

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection  
Rusk TT: Part 2 of 2  
Dean Rusk interviewed by Richard Rusk  
circa 1985

The complete interview also includes Rusk SS: Part 1.

RICHARD RUSK: [Did you get involved with] --increased funding for the Law School or the University? Certainly there has increased public support for both of those institutions.

DEAN RUSK: Well, on occasion I have spoken to what are obviously fund-raising affairs such as the annual dinners of the joint Tech-Georgia fund, and I have spoken to the Art Museum here at Georgia, and something else. But generally speaking I have taken the view that when I visit around the state that I should let any kind of good will or that sort of thing be an incidental by-product of my coming and being there and talking, rather than making a direct appeal for funds. There is one little episode that I hope you will not put into any book: I get calls almost every week from some lawyer somewhere, and some of them in small towns have got an international problem and need some advice as to how to get started on it. I have done a lot on that although I do not practice law and take no fees for it. We had a man over in a small town of Elberton, near the border of Georgia and South Carolina, who owned a cotton mill in East Pakistan. And he had built that cotton mill with an insurance guarantee under our AID [Agency for International Development] program. Well, then came the fighting between East and West Pakistan. East Pakistan split itself off and became Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh authorities in fact nationalized foreign investment there, and our insurance people in Washington would not pay the insurance on this claim for all sorts of reasons. And there is also a question as to whether the investment guarantee treaty between us and Pakistan any longer applied to Bangladesh because it had become an independent country. So I helped the fellow over there get that straightened away successfully.

RICHARD RUSK: You remember the outcome of that? My guess is that he would not have any recourse for insurance purposes in a situation like that.

DEAN RUSK: Well, we took the view that he did, and it turned out that he did. He had recourse. But, then the gentleman died and left something like a half a million dollars to the Law School. That is part of the so-called Dean and Virginia Rusk fund here. Well that is one of those things where a little loaf you set sail on the waters comes home. You see, I have tried since coming to Georgia not to have anybody think that I am a member of the Bar and practice law. And when people come in to consult with me about a problem I usually remind them that I am not offering them legal advice, that I am not practicing law.

RICHARD RUSK: When LBJ made his offer to appoint you to the Supreme Court, was he serious in view of the fact that you never did pick up a law degree? Is there any way that you could have possibly accepted?

DEAN RUSK: You have to be very careful how you handle this if you mention this at all: He was serious at the time, but I would not let him do it. He told me at that time that he had talked about this with Senator [Richard Brevard] Russell of Georgia and that Senator Russell had told him that I would be readily confirmed in the Senate, even though I was not technically a member of the Bar and had had no judicial experience, no practice of law. See, the Constitution does not require that members of the Supreme Court be lawyers.

RICHARD RUSK: Have they all been lawyers?

DEAN RUSK: But they have all been lawyers, and I was not about to be the victim of the first experiment, the test case on that point. But anyhow, had I permitted him to go ahead with it nothing would have come of it because my name would have gone out about the time he put up Abe Fortas' name to be Chief Justice. And that was at the end of the Johnson administration, and the Senate was not about to--then Abe Fortas got into some problems with his personal finances. So that my name would have failed simply because the Senate wanted to wait for the new administration. So nothing would have come of that anyway. I just would not let LBJ do it.

[break in recording]

DEAN RUSK: During the early Kennedy years the word vigor was a very favorite word around town and everybody was supposed to pretend to have a lot of it. Bobby [Robert Francis] Kennedy, then the Attorney General, called me one day and asked me to join a fifty-mile Cabinet hike. And I said, "Now Bobby, when you were still wearing diapers I was a Captain of Infantry and I have done all of my hiking. And anyway if I had taken a company in the Army out for a fifty-mile hike without adequate preparation I would have been court-martialed. So just go away." He did not like it very much, but I would have nothing to do with that kind of nonsense.

RICHARD RUSK: What was the Ditchley Foundation Conference on the meaning and effect of detente? You went to England for that?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, the Ditchley Foundation is a modest size foundation that has a big country house called Ditchley House where they have a series of conferences. And they asked me to come over there for a conference, and they had about seventy people there. It was quite an interesting experience. We talked about what detente meant, or did not mean. You see, in the early seventies President [Richard Milhous] Nixon and Henry [Alfred] Kissinger use to talk about detente all the time to the point where it tended to create a good many illusions in the sense of euphoria in the West or among the American people. During most of that period the Russians did not use that word themselves, they used 'peaceful coexistence.' And if you look into what they say to each other about the meaning of peaceful coexistence it means a continuation of the struggle by all means short of war, which is not quite a synonym for what we mean by using the word detente. Well, then the Russians discovered that there was a political plus in this word from their point of view and so finally they began to use it. So we had this meeting at Ditchley to look into this notion of detente to see what it meant and what it did not mean. A pretty interesting session.

