Oral History Number: 391-009
Interviewee: Mike Mansfield
Interviewer: Don Oberdorfer
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Project: Don Oberdorfer Interviews with Mike Mansfield Oral History Project

Oberdorfer’s unrecorded observations about the interview

“Have a cup of coffee or a soft drink?” Folgers instant coffee in china cups (one for him, one for me). US Marine tie clasp. Wears pedometer though he has stopped walking in the a.m. He finds that he actually walks about one and a half miles a day in the normal course of things; his doctor wanted to know.

Mt. Fuji is a portrait with a gnarled pine in the foreground. Doesn’t recall who gave it.

A window looking out on Pennsylvania Avenue and the Old Post Office across the way.

Behind him, a big map of Asia, including Pacific Asia and the China-India landmass with the Chinese provinces etc. George Packard got it for him.

On the table by his desk, a weather-beaten leather briefcase he used for many years.

On leaving, “take it easy,” and with a mischievous grin, “as they say in Butte, tap ‘er light.”

Peggy D. told me on the phone when I called to check on something later, it’s no wonder M. has had some heart problems, “All he used to eat for lunch was hamburger” often with a slice of onion.

Mike Mansfield had little color, hearing wasn’t very good, but in good spirits and good form, I thought.

Recorded Interview

[See Hayes family notes – MM was checking] *

Mike Mansfield: But I didn’t need it though. After her mother died.

Don Oberdorfer: Yes.

MM: And this one here, about 4th paragraph, I think he was the owner and manager of Western Fuel Company. Mr. Hosworth comes in somewhere, but I don’t know.

DO: He may have sold it to Hosworth or something like that.
MM: I don’t know. The last one on the first page, I didn’t know that he ran for governor in 1936.

DO: Yes. I don’t think it was a serious campaign.

MM: He never ran for sure to my knowledge. I think he was in the legislature, but not for long. Wouldn’t bet on it. You’d have to check the records in Helena.

DO: Yeah, well I have my research assistants going to Helena on Friday, so I’ll have them check on that.

MM: This statement that he was auditor of the city is dubious, maybe. I don’t know anything about it. On page 2, paragraph 4, Maureen told me she was born in a place called Irondale, near Spokane. I don’t think there is an Irondale left anymore, but Spokane is close enough, I guess, to say okay.

DO: Why was she born there? Was her father living there at the time? Do you know?

MM: No, her father left Michigan and went to Oregon, then somehow he ended up at someplace near Spokane, Maureen said the place where she was born was called Irondale, I doubt it any longer exists.

DO: This was before they moved to Butte, then, right?

MM: Yes. I met Anne first. I don’t know how I met Anne. I think Anne was in her first year at St. Mary’s Notre Dame. But that year, 1927—’28 the school year—the School of Mines for the first time had added women. A lot of Anne’s friends from Girl’s Central were among the 25 or 26 women who enrolled. The rest were mostly from Anaconda and Butte High. Then I met Maureen in the spring of 1928. School was out. She was back from somewhere in the midwest. She had spent a year at UCLA before going to St. Mary’s. She just took her senior year there. And I met her in the summer of 1928, met her through Anne, and then we started going together. Maureen’s mother had died the year before.

DO: Right. February of ’27.

MM: That was one of the reasons that Maureen came back. I think she sort of had to look over half of (?)** while she was away. Too much responsibility. The last paragraph is new news to me.

DO: So it’s probably not true.
MM: I have no recollection of anything like that. That’s Peggy DeMichele’s story. Page 3, Maureen is said to have been the first child in Montana with braces on her teeth. First time I’ve heard this.

DO: Would you like to keep this? If you like you can keep this of course. Here’s something that Maureen (?). This is . . .

MM: That’s her father.

DO: That’s her father. Mike Hayes for Mayor. That’s his platform.

MM: ’21.

DO: Well, we are not sure of the year, but I’m going to have that checked in Butte, but it’s ’21 or ’23. In there he says he was the auditor of the city earlier and he’s going to save them money by cutting out the waste and so forth.

MM: Well, then I guess he was.

DO: It’s a nice picture of him. He’s a handsome guy.

MM: Huh?

DO: I said, it’s a nice picture of him. He looks like a handsome man.

MM: He was.

DO: Good looking man.

MM: He was.

DO: Mrs. Lanspa sent me these. I just thought I’d show them to you.

MM: That’s Maureen taking one of her posed photos, item unknown.

DO: This one is in 1922 in Butte.

MM: Finished the eighth grade and you know in those days the photographer made you pose some way. That’s one of the poses.

DO: This is . . .

MM: Is it her mother? No, that must be her grandmother.
DO: Grandmother. Mary Ellen Bearclaw Hayes.

