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Rusk III III
Frederick Corbet Davison interviewed by Richard Rusk
1987 April 29

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking today with Dr. Fred Davison, D-a-v-i-s-o-n, former president of the University of Georgia from 1967 through 1986. This is Rich Rusk doing the interviewing, and this is April 29, 1987. Dr. Davison, how did you first come to know Dean Rusk?

DAVISON: Rich, this is something that knowing the interview was coming up, I've thought about and I've discovered something that's very interesting to me: actually, your father has come to be such a part of my life and experience here that so much has happened that I can't remember specifically. I know in general. Of course, when I came to the university as president, there were a couple of obvious and immediate goals: one was to develop an institution here capable of forming information and solving problems for its own people--we were having to borrow too much--to develop a world class university; the other was to stop the outflow of good folks, particularly our young students and some of our faculty. Now, to do that you have to build--you have to look first to your faculty, to the people that are going to form the knowledge and attract the students. I was interested in personnel policies, in recruiting faculty nationally and internationally. The university had some money that was available for helping this and faculty salary supplements. Some of it came through joint-tech Georgia development fund at that time; some was already in our foundation; other monies were available in special accounts in schools like the Law School. So, I was in the market for people that I thought could make a big difference at the university fast. Now, you have to remember when I came in '67, that old Chinese proverb that if you place the ultimate curse on a man, you say, "May you live in interesting times." Those were interesting times.

RICHARD RUSK: They certainly were.

DAVISON: Right at the beginning of all the campus unrest, the disturbances. Well, Mr. Rusk--

RICHARD RUSK: Incidentally, were you here when he made his Law Day speech at the Fine Arts auditorium? In 1968?

DAVISON: That's how all this started, really, in 1968. I came in '67 and these are the people we were looking at. Well, I was talking to [M.] Lindsey Cowen and very interested in us filling a couple of chairs that were already funded or that already had monies partially funded by the law school. The question came up as to who we should have for Law Day. Your father was mentioned as a possibility and that just suited me fine. And I said, "Gosh, yeah, what could be better?" In the first place, I had great respect for him and I tended to believe very much the way he believed, and I just wanted him to have a chance to say this was hometown, I mean, this was home state. I knew what it was like to be under fire, too. Not the same way he did, but I gave him my concurrence immediately. I said, "This is precisely what I would like to have. I'd like to have the Secretary down here."

RICHARD RUSK: That was your decision to invite him?

DAVISON: Well, Lindsey Cowen asked if that would be all right with me. He had suggested it and I said absolutely it would be. So, the invitation was issued. I think it was--I don't even remember whether I issued it or Lindsey issued it or if it was a joint invitation, but I was just tickled to death when your father accepted it. Well, that was a--you know his reception. That was a great reception. He had a standing ovation. We had it in the Fine Arts auditorium. It was full.

RICHARD RUSK: How many people fit into that--

DAVISON: Well, at that time I think it held around eighteen hundred. That's all we could get in there. There were people outside. Now, there were a few dissidents outside.

RICHARD RUSK: I understand Milner [S.] Ball and some of his friends were out there.

DAVISON: They--that's right. I expect that's right. In fact, I know it's right. [Laughter]

RICHARD RUSK: We want Milner¹'s name in this transcript.

DAVISON: But, your dad was coming in on a State Department plane. We set aside a room in the Center where he could get here and have a few minutes to rest. I even remember one of the questions at that time: well, if he drank, what did he like to drink, and would he like to have a bottle in the room just in case he wanted to swig before he went down to face this crowd. As I remember, we got him a bottle of scotch, whether he took any of it, I don't know. But we went out and picked him up and he came in in the Lockheed--you know, the first of the corporate jets. And we went to the Center and he had a short period of time just to relax. And we went down to the Fine Arts auditorium and, as I said, it was genuine and a very warm response.

RICHARD RUSK: How do you account for that? He had gone elsewhere in the country and run into tremendous problems.

DAVISON: This is a different area. First place, there was a great deal more consensus for his position here than all over. In another way, this campus had taken a position very early and that was--it was just one of those things we lucked into. I was very fortunate that we brought Ed [] Casinger in and I had that kind of person to deal with who had thirty years with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and who understood how people act under stress. We had made a few simple rules: one of them was that this institution would always protect freedom of speech, but that was a two-way sword; that it would not be a sanctuary; that whatever you did on campus, you just as well be down in front of the courthouse. We would protect everybody's right to do what they want, but not to impose on anyone else. It created a better climate on campus than we found on a lot of the places around us. Now, there were some demonstrators outside. The one thing I remember though other than how beautifully he handled that situation--he had a prepared talk ated and all--but, he had what he wanted to say. He gave what he set aside to say in the context of Law Day, and then he just stepped from behind the podium and did his typical brilliant job of speaking to that day's issue and to his position.