RICHARD RUSK: You have chaired and served on quite a few groups down here. I do not have

a list with me, the big folder that I have is at home right now. What about the [Frank Forrester] Church Committee hearings back in 1970, congressional testimony in Washington?

DEAN RUSK: Yes, I first learned about those CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] plots to assassinate [Fidel Ruz] Castro from the Church Committee after I left office. I found this appalling because I was by law a statutory member of the National Security Council to which the CIA, by law, was directed to report. And I did not know about these things. And if this had come to my attention I would have put my foot down on it very strongly because there is just no future in political assassinations. To begin with, those who succeed are probably no better than the man they have gotten rid of. But if the governments of the world get into the business of political assassination the very structure of international life takes on a wholly new cast, and peaceful or civilized international life just becomes almost impossible. So I was very upset about that. But then I went up later and testified before a Senate Sub-committee and a House Sub-committee on some foreign trade issues they were in the process of reenacting an export administration act, and I became very much concerned about the limitations we impose on ourselves in competing for foreign markets. This ramified into tax policy. There was a period there, it has been modified some since. But there was a period there when we required Americans working abroad to include in their report for income tax purposes all of the support activity or mechanisms that we use to make it possible for them to work abroad, such as any housing they might get, any educational allowances, any home leave provisions and things of that sort. Then it became involved in antitrust. Corporations in places like Germany, Britain, France, Japan can work together in searching for foreign trade markets in ways which would cause our own people to be socked with antitrust prosecution.

RICHARD RUSK: You had the Dean Rusk Center prepare some material on the end product of our restrictions on foreign trade?

DEAN RUSK: That's right. And these self-imposed limits applied to what some people call sensitive payments: the idea of, what do you call "bribing" various people abroad, to facilitate export markets. Well, I do not pretend to defend bribery, but I have never seen satisfactory criteria which set forth clearly the difference between a bribe and a commission. And if our competitors, principal Western competitors, go ahead with that sort of thing then we start losing foreign markets. I think at least a businessman ought to know with precision what it is he can and cannot do. And then it applied to such things as how we handled the granting of export licenses. See there is a general license for most things, but in a good many certain sensitive areas you have to have specific export licenses for certain kinds of goods. The trouble is that the procedures that we have going through our own government were so complicated and so long-drawn-out that by the time a businessman knew whether or not he was going to get a license somebody else had run off with the business.

RICHARD RUSK: Did the initiative for your testimony on this issue come from Congress, or did it come from Georgia business concern?

DEAN RUSK: I had gotten into it to some extent as chairman of the International Council of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and working with businessmen here about export markets and things of that sort.

RICHARD RUSK: Was there follow-through on this testimony as far as Washington was concerned? Did Congress enact--

DEAN RUSK: Well, they made some changes, but they still have not done all that they might do in trying to figure out how we can get the benefit of antitrust policy domestically here in the United States and still make it possible for companies to work together to compete hard for foreign markets. That ought not to be beyond the realm of imagination. Now they have generated something called trading companies where there can be a combination to form a trading company to engage in export-import activities and that has helped a little. But beyond, the businessman, whatever the policy is going to be, needs to know with precision what it is he can or cannot do because he does not want to do things that would promote exports and then find himself in prison. There is some point--if we could have really effective ways of storing information in a way that it could be quickly recalled if needed for policy questions. When a friend, Colonel [Charles Hartwell] Tic Bonesteel [III], and I were asked to propose a specific line in Korea south of which we would accept the surrender of Japanese forces, the Army was very dead set against going on to the mainland at all, but we looked at the map. We had agreed for a toehold on the Korean peninsula. And he and I looked at a map and thought that it would be a good idea if Seoul, the capitol, were in our zone. We looked north of Seoul and there was no clearly distinguishing geographic feature and so we--but there was a 38th parallel. We suggested that. None of us who were working on that problem at that time, either the Armed Forces or the State Department, knew that at the turn of the century the Russians and the Japanese had been negotiating with each other for a division of respective influence in Korea along the 38th parallel. Had we known that, we would have selected any other dividing line, because the selection of the 38th parallel undoubtedly confirmed to the Russians that we were fully accepting their sphere of influence in North Korea, and any further talk about such things as unification of Korea they just looked upon as puffery.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you and Tic Bonesteel primarily responsible for the selection of the 38th parallel?