MM: Yeah. She used to go back to see them in Duluth and I guess she had difficulty.

DO: This is taken in Duluth. And here is your Maureen here and one of her brothers.

MM: T.D. And that’s Anne.

DO: And there’s Anne. Yeah. Duluth 1918.

MM: That’s a (?)

DO: Here’s Maureen, T.D., Hayes children visiting grandmother again, Duluth 1918. Around the same time. This says, Bearclaw, Anne, Maureen and T.D.

MM: Well I guess at that time she was the shortest of the bunch. But the others outgrew her.

DO: And this is, again it’s Duluth 1918, same time period.

MM: That’s Anne, that’s Maureen, that’s Bearclaw, I think. And this, I don’t know who.

DO: Yeah. It says, mother Mrs. Frank Hayes. That’s her mother you never met. But she died before you met Maureen.

MM: That’s right. She died in her 40s I think, early 40s and she had, I think, a long history of illnesses and responsibilities fell on Maureen to a large extent.

DO: This is again. Doesn’t exactly date.

MM: That’s T.D. This is Maureen, I think.

DO: That’s right, yeah. And there’s Anne.

MM: Yeah.

DO: This is the ice pond in Elk Park, Montana.

MM: That’s where he got his ice when he had the coal and ice company. I think the railroad from Great Falls to Butte, a branch line, used to ... (?) Can I get you some juice or a soda?

DO: No, I’ve got some coffee. I’m in good shape. Thanks.
MM: I think they took on ice at times up there.

DO: Yes, you said they were railroad diners and Yellowstone Park as well sold ice to them.

MM: And this was by horses. There was no railroad to Yellowstone Park. The closest they came was by the Northern Pacific and the Milwaukee. No other Pacific Way first. Made Milwaukee early in the century. It’s about 7,000 feet high and right about here is a cabin. I used to spend time out there.

DO: So this picture was taken 1980. Most of the buildings were gone by now.


DO: That’s what this says. This picture was taken in 1980. So it’s—

MM: Yeah. Well, I haven’t seen that.

DO: This one is?

MM: That’s T.D. and me. And that’s T.D.’s wife. (?)

DO: It says, in Montana about 1942.

MM: I don’t know. Must be inside, but it looks like it’s outside.

DO: Yeah, it’s outside.

MM: Probably in Silverbow (?)

DO: And here is. She says, 1933 or ’34. And this is Bernice who had this picture.

MM: That’s T.D.’s girl. That’s Mr. Hayes. That’s Maureen. Roosevelt near the Highlands about 20 miles south of Butte where he had some claims. Maureen’s father.

DO: And this is, Maureen’s father and sister, who was a nun.

MM: I believe that’s true.

DO: There she is.

MM: This is Maureen.

DO: About 1925 it says.
MM: ’25. This one I don’t know.

DO: She apparently doesn’t know either because she would have told you if she did.

MM: I guess our niece is getting quite a pile.

DO: Yes, she certainly is. This is entrance to the . . .

MM: The Sorenson House was the house below them. Part of the house they lived in before . . .

DO: She made this little sketch for me. This is the Sorenson garage. Entrance to the Sorensons, really part of the house. Here is the front door of Alabama 517.

MM: And up here was the Anselmo up like that shaft mine. And Sorensoms, yes, they later moved to what was known as “The Flat” in Butte. “Flats.”

DO: This is the Hayes house. This picture is only notable because I wanted to see pictures of the house. And this is—

MM: That’s part of the house. I remember the steps.

DO: Was it painted white or was it just natural wood color?

MM: It was sort of brown.

DO: Some for the pictures it looks sort of white maybe because of reflection.

MM: My recollection is brown. Now who’s this one here?

DO: She says Terry.

MM: Terry.

DO: That’s the wife of the one boys.

MM: T.D. That’s the mother. That’s the daughter. This is the one you have been in correspondence with.

DO: Yes.

MM: That’s Terry now. I remember her more with her hair a little greyer.
DO: Anyway, they are interesting pictures.

MM: Very.

DO: And they have been very nice to me, very pleasant on the phone and cooperative.

MM: Nice people. Have you been out there?

DO: No.

MM: He’s a retired doctor now. He had in the past year cancer of the colon, but evidently it’s worked out all right. They’ve got five children. Four of them, I think, are doctors, and one I think lives somewhere in the Metropolitan area and may be a member of the F.B.I. Did Bernice mention that at all?

DO: We don’t talk about it yet. It could well be.

MM: I think he married a lady. I guess she outspent so much of what he earned that they separated or they got married again. I don’t know. I never met them.

