

RICHARD NIXON FOUNDATION

PROJECT: ORAL HISTORY WITH BRUCE HERSCHENSOHN

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INTERVIEWER: JONATHAN MOVROYDIS

Jonathan Movroydis: This is a Nixon Foundation Oral History with Bruce Herschensohn, who served in the Nixon administration as director of motion picture and television at the United States Information Agency, staff assistant to the president, and as deputy special assistant to the president. Bruce Herschensohn, thanks for your interest and thank you so much for joining us.

Bruce Herschensohn: Great to be here. Thanks.

Jonathan Movroydis: First question just to start off, when and where were you born?

Bruce Herschensohn: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Jonathan Movroydis: What year?

Bruce Herschensohn: 1932.

Jonathan Movroydis: Where were you educated? Where did you go to school?

Bruce Herschensohn: You're going to have to be talking about public schools because I never went to college. I went to Grammar School in Milwaukee, then in Long Beach, then in Los Angeles. And that's really it. And they were public schools.

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you enter the film industry? You started off at RKO. Is this correct?

Bruce Herschensohn: I did. Good research. Yeah. Messenger room. I was a messenger at RKO studios. It was wonderful, and I got to learn a lot of stuff that I could only learn by working in a major motion picture studio. And then from there, I went to San Diego. Well, I went into the service. It was the beginning of the U.S. Air Force. When I say the beginning of it, it was always the Army Air Corps and then it turned into a branch of its own. And I served there, then went back to RKO.

And then I went to San Diego to work for Convair, that made airplanes, and I was making movies for Convair.

And then Convair started working on rockets. And I was in that division. I'm minimizing something that meant a great deal to me. I can tell a funny story that has nothing to do with anything else. On the badges at Convair. There was a little seven and I didn't know what the seven stood for. I asked what it stood for. If they gave me an answer, they would say, "Well, it's for your parking place. It's a good parking place." And I kind of thought, "Gee, I got to get one of those things." That as because I was parking in way that devil away from where Convair was located and walking to the building and then walking back. I wanted that parking place!

But, anyway, I couldn't get one. I'm going to abbreviate a great deal. I was asked to visit with the head of security. And he said that Convair was now going to make missiles. And I didn't even know what the devil he was talking about. And he said, "And we have a name that you can never use," meaning as long as the name remained secret. The Atlas missile will be an intercontinental ballistic missile, and we call it here, a model seven. And then everything came to me. That's what that seven was. I was disappointed because I wanted that parking place. There wasn't such a parking place. But anyway, I then started working on missiles. And that brought me to Cape Canaveral where I worked for years.

Jonathan Movroydis: How did you become a filmmaker? How did you develop a craft in film making?

Bruce Herschensohn: I made a film when I was still in school. I'm talking about high school. And when I was working at RKO, I really embellished it and got to learn film editing, just by good people. That's all, very good people who were marvelous and they worked in RKO, film editors and directors. And I got to know how to make movies.

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little bit about your work at Cape Canaveral?

Bruce Herschensohn: At Cape Canaveral, I was asked to do some photography, cinematography, of the first Atlas missile, but we couldn't call it that at the same time. And you could never use the word Atlas. And I went to visit a guy who was at the Cape and had taken movies of many short-range missiles. And so I visited with him and I said, "I've never taken a picture of a missile going off before. Can you give me some advice?" And he said, "Yeah, I can give you a number of

things.” One of them was “When you try to follow a missile, get ahead of the missile. Don't get behind that or it's going to go like this. And he jerked his hands,, then said, “There’s an illusion that when the missile is above your head, it looks like it's going to fall directly on top of your head. It's just one of those illusions.”

Then he added, “But a lot of cameraman have run away. They've run away and caused accidents by doing it. One guy just broke his arm last week doing it. And this was on a smaller missile. Just don't get scared. When you see the missile is right above your head, it's not falling on you.” This was 1957 when there were always lineups of cameramen from different areas. I was representing General Dynamics and Convair and the Air Force. But there were like maybe 20, 25 cameramen in a row. The missile went off the first test of the Atlas, to the point that I remember the date. It was June the 11th of 1957. And it was the first Atlas to be launched. And I got it on film and it was right above my head. And sure enough, just as this friend of mine, Joe Figuerota, had told me that I had this illusion that it’s going to fall on your head.

The only problem was I could see through peripheral vision. Cameramen were running away on both sides of me and I was just left there. And by God, it was falling right directly and very close to my head. And I just didn't know that it was the real thing but it was. So for a few hours until I confessed, I was treated like a hero at the Cape because I stuck it out. Well, I was no hero. I had received this advice from this friend of mine, that it was just an illusion. And now I was being told that it could have taken off my head because the metal from the missile just goes like this as it falls down to earth, and it can strike anything in its path. Anyway. That's how I got my initiation to Cape Canaveral. And I went to see my friend the next morning. He just apologized. He said, “It isn't always going to be an illusion, I guess.” But anyway, that's how I got involved with the Cape and then through the astronauts, particularly, John Glenn.

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little bit about that? What were the astronauts in the space program? Did you work on that at all?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yes, the Mercury Program, yes, called the Mercury Seven, even though it turned out to be for Project Mercury which was the first manned flight on a missile. It wasn't seven, it was only six that made it because there was a heart murmur in Deke Slayton which was one of the seven, and in those days you had to have good qualifications. Your health had to be A1 perfect because they didn't know what would happen to people. And so he wasn't allowed to fly and there was only six astronauts of the Mercury Seven. And then he flew in the next

series of flights of Gemini, which transported two astronauts in one capsule. So he got his flight but it wasn't the Mercury one. John Glenn was certainly a tremendous hero; the first American in orbit, three orbits. And then we had Cooper, great guy with a great sense of humor. Great sense of humor.

And he went 22 orbits. He was the last of the Mercury Astronauts. And you weren't supposed to carry anything with you on a Mercury flight. No souvenirs to print, show or give to friends. But when he got off the flight, he opened his hand and he had a miniature Christian cross, Star of David, something of Islam...oh, the quarter moon of Islam, and like a charm from a woman's charm bracelet of Buddha. And he opened up his hand in front of Shorty Powers who was the major spokesman for Project Mercury. And he opened up his hand and he said, "I had to take them all with me just in case." It was just a great line and it personified this man, Gordon Cooper, who everyone called Gordo; just a marvelous guy. They're marvelous people. I mean, really marvelous. And, boy, they took their chances all right. It hadn't been done before in the United States.

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you start working for...you had said that you worked for...you went back to RKO after that.

Bruce Herschensohn: Well, I went back to that after the Air Force. Then I got the job at General Dynamics. Then it was at Cape Canaveral and then a number of things for the Air Force and the Cape.

Jonathan Movroydis: Did you do any additional work besides for the Mercury Program at the Cape?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah, Strategic Air Command and that wasn't at the Cape, however, but it was in the same climate. They were the days of the Cold War and so...yeah.

Jonathan Movroydis: When you said the Cold War, there is the Cold War in terms of your work, in terms of the coverage of that, could you touch upon that a little bit and touch just upon...

Bruce Herschensohn: Can I touch what?

Jonathan Movroydis: You know, the whole space race and the Cold War and how it pertained to your work as a filmmaker.

Bruce Herschensohn: Well, I spent so much time in Cape Canaveral. A lot of time in terms of anything to do with the Air Force. And I was just involved in that period of time.

Jonathan Movroydis: In 1963, you produced "John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Days of Drums." Could you tell us about the genesis? First of all, let's go back to...can you tell us how you started working?

Bruce Herschensohn: How what?

Jonathan Movroydis: How you started working with the Kennedy Administration as a filmmaker?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. I was working as a contractor for the United States Information Agency. I submitted films that I had made that were unclassified, not like the one on Atlas or anything. And I had been making pictures of various countries. I sent in a film to George Stevens, Jr. who was Director of The Motion Picture Division of U.S. Information Agency and said, "I'd like to do films for the USIA." And he said, "Yes." And this was the Kennedy Administration. At the time I did this, it was 1962. I guess it was '62. And I made a film in Ecuador and I made a film on the Cold War in a general sense; a number of films. Then he asked me to do a film on President Kennedy's trip to Europe and I did.

