INTERVIEWEE: GENERAL WILLIAM F. MC KEE (TAPE #2)

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

November 8, 1968

P: We had covered the Federal Aviation Administration briefly and your nomination as administrator, and we stopped at the point when I wanted to get into discussing with you the Department of Transportation and the inclusion of the Federal Aviation Administration in that Department. Did you know of the plan to include FAA in the Department of Transportation when you were nominated?

M: I did not. As a matter of fact, there was no plan for a Department of Transportation to my knowledge at that time. As a matter of fact, when the President asked me to take the job as Administrator of the FAA, he made one point very clear when he said, (this is almost a true quote), "Bozo, I will be the only boss you will have. You will report to no one else except to me." That, of course, was important from my point of view in accepting the job.

P: When did you find out?

M: It was more than a year and a half later when I first found out that a Department of Transportation was being considered and the concept being considered included putting FAA under the proposed Department of Transportation.

P: What was your initial reaction to this idea?

M: My initial reaction was quite reserved. I had a problem trying to see how the Federal Aviation Agency would properly fit under a Department of Transportation. Of course, I was acutely aware of the history of the

Federal Aviation Agency, which up until the FAA Act of 1958, had been under the Department of Commerce. The history of the CAA under the Department of Commerce had certainly not been one to bring about the kind of transportation system in this country and the air traffic control system that was required. And as a matter of fact it was for this reason that Congress set up the FAA as an independent agency reporting directly to the President.

P: How were you informed that the FAA was going to be included in this new department?

M: I first heard a rumor that such an organization was being considered, but I knew that a Department of Transportation had been considered for a period of many, many years under different administrations, and I really didn't pay very much attention to the rumor. However, some time later a formal paper was sent over from the White House, as I remember, from Mr. [Joseph] Califano's [Special Assistant to the President] office asking for my comments. I tried to look at it as objectively as I knew how, and rather than taking a position one way or the other, I gave the pros and cons of putting the FAA under a Department of Transportation. I was not enthusiastic over the idea.

P: What did you consider were the main drawbacks to putting FAA in the Transportation Department?

M: I felt the major drawback was having to report through a large bureaucratic organization in going to the Congress and in going to the President on matters that I considered vital to the future of civil aviation in the country. On the other hand, I did see that there were advantages. As I pointed out a moment ago, I tried to be objective. When I found

out that the President had considered my remarks and the remarks and the positions of everybody in the Federal government, I made it clear to the White House that I would fully support any decision the President felt was in the best interest of the country.

P: Did you discuss this with the President?

M: I did not discuss it with him personally, but the President was aware of my views on this matter, at least I was so informed by Mr. Califano.

P: How did other members of your staff on FAA feel about including this in the Department of Transportation?

M: Because of the history of the CAA in the Department of Commerce, I must frankly admit they were not enthusiastic over the idea.

P: Did you consider that there would be harm to air safety by reorganizing FAA and even CAB which I believe they initially wanted to put into the Transportation Department.

M: No, I wasn't too concerned about it from the air safety point of view because I think everyone in the Administration recognized the great importance of air safety and certainly no one would deliberately do any thing that would impair our safety. On the other hand, I did feel that there would probably or quite possibly be impediments to getting programs through that I thought of vital importance to meet the growth of civil aviation in this country.

P: What such programs? Could you give me an example?

M: The modernization of the air traffic control system; the processing of legislation through Congress to provide the resources necessary to provide for an airways-airport system, needed not only for today but of vital importance for tomorrow, both in terms of the safety of the system,

in terms of the operational effectiveness of the system, and it's great importance to the future of the economy of this country. It has been my feeling and rather strong feeling that most of the people in the country do not recognize the vital importance of air transportation to the economy of the country. Many economists look at it from the point of view of the amount that air transportation, in terms of money, brings into the gross national product. That is no measure to me of the importance of air transportation, because if we have a significant deterioration in the effectiveness of the system, the impact on the GNP [Gross National Product] will be far greater than that attributed solely to the purchase of airplanes and the purchase of tickets and the so-called business of the airlines in general aviation. In my opinion, our whole economy would be drastically affected by our failure to modernize the entire system to meet the fantastic growth in passengers, freight, and the growth in general aviation throughout the country.

P: Was your salary, because of the proposed Department of Transportation program in jeopardy?

