

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection
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Andrew L. Steigman interviewed by Richard Rusk
1986 May 6

RICHARD RUSK: --with Andy Steigman, personal assistant to Dean Rusk from 1966 through the summer of 1968. Andy's been a Foreign Service officer since 1958. He has had some overseas assignments. I presume no prior contacts with Dean Rusk until you became a personal assistant.

STEIGMAN: That's correct. The official title of the position was Staff Assistant.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay.

STEIGMAN: Your dad had a very, very small personal staff, keeping if you will the military tradition in which you use your line people to do most of the work, and don't rely too heavily on your own staff to get in their way. He had a Special Assistant and a Staff Assistant which was a junior position.

RICHARD RUSK: What was your relationship to Ben [Benjamin H.] Read's operation? Ben was the Executive Secretary.

STEIGMAN: The Executive Secretary essentially coordinated all the paper flow and the ensuing action for the Department's principals--that is, the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary and the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. Each of the principals had a personal staff in addition. And we really did not get into the follow-up actions as Ben Read did. Our real function was to screen the mass of paper that tended to come up to the Secretary's office. And try to sort out what was essential. And try to make sure that it was given some priority order so that the work done by your dad could proceed in a somewhat more coherent way. He would get buried under this ton of paper that came up every night. interested in--he said that, "Andy had an office next to mine. He could enter my office at any time; one of the few people who could do so." You went with him on all foreign trips. You worked long hours. You knew the Department of State well. You were highly intelligent and an A-plus Foreign Service officer. Those were my dad's comments. You said you handled the flow of traffic, you reviewed a lot of the paper sent over by Ben Read. You arranged briefings. You helped prepare him for press conferences, congressional briefings, trips, meetings. You rarely injected your own view into policy deliberation. Yet, he said that in conjunction with Ben Read, Andy Steigman knew his thoughts as well as anyone in the Department, and probably better than himself. But that's my dad's capsule summary of who you were and what you did. Is there anything further that we should add in terms of describing your job?

STEIGMAN: Let me just give you a little bit more description on the way that the two of us who were in his immediate office split that function. Because as I said there was a Staff Assistant and a Special Assistant.

RICHARD RUSK: Okay.

STEIGMAN: Essentially we both read everything that your father read. We read it before he got it, and we read it when it came back out to see whether he put any notes on it. And that's the way in which I think your dad had that idea that we knew his mind probably as well as he did, because we tried to be sure that we were aware of everything that had gone through his mind, and every reaction he had had to it--

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

STEIGMAN: --to the extent we could. Because that enabled us better to know what he was interested in. What additional paper would be more useful to him. And also what he expected to have done with things. I'd say Ben Read had the primary follow-up responsibility. When I worked with Buck [C. Arthur] Borg, Buck and I both meticulously read every scrap of paper that went in. Harry [Walter] Shlaudeman was a little bit more relaxed and he left me the primary responsibility for, in a sense, proofreading everything your father had to sign, and checking for the completeness of action memos.

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

STEIGMAN: Harry tended to take big packs of paper that I had read and skim them to make sure that he knew what the subjects were, and pass them in. Buck Borg would read them just as carefully as I did. We tried to make sure that if your father had to sign something it didn't have any typos in it. And we were pretty successful. If my memory serves me, he always got a great kick of spotting one that we missed. We didn't do it very often, but it happened often enough that he had that sense of satisfaction that we weren't perfect.

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, I see. You didn't leave a few deliberate ones in there to give him that satisfaction? (laughter)

STEIGMAN: Oh no. We never tried to leave any but we always managed somehow to miss one here and there.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, he's a stickler for the English language. I think he learned that from George [Catlett] Marshall.

STEIGMAN: Yeah. Well, he was an incredible stylist with a great feel for language. And it was a pleasure to watch him work. On trips, for example, when he at eleven o'clock at night would dictate a cable back to the President, depending on the trip--sometimes just back to the acting Secretary in his absence--describing what had gone on. And I would sit in with whichever secretary had come with us. And he would dictate in whole paragraphs.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: And it was beautiful! I mean, he would sum up incredibly complex things that had gone on during the day and just dictate it off. And the reason I sat in on those occasions was he then would go to bed. And since I had listened, I would proofread and sign off the telegram and we would send it. And then he would sign off and get some sleep.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: But the ability to just dictate off this very polished prose was really something to listen to.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. We've got the machine rolling. As Special Assistant you were heavily involved with the procedural aspects of my dad's job. How well did he perform on those? Another way of asking that question is what kind of boss was he for you?

