Brooks: See, I had known President [Richard Milhous] Nixon casually for a long time before he became president. On my visits to California I learned a great deal about him and his early life. Fortunately, many of the things I learned were not too complimentary. In fact, he was considered a very ruthless and vicious person, particularly when he came to politics. When he first ran for Congress, he ran against a congressman from California who had been in Congress for ten years. In addition to this, this congressman had just been voted either the most capable or the most efficient or the most likable congressman by his fellow congressmen in Washington. When Nixon got through with him he was the worst communist the world ever knew. He was worse than [Vladimir Illich] Lenin or [Joseph] Stalin or any of them, and, consequently, with that kind of a campaign he was able to defeat this congressman. I'll try to remember his name before too long.

I had known this congressman in Washington through the years and had a very high regard for him. He had been very much interested in agriculture and had been very helpful and was highly considered by the farm groups in California. That didn't suffice him when he had to go up against a vicious person such as President Nixon, and when President Nixon ran
for the Senate, the same thing happened again. He ran against Mrs. [Helen Gahagan] Douglas. . . something--I'll get her name--and he of course made her out as the worst communist that had ever shown up in California and was very vicious, but that seemed to pay off in votes because people believe all these terrible things that somebody says in political life about people, and they'd rather hear bad things than good things. So consequently that kind of politician sometimes wins, although he should never win and ought to be put down, but apparently the population, the voters, do not understand this, and consequently they put in the wrong person.

Certainly this was true both when he ran for Congress and when he ran for the Senate. See, when he ran against. . . Senator [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy for president, I figured that he would immediately start making a communist out of President Kennedy, and would chew him up, and probably win just like he had done with the congressman and his opponent in the Senate race. But apparently somebody got to him and said that he just couldn't conduct himself that way in a presidential election, and therefore he did not take his gloves off and accuse Kennedy of being the greatest communist in the history of the world. Consequently he lost the election.

Whoever dressed him for the debates dressed him in such a way that he looked like a criminal, and so consequently between the fact that he did not use the same tactics in
debating President Kennedy that he'd used in California in being elected congressman and senator, and the fact that he looked like a criminal on television meant that he lost the election. See, I had also known him when he was vice-president working with President [Dwight David] Eisenhower, and frankly I had very little use for him when he was vice-president.

He, of course, went through a very trying period when they accused him of some very bad things that he had done in California, and it looked like Eisenhower was going to put him out and shake him loose. But when he went on television with a little old dog he had and began to weep and cry and do everything else about all he had done, Eisenhower let him stay on the ticket. Of course, it still was a mistake, but because of these facts, when he was finally elected president. . . [Cut off]

[Unintelligible] a very able person but personally was considered a little too liberal. I had very little use for President Nixon, so consequently I made no effort to contact him in any way. However, he finally got into very serious economic trouble, and so I began to have calls from him to come to the White House to work on economic problems which he had. Although I disliked him personally, I felt that you could not refuse to work with any president on economic problems if the president asked you to do so. So I felt that I had no choice except to report to the White House.
During one of his economic crises he went down to Camp David for the weekend and worked out what he called Phase One of economic solution to some of the problems. He came back and by executive order put these in, and of course they didn’t work because he was trying to dam up the economy, which you can’t do, but of course he was not an economist, and he did not know you couldn’t do it. But anyway, nobody was called in apparently on that meeting that knew anything about economics or knew what the score was, and so consequently it did not last long, and he was back in serious trouble again. Then I had a call from the White House saying the president wanted me to come up there, as I recall, the next day, that he had this serious economic problem, and that I should come up and try to be helpful.

When I got to the conference I found that he was letting the secretary of the treasury, [George Pratt] Shultz, really handle the conference for him. But apparently he had given Secretary Shultz instructions as to how he wanted it handled, and so, consequently, soon after the meeting was started there was some twelve or fourteen of us there, and as I looked around the table I apparently was representing agriculture, and they had somebody representing banking, and oil, and steel, and different segments of our economy. So I said that since apparently I was representing agriculture, if they would let me ask some questions that maybe I could get agriculture
out of the discussions, and then I could listen for the next day or so to the other people who had economic problems.