M: No, my salary was not in jeopardy, and never came into any consideration whatsoever. As a matter of fact, the Congress, which really was lukewarm to the idea, I think, of a Department of Transportation and certainly lukewarm with respect to putting the FAA in the Department, was very careful to see that the position of the Administrator in the government hierarchy was not disturbed. For example, as Administrator, I was a Level II. With respect to Level II, that means that you are one notch below the Cabinet level; Secretary of Defense, State, and the other departments are Level I. Congress very carefully wrote in the act, setting up the Department of Transportation, that the Administrator of the

FAA would remain at a Level II. Also, the Congress wrote in a number of other provisos pertaining to safety which charged the Administrator of the FAA with certain responsibilities in the safety area that were not subject to review by the Secretary of Transportation. And this was an effort on the part of the Congress to give the Administrator of the FAA the maximum degree of flexibility possible under the Department of Transportation.

P: Then you came, at the direction of the President, to support and aid this transition of the FAA into the Department of Transportation. Were you called on to testify before Congress?

M: I was.

P: And what was the essence of your testimony?

M: The essence of my testimony was in support of the legislation. Being a military man with many long years of experience, it has always been my policy to say what I thought to my boss whether it be the Chief of Staff of the Air Force or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or whatever, what my views are on any particular subject. It's up to your superior to make a decision. In this case, it was up to the President to make a decision. And once the decision is made, I felt that it was my duty to support the decision. I supported the decision before the Congress in hearings. The Congress understood, I am sure, of my basic feelings because they were very careful in the questions they asked me and did not put me in an embarrassing position. In other words, they did not ask me my personal feelings.

P: Is it your opinion that one of the objections that Congress might have to this inclusion is the historical part that patronage played in

airport facilities?

M: No, that has absolutely nothing to do with my opinion. Actually, it might well work the other way because normally the Administrator of the FAA would be chosen from his background and experience in aviation and normally would not be chosen as a political appointee. For example, General Quesada was not really a political appointee. Halaby might be considered one in it's true terms, except Halaby had very broad experience as a test pilot. He was a lawyer by profession and had all the qualifications necessary to be Administrator of the FAA. On the other hand, department heads are frequently chosen because of their political affiliation, and might be inclined, and many times are, to be much more subject to political pressures on an airport program or a grant program than would the Administrator of the FAA. During my entire tenure as Administrator of the FAA, while I had a lot of political pressures concerning airport grants, I never gave in to a single one, and I knew that in not giving in I would be supported by the President. Now, whether in the future a Secretary of Transportation, regardless of whom it happens to be, can withstand these pressures as well as I could as Administrator of an independent agency, I don't know.

P: What were the objections of the air industry?

M: The aviation community as a whole was lukewarm to the idea, but in general gave it support. But I must admit that it wasn't very enthusiastic support.

P: What were the problems that were discussed and overcome in forming the Department of Transportation?

M: Well, you had the same problems in forming a Department of Transportation

that you have in forming any new department. You had the problem of personnel, where the personnel were going to come from. You had the problem of providing the resources necessary to form a major new department, you had the problems of office space, where would the key people come from, where would the funds come from to get the Department started. FAA being one of the major agencies in the Department of Transportation, the Secretary called on me as Administrator for assistance in all of these areas. My view was that (a) the President made this decision, (b) that Congress had passed the law, and (c) it was my duty to do everything I possibly could to make the Department work. And this I did. As a matter of fact, on many occasions Mr. [Alan S.] Boyd, [Secretary, Department of Transportation] made the statement that he could not have gotten the Department started and in operation without the help that I had personally given him.

P: Who led the Congressional fight against the Department of Transportation, or specifically the inclusion of the FAA in the Department administration. (pause in tape) The question was, who led the Congressional fight, what Senator specifically spearheaded the fight against the inclusion of FAA?

M: I just don't remember. There wasn't a lot of fight really on the Hill with respect to the creation of the Department because of the history over the years under various administrations to try to get a Department of Transportation started, and I don't remember in detail who led it. But there really wasn't any great fight over it. As I say, it didn't seem to be really too much interest and the whole proposal was looked upon in a rather lukewarm fashion.

P: Senator [A.S. "Mike"] Monroney [D.-Okla] is considered the father of FAA. Did he discuss this with you at all?

M: Yes, Senator Monroney discussed it with me on a number of occasions and evidenced to me his concern over the inclusion of the FAA into the Department. As a matter of fact, he had a lot to do with the language of the bill which finally passed to protect as much as he could the independence of the FAA.

P: In your opinion, could the Department of Transportation have been formed without the FAA?

M: Well, yes, it could have been formed without the FAA although the resources necessary to get it underway would have had to have come from someplace in the government. Of course, there was the consideration of putting the Maritime Administration under the Department, and the question of putting the Civil Aeronautics Board under the Department, and at one time there was even some talk about putting the National Aeronautics and Space Administration under the Department.

