

Dean Rusk Oral History Collection

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C. Jane Mossellem and Gus P. Peleuses interviewed by Richard Rusk

1985 August

RICHARD RUSK: We're talking with Jane Mossellem. She was Dean Rusk's secretary back in the years 1961 through [19]68. This is August 1985. Gus Peleuses, my dad's security agent, will be joining us in a bit. People who saw Dean Rusk frequently for consultation and we just discussed Adrian [Sanford] Fisher and his director at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency who met with my dad quite frequently in arms control issues. Apparently my dad did not get involved heavily in the the negotiations of those treaties but was involved in an advisory capacity quite extensively. Is that right Jane?

MOSSELLEM: That's right.

RICHARD RUSK: Who's this third person you're talking about?

MOSSELLEM: The third person that I was going to mention to you that I think saw your father fairly frequently, and not everybody knew it, was Robert [Francis] Kennedy.

RICHARD RUSK: Really? Tell me some more.

MOSSELLEM: Very often on a Saturday when he would be there, Robert Kennedy would come in the basement entrance and come up and talk to your father for several hours at a time. That would have been the end of '61-'62.

RICHARD RUSK: What about earlier periods or later periods? Do you recall that happening during '63-'64-'65?

MOSSELLEM: Yes, I would say so, probably more so after President [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy's death.

RICHARD RUSK: Any idea what they were talking about?

MOSSELLEM: I have no idea. You know better than to ask that.

RICHARD RUSK: What about visitors of Dean Rusk, people who obviously saw him a great deal and for reasons of importance, looking back over that eight-year period? Those people that stand out.

MOSSELLEM: Bob [Robert Strange] McNamara saw a great deal of your dad on weekends as well at the Department of State. Occasionally he would go over for a private luncheon on a Saturday with him, but more often it was at State. McGeorge Bundy was another. And, of course, Bill [William Putnam] Bundy was here in the Department. All of the Assistant

Secretaries he met with constantly each and every day. There was a comradeship within the hierarchy of the Department in those days the likes of which I've not seen since.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you see it before, back in the Republican [John Foster] Dulles years?

MOSSELLEM: I probably would not have been as aware of it then because I was just coming in to the office in those days. I guess I felt it more later on in the [William Pierce] Rogers and the [Henry Alfred] Kissinger years where I was so involved there, too, in the office itself and in the work of the Department.

RICHARD RUSK: People in higher levels tended to get along better with each other during the Kennedy and [Lyndon Baines] Johnson years?

MOSSELLEM: Yeah. And I think there was a feeling of leadership in the Department which a lot of people have not felt since that era. And, of course, I attribute that to your father. He managed his department and the way he gave authority to others to handle.

RICHARD RUSK: He's been criticized by some former colleagues as well as scholars to the extent that he didn't provide a lot of leadership, that he was reticent in office and he didn't really share his feelings and opinions with his colleagues. Did you see that quality in him at all, or did it interfere with the performance of your job at all?

MOSSELLEM: It did not at all. I have a feeling that maybe some of that might have been a little bit of jealousy. I think there was a warmth of human understanding that he expressed to everyone that came in contact with him, or he gave them that feeling. From your most intellectual down to your messengers he made everybody feel that they were extremely important and had something to offer: something to give, and something to contribute. I don't know of anyone that didn't have the utmost respect and confidence in him. They felt that they could go to him for anything. For the silliest reasons sometimes somebody would go to him, on a personal matter or on an official matter, and he would help them. He would always take the time.

RICHARD RUSK: Personal staff, his own staff would go to him with problems?

MOSSELLEM: Yeah, I think some of them probably did on off-hours or on off-times. He was the type person that they felt they could talk to. He brought that out in people without trying to be that way. He didn't appear to be that type person, but he is that type person. As you know, he's so quick on the draw with everything that he could almost see things happening before they happened sometimes.

RICHARD RUSK: He's been criticized by some as not being quite up to snuff intellectually, in terms of his mental capabilities. I think some of that talk got started with [Arthur Meier] Schlesinger's [Jr.] book, *A Thousand Days*, some of the scuttlebutt within the Kennedy clan. You've had a chance to see him and compare him with six other Secretaries of State. Just overall, in a comparative way, how would you judge Dean Rusk?