DEAN RUSK: Yes. It came about because at the end of the war there was a sharp difference of opinion between the State Department and the Army. The State Department wanted American forces to accept a surrender of Japanese forces on the mainland and as far north as possible, including certain key positions in Manchuria. But the Army knew that with V-J [Victory in Japan] day our armed forces were going to shrink very fast and they did not want to put any American forces onto the mainland where they could not take care of themselves if there was any trouble either with the Japanese or with the Russians.

RICHARD RUSK: The actual selection of this line was more or less delegated to you and Bonesteel?

DEAN RUSK: Well, this issue between the State Department and the Army was compromised by an agreement that at least we would ask for ourselves a tip of the Korean Peninsula: a piece of the Korean Peninsula. From a strategic point of view it looked like a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan and I thought it would be useful if we were there. So Bonesteel and I were asked to

make that agreement specific by indicating a specific line that we could put to the Russians and the other governments to get an agreement on. Now if--think what an enormous mass effort it would have required for somebody along the way to have put into a computer this bit about the 38th parallel. If you included all the infinite possibilities of things that just might be needed later. It would require an enormous effort of storage, coding, things like that.

RICHARD RUSK: What about other topics you have testified on in Congress? I know you testified about Star Wars recently. What would be the major topics of concern that you were called upon to bear witness to?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I think the Church Committee and the trade issues and the--I have resisted going to Washington to testify. I have been invited many times but you see, there has been a proliferation of committees and subcommittees of the Congress and I could have--There have been years where I could have spent almost all of my time up in Washington testifying before various subcommittees on various things. And so I just declined to do it on the basis of age, health, and things like that. Almost always the subcommittee chairman will subpoena me and ask me to come up there. I think I would have been subpoenaed by the Church Committee if I had not come voluntarily.

RICHARD RUSK: That is in the Church Committee hearings in 1970.

DEAN RUSK: I think their final report in their hearings were [sic] reasonably complete. There were certain questions that were left dangling. For example: Did Bobby Kennedy have a direct line? Did he have a direct relationship to the CIA where he would ask or urge them to do certain things without the knowledge of the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense, or perhaps even the President? If he did that, then it would be natural for people in the CIA to suppose that since he was the President's brother, that the President must obviously know about it and approved what Bobby was doing. But that is not my view at all. I do not believe that because Bobby urged something, that was necessarily JFK [John Fitzgerald Kennedy] who was doing it.

RICHARD RUSK: Was this CIA policy as far as the assassination plots on Castro, or would these be the same types of position papers and options that the Department of State and the government would have in their files on any given issue or policy and not necessarily the serious--

DEAN RUSK: I think on the assassination, the Castro thing, there would have been almost no papers written on the subject. It would have been handled orally. That sort of thing would not have been put on paper.

RICHARD RUSK: Did that type of thing continue with the Johnson administration?

DEAN RUSK: No. Well, who knows if there was not the closest possible supervision by the National Security Council of the activities of the CIA? I came out of that whole experience convinced that there must be the closest supervision of the CIA by the members of the National Security Council. Now, for example--You see, there was a time during the fifties when the director of the CIA, Allen [Welsh] Dulles, was the brother of the Secretary of State, [John]



Foster Dulles. And during that period some rather bad habits developed. For example, although I was a member of the National Security Council, I never saw a CIA budget. This would be prepared at CIA and taken over and cleared with a couple of specially cleared people in the Bureau of the Budget, whisked by the President's nose, and put into the hands of Senator Russell in the Congress; and he would lose it in the Defense budget.

RICHARD RUSK: The total bill for CIA was never presented openly?

DEAN RUSK: TO the National Security Council or to the public. It was always handled on a secret basis and they would lose it in the Defense budget. It was just understood in the Congress that you did not ask Senator Russell for any detailed information about what this particular item or items were. I never saw a manning table of CIA. I did not know that they had a little unit there that was working on internal security questions, despite the clear understanding supposed to exist between CIA and the FBI, that the FBI would handle internal security and the CIA would stay out of that. It was just a--we just mustn't have that. There should be close supervision in the executive branch, as well as by at least one Joint Committee of Congress, or as they have it now, an Intelligence Committee in each House of Congress, because we cannot let CIA run wild and become a government within a government.

RICHARD RUSK: Are you satisfied with the steps that were taken in the aftermath of the Church hearings?

