

INTERVIEWEE: LAURANCE ROCKEFELLER

INTERVIEWER: Joe B. Frantz

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F: This is an interview with Mr. Laurance Rockefeller and Mr. Henry Diamond in Mr. Rockefeller's office in New York on August 5, 1969; the interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Mr. Rockefeller, very briefly tell us how you came to get interested in, particularly, outdoor work and recreation and resources in this country?

R: Well, I suppose that I inherited the interest from my father who was tremendously active in this field of conservation of natural and scenic beauty. His associates added a great deal to this heritage; Horace Albright was his principal adviser starting back in the early '20's.

F: I might add for future reference that Horace Albright also used to be a director of the National Park Service.

R: Exactly. And he had a unique role, and still even does in his retirement as a senior adviser--Fairfield Osborne, Robert Moses, also. For thirty years I've worked with them as leaders and pioneers in these fields. So that having started with an interest right from childhood, I was fortunate to be named by President Eisenhower in 1958 as chairman of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission.

F: Where did the idea for that commission stem from?

R: I would suppose, giving due credit basically to the members of Congress, Senator Anderson--and Henry, you might know other

other members of Congress. Joe Pinfold, who was an active officer in Isaac Walton League, really was the poet--the conceptual poet--of ORRRC. His friends in Congress gathered together in both Houses, created the legislation. This commission very importantly was made up of four members of both Houses.

D: Right.

R: And they were leadership in this area of outdoor recreation in the natural resource field. They were the leaders in Congress. Then there were four citizens--or was it six?

D: I think there were seven citizens.

R: Anyhow, the important thing is it brought together the leadership of the two Houses of Congress and citizenry group, you see, so that this report was the projection of our collective thinking. And it took us over two-and-a-half years; we had a budget of several million dollars.

To me, the bill, as it was presented--the essence of the message, the charge of what we were to do--was to review the outdoor recreation opportunities of the American people in terms of their need, their physical, cultural, and spiritual benefits. Now this was a profoundly poetic insight, that it was not just fun, it was a basic need of the people.

So it was in presenting this report to the President, and then to Vice President Johnson as the President of the Senate in 1958, that we went to his office--

D: It was in '61.

R: That's right, '61; this report initiated in '58, presented in '61.

So we had the pleasure of meeting him for the first time, and he received our group representing the commission. A number of photographs were taken with him. He showed us around his office and was very generous in his enthusiasm.

F: This was really the first time you had come to know him?

R: Had never met him. The first time we met him, you see.

Now, the next time that you might say we had an opportunity to work with the President, meet with him, related to the Task Force on Natural Beauty, which he set up in 1964 when he was running for election at that time. This document was a very constructive document which he, I think, never published. But he and Secretary [Stewart] Udall considered it a very important document. Actually as a result of this, we put it in book form, A More Beautiful America -- Lyndon B. Johnson, you see. This was done I think in 1961.

D: That was in 1965.

R: '65, all right.

F: Did he give you any instructions on this task force as to what to come up with, or did he pretty well turn it over to you and say have at it?

R: He talked to us at length in a most inspiring and challenging way. And what I remember particularly is he said, "You tell me what you think ought to be done; what needs to be done; and let me decide whether it can be done. Don't leave out what you really think just because you think maybe it can't be done." Now this was important.

F: This freed you then.

R: So this task force report was a real honest projection of the best thinking of this group as to what ought to be done. Whether it could be or how or when, we didn't concern ourselves with. So it was a pretty good document, you see, and I think was useful to his Administration.

Now soon after that, Henry, came his famous speech. You know--what would we call that?

D: It was the message to the Congress on natural beauty.

R: That's right. That's what I mean by the famous speech, Message on Natural Beauty, February 8, 1965. This document refers to his intent to call a White House conference on natural beauty and indicated that he wanted me to be chairman of this. So this conference really was taking the task force opportunity and involving all leaders in this field and the public at large. It was taking the task force objectives of what can be done to enhance, preserve, our natural beauty.

F: With a conference of distinguished people interested in natural beauty, what beyond publicizing did you hope to get out of the conference?

R: The President and, I think, Mrs. Johnson had great vision. They were also realists. So they were concerned, as we were, about action. They were very people-minded, action-minded, and they were interested in what do we do next towards these goals, you see. So this conference hopefully was to involve all levels of government and the citizen private sector institutions, to

bring them all together to help identify their role in a total national effort. Mrs. Johnson always was emphasizing the importance of the grassroots; the people themselves in the final analysis would determine the success.

F: Had you had private conferences with Mrs. Johnson by now on this?

R: Yes. We went to the White House and talked with the President. Henry, that meeting was in '65, I guess.

D: Yes.

R: In March, you see. Well, at that time the President was tied up in some crisis, and we met with Mrs. Johnson. She was preparing an interview. She had questions to answer at an interview, and she wanted to get our reaction. This was certainly one of the early times that we met with her.

F: Did you get the idea that she was a late comer to this field of natural beauty, or that this was something that--?

R: Oh, no. This was the great thing that in both of their cases they inherited, as I did the love of the land, the love of the soil, the respect for the outdoors, and the identity with it from childhood, you see. This was their inheritance. Mrs. Johnson's statement, you know--when she came to Washington and they planted two trees in their back yard. Apparently they grew and added greatly to their enjoyment of their home. She says to this day that as far as she's concerned if anyone ever wanted to write an epitaph, she would be satisfied with simply saying, "She planted two trees in her yard," or something to that effect. She had a little better way of expressing it.