DO: Well, I got some good news for you on the China front. Do you remember I told you that in your archives there is practically nothing about your trips to China in ’72, ’74, ’76. There are no memorandum conversations. We couldn’t figure out where the hell it’s gone to. I talked to Frank Valeo, asked him did he know. He said no, but he suggested I talk to Norvill Jones. I went to see Norvill Jones yesterday. He has and gave to me the originals of the particular ’72 trip—the memoranda between you and the various officials, Chou En Lai and so forth. You could see these were amended. Some of this is your own writing and we don’t have the final printed or typed up copy.

MM: Didn’t I make any reports? I usually—

DO: Yes. We got the reports. That we got. But, I wanted to see the memos because they should be there. Anyway, we have this and Norvill had just had these things sticking in his closet somewhere. I said that I was going to ask you. With your permission I think what we ought to do is when I’m finished working on them we should send these out to the Mansfield Archives. Make them part of your papers. This is kind of a missing link there. And if it’s okay with you that’s what I’ll do.

MM: Good. That’s great.

DO: He just wants a copy of them, which I can make. If his kids sometime get interested in them or something. Also while I’m on it, he suggested I should contact Salpee Sahagian [Manfield’s administrative assistant] because he thinks that she might have had these papers.
MM: She may.

DO: Would that be okay with you if I got a hold of her?

MM: Oh, sure. Any one you want. I think Frank got Salpee the job in the leader’s office. I think they both worked together somehow in the Library of Congress. I’ve never thought of Salpee in the matter of notes. Maybe she did. She only went on one trip with me.

DO: I think she was on the 1972 trip. There are some pictures. [I think Frank (Valeo) got Salpee the job in the leader’s office. May have worked with her at Library of Congress. D.O.]

MM: Salpee. No, it was later.

DO: Was it maybe ’74 then?

MM: Maybe ’74 because we had to—when did Mao Tse-tung die?

DO: I forget. I think it may have been after ’72, because Chou En Lai died—

MM: I think it was the time that we were supposed to see Mao Tse-tung—I’m not certain—but he died, so they shifted us. No, that was 1976 when John Glenn went with us. Just the four of us: Norvill, Frank. I think Maureen and Annie.

DO: Yes.

MM: And they let us go to Xinjiang, a Uyghur province. (?) So we spent some time there in the capital. Is Turpan the capital?

DO: Urumqi, I guess.

MM: Yes. Urumqi. The Chinese call it Urupachu (?). And we went down to Turpan, which was at the beginning of the Takla Makan Desert and 500 feet below sea level, inhabited largely by Uighurs—U-I-G-H-U-R-S. Grew grapes, things of that sort. Fruits of various kinds. I remember notices in Urumqi indicating the groups they had—the nationalities—and the Uighurs, led by some figure like 48 or 49 percent. And then they had Hans, the Chinese, around the 20s. They had Cossacks; they even had a Russian colony in Xinjiang, a small one. Been there for years. Didn’t see it, heard about it. But it was listed. I forget whether. The number was very small, maybe comprising 1,200 or something like that. To the best of my knowledge it was a Russian colony created before World War II. How long, I have no idea.

DO: Norvill had some pictures, which I didn’t bring with me, from the ’72 and ’74 trips. Most of them are these pictures of everybody standing in a row outside of some place or a Great Hall of
the People. In ’74 I couldn’t figure out who this rather striking looking woman was in the party. It was Mrs. Engelhard.

MM: Yes.

DO: Blonde hair. Long and so forth.

MM: That’s right. She was with us on that trip. She came to Tokyo in ’77, my first year there. And I accompanied her on her trip to Beijing. Don’t know whether Sophie [Engelhard] was with her or not. Then she took another trip on her own; came to visit us. And she went down to Shantung, Shandong province, which used to be German-held, where she was born.

DO: Oh, she was?

MM: Yes. Her parents were, I think, Brazilian diplomats.

DO: Well, I gather that she is not in the greatest shape in the world.

MM: She’s about . . . Well, Maureen does not remember much. I think Jane remembers more. But, they are both incapacitated. She lives in Nantucket now. Very interesting.

DO: I thought if it was okay with you I might contact Sophie.

MM: Sure.

DO: And ask her what she knows about it. Ask her if her mother, how she is, if she remembers any of this stuff or not.

MM: I think so. I think it was Sophie—I wouldn’t bet on it—who went with her back to her birthplace. It was a sort of German base . . . and the Japanese took control after the Treaty of Versailles and then, I guess they held it down through the years right ‘til the end of the war.

DO: I think there was this big controversy about what was going to happen to Shantung after the German business.

MM: Well the Japanese were given permission or whatever it was to take over that German-held province. I think that’s Confucius’ birthplace.

