thought if he had the support of senators and influential congressmen, they would control the delegation. It was apparent that governors, mayors, and others who were not in public office controlled these votes. The Kennedy organization had started in January, and had built up a very effective machine. We kept pleading with then-Senator Johnson to let us go, to open headquarters. As a matter of fact, I rented a building at the corner of Fourteenth and K Streets in the Ambassador Hotel as a national headquarters, and he just refused to let me make it public or to conclude the negotiations because he wasn't ready. And finally when the time came, we opened up our headquarters, but we barely got started before it was time to go to Los Angeles. We made a tremendous effort to mount a national campaign. He started much too late. He had his own reasons, presumably. I think there was a genuine doubt in his mind that he could successfully prevail. He never really discussed with me some of the considerations which motivated him in holding back.

F: You just knew you couldn't get him out in the open?

M: At the time that I would talk with him and all the arguments that I would make fell on deaf ears. He would just not respond or said, "No, just let me do it my way, and I will tell you if I want to make the announcement, and when I want to make an announcement. I am not sure that I want to run." And I think Walter Jenkins and John Connally and some of the others had the same experience.

F: Let's go back just a minute to his Majority Leader days, and, of course, he got into a myriad of things, not all of which I want to trouble you with; but you did get in this matter of the first civil rights legislation

in three-quarters of a century, and you did get into the formation of the Space Committee to a certain extent as a reaction to Sputnik. Now the Space Committee would be something [in which] you would have some expertise, and civil rights has its legal problem. Did the Majority Leader consult with you on this sort of legislation to see that he kept his legal lines clear?

M: He didn't discuss with me the legal aspects of either one of these, but he did discuss on several occasions the entire field of space because I had a tremendous interest in that. Even before I was appointed to the COMSAT Board, I followed closely the progress of the legislation creating the COMSAT corporation. Remember, that was a filibuster which was broken. When he became active in the hearings on Sputnik, I met with him on a number of occasions and gave him some ideas. But he never used my background or experience as a lawyer in determining whether certain legislation was proper under the Constitution.

F: Okay, you now are on COMSAT. You still, of course, are doing the other things you are into, and then in November of '63, he is suddenly thrust into the presidency. Where were you in the midst of all of this?

M: In November of '63 I was practicing law. I was on the Board of COMSAT. One night after they came home from Dallas, I got a call to come out to the house. As a matter of fact, it was Thanksgiving Day. I met with Mrs. Johnson, and the girls were out there, and the staff. And I took Mrs. Johnson aside, and I said, "I think we've got some decisions to make on the radio-television ownership." She said, "Yes, we have got to decide what we are going to do. What do you recommend?" I said, "Well, immediately we have to put the property in trust, because if you wanted to sell, you couldn't sell overnight, and therefore I recommend that we

set up a trust instrument."

F: This has not been a real question when he was running for Vice President?

M: It was a question when he was up for vice presidency. It was one of the campaign issues in a very minor sense but featured in some articles. But I informed him at the time that I did not think there was any inconsistency in Mrs. Johnson's holding property, and he having whatever indirect relationship a husband-wife relationship brings about. It wasn't necessary, in my opinion, to take any legal action; but the minute he became President after Kennedy's assassination, I felt that the trust had to be created immediately. Mrs. Johnson said that I ought to talk with Abe Fortas and work with him in setting up that trust. And so I remember that I got on the phone and talked with Abe and said I was going to wait until President Johnson came home. But then it was quite late, eight or nine o'clock or so, and he hadn't arrived. I decided I would go home. My own family was waiting for Thanksgiving dinner, and so I left the house. About eleven o'clock he called me, apologized for having been delayed, and asked if we couldn't discuss the matter on the phone, which I did at length. The next day I saw Abe Fortas at his home, I remember, in Georgetown. We spent about an hour going over the pro's and con's, whether or not it would be proper to keep the ownership. We finally agreed the radio-TV holdings should be put in trust and that Abe would draw the trust document because it involved other than the radio station and involved some other aspects of their family relationships.

F: This primarily to avoid the appearance of evil?

M: That's right. Then I got hold of the then-chairman of the FCC--I don't remember who it was; it might have been Newton Minow-- and told him this is what we were going to do and that an application would be filed as

soon as it was physically possible to put it together. He said, of course, it was a matter of great urgency. It would be given immediate attention. And, interestingly, this application did not require the action of the commission. Under FCC rules, it was an action that was delegated to the staff. There had been many other requests of this nature by other companies. Upon the death of a stockholder, trustees are appointed or an executor, and KTBC would follow the same routine. So within a matter of a few days, we filed such an application. In the regular fashion, it was handled routinely by the staff. By that, I mean there was no extended delay; there were no questions asked. There was no opposition, of course. And the property was transferred. Questions arose as to who the trustee should be. There was some thought that it should be a bank. I opposed that because in my experience, frequently banks are impersonal. And in the operation of the property as vital as a radio station, which requires judgment, I did not think that a bank would be the best trustee. A trust officer might be assigned to the account and in six months another trust officer, and there wouldn't be the kind of judgment that is required in handling delicate issues involving the community. So they agreed with my assessment and chose people whom they had known for a great many years. There was Judge Moursund and Waddy Bullion. There was one other trustee; I can't remember who it was. But it was primarily Judge Moursund and Waddy who were to be the parties responsible.

F: This, of course, re-arose in '64 during the campaign on Johnson's holdings. Were you challenged on this to provide information, or was this largely between reporters and FCC? In other words, who was working where, trying to find out just how great the Johnsons' holdings were,

and what the implications of the trust they set up were and so forth?

M: I was brought into that, and I had kept a file over the years. So I just resurrected that file and showed how the properties had been acquired, the experience that I recited to you of applying for the television franchise without any opposition, the precarious financial background of the industry at the time that television began, the risks involved. I brought that to light. When there were questions by reporters, I sometimes met with them and went over all the facts, gave them a chance to look at all the records, and more stories fell by the wayside than were printed. A great many of the rumor stories led reporters who were responsible to check into the facts, and, after they did, they found there wasn't a story. So it did not amount to much; it didn't become much of an issue in the '64 campaign. I do recall that Senator Goldwater talked about flying over Austin and that you could easily identify it because of the KTBC tower. That was his snide way of bringing the matter to the attention politically, but it was not as big an issue in '64 as you might believe. It became subordinated in the President's conduct of his office. The achievements after Kennedy's assassination overwhelmed everybody, and, as you know, his victory was one of the great victories of all times.

F: Now then, you were treasurer during '64?

M: I was treasurer of a committee, Johnson for President Committee, and we managed to collect I guess about--well, I wouldn't want to guess, but I guess it was over a half-million dollars.

F: Whom were you soliciting from?

M: Mostly large contributions. People who had known Senator Johnson; who had worked with him over the years; people whom I knew; whom our mutual

friends had known. But there were all large contributions.

F: Was this nationwide?

M: It was nationwide.

F: You found it wasn't much trouble attracting the business community to the man?

M: No, and incidentally, it was a very small committee because I specified when I agreed to become treasurer that I wanted the proceeds used for the purchase of radio and television time which I would handle. And it was primarily used to purchase thirty minutes on a network or fifteen minutes on a network. These were major purchases.

F: Did you have pretty much freedom of judgment where you would place your time and how you would place your money?

M: Yes. there were advertising agencies who were involved in a group planning, but there was a little committee consisting of myself, and Bill Moyers, and we brought Clark Clifford and Abe Fortas into it on occasions to get their judgment on the content of the programs. I also brought in John S. Hayes, who subsequently became ambassador to Switzerland--he was the head of the Post-Newsweek stations--so that he might counsel with us. But it was a very small group, and if I decided that we ought to have both networks or three networks, we would do that as long as I had the money to pay for it.