STEIGMAN: Well, one of the great joys of working for him was that he always made you feel that he cared about you. And I had heard this story from one of my predecessors or somebody-- or one of the Special Assistants. We alternated on the weekends. One of us would cover Saturday; the other cover Sunday. Your dad, as you know, was usually in both days. And there was one Saturday morning I wasn't there but I guess it was probably Buck. And your dad came in at nine o'clock and Buck and one of the secretaries was there. And the first thing he did was he came out to Buck and said, "Look, I expect to be here most of the day. If you want to arrange to have someone come in and relieve the secretary so she's not stuck here all day with me--just to split the work load--I want to let you know in advance."

RICHARD RUSK: Right. didn't expect Buck to get a replacement because he knew I was on the next day. But he didn't want the secretary to be burdened with all day Saturday if they wanted to do something about it. And he would think about it when he came in to make the effort to tell him that if they wanted to make some other arrangements.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. He was good with the little people in the Department then?

STEIGMAN: He was terrific with the little people. The messengers just adored him. You know, he is really the quintessential gentleman. He always gave the impression of caring about everybody who worked for him. And I think that was one of the reasons I think we all so much enjoyed it. And we were all so willing to put in seventy to eighty hours a week. He was working as many hours as we were or more, and never complained. Despite the fact that he was putting in eighty hours a week, he worried about the amount of time that we spent there. And always apologized whenever he made us stay late.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: Your dad was one of the most organized people. Every night when we put his stuff away--you may have already heard this from one of the other Staff or Special Assistants--we drew a diagram of his desk because he kept things in very neat piles. And we made a little diagram of the desk and marked each pile as to where it went. And we would put things away at

night and put it back out the next morning with every paper back on that desk in exactly the same place it had been.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned.

STEIGMAN: Because it was all classified it had to be locked up.

RICHARD RUSK: I see. That desk the next morning it looked exactly the way it looked when he went home.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned.

STEIGMAN: We drew diagrams because usually the person who locked up was not necessarily the one who put it out the next morning. And we had a little map to follow.

RICHARD RUSK: That's interesting. Andy, what about policy itself? Did you inject your own views into policy, or did my dad solicit your views in any way?

STEIGMAN: No, we had the clear impression that he did not want his immediate staff getting into the policy line, that he preferred to deal with his Assistant Secretaries and use them as the principle policy officers of the Department. My impression always was that this was in keeping with the military staff structure in which you don't, if you're the commanding general, get a couple lieutenant colonels and turn them loose to start making policy and then pose it on your division commanders. And I think he rather looked on Assistant Secretaries if you will as the division commanders or field army commanders who were supposed to be responsible for what went on in their sectors. His staff was essentially to keep the paper coming to and from him in an orderly way. And that's why you only had two of us. The staff has proliferated since his time.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. You never ever gave him any suggestions along policy lines?

STEIGMAN: Never.

RICHARD RUSK: And he never asked for them?

STEIGMAN: No. We occasionally would talk about things, particularly on trips. There tends to be a bit more conversation. Occasionally a subject would come up for conversation and I would express my views on them. But he really wasn't soliciting policy views at that stage as much as I think he was trying to find out or get some sense of where I was coming from on a personal basis. As I mentioned to you informally when we talked the other day, I was never completely certain what his real deep-down beliefs were on a lot of policy issues because he was always totally loyal to the policy set by the President. And clearly felt very strongly that policy--the ultimate decision on policy--was the president's prerogative, that his job was to advise. And once the decision had been made his job then was to defend the policy. For example, through the Vietnam period--this was a period of major escalation in Vietnam in '66-'68--and the situation ultimately led to Lyndon [Baines] Johnson's decision not to seek reelection. Throughout that whole period your dad was the staunchest defender and certainly the most eloquent defender of

the Administration's policy in Vietnam. And to this day I don't know whether he fully believed the speeches he would deliver.