DO: Well perhaps I could ask Barbara Hickey to give me their phone numbers and call them as she did with the Hayes and say it’s okay to talk to me. Whatever.

MM: Sure.
DO: One question going back to this Hayes business. You and Maureen were married in Missoula and I wondered why you—? Was it just the two of you and some minister at the time?

MM: Father O’Brien. Lawrence O’Brien. At St. Anthony’s. She quit her job and came down. We got married.

DO: But why didn’t you get married in Butte. Was it times were too difficult?

MM: She wanted me to get an education. She was pushing me all the time—up, up, up.

DO: When you’re getting married the normal thing is you go to the bride’s hometown.

MM: I was going to school and so she just came down.

DO: Just did it yourselves. Did you have any family or anybody there?

MM: Her brother Fairclough enrolled in the university. (?) Don’t know. Didn’t get very far. He was sort of a daredevil fellow. Not too serious. Asked if the girls liked him. He liked the girls. I’m not certain of that. He did come down and he did try. Then he moved.

DO: On these materials from China—your first conversation, your first conversation with Chou En Lai. He began by saying, “The Chinese government had been thinking of inviting Senator Mansfield to come to China a year and a half ago and had expected him. But then the President’s visit”—that is Nixon—“developed and they decided they better allow the President to come first so he could ‘win the race.’ Senator Mansfield expressed his thanks and says that his not coming was probably due to a misunderstanding on his part.”

MM: Who was that?

DO: You said.

MM: About the trip?

DO: Yes. This is in your handwriting. I was trying to piece together what happened here. I think I know but I want to check it with you.

MM: I wanted to see Chou En Lai and I tried through Sihanouk. That is correct, but sometime during that period I sent a letter to Chou En Lai. It got as far as Honolulu and was returned. Ask Frank Valeo about it. Don’t know whether there is a copy of that letter. I suppose there is in the archives.

DO: No. Apparently nothing about China. But there is this. Here’s a memo from you April 1971. It says Henry Kissinger called you at your home. Said he and the President had discussed your
communication hand-delivered by Ken Ballou—who was the liaison guy—and that they
approved the sending of a letter to Sihanouk through the French Embassy. It says “also in this
day I received a return to sender stating no registry service to this country, which refers to the
registered letter I sent to Chou En Lai the previous week.”

MM: That’s the one.

DO: But now the letter I think did go to the French Embassy in Beijing. They approved it. It went
there and the French Ambassador, whose name was Mana’ch, something like that.

MM: Yes. From up north.

DO: According to the story here. It was written by Bill McGaffin, who used to a colleague of
mine. He says that according to Newsweek, “the French ambassador in Peking talked to Chou
En Lai after receiving a copy of the letter”—well, hell, he would have received because you sent
it to Sihanouk through him anyway—“and Chou En Lai suggested that perhaps the President
would prefer to send one of his own men.”

MM: I don’t recall that.

DO: But the funny thing is that in April, this very time—here is April 26th—he called you,
Kissinger called you. You undoubtedly sent the letter that day or the next day. At that very
moment, Chou just—on April 21st, less than a week earlier—had, for the first time, sent a
message to Nixon directly through Ayub Khan, the Pakistani president, saying why don’t you
send an emissary over to China to talk about all these things. We’ll receive him. And the day
after this memo, Nixon sent a letter to Chou through Paris, through some French foreign
ministry person to give it to the Chinese ambassador in Paris. So right at this moment they are
starting for the first time to deal with each other. Just the moment when your letter is getting
finally to Chou En Lai.

MM: Now what year was that? ’72?

DO: ’71.

MM: When did Nixon come in?

DO: Well Nixon came in ’69.

MM: Well beginning in ’69, I think I’ve told you this.

DO: Yes, right. You had these meetings.
MM: He wanted to know who he should contact and what he should do. He set up some sort of a conduit through U. Alexis Johnson, who then I think was Ambassador to Poland.

DO: Had the Poland Warsaw talks.

MM: He worked with his counterpart, the Chinese ambassador there. Always emphasized that he thought I should go first. I said no, I said if we’re successful you should go first. And so it worked out that way. Now that’s the letter I was telling you about. I think it got as far as Honolulu.

DO: Yes, right.

MM: Was returned.

DO: So when you said to Chou En Lai that you’re not coming may have due to a misunderstanding you might have been referring to the letter that got turned back or something like that.

MM: Probably. I did contact the French ambassador with the odd French name. Celtic name really. He couldn’t help me much. I met a member of his staff named de Gaulle and she was as tall as her father.

DO: Daughter of?