DEAN RUSK: More or less. As a matter of fact--

RICHARD RUSK: There has been some comment that we overreacted to that.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I think that there is a possibility for a time there we over reacted. See, about ninety percent of the work of CIA is gathering information and about eighty-five percent of that information gathered is in the public domain. It is just a blizzard of information falling on the world. And unless you put a lot of effort and manpower into taking a look at it, a lot of things you would miss. Then there is a fair amount of secret intelligence, as you may want to call it, a few agents, although we tend to move more and more toward technical means for getting information rather than agents. But then, there is a small part of CIA which might be called political operations: the cloak and dagger kind of thing. Well, I think we ought to have, we ought to maintain that capability because there may be situations where that kind of effort is the alternative to war. But we have to use it with the greatest discretion, and only in the rarest circumstances. So I think that reforms were needed, and I think perhaps we have come around to a point where there is a fairly good balance at the present time. But I cannot imagine CIA operations, of a political nature, that would be unknown to the Secretary of State. That would be outrageous! At one time during that period of reaction against CIA, following the Church Committee hearings, eight different committees of Congress asserted the right to supervise CIA. Now there is no way the CIA can get its job done if it has to report to eight different committees of Congress, and the Congress itself has a problem as to how it wants to deal with highly classified, discreet information without going public with a lot of this stuff. Now there is one excellent example of the capacity of Congress to do that if they want to do it: for years we had a Joint Committee on Atomic Energy in the Congress, membership from both the Senate and the

House. They had special clearances; they had specially cleared staff; they had specially guarded quarters down in the Capitol; and they received some of the most sensitive secrets in the government. And I cannot remember a single incidence where there was any kind of indiscretion out of that Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. But you see, in the Constitution, if a Congressman or Senator gets up and says anything that he wants to say on the floor of the Senate or in committee, there is a constitutional immunity given him that could not be questioned in any other place. In other words, he cannot be tried; he can only be expelled from Congress. And it is most unlikely that the Congress would expel one of its members over that kind of an issue. So it is not an easy problem.

RICHARD RUSK: You have testified before a great number of these congressional committees, both as Secretary of State and as a private citizen. In your opinion, how seriously did the congressmen themselves take these hearings? Do they perform a useful purpose? What is your feeling about all of that?

DEAN RUSK: Well, we have multiplied subcommittees in the Congress. And that is a result of, among other things, an enormous multiplication of congressional staff people. There are now more than twenty thousand congressional staff. And each one of these staff people has to find a way to justify his job; and a way to do that is to tinker with something. So the oversight role of Congress has almost gone crazy in recent years. Most of that oversight comes from staff people, not from individual senators and congressmen. But, from the point of view of the Secretary of State it is particularly--

RICHARD RUSK: Go back to that. The emphasis and the initiative for a lot of these hearings and this oversight function is from staff and not from the public need to know.

DEAN RUSK: A fair amount of it is because these staff people would go to their senators or congressmen and say, "We really need to open up this question. We would get some good publicity out of it and it might have a bearing on the legislation on the subject. Most of these hearings are always of interest to somebody, some group, some interest, some point of view, but it takes an enormous amount of time and a lot of money to conduct such hearings. You see, every committee of the Congress, almost literally every committee, becomes involved in issues that affect our foreign relations. It is not just the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees, it is the Armed Services Committees; it is the Appropriations Committee; it is the committees dealing with trade; it is the committees dealing with the District of Columbia, the national capitol, and reception and care of the Diplomatic Corp; all sorts of things. So there is no single committee in the Senate or House which has any general responsibility for our foreign relations. I have proposed fairly recently, in my testimony two weeks ago before a Senate committee, that it be understood in the Senate and the House that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee are invited to take up before themselves any bill that is pending in before any other committee and at least report on it or comment on it from the point of view of foreign policy as a whole. There is not that overall responsibility, and so it makes it that much more difficult to coordinate the town of Washington on foreign policy questions. Now, there was a time when half a dozen key leaders could run the Congress, when you could pull these things together with that handful of leaders. But those days are gone. What Lyndon Johnson used to call the whales of the Congress are no longer there and so there's a breakup of

responsibility in the Congress. Distribution of responsibility all over the place which makes it that much more difficult to draw people together on a consensus of common policy.

