Don Oberdorfer's notes prior to recorded interview

- M's hand was better. He had it in a small brace when I came in, but took it off and began exercising his hand during the interview.

- When I came in he was behind his desk, smoking his pipe and going through newspapers—a great variety of them, including the Financial Times, the Washington papers etc.

- As I was leaving, he pointed out and loaned me a copy of The Torch, published by Veterans of World War I of the U.S., which stated that 4,734,991 members of the US armed forces participated in World War I, of whom 1,848 were still surviving as of July 1, 1999. He volunteered that he and Dirksen were the last party leaders in the Senate who had participated in WWI, but when I asked him if that had any particular significance in their thinking he said not.

- The hand accident and perhaps other things have taken a toll on M. He looks thinner and a bit more frail. But he seemed relaxed and made some small jokes as we talked.
The following is the recorded interview with Mike Mansfield

Don Oberdorfer: Yes. [Discussion of No Gun Ri case, in which it was alleged the U.S. military killed a large number of Korean refugees in July 1950, during the early stages of the Korean War. The investigation followed an in-depth on the massacre by the Associated Press, released in September 1999.] *

Mike Mansfield: (?) **


MM: Or Korea.

DO: Yes. Right. Well, I was there as a soldier just after. I was on a troop ship going to Korea when the armistice was signed. I never heard of any story like this. But, these things do happen in wars. That is not to excuse them, but.

MM: But how many Americans were involved? A company? Platoon?

DO: Probably a platoon.

MM: A platoon is what? About 50, 60?

DO: Oh less than that I think. It was the situation. We’ll find out. That’s what the Pentagon is looking into—all of the documents. They are going to interview people. They will find out, I’m sure. In my view they keep stretching it out and I say this is absolutely the opposite of what we ought to be doing. We ought to be doing right. Do it quickly; get it done. Of course you have to do it thoroughly, but there is no reason to take months and months and months like this.

MM: Weeks at the most. Days, if possible. I mean the whole thing.

DO: Yes. I agree. So that is what we are doing and I’m kind of the odd-man out. The rest of the advisors, so called, are a former ambassador, Donald Gregg, who maybe you know.

MM: Yes.

DO: A former four-star general to Korea whose name is Wiscosi (?), a former Marine Corps general named [Bernard E.] Mick Trainor, who also wrote later for the New York Times.

MM: What?

DO: He also wrote for the New York Times after retiring from the Marine Corp. And Pete McCloskey, who was a soldier at that time in Korea, former Congressman from California.
MM: Oh yes. Yes. What about this Emory President?

DO: No. I don’t know.

MM: Who speaks—

DO: Yes. He would be a good person, but I don’t know how they selected these people. I have no idea.

MM: And he spent decades over there.

DO: [James T.] Laney. [Ambassador to South Korea from 1993-96.]

MM: They say he is a good man.

DO: He is a terrific person.

MM: And he also speaks and writes in Korean.

DO: Well, I don’t know about writing, but he can speak it. He is a very good man. So anyway, that is what we are doing. On the book, I sent up to my literary agent in New York, a proposal that she could circulate to publishers, which she did and didn’t get whole lot of interest initially, which surprised her.

MM: Good.

DO: But I said, don’t worry about, it’s going to be a good book, we’ll get a good publisher and it may just take a little more time to get them lined up. So, I’m not discouraged by it at all. These people are looking for some sure thing or big sensation and this is not even one of those. It’s going to be a good solid book. So they will come around eventually. When I was at your apartment when I last saw you several weeks ago you had a bunch of folders, I guess, of pictures that were taken—particularly social occasions, I guess—of you and Maureen in the time from the Senate days and so on. We were looking at one of them. We were on the table there, where we were having coffee. Remember? [Discussion of materials at his apartment]

MM: Yes. I had looked through them. Anne had pulled them out a year or so ago. They had been there for a year.