RICHARD RUSK: Which at the time--you're talking about the Vietnam--

DAVISON:--at the time was the Vietnam situation. After the talk and again, a standing ovation at the end, we went out and got in the car. We had to clear Milner, I guess, and some of his friends out. Tommy Huff, sheriff, was driving the car.

RICHARD RUSK: H-u-f-f?

DAVISON: Yeah. And Lindsey. And I know the two of us were in the car with your father and it seems there was someone else besides the sheriff. I can't remember. And, of course, he had to head right back to Washington. So, we left the campus and we were going to go out to the airport and I'll never forget--we came across the bridge from behind Fine Arts from where we left, across the head of the stadium, and when we pulled up there, your dad made a statement. He had been warmly received. He didn't say it. What he said was, he said--and I think this is exactly what he said, "If ever I escape this veil of tears, how nice it would be to be back on the university campus." And my immediate response was, "Well, if you ever decide to escape, I know what campus you need to be back on." There was another thing happening at that time and this has happened to your father many times--

RICHARD RUSK: That was the first mention of the possibility that he was available and that a position----

DAVISON: It was just a side remark. He made that comment and boy, it just turned a light on in my mind and it did in Lindsey Cowen's at the same time because we talked about it coming back from the airport.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he use the term veil of tears'?

DAVISON: I really think--you know, that's been a long time ago--but my memory is that he said, "when" not "if". I think he said, "When I escape this veil--" He was talking about the secretaryship and everything that went with it, at least that is the way I interpreted it--how nice it would be to be back on campus again. Well, during this whole conversation the sheriff was talking, "Dean this, Dean that--" calling him by his first name, which happens because around here dean is a title.

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

DAVISON: Well, we got your father back to the plane. It took off and coming back Lindsey and I immediately started talking about if this is a possibility. Now, we knew he still had some time in the office--we wanted to start working toward that end right there. We did not want to close that door. And about half-way back while we were talking, Tommy Huff said--I believe it was an expletive--he said, "Oh my God--" and I've forgotten exactly how he said it. And I said, "What's the matter, Sheriff?" He said, "I've just been calling that gentleman by his first name this whole trip!"

RICHARD RUSK: [laughter] It happens all the time.

DAVISON: Well, I know it. Well, I found out after--that was the first time it had happened here--but coming back, all of a sudden this was a real possibility in my mind that this would be where your father would come. [Interruption] At that time Milner had not gone to law school. He was the Presbyterian minister at the Presbyterian Center and I'm a Presbyterian, and frankly, Milner and I probably--we would have considered ourselves not in the same camp. Anyway, I knew of him in an entirely different light and that's been one of the fun things is to watch the relationship that grew between Milner coming back going to law school. It ended up such a close relationship with your father. It just shows what can happen when people can have good attitudes and are open toward one another. That was an important day in life for the university for several reasons. As I remember, your dad was probably the first major national figure that came to campus after I became president. Certainly one of the first at the level of the secretaryship, and the speech itself--I can't remember the specifics of what he said, except it was so well done--and then the possibility of having him come fit. It fit every requirement I had for the kind of people I was looking for. It would have brought instant recognition to the campus. It would have brought the kind of people who had a tremendous experience base and ability--obviously, from listening to him talk that day--to share it with students. We wrote a letter not long after that. I don't know whether that letter's in existence in his files.

RICHARD RUSK: Probably in his files at the Department of State.

DAVISON: And I can't remember, again whether I wrote the letter or whether Lindsey wrote it or whether we cosigned it--we talked about it--in which we firmed up that offer at that time that if and when he left the secretaryship, we wanted the right to be in on the bidding for his time, because we didn't want to be presumptuous enough to think that just because we offered him the job that he would come here. We knew we would have to make it attractive to him, that we could in many different ways. It rocked along then--

RICHARD RUSK: Did he respond to that letter? Do you recall?