MOSSELLEM: In comparison with all of them I would say that he had the utmost integrity. And as far as an intellectual, I would rate him above all in taking everything into perspective, in weighing out all elements. And he went through some terribly tough times. And then, he had two different but difficult bosses.

RICHARD RUSK: Were you privy to that relationship at all. You would, of course, see the paperwork come through.

MOSSELLEM: I think that Lyndon Johnson relied, over and above all his Cabinet, on your father for his intellect and for his guidance on everything. I don't think there's any question about that. As far as John F. Kennedy was concerned, I don't think he would have appointed your father if he had not thought that he was not the man that he would want to be his Secretary of State and do what he wanted him to do and could lean on him in many respects.

PELEUSES: One of the things that we caught with Kennedy was that he referred to him as Mr. Secretary. This was in no way denigrating; this was a mark of respect. Kennedy looked on him as his elder advisor. There was never any doubt in our minds. Other people have chosen to interpret that as your father being on the periphery, not in the in-crowd. I think that's the farthest thing from the truth. Kennedy referred to others by their first name, I think primarily because in effect he was talking down to those people. I think the reverse of what the media chose to interpret was the fact. There's no question that Johnson had absolute faith in what your father said. I don't think there's ever been a question about that.

RICHARD RUSK: Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier] Kennedy told my dad at a White House dinner one time, "You know, Mr. Secretary, that of all the members of the Cabinet, the President calls only you by Mr. Secretary." My dad didn't ever follow that up. He wasn't about to say, "Why is that?"

PELEUSES: We saw this primarily around the White House, but in other areas too: initially when we went to Paris on that famous trip that Kennedy made. Kennedy would joke, he would laugh, he would slap people on the back and say "What do you think about so and so?" Kennedy was obviously very outgoing. And people would respond in kind. Then when it got to the real hard stuff, he'd take your father and the two of them would walk off alone and he'd say, "Mr. Secretary." And they'd put their heads together. And that's where it really came down to where the decisions were being made. The rest of it was as much comraderie as anything else, I think. I felt--and as I said I'm not alone in this, the people that were around with me felt the same way--that when it came to the hard crunchy decisions and ideas that they had, he went to your father.

RICHARD RUSK: And you would go with my dad to the White House. You followed him around just about wherever he was?

PELEUSES: Yeah, except in the Oval Office itself. What happened in the Oval Office, only the two of them knew. And I mean that literally. A lot of it was done in vehicles; a lot of it was done in airplanes; a lot of it was done in other areas, in the halls. They'd be walking together from point A to point B in the White House and just stop cold and we'd all sort of lurch to a stop and stand there [while they talked].

MOSSELLEM: Not since Mr. Rusk's time with us here at the State Department have I felt, and I think a lot of people share this with me, a closeness or a sense of leadership from the Secretary of State as we did with Mr. Rusk.