DO: Oh really? Anyway, apparently there was one also of clippings, which I didn’t look at, but this stuff might be helpful to me. I wonder if at sometime either I could come by and look at these different folders or you could bring some of them in here and I could go and look at them
and see what is there. If there is particular question I could ask you about it, but most of them are pretty self-explanatory.

MM: You mean those ones on the table?

DO: Well, yes, but there are probably a lot of them around somewhere in your apartment that are (?)

MM: I wouldn’t know where to find them to tell you the truth. But most of them are at the University.

DO: Yes, well. The University has a pretty complete record of your public activities—of official things. But these are all unofficial things. That is to say, you have gone to some Embassy or you’ve done something. And they seem to have been kept separate from the official records. And I don’t think this kind of material is out there. Not much of it anyway. It may or may not—

MM: I don’t think we sent that much in the way of pictures.

DO: Yes. They do have a picture file out there.

MM: They do?

DO: Yes, they do. I think the pictures—I’ll tell you what my guess is. My guess is that anything that was in the office—your Senate office, with few exceptions if any—was shipped out to Missoula.

MM: Yes.

DO: But if these were files and things that Maureen kept at home, that were more less-official, more unofficial, they probably weren’t shipped out there. And they are probably in your apartment somewhere. Maybe in some closet or stacked on a bookshelf, or who knows where. I don’t know. But, it is the unofficial that would interest me to look at and see what is there. Of course, if you think it’s the proper thing to do after looking at it, it ought to be shipped out to the archives out in Montana.

MM: Well, I don’t think we will be doing any shipping until I leave this job or something happens.

DO: But, I wonder if you think there is more stuff around there that I might look at to get a more rounded picture of the activities.

MM: Well, I’ll look around and bring it down.
DO: Okay. You do that.

MM: What I can.

DO: Bring it down and I’ll sit in some room somewhere and just take a look at it. And if there is some question or something I might ask you about. I wanted to ask you a few things that have occurred to me in further interviews. I continue to have interviews almost every week with different people.

MM: Oh, I would be interested in what my FBI file contains.

DO: Yes, well, they are working on that.

MM: Oh they didn’t give it to you yet?

DO: No, it’s going to go to you first any way. When they find it, it is going to go first to you. But they called me the other day from the FBI and said we want to clarify what we should do with this file when we have cleared it and processed it. I said, well you should send it to Senator Mansfield. And then after he looks at it, he might let me take a look at it. So, as soon as they have finished doing this—and I don’t know how long it takes—they will send it to you.

MM: If you want to look at it first, it’s okay with me. But I’d be interested to know what they say.

DO: Sure, what they say. What did they say about this guy?

MM: They have a file on everybody on the Hill.

DO: Oh hell yes. You know J. Edgar Hoover.

MM: Everybody in the press, too.

DO: Probably so, I’m thinking about asking for my file. See what they have to say. J. Edgar Hoover was pretty inquisitive in terms of that kind of stuff.

MM: He used the same Christmas card. I don’t think I’ve saved any of them. To everybody, I’m sure.

DO: Anyway, I’ve got a few questions here. It is kind of in chronological order.

MM: Okay.
DO: Regarding your father, did you ever talk to your father about why he left Ireland or what his earlier life was and that sort of thing?

MM: No. And when I met one of his brothers in the ‘50s or ‘60s over there I didn’t talk much to him. [Sen. John Pastore of Rhode Island] Pastore was with me and we broke off from the group, forget what it was for. He said, can I go down with you? I said sure. We went down there, met in a saloon. One brother, very happy, seemed to be drinking a little bit. First thing I knew he and the others with Pastore were off over in one corner and I was by myself. Pastore came back and I understand, don’t know, made up the trip, and either became a member of the Knights of Columbus or one of their favorites. But I have never inquired into my family. I don’t know how many brothers or sisters my father had. Never knew my mother.

DO: Were you ever in touch with anyone in her family?

MM: Nope. Had no interest. May sound unusual, but just wasn’t interested in my genealogical background. Never made any effort to find out more about them. That’s about it. You could go to Ballynakill and make some inquiries, though. That’s where he’s from.