DAVISON: I don't recall. He apparently did because I don't remember ever being discouraged in our quest to get him here. Had I not heard, or had I heard in a negative sense--I think--in fact if my memory serves me right at all--we got a letter from him expressing appreciation for the way he was treated here and everything else and--we got this letter to him pretty quick--it was either then or in response to our letter. Another expression of our interest in him and that indeed, when that time came we would like to talk. So, then it's pretty fuzzy from then on. We started negotiating with him. He got in touch with us indirectly or directly, that, indeed, he was leaving. I immediately had let George [L.] Simpson, who was the chancellor, know of our interest and which way we were going and George was very pleased with it, too. While we had some things we disagreed on, boy, this wasn't one of them. He was, George was a strong supporter in our quest to get your father back. In fact, it would have been impossible to do without the kind of support he gave. But there were a lot of others: Jim [James A.] Dunlap on the Regents, in fact, the great bulk of the Regents knew this as being a good thing for the state of Georgia and a real coup for the university. But those negotiations were entered into later. Nothing around the university is unanimous apparently ever anyway. There were people on the board who had

constituencies that they felt they spoke to or had to listen to that were opposed to your dad coming.

RICHARD RUSK: Was it my sister's marriage to a black man in 1967 that seemed to be the guts of the issue or was it his stand on the Vietnam war or what was the issue?

DAVISON: I don't know, because I tried to find out the issue.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you?

DAVISON: Yes, I traveled and talked to them.

RICHARD RUSK: You traveled to see these Regents?

DAVISON: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: You must have--

DAVISON: Actually, when it came down to it, most of them--particularly people like Mr. Roy [Vincent] Harris--probably felt about the Vietnam war--and I told them, I said, "You know, I listen to you and I listen to the Secretary and darn, if I can see any difference. I mean it seems to me that yall ought to be in league with each other." [Laughter] But I don't know. Frankly, this is an interesting part of a job like this--you are with people that are diametrically opposed to each other and you realize that, really, they aren't. Fundamentally, they are--you know, if you could strip off all those things that they feel they have to appear to be or what-not, their basic thoughts are the same. But I offered the name to the board and it created a stir. I was to go to Florida to visit my in-laws with Diane [Davison] and the children at Sanibel during the time of that board meeting. I remember stopping--we got up early in the morning, four o'clock. We like to travel early because it was a six hundred mile drive down, and I stopped somewhere down around in Florida, and I called back in to see if anything else had happened. I mean it had already been active. There had already been a lot of newspaper talk. I had already visited Regents. Everything seemed to be in good shape. Frankly, I was not worried. I was more worried about your father saying, "You know, this is uncomfortable for you. It's uncomfortable for a lot of other people, so maybe we just better--we just better call it off." That was my big worry. I knew the votes that were in the Regents. I just knew they couldn't let anything else happen. But I was scared to death--

RICHARD RUSK: Did he ever say that to you?

DAVISON: No, he never even indicated. I've told him that I--in fact, I talked to him. I called him--well, I went to Florida. I caught a plane and came back. Just for the meeting. I spent the night. They--I was never seen. I went up and sat in Henry Neil's office or the chancellor's office, one, until I heard the vote and I got somebody to run me back out to the airport and I went back to Fort Myers, Florida, and I called him and I told him, at least on one occasion that that was my concern. My concern was that he would, that this thing would appear out of proportion to him and that my assurance was if that he would stick steady it would not only be good for the

university, but would be a fine experience for him because I knew how people responded here and good manners is part of our tradition.

RICHARD RUSK: I remember your student newspaper editorialized after his speech thanking him for coming, welcoming him and saying it proved that free speech was possible here at the university.

DAVISON: Well, it came out so it was to everybody's benefit. That was one of the long few hours when I left there coming back up here. I knew everything was all right, but I was just scared to death that something was going to happen that would blow it.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, well, he was a very controversial figure back then. Let me ask you this: were there other elements that were opposed to his hire here beyond the four Regents that voted against him?

DAVISON: If there were, I was not aware of it. In fact, one of the things I remember when there was a lot of talk before the vote, anything else, it was a Sunday evening and it must have been nine o'clock or so--telephone rang at home and it was the president [William L. Lanier] of the Georgia Farm Bureau--very powerful group, represents a constituency that is largely the South Georgia kind of people. This was when there was some question. This was earlier, when newspapers were kind of blowing up and people were talking in the Legislature and everybody else--

RICHARD RUSK: They were talking in the Legislature about this prior to the vote?

DAVISON: Oh yeah. It was the current item of, you know, it was what everybody was talking about. And he called and he said, "I just want to tell you one thing." He said, "I am for this appointment." And he said, "The Georgia Farm Bureau will stand behind you on this appointment." Now, that was the kind of--every place I went. That's how I knew things were going to be--all right, if he just didn't--

RICHARD RUSK: Pull out.