P: Did you think it would pass?

M: Once the President had made up his mind that he wanted a Department of Transportation, I thought it would probably be nip-and-tuck, but the power that the President had at the time with the Congress was such that I felt quite sure that the act would pass.

P: And as soon as it did? Historically the formation of another department has taken a couple of years, a fight through Congress.

M: I didn't expect it to pass as soon as it did. But I think, again looking at history, we have to remember at that time President Johnson had a tremendous amount of power on the Hill with respect to legislation. And

once he submitted a piece of legislation, he personally would intervene with the leadership in the Congress to get that legislation passed.

P: In your judgment, how strong was the degree of independence of FAA under the Department of Transportation?

M: The degree of independence of the FAA in the Department of Transportation was not very great.

P: What specific areas did you retain the authority over?

M: Well, we had the responsibility under the Department of Transportation for the safety of the system, but therein comes the problem. While the Administrator of the FAA was responsible for safety, he nevertheless had to fight with the people in the Department of Transportation for the resources necessary to carry out his responsibilities, so the final decision as to the budget, in all aspects of the FAA were made by the Secretary of Transportation before being submitted to the Bureau of the Budget. Obviously, the FAA budget in a large department like this, was in competition with the Railroad Administration and the Highway Administration and other elements of the department. And this made the problem quite difficult. This is no criticism of the Secretary of Transportation, and I don't intend any criticism, because he had a problem also looking at the administration as a whole. But I would much preferred to have fought for what I felt was needed directly with the Bureau of the Budget and the President than having to fight through the bureaucracy in the Department of Transportation. Of course, maybe this is a personal feeling and no doubt is.

P: Is it your opinion that the degree of independence did not undermine the Department of Transportation, the FAA independence?

M: I don't understand--I just pointed out we had very little independence under the Department of Transportation so it certainly didn't undermine the Department. As a matter of fact, as I pointed out before, I fully supported the Secretary of Transportation in every way I possibly could. Because I understood his problem, I was appreciative of his problems and he knew that I supported him. I never once went over his head to the Congress or the press or to anybody in the administration with respect to decisions that he had made.

P: Did the press ever come to you, or other members of the news media?

M: Oh, on many occasions because they understood the situation, and they were hopeful that I could give them information that would make a nice headline, which I refused to do.

P: You held no interviews?

M: I absolutely refused.

P: In your opinion, does the Federal Aviation Agency function better or less well under the Transportation Department?

M: I personally think it functions less well.

P: Would you tell me why you think that?

M: Because of having to work through a large bureaucratic layer and the Department to get things done, having policies that we thought in the FAA were important to the air transportation system, being either changed by people at the bureaucratic level to suit what they thought was the right answer. In short, you are always fighting through a bureaucratic level and in many cases through people who don't really understand the problems to try to get something done.

P: How long were you with FAA while a member of the Department of Transportation?

M: I've forgotten exactly, but about a year and three months, I guess.

P: Does anything come to your mind during that period that reflected on either the inclusion or exclusion of FAA in the Department of Transportation? This is after it had already happened.

M: Many things which I don't have time to go into here.

P: Could you speak of one in particular that stands out in your mind? (pause in interview) Would you give me an example of the working relationship or the day-to-day operation of the FAA under the Department of Transportation?

M: One of the major problems we had was trying to get legislation up to the Congress to provide the resources necessary for the air transportation system. As Administrator of the FAA, I felt very strongly that we had to consider the airport as a part of the air traffic control system, and a vital part of it. I felt that any legislation should take this concept into consideration. I further felt that if we were to get the resources required that we should have "user charges" preferably through a trust fund to provide for an airways-airport system, and that you could not take the airport out from the rest of the system and treat it separately. The policy people in the Department of Transportation charged with policy in the Department felt that the airport should be considered separately. I lost this fight and legislation was submitted to the Congress in two packages, one package was the user charge legislation which I supported; the other part was airport legislation which I did not support. And I pointed out to the Secretary of Transportation at the time that it had no possibility whatsoever of ever being passed by the Congress because it was not realistic. I think my statement at the time has been

amply borne out because that particular legislation, airport legislation has not even been seriously considered by Congress and it won't be.

P: In other words, it can't be considered separately on the strength of its own weight.

M: The airport legislation as submitted by the Administration is so totally unrealistic that it will never pass the Congress in my view.

P: How is it unrealistic? Is the estimate too high, you mean, for Congress to accept?

