

**ORAL HISTORY OF
HARRY C. MCPHERSON, JR. - TWELFTH INTERVIEW
APRIL 14,2003**

Today is April 14,2003, day 12 of this series of interviews, a lovely sunny day in Washington.

Mr. Vanderstar: Harry, I want to go back to comments you made on day 11 about your work on the Kennedy Center Board, was it?

Mr. McPherson: Yes, and general counsel as well.

Mr. Vanderstar: And also you were on the board of the Woodrow Wilson International Center at the Smithsonian. Both of these you got into after you left the White House. Could you just talk about each?

Mr. McPherson: Sure, and I'll add the Council of Foreign Relations; I was on the board of directors for a while and was once interviewed for the job of its president.

As I think I mentioned earlier, President Johnson called me on the last day of his presidency in the morning on January 20, 1969, and asked me if I'd like to be on the Kennedy Center Board. He put me on, and I was made one of two vice chairmen. Charles Percy, the former senator from Illinois, was the other, and our chairman was the *nonpareil*, Roger L. Stevens, whom I had known for a long time. Roger was an enormously successful real estate man, very bold fellow. He had once owned the Empire State Building. He was also, when I knew him, a hugely successful producer of plays in New York. Among other things, he produced *Annie* and *West Side Story* and many of the great Jean Kerr comedies.

Roger had a great passion for government support of the arts and a desire to generate wider access to fine art. This business man, this real estate operator and investor, was

surprisingly well read. I say surprisingly because he spoke in a mumbling kind of voice; he almost never completed a sentence, as far as I could tell and yet, as I saw when I went over to his house in Georgetown, he was surrounded by a mountain of books and scripts that people had sent him for possible production. And his reading was not just related to the stage. It was novels as well as non-fiction. He was really quite widely read.

He was a very close friend of Abe Fortas and that had something to do, I think, with my appointment, probably because Abe Fortas mentioned to Johnson that that would be a good move. I had worked on arts matters in the White House, and I had gotten to know Roger. In fact, I was persuaded by Richard Goodwin, a well-known speech writer and intellectual who was working for Johnson after working for Kennedy, to resist Roger Stevens' appointment as head of the National Endowment for the Arts because he was "just a business man. We need somebody who is intellectual." I suggested to Johnson that maybe we ought to hold up on, not knowing anything about the relationship between Abe Fortas, then on the Supreme Court, and Roger Stevens. I got a call from Justice Fortas, whom I had known quite well for some time. He said, "Let me tell you something about Roger Stevens." He painted a picture of an extremely intelligent, well read person who also had a lot of practical sense and who knew a great deal about play production and, in fact, the production of musical theater as well as plays. He was so persuasive after ten minutes that I wished that I could ~~run~~ down and take back the memo that I had sent to Johnson. Johnson had called me and said, "I got your memo and it's interesting. You may get a call from Abe Fortas about this." And in about ten minutes I did get a call from Abe Fortas.

Mr. Vanderstar: Was Goodwin in the White House at that time?

Mr. McPherson: Yes.

Mr. Vanderstar: But he spoke to you

Mr. McPherson: He spoke to me because he thought I might have more influence with Johnson. He persuaded me, and then I was un-persuaded by Justice Fortas, and I was very glad that I was, because Roger was a unique figure. There is a plaque over in the Hall of Nations, I think it is, that is dedicated to Roger. Whoever wrote the text of it really did it well. He was not just an unusual man; he was a unique man, given what he was called upon to do and what he invited himself. Roger many times wrote a personal check to cover the shortfall for theater companies that came to the Kennedy Center, and rather than have the actors or the stage hands go without, Roger would write a check. God knows how much he gave to the Kennedy Center over the years.

Did I mention going up to Shubert Alley one time?

Mr. Vanderstar: I don't think so.

