The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

# DAVID C. ACHESON

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*
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**INTERVIEW**

*Q: Today is April 29, 2008. This is an interview with David… C. is it? What does the C stand for?*

ACHESON: Campion.

*Q: Campion. Acheson. A-C-H-E-S-O-N. And this is being done on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. And you go by David or Dave?*

ACHESON: Yes, David is fine?

*Q: Well, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?*

ACHESON: Washington DC.

*Q: And when?*

ACHESON: November 4, 1921.

*Q: 1921.*

ACHESON: ….which makes me 86.

*Q: 86. So, you're one of the grey beards. I'm of the class of 1928, myself, one of the kids. (laughter)*

ACHESON: I get along with children pretty well.

*Q: Alright. Obviously, your father was former Secretary of State [Dean Gooderham Acheson] and just a very distinguished man of the American Government and otherwise. But, can you tell me what about….let's do the Acheson and then we'll do…*

ACHESON: Ok.

*Q: Where do they come from?*

ACHESON: My mother's family are Stanleys. They lived in Detroit, Michigan. My mother had a rather famous ancestor, named George Mix, M-I-X, Stanley, who was a great painter of the American west.

*Q: Oh, yeah.*

ACHESON: The Smithsonian has a big collection. He settled in Detroit and mother grew up there. Her father was a lawyer for some railroad or other and her mother was a painter and my mother was also a painter. My father's family, the Achesons, were British. My father's grandfather was in the Royal Artillery and fought in the Crimean War. He served in the heavy brigade, which fought at Balaclava, after the light brigade was wiped out.

*Q: And there was, I think, a poem, The Charge of the Heavy Brigade, too.*

ACHESON: Happily, the heavy brigade was well-commanded and competent. (Laughter)

He survived that experience. My grandfather was Edward Campion Acheson, was born at the Aldershot Arsenal, in Great Britain.

*Q: This was the great depot of the British Army.*

ACHESON: That is correct. And, unfortunately, his father, my great grandfather, moved in the military service so often, that all the family papers were lost, and so we don't really know anything about the family's ancestry going back beyond my great grand father.

*Q: Well, isn't the name Campion a bit of a clue. Campion was one of the martyrs.*

ACHESON: Well, that's a Welsh name – Campion. Acheson is a Scottish name. There are a lot of Achesons in Edinburgh and there are two Acheson houses on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, which are museums. One, I think, the last time I was there, was the head quarters of the Scottish Craft Union. The other was the Earl Haig Museum, dedicated to Field Marshal Haig, who is a relative of ours and notably the most outstandingly incompetent senior commander in World War I.

*Q: He had a lot of competition, but I…*

ACHESON: Well, he had some competition, but he was a real fool.

*Q: He was responsible for the Somme.*

ACHESON: The Battle of the Somme was a crime. It was a crime. It was a horrible slaughter.

My grandfather, the son of the soldier, was born, as I said, in Aldershot. His mother died early in his life, and his father remarried a woman with whom my grandfather did not get along. He had an uncle in Canada, who was a scholar and a very distinguished

Shakespeare scholar. Anyway, he went off to live with him in Canada and studied for the clergy at what was then called Queens College, and now is the University of Toronto.

In 1883, when he was a student there, a Canadian Métis, as they call it, an Indian-French half breed, who was a brilliant lawyer, and a very charismatic orator, organized a rebellion against the Crown - the Riel Rebellion of 1883. My grandfather enlisted in the Queen's Own Rifles and went out to the Northwest Provinces to fight. His unit was ambushed in a place called Cut Knife Creek. They'd been marching through the forest and came out into a clearing, and as soon as they came out into the clearing, the enemy forces that were in the woods beyond the clearing, started firing on my grandfather's unit. And, they immediately retreated back into the woods, where they had cover. Two men, meanwhile, had been hit and had fallen in the clearing. So, as soon as the unit got back to the woods and got some cover, my grandfather went out, with his comrades covering him with rifle fire, and picked up one of the men and brought him back in and then ran out and picked up the other one and brought him in. He was under heavy fire the whole time. He was later recommended for the Victoria Cross, and when he returned to Toronto, he was the national hero. He was like Sergeant York.

And, my great grandfather, Gooderham, my father's mother's father, was a very famous businessman, industrialist in Toronto. And it's safe to say that he really owned most of Toronto. He started the first…he started the largest distillery of whiskey in North America called….

*Q: God bless him.*

ACHESON: Gooderham and Worts, a very famous brand in Canada. He prospered and bought control of the Bank of Toronto, and then he bought control of the Dominion Bank of Canada, and then, his sons merged the two banks. And, what you see in the ads as T.D. Waterhouse is the Toronto Dominion Bank's subsidiary, brokerage firm. And, they turned to…. World War I came along, and the whiskey makers - it was quite natural for them to turn to raw materials for explosives, and they became the largest supplier of the Canadian government during World War I for explosive raw materials. They went back to the whiskey business after the war.

Meanwhile, my grandfather, who was the military hero, finished his studies and got ordained. In those days, the Canadian Church of England and the American Episcopal Church were regarded as one and the same, just different branches of the same church. So, his first church call came to New York City, in Manhattan – St. George's Church in mid-town, Manhattan. He was a very charismatic man and highly thought of and he was soon asked to come to Middletown, Connecticut and be the rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity, which he did. And, there, my father was born as the first American citizen in our family.

*Q: Your grandfather had not become a citizen?*

ACHESON: No, not at that point. After my father was born, there was talk of making my grandfather the Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut and that project apparently stalled on the question that he was not a citizen. But, then he became a naturalized citizen and so did my grandmother. So, around 1920 or 1921 – somewhere along there, he was…he did become the Episcopal Bishop of Connecticut, which he was for 15 years.

*Q: How did your grandfather Acheson and your grandmother get together? How did they meet? Michigan and Canada and New York - how did that work?*

ACHESON: My father and mother. My mother is Michigan; my father is Connecticut.

*Q: So your grandfather married a Canadian.*

ACHESON: Yeah, when he was in Canada. They lived in Middletown, Connecticut after that. My father was born there. My father had a sister named Margaret, who was a *femme fatale*. She was a beautiful, beautiful woman – very, very smart and very glamorous and very fond of doing glamorous and fun things. To say that she was spoiled would be a characterization, but I could not quarrel with it. In any event, she, being a free thinker, decided, at a time when very few women went to college, that she would go to college. She decided to go to Wellesley. She didn't know anybody going to Wellesley, so the college offered to assign a roommate to her; and, all of those things were true of Alice Stanley, my mother, who went to college in the same class, didn't know anybody and they were assigned roommates to each other. So, the first vacation they had, my aunt invited my mother to come and spend that vacation in Middletown with the Achesons. And, she did and met my father that way. They had a very strong attraction and, as they say, the rest is history.

*Q: Did your aunt play much of a role in your life? It sounds like she was a free spirit.*

ACHESON: No. Well, we saw quite a bit of her. She married a stockbroker in New York and divorced him, which produced a bit of a ruckus in a religious family. And, she lived in New York solo for a while. Then she met a very attractive, nice man named Gardner Platt, who worked for the Packard Motor Company. Shortly after they met, he was assigned to go to Paris and be the director of the Packard Motor Company's European operation. So, he asked my aunt to marry him and they moved to Paris together and we visited them in Paris a couple of times. During the beginning of World War II, they moved back to Washington. We saw quite a lot of her, my wife and I and always liker her very much.

Another member of the family, the other sibling, was my Uncle Edward, Ted, who was 11 years younger than my father. My father was the oldest; my aunt followed by three years and my Uncle Ted by 11 years. And, Ted was also a free spirit. He was very smart. He was impulsive - I guess would be an apt description. He became a newspaper reporter and covered the crime desk for the Hartford Current, a famous newspaper in Connecticut, which is still going. Then, he became a writer of detective stories inspired by his

experience on the Crime Desk. He had four published detective stories, which were really quite interesting, well done.

*Q: His name, again, would be?*

ACHESON: Edward Campion Acheson.

*Q: Now, the Campion name here….*

ACHESON: Junior, junior.

*Q: ….Campion name…wasn't Campion….or didn't it have something to do with the bible?*

ACHESON: Well, there was a Thomas Campion, who was a famous poet, British poet; and, I believe there was a Campion on King James I's commission to rewrite the bible.

*Q: Yes, because I connect Campion with the bible, somehow*.

ACHESON: Right.

*Q: I think that's part of the King James Version; the word of god. Did you get a feel….?*

ACHESON: By the way, my uncle Ted suddenly decided that the life he was leading was sort of leading nowhere. He was living in England and writing detective stories, and he suddenly decided to go to the London School of Economics and get a doctorate, which he did. Everyone always marveled that a guy who was, although very, very bright, was so undisciplined….that the dismal science – you know, everyone always said, "Well, how did he do it?" (laughter)

*Q: Well, did you get from your father…sort of, how religious was the family at the time? I mean your father…your grandfather being the bishop.*

ACHESON: My grandfather – I remember clearly – had a very strong commitment to what we would call the Christian ethical system. I don't think he really cared much about theology; he never talked about it; it was never in his sermons and he was a very pragmatic person. His life as a soldier had affected him a lot. He had the habits of industry, discipline: get up early in the morning, do your job, expect everybody else to do their job that kind of a personality. He was a very charismatic man, lots of fun to be with; a strong and lively personality. But, I never got the sense that theology meant much to him.

*Q: You know, in the rating system, where did his Episcopalian system work: high, low, medium or….?*

ACHESON: Oh, well, he was fairly Low Church. He loved church music and very often, we were… and the whole family, my family went to Middletown for Christmas and stayed at my grandparents' house, which was a large roomy house and he loved….we always went to the Christmas service at his church in the evening. He was the first Bishop not to move to Hartford and the person who became the rector of Holy Trinity Church, I think, must have rued that decision, because my grandfather continued to order everything about the church, as well as the diocese. But, he loved music and we would have marvelous…we would have Handel anthems; we would have great choral music. I really enjoyed that a lot. My father loved those services, but he was not a religious man – not at all.

*Q: Well, did a…..Let's talk about your father a bit. What are your impressions of your father?*

ACHESON: Well, he was an interesting combination. At Yale, he had been….most people would have called him a playboy, very social, loved parties, had many, many friends and was regarded as a – I think the word used then would have been *sport.* He was a sport. And, his interest in academics was fairly modest and he did fairly modestly in academics.

*Q: Was there any carryover….he went to Groton, didn't he, he went to Groton. Did Peabody figure? I mean, was this a ….?*

ACHESON: Well, Peabody, of course made a strong impression on every student who ever went there, including myself. But, Dad was very undisciplined at Groton, and Peabody didn't think a lot of him as a student. (Laughs)

*Q: For the uninitiated, Peabody…first name was?*

ACHESON: Endicott.

*Q: Endicott Peabody was the Head Master and a towering presence…*

ACHESON: That is true; that is true.

*Q:… at Groton.*

ACHESON: He had been, prior to coming to Groton – he founded Groton. His father, his uncle, rather, not his father (George Peabody of George Peabody & Co.) – was, started the first major investment banking operation in London; and a young man named John Pierpont Morgan worked for him; and later Morgan took off on his own and went to New York and started his own bank.

*Q: Did fairly well, fairly well.*

ACHESON: But, Peabody the elder was a strong influence on Endicott Peabody. Endicott Peabody worked for his uncle's bank for a while; and while working there he met Grenfell, who started the Grenfell Mission.

*Q: Grenfell was in Canada, wasn't it?*

ACHESON: Yes, exactly. And, Grenfell's father (Henry Riversdale Grenfell) had started a bank in London which, ultimately merged with Morgan's London branch and became known as Morgan Grenfell. Anyway, I mention all that because Endicott Peabody became a minister and his first church was in Tombstone, Arizona in the days when Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday were carrying on…

*Q: The gunfight at the OK carrel, and all that sort of stuff?*

ACHESON: Right. And Peabody was a very athletic, big strong guy. And, he started a baseball team and the way he recruited for the baseball team was to go into the bar, find nine people who were sober and drag them out to play baseball. And, he said he owed his life to the fact that he never carried a gun. And, he was capable of defending himself physically without a gun and nobody tangled with him because he was a really tough guy. But, that experience in the west influenced him a great deal.

So, he then decided to come back east and start a school; and it was natural, to finance the school, he turned to J.P. Morgan. So, Morgan gave him a loan and he started the school, bought maybe three hundred, four hundred acres of land; started a school; and built it in very short order. And, my father's law partner, George Rublee, was the very first graduate of Groton. He was all alone in the class of 1886.

My father was the class of 1911. It kind of surprised Dad's friends when he went to Harvard Law School, that he was either the first or second in his class at Harvard Law School. He was on the Harvard Law Review as editor; treasurer of the Harvard Law Review, and he attracted the interest of members of the faculty there, in his intellect and his writing skills, which were very, very good. He was heavily influenced there by Professor Felix Frankfurter, who was then quite a young professor, but taught him.

Dad was a strong liberal in his early days. He thought about specializing in labor law and representing labor unions when he got out of law school. But, he said that never happened because, on account of his marks and the recommendations that he got from faculty, he was asked to come to Washington and be the law clerk to Justice Brandeis of the Supreme Court. So, he did that for one year. Then, at the close of that year, the flu epidemic knocked off the clear who was his successor.

*Q: This is 1918, 1919?*

ACHESON: Correct. So, Brandeis asked him to stay a second year because the follow-on clerk had died. So Dad did. And, during that year, he was introduced to Edward B. Burling, by Justice Brandeis – they were friends. Mr. Burling was starting a new law firm

in Washington and asked my father to come and work for him. And so Dad did that and spent the rest of his life active with that firm.

*Q: Your mother and father met how?*

ACHESON: They met when my aunt invited my mother to come from Wellesley to vacation with her in Middletown.

*Q: That's right. Did your mother finish Wellesley?*

ACHESON: My mother did; my aunt did not. My aunt married before she finished.

*Q: Did you get any feel from your mother?*

ACHESON: My mother was married, I think, 5 days before her graduation at Wellesley. And, the President of Wellesley said, under the rules, she should be denied her degree. But, she said, to apply the rules that way would be what many people would call, carrying a rule to an unjustified extreme.

*Q: Did you get any feel or impression from your mother about Wellesley in those days?*

ACHESON: Not really. Madam Chiang Kai-shek was in her class.

*Q: One of the three Soong sisters.*

ACHESON: Yes. One of the Soong sisters. There were a number of foreign girls in that class. Mother said she liked Wellesley a great deal. She liked the course of study; she liked the faculty, she liked the physical situation, the location – everything about it.

*Q: Let's talk a little bit about growing up in the Acheson household. First place, you have brothers, sisters?*

ACHESON: I have two sisters: one older, one younger – I'm right in the middle. The older one is deceased; the younger one is a widow, alive and well; living in Princeton, New Jersey.

*Q: Where did you live in Washington?*

ACHESON: We lived initially on Corcoran Street, about a block off of 18th Street. And, about two years later, my parents bought the house in Georgetown, where we lived the rest of my young life: 2805 P Street.

*Q: What was your experience? What was life like in the Acheson family? We are talking about when you were quite young.*

ACHESON: Well….my father liked to walk in the early morning. We would all have breakfast together. And, before we went off to school, and even in the days before we went to school at all, my father would….we would all have breakfast together, and my father would say, "Let's take a good walk." And by a good walk, he meant a fast walk. We would go around the block, or around two blocks. And, then, he would walk to work. He would walk down to where the law firm was headquartered, which was at 15th Street and H – about I'd say a 30 minute walk, maybe better, maybe 40.

*Q: Were events of the day or of the era talked about at the dinner table?*

ACHESON: Not during the 1920s. In the 1930s they were. In the 1920s we did word games at the dinner table or played 20 questions or we would talk about what we did at school that day and Mother would talk about the painting she was doing, but in the '30s we talked…began to talk about what was going on in the world.

*Q: Well, by the '30s you were then moving into your preteens?*

ACHESON: Yeah. That's right - my 'tweens.

*Q: What sort of painting did your mother do?*

ACHESON: She started out with water colors and was really very good, a very good painter. Then she quickly picked up oils and later, when other materials like acrylics became available, she painted with those too. And she liked….she was quite experimental as a painter. She would do collage; and she would do whatever spirit moved her, from day to day. She exhibited frequently; she was quite prolific.

*Q: Landscape? Portraits?*

ACHESON: Largely landscape. Her portraits weren't great, to be honest with you. She did portraits of her three children, which we all hid later. (Laughter)

But, in the '30s, when things were starting to go wrong in the world…during the depression (this may interest you) all of us, when I was at school in the first few grades, all of us knew people who were really suffering in the Depression. We knew…we had friends whose parents had lost all their investments and it was a….it seemed a kind of remote thing because Edward Burling's law firm during the '20s was really doing well. It was quite a small firm but they had major clients and they were making a lot of money. My father ….in 1931, which you could call the depth of the Depression, my father was able to build a huge addition to his house in Georgetown. Nobody in the family was suffering financially during the depression because his firm was doing really well.

*Q: Were you picking up comments from your parents or others about Hoover and his administration?*

ACHESON: Yeah, we were. My father thought Hoover was doing everything wrong and making the Depression worse and that his…that Hoover's determination to hold onto a balanced budget was not very opportune – that was not the time. So, my father, who was always a Democrat, became a strong Roosevelt supporter.

And, in 1933, Felix Frankfurter, who knew Roosevelt pretty well and who was still at the Harvard Law School teaching, asked…he suggested to Roosevelt that he make my father Solicitor General of the United States – that's the officer in the Department of Justice who argues all the case for the government in the Supreme Court. My father was a notably able advocate and had been a Supreme Court law clerk and had argued in the Supreme Court and really wanted that job. And, a funny thing happened. Roosevelt had appointed a man Attorney General from Connecticut, named Homer Cummings. Homer Cummings had divorced his wife and had remarried and he had asked my grandfather to officiate at his remarriage. My grandfather refused on the ground that he would not participate in a marriage of a divorced person. And, Homer Cummings decided that there was no way anybody named Acheson was going to work in his department. He told the President that he would find it very, very difficult to work with Dean Acheson. So Roosevelt asked my father to be Undersecretary for the Treasury at a time when the newly appointed Secretary, William Wooden, had just discovered that he was fatally ill. So, my father was the Secretary of the Treasury, for all practical purposes, for the first year and a quarter of the Roosevelt administration.

*Q: Had there been any Groton connection between Roosevelt and your father?*

ACHESON: Well, they were 11 years apart. So they never knew each other at Groton and never knew each other actually any other way until Frankfurter suggested to Roosevelt that he meet my father and appoint him to some office. And, they got along very well together as two persons. Oh, well, they came to disagreement on something Roosevelt wanted to do toward the end of Dad's first year in the Treasury. And, Roosevelt asked my father to give him an opinion that it would be lawful for the President to use the funds of the RFC (Reconstruction Finance Corporation) to buy gold at an enhanced price. And, the theory that the President had been advised on, but not by my father, was that doing that would enhance the prices of commodities generally and that would lead to prosperity and greater employment. My father said, "Mr. President, I have to tell you that theory is nonsense. Whoever advised you to that effect really was totally wrong; it would not have that effect at all." But he said, "If you wish to do it, I could not stand in the way. The trouble is that Congress has explicitly made it unlawful for you to do what you want to do and this is what the statute says." And the President said, "Well, isn't there a little wiggle in that statute?" My father said, "No, I don't think so and the intent of Congress was to prevent it, certainly." And he said, "As long as you own the Congress, Mr. President, why don't you go to Congress and get the law changed?" And the President said, "Well, I'm going to see if I can't do it by executive authority." And Dad said, "Well, in that case, I think you are entitled to have a new Undersecretary of the Treasury." And he resigned. And Roosevelt got an opinion from the General Counsel of the RFC that he could do this, a man named Stanley Reed. And,

his reward for that opinion was to be made Solicitor General and later, a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

*Q: During this time….first place, living with your father, was he a man…I mean, you know, his stature lingers on, but was he somebody who laid down the law? How did you find him?*

ACHESON: No, no. He was pretty strict about fundamental things like telling the truth and trying to be prudent about personal finances, and stuff like that. But, he was very personable, very witty and he liked fun and he'd take us ice skating. He took me skeet shooting; took me quail shooting and did a lot of things that were…he enjoyed….He liked people, liked having fun. He loved humor; he had a keen wit and loved using it and it made him very popular with his friends. Socially, he was a very attractive, popular, personable guy and my mother, although she was a very beautiful woman, was quite shy and rather withdrawn. So Dad was really sort of the point person in their social interaction with other people.

*Q: Well, did you have the feeling as a kid, sort of sitting at the feet of….*

ACHESON: Yeah.

*Q: ….that you were part of a group, a circle….because the New Deal was a much more collegial thing than…I mean it really turned Georgetown and that whole area into a…*

ACHESON: Now, when the New Deal started, I was 12 years old.

*Q: Yeah, but still.*

ACHESON: I wasn't aware of...

*Q: You know, little kids sitting in corners with big ears.*

ACHESON: Well, later, I would say by the time World War Two is approaching, I certainly had that feeling. When my father first went into the State Department as Assistant Secretary in 1941, there was a lot more of that feeling.

*Q: Yeah.*

ACHESON: But, when I was much younger, family was family and I didn't think my father was a very important person and he never said or did anything that made me think so.

*Q: Well, let's sort of turn to you. As a kid, where did you go to school before you went to Groton?*

ACHESON: I went to St. Alban's School in Washington DC. Before that I went to the Potomac School in the city – now a country school. There is still the big brownstone building at the top of California Street that I went to school at.

*Q: How were you as a student?*

ACHESON: I was an indifferent student until I got to St. Alban's. At St. Alban's I became a really quite good student, and at Groton I was a very good student. I was either first or second in my class.

*Q: Well, you were at St. Alban's and before that to when? I mean, how old were you?*

ACHESON: At St. Alban's from I think'31 to '35. I graduated from Groton in 1939.

*Q: So St. Alban's would bring you up to about 14 years old.*

ACHESON: Right.

*Q: How about…what…were you much of a reader?*

ACHESON: Yes. I read a lot.

*Q: What sort of things? Were there any books?*

ACHESON: Well, I loved nature books. I read the Jack London books, Call of the Wild. I read Thornton Bridges.

*Q: The Wind in the Wi…. Not The Wind in the Willows, but the… Mother West Wind.*

ACHESON: Yes. I read Ernest Thompson Seton, who was a great nature writer. He wrote about wildlife.

*Q: Was it Terhune (Albert Payson Terhune)…or something about dogs?*

ACHESON: No, I never read Terhune. I thought they were silly, actually. (Laughter)

ACHESON: I remember a cartoon that I enjoyed in the New Yorker magazine, a cartoon…a whole series called Literary Renegades. And, one cartoon showed a drawing of a collie sitting on the beach with everybody on the beach running around and pointing out to the water where someone was drowning and they were trying to get him to go and rescue him and the collie would have none of it.