PELEUSES: You're probably right. I think what we're coming down to is the humanity of the man. Again, I don't know if I told you about the voucher from Vienna. I was about to commit matrimony and had one trip to advance that your father was going to make. I was out doing the advance on the trip and then as soon as the trip was over, I was coming home to get married. So I got as far as London and I think the Dominican Republic blew up. I can't remember. This was spring of '65. I got a call from Ed Streater that said, "Don't go on to Oslo because so and so has happened. Stay there twenty-four hours." This is in London. So I stayed twenty-four hours and the next night I was waiting for the call. They called me, "Don't go for twenty-four hours and we'll let you know." What happened is this kept going on and on and on. I was sitting in London. My wife-to-be knew that I was allegedly moving around Europe, and I wasn't. She was beginning to wonder, because she could read the newspapers, whether I was coming home to get married or not. In any event, we finally got a call to go ahead and do the advance in Oslo, but not to lock anything in because it was still tenuous. So I went to Oslo and met the ambassador. It was on a Friday evening or Saturday day. It was not working time. The security officer said, "She wants to see you right away." I got in there and the first thing I said to her was, "You must realize that there is a strong possibility that the Secretary will not make the trip." And she said, "Oh, absolutely he'll make it." About that time the marine guard yelled, "Madam Ambassador, you've got a telephone call from the U.S." And she sat there [on the telephone] and said, "Yes. Yes, I understand." And tears started rolling down her face. And the trip was canceled and he told me to go back to London. So I went back to London again. All this time I'm spending money because the trip had been scheduled one way and London was more expensive than the other places. To make a long story short, as soon as your father arrived in London, I met him at the airport and hopped on the first available flight and went out and advanced Vienna. This was the tenth anniversary of the four-power evacuation of Vienna. There were some circus performances there. I was housed in the hotel where the entire delegation was housed at normal per diem for Vienna, which was way under what the hotel cost was. I paid my hotel bill and I came home and filed my voucher. There were provisions to cover you for excessive costs. I filed this voucher and nothing happened. I made an inquiry and nothing happened. I got married and all this. About ten months later I was sitting at the desk writing another memo to the finance people saying, "I need my money." Your father walked up and I didn't see him. He stood there and said, "What's the matter?" He realized I was engrossed in this thing. And I told him about it and he said, "Where are these people?" They were in one of those little temporary row house buildings nearby. And he said, "Let's go over and talk to them." I said, "Well, no. The Secretary of State can't do that." He said, "Let's go over and talk to them." They had moved from one office to another and lost my file; then my file had been destroyed and then they had found it, but they hadn't found the right file. He walked in there and the whole place came unglued because the Secretary of State walked in. This little lady came up and explained what the problem was to him, and he turned around and said, "Let's go." And the next day I had a hand-delivered Treasury check in my possession. That just blew my mind that the Secretary of State would take his personal time. That's what I'm talking about way at the beginning about the humanity of the man. He scored all kinds of points with me, and he did with everybody else that heard the story. He

would do things like that. He would walk out and he would say, "How is this done?" It would be some arcane thing in Administration. We'd tell him and he'd say, "Where is that?" And we'd tell him and he'd say, "Let's go visit them." Down the elevator we'd go, with no "The Secretary is coming, stand at attention." He'd walk in and say, "I'm Dean Rusk." It's a wonder he didn't give somebody a heart attack because he'd just walk in cold like that.

MOSSELLEM: He loved to do that. He loved to walk down to George [Wildman] Ball's office when I was down there and just walk right in.

PELEUSES: There was absolutely nothing artificial about it, absolutely nothing.

MOSSELLEM: He didn't put on. As the years go by, we've all grown to appreciate that. We didn't know what we had.

PELEUSES: I told you there was a circus that went on in Vienna. I thought the Germans were rigid in their organization, but let me tell you the Austrians are worse.

MOSSELLEM: That's when the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] met in London originally. That's when he went to Runnymede, too, for the JFK memorial and then the state treaty in Vienna; and then back to London.

PELEUSES: The hotel, as you walk up to the front, was two blocks to the left and across the street from the opera house in Vienna. The chancellor's residence was immediately adjacent to that [the opera house]. They organized an opera night for everybody that was there: [Andrei Andreevich] Gromyko, Maurice Couve de Murville, the British foreign minister. They organized this humongous motorcade in front of the hotel, very regimented. People were assigned to particular vehicles. Jim [James Lloyd] Greenfield, I think, was still around. He walked out the front door and walked down the sidewalk to the left. He was in the last car of the motorcade which was directly across the street from the opera house. They wouldn't let him walk to the opera house. So he got in this car and this whole motorcade went forward and did a 180 and the principals stopped in front of the opera house and Jim Greenfield stopped in front of the hotel and got out of his car and then walked two blocks again on the other side of the street to the opera house. Those of us who were standing there went into hysteria about this whole performance. We couldn't believe the way that was being done.

MOSSELLEM: They made you stick with it though, didn't they? They are known for that.