DO: Right. Yes.

MM: By Kilkenny (?)

DO: Actually it is right on the dividing line between Kilkenny and another county in Ireland. When you came over you lived with your parents until you were 6 and your mother died.

MM: Yes, thereabouts.

DO: Do you remember anything about those times or her death or any other thing?

MM: No, I just have a faint recollection of being in a park, and a bird flew over, a lady was there. I assume it was my mother.

DO: Do you remember anything about her death?

MM: I never inquired. My half-brother John may have. I don’t know. He is out in Great Falls.

DO: Yes, I have talked to him.

MM: Oh, did you?

DO: Yes, when I was living Montana last summer, he was down in Missoula visiting his daughter.
MM: He has a big family. Spends a lot of the year going around.

DO: So I had a nice talk with John. But it must have been pretty traumatic for a 6-year-old kid to suddenly lose his mother.

MM: But, I have no recollection. Really a blank, except for that park thing I faintly remember.

DO: Do you remember anything about the train going west to Montana with your great aunt?

MM: No, frankly I don’t. We had to go by train. I have no recollection of what happened on the train when the three of us went with my aunt. No recollection of landing in Great Falls. My recollections there were with neighbors. We lived on the South side in a poor section of town. Not getting along with my aunt. Running away twice. Probably pretty self-centered, thinking of myself all the time and not paying much attention to my sisters, thinking my aunt paid too much attention to us.

DO: She had never had children of her own, right?

MM: No, and as I look back on it, I think she was right in what she was attempting to do, and I was wrong in doing what I did, but that’s the way it worked out. She meant well, but she was very stern.

DO: She was trying to be strict, bring up the kids in a strict way. Moving on to China in 1944 when you went over for Roosevelt, you met Chiang Kai Shek on a couple of occasions there.

MM: Three times if I recall.

DO: In what we then called Chungking. Now they call it Chungshing, or something like that.

MM: Chungqueen or something.

DO: I was there a couple of years ago when my wife and I took a trip to the Yangtze River and the headquarters that he had—at least they showed us—is up on a high hill. It’s a quite nice kind of a villa up on top of the hill. Is that where you saw him. Do you remember?

MM: Yes. Did you come in by plane? Did you land on the river?

DO: No, we came in by bus, because we came from Sichuan province.

MM: Oh, because I met somebody the other day and I asked them about the plane field. (?) I said yes. (?) He said yes, but it’s being used for something else. They built a new plane field. It was quite a dangerous thing to do, because here you have these cliffs right down the river and on an island you had the plane field.

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DO: Sort of like Hong Kong. Remember how Kai Tak, the airport in Hong Kong is? You come in and you almost take the laundry off the line.

MM: Yes.

DO: But when you saw him—you saw him up at that place. Did you ever meet him again after 1944?


DO: Madame?

MM: I have a faint feeling that I met Madam Chiang sometime afterward, but I’m not certain. And maybe getting her mixed up with a feeling I had that I met Anna Chennault once, but I don’t think. I just met her, didn’t know her. I didn’t even. I don’t know whether Chennault was married when I was in Kortenlai (?). If he was I didn’t meet her there. I met her here somewhere.

DO: He wasn’t married. I’m sure he wasn’t married to her at that time. I’m pretty sure. Anna Chennault was the life long—not life long, but for a very long time—was the girlfriend of Tommy Cochran, who was Jim Roe’s law partner.

MM: I knew they went together. I didn’t know how far it went.

DO: They were always appearing together. Everywhere.

MM: She’s still alive, isn’t she?

DO: I think so.

MM: Madame Chiang is still alive too.

DO: Yes, she lives in upstate New York.

MM: Upstate, not Long Island?

DO: I think it is upstate, but I may be wrong. But I know that she is close to 100.

MM: She is over a 100 now isn’t she?

DO: She is close to a 100, or maybe she is a 100. She still has a State Department protection. She is still in a certain way an official guest of the United States.

Mike Mansfield Interview, OH 391-013, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
MM: Security you mean.