*Q: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I mean, I remember those wonderful cartoons. There was one, The Day the Soap Sank at Ivory.*

ACHESON: Exactly. I read a lot of books. I took piano lessons, but not for very long. And I enjoyed reading a lot. At Groton, I was the first student to enter Groton in the third form. The first such student in about 25 years.

*Q: You usually start as a second former…*

ACHESON: First or second. So, the first few weeks I was at Groton…not having….the whole book-ordering system at Groton. No one had foreseen that there would be somebody entering in the third form, so I didn't have any books for about four weeks. Approaching Christmas vacation, I was in study hall one day, and the prefect came down and handed me a note which said "The Rector wants to see you." So, I thought this was going to be a disciplinary encounter of some kind and I was very apprehensive about it. And, I went into his study. He had this huge desk, probably as big as Mussolini's desk; I mean a great massive desk. And he was a pretty massive person himself – intimidating. So, I came in expecting to be chewed out for something and he said, "Congratulations, Boy. You've led your class for this term." I said, "Thank you, Sir." And he said, "And you have an added distinction: you've done it without having any books for a month!" (Laughter)

*Q: Well, let's talk about Groton. What was Groton like in your time?*

ACHESON: I think it was probably pretty much the way it was always, previously. Not like that now – at all. But, everything was well-ordered; scheduled. There were activities that ate up every minute of your life. There was breakfast in the morning in the dining hall. There were classes. Then the afternoon… Then there was lunch in the dining fall. Then there were sports periods, depending on the season of the year. I was a pretty adept tennis player and I started playing tennis in the spring. In the fall I had to play football, but I wasn't really much good at it; except, I was the only center who could make a perfect spiral pass to the back field. Trouble was I was so thin and so frail, at the moment the ball was snapped, the enemy line went right through me.

*Q: I might say that…*

ACHESON: But, I got really good at tennis.

*Q: …. this was a different era when they had….when actually the center would send the ball back in a spiral to the fullback or whoever it was…*

ACHESON: Yeah. Yeah.

*Q:….instead of the handoff, which came with the* t *formation of a later era.*

ACHESON: Yeah. Yeah. This was between your legs….

*Q: Yeah.*

ACHESON: …..old-fashioned, center pass.

*Q: Yeah.*

ACHESON: Anyway, in the evening there was a long study period after supper, which was in the dining hall. The day actually started with chapel – compulsory chapel every morning before breakfast; and Sunday you had chapel at 11 o'clock in the morning, and…no, I think it was earlier; I think it was 10 o'clock. And, then you had evening service, vespers at 5 or something like… 4 maybe. The rest of Sunday actually you were pretty free. You could play touch football; you could walk down to the river; or, you could play tennis. Depending on the season, you could do really anything you want. You were even allowed, on Saturdays and Sundays to walk to the village, Groton village, and get an ice-cream soda, or something like that.

*Q: Oh, this is high off the hog. I spent four years at Kent…*

ACHESON: Yeah.

*Q:… under Father Sill and we couldn't go into Kent, couldn't go across the bridge. We had an allowance of 35 cents a week, which you could spend on Saturdays at what we called the pop tent, and that was it.*

Speaking of which, did you… Kent was founded on the idea that everybody had to work and so we raked leaves and waited on tables. Were you doing that sort of thing?

ACHESON: Well, as a disciplinary matter, if you got demerits or black marks, you worked them off doing that: chopping wood…you weren't allowed to mow the lawn because they had machines doing that. But, very often you could…you were assigned to go and work in the baseball cage, or something like that.

*Q: Do any teachers stand out in your mind at Groton?*

ACHESON: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

*Q: Do you want to mention them? I always like to give a certain immortality to teachers, to mention them.*

ACHESON: Well, I particularly enjoyed William S. Cushing. I was a classics scholar; and in our senior year, sixth form, we were allowed to take a tutorial course of our own choice with a master who would teach that kind of stuff. And, I decided to take my tutorial in Greek; Bill Cushing was my mentor and master for that. And, Bill was a great guy. He was also the coach of the baseball team and he encouraged me to do the managership and I became assistant manager of the baseball team. But, the thing I remember about work with him was that we had a schedule; and we were going to read so and so by a certain date, then so and so by another day. We kept to that schedule. I was a very good classics scholar; I got the Groton Greek Prize and I think graduated *magna*

*cum laude.* We got ahead of schedule often enough so that when the grouse and quail season came along, Bill Cushing would say, "Well, let's take…" He said, "Next Saturday…" He said, "We're ahead of schedule. Next Saturday, let's take my dog and my old 20 gauge and we'll go out and drive up to New Hampshire and we'll shoot quail." We did that a couple of times and it was great fun. We talked about classics and my favorite Greek playwrights and his. It was really fun.

*Q: Well, you were at Groton from when to when?*

ACHESON: From '35 to '39.

*Q: Groton was seen as a seat of privilege, but the President was a Groton graduate. How did politics play there?*

ACHESON: Well, it was pretty obvious when I got there that most of the parents of my friends at Groton were totally opposed to Roosevelt.

*Q: He was a traitor to their class.*

ACHESON: That was a phrase you heard. It wasn't a very commonly used phrase but it's remembered historically because it sort of summed up their attitude.

*Q: I think of that cartoon – again <u>New Yorker</u> – "Let's go to the trans….. (two voices speak at once, cannot be made out)…*

ACHESON: Let's go down to the Trans-Lux and hiss Roosevelt.

But, certainly the faculty did not encourage that point of view, at all. There were, in fact, several members of the faculty, including my history professor, who were strong democrats, and one of them actually was a socialist who voted for Lemke. Norman Thomas and then Lemke.

*Q: First, let's stick domestically. What were you getting about events in the United States?*

ACHESON: By the time I got there, I think even people who didn't like Roosevelt were beginning to agree that the measures he had taken to break the Depression were necessary. And, it was sort of a grudging admission on the part of many of them, but that was the prevailing view.

The thing that began to impress itself, even more though than domestic stuff, was what was going on in the world. I was at Groton when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia, and I was at Groton when Neville Chamberlain sold Czechoslovakia to Hitler.

*Q: This is the Munich…*

ACHESON: Munich…

*Q: …crisis.*

ACHESON: And, the build-up of apprehension about a war in Europe was very strong by the time…certainly by the second year I was at Groton it was very strong.

*Q: Was the….*

ACHESON: Oh, by the way. I'll tell you this. I wrote a memoir, which you may or may not have seen in 1993, which was published by WW Norton, called Acheson Country, about life with my father and my family at their farm in Maryland; it got good reviews, too. An episode I told in that story, I will tell you now, was that my family took my younger sister and me to Paris, France, in 1938. And, one day, we were in Paris, my father said, "By the way, I have just learnt that Endicott and Mrs. Peabody are in Paris and I have invited them to come for cocktails to our suite at the Elysee Park Hotel. I thought, "Oh, no!" He said, "They'll be ok. Just relax and enjoy yourself." When they arrived, they were nice; they were very cordial. And then, a horrible moment. My father said to them, "What can I get you to drink?" And, Endicott Peabody….I thought my father had made the worst *faux pas* [French: literally – false step with the meaning of mistake] I could imagine. But, Endicott Peabody chimed right up and said, "Well, I think I'll have a gin and tonic." And Mrs. Peabody opted for a sherry. And then Dad turned to me and said, "What would you like?" and I thought, "Oh, god!"

*Q: You were 17 at the time or about.*

ACHESON: Yes. And then Mrs. Peabody said, "Oh, come on, David, we're all on holiday." So I said, "I'll have a French beer." Then we had a very nice time with the Peabodys. They stayed about an hour and when they left….The Rector and my father got talking about the crisis in Europe and Peabody ventured the opinion that he admired Neville Chamberlain. He had met Neville Chamberlain. He thought all of Neville Chamberlain's friends, all the people who knew him, thought he was a gentleman, honest, conscientious. And dad said, "Well, do you have any news about Winston Churchill?" And Peabody said, "Well, the people I know don't think he is a gentleman at all." – which is actually quite a common view at that time.

*Q: Yes, yes!*

ACHESON: So, finally, when they left, my father was laughing as they went out the door. And I said to him, "What are you laughing at?" and he said, "You know what the Rector said about Churchill and Chamberlain is so interesting." He said, "You know, if Chamberlain were a student at Groton, he would surely be Senior Prefect. If Churchill were a student at Groton, he would be kicked out in a week. But Churchill notices what is happening here and Chamberlain does not."

*Q: Was the school, as you were going through, was it…was Anglophilia predominant?*

ACHESON: Yes. A mild case of Anglophilia. The Rector, of course, had been partly educated in England. And, so...the British Public School was almost an explicit model for Groton.

*Q: The form system and all that.*

ACHESON: The form system, the prefect system, the required chapel, the high degree of organization of student life, and all that business.

*Q: I might add for somebody who is reading this later, the prefect system – these are senior boys who run the student body in a way, with adult supervision.*

ACHESON: Right. I was never a prefect. I was not that….put it this way. To be a prefect you had to show some degree of enthusiasm for the system, which I never did.

*Q: Well, I didn't even come close. I still go to the….I went to the 60th Anniversary, 60th Reunion and the head prefect of our class was still kind of the head spokesman for our class.* (Laughter)

ACHESON: Our senior prefect was…my classmate was killed in a typhoon on a destroyer which capsized in the Philippine Sea.

*Q: Oh, that was that horrible typhoon in 1944 in which we lost three destroyers ….*

ACHESON: ….and about 1200 men…

*Q: I was talking to…*

ACHESON: ….in one storm…

*Q: Ambassador Huffington, who was an officer with Admiral Halsey and never forgave Halsey for going into ….for disregarding…*

ACHESON: I was on a DE (destroyer escort) in the 3rd Fleet at the same time and happily we were not with that formation and we were not in the immediate vicinity of that typhoon, but it was a horrible, horrible thing.

*Q: Actually, <u>The Caine Mutiny</u>, the novel, was based, was set on that particular event, if I recall.*

ACHESON: Back to Groton. Anyway, looking back on Groton, I really had a good time at Groton. I enjoyed playing for the tennis team. I did very well academically. I made some friends there, some lifelong friends.

I discovered to my astonishment that my father really hated the school when he was there. I once asked him, years later – I mean like sometime in the 1960s. His closest friend, also a friend when he was at Groton, was Averell Harriman. I had lunch with Averell one day, who was always very close to our family and we got talking about Groton and I said, "What was Dad like at Groton?" Averell was 2 years ahead of Dad and brought him onto the Groton crew. They became friends through rowing. Averell said, "Oh, Dean hated Groton." So, the next time I saw my father I asked him, "Why did you send me to Groton? Averell said you hated the school." "Well," he said, "Averell is right. I did hate the school." I said, "Well, why did you send me there. I enjoyed it but…" He said, "I thought the reasons I hated the school, would be reasons why it would be good for you." (Laughter)

*Q: This is behind an awful lot of young boys who went to these schools. When I went to camp, I mean, it was…I needed the discipline and I sure as hell got it.*

ACHESON: Sure. Completely.

*Q: Did the military loom as far as…when you were getting ready to graduate? Were you thinking of…Was the thought that, "Gee, we might get into a war – or Europe might get into a war….."?*

ACHESON: By 1939, when I graduated, my father had said more than once, that a European War was certain and when I was getting ready to go to Yale, he urged me to go into one of the ROTCs (Reserve Officer's Training Corps), Naval or Army, so that I would be commissioned. He said it would be better than being drafted, and "in any event you are going to be in a war, because there's going to be in a war and we will be in it." So, I did that. I followed his advice and took Naval ROTC at Yale.

*Q: Was there much of a following of the rise of Hitler and Mussolini?*

ACHESON: Yes, very much – at Groton even there was. And, I remember Richard Irons, who was my outstanding history teacher at Groton, used to talk constantly about the need for collective security. It was the first time I ever heard the phrase 'collective security'. He said the United States and Europe had to bond together in some system of collective security. And, of course, Roosevelt found that to be politically very, very hard. He wanted to do it, tried to do it and eventually succeeded in doing it, but kind of late in the day.

*Q: Well, was there any sort of…of course, you were in an eastern school with sort of the eastern establishment, as it became known, but was there any feeling of sort of the equivalent to the (I guess it started a little later) …but the <u>America First</u> movement, of isolationists?*

ACHESON: Not at Groton.

*Q: No, this would be at Yale.*

ACHESON: There was at Yale; strong at Yale; quite strong at Yale. But, at Groton, it was quite the opposite; and I think that was because of the tenor of thought that you got from the faculty and the Rector, himself.

*Q: Well, then, you graduated in 1939. Did you know where you were going?*

ACHESON: Well, I knew I was going to Yale?

*Q: Why Yale?*

ACHESON: Well, my father, of course had been there. About three, two years before that, my father had said one day when we were having dinner, he said, "Well, David, you ought to give some thought or start thinking about where you want to go to college." And I said, to his surprise, "Oh, I know where I want to college." He said, "Oh, really. Where is that?" I said, "The University of Pittsburg." He said, "Why?" So I said, "Because they had the best football team in the United States."

*Q: Well…*

ACHESON: He said, "Well, that is certainly one factor. But you ought to consider all the factors and one factor you might consider is that if you go to Yale, I'll pay your tuition." (Hearty laughter)

*Q: So much for the cathedral of learning.*

ACHESON: Right.

*Q: So, you went to Yale from when to when?*

ACHESON: Started in the fall of '39 and graduated …We were accelerated, so instead of graduating in June of '43, which was our nominal class date, we were pushed out in December of '42 and commissioned….if you were in the ROTC, you were commissioned on the same date.

*Q: What was Yale like in '39?*

ACHESON: You know, it was remarkably like Yale probably was in the '20s. There was very little – initially anyway, there was very little awareness, except by a handful of people. I remember, Kingman Brewster was two classes ahead of me and he was already a strong student voice to stay out of war and for the America First point of view, with which I strongly disagreed. But, the student body as a whole at Yale wasn't as much concerned about the world as it was about the next football weekend, or the next debutante party in New York.

*Q: By the way, at Groton, I take it girls were not part of….I mean they weren't even going there, but as far as dating, did you have places….?*

ACHESON: We had one dance a year where we could invite girls to come live on the campus, stay in the house of a member of the faculty or in a parents' house with a chaperone and you had the dance and then there was a lunch for everybody the next day and then they went home. But, that was the extent of it.

*Q: Coming back to Washington, was there much of an active social life when you were coming back from Groton?*

ACHESON: Yeah. At that age there was, sure. And, I had a lot of friends at Groton who invited me both when I was at Groton and later when I was at Yale to come down to New York to all the parties that were going on there. I'd stay with them at their parents' house. But, yeah, I would say social life from our point of view as students didn't seem to be the slightest bit constrained by the imminence of any war crisis – not at all.

*Q: At Yale, what sort of courses were you taking?*

ACHESON: Well, I took English lit. I took German; I had two years of German at Groton and took German. I took Greek; I had in fact two courses in Greek. There was a required science course, so I opted for Geology.

*Q: Welcome to the club. That's what I did too. Science was not my bag.*

ACHESON: What else did I take? History, of course. I had two history courses: one in foreign relations and one in just straight American History. That changed, of course, from year to year; but I remember I got particular pleasure out of reading in the English lit. courses.

I'll tell you an amusing story. In the first year, I took a course called Daily Themes. What happened in Daily Themes was that you wrote a short paper for each class – two classes a week. And, the professor would select two papers to read aloud and he'd first read one paper without identifying the author and then you'd discuss that paper and you'd debate the criticisms. And, it became kind of a literary criticism course. And, one day, I remember, he read my paper. A friend of mine was sitting right behind me in class. And, he read my paper and then there was an animated discussion of my paper and, when the discussion was over, he said, "Well, I would say to the writer of this paper there is much here that is original and much that is true, but I also have to say that which is true is not original and that which is original is not true. (Hearty laughter) When we left the class, my friend behind me said, "That was your paper, wasn't it?" I said, "Actually, it was. How did you know that?" Then he said, "Your ears turned red." (Laughter)

*Q: Did events in Asia pass your radar?*

ACHESON: That's a good question. Yeah, definitely. The 1931 invasion of Manchuria was still being talked about when I was at Groton; when I entered Groton. And, I was still at Groton in 1937, when the Japanese invaded Mainland China.

*Q: Yes, and then there was the Panay Incident.*

ACHESON: And then there was the Panay Incident. That was in 1937.

*Q: Did you get much history of the Far East in your….? I was going to say, this is a big gap in our education. We get a lot of European history, but not much…*

ACHESON: Some was offered at Yale, but nothing at Groton, nothing, nothing. There was also, when I was at Groton, there was also a major gap in art - very little teaching of art; only on sort of a special basis and very shallow, at that and nothing about Oriental Art, at all.

*Q: Did any professors at Yale stick out in your mind?*

ACHESON: Sure, absolutely. I would say Professor Hubbell in Greek; Arnold Whitbridge in English Lit.; Nicholas Spykman in Foreign Relations. He had been in the Dutch Colonial Service back in the '20s and he had been stationed in Batavia, in what is now Indonesia...

*Q: What became Jakarta?*

ACHESON:… and he used to say, "Now, today we will talk about fascismus and communismus. (Laughter)

*Q: Did you pick up any feel about colonial policy from him? Particularly, the Dutch colonial policy was not very benign.*

ACHESON: Not enlightened at all, no. No, he never talked about that. He never talked about it. And whether he thought it was irrelevant or whether he just was not happy with it and didn't want to…I don't know, but he never talked about it.

*Q: Did you pick up whether any of your colleagues were infected a little by attraction to Marxism, communism and all that? You know, youth and all that sort of thing.*

ACHESON: Actually, I was in the Yale Political Union, of which I later became president. We had the three-party model under the British parliamentary system. There was a Labor Party and there were a couple of members of the Labor Party that really were socialists and fairly radical socialists. They might have been veering towards communism, but they weren't at all sympathetic with the Soviet Union and they were all sort of thinking about it in terms of benign equality.

By the way, my father, after…years later, I remember many occasions we'd be going to church Sunday morning and at that time we went to St. John's Church in Georgetown. Mother would say, "Dean… " – we'd all get our hats and coats on and get ready to go and dad would still be there reading the paper and mother would say, "Dean, aren't you coming to church?" And he'd say, "No. Groton has put me into a permanently surplus position."

*Q: I've used that.* (Laughter)

*Q: At Yale, was there a strong movement or sympathy for the British when the war started or particularly when the blitz started?*

ACHESON: Not particularly. First of all there was no underlying latent Anglophilia at Yale. There was, of course, sympathy with the British during the blitz, but it wasn't anything that reared its head in normal conversation. People didn't talk about it much. We followed it in the newspaper. The first thing I was aware of at Yale was a – which surprised me – maybe it should not have, but it did – a strong America First isolationist position. It turned out the most articulate students, who wanted to talk about it and lead discussions of it, were of that opinion; and people who were interventionist minded and more international minded, were, for some reason, less articulate.

*Q: Well, this of course, to a certain extent repeated itself with the Vietnam War, didn't it?*

ACHESON: I think so; yes, yes.

*Q: There is something about being against something…*

ACHESON:…particularly at that age.

*Q: Right, right.*

ACHESON: You have to remember – and I am sure you do – there was such sentiment of pacifism in the '30s, reacting from the slaughter of World War I that that was still strongly felt at Yale by a lot of people.

*Q: And, of course, there were the merchants of death….*

ACHESON: Right; right.

*Q: I mean all sorts of things. Also, were we dragged into it Europe-wide? We can see beyond it.*

ACHESON: Right. Right.

*Q: How about the faculty? Did they seem….?*

ACHESON: The faculty was not isolationist minded, at all that I recall. I never got that sense from anyone on the faculty. The person I got to know best on the faculty was Whitney Griswold, who later became president. Whit was a very strong internationalist and had actually written his Ph.D. thesis, which later appeared in the form of a published book, on U.S. Far East Policy. I think it took the attack on Poland to convince everybody at Yale that this was something we were all in together.

By the way, when Whit was made president – we were quite good friends by then – I called him up and said, "Whit, did you ever think you would be President of Yale?" and he said, "No." But he said, "I think that it may have something to do with the fact that my roommate was Paul Mellon." (Laughter)

*Q: Did you get any feel for Yale at the time of…was there an attempt to sort of break down what you could only call the class system of….you know, just by coming out of…. how you did you came…you'd be considered in American terms of that times, the upper class and there were people who were coming up, but weren't born to…*

ACHESON: I have to tell you that I got no sense at Yale that there was any self-consciousness about that. I wasn't aware of it myself. The truth is, coming from Groton, Yale was a really democratic place by comparison. None of us thought that Yale would have been – Yale or any of us would have been regarded as elitist at all. We never thought that way.

*Q: What about minorities, particularly blacks or even Jews, at the time? Was this at all…*

ACHESON: Well, we had some Jewish students and I knew several of them. A couple of them were friends of mine and still are, actually. And, I think they are both still alive – I'm glad to say. One, in fact, is my – has been my financial advisor. He's very good. There were no blacks when we were at Yale.

*Q: Well, did you get any feel for…trying to…at the time of…I'd only call it the American form of anti-Semitism? Was that at all an issue?*

ACHESON: No. No, totally unaware of it. Never had any sense at Yale that people were anti-Semitic. And, you might've thought that there'd have been some discussion of attitudes of that kind by the faculty, but there wasn't, at all.

*Q: How did Pearl Harbor hit you all?*

ACHESON: Well, it, of course, hit us very suddenly. And, I remember I was throwing a baseball with a friend in the courtyard at Davenport College at Yale when somebody yelled out of the window, "Hey, the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor!" I knew where Pearl Harbor was because I was in naval ROTC. But, somebody else from the campus was walking by and he said, "Where the hell is that?"

*Q: My brother was on a battleship at Pearl Harbor.*

ACHESON: Yeah. Was he? Which one?

*Q: The Maryland. It was inboard of the Oklahoma. He was of the class of '40 of the Naval Academy. So, the Oklahoma took all the torpedoes and capsized. So, the Maryland…close call.*

ACHESON: Boy. Yeah. Close call.

*Q: How did you find ROTC?*

ACHESON: I liked it, actually. But, a funny thing happened. Well, first of all, I liked it because it was well-run. The Commandant of the ROTC unit was a Commander in the regular Navy named Wilder Baker, who was later Operations Officer for the Third Fleet. He was a really nice guy and competent. The faculty for the ROTC was mainly non-commissioned officers. We had a career Chief Gunners Mate, who was very good as a teacher. He knew his stuff.

*Q: The Navy, particularly at that time, the chief petty officers were…*

ACHESON: Oh, yeah. They were the mainstay. And he said…one thing I remember vividly, he said, "I don't do this for the joy of teaching, although" he said, "I like it. But I don't do it for the joy of teaching. And I don't particularly do it because I like you guys; although I do like you guys." He said, "The reason I do it is because, if I don't, you guys will be as much a danger to the navy as the Germans or the Japanese." (Laughter)

*Q: Well, after Pearl Harbor, did the pace pick up in ROTC?*

ACHESON: I would say in the last year I was there it picked up. Yale didn't look far ahead, I have to say. Henry Stimson came and made a speech at Yale when I was there. When he closed his speech, he was talking about accelerating the academic course…

*Q: He was Secretary of the Army...*

ACHESON: He was then Secretary of War, as they called it.