Mr. McPherson: I don't remember the precise cause. I know that it had to do with "Annie." I know that the Shuberts and Roger and the Kennedy Center owned the rights to "Annie," and "Annie" was committed at a certain time in New York when Roger wanted it to be at the Kennedy Center because it was a guaranteed, big-time money maker and we needed it. Roger and I went up to the office of Bernie Jacobs and his brother. They were the Shubert Theater people who ran a number of theaters in New York, and with Roger's departure for Washington they were probably the most active producers. Roger made his case to them in their rather Romanian, Transylvanian, dark office, with all kinds of costumes around—the perfect theater office.

Roger had to go out and do something for about half an hour, and I was left with Bernie Jacobs—a tough fellow, pleasant, but tough. He said, "How well do you know Roger

Stevens?" I said, "Well, I've known him a long time. I'm getting to know him better now that I'm working with him." He said, "Well, he's a unique figure. There is no one like him in the theater world." I asked, "What do you mean by that?" He said, "I mean that, unlike anyone else I know in the theater world, when Roger Stevens makes a commitment to you, even an oral commitment, you can take it to the bank. He will write a check himself if he finds himself disadvantaged by that commitment. He will never let you down. And there is no one else like that." It was quite something to hear it from an old tough guy just off Shubert Alley in New York.

For a number of years, from '69 to '76, I was vice chairman along with Percy, and I spent a lot of time with Roger and Abe Fortas, who was off the Court by that time. When my term expired, Ford was president. It was in '76, an election year, and although I think Roger expressed the hope that I would be reappointed, these appointments — ten-year terms — were and are jewels. They give you advantages that other things don't. You get seats when other people don't get seats.

Oh, I have to tell a story. On the night of Nelson Rockefeller's swearing in as vice president, I took my older son, who was about nine years old, to the ballet. I thought he might enjoy it; it was just a flyer. I got the Trustees' box in the Eisenhower Theater. The trustees' box is immediately next to the president's box. Just before the ballet began, Nelson Rockefeller and his wife Happy and a whole bunch of people connected with him spilled into that presidential Box. The audience stood and began applauding; the whole audience stood, turned around and applauded for ten minutes. The United States had just been through the worst crisis of its kind that we had ever had, not in a league with the Civil War, but certainly a truly scary crisis, and here was a man who was well liked by people in Washington and most of the

country, and he was coming in to be vice president to a man that we were also beginning to like, Gerry Ford. People were just full of joyous praise, *laudamus Nelson Rockefeller*. Finally he sat down and the performance went on.

At the intermission, he and his friends got up to go into the little anteroom where champagne and hors d'oeuvres can be served. But before he did, this classically affable politician reached over, and I introduced myself and said I had been Lyndon Johnson's counsel, which made him shine and speak with the greatest warmth about LBJ, who felt the same for him. Then he reached down and he said, "Young fellow, what's your name?" Peter McPherson told him, and he said, "How old are you?" "Nine." Rockefeller said, "Well, you know what? Just looking at you, I can tell you're a regular fellow." It was the nicest, thoughtful thing for a big famous man to say to a nine-year-old kid. A lesson he's never forgotten. We were both just glowing. "I'll bet you're a regular fellow."

Mr. Vanderstar: You didn't need champagne.

Mr. McPherson: No, not a bit. That was wonderful.

When I was not re-appointed by Ford, Roger asked me if I would be the general counsel. I agreed and went over often to work with him. One thing I remember doing, outside of just offering counsel and occasionally going up to the Hill with him to make a presentation to committees, was in response to Roger's desire to merge the National Symphony Orchestra and the Kennedy Center. He thought that the symphony orchestra would always be a lame duck, that it would never be financially successful unless it was really embraced by the Kennedy Center. We would never be able to reach agreement on labor contracts for the players if we had one set of labor contracts for the symphony orchestra and another set for the musical comedy players.

He insisted that the Kennedy Center absorb all the debts of the NSO, which were

quite considerable. And he said, "We'll do that and then we'll go forward together." He said, "You draft this." Well, I thought about it for a couple of days, and I didn't really know who to talk to. We didn't have anybody in my firm who was a specialist in arts organization administration, so I just relied on myself. One warm pleasant afternoon on a weekend I sat in my backyard in Kensington and drafted a "Memorandum of Understanding between the Kennedy Center and the National Symphony Orchestra." As far as I know it has survived. Certainly the general principles of it still govern the NSO and the Kennedy Center.