RICHARD RUSK: How much of your time as Secretary of State was spent toward preparing yourself for Congressional testimony or actually testifying?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I spent an enormous amount of time. You might want to do a little counting when you see my appointment books at the LBJ Library. But, I attended meetings of committees and subcommittees of the Congress hundreds of times and--

RICHARD RUSK: Ten percent of your total work load there? Twenty percent?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, I would think--See, every time you go--I went before them hundreds of times on almost every question you could imagine. And every time you go, you have to understand in advance that there is no rule of relevance in the Senate or the House, and so you can be asked a question on any subject whatever from any member of the Congress that happens to be there at that meeting. And so, you usually have to put in a couple of days of preparation for each appearance you make. So it takes an enormous amount of time. Henry [Alfred] Kissinger, while he was Secretary of State, once gave me a ring on the phone [saying that] he had taken a look at the amount of time spent by Secretaries of State with the Congress and that I turned out to be the champion, that I'd spent more time with the Congress than anybody else.

RICHARD RUSK: That was my next question.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. And I have no doubt it was true, because I--And I didn't particularly resent the time that that took, because that's a part of the--That's the way in which you apply the oil that keeps the wheels of government turning over. The late Chief Justice Earl Warren visited our law school shortly before his death. While he was here, he commented to a small group discussion that if each branch of the Federal government were to pursue its own Constitutional powers to the end of the trail, our system simply could not function. It would freeze up like an engine without oil. Impasse is the overhanging threat to our Constitutional system. And so it takes an enormous amount of time to help our system function and to avoid those impasses which can make things very difficult. The other side of that same coin though is that our Constitutional system forces us to work toward a consensus. I think that's a very wholesome demand in our Constitutional system. If the separation of powers is a very important concept to us, as it is, the other side of that same coin is the Constitutional necessity for comity between the three branches of government, or Constitutional cooperation. When the President and the Congress are both acting together, we are in our strongest position on policy matters, but when they split then we have great difficulty. Senators and Congressmen who understand very deeply that the powers given to the Congress are given to the Congress as a corporate body, and not to individuals or individual committee chairmen and people like that. And therefore, they understand that at the end of the day the Congress has to decide. I'm thinking of Senators like Arthur [Hendrick] Vandenberg during the Truman years. I'm thinking of Lyndon Johnson when he was Senate Majority Leader, and people like Richard Russell of Georgia, Everett [McKinley] Dirksen of Illinois. You get people of that sort. But where there is any lack of that understanding, then things could become very difficult, very fast.



RICHARD RUSK: Pop, how about significant, meaningful contacts with Secretaries of State and American Presidents since leaving office in 1969? You might read your comments about your brief conference with Jimmy [James Earl] Carter into the record there on the eve of his Inauguration.

DEAN RUSK: Well, I served on the advisory committee for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency during the Nixon years. We met with him a couple of times, I remember. Typically, a former Secretary would not meet very often with the President. Certainly not, usually not, alone. During Jimmy Carter's--I had seen a great deal of Jimmy Carter when he was Governor. I used to go over there to the mansion and might have dinner; but then we'd go out on the back porch and take off our shoes, stick our feet up on the horse railing, and just chew the fat about foreign policy matters. This was long before he announced he was running for President.

RICHARD RUSK: Just the Governor's Mansion?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. I spent a lot of time with, good deal of time with Jimmy Carter on that sort of thing. But, after he became President, I saw very little of him. I did spend most of the day with him down at Plains when he was President-elect to go over many of the things that are involved in being a President. I had about twenty-five or thirty items on my little checklist, and he had fifteen to twenty items on his. And we just went over a lot of the things that just don't appear really on the surface as to what is involved in being President. I don't think I still have that checklist. I may have it around the office. If so, I'll give you a look at it. But, there's a big difference between being a candidate in a campaign and organizing an administration and running the executive branch of the government. And that transition from campaigning to being President is not as simple nor easy, and it takes most of them quite a few bumpy months to discover how different those two things are. For example, even personal staff: the key people who are in your political campaign to help you get elected are not necessarily the kind of people who can do the best job for you in running the government. And yet, those staff people during a campaign become attached to the President and he feels he relied on them pretty heavily. And it's natural for them to bring a good many of those people right into the administration with him, even though many of them have had no experience whatever in Washington or in foreign policy or in that sort of thing. So, the transition is not easy. The [White] Burkett Miller Center [of Public Affairs] at the University of Virginia has put together an informal commission to study this question of Presidential transitions, and I'm a member of that commission. They'll be coming out with a report one of these days.

RICHARD RUSK: So you had some contacts with Richard Nixon over disarmament. Any at all about Vietnam or what to do on that?

DEAN RUSK: No, no, no.

RICHARD RUSK: You had some contact with Jimmy Carter, prior to his inauguration?

