

Maureen and Mike

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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: 458-007

Interviewee: Pat Williams

Interviewer: Jim Caron

Date of Interview: 1989

Project: Mansfield's America Oral History Project

Unidentified Speaker: Five, four, three, two, one, two, three, four, five.

Jim Caron: If you could tell me a little bit about what Mike Mansfield meant to you, being from Montana. [Williams was in the U.S. House from 1979-97.]

Pat Williams: The Mansfield tradition has affected every member of the Montana congressional delegation that has followed congressman, and then senator, Mike Mansfield. Senator Mansfield had an extraordinary personal touch in his communications with Montanans, and that involved everything from reading the mail that he was sent from his constituents to p.s.-ing his responses, and quite often writing his responses in his own hand. Telephone calls from Mike, that personal attention, is now the hallmark of all of us who have followed Senator Mansfield. Mike had come in very, very early in the morning. Some said it was only to avoid Washington traffic, but former Senator Mansfield's staff said it was to read the mail for Montanans before he started his national duties for the rest of the day. But that personal attention that Mansfield paid to Montana's, Montanans, has set the standard for those of us who have come after him.

JC: Anything on how Mansfield related to Montana and what Montana meant to him? Do you know?

PW: Members of Congress who visit Japan almost always try to stop by the embassy in the hopes of seeing then-Ambassador Mike Mansfield, but most of them of course had the opportunity to see Mike, no matter how briefly. He would offer them a cup of coffee and answer their questions. When they returned to Washington, these members of Congress would invariably look me up or see me on the floor when we were voting and say to me, "Pat, I went by and visited with your former senator, Ambassador Mansfield, when I was recently in Japan. What an extraordinary person he is, and by the way, he had a copy of the Independent Record and the Montana Standard on the coffee table." So we knew quite well that Mike stayed in touch with Montana no matter how far he was away from us.

JC: Thanks. I know you are very busy.

PW: Glad you came in.

JC: Nice to catch up with you today.

[End of Interview]