But this shows how absolutely basic this had been a part of her whole life, so this was nothing contrived. It wasn't something that was just -- call it crisis dislike.

F: She wasn't just looking for an issue that she could pick up.

R: This was a lifelong interest that continued to grow. As she knew and saw people, she realized how important it was to them, as it had been to her. And this, of course, was the strength, power, of their collective leadership. It was a matter of personal inner conviction, not just an intellectual awareness, not just a matter of responsibility. It was a basic part of their lives in a dramatic, really dramatic, way.

We met with her and, of course, she was active in the White House conference. Then he invited us all to come to the White House after the conference and our committee's report. We got out a summary of the proceedings of this conference, "Beauty for America," and this was available to all people--libraries, institutions interested in the collective judgments of this all-inclusive task force. So it was a fabulous thing. And these committee chairmen came to the White House and reported to the President on their recommendations.

F: Did the President or Mrs. Johnson take any hand in setting up your panel of speakers?

R: Well, Stewart Udall was working with us, and Dick Goodwin, I think, was in this picture with us, so we pooled--I mean we were trying to get the most representative, the best people we could. The key organizations we wanted represented, you see.

So we did everything we could. Mrs. Johnson and Stewart Udall and ourselves, and, undoubtedly, Joe Peinfold was helpful in this thing too.

D: This was when we first started working for Liz [Elizabeth Carpenter] too--Liz Carpenter.

R: She was very active in it. So this conference was a real springboard, and the purpose of it was to try and, well, it was an unofficial statement of national policy and objective. I mean, it really had the effect after the message on natural beauty and the conference to get the people and the government together.

Now, Henry--this is an aside--when was this bond issue in New York state that went by? It was voted three to one.

D: The first one was in 1960.

R: This was 1960. This would be off the record, but this is when the government leadership suddenly realized that people not only wanted this, they'd pay for it. They voted three to one for a bond issue--the city people did--and from then on the political leadership of this country had the evidence, if you will. They not only wanted it, but they were willing to pay for it. And that was dramatic.

F: What were they going to do with the bonds?

R: Well, it was to buy land for additions to the State parks and municipal parks in New York State.

Now, Henry, under President Johnson, this whole BOR program, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, was unfolded. And I'm not sure--I guess it started under the Kennedy Administration.

- F: Yes. The BOR was established in April '62 after you had delivered the report of your Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission. It was established originally by Executive Order, and then Congress came along behind it in its own good time and made an official legislative establishment.
- R: Of course the most important thing that has happened is one of the last things President Johnson did--'68, I guess it was--in getting this offshore oil income made available to fund--the funds to make grants from ORRRC possible to federal and state agencies.
- F: Do you have any idea where he got that idea?
- R: Well, it was just another one of these miracles of legislation and Congressional action; I have no idea. But you know, he got passed a hundred or more. Actually he gave us a list of these bills, and they are magnificently inclusive of virtually all the major areas of conservation need--air pollution, water pollution. You have it, they're all there.
- F: Is this a correct statement, and that is that, in a larger public sense no one really thought of air pollution as a problem and as a challenge until the 1960's? Now, we'd been water pollution conscious for some time because I think of economic considerations, if nothing else. But air pollution is pretty much an issue of this decade, isn't it?
- R: I think that's fair to say. I know my friends in Memorial Cancer Center weren't aware of it. They were aware about cigarettes. They weren't aware of air pollution as a major health hazard. So this was another one of the pioneering bits



of legislation that he undertook and made possible. And it's so extensive and so inclusive that it's awesome, because the problem was getting this funded. It was a problem then and it's a problem now. But the tools, the objectives, are basically there, and this is a triumph.

F: You establish principle now and work out the details later.

R: That is right. What he did was to get natural beauty, or environmental quality, established as a national goal. I think that's the really important thing...that it was something that was not a luxury; it wasn't something that was just for fun. It was a basic need of the American people, you see. This is the one specific that he and Mrs. Johnson out of their conviction made such a vast multifaceted contribution to, and which we in the ways we're discussing had a small but exciting part in.

D: The period that I think Mr. Rockefeller just described, from the task force of '64, the extraordinary thing of the President of the United States sending a message to the Congress on natural beauty was just unheard of. Nobody would ever think of that. And then the White House conference. That six months I think, built the base that brought it to a first level public priority.

F: Gave it a certain dignity and status it hadn't had before.

Was the President available to various outstanding conservationists...realizing of course the limits on Presidential availability always?

R: I'm sure that he was. But his basic pattern as we saw it, which was just very fragmented, was to work through Mrs. Johnson as his general ambassador in this field.

Now in connection with these bills, undoubtedly he met with a vast number of people in order to get this legislation, but we never were part of the legislative part of his beauty program.

F: You never were asked to contribute part of a message or part of a bill?

R: No. We'd wire a Congressman periodically urging passage, you know, of a highway bill or something. But we weren't in that and therefore not too well-informed about it.

F: Do you agree with me that the idea of conservation, outdoor recreation, has moved eastward during this decade? Again, I have a feeling that once upon a time the whole concept of the Interior Department and conservation was always looked upon as trans-Mississippi.

R: That I think is basic because by the very essence of the Johnsons' approach--it was how beauty, how nature touched the lives of people particularly in their younger years, that they felt was so important. Well, obviously two-thirds of the population living in non-rural areas, they were bringing and seeking to bring this opportunity, this quality of life, this insight into reality, into the urban areas.