DAVISON: If it didn't seem more than it was--

RICHARD RUSK: I happened to be home at the time. I can remember it rocked him a little bit this [inaudible], but some students called him and said, "Don't pay any attention to it. Come on down."

DAVISON: Well, we encouraged some folks to call because he needed to know what the general climate was, not what the newspapers or the television made it look like or anything else, see? It, frankly, was very important to me because I expect it would have caused me to make a very difficult decision had it not gone through. I couldn't have tolerated that.

RICHARD RUSK: You think you might have offered your resignation over that?

DAVISON: Oh, I'm sure I would have.

RICHARD RUSK: You would have?

DAVISON: Oh, I'm sure I would have.

RICHARD RUSK: Express that in your own words. I'd like to use that.

DAVISON: Well, it was--

RICHARD RUSK: You felt strongly enough about it----

DAVISON: The appointment was important enough to me and to the university and to what I was trying to do here to have been thwarted in it for anything except for the finest reason, which no one could advance, would have caused me to have considered myself totally ineffective in the job. I would have resigned had your father not been appointed. It was probably the first crisis of that kind that was important to me following a lot of things that irritated me and a lot of things that I would have got mad about and everything else. That was a crucial appointment because it opened the door to so many other things we did and it made a statement to a lot of other people across this country, a very important statement.

RICHARD RUSK: What impact do you think that appointment might have had on my father? You said something about what it did for the university.

DAVISON: Well, there was no question in my mind that it was the right thing for him to do, that indeed it would breathe new life and it would open new doors for him and I've heard him say so many times what I instinctively knew at that time that these were happy years because around every corner, down every hall, was a new adventure with younger people, a chance to share his experiences and I've never seen anybody take to it faster in my life. It was just an amazing thing, but it was equally good for the university.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall any serious opposition on the part of any faculty members perhaps objecting to his stance on Vietnam?

DAVISON: If there was any, I don't recall it.

RICHARD RUSK: Nothing came to you.

DAVISON: No. No. It was never in that sense a campus issue.

RICHARD RUSK: You spent a lot of time traveling with him when he first came down going to various speaking engagements and meetings. What were your impressions of how he was received?

DAVISON: Well, I think it even amazed him. It didn't me. But to every place we went your father was a hero. I mean he was a Georgian who they were proud to have back home. And every

place that he went, every time he talked, the institution changed perspective in people's minds out there.

RICHARD RUSK: The University of Georgia?

DAVISON: The University of Georgia did. I mean it was a great interaction to watch: it was fun to watch him and it was fun to watch the university. It was fun to watch people's relationships to both of them change. He was just a visible indicator of what we were trying to do and he picked up on that so quick. He picked up on what this institution was aiming for, and he came to be one of my best salesmen just off the bat.

RICHARD RUSK: Probably one of the reasons he did what he did: you and he probably shared a common vision of what the university could be.

DAVISON: I always felt we did. I expect that there are things that we would disagree on in the area of politics, personalities, or some things, but, boy, when it came down to what our aspirations were for this university, I have never seen any difference between what the two of us said or thought without even having to visit about it.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. And when you were driving together on these road trips, you and he would talk about your hopes and your plans for the university?

DAVISON: We would. And the place of the university in the life of the state. And the evolution of this state. Your dad's roots are very deep in this part of the country. Far deeper than most people understood, I think.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, he comes back here all the time.

DAVISON: Of course, I had known some of your other kinfolks-- the Clotfelders I grew up with.

RICHARD RUSK: You did?

DAVISON: In Marietta. So, when we got talking about family or when he got talking about family, he was talking about people that I knew, had known most of my life, too, because I grew up in Cobb County and of course, they came out of Cherokee County up around---- His presence here it created a new environment. We seemed to move up one level and he, as I say, he's a good salesman. He took right to that. He pushed the University of Georgia wherever we went. Well, you know, he's one of the most unselfish people I've ever seen. I have never seen him promote Dean Rusk. I have never seen him fail to promote the University of Georgia on any of these trips or even today he does the same thing.

RICHARD RUSK: Dean [James Ralph] Beaird said he showed the flag for the University.

DAVISON: That's the best way to put it. That's precisely what he did.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. [Interruption] Who was the man, who was the president of the Farm Bureau who called?

DAVISON: Bill Lanier.

RICHARD RUSK: L-a-n-i-e-r?

DAVISON: Yeah, and interestingly enough. Bill had children in school here at the time. He's got one son that came through, a physician. Now he's got a daughter. He's had children here all along. He saw it from both sides.