DO: Yes.

MM: Did you ever meet her?

DO: No, never did.

MM: Does she meet with anybody or stay alone?

DO: She doesn’t do too much, but some months ago she came down and paid a visit to Capitol Hill.

MM: (?) I read it somewhere in the papers.

DO: I think it may be about a year ago. She came down and met with some members of Congress, I mean she’s not really active, but she is not reclusive either.

MM: She is not dead yet.

DO: She’s not dead and she’s not reclusive and she was always a pretty vibrant person.

MM: I don’t know when she came to this country but for a while, I think, she was living on Taiwan for some years. It might agree with her.

DO: I’m sure she probably was when her husband was the ruler or leader in Taiwan. But after 1944 you never met Chiang anymore as far as you can remember?

MM: No, maybe what I’m thinking of is what appeared in the papers a year or so ago. I only met Mrs. Chennault once, just met her, no conversations, I think she was very Republican-oriented. She was quite active in politics.

DO: She sure was. She certainly was, and she is supposed to have a role in Nixon’s election, in convincing Thúy, Xuan Thúy, not to accept the Minh negotiations to start negotiations of what later became the Paris talks, because the Republicans felt that this would give Humphrey an advantage if these talks began.

MM: Did it happen?

DO: They refused and it may have played a role in Nixon being elected. It’s very interesting. We have never really gotten to the bottom of this story.
MM: Nixon [in 1968] started talking about establishing a relationship with PRC, which was not her favorite.

DO: No, not her subject. I want to ask you something about your relationship with the press, especially back in Montana. Up until sometime in the late ‘50s I think, almost all the newspapers in Montana, except for the Great Falls Tribune, were really all owned by Anaconda Copper.

MM: The Missoulian wasn’t. [It was.]

DO: OK, but most of them were. Nearly all of them. How did they treat you as an up and coming politician? As a Member of the House and all of that?

MM: Well, when I ran the first time I finished last in a field of three. I was over at the Knights of Columbus building in Butte a month or so afterwards and somebody who was tied up with the Company, I forget his name, maybe it was Murphy, I’m not certain, came up to me and said, if we’d have known you were going to get that many votes, we might have helped you. I said, Thank you. The next time of course it was different. They never went after me; I never went after them. They never asked me to do anything. I never made any move in their direction. Their newspapers treated me fairly.

DO: Did they give you much ink or did they pretty much ignore you until you got into the House?

MM: I couldn’t fault them either when I lost or when I won, or during my career back here as long as they owned the newspapers and the mines. They sold the newspapers first, I think, and then they sold the mining areas, both in the 1950s. You can check. [They sold the newspapers in 1959, the Butte mine in 1977.]

DO: I think that is right. Did the fact that you had been a miner and knew mining, did that seem to have any relevance for them?

MM: No. Of course they knew all about me. They knew what mines I had worked in, when. I had worked in most of them because in those days you could quit and go to some other mine. Never bothered me. I never made an issue out of it. I have no complaints. Then the feeling against the Company was waning. The days when you attacked the Company, as we called the Anaconda Copper Company, were in retreat. Never came up in the campaigns.

DO: Earlier, of course, that had been one of the big issues in Montana politics, pro or against.

MM: Yes. Montana Power, I thought then and still think either Montana Power or one of its members—I got to understand—had bankrolled the other side. I think they were not in favor of me, but I think they changed.
DO: This was when, when you were running for the House or Senate?

MM: I think while I was in the House getting ready to run for the Senate. Too bad Jim Rowe isn’t alive and could fill you in. But not much [opposition?]

DO: That Senate race was the toughest you ever had, wasn’t it?

MM: Oh, yes. If I had known what it was going to be, we wouldn’t have run. It was a really difficult time.

DO: I’ve got your last speech—the last speech you made on the radio just before the election—when you were defending yourself against these various charges and saying you folks know me and I’m going to do my best for Montana. Don’t listen to all this stuff. It was a good speech.