PELEUSES: Your father was very polite and kind and sat through the entire opera performance. I have no way of knowing how he felt about that, but he did all the right things. He knew I was a car nut. We were in Geneva for some meetings when the Geneva auto show was going on. That's the premier auto show in Europe. One evening he came up and he said, "I just thought you'd like to know I've scheduled a visit to the Geneva auto show and whether you're on detail or not you're going with me." I almost fell over. He did his thing at the Geneva auto show and we had special treatment. But the whole point was to get me to the Geneva auto show because he knew I liked cars. I was looking and admiring a small Italian sporty car and I said, "Gee, isn't that super." And he said, "That's fine, but what would I do for the other foot?" He was so darn big he never would

have gotten into that thing. Again, he would look out for us. He knew that Bert Bennington, as an example, was having some health problems with his wife. He'd make a point of inquiring. Jim McDermott, who died a year ago, had a son, a blue baby. He'd make a point of that. He knew what was going around in spite of all these other entanglements, jobs, concerns that he had. He still found time to know about the people around him and what their personal concerns were and why they were and that sort of thing. I suspect that no matter who you talk to that was around him found him an extremely endearing person. I don't think I'm speaking out of line. I know McDermott felt that way. I know Bert felt that way. I know Al [Alan S.] Boyd would lay down and let him walk on him. We all felt that way. That went through the whole office.

RICHARD RUSK: Was the Department itself aware of it?

PELEUSES: Yeah. The word gets around. He made a point of everywhere we went overseas trying to find some time to meet with the staff. Others have done it since. He was especially keen to do it at the smaller places, the more difficult places and arrange that the whole staff would meet in the lobby of the embassy or somewhere like that and make a point of speaking to the staff and telling them that he understood what their concerns were and he was looking out for them and trying to accomplish certain things. He showed this again when we went to Vietnam. He'd make a point of meeting GIs [Government Issue] when we were around and ask them about their families and make calls. And he made those calls. There's no two ways about it. He'd come home with lists and lists and he's sit there in the office when he should have been going home and dealing with you and Peggy [Margaret Elizabeth Rusk] and would make those calls. He felt this obligation. Again, this is the humanity. That never stopped.

RICHARD RUSK: What about my mom [Virginia Foisie Rusk]?

PELEUSES: She's an absolute dear, one of the most relaxed and unpretentious people I've ever met in my life. We'd be in a hotel and we'd set up a command post for security. Right next door would be Jane, Millie [Asbjorsen], Carolyn Proctor, or whoever was along, and then special assistants. And your mother would come down, not just to visit but to find out if we were all right, how our rooms were. She'd come down with a box of cookies that somebody had just given her and offer cookies around for people. She'd bring a fruit basket down and distribute fruit. She was extremely supportive of your father and his whole staff in this very informal relaxed way. [There was this fellow who was working] two doors down from me and he's just moved up to AF []. Back in those days [he] was a clerk in the secretariat. On Saturdays it was one of his jobs to take the morning "take," as we referred to it, out to the house if your father wasn't coming in. He said this to me, unsolicited, that your mother made a point of offering him a cup of coffee, some toast, anything. Your father would be sitting there reading telegrams and making notes and she'd be talking to Mike. And there was no reason. Mike could just as well have sat there in silence with your father until your father finished. But your mother made a point of watching out for the little people, if you will. As I said right in the beginning, she's an absolute dear.

MOSSELLEM: I think everybody would agree with that. She worked very hard, incredibly hard.

PELEUSES: Did you talk to Ginny? Where's Ginny?

MOSSELLEM: Ginny's in Seoul but due back soon. She would be an excellent one to talk to: Virginia Wallace, who worked directly with your mother.

PELEUSES: She probably knows more about your mother from this side than anybody else. She was with her longer than anybody else.

MOSSELLEM: Your mother never missed an independence day reception for any embassy.

RICHARD RUSK: My dad said, "If you go to one, you'd better be prepared to go to them all."

MOSSELLEM: And she did. Every time she was asked to do something, whether she felt like it or not she went with a smile on her face and represented him.

PELEUSES: There were occasions when your father had planned on going to something and something would come up and he'd have to stay here because there was a hoorah going on in the Secretariat. And he'd go down there and he'd say, "Take the car and go." And your mother would go. One of us would go with her on occasions and on other occasions we couldn't. She represented the United States government at these official receptions. And as Jane said, she didn't miss a single one. The word was around Washington that the Secretary or Mrs. Secretary would be there. That's how the foreign embassies interpreted it.

MOSSELLEM: That's never happened since either. I shouldn't speak for right now. I don't know what the wives of the Secretaries of State have done since I left the office. We still got inquiries from embassies around Washington from people who have been there for a long time and who want to know some old information or want to know what we're doing today with respect to one thing or another and they mentioned here always, and always asked how she was.