RICHARD RUSK: When my dad tried to go out and sell the University of Georgia everywhere he went, did he help in any way in a direct way in terms of fundraising? Did he ever go out there and try to help you raise money for a university which is a tremendous job for a university president?

DAVISON: He--of course, so many of the things we did were--if they weren't direct fundraising, they were trying to create a climate in which fund-raising could take place.

RICHARD RUSK: And that he would have contributed.

DAVISON: Take Georgia Development Fund. Goodness, I think he was one of the--I know he spoke to that group right after he came here. But he helped us nurture a clientele out there in a sense that we had not been too successful with simply by its presence. It was a--yeah, there's no question that he had an impact on the university's ability to raise funds.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah, he's always been reluctant to, himself, play that role. He said he was glad to go out there and lobby on behalf of the university, but let the fund-raising aspects of it be sort of an indirect by-product.

DAVISON: That's--I don't even want to use the term, but that's the way we used him. That's the way he functioned and we benefited from it. We capitalized on it. You know, I have no shame about asking for money, so it's easy to come along after him and--

RICHARD RUSK: Mr. Davison, you said--

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RICHARD RUSK:--you made the point that few people know what a catalyst Dean Rusk was, is to the University of Georgia. You know that story. Not too many other people do. Do you have any way of illustrating what you mean by that point?

DAVISON: Well, the things that happened here that wouldn't have happened without his presence. Specifically, I have in mind our alumni seminar that we have every February that has come to be--I always introduced it as the state's largest intellectual house party. Those were good programs, always done well, but when your father came and we decided to do one on Russia, and he took over all at once we found that we had everybody who had anything to do with the U.S policy toward Russia since World War II that was available. I mean to have your father and Henry [Alfred] Kissinger on the stage at the same time, to have all of those other people that were involved. RR - Was [William] Averell Harriman there by any chance? Probably not.

DAVISON: No, I don't remember. I'd have to go back and look at the program. They came at different times.

RICHARD RUSK: I see.

DAVISON: But the repartee between your father and Henry Kissinger, for instance, of course they are both articulate. And knowing your dad and in later years having been around Henry Kissinger some, knowing that they don't always agree on everything-- but to watch them--your father made his statement first--all three of us were on the stage up there and all I did was introduce the program--and Mr. Rusk was first and he made his typically beautiful statement and then he introduced Henry Kissinger. He introduced him by saying that he had the same affection for him that any soldier had for his replacement in the foxhole. Well, Henry Kissinger got up and praised your father and said, he said, "I also have a great debt of gratitude to Secretary Rusk, that he is the person that established the fact that to be Secretary of State you had to speak with an accent." [laughter]

RICHARD RUSK: He said that, huh?

DAVISON: Yeah, it was that kind of day, but later in that day after the morning session--my office was right across from your father's office--I went upstairs. Here, was you father and Henry Kissinger and three or four law students sitting up there on the edge of the desk--there weren't enough places at all to sit to really visit. Now, if you think those students will ever forget that noontime just off the cuff when they sat up there with those two people--they'll never forget it! I won't forget it. I sat there and just listened too, to have a chance to join in and, of course, you know your dad has a way of making you very much at home being part of the conversation. You never feel like you're being spoken down to in anyway, but that is one example. I have walked up there before--

RICHARD RUSK: You're talking about--this took place at the Rusk Center?

DAVISON: Yeah. This was right after we had redone it to have a place for him to be. But I have walked to my office and on more than one occasion seen him standing out there all six, three or four of them, with a bunch of little school children around talking to them. And all of them looking up and looking at him--there are times when I wish I had a camera--but that's the kind of thing that your dad brought. He opened doors to other people for us who simply came because he asked, that there would have been no way for us. But--he called his chips in that way for the

university and after he came in those early days we were trying to recruit faculty. It wasn't as easy as it is now. I mean we knew we had a good product. We knew we had a good opportunity. We also knew that nobody else much knew that. When we were going after a top person, would have to practice subterfuge almost. You'd call and say, "Are you interested in joining the faculty at the university? Well, I know you're getting things going and I'm real happy. Would you come down and give us a seminar?" If you could ever get them down here, and have a chance to get on them one on one and really convince them, you had a good chance of getting them. And we brought in some of our best people, some of the people that have done much to make this university the world class institution it is right now, that way. When your father joined the staff of the faculty and you'd go to New York or some place like that, there was a little different climate. I mean all at once it wasn't, "Where is the university? Is that in Atlanta or is that in Athens or what? The first thing they would say is "Didn't Secretary Rusk just join your law faculty?" Whether they liked it or not, whether they agreed with him or not.