MM: Don’t even remember—

DO: Yes. Well, the text is there in your archives out there in Montana. You were battling to pull this thing through against the onslaught of McCarthy and all this other nonsense that was being put out.

MM: They even sent this fellow [Harvey] Matusow out. Never met him. He even got into the Catholic schools. Once or twice people crossed the street to avoid me. I saw it. We won by 6,000 votes. The next day, the day after election, we started out from Missoula to go to Butte. I almost went off the road three or four times. I was tired. Disturbed. So was Maureen. Finally we stopped in Deer Lodge, rested for three or four hours and went on to Butte, then back to Washington. Tough race.

DO: Did you drive across the country at that time?

MM: No. Didn’t drive. So we must have gone by plane.

DO: Would they have been better plane connections from Butte than from Missoula?

MM: Don’t know why I did it [drive to Butte], other than to thank some people in Butte, where my greatest strength lied. Didn’t drive [across the country] but Maureen, for four of the summers while we were in the House, did drive back to Montana with Anne. First trip she was 6 years old. I had work to do here. Maureen in those days—took her five days, she and Anne. They’d stop off in Milwaukee to see her sister. It was a break, but they had to go through Chicago, through Pittsburgh. You can see why I’m in her debt. Five days.

DO: Was this the same old car you drove to Washington in?
MM: No. The one we drove to Washington in was a Ford. The dead of winter. It was a cold winter. It came pretty close to the 100,000-mile mark when we crossed into North Dakota. Before I gave it up it was pretty close to the 150,000-mile mark. Then we had a hard time getting a car, and ended up with an Oldsmobile. We didn't like it like the Ford. The next car was when I became [Majority] Leader [a Senate car with driver].

DO: So then it was the Senate car?

MM: Yes.

DO: That reminds me of something else. I talked to Ken Scheibel, who was a reporter who covered you for a while for the Montana paper.

MM: Yes. Spell the last name.

DO: S-C-H-E-I-B-E-L. He previously worked for Gannett Newspaper, then he started his own regional bureau and so forth.

MM: Is he still alive?

DO: Still alive. He lives up there near Dupont Circle. He has a funny apartment filled with all kinds of paraphernalia—antique guns, this that and the other and so forth. He's always been sort of a character. He said that he had a hard time at first getting in touch with you when he was starting this beat, but then he met you. You met in the President's room off the Senate floor. Had a long talk, and he said, Well, Mansfield said, “This is how I operate: six days a week I do the nation’s business—the business of the Senate, and on the seventh day of the week I do Montana’s business and take care of any problems, and believe me, there are a lot of problems in Montana.”

MM: He’s wrong. I took care of Montana seven days a week.

DO: That’s what I thought.

MM: It came first.

DO: He also said he sometimes would call. He would get to his office by 7 o’clock in the morning. He’d call your office and you would answer the phone. You had already been there.

MM: Oh, yes. I used to get a couple hours in the morning by myself.

DO: So you’d come in, what, 6 or even before?

MM: About 6; between 6 and 6:30.
DO: Open the mail and look around, see what you got there to deal with. You went to Indochina, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in 1953, again 1954, again 1955. We have talked about those trips. Then you didn’t go back until 1962, when you went back on the trip for Kennedy and made your report. I wondered if you have any idea why there such a long period that you didn’t return to Indochina after having gone three successive years in a row in the middle 1950s. Were you just busy with other things or were you thinking you knew what you needed to know and didn’t go back?

MM: Probably busy with other things. And I went back at the request of Kennedy, and I went back at the request of Johnson, too. That’s about it.

DO: In 1961 when you became—

MM: Oh. Every time I went I made a report.

DO: Yes, I know. I’ve got those too. I’m glad you did. I always think that is a great thing to do. I always did it, I must say, as a journalist. After I finished some assignment I tried to sum it up in some article or something, because I think we go through life and we do these things and then we don’t stop and think, well what is it I’ve learned or what does it add up to? We are missing something.