F: On something like that, how much time clearance do you need to get a network to give you the time? I know they will move other people aside.

M: The best way to do that, of course, is to have ample time so that you don't pay what is called a preemptive charge. In a political campaign regrettably you don't have that luxury of planning, and we frequently had to pay preemptive charges. That means we had to pay for the cancella-

tion of the previous program and reimburse them for their talent cost.

F: Yes.

M: And so it was not the most economical way of handling purchase of radio and television.

F: Did you to a certain extent when you decided you wanted thirty minutes emanating from Des Moines, for instance, you then set the candidate activities in motion so that you would build to that night in Des Moines?

M: No, it frequently worked out that we chose the timing not because he was in Salt Lake City or Los Angeles, but just because we thought at this time in the campaign that it was eysential that we get our message across.

F: Is this partially a matter of a certain regularity of appearance, so that you don't have gaps of time in which the public might forget the candidate? In other words, are you trying to keep a certain amount of exposure?

M: Yes, we were trying to gain a momentum. Campaigns have a rhythm, and it's hard to describe, but there are no machines to measure the tempo. You just have to rely on the human factor, and we would say, "Well, President Johnson's discussion of a particular issue at this time is critical; it has become a turning point. People are vitally interested, and we ought to go for another thirty minutes." Or a program would be so good that we would decide, "Well, let's repeat it." Now there was one occasion where my judgment was overruled on this. We had President Johnson meet with a group of young people who sat round the table in a living room atmosphere and asked him questions.

F: Where was this?

M: It was either New York or Washington, I can't remember. There was another program like that. It was in New York, I remember definitely, at the Waldorf, where we had Oveta Culp Hobby and four or five women questioned him.

Well, those programs were so spectacular. The real Lyndon Johnson came through so well.

F: It was Johnson at his best, really.

M: Yes.

F: Small group like that.

M: That he made the decision, let's run it again on another network. I think the first program may have been on NBC, and he and his other advisors felt that it was so good that we ought to run it on ABC or CBS. And I thought, no, we would be better off with a separate, new subject. But my judgment was overruled, and I was told to buy the time. I think part of my attitude in resisting was that I didn't have the money. But that was my problem.

F: There is always that matter [of] warmed-over mashed potatoes. If everybody has seen it once, why. . . .

M: Well, we did buy the time, and I think it probably had its benefits. But nevertheless, it was his judgment, not mine.

F: Right. Did you find him a fairly good candidate to work with?

M: On radio and television, yes. He had difficulty adapting at times. I will tell you one experience in the '60 campaign which amused me. We had a joint appearance of Kennedy and Johnson in New York. It was to be a motorcade up Broadway, to be climaxed by a nationwide broadcast at Columbus Circle in the auditorium there, and everything went wrong. It rained that night; we had to cancel the parade. Kennedy was running three hours late, and the rendezvous point was confused. We got to the auditorium. Lyndon Johnson, the vice-presidential candidate, was to open the program. As he got to the podium, [the] electrician pulled a plug, and the light went out. And that threw him. His performance that

night was not up to standard. He did not take to television very easily, but after he became President he mastered the technique, and I thought he was much better.

F: In a set speech critics of course complain that he was a bit stiff, quite a bit stiff sometimes. Did he try to overcome this? You know you saw the man who, I think, was one of the superb talkers of this period. And the two before TV sets didn't seem to be the same person.

M: He was perplexed by this and genuinely troubled. He constantly sought advice, turned to strangers hwo might give him new ideas, because he knew he wasn't projecting well. There was a question about his glasses. Should he wear them, or should he not wear them? Should he stand up; should he sit down? Should he be in a living room atmosphere, should he be at his desk? How could he best get his message across? And I was one who felt that he should just talk without a script because he was at his best. He is the most persuasive man in public life that I've ever met. He has a tremendous grasp of facts. He's a storehouse of information, a masterful advocate, and I thought that was the atmosphere that could bring him out best. He got contrary advice from many people. He would read Teleprompter speeches. He was groping for a formula. He never found it.

F: But he was trying to?

M: He was trying.

F: You became USIA Director in '65. Did you have some information that you were going to be previous to this, or did this sort of come out of the blue?

M: No previous information. Let me tell you what happened. In 1948 when the act was written creating the U.S. Information Program, I was deeply

involved in it because of representation of a company in international broadcasting, and I worked with Senator [Karl] Mundt, then-Congressman Mundt, and Senator Smith, and others in drafting that legislation. Over the years I was deeply involved in the work of the USIA and would appear on occasion as counsel before the Senate Appropriations Committee in support of a request for support to a company counsel of in the international broadcasting field. For several years Senator Johnson was chairman of the sub-committee handling the USIA appropriations. And he knew of my identification and interest in this subject. We never discussed it at any time prior to a phone call which I received. I think it was on July 9, 1965. I was in New York attending a session to consummate the purchase of a radio property. It was a very large transaction, and I was handling it. The phone rang, and I was told that the White House was calling. I stepped out to a private room, and I took the call, and it was the President. He said, "Leonard, at noon I am going to announce your appointment as Director of the USIA." It was twenty of twelve.

F: I see. Not much time to say no, is it?

M: I said, "You can't do that!" He said, "Why? Don't you think you are competent? All the years that you have told me about your experience in the field of communications, your emphasis on international communications, all the foreign travel that you have had."

F: He hadn't softened you up for this at all?

M: Nothing at all. He said, "Now if you don't think you are competent, then I will have to look elsewhere." I said in defense, "Of course I'm competent, but you can't do this to me. I have a law practice and I've been together with the same partner for over twenty years." And he said,

"Well, you want me to just handle this job of running the country by myself. You don't think you can make sacrifices. Well, that's a nice attitude. I don't think this country can advance and prosper with people like you." Well, my mind was a little cluttered, as you can imagine. I said, "Well, Mr. President, Dorothy and I have been married for a long time, and if she heard on the radio that I was the new Director of the USIA withouth even discussing with her, it just would rupture our whole marriage. She would never have confidence in me." He said, "Well, where is she? Get her on the phone." I said, "She is down in Middleburg. We've got a farm there and can't reach her." Well he said, "Well, I'll tell you what I will do. I will hold it for a day." And he said, "Goodbye."

F: Still didn't give you much time to clean out your office, did it?

M: Well, just as a footnote to that, I came back and tried to act nonchalant and completed my work. I asked to be relieved of the obligation of going to a luncheon, and my client said he would walk with me back to the hotel. I told him something had come up; I had to return. As we were waiting for an elevator, the vice president of the bank came running after me. He said, "Leonard, I don't know what happened to you. You left your check." So you can see I was a pretty startled man. He actually held the announcement several days because he decided to make an appointment of Thurgood Marshall as the Solicitor General at the same time, and he thought he would have a press conference and announce it all. When I talked to him, when I recovered from my shock, I said, "Well, I think that I'll accept it although you don't give me much chance to make the adjustment. How much time do I have before you will announce it?" He said, "Oh, probably three or four days." I asked if I could make a

quick trip to Los Angeles on a matter which was very vital and I wanted to conclude beforehand. And he said, "Yes, you've got time to do that." When I arrived in Los Angeles and walked into the hotel room and turned on the set, there was a press conference in which he announced that I was appointed.

F: I see.

M: So apparently he had to move that up, and I did not appear on that press conference.

F: Did you get the feeling that he asked Carl Rowan to resign?

M: Yes, definitely. I felt that there was a growing disagreement as to the manner in which Carl was conducting himself and running the agency. The President didn't think he was being consulted about some of the activities. He never really went into it with me, but I got the feeling that it wasn't something that Carl Rowan sought, that the President wanted him out because there was a gap there between them.

F: Now as far as I could tell, he and Rowan never really broke over this, that it was a reasonably amicable parting.