MM: She was the daughter of Charles de Gaulle. And then he couldn’t help, or something happened, I forget. I think from there I went to Yenan—Y-E-N-A-N—the old Communist headquarters. And on the way I stopped at Xian—X-I-A-N

DO: Yes, I’ve been there. And this is—what trip are you talking about?

MM: And I got a telephone call—I forget how I got it or where I got it—from the French ambassador saying that, this sounds odd, saying that Sihanouk was in Peking and would be prepared to receive me. I said, well, I’m 500 miles away now and going back I can’t do. Give him my best regards. I think was probably went to see Sihanouk to get to see Chou En Lai.

DO: What year would this have been, this trip you are talking about?

MM: It had to be ’74, because in ’72 I went over to Scotland. (?)

DO: ’74 was the time you saw Chou En Lai in the hospital. I think that was before you took off on those trips out to the country, was that trip.

MM: No I didn’t see Chou En Lai in the hospital in ’72.
DO: That was ’74.

MM: ’74.

DO: He was in the hospital.

MM: Well then I’m getting a little mixed up here. Anyway, the connection with him or through him was with Sihanouk. I told you about the visit to the hospital.

DO: Yes, you did. Actually very interesting. Very interesting. In China, in your first trip of 1922 as a Marine, I have the records from the Marine Corps sent me of this group that went there on the Huron, the flagship.

MM: Huron, yeah.

DO: What I’m not clear about is your first to Tientsin. After three or four days the emergency was over. You came back to the barracks and then they gave a couple of days of leave, of liberty. Now, Professor Hood has you going to Peking.

MM: To where?

DO: Peking. He said “before he left”—before Mansfield left—“he visited Peking on convoy duty, riding the train to the capital city and staying overnight with a marine guard in this American Legation, whose compound was not far from the ancient walls of the Forbidden City.

MM: I’m not sure about that. First we got together and the Huron went to a place called Ch’üan-chou, out in Lietsee (?) and for some reason or another they wouldn’t allow us to land there to move to Peking. From there we went to Taku, went up the river, passed some Russian colonies on the way—white Russians. We were quartered with the 15th infantry. I think I told you that there were Sikhs from Hong Kong, Anabites (Sikh sect?). It was about a week or so as I recollect before Change Tso-Lin withdraw back to Peking then. He was the warlord in control of that area.

DO: He was from the Manchurian War.

MM: That’s right.

DO: Wu P’ei-fu was the Peking War.

MM: No. No. Chang Tso-Lin was in control of Peking and Wu P’ei-fu was the one who went further south. Or should we check this figures. At least on my recollection (?) They are both gone. Wu P’ei-fu later, I understand, entered a monastery. But Chang Tso-Lin stayed in control.
of Manchuria all the time and my recollection is that at that time he was headquartered at
Peking, but I could be wrong.

DO: I think you are. There was a battle, actually, outside of Peking—just before you all got
there—between the two armies, between the two men.

MM: I didn't know there was a battle. My recollection was there wasn't a battle.

DO: You didn't know about it. You were at sea. You were on the way when this happened.

MM: And then when we left Tientsin we went down to Shanghai.

DO: That's right. Now the question is, in Tientsin before you left they gave everybody two days,
48 hours of liberty, and so I wondered if this was true that you went to Peking at that time or
not or if you remember.

MM: I don't know. Tientsin is the port for Peking so they shift stuff by rail up there. We sent
guards. That's all I recall, but I thought it was longer than three or four days at Tientsin.

DO: Oh, you were. You were there about a week. But it was only three or four days on the
guard duty where they were afraid that this was going to be an actual clash. And then after that
went away—then they were there another 48 hours or so and they told the soldiers apparently,
because it's in the Marine Corps records. It says “all outposts and out guards relieved. Perform
barracks duty and men granted liberty.”

MM: I still don't recall. You are probably right, but I don't remember.

DO: Then you went to Shanghai and in Shanghai again the troops were granted liberty in
Shanghai for a while.

MM: That's right. Don't remember much. We visited a Buddhist temple. I had a picture. Don't
know what happened to it, but the group of other marines from Olongopo. I remember there
was a King Eddy the Seventh YMCA. (?) Then we went to back to Olongopo. Something sticks in
my mind. The Huron was the flagship of the Asiatic fleet. That's what it was called then. There
were two crews they were the New Orleanians and the Albany. And two squadrons—four each
of the destroyers. That was the fleet in Olongopo. But we had the Dewey dry dock supposedly.
The biggest dry dock in the world but it was seldom used. And it was just a (?) 200 or so.

DO: You told me that you remember seeing these bodies floating down the river.

MM: Yup.

DO: Somebody in one these articles about you refers to hundreds of bodies.
MM: No. No. Occasional bodies.