No, I did not. I mean, I went on a pre-trip and I had advised him and Edward R. Murrow, who was the head of the Agency; the director of the Agency. So it was George Steven's boss. I called him from Europe and said, "Boy, this is a pretty crummy time for the presidency to come over here." There were so many things terrible things that were happening. There was self-immolation done by Buddhists in Vietnam. There was the murder of James Meredith. That was the beginning of a tragic affair going on in Great Britain called the Profumo affair. And there was the death of the Pope. And I said, "This just doesn't seem to be a good time for President Kennedy to come over here." Because a lot of Europeans said, "Why is he coming?" Because of all of these incidents that were happening. And Edward R. Murrow said, "You got to come back to Washington and discuss this."

And I did and I made a picture called "The Five Cities of June" with none of the cities that I just mentioned. But one of the cities I made was the President's trip to Berlin because that was just magnificent. So I had the Death of the Pope. I had Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with Governor Wallace, allowing the Attorney General to make sure that the black children were allowed in Central High School where they

had not been permitted earlier. And Wallace stood aside, and in the sense, gave up the segregation of the school. And also a number of...had five cities and it was called "The Five Cities of June." It so happened that President Kennedy was very high on the film. He was only in one segment, but he was very high on the film.

And he sent a marvelous letter to Edward R. Murrow saying something about it being the best documentary he ever saw. And Jackie Kennedy later on sent me that letter that he had sent to Edward R. Murrow, a copy of that letter...or that he had sent to Edward R. Murrow. But anyway. I got to know a lot of the staff of the Kennedy Presidency. They all knew that I was a Republican and I was never hiding it from anybody. And they were marvelous to a number of people in the next administration for which I will always give them the greatest of credit. When President Nixon resigned, I got a call from one of the people on the Kennedy staff. He said, "I don't know how your White House works in contrast to ours, but I'll just say this, you're going to be going through what we call Dallas. It's going to be your Dallas. So if you can do something to avoid it, you better do it. Pretty darn good of 'em."

I mean, really, really, it was just tremendous for him to make a phone call like that. I stayed up for a few days and sent President Nixon a speech that I hoped he would make. He wasn't able to do it, but it all...I can't go into everything that happened because there's just too much. There was a meeting I was able to visit with the president the day before he resigned I tried to talk him out of the resignation.

The day that he resigned, a lot of the staff of the Nixon White House was meeting in an office and stayed till quite late. A lot of us were hungry. In DC closed up very early in those days. And the only one who answered a phone call was a restaurant I never heard of that was in Georgetown. And Dick Moore, who was counsel to President Nixon talked on the phone to the man who answered and Dick Moore just said, "We're hungry and we can't find any restaurant that's open."

He was told, "We're not open, but you can come here. Come here and you can have anything you want on the menu and we're going to stay open." And they did. And Dick Moore and I went there. They were marvelous to us. And I think it's really just because I got on this track of correcting what has become an error that just is untrue. It was untrue that Kennedy and Nixon didn't like each other or hated each other. They were rivals when they ran for president. But both of them were friends. They both served in the service. They both served in the House of Representatives. They served in the Senate. Then Richard Nixon became Vice President, of course,

and they remained friends, even through the race. And they were very respectful of each other.

And if you ever want to see their four debates when they were running for president, you'll see two gentlemen who ran against each other. Very shortly after the victory of President Kennedy in that election came the Bay of Pigs invasion. And that was a tragedy. We didn't succeed. We failed. He took the blame for it. He didn't have to. He took the blame for it and he made a phone call and he called former Vice President Nixon on the telephone and asked him if he would please come to the White House to talk about foreign policy. Former Vice President Nixon agreed and came to the White House. President Kennedy was a great admirer of Nixon. Nixon had gone to the hospital to visit with him when he had his very bad back problems.

And he, President Kennedy, was very, very loving of President Nixon because of what he did. Vice President Nixon, what he did for Kennedy and he told Richard Nixon, that he wanted to talk about foreign policy because he admired so much what Nixon knew about foreign policy. They ended up talking about all different places in the Cold War; about West Berlin, East Berlin, India, Pakistan. I mean, I could go on and on. It's a volume. And President Kennedy got up off of his wheelchair in the Oval Office. Former Vice President Nixon was on the cushioned chair in the Oval Office. And Nixon got up from his chair and he said, "You know, this is the stuff of presidents. And he smiled and said, "I mean, who cares if the minimum wage is going to be \$1.15 or \$1.25?"

And Nixon smiled and nodded. They both were saying something in reference to the power of the Congress in domestic affairs and the power of the President in foreign affairs. That's what they meant by that remark. And Kennedy said of foreign affairs, "That is the stuff of presidents," and that lived on. And obviously I was not there in that office. It was only the two of them. But I later got confirmation on both sides; word for word from President Nixon. And I obviously couldn't hear it from President Kennedy. He was gone by this time that I could have talked to him. And I got this confirmation from Pierre Salinger on his end because Pierre Salinger was the press secretary for President Kennedy and they were both very close. So it was confirmed through whatever sources I could get and the sources were President Nixon and Pierre Salinger.

Jonathan Movroydis: Going back to the documentary filmmaking, were you in Berlin with...

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah, making a picture because...I told you at the beginning of that, and then we had this picture called "The Five Cities of June." And so I was there in Berlin with President Kennedy's group. And when he was at The Wall, and then he was at the City Hall grounds, which then became after the assassination of the President it became Kennedy Plohtz in Berlin, West Berlin. Great speech.

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little about the film that you made after the assassination of "John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Days of Drums?"

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. Yes. Do you mind, Jon, if I make one correction?

Jonathan Movroydis: Sure.

Bruce Herschensohn: It was called "Day Singular." And the only thing significant, the only reason that is significant because I wanted somebody to repeat Years, plural, of Lightning, and Day of a Drums and put it in the place of life and death. Yeah. I was going to go to Geneva to start a trip on communism around the world. This was during the Kennedy administration. And I left USIA in DC to take a plane to New York then to Geneva and then from there...I'd go around the world. On the plane to New York, there was a woman crying across the aisle. And I asked her if she's okay and anything I could do or something like that. But she said, "No, the President was shot. He's dead." And I said, "No, that can't be. I just left USIA. They surely would have told me that." I said, "Maybe what you heard was that someone was aiming at him, but it didn't happen. He wasn't killed." She said, "Yes, he was."

And then when we landed, the flags were at half-staff at the airport. My first instinct was that whoever ordered the lowering of the flags heard the same terrible rumor that this woman had heard. I guess it's just how the human brain works I guess. It's something you don't want to have happened, so you tell yourself it didn't happen. Went inside the terminal, I saw they had television sets on the counters. And indeed it was true and I called up George Stevens, Jr. And I said, "Is there anything I can do?" He said, "Yeah, don't go on your trip, come back to DC." And I did. I made a picture on President Johnson very quickly. The only thing that was available was a 35-millimeter color short which was footage of him at a barbecue in Texas and that's all there was. I made a film on President Johnson and got it out before the end of the year for every embassy in the world, every U.S. Embassy in the world.

And at the same time, simultaneously, I started working on a film and I didn't know what it was going to turn into. But I wanted to make a feature film. And I did make it a feature film and then worked on that for a year until it was done. And I know for most of that year, I had the title, "Years of Lightning..." No, "Years of..." I couldn't think of anything before saying "Day of Drums." And I wanted a word. And then I don't know what happened but I thought of the word that "lightning" that would be perfect and it could be a singular. I mean, excuse me, a plural while the "Day of Drums" would be a singular. And that's how that picture got made. It ended up being feature-length. It was 90 minutes and that was it.