DEAN RUSK: And then after he was President he called different groups of people up to the White House to get a briefing on the Panama Canal treaties. And I went up with a group of

Georgians for that briefing. I may have seen him on two or three other occasions. I may have written him an occasional note, but I did not--you see, two things I think that from my point of view--One is the tradition that former Presidents and former Secretaries of State try not to say and do things which make life more difficult for their successors. This is partly because, I suppose, of a certain compassion for those who are actually holding the job. But a part of it is that we recognize that we're all in this canoe together and we're going to get through these turbulent times together or go down together, and there's not too much point in gratuitously throwing rocks at those who are wielding the paddle. Then, there's my own personal view that it was not up to me to pick up the phone and volunteer advice. I'm not looking over the shoulder of my successors. Now, they know where I live, they know my telephone number. If they want to call me, they can. But I don't--I very, very rarely have picked up the phone and offered them advice. Now, I've been called up there occasionally. Henry Kissinger called me up there a number of times to talk to him about things. And I was one of the people who could talk to him like a Dutch uncle: I didn't want anything from him; he couldn't do anything to me. And so I was very frank with him and he seemed to appreciate it. And occasionally he would send a government plane down to pick me up here in Athens and take me up there.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be durned. Do you remember what you talked about?

DEAN RUSK: Oh, usually a wide range of policy issues and concentrated more or less on what seemed to be on at the moment. But, when each of my successors took office, I called each one of them and wished them luck, wished them success. I did so honestly, because I felt that no one can have a stake in the failure of a President or Secretary of State in foreign policy because we're all involved in this. It's our necks as well as theirs. Now George [Pratt] Shultz has done something which I think was a very intelligent thing to do. He has a staff officer on his own personal staff there who is available to the former Secretaries of State ready to arrange any briefings that any of us might want on anything that comes up.

RICHARD RUSK: On the initiative of you fellows.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. Or occasionally they will be in touch with us to offer us a briefing or to send us materials on some pending problem. But that usually is on questions on which they need Congressional action. They might want to get some help from some of us about the Congressional action.

RICHARD RUSK: Any significant contacts with Gerald [Rudolph] Ford [Jr.], Ronald [Wilson] Reagan, Jimmy Carter?

DEAN RUSK: I've been invited by the Reagan administration up to two or three ceremonial functions up there, dinners for visiting dignitaries, and things like that. I've just taken the view that there's no point for me, at my age and state of health, to go trucking up to Washington and back for ceremonial purposes. If there's something serious on which they might want me to help them with, I'm willing to do that, but not for ceremonial matters.

RICHARD RUSK: Of course you're part of that group of senior statesmen who are, who Johnson called the old wise men. And they at several points had a certain influence on Lyndon

Johnson, particularly on the war in Vietnam. My guess is that you fellows who've been there and are now out of office and aren't under those pressures, with nothing at stake, can have a great deal of influence upon people in government if they choose to include you in.

DEAN RUSK: It's possible. But, on the other hand, the fact that we do not carry responsibility means that we have a free ride, and one has to discount our advice because we don't carry the responsibility. If things go wrong, it's not our baby. And it was that factor that caused Dean [Gooderham] Acheson to be rather scornful of outside advisors and advisory committees when he was Secretary of State. He once said, "They're just another bunch of sons-of-bitches from out of town." They weren't carrying any responsibility. But, I think very often I felt some of these advisory committees were pretty useful because once in a while someone might come up with a question that might otherwise have been overlooked, some point or some question. And you're constantly trying to be sure that you are, in fact, taking into account all the elements that ought to be taken into account. But, those advisory committees can't share responsibility. There's no way.

RICHARD RUSK: Neither Richard Nixon or Henry Kissinger asked your advice on the Vietnam conflict during that period when we still were involved?

DEAN RUSK: No. They had a full record of the things we did and were trying to do. And a lot of the people who had been involved with Vietnam while I was there remained in the government and were available to them, so they didn't need us on that. On one occasion Mr. Reagan invited the former Secretaries to come to Washington to meet with him on a particular matter. I forget now what the issue was, but it turned out that he wanted to see us one hour before he was to give a television speech on that subject. It was obvious that we were.

RICHARD RUSK: These are the ex-Secretaries of State?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah. It was obvious to us that we were just to be a backdrop for a speech he was going to make which had already been written and for which air time had already been reserved. There was no way that any advice of ours would be asked for, and so we didn't go. Not enough of us agreed to go so--

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember the issue?