RICHARD RUSK: I've got a real personal question about my mom's and dad's relationship during this eight-year period.

PELEUSES: It wasn't a showy kind of relationship. It was the little things. Remember that your father is of the old school of courtesy. And damn it, unfortunately that's dead in the United States. Our society has changed. There was a gentleness between them, a courtesy--and it wasn't a formal courtesy--a respect that you just don't see anymore.

MOSSELLEM: There was a deep understanding between the two that you could just look at them and see.

PELEUSES: It was pleasant to be around them.

MOSSELLEM: And never awkward. No one ever felt uncomfortable around them, as you can with people from time to time. And people from all walks of life, particularly in traveling. They were very kind and dear and gentle. Occasionally he would tease her in front of others, but that

was rare. That was usually on the plane or something. He would tease her a little bit and she would blush. It was really refreshing to see.

PELEUSES: I can't say it, but I can sure imitate it. He would talk to her and he would get this funny little twinkle in his eyes and kind of cock his head to one side and his smile would break up. You knew he was pulling her leg. She at that moment wasn't looking. And he'd just smile, and she'd look up and she'd say, "Oh, Dean": a little smack of her lips and she'd say, "Oh, Dean." I didn't go with your father until spring of '61 somewhere around April or May after Habib Bourgiba was in the United States. He was, still is, the leader of Tunisia. He must be at least 195 years old now. Right after he went home I was assigned on the detail with your father. But I knew about your father, as did every single soul in SY [Security Office] within telephone or conversation contact. I think when he was named and before the inauguration, they established an office for him downstairs [in the State Department]. I think Leo, and Jim McDermott, and somebody else was assigned to your father immediately in the transition before the inauguration. The word got around very quickly, "Hey, this is a super guy. This is a gentleman." There were nothing but favorable comments, and these were the people that had the first intimate contact with him in the Department of State. As soon as the person is named they assign a protective detail to him. He was uncomfortable with it. It took him quite a while to adjust to that. You're living in the man's hip pocket. He goes to the bathroom and you go with him. It was almost as stupid as that. And I'm not trying to exaggerate.

RICHARD RUSK: He refused 24-hour protection at the house. Do you recall that?

PELEUSES: Yep.

RICHARD RUSK: Do you recall his reason, what he said?

PELEUSES: Just didn't need it. There were occasions when things went awry when we had people down there: the Cuban Missile Crisis.

RICHARD RUSK: Who was in the basement during the Cuban Missile Crisis?

PELEUSES: Bill [William] Little. I have no idea where he is. He resigned from the State Department and went with DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration]. He was one of those.

RICHARD RUSK: What about my sister Peggy's growing up in Washington in those years and the degree of adjustment she had to make.

PELEUSES: I think your father recognized that there was a pulling apart that was inadvertent and involuntary, I suspect, on both sides. And I think there was recognition on your father's part. He went off to go to Cape Canaveral and took Peggy with him, and he insisted that only one person go down with him during that period. It turned out it was me. He did things with her. He would read a book. Then he'd put the book down, go over and chat, and they'd go out and walk together. He took her to see the first firing of the Saturn rocket engine that they eventually took to the moon. I don't think he did this as a "I've got to have a companion" sort of thing. It was a very conscious effort on his part to draw her in. He wasn't feeling too good, so he went to George

Ball's house to recuperate and took Peggy along to do things. Peggy would try to make things for him.

MOSSELLEM: When she started riding at the Rock Creek stables he was always concerned after school where Peggy was and what she was doing. Given the job, he couldn't dwell on it because there were so many things that he had to do. But there was always that dear little girl feeling that he had in him for Peggy, but he didn't have the time or the wherewithal at that period in his life to do what he wanted to do.

PELEUSES: The concern was there. We would be somewhere and your mother would join us. He would never ask, "How's Rich?" or "How's David [Patrick Rusk]?" He would always say, "What's Peggy doing? Did she get to so-and-so?" He always knew what her plans were. "Is she going to be all right?" were the first words out of his mouth when he would meet up at some embassy or some hotel reception with your mother. I don't mean that he wasn't concerned about you all, but that concern and interest about his daughter was there and it was very real.