Jonathan Movroydis: You had mentioned that you were a Republican working at a Democratic administration. You also worked with the Kennedy Administration and the Johnson Administration. Had you always been a supporter of President Nixon?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. And as you might expect, we're both from California. So I knew him before a lot of people of the country. But I knew him in a very scant way, as some guy in a big crowd who was there. But I really got to know him while President and even got to know him even better after the presidency was done. And when we both came back home to California. I resigned when he resigned. However, his resignation made a little more history than mine. But anyway, we got very close. The guy was absolutely magnificent and did things that I never expected a President of the United States to do for me. And I went to... may I tell you one incident? I got a job at KABC Television doing debates with Senator John Tunney. I did not know John Tunney at the time.

And I went to visit the President and said that I wanted any advice he could give me on debates. He gave me a number of pieces of advice. And because I ended up, later on, teaching at Pepperdine University, I always told the students this because I was passing on his advice to anyone who was going to the debate. And he said, "First of all, how are you going to call him when you debate him on TV?" And I said, "Senator." And he said, "Don't. Call him John because he's going to call you Bruce. You don't have a title. And so he'll call you Bruce. Why do you want to remind the California audience that this guy represented them in the Congress of the United States, in the Senate of the United States? You want to make sure that everyone in the audience knows that?" He said, "You call him John. He'll call you Bruce."

And indeed, of course, that was true. And then what I did was, of course, to call him John, naturally, and he did call me Bruce, naturally. And when I was not with him, but talking about him, I would refer to him as Senator Tunney. And it made

me feel good doing that. Then because that was one thing. Then President Nixon asked, "Are you going to have a researcher? Does this station give you a researcher to work with when you study for a debate?" I said, "I have no idea." And so he said, "Well, if they offer you one, don't accept it" He said, "If you have someone do research for you, you may remember what that person told you. Maybe you'll remember it for 24 hours at most. If you do the research yourself and go to the library, do the research, get the research yourself, you'll remember it the rest of your life." And so far he was right.

And he said, "And don't enumerate. You have a habit of saying, first this and then this, second this, this." He said, "You're going to forget what you were going to say for number three. And he said, "And it'll be very embarrassing because you may forget number three!" Well, many years later, decades later, Governor Perry was giving a one, two, three when he was running for president, and by God, he proved that Nixon was giving me very valid advice. I mean, it was no tragedy that the guy forgot what number three was that he was talking about, but he could have avoided if he had known what President Nixon was giving me his advice and I realized that and there are a number of things.

I said, "Senator Tunney is a Senator." He was a senator. And I said, "He knows stuff that I don't know. I'm sure of it, particularly, I mean, domestic policies." And I said, "What do I do if I just don't know anything about what he's talking about?" I can't say, "Well, you win John and put up my hand because I don't know anything about it." He said, "No," He said, "You don't do that." He said, "What you do is say, 'That isn't the point, John.'" And I said, "What if it is the point that he gave?" He said, "It won't be the point as soon as you say that because he thinks you know something that he doesn't know about domestic policy."

And he said, "And you'll have time as he sort of wonders about what it is you're thinking about, and you'll have time to develop something in your head, believe it or not, and then you'll start arguing about whether or not that really is the point or not. You'll be through with what the point would have been." And there were so many things that he said that were just absolutely superb. And I remember them to this day. There's a lot more but I don't want to just dominate. I always tell students this, particularly when they want to go into political life and particularly if we feel the same about political life.

Jonathan Movroydis: Going to 1968, you became Director of Motion Picture Television Service at the United States Information Agency. Were you appointed during the transition by President Nixon?

Bruce Herschensohn: No, Johnson was president, period. He was president. I started in 1968. And January the 1st and January the 2nd of 1968, he announced that he wasn't going to run for president the end of March of that year, too. And so I realized that he was going to leave, but that was after accepting and having an office in DC and working for the USIA for President Johnson. And then I was very high on Goldwater the same time because I was worried of his policies.

Jonathan Movroydis: Principally, how were USIA films used?

Bruce Herschensohn: They were used for most of them as short subjects for theatrical release. There wasn't enough TV in any of Asia or Africa or Latin America that really think of it in terms of television. But it started maturing around the world. And then we started making pictures for television as well. And I'm not talking about videotape. I'm talking about 35-millimeter Eastman color negative. And we have shorts playing in theaters. But we did have "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," which was a feature-length picture. And I had worked on another one that I made called "USA: The Seventh Generation." And I think those were the only two feature length films.

Jonathan Movroydis: What kind of films did you work on during the Nixon administration from '69 to '72?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. All those years I wasn't physically making the films, but I was directing and hiring those people who had companies of their own like I used to have to make films. And the one that I wanted the most was a picture of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, which came at the end of, I believe, the Johnson administration. And so I contracted that film out and, lo and behold, it was there and released during the Nixon administration. But a great many of the bureaucracy did not want to have it released. They felt it was too propagandistic.

It didn't even have a narrative. It had nothing but sound effects and the call of the crowd as you watched the tanks of the Soviet Union come in. I showed it to the director of the agency at the time, President Nixon's guy, Frank Shakespeare. He loved it. And he changed the rules of the USIA that those who are representing the media as appointees, not as bureaucracy but as appointees, get to do what they wanted to do. And he's the only one to answer to. That anyone else can give advice, but you don't ask permission. And he changed the rules. And he was a great director and headed a great agency.

Jonathan Movroydis: Was that Czechoslovakian film released in the Communist Bloc?

Bruce Herschensohn: No, it was released around the world except the communist Bloc. And the communist bloc, we ended up exhibiting at the home of the U.S. ambassador and inviting any diplomat to come to the ambassador's home to see it before our premiere. And so it was always crowded. And a play that did very well. It ended up winning an Academy Award.

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little bit about the influence of the film?

Bruce Herschensohn: What?

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little bit about the influence of the film?

Bruce Herschensohn: Oh, it was very, very influential in that it was the first time that many, many people in the world got to see what happened in Czechoslovakia and there was no narrative. We wouldn't saying anything. There was one word that was said that was yelled by the crowd, "Svoboda." And that was the name of the free president of Czechoslovakia, which was called the Prague Spring. It was when Czechoslovakia was free for a few months. Svoboda. And Svoboda also meant freedom. It just was one of those things and one of those strange things in history. The word in the language meant freedom and meant the president, the free president of Czechoslovakia. Anyway. And then it did get an Oscar for the documentary. It had tremendous influence, mainly because so many people did not know what the invasion was all about. But when you see those Soviet tanks come in, and you see people who were throwing anything at the tanks, it meant a lot. It meant a lot to people. It was free for a while.

Jonathan Movroydis: Did any of your work cover strictly the president's policies?

Bruce Herschensohn: Did any of what?

Jonathan Movroydis: Did any of your work cover President Nixon's policies, say, the Vietnam War and other areas of foreign policy?

Bruce Herschensohn: Oh, absolutely. I mean, that's really what I was doing. As head of USIA film, I went from Johnson to Nixon. And then that's when I was in the Nixon, started in the Nixon administration naturally and was all on policy.

Jonathan Movroydis: When you joined the White House staff, what year was that?

Bruce Herschensohn: It was January the 2nd of 1968?

Jonathan Movroydis: That year you were in USIA?

Bruce Herschensohn: Mm-hmm.

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you become...

Bruce Herschensohn: Pardon?

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you become a staff assistant and then deputy special assistant to the president?

Bruce Herschensohn: Okay. When President Nixon became president, he retained me. And then I resigned from the agency because of what TUFF that I got in with Senator Fulbright about the future the agency. And Fulbright was not an advocate of the USIA. He felt it was all propaganda. And his brother who became the judge had me for television program to discuss it. And I did discuss it and I spoke harshly against Senator Fulbright, who was trying to kill the agency. It ended up making a page one story on *Washington Post*.

And it kept on being a page one story even though there was nothing new about it, but it kept on and I talked to Frank Shakespeare who ran the agency, and I said, "I got to resign. I realize you would have fired anyone else who did that. We shouldn't speak against the senator, particularly one who's handling your budget." And I said, "That's a lot. I got to resign." And he was one of the most marvelous guys I've ever known. He tried to talk me out of it. Had Bill Buckley calling on the phone to say stay. Frank Stanton, who was the head of CBS did the same. It was a marvelous weekend. So I didn't follow their advice. I resigned. That's when I got a phone call from Bob Haldeman.