*Q: That's right. Yeah.*

ACHESON: And he closed his speech by saying, "Gentleman, you are living on borrowed time." After that, the faculty began to take measures to speed things up. But, in fact, we were getting so near the end, most of the speed up occurred in the last year I was there.

*Q: Because, I mean the colleges…the pool dried up.*

ACHESON: Yeah. True.

*Q:…except for…you had….did you have a 90-day wonder course, and that sort of thing? Had that started yet?*

ACHESON: Not at Yale. They had one at Northwestern, which was famous – V-7 course (ph?). Later, they might have had it, but I am not aware of it.

*Q: In the ROTC, did you have any…where you pointed towards any particular branch of the navy, or did you know or were you…?*

ACHESON: Actually, no, because the deal was understood that we would be given assignments at the convenience of the navy. The day we graduated we got our diplomas, our commissions and our assignments in the same instant; and some of my classmates in the naval ROTC were assigned to ships at sea, some to battleships, some to destroyers. I and at least seven or eight of my classmates were assigned to the sub-chasing training center in Miami for another course; and then we were assigned to ships when that course was over. I was assigned first to a small sub-chaser that was actually in the building yards and not completed and I had to cope with paper-work and all that.

*Q: Let's talk about the sub-chasers.*

ACHESON: Well, we finally got the ship finished at a boatyard in Delaware and took it down to Miami for shake-down. In Miami, I heard about the DE program. I thought that spending the war poking around the coast of the United States on a little sub-chaser was not a great prospect; so, I asked to be assigned to a destroyer escort. Because it was early enough in the program, they were really looking for people to man these ships. So I was assigned to a destroyer escort that was just about to be commissioned in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. We went to Bermuda for shake-down and then headed out to the Pacific.

*Q: Do you want to explain what a destroyer escort was?*

ACHESON: Ok. A destroyer escort might be described in today's advertising terms as a Destroyer lite – L-I-T-E. The ship was 300 feet long; it had a crew, as I remember, of about 180 men; officer complement of about 6. Our captain was a regular commander. Our executive officer was a really excellent, I mean world-class yachtsman who knew more about navigation and boats and sail than probably our regular navy captain. He later became captain, when we were out in the Pacific, when our first captain was assigned to a DD, as we called them, a regular destroyer. The ship had, initially, one three inch gun fore and aft, a battery of 40mm anti-aircraft guns on each side of the ship and a battery of 20mm anti-aircraft guns on each side of the ship. So, we could throw up a lot of fire power in an air attack. Well, three inch guns were virtually useless and we did target practice with them. A DE rolled and pitched enough so that you knew you weren't going to hit anything with those guns and they were not easy to train. You had to do it with wheels.

*Q: Yeah, with wheels.*

ACHESON: With an anti-aircraft battery you could just move it around yourself, so that you could actually fix on a target. Later my ship was sent back to San Francisco to have five inch guns replace the three inch guns. When we were going back for that purpose we stopped in Pearl Harbor. A destroyer escort came through, headed west, whose communications officer had been taken off with an emergency appendectomy before they left San Francisco. The Commander of Personnel for the Pacific Fleet had what they called Type Commanders at Pearl Harbor. One dealt with all the problems at personnel and armament and repairs regarding battleships, another with aircraft carriers, another with cruisers, and another with destroyers; and the Type Commander for destroyers was, in fact, our personnel officer. We were just about to set out for San Francisco when I got a TBS radio message to report to the Personnel Director, with a com desk tag.

So, I took a launch over to headquarters and the guy said, "Acheson, we really have to have you on the ship that's headed west and does not have a communications officer. Their codes are in a mess, and they failed the Admiral's inspection; and you have to take charge of that and straighten it out." So, I said, "Ok." And he said, "Here's your orders."

*Q: How much experience did you have by then?*

ACHESON: Well, I had been assistant communications officer for a year and I went out for another 20 months as communications officer.

*Q: Had you had any combat experience prior to going – I mean as assistant….?*

ACHESON: Oh, yeah.

*Q: What was the name of the DE?*

ACHESON: The destroyer escort I was first on – we were in the Leyte Gulf exercise – was called the U.S. Coolbaugh, DE214.

*Q: Want to talk about your…*

ACHESON: Absolutely. We escorted everything: merchant ships, tankers; but most of the time we were on combat operations escorting the…what we called the jeep carriers – the converted aircraft carriers which started out as tanker hulls or cruiser hulls.

*Q: Kaiser was putting these out, wasn't it?*

ACHESON: No, no. These were ships that had originally been cruisers or fleet tankers and had everything taken off the top; a flight deck put on; cleaned out the insides to make a hanger deck. And there were a lot of those ships. Yeah. Kaiser did make some later, but the first ones were converted.

*Q: Want to talk about that experience?*

ACHESON: Sure. We were doing sort of island to island work for a long time. Initially, we were based at Guadalcanal and Tulagi and the Solomons. Then we moved up to the Admiralty Islands – what was that base called? Well, I'll remember it in a minute. Then we moved up to New Guinea, to….

*Q: Well, had the battles along the Slot and Guadalcanal taken place by that time?*

ACHESON: Yes, they had.

*Q: So, what…*

ACHESON: There were still islands that had not been taken and we would often escort troop ships and other ship to some of those islands. Then, we moved up to the north coast of New Guinea to Humboldt Bay, Hollandia. And, at that time, the entire south west Pacific command was headquartered at Hollandia. MacArthur had this big complex, a huge fresh-water lake called Lake Santani, about a 10-minute drive from Humboldt Bay. And, Humboldt Bay was a big anchorage with major facilities. I went ashore one day with the captain and the exec (executive officer) and the communications officer – I was assistant communications officer on that ship – my first DE. The briefing – this big Quonset hut and nobody knew what the next operation was, at that point. At the meeting, all the orders and operation plans were handed out in a sealed packet; and we were to study that on board; but, meanwhile, we got this briefing. This guy pulled down this big map and took his pointer and put it right on _____ and said, "That's where…. ."

*Q: What was the feeling that you got from your colleagues about MacArthur at the time?*

ACHESON: Well, all of us had read a lot about him at the time and it was the next bag. He was, indisputably, a brilliant soldier. You probably have heard, or knew, that he had the highest marks ever given at West Point. In World War I, he was the youngest Brigadier General commissioned – in World War I; and, got the Medal of Honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War I; so, he was a legendary commander. We knew that he had fallen out with Roosevelt and was regarded as a sort of fascistic-minded guy; but, he was also regarded as a brilliant strategist - and a big publicity hound. So the Navy tended to be skeptical of MacArthur. But, the islanding-hopping mode of campaigning probably was the right one; and inevitably, the only one that was possible; and it was done quite well.

So, we set off then to Leyte Gulf in a convoy, with four aircraft carriers, four or five other destroyer escorts and what was then called a command ship. It was basically a troop ship, except instead of carrying troops, it carried staff and a huge concentration of communications equipment. And, when we got to our station in Leyte Gulf, we were ordered to run an anti-submarine beat in the gulf. The planes took off from the carriers to cover the troop ship landings on the beach.

And, the next thing we knew, the very first kamikaze attacks of the war took place before our eyes. The first two planes that ever exercised a kamikaze mission came out of nowhere and dove on the U.S.S. Santee, one of the aircraft carriers we were with - huge explosion and a lot of men on the deck were blown into the water. In two minutes time, the U.S.S. Suwannee was hit by two kamikazes and so in no time we had a couple hundred men in the water, two carriers on fire and general pandemonium going on. We were ordered to maneuver the ship around and pick up survivors from the water. We picked about 90 people, 90 men, and brought them on board and laid them out on the deck. Many of them had really bad burn wounds and we didn't have enough tannic-acid jelly, which was the immediate first aid medication to do the job. But, our mess attendant turned out to be a real hero, because he knew that tea contains high tannic acid so he immediately brewed up a lot of tea, and we then made cold compresses of tannic acid to put on these burn wounds.

We had these guys on the deck for several days; because, shortly after the attack, we had other aero planes come in for attack and our aero planes shot most of those down. A couple more came in at low levels and our DE and some other DEs shot them down. And then, it turned out that the Suwannee really had to go back to port because of damage to its engineering room and it wasn't clear that they could really make, could really maneuver. The Santee, although it was badly hurt on deck, could still launch planes on the catapults and the hanger deck was not damaged and that was going to stay on station, at least for the duration of that operation. But, we were ordered that same day, to head back to Humboldt Bay with the Suwannee and escort it back to port, and that's what we did.

But, before we left with the Suwannee, a strange thing happened. I was asleep in my bunk in the middle of the night, and I was due to go on watch in about an hour or so. The radio man came down, and he said….the chief communications officer, my superior, was actually on deck watch. The radio man came down to me and he said, "Mr. Acheson, there's a message here that's really strange. I wish you'd come up and look at it." So, I went up to the radio shack and there was a message from com 7th Fleet to com Pacific Fleet CINCPAC, and the message said, "Where is task force 34?" That is Halsey's force. And, what had happened was that the unit of carriers just a few miles to the north of us was under air and surface attacks from Japanese battleships, cruisers and destroyers.

*Q: The Yamato?*

ACHESON: The Yamato had been sunk.

*Q: I thought the Yamato was sunk a little latter, but anyway.*

ACHESON: I don't know.

*Q: Try to remember.*

ACHESON: The Yamato had been hit. Most of the damage done to the surface, in that surface battle, was done by Japanese cruisers and destroyers. The Yamato might have been there.

*Q: I think the Yamato was there. I think this is the attack on Taffy four, or something.*

ACHESON: We were the Southern Force Taffy One. The first force hit was Taffy three; and Taffy two began to get some shell fire until Admiral Kurita decided to bag it – turned around and tried to go out through the straights. That's when the Yamato was sunk – going back out.

*Q: Yeah. I mean, this is that…..But this is…. Say, you were on the periphery of huge things.*

ACHESON: Yeah. This message which says, "Where is Task Force 34?"

*Q: Is that the one that says, "The whole world wonders"?*

ACHESON: Yeah; that's with padding.

*Q: That was padding, but it somehow gets sent straight.*

ACHESON: Anyway, I showed this to our skipper and he said, "I guess, this means that Halsey ain't there anymore."

*Q: Yeah.*

ACHESON: As far as we were attacked by Japanese surface forces, that is our ship, we saw shell splashes coming in and…but they were from over the horizon and I guess, we saw a couple of real big guys that were probably battleship shells. Then, it all stopped. That was when Admiral Kurita decided he had enough. As it turned out later, he thought the air attack was from Halsey's force; that he had not been successful in the decoy operation. But, in fact, *all the planes attacking the Japanese force were 7th Fleet planes from our carriers* (said emphatically).

*Q: It was really a remarkable thing. They were dropping anti-personnel things on cruisers and battleships.*

ACHESON: Right. Absolutely.

*Q: I highly recommend this book, called <u>The Last Charge of the Tin Can Sailors</u>*

ACHESON: Yeah. I read it. I read it; a very good book.

*Q: ...for somebody interested in the Battle of Leyte Gulf. So you caught sort of the periphery of this. Then, what happened? You took the….*

ACHESON: Then, we took the Suwannee back to Humboldt Bay. Then, our next operation was Lingayen Gulf, the other side of Luzon. We went in there with carriers and several troop ships for the landings in Lingayen Gulf. There had been fighting on that side of Luzon. Our troops had landed at Leyte and fought their way over there and were fighting in the ridges and river valleys that went down the west side of Luzon. When we got to Lingayen Gulf, the first assignment we had was to move around the Gulf and locate and weight down the dead bodies of Japanese and American troops that had been killed and were floating in the bay.

Then, the landings themselves, on that side of Luzon, turned out to be quite uneventful; and the troops that we landed there got ashore without getting shot up, but the troops who had landed on the other side, had fought there. So I guess it was something like two weeks between Leyte and Lingayen Gulf.

Anyway, shortly after that, we began moving further north. We went up to Iwo Jima for those landings. We escorted carriers at Iwo Jima. We also did some shell fire with our useless three inch guns at Iwo Jima to support the landing (laughs). We did not encounter any kamikazes up there.

*Q: Were you getting much shell fire from Iwo Jima, itself?*

ACHESON: No, no.

*Q: They really saved that all for the troop, or marines.*

ACHESON: Yeah, that's right. There weren't any large caliber coastal artillery that the Japanese had. They had, basically, field artillery. And they were, as you say, shooting at our troops, not at the ships off shore.

Then, later still, we went up to…an amazing experience. My first visit to Ulithi Atoll, which became the great Third Fleet base.

*Q: I remember that picture called Murder's Row, showing the carriers going up practically over the horizon.*

ACHESON: Well, it was amazing, because Ulithi Atoll – the atoll was about – I would say the bay, that is the water surrounded by atoll, was about 30 miles in diameter. The entire Third Fleet could anchor in Ulithi and they had this pretty sizeable shore base. I was just thunderstruck by the size of the basin and the number of ships that were concentrated there.

On the way up there, we fueled at sea. That was an amazing experience. I had the four to eight deck watch and we were going along at around probably 12-15 knots. And, when the sun started to come up, and looking over at the horizon, I must have counted 25 aircraft carriers, probably the same number of battleships, probably 50 cruisers, probably

100 destroyers and these rows, four, five or six rows of fleet tankers, just moving along, fueling on both sides. That was an amazing thing to see. I have never seen it again. But, when you saw that, you knew that the war was over.

*Q: Did you get involved in the typhoon?*

ACHESON: No, no; not at all.

*Q: What the feeling about Halsey at the time?*

ACHESON: Well, (sigh), the feeling was…first of all, the power of a typhoon is so impressive that everyone understood that you couldn't guarantee the safety of ships in a typhoon. The thing that made people question Halsey later was that he had permitted three destroyers, at least three destroyers, to continue on the course with the rest of his force, knowing that they were almost out of fuel and therefore very light in ballast and therefore very prone to capsize. That's when people began to really criticize him. Even then, the criticism was not as severe as the criticism of his abandoning San Bernardino Straits at the time of Leyte Gulf. That was his big sin.

*Q: Well, then, after this, you returned to Pearl Harbor on your way to San Francisco?*

ACHESON: Well, we were in Ulithi at the very end of the war. This was on my second ship. It was eerie, because when my ship came into Ulithi, instead of seeing this huge array of vessels across the entire atoll, there were only a handful of ships. Several of us went ashore to the officer's club, and the commander of the base, who was a nice guy, a commander in the navy and he said that he had just received order from CINCPAC to close the base. So he said, "I'll tell you what, we probably have a thousand cases of booze here; and I don't know, but it's going to take an awful lot of time for a few of us to drink it up, but we might as well start." So, we had several drinks with him at the officer's club.

The next day, I got radio orders. I had been out so long - over two years - that I had all these points: I had been married; I had sea duty all these many, many months over two years; and combat operations. So the point system, which was what got you out, I was very high in points and I hadn't even thought about it. But, the next day, I got a message from the base commander, that he had received a message from CINCPAC, which knew that our ship was there, that I was to be detached, report to the base commander at Ulithi for transportation back to the United States and de-activation to inactive duty.

*Q: Had the war ended at this point?*

ACHESON: The war had ended at that point.

*Q: Had you gotten involved at all in Okinawa?*

ACHESON: We were never at Okinawa. But, the very last operations we did have on my second ship was to go around to various parts of the theatre where there were thought to be Japanese troops still located that might or might not know the war was over. We were to acquaint them with the fact that the war was over. If we could manage that, and if we saw any troops at any of these former bases, islands, we were to let the 7th Fleet know.

*Q: Were you able to alert any…?*

ACHESON: The funny thing is that the only thing that we did see was in the middle of the ocean, out of sight of any land. We happened upon this big raft, bigger than this room. It had a lot of boxes and stuff on it – just floating in the water. We went over to have a look at it; brought the ship to maybe 40-50 feet off. There were two Japanese soldiers on the raft. Soldiers, I say; I don't know whether they were marines, or soldiers, or sailors – or what they were, but they had sort of tattered uniforms on. So, we didn't know if they knew the war was over. So, we went over closer, and we motioned for them.

We put down one of those landing nets that you can climb up – put it down over the side of the ship and then motioned for them to come over, to swim over. We got as close as we could without colliding with the raft and motioned for them to swim over. And, rather to our surprise, they were eager to swim over. We didn't really know if they could; but, apparently they could and they were eager to do it and they had figured that life on this raft was going to be short and unpleasant. And, so we guessed maybe they knew the war was over but, since they couldn't speak our language and we couldn't speak theirs, we couldn't really be sure. They came over, and we immediately tied them up and put them in the brig.

We had a little brig which had been used as a storeroom; we had to get all the stores out of the brig. Then we said, "Hey, how do you lock this damn thing up?" (Laughter) Nobody found a lock. We finally found a padlock somewhere and we put it on the brig. We would let these guys out to go to the bathroom and we brought food in for them which they ate very enthusiastically. Then they began smiling and grinning and having a great time and realized they were…now life was going to be very soft. So…how did this end?

It turned out they would motion at our sailors who were smoking cigarettes. It was clear that they wanted to smoke. So, what happened was that some of our sailors would pass cigarettes to them through the bars and then they would motion for the Japanese to write something, and they would hand them pieces of paper or cardboard or something and these Japanese would write. Whether they were saying "You are an Idiot" or whether were writing, "Thanks for saving our lives", we never knew.

Then the question was: what do we do with these guys. Being the communications officer, I was supposed to know these things. My captain said to me, "What do you think we ought to do with these people?" So, I said, "Well, where do your orders say you should take this ship next?" He said, "Well, I don't really have any orders right now, except to go back to…." – I can't remember whether we were going back to Lingayen or

back to Ulithi. I think we were going back to Lingayen. And, so I said, "My suggestion is that you take these prisoners back to Lingayen and bring them to the U.S. Army intelligence people at the Lingayen base; and, if the army doesn't have intelligence people there, give them to navy intelligence people; but let's get rid of them. And, obviously, the intelligence people will want to know what they know. And that's what I think you ought to do." And that's what we did.

I had been told to get off the ship, as I think I'd told you, in Ulithi. By the time I'd been there a couple of day, there were maybe six people on the base: the base commander, a skeleton crew and me, awaiting transportation home. Days went by, and no ships were coming to Ulithi. And, I asked myself, "Why would the Navy say 'Await transportation' at a base that's been closed?" Finally, I got the base commander to send a message to the destroyer base Type Commander at Pearl Harbor and say that I was still sitting there and no ships were coming through. And, we felt the reason was they all knew that the base was closed. So, that apparently had been an oversight. So, they then sent a message to…I don't know how the message went. I never found that out. But, the upshot was that a destroyer based in Yokosuka in Japan, came through Ulithi, picked me up and took me back to San Francisco.

Well, they were going back, anyway, of course. And then the question was: How do I get home? I was to go home and report to the commander of the Naval District in Washington, DC and await orders to inactive duty and release. My father tried to get Averell Harriman to put me on the Union Pacific, which of course Harriman ran and owned; and, they were so full up with military traffic, that it couldn't be done. I finally got a reservation on United Airlines to fly on a DC-3 from San Francisco to Washington DC. I think we made eight stops.

*Q: I am sure you did. This is a C-47.*

ACHESON: Yeah. A C-47 and four stops, and, it turned out, to get on it, the Navy Travel Office in San Francisco bumped a woman who was flying to Reno to get a divorce. [Laughter]

So, I felt sorry for her, but I thought, "Well, after all, what's important?"

*Q: I'm trying to grab history and I think this is a very interesting aspect of the military side. The next time….I like to put at the end things to pick up. One, you note that you were married, so I'll ask how did you meet your wife and about her background. And then, did you get any…while you were in the military, did you get any reflections of the fact that your father was in the State Department or not.*

ACHESON: None. None. Nothing. Nada.

*Q: Nothing. (Laughs) Ok, then we'll pick up…*

ACHESON: First of all, we were so far away, that Washington was not a concern to anybody. Secondly, my father was only an assistant; he was one of four Assistant Secretaries of State. Well, even today, because they have so many senior officers there. Then they have a Secretary, and Undersecretary – four is it – something like that. And, nobody in the Navy really cared about that.

*Q: Ok. So, we'll pick up what happened. You left in – was it '45 still?*

ACHESON: It was at the very end of October, 1945 that I got home. Or maybe it was at the end of November. I don't remember the date, but it was on the edge there. I determined at that time to enter the class, if I could get in, at the Harvard Law School, that began in January of 1946.

*Q: So, we'll pick it up there.*

ACHESON: Great.

*[Beginning of recording 1d of interview with David C. Acheson. Same date. This picks up in the middle of a following conversation just after the pervious portion of the conversation concluded.]*

ACHESON: And no one really thought of the aftermath and all of the issues that would later be raised by nuclear weapons. People were anxious to get home, to get out.

*Q: Well also, in the Navy, particularly after Okinawa and the Kamikaze attacks, which were really the most devastating thing in the Navy, there was the feeling cranked up for Japan, of "Oh, my god, what is this going to mean?" particularly, as your destroyer escorts were you front line.*

ACHESON: That's right; they were the picket ships. And, although Okinawa was terrible in that respect, the first Kamikazes were the two that occurred on our ships – about as far as from here to the parking place (about 300 yards).

*Q: Today is the 7th of May, 2008. Interview with David C. Acheson. This is the second session.*

*David, you got discharged from the Navy when?*

ACHESON: In late October, 1945.

*Q: So, what did you want to do with yourself?*

ACHESON: Well, I had planned to go to law school. And, largely because of my father's urging, I decided to go to the Harvard Law School, which in retrospect perhaps was not a great idea.

*Q: Why not?*

ACHESON: I had to interview there. I had applied. The first class after I was released from the navy started in January 1946, so I lived in my parents' house during the interval. I was already married and my wife was at Bryn Mawr College. She would graduate in June of that year, '46.

So, I was interviewed at Harvard Law School by two professors. One was a very nice man who taught torts, by the name of Warren Seavey and he asked me some intelligent questions. Then a renowned tax lawyer on the faculty named Irwin Griswold interviewed me. He was just about to become Dean of the law school. Erwin Landis had been dean and he had retired. And Irwin Griswold interviewed me and later, years later we became law partners, Erwin and I, at the Jones, Day office in Washington. We were having lunch one day, and he said, "You know, I remember interviewing you at law school, and I recall," he said, "you wore your uniform. And, I wondered at the time if your were trying to impress me and earn equity for admission because of your uniform, because of the fact that you were in the war." I said, "No, Irwin. Actually, that was the only suit I had."