MM: I made them for protection personally, that I wasn’t junketeering. And for a record, because I had to depend on those first three reports to firm up my feelings on Indochina, Vietnam and Southeast Asia, and to have some proof if somebody raised a question, and to refer to.

DO: Well I think it’s important to do that. I’m glad you made those reports. They are in the records. They are there and your private reports are also there in the archives. They sound a little more hard-hitting than the public report, but basically they sound very similar.

MM: Well then the verbal reports were even more hard-hitting than the private reports, [i.e. written] when you can just convey your own feelings. Did not have a good reaction from either Kennedy or Johnson when I met with them about it.

DO: This brings me to another question. I’ve wondered. I have a conversation this week with Chet Cooper. Chet Cooper worked originally for the CIA. Then he worked for Mac Bundy. Then he worked for Harriman for a number of years negotiating. He was at the ’54 Geneva conference. He was at the 1954 SEATO meeting in Manila, where you were. He was dealing with Laos. He’s quite an interesting...He was assistant to Harriman in the Laos negotiations in 1961 and ’62.

DO: You probably saw him, but I don't know if you met him. But he was really on the inside of these discussions, though not at a very high level. I said look, I don't understand this. Here is Mansfield, who has been out to Indochina, has studied it, a former professor of Far Eastern history. He knows what he is talking about. He makes these reports. He tells the President, and especially in the case of Johnson, he is ignored. They listen to him, but they don't pay any attention to him. And the people around the table—

MM: They listen, but they don't hear.

DO: The people around the table—Mac Bundy, Rusk, McNamara, and so forth, have far less experience then he does in the area. In fact, most of them have hardly ever been there, if ever. Why don’t they listen to him? His answer boiled down to two things: One is hubris, just egotism; the other one was there was a very claustrophobic atmosphere. You were either a member of this inner team or you were an outsider. And if you were an outsider they weren’t paying that much attention to what you were saying. They were thinking they knew what they were doing. They proceeded with the policy and so forth. Now that is his interpretation of why they weren’t listing.

MM: Sounds okay.

DO: What is notable to me is that when Johnson became president, you immediately send him, first a copy of the report on Vietnam that you had given to President Kennedy, and then you wrote your own report for Johnson, recommending that the United States not go further into Vietnam, but try to neutralize it in some way so that this issue would not be one to get deeper into.

MM: Yes.

DO: And in this report—this report is published in the State Department’s Foreign Relations of the United States Historical Series—there is a footnote. It says there was a buck slip or a memo attached to it from McGeorge Bundy, and the memo goes to Rusk and McNamara. The memo says, President Johnson wants you and me to provide material to him refuting Senator Mansfield’s paper. Not, what do you think of Mansfield’s paper or let’s analyze Mansfield’s paper, but provide me the material to refute it. It sounds like his mind was totally closed to this right from the start. This is the first week of January or early January of 1964. Lyndon Johnson was an intelligent man, he knew you had a lot of experience in the Far East, had been there, had studied it. So why he is so closed on it right from the start is a puzzle to me.

MM: I think what you said is true, as far as I know or have heard. Johnson, I think, never wanted to admit defeat. He was a Texas Texan, sort of an Alamo man in his thinking. My feeling is that he didn’t want to accept anything, which bore the scent even of defeat. So he plugged on and on, and had a lot of people from the armed services and like the ones you mentioned [Bundy,

Mike Mansfield Interview, OH 391-013, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
Rusk, McNamara]. I think they made their reports not on the basis of what they knew—well perhaps they knew—of the facts, but because they knew what Johnson’s attitude was and they complied with it, agreed to it. And he took it at face value. It’s interesting that McNamara finally came around, and left the Defense Department to become head of the World Bank. I don’t know about Mac Bundy, McGeorge Bundy. Who were the other ones you mentioned?

DO: Rusk.

MM: Rusk always seemed to go along with Johnson. A nice man, but showed little or no initiative. Who else?

DO: Well, there were those. There was Rostow, Mr. Walt Rostow.

MM: I think Rostow really believed *** in what he was doing.

DO: Chet Cooper who was the assistant.