DO: Some of them were civilians, I gather.

MM: Couldn’t tell. We were going down and they were going down too. But it was a new experience.

DO: The sights and smells and sounds of China, Tientsin must have been quite an impression.

MM: Well it was a different China. It was a colonized China. Well, all in the east. East (?). It was a warlord China. Battles were common. Warlords were more than a few. I didn’t pay too much attention to them.

DO: You know that is interesting about that trip and I’ve got—again the Marines sent me the orders and reports from your little mission there in Tientsin and they pretty much accord with your memory about the length of time and other stuff.

MM: I don’t recall the liberty, but might have been; I don’t doubt it.

DO: After China, when you came back to Butte and so forth. We talked about Butte. But then when you ran for Congress. Now, here’s one I want to ask you about. Jim Rowe’s son, Jim Rowe Jr., who lives here, says that he heard—and he’s not sure if he heard it from his father, can’t remember now—that before you ran for Congress you checked with Jim, his father, and asked him was he going to run for Congress because you were thinking about running and if he wasn’t going to run you were going to run. Does that ring any bell with you?

MM: No. No. I really didn’t get to know Jim Rowe until I was elected. I had known him sporadically before because we used to hang out at Kilgannon’s cigar store, but just knew him by name.

DO: But in 1942 when you were running there is correspondence in your files when he was appealing to Sam Rayburn to provide some money from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee to help your campaign. Saying that the guy doesn’t have any money. He’s a good candidate. He’s a little bit like Lyndon, he says to Rayburn. And Rayburn provided $1,000, or the campaign committee provided $1,000. So he was already helping you when you were running in 1942.

MM: Yes.

DO: He was then an assistant to the Attorney General, whoever that was.

MM: He was what?
DO: An assistant to the Attorney General. He had been an assistant to Roosevelt and then moved over to the Justice Department.

MM: Well he and Corcoran and Cohen were a trio that grouped together. But I didn’t really get to know him until I came to Washington. I knew about his father, who was in real estate business. Sort of a manager.

DO: And I think I told you that he was wonderful to me. As a young reporter he was great to me.

MM: Jim?

DO: Jim Rowe, yes. He was a fine person. I really liked Jim.

MM: He was a good man. Very forceful as well.

DO: I was nobody. I was just a little young kid. He’d have me in. I’d ask to see him and he’d tell me what Johnson was doing or what was going on, so forth.

MM: Well I guess he was pretty close—he and Corcoran.

DO: Yes, I think he was.

MM: Cohen, but Cohen sort of went into retirement.

DO: I guess.

MM: Corcoran, I think, was in a law firm with Jim.

DO: That’s right. Jim finally joined Corcoran’s law firm.

Mike Mansfield: Some third person from Boston, I forget the name.

DO: Youngman, whoever he was.

MM: Yes, that’s it.

DO: Now, we talked about your meeting with Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944 and here’s the Roosevelt Library, this is the log of FDR’s day, the day that you saw him and he agreed to send you to China.

MM: Who is Per Loren (?)?
DO: I have no idea, but that’s the chronology that the Roosevelt Library has.

MM: And what do they hold? 10 or 20? Yeah.

DO: So my question is, do you remember at all how you got to Roosevelt, how he was willing to see you and he heard you wanted to go to China or whatever. Roe was off in the Pacific as a Naval Officer.

MM: That’s right.

DO: So, it probably wouldn’t have been through him, I don’t imagine.

MM: I don’t really recall whether I called him or his office called me. But when I got down there he had gotten various reports. One was headed by a General Motors man called Knudson—K-N-U-D-S-O-N—and maybe the other was from Wallace, but I’m not certain.

DO: Donald Nelson was out there.

MM: He said he’d like to get some sort of an impartial report on the situation over there from somebody who knew something about it. I didn’t know too much, but he thought I knew more than I did.

DO: But you remember. We talked about this before. You had been trying to go to China since at least the middle of that year when you were talking to the Chinese embassy trying to get them to agree to send you and Congressman Vorys on a mission to China. They were not giving you much of the time of day—the Chinese ambassador. You went to see him. You talked to Stettinius, who was an Undersecretary of State—Edward Stettinius, who was then Undersecretary of State—about this trip. Everybody was kind of saying well, these two Congressmen would like to go, but the Chinese said, well the House will have to invite you. And the State Department said, well the Chinese will have to invite you. It was one of these things where everybody was passing the buck. Nobody was doing anything about it really. My impression is that you were really very eager to go because you generated this whole idea of going to China.

MM: Yes, but I don’t get the Vorys connection. Didn’t we serve together as Congressional delegates to the seventh session of the U.N. in Paris?