M: I assume that, but I have no way of knowing. Carl was very affable. After my appointment, he took me to a meeting of the National Security Council the next day in which he and I sat together, and there was no indication of rancor or bitterness. In fact, he seemed to be relieved to be out of the job, and he wanted to get back into newspaper work.

F: A couple of weeks later Deputy Director Wilson also pulled out. Was this part of a new team?

M: Yes.

F: Or just some dissatisfaction on his part?

M: No, Wilson was a holdover, and Wilson felt that if he wasn't made

director,--and he wasn't a friend of Johnson's; nor did he know him--that he had outlived his usefulness. In fact, I think he had given indications earlier that he wanted to leave and return to private life.

F: Well, you know what you are getting into. You haven't walked into this blindly even though it's suddenly. USIA at that time had about seventeen years of frequent controversy. Well, it is exposed for one thing from a congressional standpoint. You conduct your operations where everybody can see it; kind of like a coach, in a sense. You make your mistakes and also have your successes in public. Did you have real apprehension on taking this over that you might have some problems?

M: No, it may be that I was foolish, but I had the confidence that I knew the agency. I knew some of its key people. I've lived in Washington since 1942, and I knew the congressional problems I felt that some of my predecessors had unwisely neglected: members of Congress, who were deeply interested in the program and who could be of great help but were frequently ignored. So the first thing that I did after it became public, I called Congressman John Rooney whom I had known and worked with in connection with Lyndon Johnson's campaign for presidency in 1960. And I called on him, and I said, "John, I need your help, and I need your advice. And although I know something about this job, I have a lot to learn. So I want you to help me." He was appreciative that I had taken the attitude, and he said he would do everything possible. When I was sworn in at the White House, I invited John Rooney to the swearing-in ceremonies and he came, which was the first time that he ever participated in that activity. And I remember the President called me aside afterward, and he said, "How come John Rooney's here?" And I said, "I invited him." He said, "You're going to do all right." And then I went to the Senate side. Karl Mundt on the Republican side was my friend.

I had helped him; I had known him over the years. And Senator [John L.] McClellan, Margaret Chase Smith on the Republican side; [Senator Mike] Mansfield. I went to all of them and I said, "Here is my problem: I know something, but I need your help because it is a tremendously difficult task, particularly in this very troubled time." Because we were expanding so fast in Vietnam. I went to Fulbright. I am pleased to say that I had no problems on the Hill. My confirmation was just---

F: Your confirmation was just routine.

M: It was routine. It was very affable. As a matter of fact, when I was appointed, Senator [Hugh] Scott of Pennsylvania and Senator [Joseph] Clark of Pennsylvania both came to testify, since I am a Pennsylvanian. And members of the Foreign Relations Committee such as---

F: They made it bipartisan then?

M: Gene McCarthy and [George] Aiken are my personal friends. They added their support and it was perfectly routine. During the whole time that I served, my congressional relations, I believe, were excellent. Congress passed a personnel act giving USIA the same privileges as State Department employees as part of the Foreign Service. Up to that point they had none. And President Johnson signed that act. It is, I think, one of the landmarks in the history of the agency. On appropriations I usually got 99 percent of what I asked for, because they had the confidence that I knew what I was doing. And every year I returned money to the treasury. So congressional relations, instead of being a big problem, were no problem.

F: Is there sort of a congressional mind, particularly on Voice of America but on USIA in general, that it should be propagandistic in a sense--of course, that is a much misused word--but that it should be propagandistic on the favorable side?

M: Most people don't understand what the USIA does, and that includes Members

of Congress who are not directly involved in appropriations or the legislative committees. USIA is the press officer of the United States Embassy. If you regard putting out press releases and explaining actions as propaganda, then it is propaganda, and I find nothing wrong with that word. But most people regard propaganda as a terrible activity associated with Nazi Germany or those who oppose the democratic way of life. USIA acts as a cultural arm of the United States. It handles the speeches of the prominent visiting Americans. It makes arrangements for symphony orchestras and poets and writers and playrights; all types of cultural representatives. That's not propaganda in the traditional sense as some people would use it. It is an arm of the embassy just as economic or military affairs would be arms of the embassy. The principle problem that comes in Congress is that people like to see results. If you appropriate a certain amount of money for a battleship, you one day have a launching; you see it. If you appropriate money for a post office, one day there is a building and there are people working there. When you appropriate money for press and cultural affairs, you don't have anything tangible that you can weigh and say, "This is worth it because we accomplished the following." And so constantly everybody wants to pull up the roots to see if the plant is growing.

F: Yes.

M: It took a lot of my time and effort to explain this over and over again to prevent unfavorable press stories by misinformed or underinformed reporters. I can look back and say that our press relations were very good. There were really no adverse major incidents because I worked so hard to try to explain that this is an operational activity rather than a construction or a physical facility activity.

F: Do you think the foreign press usually felt that you were dependable,

given its own attitudes; which frequently would be nationalistic or perhaps ideological, but nevertheless if the USIA told them something, they could pretty well lean on it?

M: I think by and large that was true throughout the world. There are some exceptions. You cannot create a favorable atmosphere when the actions of the United States Government are hostile or presumed to be hostile. Let's take our relationship in the Middle East. No Arab country is going to put their arms around you and embrace you when you are selling war planes and giving material assistance to Israel. Whenever we have a conflict by virtue of policy, USIA can only do the necessary but it cannot do the impossible. To answer your question, I found that in a normal relationship, foreign governments and foreign newsmen have a great reliability. They place great emphasis on the USIA. They look to them for the information to interpret the country, and the USIA is very effective. It is effective most when it is discussed the least. When USIA is in the headlines, then it is not doing its job. It should remain in the background servicing the press, not creating news.

F: You never pulled punches of U.S. facts no matter how disagreeable. This was general policy.

M: Absolutely. For every speech that I made I worked in the phrase that "the truth is our best weapon." We have so much in this country to be proud of we need not conceal our imperfections. We have achieved greater recognition for human dignity than any other country in the world. We have achieved a level of prosperity and well-being that no other country matches. We have not only tolerated, we've invited disagreement. And so, therefore, we must never be ashamed of the fact that there are

factions within our government or within our country who disagree with official policy.

F: This must have been difficult thought at times to sell to your constituency back home. "Why do you dwell on the harsh aspects of American life?"

M: Well, I developed an argument on that which I think was very influential in overcoming that feeling. I use this as a basis. I said, "Let's suppose that there's a riot in Harlem or Watts. Now, if I didn't broadcast that over the Voice of America, do you think that Radio Moscow would remain silent? Of course they wouldn't. They would report it, and they would embellish it, and they would lie about it. Now if I don't talk about it, the neutral world will believe Radio Moscow because they say, 'Look, the United States isn't mentioning it; it must be bad.' If I tell it truthfully, I have taken away the sting when Radio Moscow or any other hostile force embellishes it or distorts it."

F: Right.

M: And so that argument was very persuasive with most members of Congress.

F: Now frequently, and particularly in the student mind, sometimes it is a little impenetrable, when because of official U.S. policy or for whatever reason there is an anti-U.S. demonstration abroad, the place they go is to the local USIA office and sack it, burn it, do something. Why is it the target?

M: I have given that answer on frequent occasions, as you can imagine. First, the extent to which damage is inflicted is not as great as the headlines would reveal. Windows are broken.

F: Yes.

M: Well, that is a very dramatic illustration of objection. We frequently knew that these demonstrations take place as much as an hour beforehand

because the cameramen would come and set up their cameras so that they would be able to film the event as it took place.

F: I once attended a demonstration in Santiago, Chile in which we had seven news photographers and four students.