M: It has nothing to do with the budget because the general approach in this legislation taken by the Department was that local communities should be in effect totally responsible for either new airports or modernization of existing airports and that this should not be a Federal responsibility. If a community wanted a new airport, the view was let them go ahead and build one. If they wanted to improve an existing airport, let them go ahead and do it. Why should the Federal government be involved? Again, I think this was a totally unrealistic approach to the problem, and this was one of the major differences of opinion that I had between myself as Administrator and the Department of Transportation.

P: What was the relationship of FAA to the National Transportation Safety Board, within the DOT [Dept. of Transportation]?

M: The National Transportation Safety Board was set up within the Department of Transportation as an independent board. The Secretary of Transportation had no authority over the activities of that board, and his sole responsibility in respect to that board is administrative support. Our relationships with the National Transportation Safety Board were excellent; we had no problems with them. And we worked with the National Transporta-

tion Safety Board in the same manner that we worked with the safety division of the Civil Aeronautics Board when that function was under the Civil Aeronautics Board.

P: In your opinion, was this a good division of authority here?

M: This was not a major matter of concern to us. We recognized in FAA very clearly that the investigative responsibilities with respect to safety had to be separate and apart from the operation of the FAA because we obviously couldn't be in a position of inspecting and reporting on ourselves; so we personally didn't care whether the function stayed under the CAB or was set up under a National Transportation Safety Board. It made little difference in our operations.

P: Do you have any further comments on the Department of Transportation, and the working relationship within it?

M: My major comment on the Department of Transportation would be this: The President made a decision, I understood the basis for his decision, and conceptually I'm sure he was right. It would be my hope, sincere hope, looking at the transportation problems confronting this country that the Department of Transportation will be successful in carrying out the mission. I'm sure in terms of time, at least I hope, that these working relationships will improve and I hope, as a result of the Department of Transportation, that our overall national transportation system will keep apace with the growth of the country. I recognized at the time and I told the Secretary of Transportation that they were going to have an extremely difficult job in organizing a new department, and as a matter of fact, if they even got organized and found out where they were within a year, they would be doing quite well. So the things I've pointed here

previously may be the natural things that happen when you try to organize a new and major department. It's my sincere hope that these matters will get ironed out and we get ahead with the job for the good of the country.

P: Were you consulted in any way regarding the choice of Secretary of Transportation?

M: No. However, I might add that had I been consulted I would certainly have heartily endorsed Mr. Boyd. I knew him quite well as Chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board, and I have great respect for him as an individual and also as an objective and fine public official. I would like to add here that notwithstanding what I have said my personal relationship with Mr. Boyd through this entire time were very amicable, we got along extremely well together, and I personally admire Mr. Boyd, and I think he had full confidence in me.

P: I would like to go on to another area now. In your opinion, did the buying of airplanes in the Air Force that you participated in--was that applicable to FAA?

M: Well, my experience in the Air Force, the nine years I spent at the Air Materiel Command in charge of the major procurement of the Air Force and the logistics support of the Air Force, was very valuable background in running FAA. After all, FAA has significant procurement programs, significant logistic problems, significant maintenance and supply problems. True, they are on a much smaller scale than the Air Force, but it made it very easy for me in those areas because I completely understood the problem and I understood what the situation was and what needed to be done.

P: Were direct lessons learned in the Air Force applicable? Could they be applied?

M: Absolutely no difference in terms of procurement, production, in terms of maintenance and supply, except the problems in FAA were much smaller and quite a bit simpler than the ones in the Air Force.

P: I'd like to have your opinion on the role and the assessment of the controversial TFX.

M: Well, I thought you were going to talk to me about the Department of Transportation and the FAA. Now you are going back into some history. I was the chairman of the final source selection board on the controversial TFX. On that board there were nine generals and three admirals. Our board unanimously recommended that the Boeing Company be selected as the prime contractor for the TFX. As it is well known, our recommendation, which by the way was approved by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Chief of Naval Operations, was overruled by the Secretary of Defense. I might add that in the ensuing investigation by Senator [John] McClellan's [D-Ark.] committee in the Senate, I was required to testify and was pointedly asked by Senator McClellan with respect to our final report in great detail whether or not I had changed my mind on any of the aspects of the report. And in each instance I had to say, "I have not changed my mind."

P: Why do you feel it was overruled?

M: When Senator McClellan asked me this question in some great detail and asked me what my comment was, and I said, "Senator, the Secretary of Defense in matters of this kind is charged with the final decision. And I have no further comment." And Senator McClellan said, "General, I can understand why you have no further comment, but I have some comments I want to make," whereupon he made some very lengthy comments

on the matter.

P: One of the important missions of the FAA is to develop a supersonic transport. Was the decision to proceed in this area a good one in your opinion?