He said, "I just want you to..." I didn't even know Bob Haldeman. I certainly knew who he was. And he said, "The President wants you to know that if he can ever do anything for you, he'd like to do that. Just let him know. Call me." Anyway, I said a terrific thank you. "Please, thank him for me." And I was really surprised. I certainly knew who Bob Haldeman was, as the President's chief of staff, and certainly an important figure in the Nixon administration. So I didn't bother calling him back. A few days passed and he called me and he said, "The

president would like you to come to Florida for the Republican convention and see what ideas you might have.” I did. By the end of the convention, the President asked me to come to work for him.

Jonathan Movroydis: What were your principal duties in the White House staff?

Bruce Herschensohn: Pardon?

Jonathan Movroydis: What were your principal duties in the White House staff?

Bruce Herschensohn: The greatest assignment that any young guy could have ever wish for from a president. He said, “I want you to think of anything your imagination can draw up in a creative sense as you've been doing before, that's what I want you to do. You can go to every cabinet meeting, you can go to the meetings in the Roosevelt Room that are everyday meetings with the staff, you can be aboard on anything that you feel will give you an idea that would be creative that we could do.” Not a bad assignment. Oh, my God. You know, I still think about it with a shaking head. I mean, it was absolutely a magnificent assignment. And that's what I did. Then when Watergate came out and escalated into a major story, I was asked to be sort of his representative in the story. “Talk to the press. Go around the United States and talk about it. It's part of the job.” And I did.

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little bit about the broad nature of your assignment and the creative license that the president gave you...

Bruce Herschensohn: Some of the things I suggested he bought and some of them he didn't. They were making something of the Statue of Liberty on the pedestal. Maybe it was sort of the museum that was on the pedestal. And I suggested that he go to speak at the Statue of Liberty at that time. I said, “It will be on the cover of ‘Newsweek,’ it will be the cover of ‘Time,’ it will be the cover of the ‘U.S. News and World Report.’” I said, “Are you standing at the Statue of Liberty?” Then I got a message from Bob Haldeman. He said, “The President wants you to write a speech for him for the Statue of Liberty address.” I thought, “Oh, God, boy, this is living.” And I remember staying up a number of nights and I wrote a speech. And I handed it to him as we were walking to the helicopter on the South Lawn. I handed him a text and he put it in the pocket inside.

And he had wrote it on the helicopter and he never looked at the text. We were talking. And then we get in a limousine. Anyway, the whole thing. As we're going to the statue, I realized he wasn't even reading it. And so we got there and there

were demonstrators, demonstrators against the President. And I was thinking and I said this to myself jokingly, "I'm going join these guys and say, 'Impeach the president.'" I said it naturally as a gag to a number of people on the President's staff who were with me and had great senses of humor and recognized that this was a gag. But anyway. He handled the pocketed speech beautifully and he didn't want a speech really. He decided no text. He didn't want any text in front of him. He wanted to speak and just talk as a human being who feels very strongly towards the Statue of Liberty. And he did. I mean, he was just magnificent first rate.

Jonathan Movroydis: Did you continue to write...

Bruce Herschensohn: Pardon?

Jonathan Movroydis: Did you continue to write for him, speeches?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah, there were things that I was asked to write. And generally writing for President Nixon was tough in one regard. It was that you know what he was going to do. He was going to go to Camp David and he'd take one batch of paper and say, "This is the speech that so and so wrote for me, he's very conservative. This is a speech that so and so wrote he's very liberal. This is a speech..." you know, he knew everyone's politics and he knew what direction they were advising him. And then to put them all together and just used the things that he wanted to use. And so sometimes you were delighted if he used one sentence. You were really, really delighted, but you don't expect him to. In a sense, he wasn't writing his own material of every word, but he was gathering stuff in his head that he wanted to say. And he then often put Ray Price at that time to put things together that he knew the President wanted and could memorize.

Jonathan Movroydis: Were you coordinating with the speech writing staff?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah, I knew Ray Price quite well and some other writers. Ray Price was head of the speech writing staff. But I don't think I did anything of any great consequence. It was just that I could talk to him and we were friends.

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you first meet President Nixon? Can you describe the time and place when you first met him?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah, probably at a rally. In other words, when he was running for the Senate. I was for him at the time. So I was just a guy in a crowd who was applauding and cheering him. Whether or not he ever...I mean, there

wouldn't even have been any way that he would even know me in any sense. I think I might have gone to a reception or something like that but nothing more than that. You know, it was just I really didn't know him. He got to know some of the films that I did, and he was very high on them. And he was very high on the one with John Kennedy, of "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums." And I was delighted that he was. So we just got to know each other and I'd have to say that after resignation when you're not talking to a sitting president, it's much easier to think of yourself and to think of him as friends.

And I did. And he always acted like a friend. He did even when he was President. But it was just we would talk about policies and as I mentioned to you, advice for a lot of things. He's just a magnificent man. When my father was ill, he got at the hospital a handwritten letter from the President. Yes, he did meet my Mom and Dad, my Parents. When they came to Washington, he asked that he wanted to see them. I brought them into the Oval Office. And he said, "There's one thing I want you to know about Bruce." They said, "What?" He said, "He's too liberal for me." And which, of course, caused them to laugh. But he did great personal things in terms of putting me on, and that was one of them. And then he told them that they're invited to sit in the President's box at the Kennedy Center. And, God, that was terrific. There my folks were in the Kennedy box, the President's box. And people were looking up to see who was there. And they had wine for whoever was in that box and cheeses and, I mean, it was just superb.

And I'll just tell you one other story that's worth telling. John Tunney's Father passed away. John Tunney's Father was the only undefeated champion boxer of the world. And President Nixon was a great, great fan of his. He died. His father, John's father died. And the next thing he knew he was getting a handwritten letter from President Nixon with a sizable check to go with his Father's favorite charity. I learned later on from John that he was the first Senator to call for Nixon's resignation. If that was known, it wasn't well-known. And my strong belief is that the President did know that and didn't tell me that. When I told him I was going to debate John Tunney on TV for a series of debates, which became a career, he said, "You'll like him. He's a marvelous guy. You'll like him a lot." And he was right. I did like him a lot and he is marvelous. He was a marvelous guy. And he did very kind things for a lot of people that no one would expect he would do. That's the way he lived.

Jonathan Movroydis: Off camera you were talking earlier about the American flag and that you had...can you tell us that story?

Bruce Herschensohn: No, I don't think I ever publicly told that. It's just that it isn't this one. I have the one that he gave me. Well, it was the first days of my working for him. Tradition is when you work for your President, you generally are invited to go to the Oval Office. And he and you would pose for a picture of the two of you together in the Oval Office. I did that. And then when it was over, he said, "Where is your flag?" And I said, "I don't have one, Mr. President." And he took the flag off of his lapel and pinned it on my lapel. I had it every day after that during the Vietnam War and then after 9-11, I had it on every day and what stopped it was it just fell in my car in the little gap between front seats. I got it out and it's now in a box at a bank and this is a newer one that I have. But that one to me is tremendous.

Jonathan Movroydis: Who are some of the people that you worked most with at the White House? You had mentioned Bob Haldeman. On a daily basis, who else would you work with?

Bruce Herschensohn: Dwight Chapin. A magnificent man. Really magnificent. Really some great, great people there. Dick Moore. We shared...there was a big secretary's room. And his secretary sat in one and then his office. And I had my secretary here and then my office. And we worked together a lot. Dick Moore is one of the greatest human beings you'd ever meet. And there were two times during the Watergate hearings that were hysterically funny. One of them, Dick Moore provided and one of them Pat Buchanan provided. Pat Buchanan was asked by...I guess it was...Who was it? Oh, my God. I don't know.