M: A library is a defenseless installation. If you go the embassy there are these handsome Marines with guns, and you might get hurt. When you go to a USIA library, there is usually a nice lady who welcomes you rather than tries to confront you. And she won't pull a gun, nor will she evict you. So therefore you don't run very much of a risk. The USIA libraries are at the most prominent locations. They were chosen because of high-density traffic. We want people to come and look at publications about the United States. Therefore, they're good targets. They create news. Crowds can ordinarily assemble because of the great amount of traffic. These are the principal reasons why USIA libraries are attacked rather than military installations or some other operation of the United States Government.

F: Actually you get the feeling though that the libraries are utilized and are appreciated by the people in the country?

M: There is no doubt about it. If you go to some of the African countries, the Asian, Latin American countries that are developing, you find these libraries are crowded. Every seat is taken. I've sometimes felt in cold weather they wanted to be warm, or in warm weather wanted to be cool. But when I made an examination unheralded and saw the books they were reading, it was inspiring. They were interested in historical references on democratic forms of government, science, which is of great interest all through the world, literature. Students with genuine interest use those library books.

F: In the beginning of 1966, in February, you went to Vietnam with Vice President Hubert Humphrey. What was your purpose in this trip?

M: The President asked me to accompany him to the Honolulu conference. I did sit with the National Security Council, and he did invite me into deliberations on policy in Vietnam. Since we were meeting in Honolulu with Thieu and Ky,--this was early after they became the leaders of their government--he wanted me to participate and be fully informed and be able to advise him and other members of the National Security Council on what posture we could take in our information program. After that meeting he said, "Since the Vice President is going, it would be useful for you, having never been to Vietnam, to go there. And also I think you can be helpful to Vice President Humphrey." So I accompanied him on that trip.

F: Did you get insights there that made any changes in USIA policy?

M: Very definitely. It was my first opportunity to review the program. I made a number of fundamental changes.

F: For instance.

M: Particularly in our field operations. I found that we had people in obscure villages acting as information officers where there really was no need for information to be disseminated. I found that we were conducting cultural operations in a war-torn atmosphere where really you don't conduct business as usual. And so I made some fundamental changes. Organizationally, as a result of that trip the various agencies who were active, such as AID, and State Department, the military--we worked out a better coordinating arrangement so that would have a central voice rather than four separate heads trying to work together. It was a very interesting and helpful trip. And far more importantly I spent a

better part of that trip on the plane with Vice President Ky and President Thieu. I met also with the minister of communications. During my stay in Vietnam, I met with the people who were running the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service for the Vietnamese. We also brought television to Vietnam, which at first was scorned. People thought it was silly to have television in a war atmosphere. It turned out to be the most important link between the government and the people, because it was used to explain to the people what the policies of the government were on the purchase and sale of scarce commodity; how to stop inflation; what security measures to take in terms of the Viet Cong. We couldn't reach those people in any other way ordinarily. And when you put sets in pagodas, and in public viewing places, and hundreds of people congregated, you got your message across very, very well. Particularly in the areas where the Viet Cong were strongest.

F: You actually went out from Saigon with your installations?

M: That's right.

F: Did Vietnam after '66 more or less become your greatest problem in the explication of U.S. policy?

M: Yes. Not only our staff and operations in Vietnam, but our number one problem throughout the world was what we were doing in Vietnam, the opposition within the country to some of the policies, the opposition of some of the nations of the world to a policy of military activity in Vietnam. There was no question about it. It overshadowed everything else we did.

F: Also in the beginning of '66 you challenged U.S. businessmen to do something about the American image abroad, and I know in New York a group

formed to back you up. Just how did this operate?

M: Well, the United States is only one factor in creating opinions abroad. If an American businessman doing business in a foreign country takes unfair advantage, he is an undesirable employer, and his employees are dissatisfied; if an American tourist acts in a fashion that is not fair or reasonable, all of this creates an adverse experience. Most people form their judgments not on the basis of press releases issued by the government but on the basis of individual actions. And I felt that American business should be more alert to their responsibilities. I thought we could work together carefully. We had the facilities, we had the talent, and they did, too. If we merged and we worked together, it would benefit all of us. And so I repeatedly met with members of the business community, large industrial corporations, business groups, national associations, international associations and tried to work out operational methods for bringing about this kind of cooperation, with varying degrees of success. In Latin America we were singularly successful. David Rockefeller formed a group in Latin America, and we worked very closely with them. And they will attest to the fact that they benefitted greatly and, I think, so did the United States.

F: USIA got a little flap in late summer of '66 with Senator Fulbright and others because of picking up the check for some foreign newsmen to Vietnam. Do you care to elaborate on that?

M: Certainly. I felt that the best way to tell a story is to show the person writing it what is happening. It's one thing to sit across the table and describe an event. It is another to take the writer to the event and say, "Now look for yourself. Ask anybody any question, and then you form your own opinion, and you write your story." Most foreign

news correspondents were unable to pay for a trip to Vietnam. Their papers were not New York Times or Washington Post in terms of financial support. If you go outside of the United States, you find that most papers are small and live by a shoestring budget. And yet they were vital in creating opinion. We had in the United States Treasury hoards of foreign currency that could not be used for normal purchases, but which could be used for travel funds. And so I determined that we would undertake a program inviting foreign correspondents to go to Vietnam using counterpart funds. It was a very successful program.

F: How did you select the travelers?

M: We did it several ways. If there were multiple newspapers in the country and there was a press association, we would go to the organization and say, "We can send one or two newsmen; you tell us who you would like to recommend." If it was a country with a single large newspaper we would say, "Who would you like?" Now we didn't want the society editor or the food editor. We wanted somebody who had a competence in the field of foreign affairs and that usually was the editor himself or the political correspondent, if there was such. We did not try to pick somebody who was favorably disposed. As a matter of fact that would be a waste. What we wanted was somebody who was intelligent who might be on the offense or even who is opposed to you, because then by exposing him to the facts, if he were an honest man, you might get a different perspective. Senator Fulbright questioned that practice. He felt that we were influencing foreign opinion. And incidentally that is our objective. That's what Congress set up the agency for. And so he held a hearing on that. I pointed out the considerations which led to the decision. I told him that I was interested in making the facts available to foreign journalists.

This had nothing to do with American journalists. And if they had the facts, it didn't make any difference to me what their opinions were, because there are some people who are so opposed to the war, that no fact, no combination of circumstances, would ever change their opinion, but at least I wanted to report the facts, so the readers could judge for themselves. Fulbright listened, questioned me, and near the end he said, "Now, Mr. Marks, you made quite a point of the difference between facts and opinion. I don't understand the difference, and I wish you would illustrate it to me." And I'm very pleased at my reaction to this, because it ended the hearing for all time. I said, "Senator, I am here today before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That is a fact. In my opinion, it is a very prestigious committee. Other people may have a different opinion." He said, "That's a fact." And with that laughter, the hearing ended and so did the inquiry.

F: Did you try to take any newsmen who refused to go?

M: No, it never came about that way because we would say we have a program whereby so many newsmen can be accommodated. Anybody interested come see us.

F: You get the feeling that any of the newsmen felt that they were therefore captive, somehow tainted, because they had gone?

M: There may have been that feeling. It may have been a latent feeling on the part of some, but most newsmen did not feel that way in any manner. They felt that their independence was sufficiently well established.

F: Once you got them there did you turn them loose?

M: Oh, absolutely. Here is the way it worked. We'd give them an airplane ticket and tell them that when they got to Saigon, they would be met. Hotel arrangements would be made. Sometimes they paid for their own

hotel and all in-country expenses. Sometimes we provided hotel accommodations. But they would be briefed and then they would be asked, "What do you want to do? Where do you want to go? You set your itinerary a week, ten days, or whatever it was. You take your copy to the press office and send it, just as you would file it any other way in any country. And you are on your own. If we can help you, fine, but our job is to expose a story to you or you to the story."