DO: He had been a teacher in China for a year. In 1929.

MM: Oh, had he?

DO: Yes.
MM: This is the Ohio Vorys?

DO: Right, exactly. He was also on the Foreign Affairs Committee as you were.

MM: You’re not talking about Judd?

DO: No, I’m talking about John Vorys. And I guess—I’m guessing now—that both of you had some China background. You wanted to go back there. You probably talked to him and he said, well, I’d like to go too. So the two of you teamed up to see what you could arrange. You both tried to arrange it together. That’s very clear from the text.

MM: No, I don’t recall that.

DO: Yes, but it happened. It’s in the papers.

MM: But I did find out on the trip to China—don’t know whether it’s true or not—that Walter Judd—

DO: Yeah, he had been there.

MM: —had bummed rides and gotten to China some way. He had?

DO: Absolutely.

MM: I wasn’t sure. I just heard it.

DO: He had been there for sure.

MM: He had been there for years before, though.

DO: Oh yes. Of course. Right. As a missionary, I believe.

MM: A medical missionary.

DO: Yes, right. Do you remember—there is a line of speculation, which I must say I more or less think is probably right, although who knows—that Franklin D. Roosevelt was interested in having you do whatever you wanted to do because he was thinking that you might run against Burton K. Wheeler in 1946 and of course he did not like Wheeler at all.

MM: No, and Jim Rowe was sort of nurturing the idea.
DO: And you looked into it and finally decided not to run.

MM: Right.

DO: That’s right. But, Roosevelt, who sees this nice young attractive member of Congress from Montana, a Democrat, was thinking, maybe this guy, if he becomes prominent enough, he can take on this old bear.

MM: Could be.

DO: Did he ever talk to you about Wheeler that you know of?

MM: No, but Jim did.

DO: But not FDR. You were not certain if you gave your report to FDR when you came back. But you did. And here it is. You went to see him when you returned from China. You didn’t have very long, only 15 minutes but there it was.

MM: No, but I thought that I had given it to Eleanor.

DO: You might have also given it to her because she arranged this meeting with her husband. But you went into his office. There he is. You’re there.

MM: Well that’s how it happened.

DO: That’s how it happened. She arranged it but you went to see him. Because it’s there in the files. So, that was interesting. They found the document of the meeting with Franklin Roosevelt. There are a couple of things later I want to ask you about. According to an article that was written while you were in Japan—and I think Dan Russell may have been the source of this, it doesn’t say. Dan is now over in Cyprus. He’s been reassigned to Cyprus.

MM: You’ve seen him?

DO: I haven’t seen him. I didn’t know he was there until I called him up, but I’m going to send him a little note.

MM: Good.

DO: This says, well you can read it. It’s this paragraph I put the question by.

MM: Reagan kept me on. Understanding the political situation I was half way packed when I got a call from him asking me if I could stay on, about 2 o’clock in the morning. But, I had also contacted Ford, and Henry Jackson and told them I would like to stay on to finish the work.
DO: And Sam Nunn, apparently too.

MM: Nunn?

DO: Yes.

MM: Maybe, I don’t recall. So that’s how it happened and I think . . .

DO: This says that after this—you’ve already stayed on now, you’re Ambassador—and rumors that you might resign or they might want you to resign. Reagan heard these rumors, according to this, and sent you a letter saying, I want you to do as you please.

MM: No, he didn’t send me a letter. He called me on the telephone and asked me if I would stay on.

DO: Yeah, but now this refers to sometime long after that. You are already Reagan’s ambassador and the rumors in Washington that you are going to retire or leave or somebody is pushing, Mansfield ought to be relieved or whatever. This says that Reagan sent a letter saying don’t bother about this rumors, you do what you want.

MM: If I got it, I don’t remember it. If you can find it, I’d like to know about it.

DO: Well, we’re having problems with—

MM: But there may have been something happening back here.

DO: Yes. There was one incident back here, which I’m trying to get more details on. 1987, before Nakasone’s last trip as prime minister to Washington. In the spring of 1987—Reagan is President, you are Ambassador, Nakasone is coming. They have a big meeting at the White House to prepare for the Nakasone visit. They didn’t really expect you to be there, but you arrived in Washington a day or two earlier and you were there and you were invited to the meeting. The meeting is held in the Cabinet Room. All of the different cabinet people are there. All of the things that they want out of Nakasone in Japan. The President says, “Well, you are here Mike, why don’t you give us a briefing about what is the situation in Tokyo.” And you launched into one of your 10 or 15 minute bing-bing-bing-type briefing. And that, more or less, according to people who were there that took care of the meeting because that answered a lot of the questions that were on people’s minds. Do you remember anything about that?