RICHARD RUSK: Did that bother you about him?

STEIGMAN: No. No. My great admiration for him is the total loyalty that he showed. I think in that sense he was the classic public servant within the American system and the way it is supposed to operate. We live in an age today when everybody is back-biting. And everybody is going around and saying, "Don't blame me; I didn't really believe in this policy."

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: And a lot of your father's former colleagues of that period have gone around saying, "Oh, how misguided I was! Oh, I should have known better."

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: And I must say that I very much admire your dad who has said, "This was the policy at the time. We did what we believed best at the time. I have nothing to apologize for."

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. That, nevertheless, I think it's a troubling issue because my dad's views on loyalty carried to their illogical extreme would have made him a perfect Nazi back in the thirties. Okay, Andy, with the tape rolling let me ask you how did you handle any conflicts you may have had between your loyalty to my father as his Special Assistant and your own personal views as they may have been on the Vietnam War?

STEIGMAN: I basically disagreed with the Administration's policy on the Vietnam War and thought that we were making a bunch of serious mistakes. However, as I argued in print in my book and I feel very strongly, the choice is between doing your job to the best of your ability or asking to leave it. And I did not believe that I was going to be able to affect that policy by my own actions one way or another. I didn't really feel like moving paper to your father was a direct support of the policy. And I would do the best I could for him.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: It's an unsatisfactory compromise I suspect. Some people who--I'm not sure what would have happened if I'd still been there when they bombed Cambodia but that came several years later. During the '66-'68 period it was just a continuing, gradual build-up which seemed awfully misguided. There's always a hesitation when you are in that position, even when you are seeing all the paper as I was in your father's office, wondering do I have the hubris to say that my judgment of what's going on is so much better than that of all of these other people whose intelligence I admire?

STEIGMAN: If your dad thought it was the best policy, and I didn't, was I in a better position to judge that than he was? And you begin to wonder if there is a certain amount of arrogance to decide that you know better.

RICHARD RUSK: Andy, what was the response of many of the Foreign Service officers to this same conflict between loyalty to the Foreign Service and their jobs, and our policy in Vietnam?

STEIGMAN: There were several officers who tried very hard not to go to Vietnam, and some of them managed to avoid it. It was a period when most junior officers were being automatically assigned to work in the court's program. And several of those who became staunch opponents of Vietnam involvement in fact had learned enough about it while serving in Vietnam to put themselves in opposition thereafter. I think those who were further away from it, perhaps, tended to feel less strongly. They didn't really know it that well. They had that sense I described earlier of having this vague feeling that something was wrong and it was a misguided policy, but not really knowing enough about it to be sure that they were right. But I did know some officers, when assigned to Vietnam, tried very hard to get out of it--a couple who succeeded.

RICHARD RUSK: Right, right.

STEIGMAN: Their sense was that they could keep working for the U.S. government but they sure didn't want to work directly on the Vietnam policy.

RICHARD RUSK: Right. Was my dad receptive to these dissenting views from your perspective on the Vietnam War? Could--go ahead.

STEIGMAN: My sense is that your dad always was willing to listen to the other side. I sort of remember an anecdote, an incident that Gus Peleuses or Milton Corsey told me. Maybe it was Mil who was on that night--another late night in the office. And there were a small group of students across the street from the house.

RICHARD RUSK: Our personal home?

STEIGMAN: Yeah. How they had gotten up there I don't know. But there was a group across the street from the house with anti-Vietnam signs. And Mil said your dad got out of the car, and they were going to hustle him into the house. He walked across the street chatting with them, and invited them to come in for coffee. And two or three of the group accepted, came in, stayed for an hour, or an hour and a half. And Mil said as they were leaving, one girl asked him for his autograph. (laughter)

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right?

STEIGMAN: Yes.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned. I'll be darned.

STEIGMAN: I think it was Mil Corsey who told me. It was the security guys who were on that night and told him about it. It was either Mil Corsey or Al [Alan S.] Boyd. I don't think it was Gus.

RICHARD RUSK: Can you describe your or my dad's meetings with and speeches before large groups, perhaps college audiences during that period of anti-war protest?