And, of course, this was Mrs. Johnson's role on this Beautification Committee of hers. We called that the Committee for A More Beautiful America. She started that about '65, and intended to meet more or less monthly, you see, and this went

on for years. She, of course, was trying to make the capital of the nation an example to the rest of the nation of what they could do in their towns and cities; plus the fact that the capital was a national shrine where people came to be inspired by their history.

So I feel that she considered that a prototype and merely an example of what a citizen group could do in one city could be done in others. And, of course, her friend Mary Lasker and others had similar committees in New York, and this thing has just been an example to the nation.

We felt we helped her to broaden her program by taking this improvement of environment into the Watts Branch area, you see, beyond the immediate historic part of Washington. The obvious need was to beautify the city where the visitors from across America would come--all the historic political areas of interest. But it seemed most wise to broaden that, so we contributed to the improvement of Watts Branch Park, and this has been going right on. The park people there in charge have expanded that program very materially. So that was just one facet.

Then Mrs. Astor got into beautifying schools, playgrounds, bringing beauty into those areas. And, of course, wherever you were successful in doing this, it's amazing how vandalism and hostility seemed to subside and how the people would respond if the thing was done well and with sincerity and with the involvement of the community you were trying to effect. It was very important in that manner.

F: The President established a twelve-member Citizens Advisory Commission on Recreation and Natural Beauty in May of '66 with the idea of handling outdoor recreation, the beautification of the nation's cities and countryside, correlating your natural beauty outdoor activities by your various federal bureaus and agencies, and also to try to get some kind of coordination between local, state and private organizations for recreation and beauty; and you were a member of this commission.

R: Yes. I actually was asked to serve as chairman. And we, in the first instance, were advisory to his Council on Natural Beauty and Outdoor Recreation made up of members of the Cabinet. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation was our professional staff. We had a few people to supplement that. And this committee functioned for over two-and-a-half years.

And we were very active in regards to the highway program; this seemed to be one of the most obvious ways to bring more natural beauty, on the one hand and less ugliness into the lives of the people across the nation than almost anything else except their own back yards, you see. So we worked very closely with Mrs. Johnson, and indirectly the President, in suggesting ways and means of overcoming the previous criteria of economic values and convenience and time, and getting in there to be equated on a comparable basis the environmental impact. And I think this committee in a modest way was very

helpful educating groups, getting the legislation action, and then getting acceptance of it, too--because you know it's one thing to pass legislation and another to get it applied. So that was one area.

Then we had an eighteen months experience with a task force with the public utility industry on environmental quality. And the federal regulatory agents were represented, and the privately and publicly owned utilities; and we felt that this was maybe a pioneering example of how a citizens group could sit down with a major industry and get them to think out loud together on what could be done in terms of a national goal of a better environment.

F: Now what are you discussing with your utilities people...not only plant beautification but--

R: That's right. Undergrounding, primarily, the distribution lines...you know, the things that are on the streets of every town and back yard in America. And technology, and so forth, are such that if this is done at the time of a new development, it's almost cheaper--in some instances it is--to underground them, you see. And the industry, as a result of this conference, agreed that they would make a national policy to underground all future residential distribution lines, by what year?

D: '75.

R: By '75. Now they're talking about making it even sooner.

Now we also talked with this group about how to retroactively underground those that are already up. This is more expensive, you see. And we developed with, their cooperation, a grant-in-aid program modeled on the BOR grant-in-aid program which would allow the States and cities to accept grants and work on a matching basis with these utilities to retroactively underground power lines. Now we realized that this wasn't going to happen overnight. It wasn't going to be funded. But the machinery was set up in cooperation with the people most affected --the utility companies. So as and when this can be done, they have been partners in working with a citizens group and the government representatives, and it's a very sound thing. Just as this BOR, I think, has been magnificent; how federal, state, and local governments and private groups can work together, each doing their share in helping the national goal.

F: Did you get into the topic in your discussions with the utilities people on this matter of--I can best express it, I think, with an example--such as your Seattle utilities have in the North Cascades--where you have a sort of overlap between the Department of the Interior wants for the citizenry at large and what looks like economic necessities for your utilities companies so that, to some extent, they at least coincide in their interests?

R: I'm not clear in what you mean.

F: It's not a very clear question.

R: The conflict of interest between the utilities and the environmental problems?

F: We need this river. We need this dam to supply power. On the other hand, we would rather have as a citizens group a wild, free-flowing river. Someone has to give here.

R: This is a multiple use problem, and it brings up what I wanted to mention. The President asked us to go out to Woodside, California, where a government agency--

D: The AEC was--

R: The AEC had some kind of a plant that needed a new transmission line, and they planned to bring this right in through the woods of that community. It was a very beautiful California community. So here was the government, you see, about to violate beauty in the middle of an Administration talking about natural beauty. So he wanted our advice. This is a little bit along what you're talking about.

So we went out there and, to our amazement, found that this community was really very backwards in the undergrounding of their own distribution lines. They were very ugly. So we felt that until they did something to help themselves, they could hardly expect the government to do what's much tougher, that is, to bury the transmission lines...that's much more expensive...when they hadn't even buried the distribution lines. So we said, "Why don't you get the government to put in this overhead line, do as little damage to the environment--", I think they used helicopters just so they wouldn't have to cut swathes, they used better designed poles. They brought it in.