He was asked by a Senator if he has a lawyer. Does he have a lawyer behind him? He said, "I don't need a lawyer. I need a librarian." And what he meant by this was he was being asked questions that he would have to look up answers. It had nothing to do with him. And it was just hysterically funny to the point that even the senators who did not like Pat Buchanan laughed like a great joke. It was just a great lie that even though he didn't need a lawyer, he needed a librarian. The other one was by the Chairman. God, I just can't remember his name. A Southern guy. I'm gonna think of it as soon as I leave this place.

Jonathan Movroydis: Was it Ervin?

Bruce Herschensohn: Sam Ervin, yeah. He said to Dick Moore...Dick Moore was a guy who I always thought was born when he was 40 years old because the guy looked so elderly. And when he walked with the President, he looked like he could be the President's Father but in fact he was younger than the President. And he always had these old habits. You'd see walking down the hall and you'd say, "Hi,

Dick.” And he’d say, “How are you doing?” He was just an old guy who wasn't that old. And he had a gray butch haircut. He looked like someone who came right out of World War II as a commander or something.

Anyway, so he had answered questions of senators on a Friday, and then he had to come back on Monday. On Monday, he was asked a question and Senator Ervin said, “Mr. Moore, I asked you that question last Friday. You gave me a completely different answer today.” And Dick Moore said, “Oh, whatever I said on Friday I stand on it.” Well, everyone just roared including Sam Ervin, but Dick Moore was the only guy who could have gotten away with that kind of an answer in a Senate hearing. And there he went and said, “That's all.” He didn't care what he said on Friday and what he was saying on Monday. “The devil with it. And if that's what I said, fine. I stand on it.” It was just a very funny moment and there weren't many funny moments in those hearings.

Jonathan Movroydis: Did you ever had any interactions with Henry Kissinger?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah, sure. Of course. Fine. I'm saying of course because he was the foreign policy, you know, he was the guy on foreign policy and he had a very unique physique. First of all, he was the National Security Advisor. And then for the second term, he was made Secretary of State and continued as National Security Advisor. So for two officers that used to compete with each other, he was one and the same one. A lot of people at State we're not pleased with this arrangement, because they have a different philosophy than the NSA, the National Security Advisor, excuse me.

And so he didn't have great popularity, I think, from a lot of people at State. He certainly did with the White House, certainly did with the President because the State Department works with the mission of diplomacy. The National Security advisor goes well beyond diplomacy. You have to think of all the options that you have including the Defense Department. And so State was inclined not to be very appreciative of Henry Kissinger. And Henry Kissinger had two offices. One in State and one at the White House. And he was generally at the White House.

Jonathan Movroydis: How about John Ehrlichman?

Bruce Herschensohn: I'm Sorry?

Jonathan Movroydis: John Ehrlichman.

Bruce Herschensohn: I didn't know him well. He worked on domestic affairs. My passion was for foreign policy and in many ways I was the luckiest guy in the world working for President Nixon. And we had discussions about...I'll tell you one more funny story and it is funny. On his biography, the President said that he had visited 80 countries of the world. Well, I tried to memorize them. I mean, this was...I memorized his bio. I memorized even the countries and so on. But anyway, that to me became something that I wanted to do. I wanted to go to 80 countries, too. I forgot in time what the 80 countries were, but I wanted 80 countries, that's what the President said. So when the President resigned and I resigned, I started traveling around the world again. In earlier days, I hit maybe 68 or maybe 70 countries but not 80. So I knew this was my chance.

And so I hit 80 countries going around the world. Flying back to California, I thought I got to tell President Nixon this. I've tied his record. So I'm sitting there anxious to get home. I got home and I told him I'm back. He said, "Come on out to San Clemente. And tell me what you thought on the trip." So I came out to San Clemente and I told him, "I got to tell you, Mr. President. that I know your biography by heart. And I always read that you've been to 80 countries. And I thought I got to do this. Mr. President, now I did it. I've been to 80 countries." And he looked at me and I didn't know whether he was looking at me with appreciation or anger. He was just looking at me. And I started shifting in my chair thinking, "What a jerk I am. For God's sake. I'm trying to compete with the guy who was president of the United States."

And so what? That I've been to 80 countries. If he goes to Paris, he sees DeGaulle. I hand some stranger a camera and say, "Take a picture so I can show it to my girlfriend I was standing by the Eiffel Tower." I mean, they're not the same kind of trips. So I said that...I was shifting in my chair and I said, "But I got to admit to you that I'm cheating a little bit on the 80." And he just looked at me and I just didn't know whether this was a look of approval or disapproval. But, anyway, I thought, "My God. This is like a bad dream." I hear that before you die, you see your whole life in front of you. And I was thinking kind of our rapport on Vietnam and so many things, even Watergate.

And then I have to say a stupid thing like that. So I added, "But I got to confess something, Mr. President, I'm cheating a little bit. I'm counting Guam and the Vatican City." So he looks at me. He still wasn't smiling. He just looked at me. And then a little smile broke out. And he said, "So do I." And I'll never forget that, you know, that cheats too, on the number of countries. And that it was...well, he counted Guam and Vatican City. And they are not really countries. The Vatican

City is officially a country, but not really, the Holy See. And Guam is property of the United States. So, anyway, but he did have a great sense of humor that he often used. And I know people don't think of that with him. But he had a marvelous sense of humor.

Jonathan Movroydis: Can you tell us a little bit more about...you were saying that not everyone knew that side of him. Can you tell us a little bit more about his sense of humor?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. I've wrote a whole bunch of them down and I don't have them stacked in my head. I have the ones that I happened to be witness to. Even after I told this story about him in front of him, he had a fairly large group and I told this story, the one that I just told you, and he just looks at me and he says, "I also account Hong Kong." That was in the days, of course, Great Britain had Hong Kong. And it was nothing and certainly not an independent country then or now, but it was...I'm just telling you things that are very close to me because that's how it just happened to me. There are any number of things but the most important doesn't revolve around his sense of humor. It was the night of the day before resignation. I tried to talk him into not resigning. And obviously I failed. But I'll tell you one...go ahead.

Jonathan Movroydis: I was going to ask you about that, if you don't mind.

Bruce Herschensohn: No, I don't mind.

Jonathan Movroydis: Nixon said something in his memoirs about your meeting with him. And if you don't mind, I'll read it back to you. He says, "I promised Julie that I would see Bruce Herschensohn, one of the most ardent loyalists in the staff. He was emotional as he argued against what he suspected was a course already in motion. His voice shook with conviction when he said that seventy-five years from now, when some young person was confronted with a difficult and seemingly hopeless duty, he should be able to look back and say, President Nixon didn't give up and neither will I." Could you describe that moment from your perspective?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. I could discuss that entire meeting. First, it was like...I had the idea that he was planning on resigning with some evidence. I thought he was going to resign. I had a phone call from this friend that I knew in the Kennedy administration. And he said to me that, "This is your Dallas. Do what you can do if you want to save the presidency." And so, I think, I might have...well, I know I did tell you. I forget whether I did it in front of the camera, or if I did it without the

camera. But I stayed up many nights and I wrote a speech and then I begged to see him. In order to beg to see him, I had to ask Al Haig, who was now his Chief of Staff. Haldeman was gone. And Al Haig wouldn't allow me to see the President.

And I went to David Parker, who was the appointment secretary, and he said, "We have a word from Haig, he isn't to see anybody." And so I went to Julie and she got to him. And she asked, as you mentioned, she asked him to see me and so I did. And it was like the rule that no one could see the President over Al Haig's head. It was like he was a prisoner in his own home. But Julie got the message to him. And he did. And so we did talk about surrender or not surrender. And I wish to say I was...let me just say some of the things that he said because they're significant. One of the ideas that I had had was that Mrs. Johnson should come out for him. He liked LBJ and LBJ liked him and he liked Mrs. Johnson and he liked Mrs. Kennedy. I said, "The one thing that's unique about this administration at this time is that you don't have any former presidents who are living."