I explained that I had been on the war mobilization board with President [Harry S] Truman, and that when we had had some economic problems that I had come home on Friday night and that six o’clock on Saturday morning I had a call from Charlie [Charles H.] Wilson’s [Jr.] assistant. Charlie Wilson was chairman of the war mobilization board, and his assistant called me at six o’clock saying that he was anxious to get a hold of me before I heard the morning news because Charlie Wilson felt that I’d be greatly disturbed and upset, and he wanted me to know what happened before I heard the morning news. He said after I had left Washington on Friday night, that the price and wage administrator had decided to slap a wage ceiling on people and an embargo and price ceilings on all farm commodities, which I had violently opposed in the war board. I had thought Charlie Wilson had given me some assurance that we were not going through that again, because I had researched and been involved in some of that before, and I told him as an economist it just wouldn’t work.

Well, he knew that I was going to be terribly upset, and so when his assistant called me he said that he had stayed up all night in order to call me at that time, and that he was terribly sorry to have to advise me, but this order had been issued and was going to be out in the morning press, that Charlie Wilson had stayed up with the fellow until two o’clock
and tried to stop him, but he could not stop him. All the notices had gone out in order to hit the morning press, and the radio and television and so forth. I then explained to Mr. Shultz and the other group that were there that this infuriated me to the point that I went back as an economist and studied this problem for six thousand years as far as I could go back in history, and that heads of governments had tried this time and time and time again over the six thousand year period and it had never worked, and that I thought the six thousand years was long enough, and that we ought not to try it again.

Mr. Shultz began to laugh and said, Well, he thought he understood what I was talking about, and that he didn't think that would be done. Then the secretary of agriculture, [Clifford M.] Hardin, was sitting across the table from me, and he said he thought he understood what I was talking about, and he would be opposed to it. Then the chairman of the economic advisors to the president, who was sitting by me, stated he thought he understood it, and they didn't plan to do it. So I explained to them that satisfied me, and, as I understood, I had a firm commitment from them that the administration was not going to make that same mistake again and try to slap a ceiling on all farm commodities and put on an embargo. They said that was correct, see.

Unfortunately, when we sold six hundred million bushels of wheat to Russia and some other products and the market
began to move up, apparently President Nixon couldn't stand it, and so he slapped an embargo on exports of some farm commodities, soybeans, for example, and put wage ceilings and so forth on, which carried us right back into the economic soup again. Well, unfortunately we did not win that one. [Cut off]

Anyway, Phase Two didn't seem to be working too good, and before long we were called back to Washington, called back to the White House, to work on Phase Three. Well, of course, I was already threadbare when we got back to three, and I did everything I could to stop anymore orders that were killing us economically. The after that one didn't work we finally got back Phase Four, and that, of course, was the final disaster. By then I was so threadbare that I was about climbing the walls, and so I started to severely criticize Secretary Shultz about what was happening. Finally [laughter], I criticized him so severely that Secretary Shultz finally rebelled and said, "Mr. Brooks, you get off of my back." He said, "Personally, I was not even in favor of Phase One, much less Phase Four, but I was ordered to do this by President Nixon, and I'm doing what I'm ordered to do."

Well, consequently I had to calm down and say that I was sympathetic with Secretary Shultz, but I hoped that somebody could talk President Nixon into quitting doing this foolish economic things. Unfortunately President Nixon was having personal problems by then, and so he would send word out that
he couldn't meet with us, that he was tied up. Well, we were meeting there next to his office, and I noticed [Harry R.] Halderman and [John Daniel] Erlichman coming in and out of his office, and I would hear him talking to them sometimes, but those were the only people I saw going in and out of the president's office.