DEAN RUSK: No, I forget the issue.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you remember when it happened?

DEAN RUSK: No, maybe it will come out somewhere along the way.

RICHARD RUSK: And did these fellows offer to bring you into the administration, presuming you might have been available?

DEAN RUSK: I was never willing to take on any government jobs after I left the office of Secretary of State. Your mom and I were getting on in years, and we'd had a lot of it. We were tired of that kind of thing, and the sheer exhilaration of being private citizens again, we just

didn't want to surrender that. So, we've not been willing to take on anything more than, say, that advisory committee for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

RICHARD RUSK: Let the younger generations have their shot at it, huh?

DEAN RUSK: That's right. Let the younger people come in there and make their own mistakes, not just copy mine.

RICHARD RUSK: Pop, you've been the recipient of a number of awards and distinctions since leaving office. Do you care to just specify what they've been and identify them?

DEAN RUSK: Well, you'd have to ask Ann [S.] Dunn to help you on that. I did receive a decoration from the German government and an honorary Knight Commander of the British Empire.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you show up in Germany for that?

DEAN RUSK: No.

RICHARD RUSK: They sent it to you.

DEAN RUSK: It was handled at the Embassy in Washington.

RICHARD RUSK: I see.

DEAN RUSK: And I was given an honorary knighthood by the British Government by Her Majesty. That was sentimentally a very nice thing. I enjoyed that.

RICHARD RUSK: So you're a Sir Dean Rusk? Or a Lord?

DEAN RUSK: I would be if I were a British subject, I'd be a Sir. But since it's honorary, they don't call me Sir.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you receive that in England?

DEAN RUSK: No, that was at the British Embassy in Washington.

RICHARD RUSK: I see.

END OF SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

DEAN RUSK: Now you asked the question. I wouldn't volunteer this, but I received, oh, around thirty honorary degrees over the years, beginning while I was Secretary of State.

RICHARD RUSK: Care to slough off any on me?

DEAN RUSK: Certain ones of them I would have to chuckle about because I--For example, I received an honorary degree from Harvard in the early sixties. If they'd waited three or four years, I thought people would have burned the place down before they would give me an honorary degree. And I was very pleased to be given an honorary degree by Oxford that provides a scarlet robe, funny hat; and I sort of enjoyed it.

RICHARD RUSK: And the sword that's mounted on a plaque in this house? That came with your knighthood?

DEAN RUSK: No the sword--

RICHARD RUSK: No, that's from West Point.

DEAN RUSK: The sword came from the [Sylvanus] Thayer Award at West Point.

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, I see.

DEAN RUSK: I went up there and they presented the award and--

RICHARD RUSK: Andy's [Andrew Dean Rusk] had his eye on that one.

DEAN RUSK: They rolled out a regimental parade for me: all the cadets. And I made a speech to them in the mess hall. And there've been a good many things like that, but I haven't kept a careful record of them.

RICHARD RUSK: And the Cadillac?

DEAN RUSK: Well, that was a--After I'd served for a number of years as the Chairman of the International Section of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, a good many of the businessmen and Governor [George Dekle] Busbee threw an appreciation dinner for your mom and me in Atlanta. Completely to our surprise, at the end of the dinner, they presented us with this Cadillac. It just floored us, because it's a beautiful little car.

RICHARD RUSK: It was a dinner and a gathering called in your honor?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: For no other purpose?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, it was an appreciation dinner in one of the big hotels there: about six or seven hundred people there.



RICHARD RUSK: I'll be durned.

DEAN RUSK: Of course, your mom and I thoroughly enjoyed a party given by Secretary George Shultz in cooperation with Georgetown University School of Foreign Service on the occasion of my seventy-fifth birthday. That was in Washington, on the eighth floor of the State Department. The only thing that mom and I have missed about Washington has been the chance to see many of our friends more often than we have been able to. And so many of them turned out on that occasion. The rest of Washington we don't miss at all: glad not to be involved with it. But we did see a gratifying number of old friends and colleagues and their wives. Oh, you were there.

RICHARD RUSK: Sure, I was there.

DEAN RUSK: It was a pretty good party.

RICHARD RUSK: Oh, it was a good time.

DEAN RUSK: There's one kind of interview that I've refused to--of course, some of the leading newspapers and the wire services like AP [Associated Press] and UPI [United Press International] prepare obituaries on people ahead of time so they can move quickly when those people die. Matter of fact, a friendly newspaper editor, a few years ago, sent me a copy of my own obituary which had been prepared by the Associated Press, and pre-positioned with its member newspapers. And your mom and I had a pleasant evening going over my own obituary.