He said, "They're not?" I said, "They're not alive. Too bad. I'm convinced." I told him that, "If President Kennedy or President Johnson, both of them were alive, they'd be fighting for you." And I said, "But you'll never know. I believe that you were to call Mrs. Johnson and ask for her support." He interrupted, "No, I wouldn't think of it. I wouldn't do that with Mrs. Kennedy or Mrs. Johnson. They both have gone through hell in one way or another. They don't deserve a lot of the fate that they receive from a lot of people in this town." Something like that. I'm not probably doing a word for word but pretty close. He said, "They are two lovely women."

That I do remember word for word because I never used the word lovely in my entire vocabulary of life, but the president did at times. "They are lovely women. They've both gone through hell. I don't want to make their lives any worse. They should be treated with the respect that they deserved." Then in talking about resigning or staying in office, he didn't tell me what he was going to do but he did certainly hint at it. And he was saying, "If I don't, this thing could go on for years." He said, "There's no need for this thing to go on and on and on all three branches of government. Certainly the Executive, certainly the Congress, and certainly the Courts." He said, "All the three branches of government who are going to be focusing on this Watergate thing." And he said, "I can change that in resignation."

And I was saying that even in resignation, it wouldn't do any good. And I said something like, "You know, these are just men." If they're going to visit, he was going to be visited by Goldwater, Rhodes and...who was the other guy? I always

forget the other guy's name. It's the Majority Leader in the Senate or a Minority Leader in the Senate. Anyway, he said, "They're going to come here and they're going to give me the count, and they're going to tell me how many senators there are and how many congressmen there are that are going to be for impeachment." And he said, "I don't want hear that for count." He said that he's...and I don't want to...I remember he just wanted to put his hands down. And I said, "They're just men. They are just men." I said, "They're here. You're here. Why should you listen to them?"

I remember a lot of the things that he said to me. He said, "If I fight this thing out, it'll go on for those years that I mentioned, maybe three years, or maybe whatever it is. It's like a gift to Brezhnev. He's going to take advantage of those years." He said, "Any chief of state would. I would take advantage of something like that. We're in a a war, the Cold War." I forgot his precise words. I had a habit of writing down anything that I know is historical after I got out of wherever we were or talking because I realized this is history and I want to be able to quote it precisely.

And I have, at times, quoted precisely, but now we're talking 40-some years ago. And so it doesn't emerge as quickly as I'd like to tell. But he was magnificent. And for those people who thought that there was something that was...there were those people who said things like he isn't thinking properly or something because they didn't expect him to. I would just say this that if anyone was looking in through the window, they would think accurately that he's totally sane. And if one of these two guys is nuts, it's the guy that he's talking to, me, because I was emotional about this.

Jonathan Movroydis: 75 years on, we're at 45 years old almost. So we have 30 years left. Do you still feel the same now as you did then?

Bruce Herschensohn: Darn close to it. I still have dreams after 40-some years that I'm still working in the White House. And I remember when President Carter was president. I had a dream and I stopped in the middle of the hallway in the White House in the dream. I said, "What the devil I'm I doing here? Why am I working for President Carter?" Or why is he having me? And why am I accepting this?" And I would have these crazy, outrageous dreams that I was still there. At the White House after some number of administrations. Not a number. I didn't think I was crazy when I dreamt I was working for Reagan and certainly not Bush 41. And I think by that time, I had already stopped dreaming that stuff. But Bush 41 was a tremendously close friend of President Nixon, which did me well with Bush 41. A great guy and really a great guy. And he owed his future years after losing a senate

run to President Nixon who gave him one appointment after another and then that was carried on by Gerald Ford.

Jonathan Movroydis: You were with the president until the end. Actually you worked in “Public Support for the President,” starting in 1973.

Bruce Herschensohn: That’s correct.

Jonathan Movroydis: During the years of Watergate and things like that. What did that work entail?

Bruce Herschensohn: Going to a number of places that invited the president to speak with him, and he just couldn't do it. He had no ambition to do it if he could avoid it. By the same time, he always wanted to be a gentleman when it came to those kinds of invitations. So I would go and speak to people. I would call them up. I’ll tell you one funny thing. I held on to every piece of humor and, boy, you could sure use them One of the things I did was I would call people who put ads in newspapers, of “Support the President.” And I saw this ad in some newspaper and I don’t know where the devil it was, somewhere in the Midwest. And it was “Support the President,” and it had the name of some guy on it.

I called him from the White House and I said, “I’m calling from the White House.” I forgot the guy's name. But I’m going to I asked is, “Is Henry there?” That isn't his name. I don't remember his name right now. I said, “Is Henry there?” And she said, “No, not right now.” And I said, “Would you have him call me?” She said, “Yeah.” And I said, “This is Bruce Herschensohn at the White House.” She said, “Yeah.” And I said, “At the White House!” And she said, “Yeah.” And I said, “Would you...” Oh, she said, “What's the number?” So I gave her the number. You know, area code 202 and whatever it was, 456... this stays with you, 456-1414. And that was the number. I said, “And ask for me.”

And she said, “What did you say?” “Oh,” she said, somehow, “where is that located?” “It the White House, in Washington, DC.” And she said, “You did say the White House?” And I said, “Yes.” She said, “I thought you said The Lighthouse. That's a bar that he hangs out on every night.” Anyway, I thought this is funny as it could be. I would often tell the president, people I talk to, never anything funny, but it was just marvelous stuff. So I went and I told him, I said...and she told me that her husband goes to The Lighthouse, it was this bar in their neighborhood. The President said, “Ask him to come to the White House. I'd like to meet him and his wife.” And they did. They came to the White House. I invited them as the President

wanted, "The President wants you to come by. He wants to thank you and your husband." And it was done.

Jonathan Movroydis: Any additional parts to that?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yes, yes. That's what I'll do. I mean, those were very significant days. You realize the history of them and you don't want to go crazy, but you realize that these are very important times and indeed they are. They were.

Jonathan Movroydis: You were awarded two honors, one being selected as one of the 10 most outstanding...

Bruce Herschensohn: One of the what?

Jonathan Movroydis: Ten most outstanding people in government and for the Distinguished Service Medal. Could you tell about how you got selected for both of those?

Bruce Herschensohn: Yeah. On the first one, the Ten Outstanding Men in the Federal Government. Frank Shakespeare asked President Nixon about it. President Nixon wanted it done and it I was. And one of the great honors that I could never have expected was the fact that it happened to be that one of the ten was Neil Armstrong for going to the moon. And so I got to meet Neil Armstrong and that was after my time at the Cape by a long shot. I was there for Project Mercury. This guy went to the moon. And I met him. And it was just absolutely superb. I mean, I was just thrilled, naturally, my God. And then the other one was the medal. That was also done through Frank Shakespeare and President Nixon. He wanted me to have the Distinguished Service Medal. And so Frank Shakespeare who became... he's just a marvelous guy.

He called me after I had resigned from the agency. And he said, "Can you come on over to the Agency and give me some thoughts of yours of who might take your place?" I said, "Sure." So I came over to the Agency. I was a free man. I wasn't working anywhere. And I hadn't received that phone call from Bob Haldeman. But anyway, I was a free man. I came over to the Agency. And he wasn't asking my advice. In his office was every officer of the U.S. Information Agency. Many of them disliked me intensely. It's just the way that it works. But anyway, they were all there, all the guys related. And so he gave me the award. And he said, "This is on advice from President Nixon. He wanted you to have this."

And so I have. Those were two terrific things that happened. There were a lot of terrific things. I mean, I could say this that any day that you work for the President of the United States, depending upon your own feeling about the President, could be terrific. And then, boy, in my case, I just...I don't think that there's ever been not just in my lifetime, but in the history of the Presidency that there has ever been a president who knew as much about foreign policy as this man. He could say anything, anything to...I'll just give you one of the piece he gave and I don't mean to hold you. He said, "Spend two hours a day on knowing what's going on in the world and memorizing it. But you have to do it every day. And if you don't do it every day, you're not going to be able to talk current events because things change, leaders die. They become assassinated. A war breaks out in two countries you've never ever even heard of."