RICHARD RUSK: It made a difference.

DAVISON: There is another thing, too, that I didn't say back in the search: one of the--you asked what the reasons--of course, the reasons people give for being against somebody are not always the reasons that are real--one of the reasons that came up was well, he's not a lawyer and who would hire him in the law school. That was one of the issues. Well, the answer was no we're hiring him in international law and that is entirely different. International law is a product of treaty and who has made them? I mean he's made them. What you're doing is hiring the person that created the law. It's like--

RICHARD RUSK: When Lyndon [Baines] Johnson was offered a teaching position at the University of Texas, some faculty there objected on the grounds that he didn't have his Ph.D.

DAVISON: Well, see that judgment didn't come from the people at the law school. That was one of those reasons that people gave outside and they heard. But that was one of the easiest ones to counter. He was the lawyer as far as international trade and treaty agreements are concerned.

RICHARD RUSK: Roy Harris said publicly that he didn't want the university to be a haven for old broken down politicians who can't get a job anywhere else.

DAVISON: That's just the way he would have spoken.

RICHARD RUSK: He also had a kind of segregationist weekly that he published there in Augusta and in that he really blasted my sister's marriage. That might have been sort of a gut issue for him.

DAVISON: But Roy Harris is somebody that I came to understand over a long period of time. The only major difference we had was over your father because Roy, when it came to education in this institution, wasn't the Roy Harris that he sponsored as himself in his newspaper or to his constituents. I am convinced in my own mind that he was a great admirer of your fathers.

RICHARD RUSK: Of what? Interesting.

DAVISON: I have no right to say that publicly. I just knew him well enough. I think he took the stand he thought he had to take because of the people.

RICHARD RUSK: His constituency.

DAVISON: His constituency. I really do. Because you know we went head to head over it and it was the only time that Roy Harris and I--and he was a powerful person and the reason I say this we came out of that without a single scar between the two of us, Roy Harris and me.

RICHARD RUSK: You went head to head with Roy Harris over my father's hiring?

DAVISON: Well, the best recommendation a teacher can have is who and how many want to take his course. His course in law, in international law of course, was enormously popular and in demand, but what few people realized is that he gave so much to other departments. He lectured in political science. He lectured anyplace--in history--

RICHARD RUSK: He lectured down here.

DAVISON: In fact, I expect there are few places on this campus in the course of his career here on the faculty that he didn't lecture. That wasn't part of his contract.

RICHARD RUSK: He was sort of a campus professor rather than a law school professor.

DAVISON: Well, his experience was so broad. He had something that touched virtually everything and he was willing to go share that.

RICHARD RUSK: Funny that's interesting because his concept of the university is to sort of break down these barriers between the departments and try to present a universal experience and try to tie in the whole and--

DAVISON: He was more concerned with the uni- part of it than he was the -versity part of it. He was. But he's a Renaissance person and those individuals have a lot to offer. One of the things that I was relatively confident of after riding around the state with him was that he wanted to invest the rest of his life in the lives of young people; he was through with politics. I don't think you could have gotten him to run for anything. He had done that--that was behind--not run, but he had served in that capacity and he wanted to come back now and invest his time in the next generation.

RICHARD RUSK: You didn't get the feeling he was going to run off and take another position somewhere?

DAVISON: Well, I never had the feeling at any time in our long relationship and in the early part of it when you would have thought it would have been there that he viewed this as a stepping stone. He simply did not. He came here to stay. He just plunged in and there was never

anything tentative about his involvement in the university. You never had the idea that he was sailing on "Well, now I'm at the University of Georgia, Harvard's going to wake up."

RICHARD RUSK: I don't think he would have accepted that position had it been offered him.

DAVISON: I don't either. In fact, I don't think anybody frankly, after the first couple of years could have gotten him away from here because I think he felt fulfilled in what he was doing and totally comfortable with his environment and productive.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. Yeah. What was Dean Rusk like to you? How did he seem to be when he first came down here? Did he seem to be under some real pressure from that job as Secretary?