They knew at the time that in about five to seven years they would have to have more power. It was more or less our recommendation if, at that time, the community had made a major reform in their conduct towards environmental beauty relating to distribution lines that the federal government then would seriously consider burying the power lines, but only when they would be working with and meeting standards accepted in practice by the community.

This is what more or less was done, and I understand the community is working on undergrounding. They have some special tax--local tax deals--so they can put up money with the utilities to underground. So this is a case where we got into a specific and helped resolve on a cooperative basis what was to be done.

But we did the highway, this utility business. And, incidentally, in the utility area, we spent a lot of time talking about these high tension lines, and how they could be better designed, better located; and in all cases both in the highway and in this area urged that public hearings be held before the engineers were ready to break ground--have the hearings first and not too late. And this has been accepted pretty much in the highway. That led to legislation, or was that not--?

D: Department of Transportation regulation.

R: A regulation. But this citizens committee worked on a number of other areas. But I would say that the highways and the utilities were two of our most important areas.

We are concerned about involving HEW in education of the American people on conservation. They have no participation



in this. They've recently set up a desk as a result of all of our effort. But we feel that education in this area is absolutely critical in our schools; and that the federal government ought to be playing some role. So we stressed education.

Trees--urban trees, you know we have such a heritage--they're beginning to die off. So we challenged the Forest Service to get into urban growth of trees and not just out in the great forests of America. And they were interested. But then Interior through their work in Washington said they were better qualified. Well, that's the way we got two departments competing. The point is, they ought to be in on it--this cooperative approach you see. And this came out of just what we were doing.

Here's the practical thing we did. We got out the Citizens Action Guide for Natural Beauty. Now this was a distillation of every idea that we'd gathered over a three-year period of what you, as an individual, might do in your own community to achieve some environmental result--to overcome a problem or prevent it. We had a bibliography, and we listed the national organizations, the government agencies; and then with an awful lot of very specific, practical suggestions--what you could do to organize; how you could act to get results. And so we feel that was...in terms of practical education, applied conservation was a very useful specific thing. We did do that, and it was good.

D: This was part of the relationship with the Johnsons. And when we finished, we presented the first copy to Mrs. Johnson, and she promoted it and used it in her travels.

- F: You could always go back to her with anything that you accomplished and use her as a sort of springboard to the general public?
- R: Exactly. And so we were invited to make four trips with her in four areas of the country.
- F: I want to talk about those. Before we leave this though, in dealing with highways did your committee work on this problem of super highways, and more particularly super highways through cities...cutting off certain natural areas, or maybe historic areas? I'm thinking of that Three Sisters controversy in Washington, and the super highway coming through the French Quarter down in New Orleans and so on.
- R: We didn't get into that. We didn't get into Route 87 in Westchester. But we did discuss at great length the guidelines that might be helpful in dealing with these controversies. We had a lot to say on the subject. But we couldn't get into the specific situations to weigh the multiple needs and interest involved and try to determine the best way of preserving the most and still giving access. We couldn't get into that, the adjudication of it.
- F: Did you work fairly closely with Alan Boyd in the Department of Transportation on this, or were you independent of him?
- R: Yes, we did. And we also had a scenic highway conference. And this, I think, was very useful because there had been a Department of Transportation report saying that a whole national network--a multibillion dollar program--should be created of

scenic highways. The more we analyzed it, the more we felt that if you really put in major roads you would destroy so much of the scenery that it was almost a contradiction in terms. So we recommended that the secondary roads off the main highway be mapped, improved within limits; the scenic recreational and historic components available on each route be made known to travelers, and that we not have a national program of scenic highways with a few exceptions, you see, of major scenic areas. And I think this was a very useful conference. We had a representative group of people. And I think we've toned down this Department of Transportation approach.

Actually the other things we emphasized, the present highways should be made as scenic as possible, and that they can be progressively upgraded through the years. Elimination of billboards--our citizens committee spent a great deal of time on this--and the utility lines along the roads. In both areas you can enhance existing roads very much-- There is the opportunity for landscaping and turnouts on existing roads. In other words beauty is everywhere and should be so recognized. It's not necessary just to sit tight saying that some roads are going to be beautiful and others are just going to be functional or inevitably ugly. We said that the good potentials of them all should be made into major highways and therefore destroy the very essence of their charm. So it was a good conference and an offset to this earlier national program of scenic roads.

Now this gives you a few of the topics; there were more areas of concern that we probed into, but I think these were representative and probably covers the principal ones.

F: Mainly you felt your function was to persuade, influence, to gather information and then make that information available?

R: To the government which was the President's--

F: You weren't aiming toward particular legislation? You were just trying to improve?

R: We were just trying to recommend they [the Administration] seek legislation to achieve certain results, rather than to pretend to draft the legislation. We had goals and guidelines as our contribution.

F: Was the committee finally just dissolved?

R: No. The committee has now been renamed, under the Nixon Administration, the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality. And the present membership has been continued on. They're planning to add three new members. The present Administration has continued the Council on, but renamed it. I think, very constructively, the President and Vice President are chairman and vice chairman of the council, which is good. But I don't know that we want to get into Senator Jackson's legislation; the fact that we haven't been able to fund it yet. These are problems that will have to be ironed out.

But the significant thing is--this thing was so rooted the hearts and minds of the government and the people that the new Administration is going right on with it...top priority... using a different name to be sure, but keeping the same goals.