STEIGMAN: Most of the speeches on which I accompanied him were to essentially friendly and supportive audiences. I am sure there were a lot of skeptics in the crowds, but they tended to be generally adult audiences: a Rotary convention, or Mayor's council.

RICHARD RUSK: American Legion's meetings?

STEIGMAN: Yeah. The one I remember where he had some fairly strong protests were [sic] at the University of Indiana, where there were a lot of demonstrators outside and a number of hecklers in the hall. And they kept jumping up and shouting. And he would simply stop until they quieted down and then he would start up again. And he just stayed up there with great patience and great dignity. And finally of one of the young folks got up and started shouting. And some woman, who must have been in her seventies, was sitting behind this kid, she stood up and whopped him on the head with her umbrella and told him to shut up because she wanted to hear the speech.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned. I'll be darned.

STEIGMAN: And a round of applause from most of the audience. And that was the end of the heckling.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned. I'll be darned. I'll be darned. I'll be darned.

STEIGMAN: Once he went up to New York--

RICHARD RUSK: This is an anecdote from a trip?

STEIGMAN: An anecdote from trip but not Vietnam-related. In fact, I'll just throw in that when we're going up to New York--he was speaking to some group at the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn. And I don't know what the group was--but it's a two part anecdote. One, he promised a ride to John [J.] Rooney, who was then heading the Appropriations Subcommittee. And I think Rooney, in fact, was going to the speech. And we sat in an airplane out at National Airport for forty-five minutes waiting for Rooney, who was late. And your dad showed great patience in not taking off without him. But when we got up to New York he had put in a wait. You dad said he really didn't want go to the dinner. He just wanted to go down and make a speech at the end of it. So we sat in a rather depressing hotel room at St. George, which was fast going down-hill. And I remember your dad asking, wanting to use one of his favorite quotes from Ecclesiastes, "Unto all things there is a season." time to be silent."

STEIGMAN: Right. And he wasn't sure of the exact quote. And it was the only hotel room that we had ever been in that didn't have a Gideon Bible. We had to call the desk and ask if they could find a Bible for us so we could check the exact wording of the quote; he wanted to use it in his speech.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned. Talking about my dad's health in 1968--go ahead.

STEIGMAN: Yes, he certainly seemed to be under considerable pressure. And often seemed kind of beat. So many things were pouring in on him that it's not surprising. But he was--well, we really saw him--we spent the most time with him when we traveled. And there he was able to relax. But when he was in the office and paper kept hounding in on him at regular intervals, and people kept hounding in on him, and the President kept calling and jumping on one thing or another--I expect Lyndon Johnson wasn't in the best of humor either. [He] was a person your dad tended to get worn down under.

RICHARD RUSK: He later said that he was just "bone tired" in his own words during that last year.

STEIGMAN: He looked it and at times acted it. I had the impression that when we did get off on a trip he welcomed it because there would be stretches--twelve or fourteen hours--with no papers and no phone calls where he could really relax. You asked--you said drinking. I never saw your father drink excessively in the sense that he never seemed to be seriously affected by it. He seemed to have quite a capacity for his favorite scotch. And he certainly would have two or three scotches, but he never seemed to show any effects of them unlike some of his colleagues, who when they tried to match him didn't quite show.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned. What about the effects of making decisions in a policy that involved, like any war, loss of human life? And as the war escalated loss of life on a mass scale. He was responsible for a lot of those decisions. Did you see any evidence of that in terms that it might have affected him?

STEIGMAN: Not directly. Presumably that was part of the total fatigue. But he never talked about it in those terms to me. He never specifically mentioned the human cost of the war. Knowing how much he cared about the people around him I can't believe he was indifferent to it. And I'm sure that added to the emotional and psychological stress under which he was operating.

RICHARD RUSK: We have that, Andy. Yeah. Andy, in terms of my dad's performance and role in that post-Tet policy review period do you have any theories on the role he may have played in who was predominant in turning Lyndon Johnson around on the war?

STEIGMAN: No. My memory of it is fuzzy at this stage. The impression we had at the time was that Clark [McAdams] Clifford played the key role. That he persuaded the president that it was time to change direction. What advice your father may have given in the closed meetings with the President is something we never knew. Had he given advice contrary to the then current policy that's a thing we would have been least likely to find out.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah.