But I always felt that if President Nixon had come out, as he was supposed to do, and sit with us as all the other presidents had done with whom I had worked, that we would have stopped him from doing some of these foolish and stupid economic things which he did. And that's why I was delighted to learn that Secretary Shultz also felt the same as I did about the situation, and of course I had a high regard for him because he was highly trained in economics. So he had had some of the same background training that I'd had in economics. But nevertheless, even with his clout that he had as secretary of the treasury, apparently he couldn't stop President Nixon. That, of course, made me still feel worse about President Nixon and his leadership as president.

Unfortunately, when the Democrats nominated McGovern to run against Nixon, he was the worst candidate that we could have probably ever had run against any president. As bad and as terrible as Nixon was, and as dishonest as he was in many ways, and as inept as he was in economics, he seemed to be a better choice than [George Stanley] McGovern, who was an extreme left-winger, and who would have carried down a
terrible economic path, even worse than Nixon, many times worse than Nixon. So consequently, we ran out of a choice as far presidents were concerned, and President Nixon, of course, was reelected.

'Course, in his great desire to be reelected and with his lack of morality he became involved in Watergate, which finally meant that he had to resign. There's one other instance that I have never discussed in public, and I put it in this memorandum, but I do not yet want it to publicized, and that is experience I had with President Nixon with reference to his student days at Duke University. I have been a Methodist and have been heavily involved in the Methodist church for most of my life, and, consequently, I have held most of the highest offices that a layman could have in the church, including working with our colleges. I was chairman of what we call the Committee of One Hundred for the Candler School of Theology at Emory University and was on the board of trustees of Emory for some thirty years.

I had to do lots of dealing with Duke University because we had some programs that we worked together on. So I was up there when some pressure came on to give President Nixon a doctor's degree from Duke University, and the president of Duke University told me that he was not thinking about giving a degree to Nixon, that when Nixon was a student at Duke, that they had caught him one night going over the transom to get in the office of the professor who was going to give him the exam
the next day. Apparently he was going over the transom in order to find the questions so he'd have all the answers for the exam the following day. The president said, from the reports he had apparently, which happened before he was there, Nixon should have been immediately expelled from Duke at that time, but he was not expelled.

So he said, "We're not thinking about giving a crook a doctor's degree from Duke University," which, of course, is one of Methodist colleges. I have never disclosed this information personally, and, of course, I have never double checked it, but I assume that, coming from the source I had it from, the president of Duke, who is now dead, that it was a correct statement, because I'm sure he had gotten it correctly from information he had there at Duke. See, like everybody else in life, although you do lots of bad things, if you do some good things, you should also be given full credit for the good things that you do, and fortunately President Nixon did some good things.

Since he had spent a lifetime fighting communists and communism, and, in fact, had gotten elected as congressman and as senator as a communist fighter. He was probably the only one that could have possibly opened the doors of China and Russia. If President Kennedy, for example, had tried to do it with all the accusations that he was an extreme left-winger, he would have immediately been accused of being a violent communist. But in view of the record or President Nixon,
fighting communist all of his life, he was the only one that could open the doors. So consequently, when he got the door of Russia open, and then he sent [Henry Alfred] Kissinger to meet with Mao and got the doors of China open, we have to give him full credit for that. That was one chance we had to get back into the communist world and to hopefully in time bring about peace on this earth. That was the great and wonderful thing that he did as president, and I'm sure the history will give him full credit for that.

On the other hand, he's the only president who's been completely disgraced as being a liar and a crook and dishonest, and, unfortunately, all of my experience with him and all the knowledge I obtained about him through all the years was that he wasn't just a crook while he was president of the United States, he'd been a crook all of his life. Even crooks can do some good things, and fortunately he did this great thing of opening the doors of China and Russia while he was president of the United States. And he was probably the only president that we had who could do that. So we should all give him that kind of credit in history.

