

Maureen and Mike

Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Archives and Special Collections

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: library.archives@umontana.edu

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: OH 460-042

Interviewee: Albert Seligmann

Interviewer: Don Oberdorfer

Date of Interview: circa 2000

Project: Dan Oberdorfer Interviews about Mike Mansfield Oral History Project

Albert Seligmann: —to try to build up a constituency. I don't think it was Friendship Force.

Don Oberdorfer: Friendship Force was Carter's thing.

AS: Yeah. No, this is something else. It was a Pentagon-sponsored thing, and there was a plane-load from Montana. And they were scheduled to come to the embassy on a briefing, and the ambassador was going to brief them and the rest of us were there, I guess. I don't know whether we all went on with the ambassador or just were there in case there were questions. Probably the latter. And the defense attaché, Navy Captain Marv Duke (?) [unintelligible] waiting in the lobby for them to arrive and walkie talkies and 'where is the bus,' and 'the bus is here' [unintelligible]. He was watching and getting very nervous. And the ambassador, who [unintelligible] came downstairs, and he's set to greet them. And Marv Duke said, 'Oh, Mr. Ambassador, they're running a little late, but they'll be...They're coming through the gate right now, and we can get you into the back door of the auditorium so you can be right there to start in the minute they come. And we'll get them seated right away.'

Mansfield says, 'Marv, I'll show you how it's done.' [laughs]

And so a couple of minutes later, the bus rolls up, and they come through the door. And the ambassador greets every one of them by their first name. [laughs] Montana, he knows. [laughs]

It was very impressive.

DO: He said—another member of your staff—who after a couple of episodes like this, 'How in the world do you remember the name of all of these people?' And Mansfield said, 'Listen, when you're in politics, you remember people's names.' [laughs] But not everybody in politics does.

AS: Yeah. I always felt it's the other way around. I could never be in politics. [laughs] Never remember enough names.

DO: [unintelligible] And if you were...you were in from Montana or somebody told me, if you ever passed through Montana, Mansfield wanted to see you. [laughs]

AS: Yeah. Well, he was very...He had an open door. He was...he was good at seeing people.

You know, you had the feeling he was a man who didn't suffer fools gladly, but suffered an awful lot of them. He did suffer them.

DO: Yeah, but not for lengthy periods of time.

AS: No.

DO: There's one story—I don't know whether you were there or not—about some Air Force, I think, general who insisted he wanted to meet Mansfield for an hour. And nothing could deter him. He was on some kind of mission, Lieutenant General, I think. They explained that this wasn't the Ambassador's way of working. 'No, he has to do this. He has to brief in person.' So he came in, and they...he gets up there and talks, and after about 5 minutes [laughs], Mansfield said, 'Well, General, what else have you got to say?'

AS: Yeah. [laughs] He was good at that.

DO: And that was it. He left.

AS: He was very good at breaking up meetings. [laughs] Yeah, he could do that admirably. Like nobody—we wouldn't dare. [laughs] Yeah, right. Well, I'll write this one up. I guess you want those. Someday I'll have to go after the—

DO: [unintelligible].

AS: Oh god, that was very messy. And then he accused us of unjustly hiring. And then, of course, we...as I...Now it's coming back. I don't think we ever suggested that write to Muskie (?) or that he, you know, shaft the guy. Which is what happened, but we wanted [unintelligible].

DO: Oh, he did.

AS: He did it. He did that on his own as I recall.

DO: Yeah.

AS: Because now it's coming back. Did it on his own. We were a little concerned we were being caught in the middle on this because, you know, it looked like we had put him up. But we didn't; he did it himself.

DO: That's Mansfield.

AS: Yeah. I remember that now.

[End of Audio]