STEIGMAN: He never would have told us.

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

STEIGMAN: That fits with my general statement that to this day I don't know what his real, deep-down, in-the-heart belief was. He would have given his best advice to the President. But unless it was totally in accord with the President's decision, nobody else would hear about it.

RICHARD RUSK: Did that make him a difficult man to work for from your point of view, in the sense that you often didn't really know what he thought about things? And--

STEIGMAN: No. Those who were charged with policy recommendation and policy implementation--the Assistant Secretaries, for example--would undoubtedly find it difficult to know exactly what policy line the Secretary wanted to follow. For those of us who were essentially paper handlers for him--his personal staff--it didn't matter. We didn't need to know his views. We needed to know what subject he was interested in.

RICHARD RUSK: That's right.

STEIGMAN: And we knew he was interested in Vietnam. We knew the kinds of information that he wanted us to put through to him. And how he wanted it organized to make it most useful.

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

STEIGMAN: And whether he agreed or disagreed with policy didn't really matter. He still needed the same information. So we didn't need to know in the way that the Assistant Secretaries need to know. And I can understand how they would have found it very difficult. In their position I would have been gone up to him and sort of beaten on him and said, "Look, what do you really want me to do?"

[break in recording]

RICHARD RUSK: So you went out to Chicago?

STEIGMAN: One time--ask your dad if he likes to sleep on satin sheets. (laughter) None of us slept well. He came back complaining in the morning.

STEIGMAN: This was the suite at the top of the Conrad Hilton. They put satin sheets on the bed. Bill DeCorsey was his security man on the trip. Bill and I shared one room, and your dad had the other one. We all slept very badly, very uncomfortable. He came back grumbling in the morning.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be darned. That's strange. As a Secretary of State, how was he with the Foreign Service? In terms of administrating the Foreign Service? He always said that the best way to deal with the Foreign Service is to try and capture it and make it work for you rather than fight it. Was he successful in that?

STEIGMAN: My impression is that the Foreign Service didn't know a lot about him. I never got any impression in the two years that I worked for him that he concerned himself very much with

the administration of the Foreign Service. I think he did try to capture and use it in the sense that he let the Assistant Secretaries and their staffs, in fact, do most of the work. He didn't try to interpose a level of hand-picked people and take the action away from the career people down the line. In that sense I think it can be said that he did try to use the Foreign Service. But I don't think he ever paid much attention to administering or structuring it--

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

STEIGMAN: --as an organization. The general comment was that he sort of ignored the structural management problems.

RICHARD RUSK: Right. And tried to stick to policy.

STEIGMAN: Tried to stick to policy and let the other people run the Department, and manage the Foreign Service.

RICHARD RUSK: Right.

STEIGMAN: And I suspect that as George [Pratt] Shultz has shown it probably would have been helpful if he had had the time and inclination to make a greater effort on behalf of the Foreign Service. But very few Secretaries of State, and I think George Shultz is the first one in years who, has been willing to invest some of his political capital and some of his energy on the Foreign Service institution.

RICHARD RUSK: I see. Interesting.

STEIGMAN: He was always in command.

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking about Dean Rusk's relations with the press and his performances at press conferences.

STEIGMAN: Yeah. I would read the transcripts; I seldom went to press conferences. The only time I saw him with the press generally was when a couple of reporters were with us when we were traveling, when he would sometimes meet with the American press. He always was in control, very relaxed with the press. He didn't get nervous or uptight about press appearances. And that's one of the great tricks, I think, of dealing effectively with the press, is to not to come on scared. I get the feeling that when you appear before the press it's almost like you're standing in front of a lion in a cage. They sense fear and go for blood if you're afraid. And your father was always very relaxed because he really knew his material. He knew what he wanted to say. He knew how to say it articulately. I think he appealed enormously to the press because he was so quotable. Just as you said before, you can take his whole paragraphs and use them almost verbatim, and you've got a story. I think the press recognized in him a guy who was the master of his material, and could give to them in very cogent and very clear form. And he was a very good logician. It's very hard to poke holes in his logic. And as a result, he didn't get tripped up. Impact on Congressional committees. Even at the time when the furor over Vietnam was rising--

RICHARD RUSK: You would accompany him to those committee hearings?