M: I think the decision to proceed in the development of the supersonic transport was sound at the time and is sound today, and the future will show that it will be sound ten years from now. We were confronted with either going ahead with the development of a supersonic transport and progress in aeronautical research and development, looking to the future of this country, or else turning over that leadership to some foreign country, either the British or the French or even possibly the Russians. It is clear that the Concord [French] is going to fly much before our SST, and my guess would be that the Russian supersonic transport, the T-144, will be the first supersonic transport in the world to land at JFK.

P: Why do you think America must proceed in this area? I mean, it is conceivable that we could buy these abroad, since they are well ahead of us.

M: The United States has been the leader over the years in the development and the manufacture and production of both civil and military aircraft. Today the major airlines of the world are largely flying airplanes that are made in the United States. To put it very simply, the building by corporations in this country of aircraft for sale abroad is simply good business. Nobody in their right mind wants to turn over the tremendous manufacturing business in the airplane or the aeronautical field in this country to the British, the French, the Russians, and any other country in the world. We would be foolish indeed, not only from the point of view of business, but from the point of view of the balance of payments, the

point of view of our world leadership, and from the point of view of our national prestige.

P: What were the difficulties of getting this program under way?

M: Well, there were a very many difficulties in getting the program under way because a lot of people in the country and a lot of people in Congress felt that this was a waste of the taxpayers' money, and they felt that the government should not appropriate money from the Congress for what they considered to be essentially a civil development. We had problems in regard to the sonic boom, we had problems with regard to the noise, but the major problem always was the question of the expenditure of Federal funds in the amount required to proceed with the prototype development. This was estimated to be about 1.3 billion dollars. I think it is interesting to note, however, that from the beginning of this program, starting back in 1961, up until this time, that the Congress fully supported the Administration's proposal in terms of requests for funds, and in the three years that I spent as Administrator of the FAA, the Congress appropriated each year the amount that we had requested for the program. I think this is indicative of the feeling of our Congress as a whole on the importance of our world leadership in civil aviation.

P: Do you feel the government is assuming too much risk on these supersonic transports, that private companies that profit on it could assume more of this instead of the taxpayer?

M: No, the reason that the government has to participate in this program to the extent it has is because the program is so large that no one company or group of companies could afford the risk. In all of our testimony

before Congress, we stated that it was a high-risk program, and that was well understood, and we pointed out that it was for this reason that the Federal government had to participate with industry. I think it very important, however, to note that the companies now participating in this program, the Boeing Company and the General Electric Company for the engine, have also assumed very great risks. As a matter of fact, if this program should fail, the Boeing Company stands to lose some two hundred million dollars, which is a significant part of their net worth. The General Electric Company stands to lose a proportionate amount although not as great because the engine cost is not as large as the airframe cost, but they also stand to lose heavily.

I think it also worthy of note that the airlines have put down for each SST they have on order one million dollars at risk if this program fails. For example, Pan American loses one million dollars on each airplane they have on order, and they have a total of fifteen on order. Here, I think, the President was very wise because he insisted before going ahead with the program that the airlines indicate their views and their belief in the importance of the program by putting down these substantial amounts at risk. As he told me, he felt that if the taxpayer was going to assume this risk, that the manufacturers ought to assume their fair share of the risk. The airlines should be willing to assume their fair share, and that he wouldn't go ahead with the program unless he felt that they were doing their share in this program.

P: Recently, Boeing--I believe, this was in the paper a few weeks ago--announced that they were changing the swept-wing design.

Does this cast a question on the original selection?

M: Well, from the layman's point of view, the answer would be yes. From a technical point of view, this change, although regrettable, is not a matter of deep concern to me, although my concern is the loss of time. But as I pointed out a moment ago, this was a very high-risk program, and when the original designs were being looked at by the source evaluation board, this was the best technical judgment of some two hundred and eighty highly qualified technical people throughout the government which included the Air Force, the Navy, NASA, and the FAA. And this was their considered judgment over all, and importantly, I might add, that these proposals were considered separately by each of the major airlines who were interested in the program and it was their unanimous judgment separate and totally independent from the government's judgment that the design that was selected, the Boeing-GE proposal, was the best technical approach.

After the lapse of considerable time and a re-evaluation of, rather an evaluation of the progress being made, it was recognized that Boeing, in an attempt to overcome some of the original deficiencies which we had noted, and both proposals had deficiencies, had added more weight than they had expected and we had expected to the airplane. This resulted in a loss of range for the airplane due to the added weight which in our judgment, and Boeing finally agreed with us, would produce an airplane that the airlines might be very reluctant to put down thirty or forty million dollars per copy at that stage of the program when they couldn't see that they were getting an airplane that would fulfill the original operational characteristics laid down, which was a prescribed payload for a range of some

four thousand miles. I took the view that the important thing here was to get an airplane that was safe, an airplane that was economically feasible, an airplane that the airlines wanted and would buy. I felt also that it was very important that the airplane finally developed should be sufficiently attractive to the airlines that the government could get out of the financing of the program and turn over the production program to the civilian sector, that is, the airlines, the manufacturers, and the investment community.