When I started law school, I was impressed by the fact that a huge percentage of the class were veterans. Because of the war, their normal graduation years had become compressed. So we had, in my class, people who had graduated from college in 1941, '42, '43 and '44. And, a lot of people showed up whom I knew and liked, who'd been at Yale. I had known them well there or known them at least a little bit. I made a lot of friends there and I liked the community a lot.

The problem with the teaching was that all of the faculty, with maybe one or two exceptions, were holdovers from the '30s. They were very smart; they knew their stuff; they were obviously very good lawyers; and, I would even say that the so-called Socratic method of teaching wasn't bad. People still argue about that. At Yale, they taught law; at Harvard you arrived at learning law by the process of argumentation, dialogue. It seemed to me unnecessarily slow. One practical thing that really bothered me a lot, which I think gave me a poor opinion of the Law School in those days, which I still carry, that is with these huge classes, numbering…except for the seminars, some of the classes numbered more than 300 students. Row after row after row of seats, and the damn law school had no amplification in these rooms and some of the faculty were getting on in years. There were two professors of corporate law; one taught a little differently and taught more corporate finance and one taught more or less the regulatory constraints on corporations. Ralph Baker and E. Merritt Dodd: they were quite old and rather frail, and their voices did not carry beyond the second row.

*Q: Oh, god.*

ACHESON: There was no amplification. Occasionally, I would get a seat in the second row. But, it was very difficult; so, we were borrowing each other's notes a lot and that wasn't a very satisfactory way to learn law. So, I came away from law school, when I finally succeeded in graduating, with pretty good marks, but not anything special.

*Q: There was quite a popular movie at one time called The Paper Chase.*

ACHESON: I read it; I saw it.

*Q: This was of course during the '70s. Did this portray, more or less, the system?*

ACHESON: Well, it portrayed the system, although with the obvious caricature. It did not really convey the tenor and the flavor of law school. There was too much, I thought, of caricature.

But, anyway, some of the professors I really enjoyed a lot. Barton Leach was a really great teacher. He was a great ego. He was very vain; he was a very tall, handsome guy – very smart. He taught property law and all the quirks of wills, estates, conveyances of property and all the tricky things that can go wrong if you don't do it right. He made it very interesting and witty.

*Q: Did you find…when you were learning from your fellow students, was this a major part of…?*

ACHESON: That's a good question; because it brings out that we had what were called law clubs. The students joined various law clubs. Those so-called clubs weren't really clubs at all, they were discussion groups. They were pretty well established. I joined a group called The Scott Club, named after Austin W. Scott, who was a very distinguished and very senior professor of civil procedure. He made it very interesting. He took you back in history in British Common Law to the Wars of the Roses and stuff like that, which made it kind of interesting. I liked him very much; we got along very well.

They ran us straight through the summer. We were anxious to get out quickly, and the law school was anxious to have us out quickly, because we were bottling up the normal flow of students through the law school. So, we ran right through the summer of '46 and right through the summer of '47 and we graduated in May of '48.

I was terribly amused by a couple of things - little anecdotes. Austin Scott, in almost –I think it was, actually, the first day of class, taking us into civil procedure. He acquainted us with the fact that in British law, acts of parliament are cited with the name of the king, the number of the king and the year of his reign. So, the first question in the first lecture was addressed to me. We had prepared, of course, for that class – at least I had; one was expected to. So, he said, "Now, Mr. Acheson, you will notice the citation of this act of parliament and what do you think it means?" And, I said, "Well, Sir, it means that the act of parliament was passed in the reign of Henry IV in the 7th year of his reign." He said, "Right." And, he said, "And, suppose the act of parliament had been passed in the successive reign; how would that citation read?" Well, I had read a lot of Shakespeare, including his Chronicles, so I said, "that would read, Henry V and the year of his reign." And he said, "Now, for the trifecta - Acheson: if it were passed in the subsequent king's

reign, how would that read?" I said, "That would read, Henry VI, and whatever the year of his reign." He said, "Well, Mr. Acheson, you're right, but it isn't always that way."

Then, Barton Leach was a character. He had been in intelligence in the 8th Air Force. He was a Lieutenant Colonel – when he came out, anyway.

In my class there was man who had graduated from college in 1940, named Ramsay D. Potts, who had been a notable hero in the 8th Air Force. He had flown as a pilot any number of B-17 raids over Germany. His plane had been shot up a couple of times, but they had always landed safely; he had been very lucky and he was a very good pilot. And, he came out as a full colonel in the Air Force. You know, they promoted very rapidly.

*Q: Yes, there used to be jokes about signs: "No Colonels under 21 can be Served Alcohol."*

ACHESON: Right. And, in the 8th Air Force, he and Barton Leach had become friends. So, here was Potts in our class, taught by his junior. Leach loved to needle Potts about this. And he would often ask, when question time came, he would say, "Now, I'm going to call on Colonel Potts. Colonel Potts often has the right answer. We'll see if he has the right answer this time."

*Q: Did you find a veteran's spirit with your group - in a way, a sort of a – I want to say discontent. But you know, colleges have a leisurely pace and all this and the veterans coming out saying, "I want to get at it!"*

ACHESON: Right.

*Q: I mean, did you find a sort of disdain for all the minutia and all?*

ACHESON: I wouldn't say disdain, no. The morale was pretty high in the class, largely because there were so many veterans that they bonded very quickly and shared experiences. Some of them had common experiences, which they had not known before they met at the law school. So, they were anxious to get out; and they were anxious to learn, because they realized that when they got out and got jobs, they would have some catching up to do. I didn't recall anything like disdain; impatience, yes, but not disdain.

*Q: Your father, by this time, was in the administration, wasn't he?*

ACHESON: He was. He became *the* undersecretary of state, which is the number two job, in the autumn of 1945. He succeeded Joseph Grew, who had retired.

*Q: Did you find any feeling about post-war policy or anything of this sort? George Marshall, of course, was the Secretary of State during most of the time. You were there during the famous '48 speech of Marshall at Harvard Yard?*

ACHESON: No. I was out just before that.

*Q: This was when the Marshall Plan was announced.*

ACHESON: Yeah. He spoke in '47, I think it was. No I wasn't out, but I didn't go to the commencement because we were not commencing.

My wife and I were invited to dinner at Barton Leach's house. Bart was married to a rather glamorous woman and he himself was a rather glamorous figure: very tall, rather handsome and witty and very smart and he knew it all. At the dinner – it was a very small dinner, it was very pleasant. And, Ramsay had been married to a British lady and so had Leach, so that was a bond.

We got sort of deeply into the martinis before dinner and Bart got very – well, he loved the martinis and he got very [inaudible] and rather maudlin, actually. After dinner, he asked Ramsay to come in alone with him to his study, and I stayed out with my wife and talked to Mrs. Leach. The next day, Ramsay told me what had occurred. He said that Bart had tears coming down his cheeks and he said to Ramsay, "I've got to say this to someone, Ramsay, and you happen to be the victim." Crying the whole time, he said, "It's been very painful for me, but I finally have come to terms with myself. I've had to realize that I'm not a genius, I'm merely brilliant."

*Q: Well, every life has a down side, you know.* [Laughter]

*Q: I don't think I've asked you but can you tell me a bit about the background of your wife and where you met her and all?*

ACHESON: I met her, because she and my sister Mary, now Mary Bundy, were at school together at the Westover School, in Connecticut.

*Q: My mother graduated from Westover…*

ACHESON: Did she? Really?

*Q: …back in probably 1916 or something like that.*

ACHESON: That's great. Yeah. I didn't know that. That's great.

They were in the same class and they became friends, largely because their fathers had been friends at Yale, in the same class and in the same senior society – a society called Scroll and Key. So, my sister Mary invited Pat to come down and spend some time during a summer at the farm. They did that together and they commuted with my father to Washington. This was all while I was in college. They enlisted in a typing school in Washington; they went in everyday and came out with my father. They became very good friends. That's how I met Pat.

*Q: Was there a discernible difference in a way, obviously in gross terms, between the outlook of the students coming out of Yale and the students who were coming out Harvard?*

ACHESON: I didn't notice any difference at all, none.

*Q: The thing I've always been impressed with is that so many graduates of Yale law end up in the political life, as opposed to Harvard; but that may be today's phenomena.*

ACHESON: I think that is a fair comment. I think that is because Yale Law School, in the '40s and '50s, and maybe even in the late '30s, taught law with a twist. It has often been described as a mixture of law and a liberal regulatory philosophy. At Harvard, there was no twist; it was just straight law. No one ever attempted to tell us anything about regulatory philosophy. Occasionally, it crept into the anti-trust course; it almost had to. That was a key different between Harvard and Yale.

We had, obviously, a lot of Harvard College graduates in our class at law school, but we had a surprising number of Princeton graduates. I think they exceeded the number of Yale graduates at law school. That surprised me.

*Q: I guess one reason might be that Princeton doesn't have a law school. So, with Yale…the natural attraction is that Yale is…*

ACHESON: That's probably a good answer, right.

*Q: Did you find yourself at all political?*

ACHESON: Yes, I was, and had been, really, for some time, an admirer of FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt). I think in my early years that admiration was naïve and uncritical; but nevertheless that's the way I felt about it.

I was not active in politics at law school, at all. I was active in politics at Yale. I think I might have mentioned that I was president of the Yale Political Union, which was the mock parliament with three parties. We invited distinguished guest speakers to come and speak on a resolution. And then, the three parties would debate the issue after the speaker had finished.

Just to flash back for a minute to that, because I don't think I told you this before. I got a lot of really interesting speakers. I got John L. Lewis. I got Dorothy Thompson. I tried to get Lindberg, but couldn't get him. Because I thought I had him for the two points of isolationism, but couldn't get him. In the back of my mind, I recall that the issue of the independence of India had become an issue during the war and had become a kind of a sore point, a difference between Churchill and Roosevelt.

So, I invited a charming and very intelligent man, who was an Indian, to come and speak. He had an official position: he was the Agent General of India, in Washington. Because

India was not yet independent, he was not a consul or ambassador. He was called the Agent General. I don't even know really what he did. He turned out to be extremely articulate, very polished, very charming and very sophisticated; and he wrote me a very nice letter afterward. We'd taken him to dinner after the thing and had a few drinks and talks with the few leaders in the Political Union. He wrote me a very nice letter and said that this was one the most memorable experiences of his career. I was flattered, but I didn't see how it could be that important to him.

Anyway, years later, in the 1980s, my wife and I got an invitation to dine at the Indian Embassy. Now, the agent general's name, he had been knighted, his name was Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai. When we got the invitation to dine at the Indian Embassy, the invitation was issued in the name of Ambassador Bajpai. I thought, "God, he can't still be living; he's my parents' age." So, we went. It turned out Bajpai was the son of Sir Girija Bajpai. He told me that evening that he was at Oxford University at the time. He is about my own age. And, after his father had been to Yale, he got a letter from his father saying that it was such a pleasant experience. And, he said to his son, "If you ever go to Washington, look up David Acheson." And his son (I doubt if I would have remembered such a thing) remembered it, and when he came to Washington as ambassador, he invited us to dinner. We met and had a delightful conversation. He was a very distinguished man, himself. That was a rewarding experience for me.

So, anyway, law school came to an end in May '48. I had been very attracted by a new thing in Washington, called the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission. It attracted me because it purported to harness the wartime technology to produce electric power and radio-active isotopes for medical research, and it was going to be a servant of mankind. I thought, "God, this is just great. I want to work for them." And, they were just putting together…the creation of the commission was in 1946; and, after they were created by statute, it took about a year for them to start getting organized so that by the time I graduated from law school, as a working organization they were only about a year old. The general counsel was a really nice guy, very conscientious and eager to do what he hoped the commission would do and to help it. So, I had applied for a job there, and I got it. So, I signed on as the most junior member of their legal stuff under a general counsel who was a wise and really good man.

*Q: To get a feel for the times was there a feeling coming either from your family, or from your self or your wartime experience of public service, or was there the feeling of "Oh, gee, I want to get out there and make money."?*

ACHESON: No, everybody at that time – I say 'everybody', but a lot of people – there was a very strong ethic that we talked about at law school - a lot of us - of doing some important public service. There were two schools of thought. One was go out in the world and make some money and when you become financially independent, then do your public service. Another school said that public service organizations offer more responsibility to young lawyers than the typical law firm or even corporation; so, if you want to attach yourself to something that is significant in the world, it's best to go into government or non-profits that are doing something experimental and important.

*Q: Was the situation still intact at that time, of where if you wanted to get into one of the big firms, you went and you spent seven years or something beavering away?*

ACHESON: Oh, yeah; absolutely.

*Q: So, if you took the other course, didn't this almost preclude you from becoming a partner in anybody because you wouldn't have had that seven years or would you bring something that could make up for that? How did it work?*

ACHESON: Well, a lot of people wanted to go into public service. They felt that in the post-war economy, the growth of 'lawyering' made it highly probable that they'd be able to get a job in a law firm, particularly if their record was good in what they were doing before and particularly if the field they were in before was one that offered some opportunities to law firms. I thought that all those things held true of atomic energy.

*Q: Certainly, it would appear to be.*

ACHESON: So, anyway, I signed on at the AEC and had a very good time there; I did well there and got compliments on my work there. I started in August of '48. My wife and I had rented a house in Georgetown – small house. We had one child, my daughter and a dog. I had a very good time there.

But, in September 1949, the Soviet Union exploded their experimental nuclear device, and that meant that the arms race was on. That meant that the Atomic Energy Commission quickly became hardly nothing more than a bomb factory for the Pentagon. And that totally dashed the hopes that I had had of moving into a rising field of activity, and lawyering along with it, that was really going to concentrate on the field of experimental power and experimental medicine and all that stuff. That became not only secondary, but almost not existent.

*Q: Was Lewis Strauss….*

ACHESON: Lewis Strauss was a member of a five-man commission. David Lilienthal was the chairman. It was a bipartisan group, and Strauss was very partisan and very vain and very difficult. But, it wasn't because of him that I left the commission. It was because I felt their mission just evaporated.

*Q: When you arrived there in…*

ACHESON: August '48.

*Q:…'48..You say you were a junior lawyer, but was there a feeling of "We're going to change the world!" ?*

ACHESON: Yeah. Very much; absolutely; very exciting.

*Q: What happened when the switchover came?*

ACHESON: Well, a lot of people left within the next year or two and started doing other things. I was one of the first to go, although I was the most junior. But, most of my friends there left either at about the same time or with the next year or so after me and went and did something else. And, some of them started to practice atomic energy law in the fairly narrow sense of representing those electric utilities which chose to build nuclear power plants.

And the licensing. All of them told me later that they found the whole licensing business for nuclear plants terribly tedious. It was boring. It took forever to get through the pipeline. I would say, for about 10 years, maybe more, possibly 15, there were enough nuclear power plants going up around the country to keep at least one small firm of lawyers in Washington pretty busy on that work. And, I could have gone into that work if I had chosen to, but nothing I heard about that kind of work made it seem attractive. Boring; boring work.

*Q: This is one of the things that struck me, is that laws often are the alternative to coming into the Foreign Service. The same group of people do this; some do both. But the Foreign Service, from what I know of, seems a hell of a lot more fun than the people who have to spend their particular seven years and then saying, "Well, I've worked on clause 13 of a contract between two giant companies."*

ACHESON: Yes. Exactly.

*Q: I don't think I asked you this before, but what was your attitude at the time, and then as time went on, towards the use of the atomic bomb against Japan and then later concerns about using atomic energy and its safety?*

ACHESON: My attitude towards the use of the bomb against Japan was unqualified approval. [General Laughter]

*Q: Obviously, being on a destroyer escort and getting ready to go into…*

ACHESON: You can quibble about whether…I think Henry Stimson, at one time, in the early discussions of the use of the bomb, before it was used at all, put forward the theory, "Look, why don't we drop this somewhere in Japan that's a desert or a jungle and try to minimize the number of people we kill and just demonstrate the power of this thing and see if that doesn't have some effect in pushing them towards surrender." But, apparently, overtures of that kind were made to the Japanese, which I did not know until much, much later; and they were contemptuously turned down.

Anyway, so where would I go from the Atomic Energy Commission?

*Q: But, during the short time you were with the Atomic Energy Commission, was there concern about the safety?*

ACHESON: Oh, the safety? There was an awareness that the normal nuclear power cycle would produce nuclear waste that would take a long, long time to decay. That was not regarded as a serious problem, because the volume was not that great and they thought they knew how to deal with it. And, in fact, it has never really been a problem; it has been a financial problem in part. The fact that there is nuclear waste on the ground has upset a lot of communities. There has been political opposition; but, in fact, all the horrible predictions of what would happen with all this nuclear waste around just have not happened. Now, at the time, of course, nobody could foresee where it was all going to go; but there wasn't great concern about that.

Parenthesis. Today, the answer is to reprocess plutonium and use plutonium as the fuel for electric power plants and that will vastly accelerate the decay of plutonium and it will become harmless in relatively short time. The problem is, there is so much political opposition to enrichment and the use of plutonium for that purpose, because of the theory that other countries will convert it to military use. The world is so opposed to that, that it is almost politically impossible to do it.

I have friends who were pioneers; in fact, I had lunch with one of them yesterday. He said, "It's a very simple answer, from an engineer's point of view; the problem is the political problem of making it happen."

*Q: So, where did you go? We are talking about 1949. By this time, had your father become Secretary of State?*

ACHESON: He had. He became secretary in January of 1949. And, he was shocked by the Soviet weapon's test.

*Q: Were you getting a seminar in foreign policy from your father?*

ACHESON: No, no. He was telling me a lot about what he was doing - trips he had taken and conferences and the origination of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and all that stuff. I followed that stuff very closely talking with him and he was very patient and generous in reporting on his own activity. He had a terrible time with Louis Johnson, who was the Secretary of Defense.

*Q: This sort of set the pattern and has continued.*

ACHESON: Yeah. Well, it was even worse in Johnson's case than it was say between George Schultz and Weinberger, because he was mentally ill at the time. His biographer won't admit that, but it's clear that he was.

*Q: This is Louis Johnson.*

ACHESON: Yeah. Louis Johnson.

*Q: His background was business, wasn't it?*

ACHESON: Law. He started a very successful law firm, Steptoe and Johnson. It began in West Virginia, his home state, and spread to New York, Washington and is now a very big, successful firm. In fact, my lady friend is the stepdaughter of one of Louis Johnson's law partners. When she was 13 years old or something – fairly early in her life – she remembers commuting on the train to New York with her stepfather, with Louis Johnson, and a couple of other lawyers. They always took a compartment, played cards and smoked cigars.

*Q: Did you get any feel for your father and his relation with Congress? I remember someone saying that he used to address congress as though he had a piece of fish caught between his teeth, or something like that.*

ACHESON: No. I've heard those. But, at the time he was very successful with congress. You have to remember that, in an effort to get rid of him, Ed Stettinius offered him the job of Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs and when the new team was being formed…

*Q: This is Truman's team.*

ACHESON: No. This was Roosevelt's last team, under Stettinius.

*Q: Ah, yes.*

ACHESON: Dad thought Stettinius was a nitwit. But, even as Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, and then certainly later as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Affairs, he was very successful with Congress. He took that job….I used to say, "Did you take that job just to piss off Stettinius?" He said, "No. I realized with all this post-war legislation, the World Bank, with UNROD the Monetary Fund, and foreign aid, that job was the most important in the building."

*Q: Well, his book was entitled, <u>Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department</u> and really we are talking about the post-World War II period – the first few years of that…the UN…everything….all these things were happening.*

ACHESON: Quite so. Absolutely. Dad was running that whole program – at least with Congress. So, very quickly, he and Tom Connally became very close.

*Q: Who was the head of the …*

ACHESON: … Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He was from Texas. And the House…I have forgotten who was his counterpart in the house.

*Q: Was it Sam Rayburn?*

ACHESON: Doc Eaton, I think. He was a republican. Of course, Vandenberg was very important, because Congress was closely divided and Vandenberg was the senior Republican on that committee.

*Q: ...And who was more again an internationalist.*

ACHESON: Dad discovered something. He said, "I made a discovery that changed my life and changed the way the Department worked. I discovered that if you were dealing with Vandenberg on a controversial thing and you could somehow persuade Vandenberg it was his idea to do what you wanted to do, then you were in clover."

*Q: Ben Franklin, I think, was quoted as saying something to the effect: the way to get along is always to make the other person think your idea is his idea.*

*So, when you left the Atomic Energy Commission, where did you go?*

ACHESON: Well, actually my father was sort of anxious – not anxious – he sort of liked me to go to Covington & Burling. I didn't have any real reason not to. He was out of the firm, so I thought that so called nepotism or conflict of interest wouldn't arise. So, I did go to Covington.

Initially, I had a very interesting assignment working on an anti-trust team on a massive anti-trust case brought against Dupont. Covington represented Dupont at that time in three simultaneous on-going anti-trust cases. There was one to break up the agreements between Imperial Chemical Industries and Dupont; there was another to force Dupont….Dupont, as I am sure you recall, owned about 30% of General Motors and a suit was brought to force them to divest that interest; and, a third suit was brought by the government (the one I worked on) to establish that Dupont had an illegal monopoly of cellophane, which was a huge packaging material of enormous value and brought in a lot of money and was a very important product to Dupont. So, I worked on the cellophane case and I enjoyed it a great deal. The senior guy on it was Gerhard Gesell, who later became a federal judge in Washington. He was a very able and inventive trial lawyer and it was great fun working with him, because he had ideas and he moved things along. He was not a boring guy to work with at all.

The policy at Covington was to rotate associates around, and you'd go from one partner to another. After the work was finished on whatever you were doing with the first partner, you'd go to somebody else. Normally, you'd spend like a year, a year and a half working on various things with one of the major partners and then you'd rotate around. The theory was that's the way the decision makers would get a look at you. But, I discovered, and I criticized myself for not having realized this before I went to Covington, that even though my father was not in the firm, he had a very long shadow in the firm. As I later learned, there were some partners who thought that it was not a very good idea for me to come to the firm for that reason, and those partners continued to

make trouble for me when I was at the firm. Finally (it took me a long time to realize this), I realized that this was not going to be a happy trip for that reason. So, then I had the dilemma of "Do I get out now and go somewhere else, or do I hang in there and see if I can become a partner, so I will have more control over the rest of my career?" I decided to do the latter and did so and became a partner in seven years – the normal course.

The very last case I had was in many ways the most fun of all. There was a brilliant, brilliant lawyer, with a very theatrical manner named Howard Westwood, who had been a law clerk to Chief Justice Harlan Stone. He came from Columbia Law School in the early '30s, and he was a brilliant, inventive lawyer with a great imagination and great style. He was very profane; he was very smart; he loved to have fun; and, he was just great to work with. He and I became great friends. He was doing mainly airline regulation work in the days when the Civil Aeronautics Board was still the regulator of that industry and he represented American Airlines, which was a big client for the firm.