DAVISON: Well, he wouldn't have been human if he hadn't carried a burden. Now, certainly the load a university president carried during that time was nothing to the pressure of a national office, but I think you recognize some of the indicators in other people that you see. Those were stressful times. Those were times at which everybody was being asked to do things that were not only difficult but the climate in which you were doing them was so divisive and there wasn't a consensus. When Mr. Rusk left that office, if he had not been the victim of stress he would have been a medical anomaly. Absolutely would have been. Now, he's had a lot of health problems since he's been here, the prosthetic aorta, all the rest of them, but you know he's just breezed right by those. I mean they have been no more than physical difficulties. And I think one of the reasons that he's done so well with all of them is that he very quickly reacclimated himself mentally and shared a lot of what would have been bound to be eating on him. Took up a new challenge and never looked back in that sense. Now, I know he did. I know you wake up and you dream and you do everything else, but publicly there was never the impression that he was ever looking back. He just picked up the reins and headed on.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah--tremendous story.

DAVISON: One of the things that I cherish about these years is the informality of our relationship. He walks in my office or did, when I was over in . He saw something that he thought I needed to know about and he was always the diplomat, perfect. If he wanted to tell me if I was maybe--if he thought maybe I hadn't thought of something, he had the best way--I never felt ill at ease to just walk over and just walk in. But we had a common meeting ground in the parking lot as well. We parked there so we saw each other, greeted each other several times a week. We would have a conversation in the parking lot. That is the environment that the university produces. You just don't find any place else and I think he enjoyed after years of formal--everything having to be couched just so--in fact, I'm sure he's told you, his early comment when someone asked how he was getting along, he said he was luxuriating being back in the world of opinion. It was a grand statement. All at once, here, I can make a decision. I can have an opinion. It's a commodity. I can change it. I can modify it. I--

RICHARD RUSK: I can have no opinion at all.

DAVISON: I can have no opinion. I can do whatever I want to do. Of course, he was never caught without an opinion that he had thought about. But the release, the freedom of this, the

way that he accepted it. Now, here was a person who had been accustomed to the protocol--I asked him one day, I said, "Why do people argue [inaudible] in the State Department whether you're going to have a round table or a square table where people are going to sit? Why is the protocol so--? He said, "Well, why you're doing that you're not shooting." He said, "It keeps you doing something while things quieten [sic] down." But after all that he took to life here--an entirely different place--with apparently no trauma. There are a lot of people who would have missed the pomp, the rest of it. If he ever missed it, he never indicated it.

RICHARD RUSK: You made the point earlier about he would occasionally walk in your office and give you a few pointers or hints in ways that might be helpful to a university president. Anything along those lines?

DAVISON: Well, he would never, of course, come in and say there's a situation out there that you don't understand and this is what you should do about it. He would come in and lead you into a conversation in an area that he might be concerned someone that he had found out that was alienated from the institution. It was never a challenge to the job you were doing. It was always helpful. He would lead you along the line and if he found that you were thinking that way already, if not he would have implanted or left a concern and you would start thinking about it. He was very sensitive that way. There's another thing--when he came in you always knew he had something to say.

RICHARD RUSK: He never would come in for social purposes?

DAVISON: He never came in just to get a cup of coffee or anything like that. There was always that respect for other people's time, but again, if he thought it was important, he would come in--he never left that I didn't know what he said, but I never felt offended by it. [Laughter]

RICHARD RUSK: I've heard a lot of good stories about my father. I feel obliged because this is an oral history to ask this type of question but do you recall anything of a critical nature that could be applied to Dean Rusk's role here in the last fifteen or twenty years as a professor, perhaps other things that other people might have said, either in his teaching or in any facet of university life that he was involved with?

DAVISON: I want to make this statement: if I could think of a valid criticism, I would state it simply because it would add validity to what else I've said, but frankly, I have made the comment across this state and privately and publicly many times that your father was as near a perfect professor as I have met.

RICHARD RUSK: He never published anything.

DAVISON: Yeah, he did, too. You'd be surprised what all he's published indirectly and directly.

RICHARD RUSK: Transcripts of speeches, that sort of thing.

DAVISON: Well, everything else. His influence has been such--you know that's why we have 'or comparable to' statement in those requirements. He gained his position without ever having to

write it and nobody ever questioned it. But his concern for the students, his background, his knowledge in the areas which he had responsibility and his willingness to share them and the fact that he--you know a lot of people would take a job like this, come and rest on what they've done and sort of stop, not continuing interest in what was going on, become dated very quickly--

RICHARD RUSK: Sort of a retirement position, not really work on it.

DAVISON: And three years they would have a good name, but no current knowledge. See, that didn't happen. I mean he's as current as today's happenings. That's terribly important.

RICHARD RUSK: What was the genesis of the Dean Rusk Center? Dean Beard advised me to ask you that question because you seemed to be quite involved with it.