Mr. Vanderstar: Well, that's terrific. That's when you were general counsel?

Mr. McPherson: Yes.

Mr. Vanderstar: So you were retained as counsel by the Kennedy Center?

Mr. McPherson: I was.

Mr. Vanderstar: Well, back up. When you were vice chair of the Kennedy Center, was that a volunteer job or was that a paid job?

Mr. McPherson: It was a volunteer job.

Mr. Vanderstar: And how much time did you spend?

Mr. McPherson: Well, it was all *pro bono publico* of course. I would go there any time Roger and Abe Fortas called on me. Which reminds me, when Abe died, someone called me at night and told me that he had died. The next morning I called Roger at 6:30 to express my sorrow. These men, as I said, were extremely close, but Roger said, "Oh, he did, did he? Oh. Well, thanks for calling me." And this had been a sudden heart attack. I guess Roger didn't often express deep emotions about personal things.

But he could be deeply moved by theatre and by a musical performance. One night Slava Rostropovich came to the center when he was still living in Russia, came to play the

cello, and Roger invited me to go with him. We sat in a box right over the stage at the Kennedy center while Rostropovich played furiously at the Bach and Brahms. It was an amazing performance. Roger's eyes welled up in tears, it was so powerful. Later that evening we went over to Lily Guest's house in Georgetown. She was a very wealthy woman who worked hard for the arts. Rostropovich was to come. There were about 20 of us, and we were going to have dinner. It got to be 11, 11:30. Finally he arrived with a handler, clearly from the KGB, a little man who was his "agent." A few minutes after him, Jane Thompson, the wife of Llewellyn "Tommy" Thompson, the U.S. ambassador to Russia—a very astute man—came into the house. She had been at Bethesda with Tommy, who was dying.

Mr. Vanderstar: Bethesda Naval Hospital?

Mr. McPherson: Yes. Tommy Thompson was dying and Jane had come in to see Slava, because he was Tommy's friend. This is a time when Rostropovich had bearded the Russian government on a number of occasions. Among other things, he took Solzhenitsyn into his house and said, "He's here and no one's going to touch him," and no one did. Anyway, Rostropovich went up stairs with Jane Thompson, and they didn't come down until 12:30. He was holding her hand and embracing her. They came down and the two of them drank ten-ounce tumblers of vodka on ice. It was now about one o'clock, and we were eating, and I said, "Is it okay to ask questions?" I said, "Mr. Rostropovich, what can you tell us about Suslov?" He was the principal theoretician of the politburo; you didn't see much of him, but he was the hard line Stalinist theoretician. I said, "Tell us what role he is going to play in the future of Russia." With this KGB guy sitting right next to him, Rostropovich, now full of a large glass of vodka, said "Suslov — goddamn son of a bitch bastard. Good English?" I said, "Oh, very good, very good." (laughter)

These were wonderful moments, just being around Roger Stevens and being in the Kennedy Center. I loved the role I had there.

Mr. Vanderstar: Talk about your role, because the drafting of the contract was after you became general counsel, but while you were vice chair of the Kennedy Center, that was pretty high up. What did they call on you to do?

Mr. McPherson: One of my roles was to be an interpreter of Roger at board meetings and executive committee meetings. As I said a minute ago, Roger mumbled. If a trustee said, "Roger, I wonder if you could tell us a little more about what our commitment is here to this three-play series. How much are we on the line for here?" (mumbling) And I would say, "I think what Roger's saying is that we are committed if such-and-such happens" and I would speak English for a few minutes. Roger was famous for this incomprehensible mumbling. As soon as he started answering that way, you'd hear laughter all over the room, because everyone knew that's all you were going to get out of Roger.

Mr. Vanderstar: And how did he respond to that reaction?

Mr. McPherson: To my doing?

Mr. Vanderstar: No, to the laughter.

Mr. McPherson: In a good-natured way.