P: Do you think this program will succeed?

M: I do, without any question.

P: When do you see that the first supersonic transport, civilian supersonic transport, will be in the air?

M: Well, I think the Russians will fly their T-144 by the end of this year or early next year and certainly the Concorde will fly initially sometime, my guess would be next spring. Of course, it will be two or three years after that before they come into comercial service.

P: And when will America's?

M: I think our airplane is, it was originally supposed to--I've forgotten the date--well, to put it this way, I don't think we will have an SST in the commercial service until 1976.

P: That's a delay over the originally projected time span, isn't it?

M: Yes, by more than a year.

P: Do you have any other comments on the supersonic transport program? Any problems?

M: Well, I have one other, looking at its history, and then projecting history into the future, and I am confident that we will have an American

supersonic transport flying and in service, but I would like to point out here that in my opinion this development will have a very important military application, and I would think by, certainly by 1980 you will find the services flying military supersonic transport aircraft.

P: Do you foresee that this application of the military would conceivably allow us to withdraw our bases abroad?

M: Well, obviously, military transport is vital to our worldwide strategic posture, and the time is going to come when we will more and more withdraw bases from overseas, when we have the ability to protect ourselves and to maintain our world position by operating from bases in the United States. I'm sure this will come, and in my view the SST will play a very important part in this changing concept of world strategic deployment.

P: What was your biggest problem when you took over the Federal Aviation Agency?

M: Finding out what it was all about.

P: And when you found out what it was all about, what was the major area where you were applying the most research and development?

M: Well, the major area in the FAA was the operation of the air traffic control system, and in particular getting the people and the quality of people and the trained people necessary to operate the system; as well as getting better equipment, getting more equipment--for example: instrument landing systems at hundreds of airports that now don't have them that should have them, high-intensity lighting, better communications, better radar--fighting, bleeding, and dying to get more air traffic controllers to man the system.

P: When you took over the administration, was the airport congestion, the

crisis peak that it reached this summer evident?

M: No, not at first. There is a long history of ups and downs in the air traffic control system in the CAA and later the FAA. This was not evident to me at first. As a matter of fact, it was almost a year before I really began to fully realize that we were getting behind. One of the factors which industry missed and the government missed was the tremendous increase and growth in terms of the workload, in terms of the number of airplanes, and particularly in terms of passengers. As the passenger demand grew, the number of operations grew, and I would say that three years ago that industry and the government had underestimated this growth by fifteen-twenty percent. Then you get behind because the lead time in training personnel, for example, air traffic controllers, is from two to three years, and the lead time in providing essential equipment will vary anywhere from one year to three years. So suddenly it was clear that we were getting behind and that's when we started the fight over two years ago as hard as we could to get the resources necessary to catch up. We still haven't gotten them.

P: You developed a very comprehensive plan for the solution of this problem, I believe. Could you go into this just briefly?

M: We developed a full five-year comprehensive plan as to what is required for the system, both the on-route system and the terminal system: facilities and equipment required, research and development necessary, number of people required, cost by year over the next four to five years, with a projection on beyond that for a total of ten years.

P: How expensive is this going to be?

M: Well, right now, for example, we need over the next five years, approximately

five billion dollars more for some nine hundred new airports and for modification and improvement of some two thousand airports. We need at least, in the next five years, over two billion dollars for modernization of the airway system. The key thing to remember here is that we are not going to get this kind of money out of the general revenues of the Treasury through appropriations and that's the reason I've been pushing so hard to get "user charges," the user charge legislation through the Congress to provide these resources. This to me is sensible and can be done without the taxpayer shouldering the whole burden and it certainly is not going to hurt drastically the aviation community. So one of the fights I have been making and still am is to try to get the aviation community together to support a reasonable and equitable program to get this done.

P: What will immediately relieve this very dangerous congestion and stacking over airports?