STEIGMAN: No, I did not accompany him at all. We would get back the transcripts again afterwards, and read them over. But it was clear--and I would get reports back from people who did accompany him--the big secret was that no matter how emotional or how excited the members of the committee got, your father never lost his cool. He didn't get mad. He didn't respond in kind. He would just come back to his basic arguments quietly and patiently, which was the only possible approach to take at that stage. And as a result he was very effective at it. I suspect he must have frustrated the hell out of some of the committees because he wouldn't rise to their bait. And as a result, I think to a certain extent, they probably felt that they had not really gotten him engaged in a substantive debate. Because he would simply keep going back to his fundamental points, his technique.

RICHARD RUSK: Ben Read describes a setting--describes those years in almost alarming terms from my point of view in describing his job and my father's job. He said there's just an enormous degree of work and amount of paperwork, an enormous flow of material; that they were always running just to try to keep abreast of things; that my dad never really had time to think or reflect or time off from the job. And it was really quit chaotic and he almost presents a theory that--a point of view that suggests that these fellows at the top really aren't in as firm of control as we think they are, strictly from the press of events. Do you relate to that at all? Does that make any sense to you in terms of what you saw?

STEIGMAN: Yeah, I think that's true. That's a comment really on the whole policy mechanism in the government and a lot of academics have made the same point: that there have been very few periods in post-World War II American history where there have been any planning mechanism or anything other than a fire-fighting approach.

RICHARD RUSK: Everything is strictly operational and there's not much reflective thinking on.

STEIGMAN: The one real time was with Marshall when he had George [Frost] Kennan running policy planning staff in the late forties. Marshall and [Dean Gooderham] Acheson really did lay out in fairly long term views the general lines of U.S. policy. But that was a one-time thing. Since then I think it's been pretty true of all Secretaries that they spend an awful lot of time on whatever the current problem is. You know, Henry [Alfred] Kissinger spent his time shuffling around the Middle East and other things went to pot. He worked on China for a while. But there always tended to be one problem at a time that takes seventy-five percent of the attention. The rest doesn't even get thought about very much.

RICHARD RUSK: My dad has said that George Marshall ran, as Chief of Staff, ran the war effort back in World War II on an eight hour day. He'd go home every day at five o'clock and I asked him why he didn't do that. He agrees that he perhaps worked too hard at the job.

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STEIGMAN: --paper, I think, than his successor did. The impression I have is that when he left office and Bill [William Pierce] Rogers came in after him that he had read through many of the raw telegrams. Your father liked to read a lot of cables. We gave him, probably, I don't know, thirty or forty incoming cables a day, some of them fairly long, plus all the other paper. I gather Rogers pretty much cut out the cable traffic. Somebody had told me afterward that he'd cut it way back. He relied on the summaries. He didn't want to read all the raw cables. He just read the summaries. Your father read all of the summaries and then the read a lot of the cables. When we gave him the State Department morning summary, it came up with all the cables attached. So my guess is he probably read a lot of them.

RICHARD RUSK: Just how much material was that, say, in the course of a given day? How much written material, reading material would he have?

STEIGMAN: He probably saw thirty or forty cables that average a couple of pages each, plus whatever memoranda came his way, plus the military and State Department summaries in the morning.

RICHARD RUSK: Intelligence summaries?

STEIGMAN: Intelligence summaries, yeah. What came over from the Pentagon and the State Department. He got a special intelligence briefing each day which did not come through us. It came directly from INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research]. I don't know how many pages he wound up with each day. He probably wound up with a hundred to a hundred and fifty pages reading material, some of which I'm sure he skimmed. Some of the cables he probably only read the summary rather than the full text. A lot of them I'm sure he read the whole thing.

RICHARD RUSK: Andy, go ahead and sort of critique my dad as both your boss and as American Secretary of State, and say something about his problems on the job as well his strengths and capabilities.