MM: I don’t know him.

DO: The guy I talked to this last week, who was an assistant to [Averell] Harriman, said that Harriman objected privately to some directions that Johnson was taking, but that he would never confront Johnson with his objections. He would talk to others about it, but when Cooper said, why don’t you go in and tell the President what you think, he would never do it. His interpretation was that Harriman, although we think he didn’t need the job because he had so much money—more than God—that he needed it maybe psychicly or some other way. He wanted to be in the power circle and he realized that if he confronted the President on something like this he wouldn’t be.

MM: As some senators tried to do and were put outside the circle, like Frank Church, and [William] Fulbright, perhaps others.

DO: Yes, he dropped them. In fact, there was a period when Johnson wouldn’t even let Humphrey, who was his Vice President in some of these important meeting, because he didn’t think Humphrey was in sympathy with what he was doing.

MM: Humphrey was in deep trouble when he ran for President, and didn’t begin to get out of that trouble until he expressed his true feeling, I think in Salt Lake City or Spokane, somewhere.

DO: That is right. Yes, I remember that speech.

MM: Then it was too late.
DO: But, what is interesting to me is here are all these other guys some of whom—Harriman, certainly and others, and McNamara, privately—had began to have doubts or even objections, but they couldn’t bring themselves to express it to the President, because he had a different idea. Whereas you right from the start expressed yourself to the President. He didn’t pay attention to it, but you put it up there for him to listen to.

MM: He heard, but he didn’t hear. Well—that’s how I felt. It wasn’t easy, to be in that room with all these others—staff, Defense, State Department, close advisors. But someone had to do it. So we did it.

[End of Side A]
DO: First meeting of Democratic Conference [in ‘61], you proposed that Johnson should preside over this conference and your colleagues said, no, no, we don’t want that. We don’t want Johnson to preside. Presumably they were chaffing under Johnson having been such a taskmaster as a Majority Leader and they didn’t want that to continue. Did you know in advance that was likely to be their reaction or not?

MM: No. I just trusted their judgment. He made the request, and I acceded. I brought it up. They took it up. The result was one he had not anticipated. That was that. It was the only way to get rid of it. Just face up to it, yes or no.

DO: Yes. But, did you know that’s what they were going to do? Did you have a pretty good idea?

MM: No. I was hoping there would be some protest, but didn’t know how much or who. Didn’t talk to anyone about it. When they got it, they got it fresh, and not with knowledge beforehand—none of them. I think it caught them by surprise.

DO: One other issue. November 22, 1963, the day that President Kennedy was killed. We talked about the fact that you had scheduled to make your speech to be made later that day. But, one story that I heard from Salpee Sahagian, [an administrative assistant to Mansfield] who is very nice by the way. She is really terrific. She spends a lot of time doing charity work, helping people in the communities and so forth, which is great. Anyway, her recollection is her husband called her on the phone. Her husband happened to be listening to the radio and called her and told her that Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. She immediately went to the Senate floor. You were there and whispered to you that the radio was reporting Kennedy had been shot. You then walked to the cloakroom, looked at the news tickers to see whether there was anything on there. It was coming across the news tickers. And she remembers you saying, Well let’s go back to the office. You went upstairs to the Leader’s office, walked in and said to the man—I forget his name—who worked for you. The elderly colored man who worked at the—

MM: Horace. (?)

DO: You said to him, I need a drink. She said it’s the only time she ever remembers you taking a drink at that time of day. She poured you a drink. You sat, drank a little shot of whatever—bourbon, I guess—and sat there for a while and then finally came out and went down to the Senate floor to see what was happening. They had adjourned the Senate when the news finally came through that he had been shot. Does that sound right to you? Do you have any recollection?

MM: If I had a drink, it was coffee. Never kept any liquor around the office. She did tell me, I think.
DO: Then you and Dirksen met with the Senate chaplain, I think, a little later, and he gave a prayer.

MM: Spessard. He was the Senator from Florida at that time.

DO: Holland. Spessard Holland?