Now they are going to give a little more science orientation to this. Instead of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation as staff, they're getting the President's science adviser and his staff to staff the committee. Well, this is a many faceted complex thing, so a little shift in emphasis undoubtedly will bring out some new facets, all to the good.

F: Right. You were going to talk about the trips you made with Mrs. Johnson.

R: These trips were, of course, a great privilege to participate in. And as I see them, this was all part of her way of educating the people throughout the country and dramatizing that which was good. She didn't criticize the bad; she went to see the good and the beautiful and identify herself with it. These were very useful and, I think, educational trips.

The first one was the trip to Virginia by bus and plane, visiting scenic and historic sites, cultural centers. As a minor but still dramatic interest (we made our plane, F-27 available)--all the Cabinet wives were invited to come on the trip plus the President and the Vice President's wives; Mrs. Rusk was the only one not to accept. We got into this plane with them and made three trips.

Well, I'm very aviation-minded. But when Stewart Udall asked me to go walking and meet the ladies later, I said, "If anything happens to this plane and I'm not on it, I'm going to be sorry the rest of my life." So I stayed with them

throughout. It was a unique, dramatic, first experience with Mrs. Johnson and her talent with such humility and eloquence of communicating to the people that were doing good things in the area of this particular interest.

F: Where did you go?

R: We went to the University of Virginia.

D: The Shenandoah Valley Skyline Drive.

R: Skyline Drive. We went to this Barter Theater at Monticello--that was there. It was so exciting that I remember the human elements more than I do the environmental ones.

That same year she came out to Jackson Hole and spoke at some meeting at one of our national conservation organizations; stayed with us at the ranch two or three days.

F: Did you float the Snake with her?

R: No, I don't think that we did, actually. The National Park people took over on that, and she tremendously enjoyed that as one of the great scenic trips of all times.

F: Just as a matter of detail when she comes some place like your ranch in Jackson Hole, what kind of security is set up--is provided? Do you have to make special arrangements yourself, or does the Secret Service take care of it?

R: She has her team go ahead, put in phones--so she can keep in touch with the President--and review the layout of the situation. Frankly, they found our places in Wyoming and Vermont and Westchester County lent themselves very pleasantly to their security requirements--and also to Caneel Bay. We weren't in Caneel with her, but she did go there several times. So they took

Vermont, was in '67, and the Hudson trip was in '68. She stayed at our home in three of these four trips. Of course, the trips were so heavily scheduled, there was very little time for just relaxation and sociability. But we did stay and travel together, and I just felt so privileged to see how it was done on the one hand, and see how--

F: It's quite a logistics operation, isn't it?

R: Oh, it was fantastic. But it was done so well it seemed obvious and easy.

D: I think the anecdote about our rendezvous in the Hudson River might be interesting. Remember when we got--

R: You mean with the Mayor and the Governor?

D: On the Hudson trip the schedule worked out that it was best for the Governor and the Mayor to meet Mrs. Johnson--

F: This is Mayor Lindsay?

D: Right. As you know, there are always scheduling difficulties with the First Lady and Governor. But for one quite extraordinary event the Governor and the Mayor all showed up on time. The Mayor made a grand exit by fireboat, and we had a ceremony on the lower Hudson right down here.

R: And, also, refused to let us go into the East [Harlem] River trying to dramatize the fact that only he would be welcome in the inner cities, see...that these people from Washington mightn't be as well received as he would be, because we wanted to go to the site of the first state park in the city. Mrs.

Johnson brought us a check, I recall, for about \$500,000.

Well, you know, a Mayor that wants money--you'd have thought this would be a happy day. But he wouldn't even let us go to the site where we hoped to spend the money she brought us, so we had to receive the check out in the middle of the Hudson River.

F: He was adamant in this?

R: Oh yes. Liz, you know, is slow to anger, but her anger was really aroused on this. I'm glad to say that this park is still going forward. It is dramatic because now the federal government is talking about parks in cities, and now they've got the States again. This is all part of the approach that the Administration made--the Johnson Administration. All levels of government and the private sector working together.

F: Then along that line, you, of course, are heading up this interstate park system along the Palisades.

R: Right.

F: Is there any federal involvement in this at all, or any particular evidence of either President or Mrs. Johnson's concern with it?

R: I would say that there's a great deal of federal government involvement through BOR, which wasn't initiated by the Johnsons, but was fed, nourished, stimulated, and encouraged, you see. It's a marvelous program, because in order to qualify for a federal grant, each state has to have a recreational plan of development. And then each city within the state must have its



own plan to qualify for the grants. So this will result in a national plan, and you couldn't dream of anything in which federal money could be spent to a better end than encouraging the cities not only to develop, but to plan--and the plan obviously will be upgraded. It will take years to perfect this plan--changes, need, and so forth.

F: You look on what you're doing as furnishing a model for the remainder of the country?

R: Well, the New York State park system, I guess, is one of the oldest and best. Of course, we have here copied the federal government in involving historic sites. You see, the National Park System in the act of 1936 put historic sites in parks. We were fortunate to have Connie Wirth become chairman of this state historic trust with all his experience in Washington. And I'm glad to say, speaking of state parks, that Nash Castro, who was Mrs. Johnson's aide really throughout this whole period in the Capital District Region as director there, has now retired from the Federal Park Service after thirty years service, and is coming to us in the Palisades Interstate Park, which is the one along the Hudson River here, as our new director.

F: I'm having lunch with Nash Friday to say goodbye.