It's terrible to go out of office as president of the United States in disgrace, but that happened to President Nixon, and, of course, he will probably never be recognized as one of the responsible presidents of this country. We've had some others that didn't do too well too. President [Warren Gamaliel] Harding, of course, had an oil scandal, and we've
had some all the way back through history, but never one that was as bad as President Nixon, where he had to resign. So it was a very disastrous presidency in many ways, but he ended it by doing the fine and wonderful thing of bringing China and Russia into conversation with the people in the United States, and we must give him full credit for that.

President Nixon resigned and President [Gerald Rudolph] Ford [Jr.] moved in as president. Soon thereafter President Ford appointed me again on the trade board, which I had been on for a number of years, and also began to invite me to his economic meetings. I had met him before but I did not know him well personally. So I felt that he was a very honorable person, and that I would like to work with him in any way that I could. He was delightful fellow to work with, and the first economic meeting that I attended with him he had a very pleasing and personable personality. I enjoyed the economic discussions. Unfortunately I noticed that he had a very slow uptake. In other words, in some of the economic discussions we’d get into he would start asking questions after we got through, and about everybody who was there involved would begin to answer the questions, and all they had heard is what he had heard, which indicated that he had the slowest mind of any of the people who were involved in the economic discussion. That disturbed a great deal because I got to worrying that when he would get into conversations with the
Russians, for example, negotiating treaties, that the Russians would outsmart him, and it gave me some concern.

I had no concern about his dedication or about his honesty and integrity. In fact, he fitted in and furnished a period that we desperately needed in this country of trying to build confidence again in the presidency. After Nixon went out the people of this country had largely lost confidence in the presidency, and it was up to President Ford to restore that confidence. I think he did an excellent job in doing this, although he was, of course, by no means the brilliant president that we've had in many cases in the past. He was perfectly honest even about that, though, because in his statements he wanted everybody to understand that he was not a [Abraham] Lincoln; he was just a Ford. So consequently he never tried to be something that he wasn't, and so he was not a hypocrite. He was a very honest an open person. He filled a need that we desperately needed at that time.

He asked me to meet with some of his economists in the some of the economic problems because he did not understand economics too well personally either. Unfortunately I had some very violent discussion with some of his economic advisors. To illustrate what I'm talking about: I was called to the White House to discuss economic problems, and one of the problems that we had was the price of beef. It had gone up some, and the White House [had made] statements that we had shortage of beef, and that we had to meet that problem.
Actually, we had no shortage, and all the shortage was being caused by the White House. In fact, the council of economic advisors were the ones who were issuing the notices.

So, consequently, I was soon into a violent discussion with the chairman of the economic advisors, saying to him that he was as wrong as he could be, that he had created this shortage in beef, that we had no actual shortage, and that he himself had created, with these statements by the president and by himself about the shortage of meat, that that was creating an impossible situation. I told him, for example, that no one could buy a single freezer in the United States, that every freezer had been bought and had been placed full of beef, and that that had created the shortage.

What greatly disturbed me was that when that beef started coming back out again out of the freezers, it was going to run the price of beef way down and break lots of cattle farmers, that I had been through that with President Eisenhower once, and that I didn't want to go through that again. I had had to meet with President Eisenhower to meet with lots of cattlemen marching on Washington, because for a period of years the rich people of the country, the bankers, the lawyers, the doctors, and so forth had been buying cattle and putting them out on farms, and very little meat had gone to the market. Consequently the price of beef had gone up to thirty-six or thirty-eight cents a pound, and about the time President Eisenhower, all of this beef began to come to the market, and
the price went to sixteen cents, which began to break cattlemen all over the country.

So they marched on Washington, and President Eisenhower had called me and asked me to come to Washington immediately to help work out that problem. I did not want to go through [unintelligible], and [unintelligible] goodness' sake [unintelligible] to stop saying there was a shortage of beef, because we didn't have a shortage of beef, and although maybe he wasn't willing to say we had a surplus of beef, he really ought to calm the waters and hopefully let this beef gradually work in instead of being dumped into the market, which again would make [unintelligible] for this cattlemen of this country. [Cut off]

End of Side One

END OF INTERVIEW