M: Well, actually, this is not as dangerous as you think it is, because the FAA is charged with the safety of the system and they will only handle the number of airplanes in the system that they feel they can safely handle. So while airplanes may be stacked up, they are still under the control of the FAA. The problem is that you inhibit the growth of civil aviation and you have a deterioration of service to the public because you are going to have delays on the ground, for example, in Los Angeles or Chicago, because the airports in New York are saturated and can't handle the number of airplanes. So what you are going to get, and is happening now, is you are going to get further restrictions on the system to include a limitation on the number of take-offs and landings,

for example, at JFK, and we are already doing at Washington National and have been doing it for some time. But unless we get resources, as I pointed out a minute ago, necessary to improve the system, these restrictions will spread to other major areas in the country.

P: This restriction or the cutback on the airlines and the times that they use it has not been the total complaint on the dangerous element involved. A lot of it has been around new programs that are developing in landing equipment and the air controllers themselves and there is some furor in, I believe it was New York that the air controller being undertrained, and there was a slowdown.

M: We don't have any problem with our air traffic controllers being undertrained because they are not allowed to go on duty until they are properly trained. Our problem has been, really, a shortage of controllers to the point where in the New York area and the Chicago area and some of the major areas they are being required to work overtime and in many cases working six days a week. An air traffic controller with a kind of job he has, which is very demanding and exacting, should really not work at the most five days a week, eight hours a day. If I had my way, they would work five days a week, six hours a day on the radar scopes and spend the other two hours in training. So they are overworked and obviously this is a safety factor which concerns me.

P: Have any airplane accidents been directly attributable to this congestion and overworked air controllers?

M: No, and I'll knock on wood, not yet. As a matter of fact, some of the accidents we have had over the last two or three years have occurred in areas that were relatively uncongested, but our concern is that this

can happen and may happen.

P: Let me go on here. There have been many studies of the noise and effect of irritation on our lives. Won't this increase with the SST program, and what steps are being taken to remove it?

M: Well, actually, the SST is the first airplane whereby specifications on noise limitations were spelled out in the contract. So the SST is really not going to be any worse from a noise standpoint than existing airplanes, but even that, of course, is too much. We have a long way to go in terms of noise abatement, and of course the primary way to get at it, which is a long hard road, is through the improvement in this regard in the propulsion system. that is, the engine. Of course, many other things can be done in terms of zoning around major airports. In particular, you will note in many areas of the country, due to a lack of proper zoning development, housing development have been permitted to be built practically at the end of the runways and what not with full knowledge that the airport was there all along. And I think this is intolerable.

P: General McKee, you were a career military man. How did you find civilian bureaucracy?

M: Not any different from the bureaucracy in the Defense Department because, after all, I spent nine years at Wright Patterson [Dayton, Ohio] at the Air Materiel Command which was a worldwide organization, and most of the people in the air materiel command were civilians. So I've been dealing with federal government employees and the so-called federal bureaucracy for many, many years, and it is no different in one department than it is in another.

P: You served under [Gen. Curtis E.] LeMay as Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force. How would you characterize him?

M: Well, LeMay is one of the great combat leaders of our time. He was a very able commander of the Strategic Air Command, and did one of the greatest leadership jobs that I have seen done. He's a man of determination, very intelligent, of the utmost integrity, and a great knowledge of air power and the use of air power. I don't consider him a politician, and I was sorry to see him run on the Vice Presidential ticket with Mr. [George C.] Wallace (American-Independence Party, 1968).

P: While the Pentagon was under McNamara, did it become more efficient in its organization and in the centralization of authority?

M: This is a question of great debate in the United States, and many people, particularly external to the military services, thought it became more efficient. And many people feel very strongly that Mr. McNamara overcentralized authority in his office while the people in the field still had the responsibility but were bereft of authority. So this is a matter of great debate and only time will tell whether Mr. McNamara's philosophy of management in that great organization was correct or not. It all depends on to whom you talk.

P: Can you make an evaluation now?

M: Well, I happen to know Mr. McNamara quite well, and I have great respect for his brilliance and his capabilities, although it was my view that he did overcentralize authority in his office and in the Department of Defense. To put it another way, I would not have run it the way he ran it.

P: Do you think the use of our air power in Viet Nam has been effective?

M: It's been effective, although I don't think, personally, that it's

properly used, because I think it's been too inhibited and too restricted.

P: Do you think it was used as a ploy to ultimately get negotiations under way?

M: No, I don't think that it had anything to do with that. They were using air power because it was necessary in the conduct of the war, but I think it was quite clear notwithstanding all the remarks about the ineffectiveness of bombing that this was a major matter of concern to the North Vietnamese. If it hadn't been, why did they keep on talking about the unconditional halting of the bombing. That's all they've talked about for the last year or two. I think the best way to find out, if you want to find out the effectiveness of the bombing, is to ask any military man in Viet Nam who was there getting shot at and ask him what he thinks, and I think you'll get about one hundred percent answer that it's damn important, and that includes General [Creighton] Abrams [Commanding General, U.S. Army Viet Nam] and before him General [William] Westmoreland.