MM: Spessard Holland, I think was in the chair. He got word and asked for Ted Kennedy to be brought up. He told Ted, or maybe Ted already knew, and then he made some sort of announcement. It’s hazy.

DO: Were you still on the floor when this announcement was made do you think, or not?

MM: Yes. I was there when Holland—if it was Holland—made the announcement.

DO: I’ll look in the transcripts of the Congressional Record to see what that part of it was. By the way, I have a splendid young man whose name is Dan Ewing, who is now my research assistant on this job, who is a SAIS student, graduate student, and he has been up to the Hill. He’s been pulling stuff out of the Congressional Record for me and so on. And someday when I come around I’d like to bring him around to meet you.

MM: Fine.

DO: Nice young guy, very eager, interested. He spent a year at in China at Nanjing. SAIS has a school in Nanjing, China, and he was there for a year before coming back here.

MM: What did he graduate in? What was his field? China?

DO: I guess. Far East studies, I am sure.

MM: Where?

DO: I forget where he went before Nanjing.

MM: I mean what school?

DO: Yes, I don’t remember. Johns Hopkins SAIS—where I am—has this campus and they have had it for quite a number of years. It is very interesting in that each Chinese student has a foreign student roommate and vice versa of course. The Chinese students take most of their courses in English and the foreign students take most of their courses in Chinese so they get really connected. This thing started back in the early ‘80s or before and it was the one thing that after Tiananmen the Chinese didn’t touch it.
MM: After what?

DO: After Tiananmen, the ’89 massacre. The Chinese do touch it at all. Let it just be like it was.

MM: Still going then?

DO: Still going. I gave the commencement address there several years ago. Great bunch of students. It is not very big and it is not a large school, but these people really get into Chinese culture and the Chinese really get into the foreign or Western culture.

MM: It sounds good. It sounds like these so-called Mansfield fellows, who are really Roth scholars, because it was not my idea but Bill Roth’s, whose idea it was to initiate it and who made it possible. They give them a year of Japanese here, and in the second year they go into a government department. They’re pretty well prepared by the first year, which makes them all the more effective in the second year. They’re really Roth scholarships. He did it, and just let it be named after me.

DO: Well great, thanks for your help.

[Break in audio]

MM: It is interesting to note that Dirksen and I were the last of the World War I leaders. I think it marked a breaking point of sorts—not with World War II, but with World War I, which goes back a long way. I get a newspaper called The Torch, put out by World War I veterans and it comes out occasionally now, but it used to come out quarterly. It’s very interesting and I thought you might like it.

DO: Oh yes.

MM: I look at those figures. They are four months old.

DO: 1,878 surviving. Do you think there was difference in thinking, or so on, from those who were in World War I compared to those who came on later?

MM: No, I was just indicating—to use the name of an old-time program that was on the radio, “The March of Time.” It goes back a long ways. (?) gets his figures from the Census Bureau. But some interesting figures.

DO: Can I borrow this and send it back to you?

MM: Sure. Have a copy made if you want, up there.
DO: I’ll just make a copy. I’ll send it back to you. I’ll mail it back to you. I see you’ve got [a picture of you and Keizo] Obuchi up there. When did you visit with Obuchi?

MM: Saw him last May. Had a picture taken and his autograph. That is all.

DO: Looks like it’s the Blair House or something like that.

MM: Yes, it is. That’s where I saw him.

DO: He’s doing a pretty good job, I think.

MM: So far, though lately his popularity has been dropping. He’s coming out with a new package—cost $71 billion, I believe—anyway, even without the package and I think there were eight previous stimulus packages, overall they’ve put in more than a trillion dollars.

DO: There was an article in the Post—I think yesterday or the day before—about their construction building the subway which nobody much is using and gold plating this and—

MM: Well they are learning from us or we are learning from them because we are making appropriations for things the Army doesn’t want, the Navy doesn’t want, the Air Force doesn’t want.

DO: Yes, right. Exactly. Well thanks. Thanks for your help.

[End of Interview]

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