RICHARD RUSK: The gall!

DEAN RUSK: But what I've not done is that some of the television people, including European television people, have tried to get me on tape to take part in an obituary of friends of mine who are still living. And that just seemed to me just a little too ghoulish for me to handle, and so I refused to do that.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be durned. What about the Rusk Roast? I was roasted in Nome prior to leaving for Georgia, and I wouldn't necessarily consider that an honor.

DEAN RUSK: They put on a roast Dean Rusk dinner here to raise money for the Journalism fraternity. And a good many people turned out to participate, including my brother Parks.

RICHARD RUSK: Parks was pretty proud of his input into the affair.

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, he did a good job that evening, and it was good fun, and they had a good turnout party.

RICHARD RUSK: That was here in Athens?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah.

RICHARD RUSK: Where?

DEAN RUSK: I think at the Country Club. But, in those roasts you get tweaked pretty hard by people, 'cause that's the purpose of those things. It's a fun evening.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you have a tape of the other roast?

DEAN RUSK: I don't think I have a tape of it; I may have. But my brother, Parks, took part in it, enjoyed it, and his remarks were greatly appreciated.

RICHARD RUSK: The Rusk Center, itself, was named after you?

DEAN RUSK: Well, this, it was not of my own invention. My colleagues came up with that idea: the dean of the faculty of the Law School. We dedicated that center in what was really quite a touching experience here in Washington [sic]. Lady Bird Johnson was here; I think Henry Kissinger was here. There were others: George Ball was here. And that was quite an affair. But that kind of thing I could do without on a purely personal basis. I don't need or look for that kind of plaudit along the way. But, nevertheless, when it happens, it's pleasant, particularly to see some of your old friends and colleagues.

RICHARD RUSK: And the Dean Rusk Elementary School in Atlanta?

DEAN RUSK: Yeah, they did that.

RICHARD RUSK: That did have a certain amount of meaning for you, if I remember.

DEAN RUSK: I suggested to them they ought to wait 'til I'm dead, because while I'm alive I still have a chance to fall on my face and cause them to regret it. But they went ahead. And I was rather touched by it, because the Dean Rusk Elementary School is right there within three or four blocks of where I lived as a boy in the West End in Atlanta. Indeed it was a kind of a substitute for the old Lee Street School which I had attended when I went to school, which has been torn down. And I enjoyed going. I try to get over there every year or two and visit with the children and show an interest in the school and that sort of thing. Then a group in Atlanta, including the Atlanta Gas Light Company, gave me what they call the Shining Light Award about two years ago. And in this case it involved putting up one of the old-fashioned gas lamps that you used to use to light streets. So there's this post out there with a perpetual flame in it fueled by the Atlanta Gas Light Company out at the Dean Rusk Elementary School with a little plaque on it. And that was a very pleasant occasion. I was particularly pleased when after it was over so many of these children, most of whom were black, gathered around to get autographs, making it clear that they were glad that I was there. And they provided the music for the occasion. It was really good fun.

RICHARD RUSK: It was on that occasion that a little boy gave you the can of Vienna sausages?

DEAN RUSK: Oh yeah, and while they were asking for autographs, one little boy came up and

put a can of Vienna sausage in my hand. And I almost cried because--well, I told you the story as to why the Vienna sausage has always been looked upon as a kind of luxury for me. But somehow he had heard about that, and got a can of Vienna sausage and gave it to me.

RICHARD RUSK: I'll be durned.

DEAN RUSK: When I was at Oxford they decided that they would play an exhibition baseball game at Lord's Cricket Field [Lord's Cricket Ground] in London. So, we Americans at Oxford put together a team; I was on it. And then they got up a British Empire team from some of the ships in the port and the embassies and things like that. Well we got down to Lord's Cricket Field. However, the British Empire team was one man short, so they loaned me to the British Empire team. Well each one of us was introduced when we came up to play, and I was introduced as Eric Svenson from the Yukon. But anyhow, just for just plain luck, the first two times I was up I hit a home run. And the next time I came up to the plate, the umpire said, "Take it easy on the--this is the only ball we have left."

RICHARD RUSK: Is that right? I'll be durned.

DEAN RUSK: See, the British claim that they started baseball at Chipping Norton. We had a little pick-up team that went over to Chipping Norton to play their village team and we just, oh, we beat them twenty to five or thirty to two, or something like that. But, they are very proud of having started baseball at Chipping Norton.

END OF SIDE 2