MOSSELLEM: And it's the protective interest, too, that a father has for a daughter versus a son. They feel that a son can take care of himself, a daughter can't, or that she should have somebody to watch over her. I think it was always a concern from the time he came into the office. I believe it was his last day in office. He and your mother had bought lovely Steuben pieces for all the girls: a bowl, a candlestick. He called everybody in individually and gave them their gift at different times. He called me in and said that he wanted to dictate a letter. I was convinced that he was writing his farewell letter to Millie. I got very teary and emotional, gulping hard and taking dictation, sitting on the edge of my chair. I got up to leave and he said, "May I have your book?" and I sort of looked at him. He took my notebook and he said, "Now, where did you start?" And I showed him. And he wrote, "Dear Jane," and he signed it, "Love, Dean Rusk." And then I did go to pieces. I have that with his picture at home. These are the kind of things that he did.

PELEUSES: Needless to say, we all get emotional about him.

RICHARD RUSK: I've found, going back researching his past, talking to the kids he went to school with at Boys' High, Davidson College, Lee Street Elementary School, it's always the same thing. It goes all the way back.

MOSSELLEM: And his concern for everyone when we'd take a trip. There wasn't anybody on that plane that he didn't ask about or keep his eye on and protect. If they were upset or concerned he could sense it.

RICHARD RUSK: You came to know my dad in a certain way. You know what he's all about and his good qualities and the kind of man he is. Yet, in the history books and the period of history in which we lived, he'll go down as the primary architect on the Vietnam War. In the history books he has and will continue to take a hell of a beating. Forgetting history for a minute, at the time you people lived this history you saw the terrific--how do you put the two together?

PELEUSES: I went through and argued this last night with my wife and my son. I've got the answer. My son has all these books on Vietnam, including [David] Halberstam's book. Halberstam takes the whole Administration to task, and your father. My wife said, "I've always been opposed to what we did in Vietnam." This is the first time this ever surfaced. I've been married for an eternity and I never knew this about her. I said, "Why?" She said, "I think we were wrong." I said, "You sound like Halberstam," because I'd read his book. I think perhaps you're right that the history books will say certain things about your father as the primary architect. There's something that nobody focuses on or puts in perspective that I think is critically important. Your father kept saying over and over, Kennedy kept saying over and over, Johnson kept saying over and over, "[Remember] that all of these people were in World War II [and this experience was burned into them.]" And that was the base from which they were operating. It wasn't Korea; it wasn't what the French were doing [in Vietnam]. It was World War II. And the whole objective is "We must never get into this uncontrolled situation again. We've got to stop it before it gets to that point." It's critically important to understand that. If you go from that, other things make sense. Another thing that I suspect your father did not say publicly, but he sure as hell said to us and we knew it: he felt very strongly about two things: [obligation and not writing memoirs.] It was the obligation of any U.S. citizen to serve at the beck and call of the President. This was an obligation of citizenship no matter what it did to you financially, personally, whatever. That was your obligation; that came with the territory. He was unique. Other people didn't feel that way during that era. Other people served in the Administration and went out and wrote their books. This is the whole point. This is why he wouldn't write the damn books. I wish he would. He felt this obligation very strongly. He interpreted his function to be to give the President his best advice and then to carry out the wishes of the President, not the wishes of Dean Rusk. And if it ever came to the point where he could no longer do that he was obliged to resign and keep his mouth shut. And he said this. If you understand where he was coming from, it all makes sense. He was doing what the President wanted, not what Dean Rusk wanted necessarily. I think this is where the history books were all [wrong.]

RICHARD RUSK: What about personally? As well as you knew my dad and as fond as you both got with him, that must have been kind of a painful thing for you seeing him go through this.

PELEUSES: It was. Why do you think one of the things I told you is that business about Paris? Maybe only ten or fifteen of us knew about it. But I hear this crap about 'Dean Rusk didn't make any efforts to talk to the other side.' That's unmitigated bullshit and I'm sick of it. This is why I feel so strongly about telling. But again, if he says no, that's it. The histories are wrong, and he will not go out of his way to remedy this. He will let history take its course. And, again, I suspect, in retrospect, that he saw it far more clearly than we ever did. He knew what was coming. He knew what the potentials were better than any of us did. And I think he probably believes--I'm putting thoughts into his own head, and you've got to get those out of him--it's better for the country to let it ride. I suspect that's how he feels. He certainly has had the opportunities to set the records straight. Again, there's this unique quality in the man: obligation to the country. You don't see that too much anymore. It's beginning to come back, but boy it sure [looked like it] died a [horrible] death.