STEIGMAN: I think his strengths and his weaknesses are somewhat the same, oddly enough, some of the same characteristics that you suggested earlier: his total loyalty could have posed certain risks. At the same time, one of the things I admired him for was his total integrity and his total loyalty to the President, the fact that he never complained and never whimpered. When things weren't going right. He didn't grumble about, you know, fate sort of keeps dumping on us. Lyndon Johnson once told one of the members of his staff, apropos of Vietnam, a great quote, "History shits on us all," in a sense, it's not what I did, it's fate that brought me to this pass. I never got that sense from your father. He was always willing to take responsibility for his own actions and his own decisions. You see, the flip side of the same thing is that one never really knew where he stood in personal terms or indeed whether he was operating on the basis of any strong personal convictions on Vietnam at all, whether he was simply acting totally as the loyal subordinate without any independent ideas.

RICHARD RUSK: Acting as a technician rather than a man with deep moral principles.

STEIGMAN: My own sense is that he had deep moral principles, simply from other things I saw in him, and that he did have strong ideas of his own. He's too intelligent a man not to. But he never let them shine. He never let them show through to us, in any event. I'm sure that the President got the benefit of his best advice. But it never showed anywhere else. That I suspect was a great frustration for the people below him. On the other hand, I guess if you want to keep you department running in tune with the president and not going off half-cocked, you don't want to encourage them by giving them the impression that the Secretary will let them play games. And the way you keep your department operating to support the president is to make quite clear there's only one policy and I, the Secretary of State, am fully behind it. The only other area in which I would critique him is the one that you raised earlier, rather ignoring the Foreign Service as an institution, or the problems of departmental management and leaving them entirely to other people.

RICHARD RUSK: Did that not tend to work when he delegated those management responsibilities to his Undersecretaries and other people?

STEIGMAN: Ultimately it didn't account really for the changes that were taking place in the society and in the nature of the Foreign Service. I'm not sure he realized fully at that time the impact that Vietnam was having on the career service. My guess is that he looked on the career service as being a bunch of people with the same kind of response that he himself would make: this is the policy and therefore we will support it. And I'm not sure he fully recognized that people in the Foreign Service were going to start responding the way some of the students were responding. That they were going to have personal conflicts over the Vietnam thing and it was going to change their entire attitude toward the service and toward government.

RICHARD RUSK: And that in fact did happen.

STEIGMAN: Which in fact did happen. And it was in the late sixties that you got the young Turk movement, and AFSA, the Foreign Service Association; you got all the sudden spate of calls to reform the Foreign Service which came just about the time your father was leaving office. But it was all brewing during those years, and I'm not sure that--I don't claim that I was aware of it either. Working his hours, I'm not sure any of us saw anything beyond, maybe, the problems on his desk. But it was all brewing. Whether anybody was bringing it to his attention, I don't know. Whether he should have spotted it on his own, I'm not sure. But anyway, it did not happen.

RICHARD RUSK: Good point.

STEIGMAN: Whether that would have made a difference in the ultimate evolution or not, I'm not sure. I have further anecdotes which don't relate to Vietnam or any of the other topics really. One, in terms of one thing I learned from your father, he always said that inaction can be a valid policy as long as you think about it first and decide that inaction is the right course. To me the classic illustration was the fact that there were people in the Department who were pushing for diplomatic relations with Outer Mongolia and sent up an action memo to your father asking him to approve exploration of opening diplomatic relations with Mongolia. And he put the memo in

his Hold box. And, in fact, I think he may have done it twice. In the course of the time that I was with him the memo always sat in his Hold box. He didn't think the time was right.

RICHARD RUSK: Did he tell the people who had written the memo that he was putting it on hold? Or is that his way of responding to that memo?

STEIGMAN: The answer always--I'm not sure whether Bill [William Putnam] Bundy talked to him about it directly afterward. But whenever we got a question, the answer was, "The memo is on the Secretary's desk and he's considering it." "Do you have any idea when he'll decide?" "No, I really couldn't predict." But he had told us that he was just going to hold it. We knew that he was essentially deferring action by holding it up there.

RICHARD RUSK: He would do that rather than saying to Bill Bundy or whoever else was involved, "No, this isn't a good idea. We're going to have to wait on that."