But, he also did some other work and he was often chosen to handle Supreme Court cases. One day, he just walked into my office. I had worked for him on something else. He discovered that, although I, like everyone else alive in the world, fell short of his standards, I was a very good editor and writer of briefs. He thought that was a valuable thing to do and to have, so he asked me to work for him on something – I have forgotten now was it was. But, I was to take a brief to our printer in New York and to see it through from the typescript to the finished bound product and then bring it back; so, I did that. And, as I was about to leave to go to New York, he said, "Now listen, Acheson, if there is one mistake in this god-damn brief, I am going to commit suicide!" And, I started to laugh. And he said, "Well, don't laugh, 'because before I commit suicide, I'm going to commit murder!" [Laughter]

He was a great Civil War buff. He had endless energy and he used to prepare papers for the Civil War Round Table. And, he would make me read all his papers, and I would comment on them from time to time.

Who was the famous Confederate regular cavalry commander?

*Q: Forrest.*

ACHESON: Forrest…

*Q: Get there first, Nathan …*

ACHESON: Forrest, exactly – Nathan Bedford Forrest, right. So, he did a paper on Forrest and I said to him after I read it, "Howard, I don't see how you can admire this guy. He was a terrible racist, member of the Ku Klux Klan…."

*Q: He had been a slave dealer, too, I believe.*

ACHESON: I said, “Everything about him is just horrendous.” And he said, “Oh, Acheson, you read all that god damn conventional stuff about Forrest. You don’t appreciate the guy.” But he was a lot of fun.

He walked into my office one day and he said, “Listen, Acheson, do you want to have some fun?” I said, “What’s going on? What kind of fun?” He said, “The Ambassador of Venezuela and I have just finished a meeting and he wants me to represent Venezuela in the U.S. District Court in Miami to extradite Marcos Perez Jimenez, the deposed dictator of Venezuela. He said, “God, Acheson, this would be the first extradition in history of a former head of state. This is big stuff.” So I said, “Yeah. I’d love to work on that.” So he said ok. So, he put a small team together: himself, myself and one other associate who was a brilliant researcher, which I really was not. We prepared a lot of evidence. We discovered that when he fled from Venezuela in a big hurry, Perez Jimenez left behind cardboard boxes full of files and documents. They, absolutely to the hilt, documented his career of murder, physical intimidation and large-scale thievery – he stole hundreds of millions of dollars. Howard said it was going to be easy; although, it was going to be a lot of work to get through this pile of paper, it should be easy. Then we discovered that in the extradition treaty with Venezuela, political crimes were exempted. So Howard says, “I guess we can’t get the bastard for murder, it’s not in treaty - murder is excluded from the extradition treaty. But, he said “The Ambassador has told me that there’s all this evidence of what he called ‘peculado’.” This is the Spanish word for embezzlement, basically.

So we went to work on this. We prepared a very tight case and went to Florida. Howard presented the brief and argued the case before the District Judge. We thought that maybe the fact that this case was such a novelty will mean that the district judge wouldn’t want to handle it. Some judges are afraid of making history, others love it, and you never know which one you have. And, to our surprise, the judge ordered extradition. And, about a week later Perez Jimenez submitted a writ for a petition of *Habeas Corpus*. The judge denied that. He appealed. Howard said, “The bastard *can’t* appeal.” and I said, “Why not?” and he said, “It’s not a final order!” He said, “You can only appeal from a final order, a dispositive judgment and this is not procedurally that situation.” So, I said, “Well, that’s great.” And by god, two days later, he was on an aeroplane headed for Venezuela.

Now, Howard and I went to see the Ambassador just after the extradition order had come down. We said to the Ambassador, “Would you please consult with your country on this question: Now we have the extradition order, are you sure you and your government really want him back? To be sure, it will vindicate your position on his crimes, and I think it will look like a political plus for you, but he will very quickly be back in politics and nobody knows where that will go.” The Ambassador said, “Thank you very much for your caution. I will consult my government.” So, a couple of days later, he said, “They want me to send the bastard back.” So he did. And, this is the only a head of state who has ever been extradited in world history.

*Q: Well, did you have any contact with people at the State Department just as to what would happen?*

ACHESON: No.

*Q: I was just wondering whether somebody, as a part of your brief, was looking at the political consequences…..*

ACHESON: No.

*Q:…because these things often have political….*

ACHESON: We had two reasons not to do that. First of all, we were absolutely confident the State Department wouldn't have the slightest idea.

*Q: You were right.*

ACHESON: The second was we did not want to introduce what appeared to be political considerations into the case before the judge. We wanted to keep it simple and straight forward.

*Q: What happened to him?*

ACHESON: That's the irony. He was put in prison; he was allowed to spend the money of his friends (who gave him money to do this) to remodel and redecorate the part of the prison he was in, so he basically had a deluxe suite. People sent him delicatessen food everyday. He lived the life of a prince in prison. Then, he decided that under Venezuelan law, if he could be elected to the senate, he would then be immune to criminal process; so, he ran for the senate and was elected and was out of prison within the year. And, Howard and I said, "Well, we told them." But, then, a double irony occurred: shortly after he was released from prison, he died of a heart attack.

Anyway, that was an amazing end to my career at Covington & Burling.
*Q: Just a feeling for this big law firm: what was your impression of it as an institution and its role in Washington, at that time?*

ACHESON: Well, it was the leading law firm in Washington at that time, which today I do not think it is. It is certainly one of the top three.

*Q: It has a huge office.*

ACHESON: Well, yeah; but, it is by no means the biggest in Washington. It has fewer offices outside of Washington, than five or six of its Washington competitors. They have become chains, you know. Covington has a New York office; and they have a Brussels office to handle European commercial regulatory work before the E.U. (European Union).

At the time I was there, I entered the firm as lawyer number 70, as an associate. Now the firm in Washington has 300 lawyers or more, and altogether probably has, with its New York office and its Brussels' office, more like 500. And there are several firms that are bigger than that in Washington and elsewhere.

Covington avoided in the later years becoming a chain, and they did so for a very practical reason. If you become a chain, with multiple office all over the world and in the country, what happens is that lawyers practicing in other cities will generate conflicts of interest for your head office, and either they will not be able to take the work for that reason or the Washington office will have to disqualify its work for that client or for a competitor. So, some law firms have this elaborate procedure, like the one I later became a partner in, Jones Day, (it was a huge firm), to handle that problem and screen out conflicts; but it takes time and it's trouble, and Covington, I think, just said, "We don't want to go there." At the time I was there, it was the leading firm in town. I thought the firm was very well run. It did not have any particular concern for the care, feeding, comfort, convenience and morale of its associates, but that was true of every major firm in the country, so it really didn't differentiate itself that way.

*Q: Did it have a political leaning at all?*

ACHESON: No, no; yeah, well maybe. I would say more than half the lawyers in it are probably democrats. And, Stuart Eisenstadt, for example, who is a conspicuous democrat, is the head of their foreign international law work. Yeah, I'd say probably it has a slight tilt to the left.

*Q: During your time?*

ACHESON: During my time, I would say almost everybody in it was a democrat, except three or four of the significant partners.

*Q: Well, you were there from when to when?*

ACHESON: From late Autumn 1950 to April 1961. I was an associate until 1958 and made a partner in 1958.

*Q: We keep touching on your father because it is of historic interest. Did you get any feel about when the Eisenhower administration came in in '53, and John Foster Dulles? I mean, the State Department in my interviews….it was a traumatic period when your father said goodbye to sort of weeping and wailing and when Dulles came in to the gnashing of teeth, practically. It was not a happy interlude, period. But, did you get any feel about this in the relationship with Eisenhower?*

ACHESON: Well, I didn't really get any from the State Department, but I got a lot from my father. This feeling towards Dulles was what Sam Rayburn used to say. Sam Rayburn used to say, "I hold him in high disregard." That was Dad's view of Dulles. His view of Eisenhower was not a bitter or personal one; he just thought that Eisenhower was making

a lot of mistakes and the most significant mistake he thought was trying to trim down conventional forces and trying to protect America's interests abroad by the threat of using nuclear weapons. You remember the phrase that Dulles had? Massive retaliation. And then, my father started almost immediately, writing blistering articles about the foreign policy of the Eisenhower administration for the New York Times Sunday Magazine, for the Foreign Affairs Journal and for almost every magazine. He had so little law practice when he returned to the firm, that he became, to all intents and purposes, a full-time writer. And he started writing books; that's when he wrote his memoir.

Now, I had, meanwhile, taken leave from Covington & Burling, to campaign for Jack Kennedy in 1960. Because I had done some work for Stevenson four years earlier, I was asked to head up a group of three people, three men who went to New York to remain there for about five weeks and handle all of Jack Kennedy's campaign in the five county area of New York. And that was a hell of a lot of fun. I really enjoyed that a lot.

*Q: Why you? You are not a New Yorker and this wasn't your bailiwick.*

ACHESON: They were just looking for people who had had campaign experience. Of course, the people following him around, like Dick Goodwin and Archie Cox and whatnot, had plenty of campaign experience, but it was a different kind. Campaigns always have two levels: they have the staff that follows the candidate around; but, then you have to have people who will go to various places and stay a while and organize that so that the people following the president around don't have to do the preparation work for each trip he makes; they can't.

*Q: What attracted you to Jack Kennedy?*

ACHESON: A couple of things. First he was the anti-Nixon. My father had great skepticism about Kennedy, because of Kennedy's old man.

*Q: That shows that Kennedy was an isolationist. He was ready to sell England down the drain. Not a very admirable man.*

ACHESON: That's right. But, anyway, I liked what I knew about Jack. I had met him twice, very briefly. He was my generation, and that attracted me a lot.

*Q: Navy.*

ACHESON: Navy. I thought he had good ideas and expressed them well. Whether I was more motivated by attraction to him or whether more motivated by my disgust with Nixon would be hard to say. But, in any event, I decided to do that and the firm very generously let me take leave to do that. And, the reason I was available to work with Howard Westwood on the Venezuela case was because that came to him just after I got back from the campaign.

I had been elected about three years earlier, to the Democratic Central Committee of the District of Columbia with a number of fairly distinguished people – all of them older than me. That committee urged the President to appoint me United States Attorney for the District of Columbia, and the fact they did and the fact that I had campaigned for Jack and had met Bobby and Byron White during the campaign, meant that I had those two guys on my side and the Democratic organization here on my side and that pretty well took care of it.

*Q: I've always been curious about how people in business or law or something can take a couple of months off and go work on a campaign. Some people live from pay check to pay check. How do you survive during this period of time?*

ACHESON: I actually had plenty of leave under the firm's leave policy. And, if I did it on my own leave, I was still getting paid until my leave runs out. My leave did run out, but I didn't have to suffer that for very long, because the remainder was a very short time.

*Q: Did you get any feel – I am sure you did - for New York politics? I was thinking, you know the State Department – I watch this from the side – about Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. We always seem to go through that phase, particularly up in New York and it promptly gets forgotten, but did you find yourself getting involved in Israeli politics?*

ACHESON: No, no. But, we did get very much involved in New York politics. Here's what happened. We became aware of it immediately. There was one big battle between two well-organized forces in New York politics, state-wide. One was the reformed democrats in Manhattan. These were, by and large, wealthy, waspy, elite people who really wanted to clean up city politics and they could raise a lot of money. The other force was the state and city organization. The Democratic State Committee was headed by Mike Prendergast and the City, Manhattan, New York County organization was headed by Carmine De Sapio. So, we met with the people leading both organizations; we met with Mike Prendergast and Carmine. I was selected by my group to meet with Marietta Tree, who was one of the leaders of the reform democrats, because she was a grand daughter of Endicott Peabody and my friends thought that I would be able to make the pitch to her more successfully.

*Q: She was a stunning looking lady. I remember she was with Adlai Stevenson when he died.*

ACHESON: She was a very stubborn woman. They have this…we used to call them limousine liberals. What we basically proposed to both groups was that we would bring Jack Kennedy to their rallies and they would raise the monies to support the rallies and 50% of the proceeds would go to their organization and 50% of the proceeds would go to the Kennedy campaign. And Marietta said, "How can you make that deal with these crooks?!?" And I said, "Marietta, this is an election, you know. People vote in New York and a lot of people are well-served by the regular organization. They get patronage, they get jobs. It may or may not be true that these people are crooks, but they serve a lot of people very well." And I said, "What does your organization do for these people?"

"Well," she said, "we are trying to clean up these dirty politics." So I said, "Look. We have to make the same deal with both sides and that's just going to be the way it is and if you don't like it, you are certainly free to not participate, but then we won't bring Jack to your rallies." Then she said, "Well, I'm sure he's one of us." I said, "Marietta, he wants to be elected. Now, come on!" Finally, she was overruled by Herbert Lehman.

*Q: Former Governor of…*

ACHESON: ….of New York State. Former senator as well. And Carmine and Mike – absolutely everything they said they would do they did. They played very fair with us; they kept their promises and we kept ours. I was actually sorry to see that both of them were indicted by Bob Morgenthau no less, whom Jack made U.S. Attorney in New York. I thought that was too bad; but nevertheless, that's what happened.

So then, when I discovered I was going to be U.S. Attorney, the outgoing U.S. Attorney was very gracious and helpful. He invited me over to have lunch with him at the courthouse. He introduced me to everybody and then gave me a sort of rundown on how they worked and I met the heads of divisions there. A number of them were close to retirement and the deputy was…the deputy wanted to know whether I wanted his resignation or not. I said, "You know, I have heard very good things about you, but I think my ability to control and run this office and guide it in a direction that I think best is going to be better served if you do resign and I can pick my own deputy." He said, "I understand that." So, he resigned. I brought in a very nice, well-regarded black lawyer of my own age, who was the stepson of Todd Duncan, the great star of Porgy and Bess. Todd's wife, Gladys Duncan, had been a member of the Democratic Central Committee, so she was supportive. And, Charlie Duncan – he took the Duncan name, although his name was something else, I have forgotten what, but he was legally adopted by Todd Duncan when he was a kid.

We discovered that the turnover in that office was sufficient so that within one year we would have an opportunity to appoint about one third of the staff, and within a year and a half, probably half the staff. So I decided….the staff, characteristically, had been a bunch of sort of career time servers, who were reasonably good at what they did, but they were pretty stale. They were used to doing things the same way and a lot of the new court decisions on criminal procedure were judgments that they resisted and really didn't want to implement or even recognize. So, I thought the office had to have a different stamp. I started putting out feelers to faculty I knew at various law schools. I started recruiting people who earned the law review at those schools, who were one or two years out of law school. Within a year, I had the core of a really crack team and within a year and a half, I had a really magnificent team. And the courts noticed right away that we had people who were thinking differently and doing things in a different way and cooperating with them in a different way. Most of the resistance to that was coming from some of my senior staff, not the courts; although, some of the judges liked it the way it was.

*Q: Could you explain to the layman what the job was, and what the situation was, and how it fit in with…*

ACHESON: Yes, of course.

The United States Attorney is the advocate, the lawyer for the United States in the judicial district where he is located. In Washington DC, which is a unique district, the legislature for the District of Columbia is the U.S. Congress. The result is that my office has combined the jurisdictions of a State Attorney General and a United States Attorney. In other words, we prosecute and defend court actions under the DC legal code, as well as under the United States legal code. That is an essential difference between my office and every other office in the country. There were 92 judicial districts in the United States when I was there and I think still are and we were the only one that had that double jurisdiction and we were as busy as hell. We were the second largest office in the country; the largest being the southern district in New York. And, we were the only one with a combined state and federal jurisdiction.

I had a trial division in the U.S. District Court and a trial division in the Municipal Court. I had an appellate division that argued appeals in both the federal appeals court and in the local appeals court. I had a civil division that represented the United States, when the United States was sued, in the United States District Court in the District of Columbia. We got into the Federal Tort Claims Act and things like that. I had a guy whose title was Assistant United States Attorney for Administration. He was really just a glorified clerk, but did a lot of the office paperwork and personnel stuff and all that. I inherited from my predecessor a competent secretary, and pretty soon, we really had a good thing going.

The first controversy I had was that my criminal staff hated the restrictions that the Supreme Court had recently placed upon the interrogation of people accused of crime and the procedure that that could only happen if they had a lawyer present. This was a new thing.

*Q: Was this the Miranda business, or was this after that?*

ACHESON: Mallory was the case. The Supreme Court decision written by Justice Frankfurter in the Mallory case said that if the police interrogate a man and get a confession, that confession cannot be used in court unless there was a lawyer representing the prisoner present at the time of the interrogation. And, my staff hated that and every time there was an appeal from a conviction, my staff wanted to re-argue that all over again in the U.S. Court of Appeal for the District of Columbia Circuit. I used to say, "God damn it. That's been settled!" I finally had a meeting with my trial division and said, "You guys have got to tell the police who you are dealing with. Don't come here with a reference for a prosecution and a confession, unless there was a defense lawyer present at the interrogation. I don't even want to hear about it."

One of my senior trail attorneys ignored that and kept trying to find a judge who would disagree with the settled law. Finally, I got tired of that. Harold Titus was his name; he was a bright guy, a very intelligent, attractive, well groomed, well-educated lawyer. He was just hopeless on this issue. So, I called him in and I said, "Hal, the only way I think I

am going to get you to understand this is I am going to assign you to my Appeals Division and you are going to argue our case in the Court of Appeals every time there is one of these cases which goes to the Court of Appeals. He was horrified. He said, "You can't do that!" and I said, "I certainly can and I just have." He actually went around to talk with some of the judges and to see if they would talk me out of it and the chief judge of the district court called me up to his chambers and said, "this was very unsettling, because this lawyer was highly regarded by the district judges and to take him off the cases in that court" he thought, "was too bad." I said, "Well, I'll tell you frankly Judge McGuire, either I've got to fire him or I'm going to have to get him to understand that there is a better path, and I've decided to take that course."

There were a number of other things I did that Judge McGuire didn't like. At one point he threatened to take away my parking place in the District Court building.

*Q: Now, that's hitting below the belt! I mean, that's the ultimate.*

ACHESON: But, he never did it; he threatened to. I had a very good friend on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, Carl McGowan, who had actually been the guy who ran Stevenson's campaign and had been appointed to the Court of Appeals by Jack Kennedy. And, Carl was a member of the Circuit Council of Judges. I told him this and he laughed. He said he can't do that; he couldn't do that unless the Circuit Council ordered it and they won't.

*Q: Well, tell me. The District of Columbia, particularly at that time, the whole is essentially a district where probably the largest group in the area is Black or African American.*

ACHESON: Sure. Much more so than now.

Q: Yeah. Before the…

ACHESON: Before the Hispanics started coming in.

*Q: I would think that sort of this is a time of extreme racial tensions, you might say, because things were changing. How did you find this played out, from your perspective?*

ACHESON: Well, it didn't really impinge a lot on what my office was doing. Besides my deputy, who was Black, I had two other Black attorneys. They were competent and good at their job; they were not upset when Black defendants were brought into the court and tried in the District Court. Where I noticed it, I think, most was on the House of Representatives Committee for the District of Columbia. There had been historically, and was when I was in office, a very retrogressive Chairman from Mississippi and it seemed that the Congress went out of their way to make people like that chairman of the DC Committee of the House. So, I decided the way to deal with them on whatever legislative business I had, including appropriations, was not to start trying to re-argue the politics of

the situation for those guys, but just talk in terms of our case load, the curve of our population, of our staff population, and stuff like that.

The only time I really got involved in something that you might call really political, was when I helped to create a way to handle securities fraud in the District of Columbia. I had a very good friend, a very close friend from New York, who had been a professor of corporate law at Columbia, a very distinguished guy named William L. Cary, whom Jack Kennedy made Chairman of the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission). He and I were having lunch together one day and he said, "You know, the thing I have trouble with over here with my staff, is we have so many little picky securities fraud cases from the District of Columbia that we put them behind the big cases that come in from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore that are more urgent; but, there ought to be some way that we can deal with those cases. And, frankly, in every other region of the country, those cases of simple securities fraud would be handled by the state prosecutor. Why can't we have that here?" So I said, "Well, the problem is there isn't any regulatory equivalent of the SEC in the District of Columbia. So, I would say the first step would be to create one." So, I wrote a statute with his help. The deal was to find the way securities fraud would be handled in the District of Columbia and the regulator was going to be the Public Utilities Commission of the District of Columbia. And I got that statute passed. So, almost right away, cases started coming in from them, instead of the SEC and my civil staff would handle the regulator aspects if it came to litigation and my criminal staff would handle the fraud stuff.

Reporters, who wrote for the financial pages, used to call me up and say, "Mr. Acheson, do you know there is a criminal complaint in a securities fraud case here, that's been sitting on somebody's desk for a year and a half?" I would say, "Where is that?" And they would say, "Well, it's over at the SEC." So, we took care of that problem. That was the only time I had to go to Congress for anything but appropriations' testimony.

*Q: Were you under Attorney General Robert Kennedy?*

ACHESON: Oh, yes; absolutely.

*Q: Did you get any feel for him and his operations?*

ACHESON: Well, I'd met him in the campaign and I got to know him a little bit in the campaign. And he and I hit it off very, very well. He and I became very friendly and even his wife and I became quite friendly. I thought she was a very friendly, nice woman; I still think so. He had, every Monday, a lunch in his official private dining room, for his senior staff – the assistant attorneys general and me. He invited me to go to those. My predecessor had not been invited to go to those under the Republicans. I don't know why and maybe this was the first time it had ever happened but Bobby said, "You ought to come over to those luncheons as a regular thing." So, I used to.

We would talk shop at the lunch table a bit, and occasionally Bobby would say after lunch, "Come on down to the office. I want to talk to you a little more about something

you said." So, I go to know him really quite well. He was always very supportive and very positive in our relations. I got to like him a lot. And I got to like him more than I liked Jack, because Jack was very cynical. Bobby was not cynical; he really wanted to do something to improve the country; that was really on his mind. He wasn't concerned about his image, the way Jack was always obsessed with his image. He wasn't concerned about that. He wasn't going to run for re-election; he in many ways, I thought, was the better public servant than Jack.

One day, there was a big story in the Washington Post about indictments my office had brought against four men who had been big city democratic bosses. I remember one was in Philadelphia, one was in Baltimore, one was out in the Middle West somewhere – I've forgotten where the fourth one was – maybe it was in Virginia. They came to my office under Federal jurisdiction, because what these guys did were violations of the Federal Mail Fraud Statute and Federal Wire Fraud Statute, because of transactions that passed through the mail and because of transactions that passed through the telephone wires. So we got indictments. The Post ran a big story and all these guys pleaded 'guilty' shortly thereafter. The Post ran another story and they all got sentenced. I've forgotten what they got. My office was highly visible for a moment, and Bobby called me up and he said, "Hey, that's a great piece of work, Dave. Glad to see that. You guys are really doing something over there. But, I have one question: Do you think you might some day find it in your heart to indict a republican?" [Laughter]

I said, "Bobby, you show me a republican big city boss in Philadelphia, Baltimore, where ever, and I will do it." [Laughter]

*Q: How long did you do it?*

ACHESON: Four years.