R: We are thrilled about it. And you see, his experience of urban use of parks--we are trying to bring the people to the parks. We've got \$500,000 a year to bus them out of the city. And then we're trying to bring the parks into the city. So

we're really urban minded. He had with Mrs. Johnson there, all of his Operation Pride, all of these experiences in Washington of how do you involve people in parks--how do you get them interested. One of the great things that has come out of all of this is that parks must be programmed; you must have recreational people as well as park people. And in New York State, we've not just changed from the State Council of Parks. We've added "and Outdoor Recreation." And passive parks are not enough. In the city they aren't used significantly. And it's a new challenge to program them, and Nash, I feel, can help this immeasurably.

F: This is one thing I have found in my own Parks work, that you take a city born, city raised, city oriented person and put him just in a passive park, he doesn't know what to do.

R: That is so right. But more and more--I just went up to this old Herald Tribune Fresh Air Camp. They're taking these city children out there and really involving them in their natural environment, playing down competitive sports on the theory [that] that's what they've had, and decentralizing-- They have to walk all over, the swimming, nature trails. They've got a farm supervised by Cornell University, they borrow animals. They're doing everything they can to involve these children in active, informative programs of understanding of nature. Everybody now is groping towards this new outdoor classroom approach.

F: When the Job Corps was placing some centers on the edges of parks, were you involved in that at all?

R: Well, our program in Washington that we helped sponsor...that Mrs. Johnson's committee did, we helped finance it...tried to bring outdoor recreational opportunities together with job opportunities, so that these boys would have a fascinating day--not just all play and recreation, but they would learn something about automobile engines or how to plant trees or something so that they have a very enriched program. The real test came when another program of another agency paid more, and our student stuck by us at a lower price because they had so much more fun and felt that the program was so much more interesting; I mean, the leadership was better. And it was a total involvement of these young people in a way that held them. And of course there was a question of money, but also very much of leadership. If you don't have really good dedicated and informed leadership, these things won't work, because the kids are sort of lost. You put them out in the outdoors, they don't know about it. There has got to be a bridge. There has got to be a human bridge. And in these programs, we were pioneering that, and Nash Castro was a very active person in regards to it.

F: I have, incidentally, six long interviews with Nash that are superb.

R: You see, we've got these \$500,000 worth of busing--at least 200,000 children coming out, most of them, to his park. And he has got a great job to help us make better use of the time they have in our parks.

F: Along the line of money, so much of the beautification in the District of Columbia was done with private money. How, within your experience, did Mrs. Johnson solicit this money? Was it solicited, or did she just lay down an idea and the money sort of flow automatically? What happened?

R: Well, her Beautification Committee--

F: It seemed to me a lot of it came from New York too, an inordinate amount.

R: Well, Mary Lasker, you see, was very active in this thing--no question about that--and for years had been working along these general lines. So at these meetings, different professional people would discuss the opportunities they saw for improving the capital district environments. Then various people would volunteer to finance some component or another. I remember young Ed Stone, I think, talked on landscaping; and Larry Halpern talked on maybe backyards or alleys or streets. We had a whole series of presentations, and then a great deal of time was spent on Pennsylvania Avenue with Nat Owings and the Mall. Mrs. Johnson did a great deal to develop plans for the ultimate enhancement of those areas. Now these plans are not implemented and when they're going to be implemented, we don't

know. But certainly a vast amount of thought and discussion has been given to them so that when funds are available, they should stand up; they ought to stand the test of time.

Secretary Udall and the other government agencies involved, and the Washington subway, all of this stuff was discussed and tried to be interrelated--getting cars off the street and so forth. So a great deal of time at these meetings went into that, I would say.

D: There was always something on the program every meeting.

R: There was always some formal presentation, and these would suggest specific projects. Various members of the committees would encourage each other to rise and take on some particular project. Of course Mrs. Lasker ended up by giving us a fountain which still doesn't work, but I'm sure that it will! The National Park Service of course did inherit quite a responsibility to maintain some of these exhibits. There's no question about that.

F: Let's go back to the trips a moment. Something that always impressed me, and I'd like your comment. I've been on several of the trips, frequently they became almost grueling. Mrs. Johnson, it seemed to me--and, also, I never saw any breakdown in her sort of general facade of interest and pleasantness. I wondered if there were ever a time when she behaved like an ordinary human being and kind of had a "Oh, to hell with it; this has been too much of a day," sort of attitude. She seemed to me enthusiastic from beginning to end.

R: That's right.

F: I used to marvel.

R: And she was so self-transcendant that it was amazing. We were fortunate--we made two trips to the LBJ Ranch, actually, a third day visit. They are right in her own back yard where she could control all the planning elements of these plans. It was so delightful in terms of visiting the historic elements of the community, a pleasant outdoor experience, a boat ride on the lake, or riding around the ranch with the President, a picnic on the knoll; with meeting local leaders, people from the University, so that you had a really most pleasant educational time in which you learned and saw and lived all at once. This sort of gave you the emotional content of the learning process. It was magnificent.

And, of course, you will learn from Connie Wirth about his role and my encouragement of his participation in the Johnson State Park there, which may well become a national monument. We were happy to help see that thing planned and then go back on the last visit and see it largely completed--not entirely; the Visitor Center open, educational--interpretative center for exhibits and all that kind of thing. That seems to be marvelous. They're willing to share their home with the public and things like that. They love people. They welcome them. When we were there, the President waved across the river at this group to come on over. The first thing we know we had fifty people across the fence.

F: This was just a group of tourists?