And it was the advice that he gave was magnificent. And I know that in my lifetime, there is no contest. I've talked to leaders, senate leaders, and others who are leaders but not Senators who were Democrats. Really, as Democrat as I am, conservative Republican. And they would say to me, "If I had my choice of being able to speak to anyone who was in the White House about foreign policy, I'd choose your guy, Nixon." And they meant it because they knew their stuff. And it wasn't just even Americans who would say that Anwar Sadat said something very similar about him. And so did Golda Meir. Two people who were fighting a war in '73 against each other. They both said that and they meant it. And they were terrific people.

Jonathan Movroydis: Your main area as you state is foreign policy. You've written books about foreign policy. When you were in the administration, how did you feel about President Nixon's foreign policy, especially major things like the Vietnam War, China, SALT with the Soviet Union and Middle East peace? How do you feel overall about the president's foreign policy?

Bruce Herschensohn: Well, the only thing that I disagreed, everything that you mentioned I agree with, but I disagreed with the China policy. I disagreed with... but he knew that. I was not working for him personally at that time. I was working for him as an appointee at the USIA at that time of the China trip, but I didn't want to go on the China trip because I disagreed with what would happen with Taiwan. And we discussed it, not at the time, but I'd say that that's the only time, I mean, the only incident that in which there was disagreement.

And, boy, I could see how the guy knew his stuff. And whenever I explained this to students teaching at Pepperdine University. I always say, "If President Nixon was

sitting next to me, this is what he would say.” My only argument was that this was not going to be good for Taiwan and Taiwan is a friend. That was my whole case. His case was that he wanted triangulation. He wanted to be sure that the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China never got together again. And that they would now see if Nixon went to the People's Republic of China, they would see that the possibility was there, that the U.S. and China would get together as friends and the Soviet Union would be left out in the cold.

He said, “I wanted to prevent that. I wanted that to be the future so that they would never get together again. I wanted to prevent them from going together with each other again. And I saw that as a device preventing.” And I always explained that to the students. I said, “And the President was right, really right.” When he did this, it brought about great fear of Leonid Brezhnev that China, that Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon were going to get together, and both form, what he called a triangulation.

So I think that I understand what he said and he did what he felt was right. And judging from all the other things that he did in foreign policy, he was a pretty darn good judge. I didn't see his way on that one. That's all. Man, he never got mad. He never stopped saying, “Come over.” I mean, he just...I'll say one thing that I learned with absolute certainty: he was a great guy to talk to and when he disagreed with you, he was great because you could learn a great deal.

You would learn what he was thinking and why there was a difference between the two of you. That's the only big one. The other ones that you mentioned, absolutely I was and remain for his policies. And I was very much against Gerald Ford who allowed the Congress to take over foreign policy, which caused South Vietnam to surrender. If it wasn't, if President Nixon was still in office, there would have been no surrender of South Vietnam. And the only people who would agree with me like that were the leaders of North Vietnam. They thought that the Paris Peace Accords that President Nixon brought about was a surrender for them. They didn't know that the Congress of the United States, 94th Congress, was going to go against Ford when he begged them to keep the word of the United States that President Nixon made in Paris. He wasn't and now Ford was President. He begged Congress to go along with it, not vote against it.

What he didn't know is that they would say no to that and suddenly, the Congress was taking over foreign policy. I got to say that I think of that today very often when the Congress continues to try to take over foreign policy. And I could add to that. If anyone believes that that's Congress's business and not the President, read a

1936 decision of the Supreme Court...and if you look it up now and you couldn't do it in those days, you can look up this decision on a computer. And the decision is called "U.S. versus Curtiss-Wright Export Corporation."

I think Curtiss-Wright, Curtiss is spelled with two S's, that I remember. Read the decision and there is no one who could read that decision and say, "It doesn't say what I said. And what I said is that is the business of the President, period." And it is. It's why they call it the Executive Office that the President, he is the guy who is the executor. He is the guy who makes the decision. And they give the reasoning in that decision that I just...Export Corporation, that's what about this. U.S. versus Curtiss with two S's. Curtiss-Wright, W-R-I-G-H-T, Export Corporation. And that is telling me that is not the business of the Congress.

That's precisely what was meant when President Nixon said to David Frost, "If the President does it, it's legal." He meant if it's foreign policy and that is legal. And he's the one who brought to my attention this Supreme Court decision of 1936. And I just want to emphasize this for anyone who says that's not true. That's not good. It's not. Whether it's good or not good, it's not the issue. It is the rule of the United States Congress due to a decision of the Supreme Court that it is the business of the President regarding national security, of foreign policy. And the answer to that is absolutely, it is the law.

Jonathan Movroydis: This is the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Nixon administration, 2019 marks that 50th anniversary of his inaugural. The next 5 years, a bunch of 50th anniversaries. This July is the 50th anniversary of the moon landing.

Bruce Herschensohn: You bet.

Jonathan Movroydis: And the splashdown of...were you there for any of those events?

Bruce Herschensohn: No, I was not. I was in Moscow for the event of Apollo 11's landing. What other events did you mention?

Jonathan Movroydis: The inauguration. I was asking specifically about the Apollo mission and where you were.

Bruce Herschensohn: Well, Moscow. I was in Moscow. I was there for the United States Information Agency. There's a film festival in Czechoslovakia in the odd

number of years. It was the opposite in Moscow. Do you follow me? Odd number one of the two countries. It was in Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia, Moscow for the Soviet Union. And I was there when we landed. Or when it took off from the United States and then when it landed. And I was at a party that we threw. We, meaning the United States, for what you just said, the Apollo mission to the moon.

And I was talking to a waitress who didn't speak much English. But I said, "We're going to land on the moon tomorrow on Monday." And she goes to the poster. She puts her hand like this, something on it and she said, "Not Monday, Moon Day." There are creative people everywhere in the world. I mean it was just absolutely a wonderful thing to give issue to the feeling of what went on in her head, which I would never have guessed that she would have more than amazement. She wanted to say to me Moon Day, pretty good, pretty good. Anyway, that's where I was when Apollo landed.

Jonathan Movroydis: And resignation day is August 9, 1974. Where were you during that day?

Bruce Herschensohn: I was at the White House and listening to his goodbye speech. And there are things that happened historically that you just can never quite put together. The Marine Band Played a medley from "Sound of Music." And I thought, "This is the dumbest piece of...this is not what we wanted to hear." I mean, jeez, jeez. Just imagine I mean, this tragedy is...It's happening in front of our eyes. And we hear, "Da, da, da." Gee, whiz, that got me. I don't know who gave that order, but it was wrong. There was a lot going on that still bothers me to this day and I got crazy about the Marine Band. Oh, my God. Of all precedents. But that was not the selection of the music to play. Maybe there should have been no music to play.

And there are other things. You walked in the White House in the morning. You had yet to leave and all of the pictures of him and Mrs. Nixon were off the walls in the White House and the Executive Office Building. Gone. Hooks left. There are things that are bothersome and still bother me. I don't know why the immediacy to take down the pictures. Oh, I guess, I do know why, it's to say goodbye. It's in a strange way. It's to say it's over. The people that I know in the press, most of them were pretty terrible.

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you leave the White House?

Bruce Herschensohn: Pardon?

Jonathan Movroydis: When did you leave the White House?

Bruce Herschensohn: I left the White House right after he resigned. I wrote a letter to...and President Ford became president. And the helicopter went away. I wrote a letter to President Ford and said that I resigned and that the president has the right to have the staff that he wants with him and I was here for President Nixon. And so you have the right to take the vacancy that I'm leaving and fill it with someone of your own choosing. And that's how it was.

Jonathan Movroydis: During the post-presidency, you had mentioned some of the counsel and some of your interactions that President Nixon gave you. You state here your run for politics. Can you touch a little bit more of what sort of...you had mentioned giving speeches, don't enumerate Were there other cases President Nixon gave you throughout your career?