*Q: Did the advent of the Johnson administration after the assassination of President Kennedy make any difference?*

ACHESON: Not really, no. The same team stayed on in the Justice department, pretty much. Bobby was still Attorney General for a while when Johnson came in. Then, when he began to get ambitions to run for president, he resigned.

You remember, there was an amusing time, when there was speculation who was going to be on the ticket with Johnson in '68? And, everybody was thinking, "God, the most visible guy would be Bobby." Johnson didn't want Bobby, of course. So, he made a public statement in a very round-about, transparently, sort of ridiculous way, saying that the criteria for being on the ticket with him next time around would not involve anybody who was a member of his cabinet. Why didn't he just say, "I won't take Bobby."? So Bobby resigned.

I forgot to say Byron White, probably my closest supporter really in the Justice Department, had been put on the Supreme Court very early in Kennedy's term, so Nick

Katzenbach became the Deputy, and when Bobby left, Nick became Attorney General. And then things did change, because Nick was very sensitive that he was a Kennedy holdover. He was very aware that Johnson really disliked Kennedy and the Kennedy people, and he didn't want to do anything to rile Johnson up, so that certain things that I thought probably needed to be done at the White House, he would not be willing to do.

I didn't tell you this, but in the summer of 1940, when I was a student at Yale, I had a summer job at the National Defense Mediation Board, created by President Roosevelt to attempt to mediate strikes in defense-related industries. I had a wonderful time. The Board was composed of labor representatives, management representatives and public representatives. And, every case with a threatened strike was heard and testimony taken, by a three-member panel – one management, one labor and one public, with the public member as chair. Archie Cox was the general counsel of that Board, hence his interest in Labor Law and he could not have been kinder and more helpful to me. He made sure that instead of just being sent to sharpen pencils and stuff – gofer work – that I got to sit in on hearings before panels. And I really learned a hell of a lot during that summer and I would never have had such a good opportunity, but for him. So, he and I had always been close, and when he was made Solicitor General, we remained close.

I'll tell you one story going back to the Defense Mediation Board, 1940. John L. Lewis would appear before the Board occasionally. He would quote Shakespeare (William Shakespeare) and go into these long speeches; it was entertainment of a high sort, to listen to John L. Lewis.

*Q: Yes. What is it? "A plague on both your houses…"*

ACHESON: Aye.

*Q: "It ill behooves…." I can't remember it.*

ACHESON: "It ill behooves one who has supped at labor's table."

He was great.

*Q: By the way, when I think of your father and John L. Lewis, two things which always stick out in my mind are their eyebrows. They really had magnificent eyebrows.*

ACHESON: True. You're right.

Then Walter Teagle was the great man of the oil industry, the Standard of New Jersey. He was on the Board. There was a wonderful guy named Judge Stacey.

He was and remained during all this time, a member of the Supreme Court of South Carolina. He was a very civil, courtly, older guy and very fair. And because he was a public member, he was always the chair of the panel he was on. He had this habit. The testimony would be going forward, and he would reach deep into his coat pocket and pull

out a fistful, a handful of quarters and then reach into his pocket and pull out some more quarters. Then he would put them all on the table. People would watch this with disbelief. Then he would start building two towers of quarters – stack them one on top of another to see how high he could get. At some point, inevitably, the tower or towers fell over with a clatter and everybody would stop talking. They'd look around in great alarm and he would look very embarrassed. [Laughter]

It was really very, very funny. But I had an excellent time at that job; I really enjoyed that and I really learned something.

So, going back to Archie Cox – when he was Solicitor General, he called me up one day and he said, "Would you like to argue an appeals case?"

I had been doing a lot of appeals arguments before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit in criminal cases in order to get them to revise the rule establishing, defining the defense of insanity in the case of crimes. The insanity defense had been established by Judge E. Barrett Prettyman in the 1954 case of Durham vs. The United States. The definition came out as: "If the crime is a result of a mental disease or a mental defect, then the insanity defense holds." And, I thought that was an illogical test and I was encouraged when I learned that the American Law Institute also thought so, as I had become a member of the American Law Institute.

I proposed that they develop one of their many restatements of the law to propound a new rule, which I defined. And, that rule would be that if there is a mental disease or a mental defect, but if the jury should find that the defendant retains the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, then there is no defense. The ALI thought that was just great and they produced a restatement of the law that got a lot of publicity. I used to argue a lot of those cases (and other cases, too) before the U.S. Court of Appeals and kept hammering on that as a good way for the law to be redefined. I argued myself every case before that court that went to the full bench. Normally, it would be decided by a panel of three, but sometimes you could move for reconsideration and banc and whenever we did that, I would argue that case myself. So, I had a lot of appellate experience and I was regarded as a good appellate advocate.

So, Archie had discovered that and he asked me to go to the Second Circuit in New York and argue a tax case involving an appeal from a famous band leader. You can help me. Do you remember the name of a band leader who was killed in an air crash during World War II?

*Q: There was Glenn Miller.*

ACHESON: Glenn Miller; exactly; right. The estate of Glenn Miller appealed from a ruling of IRS and from a judgment of the U.S. tax court. His widow began selling rights to his music to people who produced music, to record companies and whatnot. Over a couple of years she claimed that those sales of rights were capital transactions and that her profits would be taxed at the capital gains rate, instead of the income rate. And, the

IRS and the court below said, "No, it was income, because it was a series of repetitive transactions, and not one big sale." She said, "Maybe not one big sale, but these are sales of property, therefore were capital transaction."

*Q: Sure.*

ACHESON: So, I was asked to argue the government side in the Second Circuit, and I did. And, one of the judges, I remember, was the black judge who later went to the Supreme Court and now has the Baltimore Airport named after him: Thurgood Marshall.

I argued that case. I was introduced by Bob Morgenthau to the court. He moved my admission for the purpose of the case. The court granted his motion. I argued; Miller's estate's lawyer argued. We waited two months. The decision came down and I'd won. Archie called me up and congratulated me.

So I said, "So, Archie, maybe it's time I had a crack at the Supreme Court." And I thought he was going to laugh, but instead he said, "Yeah. I'll find you a Supreme Court case."

*Q: Because he is the one designated, normally to….*

ACHESON: Yeah. Either he or his staff.

*Q: Yeah.*

ACHESON: And, by god, in about six months, I got a Supreme Court assignment from Archie Cox. And, boy was I nervous. I prepared that case until the cows came home. I was so nervous. I argued the case in the Fall and got a decision in June. I was about to go out of office, I think, when the decision came down.

Anyway, the case was called Rugendorf vs. The United States. And this was the question: in a criminal case, if the prosecutor gets an affidavit from a person, which is the basis for a search warrant against somebody else, is the defendant entitled at the trial to have that person who gave the affidavit identified, exposed and brought to testify. Normally, in a criminal procedure, it would be a motion to suppress evidence, and in this case, there was such a motion and it was denied. The ground of the motion was that the source of the affidavit should have been identified and allowed to testify.

So, I looked at the cases. There were very few cases and those that existed were all over the lot on that issue. So I thought, "Well, this is going to be no picnic" but, I prepared the case very thoroughly. The Supreme Court then put it on the Summary Docket, which means that it was rescheduled for a half-hour argument for each side. For reasons which I never found out, and never was that curious about, the day before the argument, the Supreme Court moved the case to the Plenary Docket, meaning a one-hour argument for each side. The day before the argument! So I thought, "Oh, my god!" So, I burnt some

midnight oil, went to bed fairly late, got up the next day, put on my cutaway and my striped trousers.

*Q: Did you have to rent one?*

ACHESON: Actually, I had one. It was a cast off from my father, but it fit me perfectly. He had gained some weight. You know, when he was young, when he was married, he was 6'2" and he weighed 136 pounds.

Anyway, so, the appellate, of course, argued first. And, then I got up to answer the argument and the moment I stood up, the First Justice, I think it was Douglas, said, "Counsel, before you begin, I want to really cut to the chase here and I have a question." His question was, "Counsel, who was the informant who gave the affidavit?" And, I didn't want to answer that question, identify that person, because that was the defendant's wife, and I thought it would throw a lot of sympathy to the defense side. Moreover, I did not have to answer that question, because it never appeared in the record anywhere. I had been told that by the Department of Justice people who had helped me to prepare the case. So, I said, "Mr. Justice Douglas, the record does not disclose." And then I hoped he was not going to say, "Well, maybe it doesn't, but do you know who it was?" He never asked that question. Normally he wouldn't have had enough regard for propriety that he would not have asked the question, but in this case I guess he didn't.

So, then, I started my argument. I got about five minutes into it, and I got another question. I answered that question. Then, I got a very sharp question from a justice who obviously disagreed with the justice who had just asked me that question, so they are arguing with each other through me. And that triggered arguments from both sides of the court against each other through me. And, before I knew it, the Chief Justice very kindly … (I mean, Warren was always the image of courtesy and civility)...I saw the red light go on, on the podium and he said, "Mr. Acheson, I see your time is up, but we have so grievously intruded on the time of your argument, that we would be very glad to extend you another 15 minutes to pursue whatever points you wish to pursue. And, I was about to say, "Thank you very much, your honor." and proceed to make some points that I had made, but only in answer to questions when I suddenly realized, "You know, these guys have been listening to me for a long time, and I have really answered all the points I had in mind in answer to question." So, I said, "Thank you very much, Mr. Chief Justice, but I think we have explored the points. The points have been well-ventilated by the questions; I hope by the answers, so I will respectfully decline." So, I sit down. So, all the justices smile. So, I went back to my office.

As I left the Supreme Court, I felt a pain in my foot, as if a bullet had been shot into my foot. I limped to the curb and hailed a cab and went up to my office, still in my cutaway drenched in sweat from the tension and stress of the argument. I called my doctor, and I said, "Frank, what the hell is happening to me. I was just leaving the Supreme Court where I made an argument and I've got this horrible pain in my foot in the ankle. It really feels like a gunshot wound." He said, "Well, you are now in very distinguished company. You have gout and this is your first gout attack."

*Q: Good heavens!*

ACHESON: So, I limped through the day, finished my work, went home early and went to bed. Meanwhile, my doctor sent over something that was supposed to alleviate the pain, which it eventually did.

The next day, I went to work. Archie called me up. He said, "My staff, who were at the argument, said you did a first rate job." So then finally, the decision came down 5-4 on my side. And my friend Potter Stewart, who I was very close to as a friend, because his younger brother was my closest friend ever, and he said, "Dave, I've got a question: who was the informant? Now we have decided the case, it doesn't matter any more. Who the hell was the informant?" I said, "It was the defendant's wife."

*Q: Oh, boy.*

ACHESON: He said, "I think you should be grateful that that did not emerge during the argument." I thought that was a great adventure; I loved that whole thing.

*Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop. We'll have another session, but, you left the job when?*

ACHESON: I left it in '65. I had been there four years. I think it was like the summer, early fall of '65. And Henry Fowler had just become Secretary of the Treasury. He and I were old friends. And he asked me to come over with him and be Assistant Secretary for Enforcement, which was a new role he had started. He called me up and made that pitch over the phone. He said, "It'll be an interesting job, because it is the only job in the building which has a functional responsibility that could cut across all of the bureaucratic responsibilities." All the other assistant secretaries were assistant secretaries with two or more groups of bureaux under them. And, my job would be to exercise some degree of oversight, hopefully tactful and hopefully effective, on enforcement policy touching all of those bureaux, including IRS. So he said, "This job will introduce a lot of diplomatic problems for you, at least questions, but it shouldn't be too difficult as these are all reasonable people and some are career and some are not." So, I took it on, because I didn't immediately have any other place to go and I could go around and talk to law firms. My Covington experience had persuaded me that the life in a big law firm was not for me. So, I could have gone back to ask Covington if they'd want me back and I could have gone to another big law firm and asked them same question, but then I thought, "I am very likely to get into the same kind of situation I was in at Covington, before I left. I don't want that."

*Q: Ok. Well, we will pick that up when you are off to the Treasury Department in 1965.*

ACHESON: Then COMSAT followed that in 1967.

*Q: Ok. Then we'll pick it up then. Well, this is great.*

*Today is the 13th of May 2008. This is with David Acheson. Okay, David. We are moving onto COMSAT. Is that where we should go, do you think?*

ACHESON: I think so, yeah. I think we finished the Treasury.

*Q: This is a very interesting aspect, because all of a sudden space becomes important. Here you are a lawyer and all of a sudden you're involved with space. How did you get involved in the issues?*

ACHESON: Well, it was absolute coincidence. For years I had had a law school classmate and friend in Washington who had been appointed to the board of the Communications Satellite Corporation, when it had first been set up by statute in 1963. There were three directors appointed by the President; there were three directors appointed by the common carriers – the communications carriers like AT&T, ITT and RCA International, etc. And, there were six elected by the stock holders.

COMSAT was a funny animal. It was invented in order to pursue a major commercial exploitation of space technology. In the congressional debates over the Satellite Act of 1962, there was a very bitter debate, and that was whether the communications common carriers should dominate, perhaps even own it or whether the investor public should be permitted to own it. Finally, a compromise was reached. And, actually, in that debate, cloture was necessary to break the filibuster in the House of Representatives.

*Q: Good god!*

ACHESON: It was a very controversial matter.

*Q: What were the lines that were drawn?*

ACHESON: The lines were the lines between the existing communications carriers, who did not want this strange hybrid animal to be created, because they feared it would weaken their position. They thought, "Look, we're in communication; satellites are now available for communications; why shouldn't we run it? And, as we have with every previous communications technology, simply add this one to our portfolio."

*Q: Were they speaking of launching the things, and all that?*

ACHESON: No, no. They were speaking of owning and running the communications operation. The Satellite Act – and no one objected to this provision – called for the Satellite Corporation going to NASA (National Aeronautic and Space Administration) for its launches. It would buy the satellites from the space technology industry and NASA would launch them. NASA would bill COMSAT for the launch expense. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) would fix the rates that COMSAT charged for access to the satellites.

*Q: Was this, by the way, prior to the break up of the big telephone company, the Bell system?*

ACHESON: Yeah.

*Q: So, at time, there was such a thing as, as we would call it today, Big Bell.*

ACHESON: I would say that this was the first step in the break up. The Common Carrier Bureau of the FCC was a very forward-looking, energetic and powerful bureaucracy; and, they had figured that, somehow or other, they had to weaken AT&T's monopoly and they saw the Satellite Act as a way to do that. The carriers objected strongly; went to debate. The Senate had no problem with it; the House of Representatives ended up with a filibuster. Cloture was invoked. Harley Staggers, Chairman of the House Commerce Committee, led the charge for a compromise, and the compromise was finally in the shape of the act as passed.

*Q: Would you say that the opposition of the common carriers was almost a populist thrust, that too much would be charged, monopolies were not good, and that sort of thing?*

ACHESON: Well, you *could* say that. But, you know, AT&T had a very powerful lobby and nothing much had been done to weaken AT&T's monopoly, certainly not for overseas domestic telephone. I had some talks later with guys who ran the Common Carrier Bureau, and they said, "Look, we could have initiated anti-trust cases against AT&T, but those things drag on forever. It would have taken a long time, would have been very expensive, and would have pinned down a lot of our personnel, which we couldn't afford, so the legislation was the way to go."

Anyway, the Act provided for, as I said, three directors elected by the carriers, three appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, and six elected by private shareholders. The capital formation of COMSAT was all equity; there was no debt in the financing, at all. So, one of the directors appointed by the President, was very close to the senator from Rhode Island, where he came from.

*Q: Was that Theodore Green?*

ACHESON: No, it was Pastore. Pastore lobbied to get him appointed by the White House, and he was appointed by the White House and confirmed by the Senate under Pastore's leadership. He had been a big contributor to Pastore's campaign. One day, I got a call from him. I was still in the Treasury. Joe Fowler had indicated that he was leaving the Treasury and had hoped very much to be appointed President of the World Bank. But, President Johnson was looking for a way to dump McNamara, who had started dragging his heels on Vietnam, so the way to get rid of him was to appoint him to run the World Bank. That was a bitter blow to Joe Fowler, who was very unhappy. However, his sorrow was assuaged by a very quick invitation from Goldman Sachs. So, he was asked to be

Vice Chairman of Goldman Sachs, in charge of their international, foreign business. So, he did that.

About the time I was sorting out whether I would stay in the Treasury for a while, or whether I would go do something else, this friend of mine called, and said, "Would you have lunch with Horace Moulton and me?" Horace Moulton was a senior vice president of AT&T and a director. They had three directors on the COMSAT board and he was the senior of those. Anyway, he said, "Horace and I would like you to come and have lunch. I'd like you to meet him. He is in-house general counsel, and senior VP of AT&T." So I said, "Fine." So we met at some restaurant in Washington. They told me that they would like me to consider coming to COMSAT to be vice president and general counsel. So I said, "I thought you had a general counsel at COMSAT." And they said, "Well, we do, but he's sick; and besides, he was a bond lawyer in New York and he was brought in solely for the purpose of organizing the public issue of securities." And I said, "Funny. It's an all-equity issue and you got a bond lawyer to do that?" And he said, "Well, we thought at that time we'd issue bonds, but we never did. Anyway, he's leaving." So I thought about it, and they were offering me a lot more money than the Treasury was paying and roughly equivalent to what I could have expected in the practice of law. But I thought this would be a lot more fun; a novel thing to do and a pioneer operation, and I was in at the starting of its history, so I accepted and went to work there in about a month's time.

*Q: How long were your there?*

ACHESON: To 1974.

*Q: So this was from 1967 to…*

ACHESON: to 1974.

*Q: 1974. What was your impression of COMSAT when you went in there looking at this organization?*

ACHESON: Well, they had some interesting people. I had met the president. Funny; he didn't have the title CEO (Chief Executive Officer) or the title Chief Operating Officer (COO). He was President and he was actually treated as the Chief Operating Officer. COMSAT had a very impressive board. As I said, three of the directors were appointed by the President and one of them was George Meany, who was then head of AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations).

*Q: Yes, and the labor leader in the United States.*

ACHESON: He was. And he was very shrewd and a really nice guy. He and I became really good friends. I had lunch with him occasionally. He told wonderful stories. He was very, very sensible and very down to earth; and, he wasn't impressed by anybody, not even President Johnson.

Another director was Fredrick Donner, who was chairman of General Motors. The chairman of the board of COMSAT was a wonderful man named Leo Welsh. He had had a remarkable career. He had been the president and CEO of the First National City Bank of New York; he had been the chairman and CEO of a little company called Standard Oil of New Jersey.

*Q: Good god!*

ACHESON: He was a very patrician, intelligent, gracious, courtly guy with a spine of steel. People thought that because he was polite, he was not tough. He was very, very tough; very hard-nosed, but always with a very cheerful, civil manner. He would make very hard decisions and not be intimidated by the consequences. I thought very highly of him.

AT&T had three directors: the general counsel, the head of the long lines department, and the head of their international business. RCA International and Western Union had one director apiece. Then there was a third common carrier director, whom I forget. I don't know who that was. I can't remember who that was. Well, the Board was very interesting.

*Q: What was the purpose of having the Board be so diverse with the top labor man and the top business people? Was it to keep the common welfare in mind, rather than a profit motive?*

ACHESON: The real purpose was to put some very powerful people on the Board, so that the common carriers would not dominate it. And, initially, but a side issue, it was to make it clear to the public that this was a very important organization. They were looking for public investment to make it successful and they wanted a real showcase board. And it worked: the public invested very heavily in COMSAT.

*Q: What role did you play in the very early days?*

ACHESON: My chief role was to try to manage the legal aspects of the business. That was several things. First, it was dealing with the Federal Communications Commission, our chief regulator. That was my baby. It took a lot of time and a lot of care and feeding of these very jurisdictional-minded people, who were actually quite smart. I had a lot of respect for them.

There were two particular people at the Commission: the Head and the Deputy Head of the Common Carrier Bureau. They were really quite smart and far-sighted. It was clear that among their agenda was to start weakening AT&T's position in the communications business.

We had, initially, a kind of a treaty with the common carriers, which was ….of course, our business by statute we were a monopoly of satellite communications in the

international market. One of my charges was to try to keep the business 50-50, divided between satellites and the cable facilities of the overseas carriers. Every time they would start to commission a new cable installation, which had many times the capacity of their previous ones, I would say, "Hey! Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. We have got to have 50-50 here." So, we were always putting up new satellites to add capacity in order to hold up our end of the 50-50 deal. That took up a lot of policing and a lot of time. That was certainly one of my responsibilities.

Another responsibility was to supervise the legal aspects of our relations with investors. So, I had to work with the SEC; I had to work with underwriters for the issues of stock. I got to know some interesting people that way. We were acquiring facilities overseas for earth stations for ground antennae for the satellite, initially in about 20 countries. So, I had to write what amounted to what the military called status of forces agreements and to supervise how they worked.

*Q: This is how to treat the people involved, personnel there?*

ACHESON: This is how to protect our investment in their countries; how we handled our employees pursuant to their laws; and, how to acquire the property and increase the acquisition of property when we needed to.

Those were really the three main things I had to do. The ground stations were 50-50 all over the world, between COMSAT and the communications carrier or carriers for that country.

*Q: So often this would be the equivalent of PTT. It was almost all government.*

ACHESON: It was entirely PTT, except for the US and Puerto Rico. The PTT in Puerto Rico was IT&T.

*Q: How did this work out as far as here was this American monopoly, essential and something which became vital to everyone.*

ACHESON: Well, in the United States it was an American monopoly. But, the international system, that is to say the satellites themselves, was jointly owned by the international consortium.

*Q: And the international consortium being what?*

ACHESON: Every country that used the system. So, the PTT for every user country was a part owner and the agreements uniformly provided for the ownership share of every country, including COMSAT, the United States, to be adjusted annually on the basis of the use of the system. The capacity of the satellite was X. What percentage of that capacity was used by each country? And, once a year we'd calculate that and readjust the ownership. And, then, in accordance with the share of ownership, the revenues from the use of the system would be distributed to the owners by their percentage share.

*Q: With the other countries that were doing this, would things get politically contentious?*

ACHESON: Yes. You might even remember that the State Department got involved in that. The problem, not initially, but I would say two, three years down the road, was that a lot of the more contentious foreign partners... and I remember chiefly the UK and Switzerland. You would have guessed France; but, no, France was not contentious. Britain was very contentious, largely, I think, because the chap in the Embassy here in Washington wanted to make himself a hero by taking an anti-COMSAT position. And, he was seconded by a very gravelly character, who was the Swiss Director of the Consortium. The consortium, as opposed to the American company, was called INTELSAT – you probably remember that.

The Swiss guy and the Brit began raising at the meetings of the governors of INTELSAT, "Why should COMSAT be forever the manager? Wasn't there a conflict of interest inherent in being a major part-owner and manager?" COMSAT at the start had 29% of the system, based on use. And the country said, "Having a big owner, who is also the manager sort of belittles the other owner. We think we should have an independent international entity manage the system." So, in the end, the State Department really pushed us to agree to that. Under the statute, the State Department and the FCC gave the manager, COMSAT, its instructions, to vote the U.S. share at each meeting. That's how heavily regulated we were.

