

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](mailto: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: 458-005**  
**Interviewee: Alan Cranston**  
**Interviewer: Jim Caron**  
**Date of Interview: 1989**  
**Project: Mansfield's America Oral History Project**

Jim Caron: Are we ready? Is the tape rolling? Do you mind if he shoots a photograph?

Alan Cranston: No.

JC: Senator, if you might, just say something about the years you had with Mike Mansfield in the Senate and perhaps some things about the legacy you think he may have left, what kind of man you think he was.

AC: Well, he was the leader in the Senate when I arrived as a freshman [from California], and I remember him then as just very helpful in terms of advising a new member on the ways of the Senate, how to get things done there, how not to get things done. He is a very wise man. A very gentle man, a very thoughtful man. And he was a very fine leader in the Senate. Very effective on issues that he believed in deeply.

JC: When you came into the Senate, we were in the middle of the Vietnam era and he, of course, was opposed to that. How do you feel about that era in terms of Mansfield?

AC: Well, Mike Mansfield was a very effective leader in the effort to get us out of Vietnam. I ran for the Senate in 1968 on a platform that had a key component getting out of Vietnam, so I was glad to join the troops that were working for that under Mike's leadership when I arrived in the Senate. And after a while we did help force the people in the executive branch that wanted to stay there, out by cutting off the money for the war.

JC: I remember that election very well, as a matter of fact. [Laughter from Caron.] Any personal anecdotes you might have about any relationships with Mansfield, any moments you remember that might be of human-interest value to us?

AC: I was the first member of our class to take the lead on the floor on an issue. You're normally supposed to wait around a while before you get too active, but one came along that I just had to get involved in, which was trying to keep the Job Corps, which trains young people for work, from being done in by a budget cut by the Nixon administration. And I took advantage of that opportunity, which came along after I'd been here only maybe two or three months, by talking to every senator, every single one, about the issue. I made appointments in their offices and went to see them to get their advice, and that was helpful in establishing relationships, and helpful on that issue, and Mike was very helpful in making some suggestions to me as to how to proceed. And we had quite a battle on the floor that I led, and we got licked by a narrow margin of votes. I had a hard time getting Republican votes against the new president, Mr. Richard

Nixon, and every Democrat gave me a vote at one time or another, but I never got every Democrat to vote with me when I needed them on one vote. So I never put together the majority I needed to win, and afterwards Mike made a very nice tribute on the floor to my effort as a freshman, and said he was sure the Senate would be seeing a lot more of me and that I did well on my first test. And that was very generous of him, and I've always remembered that.

JC: Twenty years later the proof is in the pudding, sure. I've read a lot and hear a lot about Mansfield the diplomat, even before he went to Japan. Mansfield, the man, who sometimes was certainly a Democrat and certainly liberal but would cross party lines, would be able to put things together with other parties. Did you see any evidence of that?

AC: Well, he was always very good at working with everybody regardless of viewpoint. Democrats have differences enough among themselves, but he was able to bridge those gaps a great deal, and then he was very skillful at working with Republicans. At the time that I came in Everett Dirksen, a very colorful figure, was the Republican leader, and he and Mike seemed to have a warm and pleasant personal relationship and a pretty good professional working relationship. Though the diplomacy that he learned in the House of Representative first and then in the Senate certainly served him and our country well when he went to Japan as our ambassador. And the Japanese became very fond of him, and Americans with an interest in good relations in Japan were very fond of him for his role on that front.

JC: Well, that covers the area that I wanted to deal with.

AC: Ok, fine. Good.

JC: I certainly appreciate your time.

AC: Ok.

JC: Could we get maybe one shot of you to use, maybe over here in front of—

[End of interview]