F: You tried to open doors for them if they wanted to see certain people?

M: That's right, within reason. We couldn't have all of them see the President of the country at the same time. Sometimes we arranged press conferences where they could question Thieu and Ky and others at a press conference meeting.

F: I am sure you keep up with what the press is saying about you back home. Could you tell that, at least, if you hadn't blunted some of the opposition, you brought a certain understanding, a reasonable tone into it?

M: Naturally we had a follow through. Our offices in the countries where these men were located were instructed to send us all press clippings following their stories. It was tremendously successful. Even those who were the most outspoken opponents came to recognize that the program of Vietnamization was working, that the program of land reform and better distribution of the commodities was working. They showed a better understanding of the nature of the war, what the Viet Cong had done in the way of committing atrocities. They visited villages where they learned first hand how school teachers and public officials had been killed in the middle of the night, garroted and stabbed, kidnapped, how women and children had been victimized by Viet Cong. They learned what atrocities were. I would say the program was one of the great successes.

F: You wish you could take all newsmen over there. You also had that problem of books that were subsidized by the USIA.

M: Let me explain that to you. You probably have read the press clippings.

F: Yes.

M: When I came to the USIA, I found that this practice had gone on since the agency was created. I stopped it. I terminated all projects which involved a subsidy of books that had not been disclosed. There were certain books that were printed, and rather than just store them in a warehouse, we went ahead and made distribution. So I did not have any trouble on subsidy because I ended the program. I ended all subsidies of a secret nature. There had been many over the years.

F: You do find at times that you inherit the problems of predecessors, and because they do, in a sense, emerge in your period, you carry the onus.

M: Yes, and I want to point out in fairness to my predecessors that there were circumstances justifying the practice. It was just that I felt that it was wrong to go to a publisher and say, "We want you to print a book on a certain subject written by a certain author, but leave our name out of it." I felt that with the thirty thousand titles published every year in the United States, we had ample latitude to pick and choose on all noteworthy controversies, so that there would be plenty of information to disseminate.

F: Do you have some sort of a library committee that decides what shall be bought or is this left up to the individual ordering at the individual library?

M: Here is how that worked out. Most libraries are small. Three to five thousand volumes would be the average. Depending upon the interest in the country, you choose certain basic books. If it is an agricultural

economy, you naturally stress agriculture. If it is an industrial economy, you try to give them something on developing of industry. People generally are interested in outer space, so you give some material there. You try to put some great American novels. I chose a library committee consisting of a former Librarian of Congress and some of the eminent academic figures. They spent many, many months and they finally came up with a selection of great books on cultural subjects.

F: A sort of nucleus?

M: That's right. It was called "USA and Books." And we asked each library, out of their budget, to try to accumulate this basic library of great American novels, historical material, works of consequences in the field of architecture, art and the like. But each librarian or each officer in charge of the post had the latitude to order any book that he wanted, that he felt, on a local basis, would be of interest. There were no restrictions. We didn't say, "Choose authors who are liberals or authors who are Republicans, or authors who are Democrats." We didn't care about the author. We were interested in the content of the book and the subject matter in relation to the country. But the man on the spot was the one who chose. Now he sent in his order to Washington; it would be filled if it came within his budget.

F: Okay, I write. Hypothetically, I am an American fascist. I write a really bitter indictment of the United States and I get the private subsidy to send a copy to every USIA library. Its factual content is not great, but its emotional content is enormous and it represents one viewpoint, however limited. Would the USIA library be empowered to accept that or should he clear something like that?

M: No, he would be empowered to accept it, if he felt that the author had

the background and the experience, if the material was relevant to his community, if he had room for it, yes. But we don't accept all unsolicited books just because they are sent to you.

F: Yes. Just keep out the white elephants, in effect. You also had a problem with Senator Thruston Morton there on the abandonment of the USIA world surveys. Well, why did you abandon them, first of all?

M: First of all, I didn't abandon them. Thruston Morton was behind the times. When he got the facts, he stopped his argument. When Ed Murrow became director of USIA after President Kennedy's election, he studied the scene and decided that world surveys were not worth the money that was being spent. This is the so-called popularity poll: Who do you like? Whether his judgment is scientific or otherwise, I came into the agency and found that there hadn't been any popularity polls. I did not feel that popularity polls were worth the kind of money that had been spent prior to 1961 and did not resume them. I also felt that problems were primarily local. If you want to know the attitude of people on a particular subject, you must go to the community because you cannot get a world-wide attitude that will mean a damn thing. In one country, the United States will be very popular because it has embargoed arms. In another country, it will be unpopular because it won't sell arms. So there is no universality on these problems. I confine our surveys to regional or country studies.

F: Did you get the argument over to Mr. Morton all right?

M: Here is what happened: Senator Morton remembered that President Kennedy was elected because in the final days of the campaign he said, "The prestige of the United States has sunk to an all-time low." And he pulled out a USIA popularity poll and an attitudinal study which supported

that. Well, that miffed the Republicans and so in 1964 or '66--I can't remember when it was--they thought they'd pull something out that might be similar. It was at the height of the Vietnam war. And they came to the USIA and said, "Show us your latest poll comparable to the one in 1960." We don't have any. Well then, he accused us of dropping all surveys because it might have an adverse effect. He was wrong on his facts and when he was told, he just quit making the point, so I don't know whether he was satisfied or if it served its purpose and no longer had usefulness.

F: How much a problem is jamming?

M: Jamming was not a problem until the Czechoslovakian invasion. The Russians and the Eastern Europeans had pretty well decided that they couldn't prevent their people from listening because despite the use of jamming, individuals were able to circumvent and listen to the Voice of America news primarily in Eastern Europe. So they removed all restrictions. When the Czechoslovakian invasion began and they ran into a very hostile world reaction--world reaction in a sense that people throughout the world did feel that this was unfair and an imposition of the Russian might on the weak Czechoslovakian country--the only reports that the Russians and the Eastern Europeans got were from foreign broadcast: BBC, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, the like. So they instituted jamming. It still continues in the Russian language. English is not jammed. It is a major problem. It must be costing the Soviet Union a very substantial amount of money and certainly it is a bitter pill for them to have to admit that their people can't hear something from outside.

F: How do you get some feeling for how much you are listened to behind the Iron Curtain? Do you get letters? Do you get secret messages? Do you

have operatives who report?

M: No. Unlike a free country, you can't take a poll and ask people, "Do you listen?" But there are indications from the mail that you get and that's very carefully regulated. People are still frightened about sending a letter to the United States, going to the post office, buying stamps and spending the money. But we have some illustrations. Let me give you one that I have always used: we have a disc jockey on Music USA. This disc jockey is so well known that when we announce on the Voice of America that he is going to take a trip to Eastern Europe--the papers of course won't print it in Hungary or Romania or any other country. But we will say that he will arrive at the airport at such and such a time. There are hundreds of people waiting for him at the airport. Everywhere he goes, they will talk about his commentaries on American contemporary music and on subjects that he discusses. So we know. We also know from our USIA representatives in their conversations with representative citizens that the news is listened to regularly.

F: Did President Johnson take a great deal of interest in the USIA? Did he pretty much leave it alone except when you got up against a problem--or what was his attitude in this?