R: They were there--just tourists, you see--and no expectation of speaking to the President, much less meeting him. He'd just invite them over.

Then as he drives around he waves at these groups, they recognize him. He'll stop and talk with them like neighbors. There's this wonderful sense of being at home with people which is a quality they both have.

There's no question that Mrs. Johnson is a real professional person in the right sense of the word. In other words, she works hard to achieve great results. She knows it means discipline. She knows it means to do this, she can't do that. I'm always awed by the way she focuses her attention and her conversation and her effort on things that she considers top priority, and refuses to be diverted or to dissipate her energy in other, not necessarily relevant, areas, whether it's in conversation or in what she's doing.

Of course her love of her grandchildren, the family life of that family, the love of soil and the love of family, you know, are a very moving fact of life in the Johnson family. And I think is a great force for good. You know, if anything holds a society together, it's that kind of basic quality.

F: You weren't with her on her trips to Caneel Bay?

R: No. She went twice, I think.

F: Did you make any particular plans for her entertainment, or did you just turn her loose down there?

- R: She went there to rest; she went with her brother once, and I forget who went the other time. And of course one of the girls, Lynda, went there on her honeymoon, too, which we were very proud of of course. Luci went to the Mauha Kea Beach Hotel in Hawaii during the leave when her husband came back; and wrote a letter to me going from the hotel to the airport--he had about forty-eight hours leave--to express their enjoyment of that place. I thought that was the most selfless, like her mother. Can you imagine on two days leave, and she's writing me a letter driving from the hotel to the airport to go back to the baby over in Honolulu--that's like her mother. But she lives through other people in a most selfless, fantastic manner. And I guess everybody gets tired, but I never saw the system fail or falter myself. It didn't--and hard work and planning and focus of effort, the self-discipline. I mean in conversation, she was interested in knowing about the place, the people, the objectives of our visit. She wasn't interested in discussing past history, in the unrelated sense, or politics or personalities. She simply wasn't interested.
- F: You served rather closely with President and Mrs. Johnson then and got a special vantage point. What do you think in a permanent way that the President or the Johnson Administration accomplished for the environment and for the society as a whole? I realize environment takes in practically all aspect of American life.



R: Well, to try and sort of sum it up a little bit philosophically, it seems to me that they both inherited and passed on to the American people a legacy of love of the land and the soil and an awareness that God, man, and nature are all one; and if you lost sight of one, you might easily lose sight of the others. In other words, that a balanced understanding of nature was essential to man's enjoyment and to his well being. And this was something they felt so strongly that they, more than anyone that we know of, passed this awareness on to the American people in a thousand different ways and have left this as a national goal and an awareness. And we summed this up in a farewell dinner to President Johnson in which we wrote a tribute.

F: Who's we now?

R: Henry and I collaborated in writing a summary here of what we felt President Johnson with his partner, Mrs. Johnson, had accomplished in the field of natural beauty, conservation, environmental quality. And what he has done, I feel, is to make this just as important as education, Medicare, civil rights--all of the basic qualities--freedom, justice. This has become a national value--a goal--that is just as important to the welfare and well being of the American people as these other basic goals are.

Now this wasn't realized, wasn't known; and during their Administration I think that it has become a fact, and the American people now know that not only the quality of their lives, not only their enjoyment of life, but their well being and even their

survival depends on following the guidance, the example-- if you want to call it--the teachings of President and Mrs. Johnson. So this is very dramatic and hard to put into words, but I think it's true.

F: We've added a dimension to what we're seeking in our pursuit of happiness.

R: They've added a dimension, and they've gotten national recognition of, what you might call, an emergent or new social goal or value--environmental quality. And if you don't have it as a goal and you aren't aware of its significance, naturally it gets ignored. During the early period of this country people were fighting the wilderness, exploiting our resources. Now that has all changed. But no one had any idea five or even ten years ago how subtle and how interwoven and how complex and interrelated matters of environment are--spiritually, psychologically, economically, socially. So it has become the great big new goal of our society. They were the prophets and the pioneers of this awareness!

F: Do you think that part of the disenchantment of life that goes on about us nowadays in these--all times are critical--but these critical times, come from an awareness of the fact that life has not always had quality; that part of this is an awakening of sensitivity that we haven't had previously?

R: I think there's a rebellion of youth, you might say, against material values. And, of course, the excitement is that the main thrust of what the Johnsons were talking about in using

the word beauty--natural beauty--they're talking about non-material values of our environment and equating them with the economic values or [social and] political values--whatever you want to call it, you see. So that I feel they are giving youth their principal tool other than religion, so to speak, to enrich their lives and other people's lives in terms of non-material values--namely beauty. So it goes back--you know, to truth, goodness, and beauty. There they are. Even those three tend to be interlocked. So the Johnsons have given us non-material values, non-material goals, with all kinds of practical ways to seek to achieve them. And to me they are challenging youth--challenging all of us--to give higher value to non-material elements of our lives. It's the very lack of this in our society that youth are rebelling about.

In other words the major source of how to re-orient our society in terms of youth and changing attitudes and opportunities, I think lie interlocked in this field of environmental quality. But, it's so inclusive, so complex, that it's not easy to summarize in a few words. But it's so important that it is, to my mind, in a way the greatest thing that they did.

F: Did you notice as the war in Viet Nam became an overriding concern any diminution of the President's interest in this development of an awareness of our environment?

R: No. It always amazed me to see how he would come to this with sustained enthusiasm, just as he'd go back to his ranch to renew himself. He always became free and relaxed and full of conviction.