*Q: Good god!*

ACHESON: We would lobby those instructions as best we could, but on the issue of an independent manager, we were really losing ground. Finally, we acceded to that. INTELSAT appointed an American, who had been a member of the COMSAT staff, to be its first manager; but, he no longer worked for COMSAT, he worked for INTELSTAT. He had a tax-free salary; he had a separate office from COMSAT when he became independent. And, he built a new office building on Connecticut Avenue, which you may have seen. It's a *huge* operation.

And, I'd like to add that he went to jail, because he took money for throwing the building contract to a contractor.

*Q: Oh, god!*

*While all this was going on, what was happening on the American side? Were you involved in the disputes about how internationalized we should be or not?*

ACHESON: Yeah. Every time there was a meeting of INTELSAT, I and others in the company would run over the agenda with our representative on the Board and make proposals. I would say this took probably 20% of my time because there was a meeting every month.

*Q: Were there any real knockdown, drag out fights?*

ACHESON: Yes.

*Q: On what sort of issues?*

ACHESON: Well, the common carriers wanted to change the earth station ownership in the United States. That is, what the carriers wanted to do was instead of owning them 50-50 with COMSAT, they wanted to own them all together. We fought that for about three years and they never did get to do that; they remained jointly owned.

Another big issue wasn't anything that COMSAT proposed or resisted. The FCC wanted the common carriers out; they wanted the stock ownership to be sold to the investor public, so that the entire equity was owned by the public and none by the common carriers. The carriers fought that very hard.

*Q: I would imagine they would.*

ACHESON: Particularly AT&T. Meanwhile, the stock, which opened at $20 a share, had climbed in about two, three years to $80 a share. And IT&T, which I'd say had the smartest directors of anybody on the board of COMSAT, said to themselves, "Look, sooner or later we're going to lose this battle and the time to accede voluntarily and sell the shares is while the stock is at $80 a share, and not while it falls back. And, when the public catches onto the fact that this is a highly regulated public utility, the stock is going to fall back." So, IT&T sold their entire holding at $80 a share. They made a ton of money. They had something like 2.2 million shares sold at $80 a share.

AT&T thought that it had a responsibility to the public to hang on. And the stock started to slide and they finally panicked and sold, but they got $44 a share. So, now the stock is wholly owned by the public, and the common carriers were no longer on our board.

*Q: How did scientific developments affect what you all were doing? The whole thing was basically you were jumping on new technology.*

ACHESON: The satellite technology and earth station technology were both moving very fast. The first satellite generation we launched, called INTELSAT II, involved a gyroscopic satellite. A satellite had to spin in space because that was the way it would be stabilized. And, it had to be stabilized because the antenna had to keep its spot on the earth without any deviation. So, the spinners were the first two generations. And in INTELSAT II we had two of those over the Atlantic, one over the Pacific and one over the Indian Ocean; so, we covered the whole earth, the whole world except the poles. And, each of those satellites had the capacity, as I remember, of something like 200 circuits. It would seem trivial today. INTELSAT III about tripled that capacity; it was also a spinner satellite.

And, we insured our satellite against launch failures and in INTELSAT III we had some disasters. I wrote the insurance contract and the deal was…we ordered 8 satellites to run over a period of years. The first launch failure was on us. Within the first 4 satellites, the next launch failures were on the insurer. After that, we ordered another buy of 4, with the same deal. You never heard of worst luck. In each round of four satellites for INTELSAT III, the first was a launch failure on us. The insurer never paid a dime as the remaining three in each buy of four worked perfectly. I got a lot of kidding from the chairman of COMSAT. He said, "Boy, you can really pick 'em, Dave!"

*Q: Were the Soviets or the Chinese doing anything in this regard at the time?*

ACHESON: The Soviets had a satellite system for their domestic communications. Our satellite system was what you'd call geo-stationary. We would launch the satellite to an altitude of 22,300 miles and then put it into an orbit speed, with jet propulsion, that perfectly matched the rotation of the earth, so the satellite was always over the same spot on earth. The Soviet system was very different. They used a whole string of satellites at low-altitude that would pass over the horizon, and a new satellite would then be coming up over the horizon on the other side of the earth. They had a whole string that just kept revolving around the earth, and they would be able to communicate for the period that satellite was over Russia.

After INTELSAT III, the technology had changed so that you could, what we call body stabilize a satellite in space. That meant that instead of having a satellite spin and then having to de-spin the antenna to keep the spot on earth, you would have a satellite that did not spin. It was about the size of a pick up truck up in space, and it had antennas that would spot the earth and were stationary; the stability was achieved by an internal gyro. Ford Motor Company had a subsidiary called Aeronutronic Ford Corporation, and they built the first one of those for us. And that had a capacity of about 3000 circuits; just a huge capacity. And, because it was body-stabilized, you could spread out these big wings of solar energy panels that would just soak up power. Later satellites, after I left COMSAT, were developments on that: all body-stabilized, no more spinners.

*Q: Who was paying for the development of the satellites?*

ACHESON: We were paying for the development and purchase of each satellite, but the space technology companies, like Hughes Aircraft and TRW….Hughes Aircraft did the whole INTELSAT II series and TRW did the whole INTELSAT III series, and Ford and Hughes then later did the body stabilized satellites, sort of one after the other. They spent a lot of their own money, those contractors, in developing new technology; and, we would pay for the satellites and probably some of the development was in that price. But they also did a lot of experimental work.

*Q: Was the internet coming along at that time?*

ACHESON: Yes, toward the last couple of years I was at COMSAT, the internet was coming along.

The most controversial thing that I got involved in and the company got involved in, was whether, in addition to its international monopoly, it could also carry on domestic communications with the satellite system that was not part of the statutory monopoly, but part of our investment. In the end, we were allowed to do that. We were required to work with ground stations that were wholly owned by the common carriers for domestic communications. We looked around for partners, because the FCC, after succeeding in weakening AT&T's monopoly, did not want COMSAT to develop its own monopoly in domestic communications by satellite. So they said, "We'll license you to do this, providing you get partners, so that your partners have equal shares with COMSAT and COMSAT never controls the thing."

So, we started out the domestic system with partners and the first set of partners was IBM and Lockheed. IBM was very anxious to build into the system the capability of handling data communications and computer traffic. So, we succeed at doing that with IBM. Finally, IBM found itself the defendant in a major anti-trust case brought by the Department of Justice, and it decided to get out of the consortium with us for domestic communications; and it did. And we got a couple of other partners. I think the Aetna Insurance Company was one. Lockheed dropped out. Another aerospace company bought in; but, I've forgotten who that was. That was toward 1974, when I was shortly to leave the company. What happened after that, I remember dimly, but I wasn't a part of it.

*Q: Did you run into and concerns or any problems of countries, such as the French or the Canadians, getting huffy about what was happening, especially with regard to American technology getting in there?*

ACHESON: No. Not with the French or Canadians, certainly. As I said, the main international trouble was over the managership and we gave that up.

Actually, do you know what the French did? We had one very interesting battle with the Department of Defense. It turns out, Cape Canaveral, where the space program is launched from, that is the NASA program, isn't owned by NASA at all. It is owned by the Department of Defense. It is called Patrick Air Force Base and facilities are leased to NASA. Our agreement with NASA for launch service always provided that NASA would give us launch service at incremental cost. That meant that in a given year NASA had its own programs and over and above what those cost that were caused by our programs they would bill us for it. We thought that was fair and we built that into our traffic, pricing system. Bob McNamara came along and he had a very zealous assistant secretary for finance.

*Q: This was when he was secretary of defense.*

ACHESON: Yes, secretary of defense. And, all of a sudden, they said, "We're going to bill NASA, not in incremental costs," which they had been doing, "we're going to bill NASA for a fully allocated share of cost. In other words, not just the use of launch pad A or B; we are go to bill them for the fact that they use the Officers' Club. We are going to

bill them for a piece of that. We are going to bill for them for the utilities' expense. They use a share of that. Everything across the board at Patrick Air Force Base is going to be divided up between NASA and DOD." So then NASA said to us, "God! This is terrible. We have got to work out a system here, and you guys are just going to have to pay more because we are getting this big bill now from DOD (Department of Defense)."

At that point the French came along. For some years, they had been using a launch base of their own for domestic communications, in French Guyana, in a place called Kourou. They said, "Look, we'll give you launch service out of Kourou, and it will be better for you. First of all, it is nearer the equator, so for an equatorial orbit, which you are using, it's a hell of a lot better than Cape Canaveral. Secondly, it'll be cheaper, because we don't have these built in costs that DOD has at Patrick. So, how about that?" So the chairman asked me what about that. I said, "Well, there's only one hitch. That is the Satellite Act says that NASA must give us launch service and we must go to NASA for launch service. So, let's try to get an amendment to the Act." The chairman said, "Well, someone will fight that, probably." I say, "Yeah. But, let's put on a powerful legislative pitch here and see if that will not cause DOD to lower its rate and agree to incremental cost billing to NASA and they will do incremental cost billing to us." He said, "That's not a bad idea." So we put on a major push in the congress to get rid of that requirement and let us get launch service wherever we found it." And McNamara said, "This will look terrible; this will look terrible. We can't do that, so we'll bill you incremental costs." The chairman said to me, "You really earned your salary, today." [Laughter]

*Q: There is nothing like hauling in a third power, a third country, or something like that. I was interviewing somebody when they were flagging tankers in the Persian Gulf. The Kuwaitis wanted it and the State Department, and particularly the Defense Department, was dragging their feet. Then, all of a sudden, the Kuwaitis said, "Well, if not, the Soviets have expressed some interest in doing this." And, well, then all of a sudden, lo and behold, we were quite willing to do that.*

ACHESON: We always had great relations with the French, because they were always hopeful that we would come back.

*Q: And, the French have really jumped into advanced scientific things with a great deal of zest.*

ACHESON: Well the truth is that throughout history, France has always been a very advance technology country.

*Q: It really is part of the French soul.*

ACHESON: It really is. Even as far back as before Napoleon …

*Q: They had balloons and all sorts of things.*

ACHESON: Exactly.

Well, anyway, something happened in 1973 that made me rethink my career concept. The ever jurisdictional-minded Federal Communications Commission said to us, "Now that we've allowed you to do domestic communications, and you've got this international monopoly in international satellite communications, we need to be sure that your international business is not subsidizing your domestic business, because in the domestic business you have competition and in the international business you don't. And, if the subsidy gets to your competitive business, domestically that's very unfair competition. So, you are going to have to create a separate subsidiary company to do your domestic communications, and you cannot have the principal officers of COMSAT or the members of the board doing both responsibilities." So, we fought that for a while, but it stuck. We had to create a wholly-owned sub and that meant that the Boards had to be separate. This is absurd, because it just added costs.

The boards had to be separate; the principal officers had to be separate. I could no longer be general counsel of both the domestic and international operations. We had to form a company that we called COMSAT General Communications, and I had to choose between which job I wanted. And, it was a very hard choice, because the future of domestic was not certain. The earnings from international, I thought, were going to be going down over time; as other countries started using the international system more, COMSAT's share would diminish and the revenues to COMSAT would diminish. So I thought maybe this is telling me I shouldn't be here anymore. So, I decided to go back to the practice of law.

*Q: You know, it strikes me that every once in a while, we get into a holier than thou attitude in business. It really screws things up; it makes no sense. It seems only to appease a group of hoodlers.*

ACHESON: That's true. It happens a lot.

*Q: Was the satellite business changing the nature of domestic communications? Obviously, it was changing the world; communications were getting better and better all the time, but was this doing something to the cables and landlines, too?*

ACHESON: Sure. Landlines still exist in the United States, and indeed all over the world – not all over the world. There are some countries that have such sparsely distributed populations that landlines make no sense.

I'll tell you a story. Joe Charyk, the president of COMSAT and I and our wives flew around the world together and took one month going around the world visiting every major country that had a satellite ground station. We went to India on that trip. We had flown in from the Middle East to Bombay and we were met by a very nice team, including the Minister of Communication. They flew us up to the Indian ground station in Poona, which is sort of North Central.

*Q: It used to be where they had summer stations for the British.*

ACHESON: Yes; that sort of thing.

As we were flying out of Bombay, I said to the Minister, "Tell me now, your communications traffic to the world is obviously out of your highly-populated cities (they are Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. Calcutta and Bombay are on the coast and Delhi is sort of in the middle). Why not build a station in one of those places instead of way up in this place north and sort of out of touch?" And he said, "It's a good question. It's because a station situated at a major communications center would create radio interference with the ground microwave system." I said, "Well, that's right, but I didn't see any microwave installations as we were flying out and I wonder whether that's really a problem." And he said, "Oh, there are no microwave systems. But, there is a microwave system in the five-year plan and that plan is senior to the plan for the satellite system."

*Q: Good god! So, I mean, they have been thinking about this…. in every five-year plan, I guess.*

ACHESON: This struck me as typical and I thought, "No wonder India is screwed up."

*Q: Was there talk about having, what now is our cell phone system, which has now dominated the world? This is the microwave system.*

ACHESON: Yes.

*Q: Was this in the works?*

ACHESON: No; nobody had ever hear the words 'cell phone' at that time. My trip, including the Indian visit, was in December of 1970. And, I never heard the words 'cell phone' by the time I left COMSAT. I don't even remember when cell phones started out.

Obviously, the way communications has gone, is to free people up from being tied to a ground-based wire system. And the satellites made that possible. If you didn't have satellites, there would be parts of the world where you couldn't even have cell phones because, with the curvature of the earth, unless you just dotted towers all across the country, you wouldn't be able to reach….

*Q: Yeah. It's an integrated system.*

ACHESON: Yeah. Now, the requirement to do cell phones by satellite is to have frequencies that travel a straight path, instead of a curved path and to have enough power in the satellite and in the cell phone so that the signal would be audible on both ends. That's all you need.

*Q: Were you having to monitor things like the UN (United Nations), and all that, that they might come up with something to screw things up for political purposes, or something like that?*

ACHESON: Well, there is one way that the UN did come into our lives, and we thought it was screwy. INTELSAT, based in Washington, but with a board of foreign governors living here who wanted very much to have tax-free salaries. They decided it would be fun to follow the practice used by the World Bank and by the UN. So, in the years I was at COMSAT, there was sort of more or less annually, a three-legged race, between the UN, the World Bank and INTELSAT to use the other as its model for salaries, perks and tax-freeness, and all that stuff. And we just thought it was insane. But, it happened.

*Q: Did some people get this tax-free thing?*

ACHESON: Not in our company. But the International Consortium's board, INTELSAT, its directors, and after the manager went to INTELSAT from COMSAT, the manager and the board had tax-free salaries here in Washington.

*Q: Were you, as you were looking at this, concerned that you were sitting on a time bomb. There would be some electronic explosion, or something like that, that would really effect your equipment.*

ACHESON: Well, it did happen. We had satellites failing in orbit. We not only had launch failures (I have forgotten how many, but while I was there we had three that I can remember), but we also had other types of failures in orbit. These were not permanent failures. I'll describe it. With INTELSAT III, which was a spinner satellite, a very ingenious system was invented to spin the satellite so that it would be gyroscopically stable. But then, the antenna, which had to spot the earth without interruption, had to be de-spun by an electric motor at exactly the same rate. It was a very, very tricky operation.

*Q: Oh, boy!*

ACHESON: One day, we were at a staff meeting in the early morning. Siegfried Reiger, who had been on Werner von Braun's team at Peenemunde.…oh sorry, vice president for science, reported that we had lost communications in the number one Atlantic satellite. He said that the indications appeared to be that the bearing on the side that was facing the sun had bound up, and that the antenna wasn't de-spinning anymore.

I remember being at the meeting, and I got a lot of credit for this later, even from him. I didn't know what I was talking about, but I said, "Sig, if you can invert the satellite, the bearing will be in the shade and will be cooled quickly, because it is colder than hell in outer space, and then maybe the antenna will start spinning again." He said, "We thought of that, but we thought it very improbable." So I said, "You know, we have stockholders and we have a Board of Directors, and it seems to me you ought to be able to say you've tried everything before you scratch this satellite off." He said, "Ok, that's a fair comment." So, it was very easy to give the satellite a command to invert. You did it with the little jets they have on the satellite that tilt it and stop it where you want it stopped. And, in about an hour the satellite bearing had chilled; and, because it is 180 degrees

from the way it was before, it remained spotted on earth, and immediately it started spinning again. Everything worked perfectly. [Laughter]

Sig later said, "That was a really dumb idea of yours, but it's good for a drink."

*Q: Well, you could say, "I was assistant communications officer on a Destroyer Escort, so, of course I could figure this out!"*

ACHESON: Anyway, that was one failure. Those things happen.

Oh yes, one I should tell you about. Another staff meeting early in the morning. George Sampson, a retired Lieutenant. General in the Air Force, had been the head of the Defense Communications Agency in the Defense Department. He retired as a Lieutenant General, came to work for COMSAT and was our vice president for communications operations. He was a lovely, nice, reliable guy. He came in one day and said, "Something has happened; I don't understand it. The ground station in Thailand, at Shijiazhuang has gone off the air." So, I though, having served in that part of the world in the navy, I said, "Well, has there been a typhoon out there? It might have happened." He said, "I'll get on the order wire." This means the non-commercial communications circuit that we have with every earth station. He said, "I'll run it through Bangkok so the whole thing goes by landline, and maybe there's some crew there, and they can tell us what's happened."

And he did that, and indeed there was some crew there and they said, "We have had a very heavy seasonal rainfall. There has been some very heavy flooding. All the cobras have come up out of their ground nests and are now climbing the metal steps, the ladder going up to the front door going up to the ground station." They built it that way because of flooding and they needed to have the…it was like putting a house on stilts, basically that's what they did – with a metal ladder, with corrugated metal stair going up. He said, "Nobody can come in or get out until these god damn snakes have gone." [Laughter]

So we said, "Do you need anything? We could have food or drink, or whatever you need, helicoptered in, I suppose." And he said, "Oh, we've already taken care of that. The only problem is physical access or egress. We're just going to have to wait." [Laughter]

*Q: So this is '74ish.*

ACHESON: '74.

*Q: So, where'd you go?*

ACHESON: I have some friends in a big Cleveland law firm. Actually, one of the great American law firms headquartered in Cleveland, with a sizeable Washington office, called Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue, that was one of the pioneer firms in the industrial days of Cleveland, Ohio that worked with Mark Hanna and his company.

*Q: Mark Hannah was McKinley's political boss.*

ACHESON: Right. Hanna was the guy, when McKinley died, who said to somebody, "McKinley is dead and now that damn cowboy (Theodore Roosevelt) is President of the United States."

*Q: I think he's also the person who said, "There's a madman within a heartbeat of the presidency."*

ACHESON: Exactly. Right. Well, they asked me if I would come and practice with them. I had told my chief friend there, with whom I had lunch, that I was leaving COMSAT and told him why and that this jurisdictional problem seemed to me to be unmanageable and that it made the end of a really good career at COMSAT. And he said, "Why don't you come and practice with us." So I did and practiced there until 1980.

*Q: What type of law were you practicing?*

ACHESON: I did mainly anti-trust law and communications law. COMSAT asked me to do some things for them. One thing I did, which I was fairly proud of. The INTELSAT IV series, the first body stabilized satellite, was being bid for by Aeronutronic Ford. What Ford wanted to do was to basically send its specs out to foreign contractors. Any INTELSAT system had to have a lot of foreign participation or the Board of Governors in INTELSAT wouldn't approve it. So, what they wanted to do was send out their specs so they made sure that this was done the right way and have foreign contractors – one guy do the antenna, one guy do the power system, one guy do the body stabilization system, etc., etc., etc. They ran into a road block, because the Defense Department and State Department said that because of the Munitions Control Laws, you many not send space technology out of the United States.

*Q: You'd been doing it before, hadn't you?*

ACHESON: Not really; no. And this was very sensitive stuff, too; very leading edge stuff. So, COMSAT suggested to Ford that they talk to me about it. So, I went out to Ford on the West Coast, near Mountain View - Milpitas, between San Francisco and San Jose. When I was out there, I said to these guys, "COMSAT wants you to build the satellite, and you want to build the satellite, and there is one obvious way around the munitions control. If you do it this way, you get two bonuses: one is you avoid the munitions control and the other is you excite the admiration and the hunger of the foreign contractors and that is this: put out to them a proposal that they send in their development specs for the parts (the antenna system, the power system, the body stabilization system, etc.). For everything they would like to build, have them send in proposals. Then, you evaluate the technology and give them hints about how to improve it, but don't send out any technology of your own. Document this. You will then have a satellite system with a lot of foreign participation that the Board of Governors of INTELSAT will love and you will have avoided munitions control.

*Q: This is reverse engineering.*

ACHESON: Exactly. So they thought, "God! What a great idea!" Well, one guy at the meeting, who was obviously the reason they started out the other way, was one of these control freaks who wanted to tell the foreigners exactly what to do, and how do it and send in the hardware. But the situation obviously got past him, so the guys who were running the company said, "Absolutely, we've got to do that." And they did. And they had some excellent proposals. The Italians came up with a wonderful antenna system; the French came up with a wonderful body stabilize system; the Germans came up with the flat solar panels and the system to generate electric power and the Japanese had some great….

*Q: Well, in a way it really opened things up, rather than building on our own plans.*

ACHESON: Exactly. This is a perfect illustration of how things ought to work in a free trade system.

*Q: Yeah.*

*Had the profession of law changed much - the atmosphere and all that?*

ACHESON: Yeah. It had changed a great deal and much to the worse. It did not take me long to discover that. For one thing, the practice of law had become fiercely competitive, even in Washington. There were a lot of firms getting bigger and bigger and bigger and opening foreign offices. Jones Day was doing the same thing and they were doing everything they could to maximize their revenue. They all now had computer systems and so the computer systems could record the hours you worked for a particular client and what the charges would be, multiplied by your personal hourly rate. And, because the most difficult thing in a firm is always to determine, at the beginning of each year, what partner gets what share, with the computer the firms all went checking on this, and decided to let the computer determine that. So, at the end of each year, they would look at the billings by each partner and they would determine the percentage of the billings accounted for by each partner, and then they would say the same percentage will apply to the revenue for each partner. So, it was just automatically done by computer. And, none of the things that lawyers were doing that were not reflected by the computer like: were you really becoming important in the work of the American Law Institute; did you make your name and the firm's name in *pro bono* cases in the Supreme Court, and stuff like that were totally ignored. I was very unhappy with that.