RICHARD RUSK: How did you reconcile the situations with the man that you know? How did you deal with it personally?

MOSSELLEM: It was very hard for us to deal with it because you could feel his frustrations. You could see his frustrations. It was even harder for us, who thought so much of him and loved him so deeply, to see him go through this. But, as Gus says, it was his dedication to his country and his feeling of total obligation to the President. He had a lot of tough decisions to make himself and he had to weigh lots of things against those decisions, and few of them were his own personal wishes. When it came down to the bottom line and the President would ask him last to summarize all of these things, to put them all in focus, and to balance them, that was a difficult task.

PELEUSES: We make a lot of noise in the media, especially in the last few weeks there's been a big hoorah: it's been forty years since we blew the crap out of the earth, and all this sort of stuff. Everybody goes around waving their hands saying, "No more nukes." It's a different thing when you're there and making that decision about nukes or no nukes. That's a terrible ordeal to go through. Your father was making those decisions, not the guy waving the flag out there at Berkeley. There was a hotline of communications with the President. It wasn't as sophisticated in those days as it is now. There were three of us who rotated duty with him then. Today there is a detail in excess of forty people permanently assigned to the Secretary of State. When he makes a move to point A, they pull sixty more people out of the field office and send them out and scatter them out in advance. The three of us who used to do it sit there and marvel about how they can keep from killing each other. World society concepts have changed. When the first semi-confirmation came that the Thresher [our nuclear submarine] had been destroyed, I can remember your father sitting in a chair. His eyes got sort of glassy, sort of watery and he said something that I can't tell you. It was obvious his concern was not about the damn nukes or about the sub; it was about the people on the sub that had been lost.

RICHARD RUSK: Did you ever see him cry?

PELEUSES: Yeah, then.

RICHARD RUSK: How about you?

MOSSELLEM: Then and when President Kennedy was assassinated. Here was a young man with so much to give and he was totally destroyed: a human being was gone. I think there was a much closer personal relationship and respect that anybody will ever know. And it was all very private.

RICHARD RUSK: People have asked my dad about his relationship with John Kennedy, and my dad always answers, "There are only two of us who knew of that relationship. One is dead and the other is not talking." You're right. We won't be privy to that.

PELEUSES: That, in turn, impacts on Vietnam. There is a tendency among highly placed officials to deal with lives as numbers, and you can't help that. I suppose you almost have to. But I don't think your father ever lost how much he valued human life. And I think that got to him

when all these things were happening as Vietnam grew. I think that took a bigger toll on him. I've never really put this in words before. We've just sort of come around to it. I suspect that took a bigger toll on him than any other single thing: the human cost, not just to the United States, but to the world. This goes back again to when we couldn't permit it ever to escalate to what he and the others of that era had experienced. It's easy to be a Halberstam and to sit there and say, "Ah, they were the best and the brightest and they gave him bum advice." But Halberstam never really focused on where they were all coming from, what they had gone through.

RICHARD RUSK: What was the effect of the numbers on my dad? All the life? That's the one I felt as a kid growing up. I was always a bit bashful of the publicity, but the one that affected me was decisions he had participated in being associated with the resultant deaths. I know that's the one that obviously bothers him; it bothered him at the time. These guys don't talk about it; they don't write about it in their memoirs: the effects of combat decision-making upon them personally and upon the factor it plays in decision making.

PELEUSES: Way at the beginning when I was relatively new, he said something that there was a lot of media hoorah about: the infighting that was going on within the State Department for position. You father said that he found exactly the opposite to be true; he couldn't get people to take responsibility. People want to make a lot of noise and offer suggestions, but when it comes down to making the decision people shy away from that. It was left to people like your father.

MOSSELLEM: And having to shoulder the decision of others too, that weren't necessarily his decisions: decisions that the President made but he was accountable for them.

END OF SIDE 1

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