STEIGMAN: He may have told that to Bill Bundy informally. I don't know. But as far as the people down at the desk level who were very interested in this, and eager, and thought they had a great thing going, it simply had gotten to the Secretary and disappeared. It was pending a decision by the Secretary. I think his sense was that in that way there wasn't a thing they could do really, because they had taken their action and put it to him. If he turned it down they might go and try to go around him or do something else, try to get his decision reversed, or whatever. But as long as it was in his hands for a decision, they couldn't stir any interest anywhere else. For whatever reason, he just sat on the memo. And for the two years I was there he always had a memo in his hold box recommending diplomatic relations with Outer Mongolia.

RICHARD RUSK: Interesting. That's interesting.

STEIGMAN: Minor anecdote. Very often when we went overseas we'd stay with the ambassador; whoever it was would put him up. One time he refused to stay with the ambassador and insisted on staying in a hotel. It was in Brussels for the NATO meeting. They all stayed at the Westbury and he did too. The official grounds was that it was more convenient for him to stay with the delegation. But the private ground, which he said, was he really didn't want to stay with Ridgeway [B.] Knight. (laughter) (unintelligible)

RICHARD RUSK: There would have to be a follow-up on that for me to use that. But go ahead. Keep on rolling.

STEIGMAN: Anyway, that's just a little interesting one: the human side of the man. The Knights drove him crazy. He didn't want to stay with them. Lyndon Johnson and his concern about leaks used to keep--we in the office used to--you know, all his phone calls were monitored when he was there--whoever was on the front desk would listen in. We had a monitor button and would make summary notes in the conversation.

RICHARD RUSK: In his talks with the President.

STEIGMAN: Including his talks with the President, in 1967 at least. At some point while I was there, either the President had found out about this, or whatever, or there was some concern about something leaking. I don't know what specifically triggered it. But he gave instructions that no one was to listen in on or record his calls to the President.

RICHARD RUSK: That would have been while you were there?

STEIGMAN: While I was there. It was during that period. It was during the '67-'68 period.

RICHARD RUSK: Huh! Because he told us that he found this out soon after taking office back during the Kennedy years and that he discontinued that practice of having someone monitor the call and taking notes of his presidential conversations at least.

STEIGMAN: Well, I've got news for him. They were monitored. They were still being monitored when I came in '66, or sometime while I was there that he instructed us to stop listening to presidential calls and stop making a record of them.

RICHARD RUSK: Wow! That's interesting.

STEIGMAN: The first part of that period that I was there we had written notes on presidential calls.

RICHARD RUSK: Fourth story.

STEIGMAN: No, actually that was the two together about leaks and phone calls. I just put that together.

RICHARD RUSK: Your memories of traveling with my dad and playing bridge?

STEIGMAN: Hour after hour after hour.

RICHARD RUSK: Well, he must have enjoyed his trips then?

STEIGMAN: Oh God, yes. There was one trip where--where the hell were we coming back from? I guess we were coming back from Honolulu. We started playing bridge before the wheels were up and we didn't put the cards away until the wheels were down at Andrews. It was a non-stop flight. I mean, dinner was served while we played bridge. You had to be a dummy to eat dinner.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be durned. I'll be durned. Who would be his bridge partners? Whoever was on the plane?

STEIGMAN: Whoever was on the plane. Usually George Mishtad used to come along. He was a medical director. And he was a regular. Then your dad and me, and whoever else would could round up for a fourth. And we'd just play non-stop. You dad's a good bridge player--tends to overbid.

RICHARD RUSK: It must have come with the office!

STEIGMAN: It must have come with the office. He tended to over--I remember one time, I was playing bridge as his partner, he bid us into a slam. He turned out to be right. But it was funny. He said, "You make this one, you can have Paris for your next assignment." (laughter) And we made it.

RICHARD RUSK: Yeah. And did you get Paris as your next assignment?

STEIGMAN: It was a year later. He wasn't there anymore and it was an accident, but it turned out that way.

RICHARD RUSK: I really want to thank you for this interview.

STEIGMAN: I hope some of it helps you. I'm sure a lot of it repeats what you've heard elsewhere. But it's a couple of more pieces to put in the jigsaw puzzle.

END OF SIDE 2