DAVISON: Well, talking over a period of time and looking at the university's responsibilities in international affairs particularly and I have a strong interest in that as well, we wanted to capitalize on Mr. Rusk and on the opportunities of the university to develop here particularly in the area of law business and everything else. A focal point, an international focal point. Well, how better could you do than to have a person who served eight years really directing those relationships in this country, so the concept of setting up, of not just having the Sibley professor, not just having Dean Rusk, Sibley professor, but having the Rusk Center which would give us a high visibility where they would house him and have staff then that could do other things with him. Now, eventually that center should expand even more than it is now. And that's why we have been interested for several years and Ralph Beard and I talked about putting another wing on the end of the college--of the school.

RICHARD RUSK: Of the law school.

DAVISON: Of the law school. Next to the library. To bring in the Rusk Center facility and have it right there just across the courtyard from the [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.] Library, from the [Herman Eugene] Talmadge papers, the support of the main library as well as the--right close to the business school. It has a very strong international--or should have or continue to have a very strong international concern and presence, and have the Rusk Center. I mean, gosh, what could you have better than named after the Secretary of State.

RICHARD RUSK: What was my dad's reaction when you told him--

DAVISON: Oh, he never was for all of this. Frankly, he really wasn't.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall specifically what he might have said when--the idea came from you, I take it?

DAVISON: Yeah, it came from me, but the best we could ever get out of him was that he wouldn't get in the way. [Laughter]

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right?

DAVISON: I mean he never looked for any kind of glory. Aggrandizement is not in his make-up. He did agree not to veto it. I think---

RICHARD RUSK: The way you conceptualized it he was not to be the director, someone else would do that--

DAVISON: No, of course, that's right. That would be Tom [Thomas J.] Schoenbaum. But there's a great work for that center to do. It's just really getting cranked up. And another concept that we had was it would not be confined to the law school. This would spread out because you have political science; you have geography; you have business, you have agriculture; you have all of these areas that are interested in international concern of this institution. Well, if you look at the make-up of the board of the Rusk Center, you find all of those people--now, it's hosted by the law school but it was to be interdisciplinary and is interdisciplinary and one of its main functions was to break walls down. Your dad, we talked about it earlier--he's a Renaissance type of person. I mean interdisciplinary is something--he likes to mix with people with different interests and the university should be the same thing. But he wasn't particularly impressed that we wanted to name it for him--

RICHARD RUSK: I think he secretly sort of takes a delight in it.

DAVISON: I hope so. I'd be disappointed if he didn't.

RICHARD RUSK: Did my father ever talk to you about book writing or trying to profit some way from--

DAVISON: Well, of course, I talked to him--it was obvious that this experience of his would be worthwhile, but his position from the day he got here was that he would not profit on personal knowledge of what went on. You know, there's so many books about what goes on going up and down the back steps and all that--everybody wants to lay open everything. We talked--you know, he just plain wasn't going to do that and personally I have great respect. He lends dignity to government that we lose sometime. I'm for openness but not a lot of what we read. He did have a great interest in writing about the secretaryship of state and I don't know really how much of that he ever got down or put down--

RICHARD RUSK: He said he's working on that book in a desultory fashion. I opened up the file folder that said'book'on

it and it's desultory alright! I think I more or less got what he wanted to say there. We'll slip it in--

DAVISON: Well, maybe he wrote his book in another way, but he had no intention of popularizing the position that he held for those years. [Interruption] My real hope for the Rusk Center is that it will be a lasting and permanent kind of memorial that will make not only your father, but the family, proud from now on and be a continuing point of high visibility for the university.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, if you're going to say that, I'm going to have to say this and that is that the best memorial that my father could have is the work that you and all the faculty are trying to do here at the University of Georgia out there working with those young people--

DAVISON: It's been a partnership. I sense that. He's been a great strength to me in that way. He can always put in a word of praise when he senses you need it and, by golly, folks need that every now and then.

RICHARD RUSK: He would do that for you, too, little notes or little letters.

DAVISON: Yeah, or publicly. He had real instinct for sensing there was something to be said.

RICHARD RUSK: When you're down.

DAVISON: And he would say it. [Interruption] The hard part about talking about this is that it had been such a constant relationship. It has high points, but it doesn't have any major peaks and then long periods. It's just been a blessing to me. And I sense that we were given an opportunity and a stage here that was useful to all of us, because golly Ned, he's been productive.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. This has been a great interview and I'd like to thank you.

DAVISON: You like to talk about folks you like.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

DAVISON: They're the easiest kind in the world to talk about.

END OF SIDE 2