M: I want to tell you that the entire time he never told me what to do. He was always willing to be helpful. I never had to seek his help except in getting this legislation passed and signed. He did not interfere during the time the Congress was considering the legislation because I didn't need his help. But once it was passed, I wanted to be sure that he signed it. That was the only time I had to go to him and say, "Mr. President, I want to get your help here." He showed a great interest. He read my weekly reports and the special reports. I met with him on a

number of occasions to report on what I was doing--primarily in Vietnam. I met with him on several occasions to discuss our relations with Russia and Eastern Europe. The jamming, the negotiations on mutual exchanges of persons in cultural events. I met with him on several occasions before international meetings. For example, he included me in his delegation to Punta del Este--the meeting of Latin American presidents. We discussed how we would handle the dissemination of the results of that meeting and some of the related events of that. Because he has a keen interest in media, he was always interested in world press reaction and I would send to the White House every day the highlight of press commentary on events affecting the United States. On some occasions he read it; most of the time I would tell Walt Rostow or others who were working on his night reading, "This is routine--you might call item A or item B to his attention, but that is about all." But he never told me what to do or how to run the agency and I'm really gratified at the confidence he placed in me and the freedom he gave me.

F: I gather that he did have some interest in the USIA's promoting educational television abroad.

M: Very much. He knew of my interest in that. He knew that I had helped set up the educational system in American Samoa. And on a trip that he made to Korea, I arranged for him to spend an hour in Pago Pago looking at the educational television system there. He became excited at the possibilities of using this in underdeveloped countries and at the Punta del Este meeting, at my urging, he agreed and offered a Central American country, through AID, an educational television system and this is--

F: In Salvador.

M: It was built in Salvador. We also offered to create a laboratory in a

Latin American country where people could be trained from all over Latin America on the techniques of educational television. He encouraged my going to Africa which I did--incidentally, I went with Vice President Humphrey--and trying to work out AID projects or other assistance programs for educational television. He was very deeply interested in my proposal that we take airplanes which the military had on hand and put television transmitters in them for Vietnam before the land base system was built. And that was done. We had so-called Blue Eagle flying over certain areas like Da Nang or the Delta or Saigon beaming programs into the sets located at public places. That was the start of television in Vietnam. It is a technique incidentally which is being followed now in other countries and I think it also has important uses in the event of military excursions at times. This is one way of getting information quickly into a certain locality. But he was very interested in that experiment and it worked very well.

F: You lost John Chancellor as director of Voice of America, put in John Daly. Was this just a matter of Chancellor's wanting to move on to other things or was this some sort of fundamental dispute?

M: No, John Chancellor came to the agency with the understanding that he would stay two years. We did not publicize that, but he did not think that he could maintain his position as a commercial newsman if he was gone more than two years. So when the allotted time came towards the end, he gave me six months advance notice and said that he was going to return, [that] I ought to look for somebody else. I chose John Daly and, incidentally, the President had no voice or no interest in that.

F: This was your appointment?

M: This was my appointment. The head of the Voice of America is a USIA

appointment, not a presidential appointment, so I chose his successor.

F: Then Daly left in a year.

M: Daly had a fundamental dispute which you might be interested in. The day that Senator Robert Kennedy was shot, at four that morning Daly called me to discuss the event and how we were going to report it nad some arrangements. And I immediately got dressed and came down to the office. About eleven that morning, I got a letter hand delivered from him saying he had resigned and the basis for his resignation was the fact that we had taken a man who was one of his editors and moved him into the magazine department where we had a vacancy. This man had a literary background in the print media and we needed somebody to fill the vacancy, so we moved him. The personnel office had not consulted Mr. Daly about this, and he felt there was an infringement of his prerogative and if it was not countermanded by noon, he would resign. Well, I called and I said, "John, you can't be serious. We've got this fast-breaking story--Kennedy's assassination and everything. . . . You are not going to resign. Let's talk it over later on. I can't get involved in every personnel action." He said, "That resignation stands." I said, "Well, if that is the way it has to be, it has to be." It was a decision which I was sorry to see him make, but that was the whole basis for it. There was no dispute on ideology. There were no personal differences; it was just that Daly felt, as an administrative matter, that he should be consulted and agree before any person working for the Voice of America was transferred.

F: You have a problem here in two very popular international figures being assassinated in this country: Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, fairly close to each other and both of them at times [had been] critical of the President. How did you handle these assassinations?

M: We reported them fully, factually. We introduced comment from various representatives of National Association of Colored People, Urban League, all ranges of American thought. We read editorials on the air. I am talking about the Kennedy assassination--Senator Robert Kennedy's assassination and the Martin Luther King, both. There were overtones of civil disturbances and civil rights and racial differences, and so we had a very difficult time explaining that the United States was not on the verge of complete breakdown in law and order.

F: Did you get a feeling that you had sort of a saturation audience in this case?

M: Yes, we did. And it was a very nervous audience because people living abroad tend to exaggerate disturbances in the United States. When we are quivering, they shake. So it was a story which was difficult to handle, but I think we handled it well and after a few days the repercussions were minimal. We broadcast in the entirety the memorial services, the funeral services of both; we had high listener interest.

F: You were on a committee with Walt Rostow and about fourteen others to review the foreign and domestic policies of the United States and the need for new legislation. How did this come about?

M: It was one of the many assignments that the President asked me to undertake. There was nothing unusual about it.

F: Did he give you any particular charge or did he just say, "See what meeds doing." ?

M; No, let me make one point here. President Johnson had a high regard for the role of information in the conduct of foreign policy. He felt that the USIA was a vital agency. I mentioned that he had sat as chairman of the subcommittee on Appropriations for many years so he knew

something about this. Other presidents may not have that view. Some have to a greater degree than others. But he appreciated that you have got to tell your story to your foreign audience and it is more difficult than to tell it to the United States. It is tough enough here, but it is even worse abroad where you have so few newspapers, where you have so few radio and television stations and where you have a controlled press and radio. Whenever there was a fundamental problem involving the United States' foreign policy, he asked that I be included. Secretary Rusk and George Ball and Nick Katzenbach all were aware of his interest and so I never had to fight my way into a meeting. It was always assumed that I would be part of it and this was part of it.

F: You were the information officer for the United States?

M: That's right. I was the minister of information.

F: Yes. You had another problem that I always thought I could see the logic of, but I thought was unfortunate. That is that USIA publications, films and so forth made to be shown abroad could not be shown at home. I am thinking of things like "Gideon's Trumpet," which I thought was superior. But you did break it down with the Kennedy story.

M: I had nothing to do with that. It happened before I came there. The Congress felt that the Kennedy story was such emotional [material] and so valuable for schools and otherwise that they would pass a law. I think the restriction is unwise and unsound. There are some magnificent films made by USIA that could be used--

F: It makes people of the United States discriminated against in a sense.

M: It is. You could go to Mexico City and you could see "A Day in April," which is a story of President Johnson's visit there and the most magnificent poetry in film. And there is nothing partisan or political

about it. It would make Americans proud to see how their President was received in Mexico and the warmth of the feeling that the Mexican people have for the United States, but we can't show that. I hope some day that Congress is educated to the fact that this is a waste and that it would be to the ultimate good to change the rule.

F: But only in the case of Kennedy where you received special permission, were you able to come inside with it. Were you active in the setting up of the Public Broadcasting system?

M Yes, I talked to the President and told him that I felt we must do something, that the country had reached a point of development maturity, that this would be a very valuable addition to our educational broadcasting operations. I worked with him on the drafting of the message. Doug Cater was the principal architect, but I was consulted. After the legislation was passed, he asked me to become chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It came at an awkward time. I wanted to do it very much, but he had also asked me to head the American delegation to an international conference on communication satellites. I felt that I couldn't do both without minimizing one, and so with regret I said no. But he did ask for my advice and I gave it on who the original director should be, and he placed great reliance on my experience in this field.

F: Do you think it more or less emerged as you thought it should and as the President thought it should?

M: Yes. It's turned out very well and it is making great progress and in fact exceeding my expectations. The support they have gotten from Congress has surprised me but pleased me.

F: Tell me a little bit about your telecommunications satellite conference.