Bruce Herschensohn: Kind of a lot of it. One of it was, don't waste your time going to Northern California to campaign. You're not going to get one vote up there. He was absolutely right, and I didn't take his advice. I went to Northern California and as soon as I got off the plane, there were members of the press standing around with notebooks and saying, "What are you doing here?" And my answer was, "I'm running for the Senate." I felt beyond the shadow of a doubt. That was President Nixon. He was right, and I was wrong. I shouldn't have wasted that time and money. I could have been in Southern California where you can get a, you know, a rally going with balloons and everything. And I wasted going to San Francisco, but there wasn't a chance I was going to get anything up there.

Jonathan Movroydis: Was there any other...?

Bruce Herschensohn: Pardon?

Jonathan Movroydis: Are there any other wisdom that you remember that he gave you?

Bruce Herschensohn: I got so many pieces of wisdom. I just haven't. It's been over 40 years and all I have to do is just look at some stuff that I wrote. Just because I knew that this was history. And I would never write anything down at the moment. But I'd sit in my car and park it somewhere and just think and write from memory. I think. Oh sure. The idea of spending two hours that I mentioned to you every day on recognizing the news of the day, particularly, in foreign countries, you have to

do it. And he said, "In that two hours, don't sit down because you're inclined when you have two hours and you're sitting down, you're going to fall asleep. Always stand up and pace all alone and think." And that's what I do. I don't pace like I used to, but by God I keep the oath of spending a couple hours. He always gave me worthy advice.

Jonathan Movroydis: When is the last time you saw President Nixon?

Bruce Herschensohn: I guess it was in New Jersey, I don't know. I just don't know. We talked a lot by phone. And I think that I've mentioned to you that I did a series of 14 years debates with John Tunney. And at KABC, it was habit that he would call me after a debate and give me from top to bottom everything he liked and anything he thought I should do better. And, man, I mean, the secretary who answered the phone in the newsroom at KABC would say, "Your presidency is on the line." And I knew precisely who she was talking about. And it wasn't Gerald Ford and surely it wasn't Jimmy Carter, but it was him and he was terrific. And he would come into the domestic stuff too. I did one on busing. And I remember ending it by saying that "it was like Greyhound bus and leave the driving to us" and how they were talking about the government of the United States leaving the government.

Anyway, the only reason I remember it is not because it was a great line, but because he thought it was and he complimented me on it, which I told the news director and he knew that I always talked to the President. But I told the news director and he said, "And stick around for the 11:00 news and do it again." So it was wonderful. Also the first debate he gave on TV, no matter what anyone says about who got the first debate, I know who it was. It was Jerry Dunphy who was the anchor of KABC TV. And when the President came down from San Clemente, I had flown up so that I could go back with him in the helicopter. And I'll just tell you there is nothing worse than being next to the President of the United States and saying, "What? What?" But the helicopter made so much noise that I could never understand one word he was saying.

And so I spent about a good hour maybe just saying, "What?" I tried to look for humor in anything. Anyway, he was wonderful and he would always ask, "How's Dr. George Speck?" Who was the weather man. And how was Tawney Little. I mean, he would comment on everyone's position by using their name. He was very good. Oh, and one of the pieces of advice when I started running for office was, "Never at any time while you're running for office say, 'Good to meet you' to anyone." Say, 'Good to see you,' because probably you met them before at another

such get together and they would really feel like they didn't mean anything if you say, 'Good to meet you,' because it means it meant nothing to you." Pretty good, huh? It's good for life. You don't have to be running for office. But he was right on something like that. Oh, my God, you forget who you say hello to when you're shaking hands to a lot of people. And they were just marvelous pieces of advice.

Jonathan Movroydis: Fifty years on since resignation, 50 years on since the Nixon Administration. What do you feel President Nixon's legacy is?

Bruce Herschensohn: Certainly, he's the best-known voice of foreign policy in which, as I said earlier, even chiefs of state feel that way about him. And just one other thing that happened. Gerald Ford gave a speech, August the 10th of 1975. He had just sent over a general to Southeast Asia. And he said, "The general came back and said that Cambodia is going to..." Look, I'm paraphrasing, "Cambodia is going to surrender. Vietnam will. You have got to stop. You have got to make sure that the word is kept BY the United States that if they should ever use aggression, North Vietnam or the forces in Cambodia... if they ever use forces against the free people of Cambodia and of South Vietnam, that we're not going to permit that because they have to abide by the Paris Peace Accords that he had them sign."

And as I mentioned to you earlier, they thought that they had surrendered, but the Congress was not going to put it together. And I said, "What..." I said to him when this happened, "What would you do if you were president?" And this whole thing happened when the Congress wouldn't allow the United States to keep the word that you gave that we would definitely fight on the side of South Vietnam and even of Cambodia who he didn't make the arrangement with, but we certainly met. He said, and I want to do it as precise as I can remember, he said, "I would announce that we're going to hit every military and industry complex in North Vietnam in Hanoi and Haiphong that they had attacked before that President Nixon had attacked. And I would do the same thing with Cambodia. We're going to attack their places that they find the most valuable industrial and military complexes. And they know that I wouldn't be kidding. They know that our Congress is going to allow them to take over those two countries."

And indeed, they did it. He said that, "I would strike them." I'm trying to think of the words that he used. That he was trying to close those targets immediately. And he was as mad as he can be that the Congress was taking over foreign policy. And he had previously told me about that 1936 decision of the Supreme Court that did not allow the Congress to do that. I hear the debates right now and I just shake my head, for God sake, will someone do what they could never have done before,

strike a couple of keys on a keyboard and look up that decision? That becomes part of the Constitution once you make a Supreme Court decision and it becomes the law of the land.

Unless something comes along in the interim where the Congress changes it. But when in truth when in regards to foreign policy, the Supreme Court, I believe, would not ever go on the side of the Congress. When it comes to foreign policy, they either wouldn't hear the case or if it was going to result in the Congress taking over foreign policy, or if they did hear it, they would make sure that the executive won. I'm certain of it. You can look up any number of cases since 1936. They don't go for this Congress. Not with foreign policy. Senator Fulbright said that...this was on April the...well, I told you the speech that Ford said was on April the 10th of '75. On April the 17th, Cambodia fell and April the 30th, Vietnam fell, South Vietnam.

Three big X in succession, all spelling the disaster for Southeast Asia. When April the 30th came and South Vietnam surrendered, Senator Fulbright said, "I am no more." He didn't use the word unhappy, but it was something like disillusioned or something or, "I am no more," I'm going to say unhappy. He meant it. "I am no more unhappy than I would be if Arkansas lost a football game to Texas." That was like using a knife in the South Vietnamese refugees who were boat people trying to get to the U.S. That was some statement of a leader of the United States. I wish I could think of the word. It wasn't unhappy but it was saying approving in some way that...sorry, I can't think of it.

Jonathan Movroydis: Beyond tragedy of Vietnam that you argued is the result that Nixon resigned from office and Congress overtook the execution or lack of security there. What do you think Richard Nixon's foreign policy legacy is?

Bruce Herschensohn: His legacy is that those things he was allowed to conclude with were tremendous. We won the war. We totally won the war in January of 1973. We won the war with the Paris Peace Accords. And you can read the memoirs of some of the leaders of North Vietnam who did feel that was a surrender document for North Vietnam. But our Congress didn't want them to surrender. Our Congress, believe it or not, was so much against the war that they were for the victory of North Vietnam. Fulbright wasn't kidding around when he said he'd be no more unhappy, or whatever the word was, of...he said it would compare with Arkansas losing a football game to Texas. But he seemed to forget that it wasn't between two people who were playing a game. It was between two governments, one of them was going to take over the other. And if it was South Vietnam, it

would be paradise for that part of the world. If it was North Vietnam, it would be hell for the South Vietnamese. And it was.

Jonathan Movroydis: Bruce Herschensohn, thank you so much for your time.

Bruce Herschensohn: My privilege. Thank you. Thanks for asking.