F: He liked to talk about this?

R: Exactly. He was emotionally at home and involved, and it was amazing to see how his enthusiasm for this was undiminished; it was just extraordinary. What a tribute to the Johnsons! You see, this thing isn't dying out, it's going on. And it's the involvement of all the people which is what they knew from the first.

F: It has been an educational tour de force anyhow of the whole public?

R: Oh, just fantastic! It's wonderful, and to me it's the road to the return to religion in some new form. I really think it is. Because these youths, you know, have human values. They're idealistic, but they haven't any structure of thought to relate them to other than an awareness of nature which gradually becomes a religious springboard of faith. So nobody may have given the Johnsons credit for bringing about a religious revival, but they've given us the raw materials, the springboard and the direction for one to occur; I feel that very strongly.

Youth has very keen awareness of human values, if they can interlock them with natural values, together the two may produce a projection of faith of religious values and maybe we'll begin to get a cohesive structure to our society. It's fragmenting now; the value pattern is breaking up. The old economic goals are not enough, and the non-material values are still emerging.

We'd better close on that note.

F: Mr. Rockefeller, were you and your commission involved at all in the negotiations in the rather delicate problem of working out a Redwoods National Park?

R: Yes, we were. When we went to California, at the President's request, to look at the power line problem in Woodside, California, we volunteered our services to go up and review the Redwood Park situation.

F: This was your initiative?

R: This was our initiative. We wrote that up in a separate letter as a report to him. And he was sufficiently impressed with our views on the subject and its potentials and what a possible solution could be, that he asked us to informally represent him with Governor Reagan in starting negotiations as to between the National Park Service, really, and the lumber companies and the State.

F: A three-way negotiation gets a little more difficult than when you just have two.

R: It was a three-way negotiation. We made two or three trips to California. We had innumerable meetings with the Deputy Director of the Budget, Sam Hughes, who was a coordinator of the government agencies involved--the National Park Service, Defense Department, the Department of Agriculture, and undoubtedly one or two others.

F: The Defense Department is involved because of installations in the area?

R: Well, what California wanted was a quid pro quo for turning over certain state parks as a nucleus of the new national park. They wanted to be paid for them. They in effect wanted to sell them. It wasn't put that way, but that's what they wanted. They wanted certain land held by the Department of Agriculture --forest preserve area--they wanted turned over to the lumber companies to compensate them in part, to keep employment going in the area, for the land that they might be required to sell and to round out the state parks into a national park.

So we got into a long rather endless negotiation, meeting with Senators Jackson and Bible and many others and certain Congressmen. We really spent a lot of time. I have the greatest regard for Sam Hughes for his role as coordinator of all of that.

Then finally the Congress had to kind of take it on themselves. We dropped out of it, and the program went ahead. While it wasn't exactly what we were working for, I would say it was substantially what we were working for. It was an intelligent, constructive compromise. And it involved the transfer of this so-called purchase unit which many elements of the government were dead against because they thought it was a precedent. But the idea that the government can't give up some land in order to acquire better land, we felt was sound policy, precedent or no precedent.

So this all worked out, and we did have an informal role in it which was very gratifying. And Horace Albright and Newton Drury and Fred Smith and Henry and myself were sort of the Connie Wirths, you see, very close to this whole thing.

F: Did you work with people like Ralph Chaney in his "Save the Redwoods"?

R: Yes. He was on one of these trips with us. Who was the Conservation Commissioner there that we talked with so much?

D: Livermore.

R: Ike Livermore. We saw a great deal of him. And it all was how the State of California, the lumber interests, state park interests, the national park interests, were going to resolve their differences.

F: Did there seem to be a disposition on the part of the lumber interests and the State of California to negotiate and to work out some kind of compromise, or did you really have to overcome some pretty severe opposition?

R: Well, the big problem was how to get enough trees to make a meaningful park, and then have enough left so you didn't create a disastrous unemployment problem in California. The goat was this National Forest Purchase Unit. They had to give that up or turn it over to private interests. I think that's how it came out.

D: They're swapping off some of that land--

R: And the lumber interests of course are going to be paid a fabulous price so they get their profit. And the State of California was just being shrewd. They weren't going to give up something. Actually they were getting rid of the burden of maintaining these parks, getting much more visibility nationally to develop a weak tourist area due to inaccessibility, short season, and cold weather. But they wanted more if they could get it, and they tried very hard.

F: What was your estimate of Governor Reagan's role in this?

R: He, of course, got off to a bad start when he said, "If you've seen one redwood, you've seen them all." But he was partly kidding about that. He was trying to say you didn't have to have a vast number of redwood trees to have a significant experience of redwoods. And he had his legislature to deal with. He was giving away from their point of view part of the State of California to the federal government for what? I mean, that was his problem, it was an honest problem. So to give an answer, he could say, "We got back the best surfing beach out of the Department of Defense." A lot of people say, "Well, maybe it was worth it." A lot of other things they wanted. So I think that everybody represented their special interests aggressively, and that out of it all we hammered out a pretty good compromise.

I think this is going to be a beautiful park; I just wish it was more accessible and they had better weather.



But actually the higher ground is less foggy. We tried to get this thing mapped out into a recreational plan of the State with the Forest Service which surrounds this area, and the lumber interests, so they could make greater use of it, get greater public enjoyment.

F: Thank you.

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By Laurance S. Rockefeller

to the

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