M: The way it came about was this: the President and I were once discussing the impact that satellites would have in world communications--how the most remote part of the world would be brought closer to civilized developed countries, that you could leap-frog from the age of the wheel into the age of the jet in communications via satellites. I mentioned to him that in 1962 I had been a delegate to the international conference in Geneva which had helped create this satellite operation, and he knew about my activities in INTELSAT and that there was to be a meeting which I felt was very vital to the future of the whole field of satellites and to the United States. He asked for a report on it which he got from State and others. He got one from me and, after reviewing it, he called me and he said, "I think that this is important enough that you ought to take it over. I don't think it ought to be some ambassador not qualified in the field of communications." He asked me to remain as director of USIA as long as I felt I could, that the work was not too great in the beginning because it was a matter of organizing the delegation and the like; it wouldn't take full time. But when I felt it was necessary to devote full time to it, then he would accept my resignation but not before. And so I did both for awhile and then I stayed on after the administration changed. I conducted the conference until May of 1969 and we recessed, and at that point I felt that I wanted to return to private life, that remaining as an ambassador and chairman of this INTELSAT conference might create complications, although we did not represent anybody directly involved, it might limit my activities. And so I asked President Nixon to appoint somebody else, which he did. He asked Governor Scranton to succeed me.

F: You received equal support from the new administration?

M: The way it came about, I went to see Secretary Rogers after his appointment and said to him that if he wanted to replace me before the conference opened, please feel free to do so because he was under no obligation. I had known Secretary Rogers for quite a long time. He said, "No, we feel very fortunate having you and you just continue. And any time you need some help or have a problem, come see me." I interpreted that as saying, "You are the boss and run the conference as you want to." And I never had to go see him. I reported periodically particularly on our relationships with the Russian delegation and the Eastern Europeans.

(End of Tape One of Two)

F: You feel that this international telecommunications program does have some future in lessening world tensions?

M: I have no doubt about it because it is the most effective way of communicating to large numbers of people in remote areas. I have always felt that international misunderstanding is due to lack of information. And although information won't solve all problems, it will be great help in bridging the gap which certainly exists. Too frequently, we've discovered that animosities have been created because people didn't understand what they were talking about. There wasn't a common basis for discussion of problems. People act on rumor. They believe the worst. When they get the facts, usually the tension disappears and there is an element of reason that enters into the discussion. So I do think this is a vital factor in international relations.

F: That reminds me: Right after World War II, our local art theatre showed a Russian movie, I think it was "Stone Flower." It showed a Russian family on a picnic in the autumn, beautiful trees, lovely meadows and woods. Some student said to me, in what we thought were those sophisticated days, but quite innocent, "I thought all of Russia was gray. I had no idea they had golden autumns just like we do."

M: Yes, and you find that people everywhere have the same aspirations: They want, essentially, an opportunity to do some creative work; they want a place to live; they want opportunity to raise their family; they want decent housing, food and clothing. And the aspirations, whether they are Russian or African or Asian or American, are usually the same.

F: In the spring of '68, you gave a party at Blair House which was notable. Was this anything more than social?

M: No, it was purely social. And I think its principal purpose was to welcome a new chief of protocol and to bid goodbye to the former one. Angier Biddle Duke was leaving and he was succeeded, if I am not mistaken, by ---

F: James Symington.

M: Jim Symington, yes.

F: I would also like you to talk--if it is anything to talk about--on the transition between you and Mr. Shakespeare.

M: That worked out very well. When Frank Shakespeare was appointed, I had known him. He had been with CBS and our paths would cross, but not too frequently; we didn't know each other very well. I called and I said I would be glad to make any information available to him and he was grateful for that and he set up a meeting. We had lunch together at which time I highlighted for him some of the problems which the agency has always faced. We talked about his congressional relations, his budgetary problems, his relationships with other governmental agencies, particularly the Department of State, the National Security Council--how we had conducted our affairs vis a vis the White House. I talked to him about some specific matters involving national security, relationships with the European countries, our Vietnam problems, some of the plans I had, had I continued, for changing the direction of the agency, reduction in some of its operating forces and increasing its efforts in other fields.

F: Looking back, what do you think the USIA should have done that it didn't get done?

M: I can't answer that because there was no single effort which I undertook that was not completed. There was no single effort that was frustrated. I did have, as a long-range objective, however, a reorganization of the

information program. At the present time there is divided responsibility between the Department of State which has a Cultural and Educational Affairs Bureau.

F: Yes.

M: They create the program throughout the world, but we at USIA ran it. In other words, the State Department says we will now send over a symphony orchestra to Africa. Once they make that determination, USIA offices all through Africa are charged with the responsibility of making the arrangements. The liaison is good, but it is not really an ideal way to run a program. It is a historical accident that this was ever created that way. I would like to put the two together. Dean Rusk and I had talked about this. There was a chance that it could have been done had we stayed, but since the [Johnson] administration was coming to an end, that was abandoned.

F: Does the USIA sometimes get vetoed by the State Department on people whom they would like to use who have the literary stature, the cultural stature, whose politics may be a little bit in suspect from an administration standpoint?

M: We didn't run into that during my tenure. I am not aware that it may have existed in previous administrations. The way it usually worked out, our officers would come up with ideas; they would discuss them with State, and out of the give-and-take would come some sort of agreement. Sometimes our recommendations were accepted; sometimes they were rejected. But ere was never any clash on ideologies.

Now, that was one project, though, that I would like to see and I think in the future it should be considered. I think the whole USIA-State relationship must be considered: should it be merged with the State Department as it once was? Should the Bureau of Cultural Affairs

be taken out of State and given to USIA? Should the libraries of USIA be transferred to another agency of the government? What posture should we take in the field of international relations as far as working with AID? If AID has a program for illiteracy, should USIA have any part of it? We do teach English in our own libraries; they teach English. These are questions which remain unanswered. There are always problems, and there are always ways to improve the program.

F: Do you run a quota of nationals whom you employ in your foreign centers?

M: There is no quota, but predominantly of the twelve thousand employees that we had, most of them are foreign nationals. There were about fifteen hundred officers. There were about three thousand people employed in Washington and all of the rest are foreign employees. And they are very valuable--without them, you cannot function.

F: Do you use them primarily as your teachers?

M: Sometimes, but they are our librarians; they are our translators; they of course perform the administrative duties outside of national security matters; they are the secretaries.

F: How big a teaching operation do you have? It must really aggregate a pretty large teaching establishment.

M: It is. It is a very large teaching program. It is conducted in some cases through bi-national centers which are separate and apart, but USIA makes funds available, makes teachers available, makes textbooks available. I would say there are several million people at any one time being instructed in English through USIA offices around the world.

F: You have a State Department with a one and three quarters century of history. The USIA is a two decade old upstart. Is there a tendency on the part of the State Department personnel to look on the USIA as a sort of an excrescence on its face?

M: Very definitely. There has been, and it may persist, and I referred previously to the passage of legislation giving USIA the same professional standing in the foreign service community. That has done a great deal to remove this feeling. There are many, however, old timers in the State Department who resent the intrusion of upstarts such as men involved in press and cultural affairs. They do not believe that diplomacy is conducted in these areas. They yearn for the return to traditional diplomacy where in very formal language men engage in discussions on economic and scientific business and problems of mutual political interest.

F: Now, you have the problem that in any country of size or importance you have any number of U.S. missions of one sort or another. Do you try to coordinate the press relations of these several missions? Every now and then they must get at cross purposes.

M: No, you are entirely wrong. Abroad there is only one press officer for the whole United States: that is the USIA man. Nobody else--

F: Everything peaks now through there?

M: That's right, except in some cases where, in a field of battle where military operations are being conducted, the military does have some press spokesmen. But other than that, it is a coordinated effort through the USIA. There are no other press officers abroad.