MM: No.

DO: No reason you should. There were numbers of these that you had at the White House. Just giving them some advice. Okay, thanks for your help. I’m in the process of writing a—let’s call it
an outline, which gives what this book will contain, what different chapters will say and so on. When I finish that—I hope to finish it before Labor Day—then I will send it up to New York, to my literary agent up there who has handled all of my books. She will be in touch with some New York publishers and before the fall is out, September, October, we’ll have a publisher and I’ll sign a contract with the publisher.

MM: That’s work.

DO: Well, I won’t have written the book. I will have written, kind of something the publisher can look at and say, well, we’re interested in this or we’re not interested in this. And so forth. And I’d like to get that done before Labor Day. I might want to come to see you one more time before Labor Day if there if in the process finishing this I have come across some question where I’m not too sure.

MM: Okay.

DO: But, it’s good to have the horse’s mouth here who could say that didn’t happen or I don’t remember or yes, but it happened a little differently.

MM: Well my memory is still fairly good.

DO: Yeah. Some of these things are details.

MM: I can’t remember everything.

DO: No, nobody can remember everything. I’ve found for example, Secretary Schultz helped me terrifically with my book on the end of the Cold War. He gave me 13 interviews in preparation for my book. And some things were very vivid in this mind—certain meetings or certain situation—others he just couldn’t remember it. So many things that happen. Nobody can keep it all in their mind.

MM: Well especially in a job like that.

DO: Or in your job. You know, being a Majority Leader and all. This is not exactly the easiest job in the world either.

MM: Well I guess you say that about anybody.

DO: No, but. I don’t think so. I have this theory. I’ll bother you with my theory before I leave. I’ve heard from somebody who knows something about the brain that this actually may be true. I’ve always felt that as a journalist, as a reporter...
DO: As a journalist I get all this information; I’m working on some story and get a ton of information. I’m trying to find out this, and that and the other and something and it fills my brain with information about this particular thing, whatever it is. And then after a few months I just dump it. Something else has come up and I’m looking into that. And I can’t remember anymore the details that I used to know when I was working on x, y, or z.

MM: But you probably kept it.

DO: Somewhere.

MM: You didn’t dump it. You put it into a file somewhere.

DO: But apparently there is only so much that the normal person’s brain can maintain.

MM: Well they say Eisenhower, no. Who is the fellow that taught at Princeton?

DO: Einstein.

MM: How do you spell it?

DO: Albert Einstein.

MM: Einstein. I read in the last several months where he was supposed to have some sort an enlarged brain and some additions in there somewhere which made him so smart. I wonder why they didn’t examine his wife, who was probably just as smart as he was. That’s one theory.

DO: He had a couple of wives.

MM: Oh, did he? Well, one was very smart, though.

DO: Yeah. He was around the campus when I was a student at Princeton. I never went to him with my arithmetic problems or anything like that, but we would see him and he was very, very big on United World Federalism. That was his idea. This was around in the late 1940s and early 1950s and he made speeches on the subject. He’d walk across the campus. He’d have these baggy pants and an old sweatshirt and no socks. Shoes, but no socks. He said it’s a waste of time to put on those things.

MM: He has a point.

DO: And he was just fascinating looking. The big, the hair and so forth.

MM: Did he recognize you or was he immersed in thought?
DO: No. Undergraduates, he would say hello. He wouldn’t know who we were particularly but he was very pleasant. I found out later—I did not know this at the time—that he had a rule that if any Princeton student had a serious mathematical problem the student could come and see him.

MM: You found out too late.

DO: Yes. Too late. I didn’t have any of those any way. I didn’t take much math. I should of, I guess.

MM: Should’ve, could’ve, would’ve.

DO: Right, exactly.

[End of Interview]

Oberdorfer’s post-interview notes after the interview (this section was not recorded)

Meeting the Engelhards: He repeated the story he had told me once in a car ride. LBJ knew the Engelhards, and was invited to wedding of her oldest daughter by her first marriage, Annette, in NJ. Married Samuel Reed, later divorced. Now married to Oscar de la Renta. LBJ asked MM to go with him, which he did. Doesn’t think Maureen was along. [Sophie says it was 3/60]

Mike Mansfield and Charlie Engelhard hit it off, invited the Mansfields to their place in Florida. “He didn’t speak much; I didn’t speak much.”

Jane was one of 10 most fashionable for a time.

Four daughters: Susie and Sophie live in Montana. Sally in DC area. Charlene in Boston near her mother, who is at the Cape

* Information in brackets is the observations and/or comments of Oberdorfer.
** Question mark in parentheses reflects inaudible section of dialogue.