But, along about 1979….Jones Day really had two, I would say, major components: one was a team of about 12 lawyers, maybe a little more, but about 12, who did government contracts work for companies. That was their specialty and they did nothing else. They turned it over and they were very efficient at it. And then there were lawyers like me, who did everything else. The guys who did contracts thought they were not getting a fair shake in the firm, so they decided to leave the firm and form their own firm in Washington and go independent; and they did. They were going to do that at the end of '79. Most of my friends in the firm were actually in that component, but the kind of work

I was doing fell into the other component. So, I thought, "I don't like to make this choice. But here I am, like I was at COMSAT having to make a choice that I really didn't want to make."

So I thought maybe it would be fun to open a Washington office for a successful firm that does not have one. So, I scouted around and discovered that a firm that I respected a great deal in Philadelphia wanted to open a Washington office and was looking around about how to do that. So, through an intermediary I got started talking with them. And they asked me to do that. So, I started an office. I was the only lawyer they had in Washington, with a secretary, a lease and a little extra space. I immediately looked around for a way to expand our footprint. A good friend of mine named Joe Johnston had a very, very good practice in corporate insurance, liability insurance, fiduciary insurance, and fiduciary liability. He was really the leading lawyer in the country on that specialty; it was a fairly narrow specialty, but a rather rich one. I asked him if he wanted to join our firm, and he finally agreed to it, so I brought him in.

Then the aluminum business suddenly opened an opportunity for me. One of the directors of COMSAT toward the end of the time I was there was a man named John C. Harper and he was the CEO of Alcoa (Aluminum Companies of America) and rather to my surprise he called me up one day just out of the blue. He said, "David, we have a funny situation here that maybe you can help us with. The American Aluminum Companies are mining bauxite all over the world, and a lot of those governments, which are mainly third world countries, have decided to form a cartel like the oil cartel and control the price of bauxite, raise their financial participation and basically turn it into a joint venture with them instead of just selling us ore at an agreed price. So, the American aluminum producers are getting together to form a series of regular meetings where they put together a common plan of negotiating with these governments around the world. We think we can sell this to the anti-trust division because we're not talking about fixing the price of aluminum, we're not agreeing on anything among ourselves, except how to negotiate with guys that are trying to hold us up. As a defense against the cartel, we think that the Department of Justice will think this is ok, as long as we stick to really well-defined anti-trust guidelines. So, what I am asking you to do is consider this. Would you like to be the commonly-retained anti-trust lawyer for this purpose, for all the North American producers?" I said, "Sure, John. It sounds like great fun. I think I could be useful because I had a lot of anti-trust experience when I was at Covington."

So, I went out to talk with him in Pittsburg. I quickly was invited to have the Alcoa plane pick me up in Washington and to fly me down to Jamaica where they were having their first meeting. We had our first meeting. About 2-3 months later, there was to be a meeting with the representatives of the cartel, which meant that they were going to do that in Jamaica. It was Jamaica, because Jamaica had first raised this issue. There was a prime minister in Jamaica named Michael Manley, who was a very articulate, very personable guy and extremely popular and very populist-minded. He was sort of pushing this idea. Do you remember he had big ears and a beautiful British accent? He was a very talented guy.

So we met in Jamaica with those guys. We had the two men from Guinea, who were obviously under instructions from Sekou Touré, the dictator of Guinea, never to lose sight of each other. [Laughter]

They always moved in pairs; they would never have anything to drink. We had a representative from Guyana, and you know he was an East Indian from Guyana; a guy from Yugoslavia; a couple of Australians. I became very good friends with the producers, particularly with the Alcan guy – the Canadian. You might recall that years ago Alcan owned Alcoa. And, actually, it wasn't Alcan itself that owned Alcoa; it was Arthur Vining Davis, the founder of Alcan, who owned a controlling interest personally in Alcan and a controlling interest personally in Alcoa. An American anti-trust suit was brought against him to force him to sell his Alcoa stock, and that was sold in 1940. He got something like 2 billion dollars in 1940 money…

*Q: Oh, god!*

ACHESON:…for that and put it into Florida real estate. If you've been to Florida, you will have noticed a real estate company called Arvida, which means the estate of Arthur Vining Davis. His son, Nat Davis, was then running Alcan when I was doing this work. Their vice president for production was a delightful guy, French Canadian, very polished and amusing, entertaining, friendly guy. This one went on for about two years.

*Q: How did this cartel work out?*

ACHESON: Well, in the end, like most cartels, after the initial enthusiasm, there were members who decided they weren't selling enough ore and that maybe they could sell more if they lowered their price. It's just like the oil cartel a few years back.

So anyway, that aluminum caper went on for two to three years. I had several trips to Jamaica. We used to stay at the Plantation Inn in Ocho Rios. I kept looking for the eight rivers but I never found them.

*Q: Did you ever find Manley, as you say he was a populist. I can't think of anything more fun than sticking his thumb in the eye of Alcoa.*

ACHESON: Sure. Oh boy, was he popular in Jamaica.

*Q: Were you able to manage this? I would imagine there was an awful lot of PR posturing.*

ACHESON: There was a lot of that. Greece and Yugoslavia were actually part cooperative. Surinam was a big operation. Surinam accounted for a very large volume of bauxite and was particularly militant.

*Q: They had a rather nasty, sort of military regime at the time.*

ACHESON: I think so. Some of the North American majors stopped operating in Surinam. The end of it all was that Alcoa came to the conclusion that the countries where it was getting most of its bauxite were becoming less problematic: Australia for example. So they decided to leave the American Group. For about a year, Reynolds and Alcan and Kaiser continued the venture without Alcoa. In the end, they though it wasn't doing any good. With Alcoa out, Alcoa was such a big factor it made no sense to keep on that way. So the whole thing broke up.

*Q: Shall we move to the time you got involved with the Atlantic Council? Could you first explain what the Atlantic Council is, was at the time.*

ACHESON: The Atlantic council began in the early 1950s. '54 sticks in my mind. In '54 some people in Washington, who had been involved in foreign affairs work, chiefly with the Europeans and the Brits during the war, got together. They were pulled together at a famous lunch meeting by a man named Theodore C. Achilles. In 1961, the various U.S. groups supporting the Atlantic Alliance were brought together more formally under the Atlantic Council.

*Q: His interview, which was done by somebody else, is included in our collection.*

ACHESON: So, Ted Achilles got this group together and he said, "There are a lot of issues that are coming up in the post-war era that haven't been thought through. Why don't we collect a group of distinguished people, both republicans and democrats and people who have been involved in the Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower administrations and form what you might call a discussion group with an action agenda? Let's meet from time to time and pick an issue to discuss at a certain meeting and see what kind of follow-up we want to do."

So, they began picking names of people like my father, Ted Achilles, W. Randolph Burgess, who was Eisenhower's ambassador to NATO, Will Clayton, who was undersecretary under Roosevelt and one of the architects of the Marshall plan, William Foster, and Christian Herter, former secretary of state under Eisenhower, to name a few.

So, they began meeting. They would have a meeting and then somebody would say, "You know, we ought to do a paper on this and get it to the Secretary of State or the Secretary of Defense in the White House." They would definitely make someone write a paper. Paul Nitze was an early member.

So, finally, Ted Achilles said, "You know, we have been doing this so long now, we ought to give this some permanent shape." So, in 1961 they organized a non-profit corporation, actually first in New York and later in DC. They set it up with a couple of employees. Ted actually paid the expenses of this organization out of his own pocket for several years, maybe with some additional help. Then they began raising the money. Then they began hiring people who specialized in this or that. They got a lease over on 17$^{th}$ and H that had basically one floor in a kind of run-down building.

Originally and still, the on-going premise of the Atlantic Council was and is, we are going to be non-partisan, we are going to be non-partisan in outlook and we are going to be bi-partisan in make-up. We have to do that if we want our proposals in policy matter to be taken seriously by republican and democratic administrations. So, that _____ pretty well. It was kind of slow; it was kind of hard to raise money, but foundations liked it for some years, largely because it was non-partisan and largely because security issues and NATO were hot topics for, I would say, almost a decade after World War II. Maybe more than a decade.

I became one of the Board of Directors in 1977. The Chairman of the Board at that time was Andy Goodpaster, who had been the SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander of NATO) and was a very memorable, intelligent and farsighted guy. I was on the executive committee of the board. We have a huge membership board – 50 people. You can't really do business with 50 people, so we had an executive committee where all the decisions were taken. Then we had an annual meeting of the full board, the purpose of which was to give voice ratification to what the executive committee had done and was proposing to do.

So, we go along toward 1988, going into 1989 and the president of the Atlantic Council by then, was a woman by the name of Rozanne L. Ridgeway. She was supposed to be smart. I got to know her a little bit, but I got to know Andy much better. Pretty soon I discovered that Roz was away a lot. Then I read that she was joining corporate boards of directors one after another, and before I knew it and before we could count it all, she was on the board of about seven big companies who were looking for women.

*Q: Yeah. It was in that period when they were rapidly recruiting women as members of their boards.*

ACHESON: She was missing a lot of meetings. I had lunch with Andy one day and I said to him "You know, Roz is missing a lot of meetings. She's really becoming more of a corporate director than running this place. I frankly think we ought to contemplate replacing her." And Andy said, "Well, I've been actually thinking along the same line." So I said, "Well, you will proceed the way you wish, but my suggestion would be to form a very small search committee and look for a new president to succeed Roz, and then if you get a taker, tell Roz that she really ought to resign as she is becoming more of a director than the president of the Atlantic Council. And then go from there." And he said, "Would you serve on the search committee?" And I said, "I don't really think I should. First of all, because I don't think a member of the search committee should have already made up his mind that Roz should go, which I actually do feel." He said, "Ok. I'll call around and get back to you." So, maybe about ten days, maybe two weeks later he said, "I talked to a number of people about a search committee and they have said that they would only serve on a search committee if you would NOT accept the job of president of the Atlantic Council." And I said, "God; I don't know if I really want to do that. But let me think about it."

So I thought about it. I talked with my wife. She said, "You know, I think you are getting pretty bored with the practice of law. The aluminum stuff is over. Maybe it's time for you to do something else." So, then I talked with the head of my Philadelphia firm, Drinker Biddle & Reath, and said that I was thinking about doing this. He said, "You were born in 1921 and it is now 1990. You should bear in mind that our bylaws provide our partners must retire at age 70." And I said, "Oh my god, I hadn't realized I was getting on to that, but you're right." So he said, "Well, if you have something that interests you that you might want to do, you might think of doing it, because, at the time you are required to retire from the firm, we can keep you on as counsel and give you an office, but you'll only be paid your retirement; you won't be paid the way a partner is paid, so you might want to do something else." So I said, "Yeah. I probably will." So I told Andy I would take the job.

*Q: So, you did this from when to when?*

ACHESON: I did this from '91 – I have forgotten how long it took us to get Roz out of there, but it took a little doing. Literally, she didn't want to go; then she realized she really ought to. She was trying to do both for a time and I think she was driving herself crazy with a hectic travel schedule, board meetings, meeting of the Council and basically not giving it the time she ought to give it. She understood that. So, let's say – nearly as I can remember, mid '91 maybe I started doing that.

*Q: And you did it until when?*

ACHESON: I did it until 1999. I would probably still be doing it, except for the fact that my wife became terminally ill in 1998. She couldn't travel anymore and there were times when I had to suddenly leave the office and get her to the hospital. There was one occasion in late '98, when I woke up in the morning I went into her bedroom and she was unconscious. She had emphysema and was dependent on oxygen and the oxygen thing had slipped off her face and she was unconsciousness. So, I got her down to the car and took her to the hospital in a rush and they got her going again, but it was down hill after that.

*Q: During the time you were there, and in the '90s, what was the impact of the Atlantic Council?*

ACHESON: Well, we had very strong relationships with the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations.

*Q: George Herbert Walker Bush.*

ACHESON: Yes. And we had an exceptionally good relationship with Bill Perry, when he was Secretary of Defense. I thought very highly of Bill. Bill was and still is, an exceptionally thoughtful, unprejudiced, objective-minded, fair-minded guy. He was very astute; I though he was terrific.

*Q: This is during the period when the European Union was really coming into its own, wasn't it? Did this change things?*

ACHESON: Not much. The European Union, you know, has talked for many years, about forming its own independent defense capability. In fact, it has never done that. What it has done is to have formed a paper organization, which basically is the NATO forces less the United States and Canada. What it means is that when the Europeans want to do something without the participation of the U.S. and Canada, they could do it with those forces. And it is not the ideal for them. In the NATO operations, as I am sure you know, the U.S. has always supplied the major airpower and the major intelligence capacity and the Europeans don't have that to that extent if they are going by themselves. So, the only thing they have done, really, as the EU, has been on the non-military side, like Kosovo or the EU providing a lot of political counseling and has really taken charge of Kosovo, but in the Bosnia operation, it was NATO.

*Q: Much of what the Atlantic council was dealing with was NATO, wasn't it. It was very NATO oriented.*

ACHESON: Yes. Absolutely. Now the EU are in it also.

*Q: You were there, in the council, when its raison d'etre, the Soviet Union, collapsed.*

ACHESON: Yeah. That's true.

*Q: What about the Council; what were you thinking about?*

ACHESON: Well, when the Soviet Union collapsed, the immediate concern was disorder in the former Soviet Union. And, since nobody knew what really was going to happen, security did not diminish as a concern. It remained a concern. I mean, one could say the Soviet Union wasn't the enemy anymore, because technically it had been abolished. But, with its territory in what some people said was approaching chaos, security was big issue. That continued really through the Yetlsin period.

You know, the things that really generated enthusiasm in Eastern Europe for membership in NATO were, I would say, two things. One, with the collapse the Baltic States felt that there was no longer really a prohibition on their joining NATO, and they sought to do that. And the other was that in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia the disorder in Russia during the Yeltsin period and the changeover after that, led them all to say, "We don't know what's coming, but it doesn't look very tidy." So they got interested in joining NATO.

A lot of people, including myself, think that NATO has emerged too rapidly. I don't know. I am still of two minds about that. The chief interest the council had in NATO during the Yeltsin period and later, was that we saw the way it was working: that NATO would become a major force for stability in Central and Eastern Europe. The reason was that the preconditions to join NATO were all conditions that made for stability. They

included that you could not have any dispute over boundary with your neighbor. They included agreements with your neighbor on how your minorities there and his in your country should be treated. They included private market economic systems. They included human rights guarantees, fair elections and all kinds of democratic elements. These are spelled out in a NATO-approved document and every country that wants to join NATO has to demonstrate that they have met those requirements. So, even if you put defense considerations aside, a lot of the problems that made Central and Eastern Europe so shaky were getting resolved, because those countries had to meet those conditions to join NATO. That was a really key factor.

*Q: On this opening up NATO to Central Europe, were there any divisions within the Council?*

ACHESON: Yes. I wouldn't call it a split, but there were some directors who thought that we ought to push the EU to move faster on taking those countries in and not push NATO to do it. The problem there was that the EU is very slow to move. It has been faster in recent years, but at the beginning it was very hard to move. One of the reasons was that some of their early acquisitions had been very costly for the EU.

*Q: Greece, for example.*

ACHESON: Greece, yeah. I have heard a number of times at EU meetings, "May there never be another Greece!"

*Q: What was the role, during your time, of the Atlantic Council?*

ACHESON: I would say the chief role was that we would visit the offices of the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and the National Security Adviser with small delegations of 2 or 3 and talk about particular issues. And then, when we got a sense that we could do something specific with a paper, we would write a policy paper and submit it to the people we had talked to. We would always print enough copies to distribute to every member of the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the executive branch of the government – those departments involved in foreign affairs down to the offices of assistant secretaries. So, we had a big outreach and are having an effect, particularly with people like Colin Powell, Bill Perry, Tony Lake – when he was around. He was very amenable to the Council. Tony used to joke about a statement my father used to make about the Department of State. Tony said he'd found this somewhere. My father said, "The State Department is very amenable to ideas except to those of external origin." Tony said, "Never say that about me!" [Laughter]

*Q: What about the breakup of Yugoslavia? We were initially trying to stay out of the thing. Where would you put the Atlantic Council on this particular issue, particularly in the early days, before it was…*

ACHESON: …before it was Bosnia, not Serbia or Kosovo. The government of the United States is very slow to move. The Atlantic Council always thought, almost from

the first moment of the breakup, particularly when Sarajevo was a shooting gallery, and people were not walking on the street because they would be shot at random by people on a roof somewhere, we thought NATO ought to move in and stabilize the place – essentially occupy it and restore order.

In the Kosovo case, a number of us – I don't know whether I can say the majority of the Board, but many of us including me, thought that bombing Serbia, bombing Belgrade, the capital of Serbia was not a good idea. The chief reason for that was that it did not solve the immediate problem, which was the ground insurgency in Kosovo against the Albanians. A number of us were highly in favor of using a large scale helicopter force to really suppress that activity. It would mean low-level flying and basically shooting ground troops from the air and risking getting shot by ground troops at fairly short range. But, it seemed to me…the problem was those people getting killed and bombing the capital of Serbia was not going to deal with that. And it took some time to deal with that. We felt that it should have been stopped sooner – the way I said.

By the way, it was the same issue that caused the resignation of SAC EUR who was that political general who was a candidate for a while.

*Q: Wesley Clark*

ACHESON: Wes Clark was fired because Bill Cohen and Madeleine Albright wanted to deal with the Kosovo insurgency by the Serbs by bombing the capital and not by risking the helicopters. He wanted to send the helicopter in, and I think he was right. But, I certainly cannot say that there would not have been pilot casualties.

*Q: The Clinton administration, like many administrations when they first come in, wanted to stick to domestic problems. When they first came in, as you well recall, the watch words were: It is the economy stupid. They usually, though, get caught up in foreign problems much quicker then they like. Did you find that it took some prodding to get the Clinton administration to look at the world?*

ACHESON: Yes. From the beginning Madeleine was really strongly in favor of exerting some influence in the Balkan crisis. She was very outspoken about it and very energetic in pushing her view.

*Q: She was ambassador to the UN, but also on the Cabinet…*

ACHESON: That's true.

*Q: …and played much stronger a role in policy than Warren Christopher, because he was not a…*

ACHESON: I thought he was very passive, as a secretary of state.

*Q: People described him as Clinton's lawyer on foreign affairs, so he would wait for a case to come and would prepare it. It wasn't a very good fit, I don't think.*

ACHESON: I think that's true, dead true; absolutely. My father, you know, though he was a lawyer, never approached a problem from a lawyerly point of view; he was always trying to get ahead of the curve.

*Q: When you left the Atlantic Council, how did you leave it, in your opinion?*

ACHESON: I came in when the Atlantic Council was flat broke, and there was some question whether it could continue. Roz Ridgeway had not been effective in raising money and she always sort of blamed the board. She, for example, liked to quote Adele Simmons, who was president of the MacArthur Foundation, as saying the Atlantic Council was too white, too male and too military. I used to say, "Roz, give us some names to put on the board …" – that is when I was on the board and not when I was president – "…and we could deal with this thing."

Let's put it this way. Roz was quick to find that people other than herself were not doing the right thing. But, when I can in, I started as best I could raising money at a time when the foundations were withdrawing from foreign affairs. You'd see this everywhere. We had gotten grants from MacArthur, the Ford Foundation, from the…..

*Q: From the Pew.*

ACHESON: ….the Andrew W. Mellon foundation, and from Pew – we got one or two from Pew. Mellon was quite loyal to us and Ford was very loyal to us.

When foreign affairs were no longer in a state of crisis, after the Soviet Union had collapsed and all that, foundations began looking around for something more sexy to do. I'll give you an illustration. I remember vividly being turned down by Pew for one grant, and that sort of startled me. Not long after that, the woman who ran the foreign affairs side of the Ford Foundation grants called me up from New York. They were giving us about half a million dollars a year at a time when our budget was about $2 million a year. She said, "I'm coming to Washington for some visits. I wonder if I can come and make an appointment with you?" I said, "Certainly." So, we made a date. She arrived. A very attractive, and very intelligent Iranian woman. She was always beautifully dressed in a very exotic, striking way. She was very smart. Let's see if I can remember her opening line. She said, "Can you stand some good news?" I said, "Of course, I'm all ears." So she said, "Well, it comes with what you might consider some bad news, but the good news is better than the bad news is bad." So I said, "Come on; don't keep me guessing."
So she said, "We are going to terminate our program of grants in foreign affairs, except with a few things like our own office in India that does population planning and stuff. So my proposal is this: we will give you right now a grant of $1 million on the condition that you did not come to us for any further grants period at any time. Or," she said, "If you want to take your chances with us and come for further grants, we'll consider them, but I have to tell you, we are reducing our emphasis on foreign affairs, particularly security

issues." So, I said, "Well, it's clear to me that you are advising me to accept your offer and I would be a fool to go to my board and tell them that I did not accept your offer so I am now accepting your offer." And she said, "Do you have to go to your board before you make that decision?" And I said, "No." "You're sure?" she said. I said, "Yeah." I said, "because you had already made that decision for us." So, I told Andy Goodpaster and he said, "That's great; that's good news. I will settle for the million today and do what we can do tomorrow."

So, Bill Bowen was the president of Princeton, was then at this time the president of the Mellon Foundation. He had been giving us a grant of about a half a million a year. And, he said the same thing; that he was finished with foreign affairs and that they were now going to concentrate on the arts, of all things - the arts!

Well, there is another thing that I haven't mentioned, is the Smithsonian Institution, of which I was a member of the Board of regents and chairman of the executive committee. I was a member of the executive committee on the Board of Regents for a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I was brought on that board in 1980 with a six-year term. I was asked to serve another six-year term, which is all their by-laws allow. In the first part of that time, Carlisle Humelsine, who was Undersecretary of State for Administration in my father's time, was head of Colonial Williamsburg. He was chairman of the executive committee, when I come on board. He died rather suddenly and the board elected me chairman of the executive committee.

So, Bill Rehnquist and I, and Samuel C. Johnson, a very nice man who owns the Johnson family company who makes Raid, were the executive committee. We ran a pretty tight ship. The big problem we had was that when Dillon Ripley raised a lot of money to build all those new museums, he did not raise money for the maintenance of those buildings. The deferred maintenance on those buildings became a huge issue and still has not been satisfied. In fact, it has grown beyond belief. When I left the Board of Regents in 1992, the deferred maintenance account on those museums was a shade more than $300 million.

*Q: Oh, gee!*

ACHESON: And I think it's now double or triple that. It's just unbelievable. The moral is you have to have building money and maintenance money if you are going to start a new museum.

*Q: Oh, boy! Well, since leaving the Atlantic Council, what have you been up to?*

ACHESON: Well, since I left the Atlantic Council my wife died. I acquired a very nice lady friend, who is still with me; I travel a bit with her. I write blogs and articles for the Atlantic Council on my computer; send them in and they publish them; that is mildly entertaining. I write book reviews for the Washington Times newspaper. I've done four of those and I am about to do another. So I don't try to keep every minute filled; I like

spare time; and I like to do my own thing. I like to do a little intellectual work. Well, that's pretty much my life.

*Q: Well, I want to thank you very much for this.*

*End of interview*