F: This must have brought a little order out of what, I guess, was a confusing situation.

M: Yes, it did and it was very helpful. For example, the best illustration of that is when you have a venture to the moon or a space flight. NASA does not provide the information in the hundred and some countries, nor even in the countries where they have their own installations. That's all done by USIA.

F: Do you have reasonable receptivity for USIA activities from the host government?

M: In most cases, yes. In some cases, where hostilities arose because of political differences, USIA closed down. For example, when we ruptured our relationships with Egypt, the USIA offices closed. And it was with great misgiving, we were told by the Egyptian ministry of information and other officials, that they saw the library closing and some of our press officers leaving.

F: I would imagine they feel the cultural lack there.

M: That's right.

F: Let's talk just a little bit--you've had an opportunity, personally, legally, and politically to get to know Mr. Johnson through the years. I would be interested in your assay of him as a person and as well as a practitioner of the political art.

M: Well, at the risk of being immodest, I feel that I am a very good advocate--that I know how to convince people; I know how to marshal the facts; I believe I have a good memory; I seldom forget anything significant and I just feel that I can hold my own. But I have met my match on a few occasions. President Johnson is without doubt the finest advocate I have ever met any place at any time. Most people don't realize he had a short legal training, but that isn't the basis for it. He has a natural ability to persuade.

F: He would have made a formidable lawyer.

M: He would have made a formidable anything.

F: Yes.

M: I once told him that I felt that had he gone into business instead of politics, he would have been the most successful American businessman. He not only has the ability to advocate and persuade, but he is a very

perceptive person. I have said to him that, "You have radar, Mr. President." He can sense your reaction. He is a good judge of human character; he knows when people are loyal; he knows when they are not putting forth a full effort; he can detect sincerity and insincerity. In addition, he has the tremendous asset of being able to inspire people. Now I worked a twelve and fourteen hour day while I was at USIA, but I never complained because I enjoyed every moment of it and I knew that President Johnson was working as long, if not longer.

Now we talked regularly on the phone. The best time for me to reach him was in the early morning. Most times I would get a call at about seven-fifteen because the morning news was over and he had watched the Today program or one of the news broadcasts. He would call me at seven-fifteen or we would talk at eleven-thirty at night. He would call me and I would be aware that this is one of the occasions where he had some time on his hands and so I didn't mind calling him.

F: You never hesitated to initiate calls?

M: No, I never hesitated to initiate calls and he never turned away a call except if he was at a meeting and the operator would say, "He will call you back," and he frequently did at late hours of the night. I never asked for an audience with him that wasn't granted. Most of my meetings were off the record, but he sought the opportunity to question me. He has a desire to know things. He is curious about everything. There isn't any subject which is remote or foreign to him; he has catholic taste, whether it is the reaction of a foreign newspaper or how you manage to transport and publicize a symphony orchestra. He wanted to know everything. He is the most inspiring leader I have ever worked with and, as I say, I have a high regard for my own training. (Laughter) But he is a master in all the arts that I excel in.

F: Now, in a situation such as Bill Heath, and I might add Ambassador Holland have now run into in Sweden in which the press is largely antagonistic to the United States and it doesn't mind expressing its opposition, did he ever consult with you on how best to handle this situation?

M: Yes, we talked about it on a number of occasions. And I made the point to him that there were certain professional steps that you can take, but basically the opinion that a country will have towards the United States is related to our actions and we must never look just to please some other country. We must look out for the best interest of the United States, and where our interests lie in a direction which another country disagreed, there is nothing we can do about it. They were going to be hostile. The severance of relationships with the Arab world is a perfect illustration. This was in our interest. There is nothing that USIA or anybody else could have said to make those people respect us or like us. Their hostility was caused by factors beyond our control. He understood that. He never made unreasonable demands upon me.

I would say the only time that he would prod for further actions was in Vietnam. It was distressing to find world opinion in some countries so definitely slanted against us and it came about because they didn't know the facts. And that's why I made a special effort in bringing foreign newsmen to Vietnam, putting out films, putting out pamphlets telling the story of the atrocities in every imaginable form. I did it through printed media, through the radio, television, through speakers, the one-to-one relationship. But it was a job that could not be done to anyone's complete satisfaction because it never ended.

F: Did you get the feeling that in private conversations together that he sometimes used you as an adversary just to get you to develop arguments and that he would take contrary side to see how you would answer?

M: Oh, absolutely. He was constantly testing and probing. He wanted your opinion, not your agreement with him. He is such a persuasive advocate. On a number of occasions, I found myself changing my views and then I would say, "Well, I want to think about that," and then he would take another view in order to give me a dimension that perhaps I hadn't seen.

He is a fine administrator. I know of no man who had a greater relationship, more warm relationship with the people who worked for him, his staff, his aides. I would have done anything in terms of spurring efforts, working long hours in order to come up to his expectations because he is a leader.

F: You never really got the feeling that among his employees who knew him well and his associates that these bits of mood or irascibility which are complained about--they weren't any deterrent in getting on with the job?

M: No, but there were people who were naturally irked as you would be in a human relationship. The President did have his bits and moods and he was sometimes a difficult person to be with. But I never experienced it because I was not on his staff and our relationship was a little different. And I must say to you in complete candor that never once did he get angry at me. He may disagree; he may not have fully accepted all that I said, but there was never a feeling of hostility or antagonism.

F: You never came to that point at which you quit communicating?

M: No, there were a number of communications, though, during the Vietnam period, where we disagreed. I was in favor of a posture at one point that he said would be entirely inconsistent with our military activities.

We discussed it frankly, but we never---

F: Would you mind talking about that?

M: Well, it came about during the bombing of the oil dumps in Haiphong and the question of whether or not we might cause greater damage if we inflicted a hit on a Russian vessel or some of the other foreign vessels that might be in port. I thought that that operation was too hazardous in terms of public opinion. But the military felt that it was essential that we knock out those oil dumps in order to prevent the Vietnamese from bringing their vehicles down the trail. But it wasn't a major disagreement; it was a military question on which I don't claim to have competence. I was looking at it from the public relations--the information--standpoint that this is going to cause us a great deal of difficulty. But my premise always was: you can't determine policy based on public opinion; you must determine policy on what's good for the United States. And if on a military basis, that was a predominant interest, then we had to make the decision on that ground.

F: Well, by nature, the U. S. press is critical. You are the minister of information albeit with your emphasis overseas. Did you get embroiled with the U. S. press in your information program?

M: No, I was fortunate. I had been counsel to the White House Correspondents Association. I had been counsel to Sigma Delta Chi, which is a professional journalistic fraternity. I had been attorney for numerous radio-television, newspapers. I had been private attorney for some of the leading Washington newspaper men. I had their personal confidence.

F: So you didn't have to get acquainted with personnel?

M: I knew The Washington Post publisher and The Evening Star and The New York Times and the bureau chiefs and I never got embroiled with any problems with them. They may disagree with the President, but they never disagreed

with me because they knew that was not my problem. That was George Christian or Bill Moyers or George Reedy's problem.

F: Have you seen President Johnson since he left Washington?

M: Yes, I have seen him several times at the ranch. I saw him when he was here in Washington on his next to the last visit. I had a little press party for him when he was here and we've talked on the phone frequently.

F: He seems to be taking retirement rather well, if you can call it that.

M: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you, Mr. Marks.

(End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I.)

27 JAN 1977

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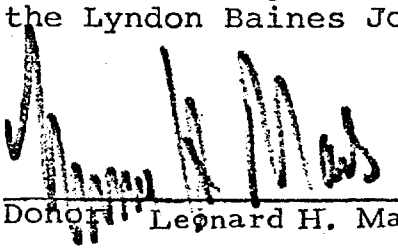

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