P: In your opinion, has Mr. Johnson shown any lack of confidence in the military point of view?

M: No, I think President Johnson has always had a high respect for the military, and I think he's had a high respect for their point of view. Obviously, he has to consider all points of view. He can't just take the military point of view because he had a lot of other people in the government and in other governments to whom he had to listen. One thing I'm sure, regardless of whether President Johnson may have been right or wrong from time to time, that in these decisions with regard to Viet Nam that he has done the very best he knew how.

P: What do you feel Mr. Johnson's attitude has been towards air power, both military and civilian?

M: Well, I think he's had a keen appreciation of air power as far as the military is concerned and understands it quite well. And also I'm sure he understands the importance of civil aviation to the country and the air transportation system of the country. But again we have to remember that looking at the national budget he had to set priorities and there was a limitation on the amount of money for various programs that can be spent, and so he had a very difficult problem, which I tried to understand when I was Administrator of the FAA. I'm sure, had money been no object, he would have done a lot of things that he wasn't able to do.

P: What new techniques in aviation do we have to look forward to?

M: Well, I think, of course, you are going to have the supersonic transport coming in, and I think one of the great areas in civil aviation will be the short take-off and landing aircraft, the V-TOL [Vertical Take-Off and Landing]. I think in the next few years you are going to see short take-off and landing aircraft operating from either the center of the city or the periphery of the cities to other cities with STOL [Short Take Off and Landing] ports either over existing railroad tracks or other areas nearby. For example, I think we will see very expanding STOL operations between Washington and New York, and between New York and Boston, between Los Angeles and San Francisco and many of the other short-haul routes. So I think we are going to see a revolution in the next ten years in this area. I think also you will see a tremendous improvement in what is called blind landing techniques. We already have that capability, and the time is going to come when an airplane is going to come in in zero-zero weather and land without the pilot being able to even see the runway. That can be done now; it's technically feasible. We

are going to see better communications and better navigation due to the tremendous improvements in satellite operations both for overseas communications and navigation. I think we will also see it domestically. I think we will see a great improvement in terminal radar, great improvement in on-route radar, and many other developments in this whole field of electronics which will greatly improve our operations in the whole civil aviation and military aviation field.

P: What do you regard as the future of the hypersonic transport plane?

M: In the year 2000 or even perhaps before, I think we will see a hypersonic airplane flying. It's technologically feasible. There are many engineering difficulties, but it's the next jump past the SST. As a matter of fact, the hypersonic aircraft once developed and flying will be a much more economically sensible aircraft than the SST because with the hypersonic aircraft you won't have any sonic boom problems.

P: Is there a level at which commercial aircraft is going to put a limit on the number of passengers that these bigger and bigger planes carry?

M: No, I think the number of passengers to be carried by an airplane will only be limited really by economics.

P: And the impact of an accident with this many people involved will not be a factor?

M: And then you get into economics, and that is whether or not people want to ride on an airplane that big with that many passengers, but in my view each succeeding generation of commercial aircraft that come out will be safer than the preceding generation. Sure, you might have an accident, on an airplane with five hundred passengers, but on the other hand it makes no difference whether five hundred people are killed in one airplane

or five hundred people are killed in three airplanes. They are still dead.

P: How would you assess our progress in commercial aviation over the last four years?

M: I think it's been fantastic, and what I don't want to see is any strangulation in the growth of our civil aviation because we are not able to handle it from an air traffic control and airport point of view.

P: General McKee, do you have any futher comments on any of the areas that we have talked on? Anything regarding your administration of FAA? Or the aviation industry? Air power and military?

M: The remaining comment I have is notwithstanding the fact that I am now in another career, I shall continue to work as hard as I know how on improving the air transportation system of the United States, because I think it's so important to our growth, important to the public, important to the economy, important to your safety and mine, everybody's elses that flies on an airplane.

P: Do you see this as eventually as the single mode of transportation?

M: No, I don't. Obviously, we are going to have, continue to have buses, and we will continue to have automobiles, and my guess is that we will certainly continue to have development in the field of rapid ground transit, although I must say there doesn't seem to be very much enthusiasm on the part of the railroads in hauling passengers. But the primary means of long-range transportation in this country and overseas is obviously is going to be by air.

P: Thank you very much, General McKee.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By William F. McKee

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, William F. McKee hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed William F. McKee

Date November 18, 1970

Accepted Harry J. Middleton - for
Archivist of the United States

Date September 30, 1974