Mr. Vanderstar: It didn't bother him?

Mr. McPherson: It didn't seem to bother him.

Mr. Vanderstar: Nor did it bother him that you seemed to feel the need to translate for him?

Mr. McPherson: No.

Mr. Vanderstar: Delightful. Well, beyond translating at board meetings, tell me

some of the other—

Mr. McPherson: Well, I knew the Hill and would go up there with him. If I dug into my files I could probably retrieve some specifics, but largely it had to do with trying to get a better relationship with the National Park Service and a better understanding about what the government would pick up by way of costs. Essentially, the Park Service paid for the guards and the maintenance, the air conditioning, and so on. If you considered the Kennedy Center as a presidential memorial, which it is, then the Park Service paid for the kinds of things that they would pay for in any presidential memorial, that is, hardware, logistics, and the maintenance of a dedicated place that large numbers of Americans walk through. There was not a government nickel in any production. Improving that ratio was of interest to us.

Years later, when Roger retired, he was succeeded by Ralph Davison, who was a former chief executive of Time-Life, and Ralph Davison was succeeded by Jim Wolfensohn, now the head of the World Bank. Wolfensohn was a very brainy and effective guy. He was already the chairman of Carnegie Hall and chairman of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, and he was the chairman of his own investment banking firm. He was really quite a big operator. He came in at a very tough time for the center, when it was facing bad financial times and needed a lot of repair, big-time changes in the wretched building designed by Edward Durell Stone. He thought Congress should be persuaded to make very big appropriations for this purpose.

I didn't think he could do it, and I told him and the executive committee. I just didn't think Congress would make the kind of commitment to the center. Mine was a classic case of an anachronistic response. I had been in Washington by that time for 25 years, and I had heard the H.R. Grosses of the world—this was a reactionary congressman from Iowa—I'd heard

people like that mock the belly dancers at the Kennedy Center when the New York Center or American Ballet Theater would come to town. To me, that was Congress looking at the arts.

Roger Stevens, because he was a business man, had a way of giving some reassurance to these people. But he was also, I guess you have to use the word “timid,” when it came to asking Congress to make a major dollar commitment for things that it had never supported before. Wolfensohn just went in and said, “Look, I’ve got a lot of things to do. I’m chairman of the Carnegie Hall Board, and I’ve got this thing at Princeton, and I have a lot of things that I’m involved with. I have undertaken this as a public service. I’ve been asked by Senator Kennedy and several other people whom I know to take this on. But I’m not going to do it if it is a vain effort. I’m not going to do it if the Congress is not willing to listen to me when I present them with a financial plan that will involve very substantial government commitment. Either you want a presidential memorial in good condition or you don’t. If you don’t want that, take it back.” I was not present at any of these meetings, but that’s what I heard he said. He charmed and intimidated them, and they changed everything about the relationship between the government and the Kennedy Center. They put up the funds to repair the building and made some real commitments that they had never made before.

Mr. Vanderstar: You said that he said, “Take it back.”

Mr. McPherson: Right.

Mr. Vanderstar: I have forgotten. Did the federal government build the Kennedy Center, government money?

Mr. McPherson: It was a mix of government and private funds.

Mr. Vanderstar: Oh, oh, okay. There must have been a 501(c)(3) created, because that’s what you make donations to.

Mr. McPherson: Right.

Mr. Vanderstar: And so I now see that the relationship between the federal government and this 501(c)(3) must have been a running battle and probably still is.

Mr. McPherson: It certainly invited battle because you're talking about one of the riskiest financial investments you can make—the theater.

Mr. Vanderstar: Right. It's not a public park where people can wander in and enjoy the scenery. They've got to buy a ticket, which is pretty expensive to most of the things.

Mr. McPherson: Exactly.

Mr. Vanderstar: And I can understand why, just like the arguments about funding public television and Amtrak and so on, some say, "Let the users pay," and that's how you support it and all the problems.

Mr. McPherson: Right. And that's essentially still the case.

Mr. Vanderstar: All right. So you really had plenty to do as vice chair in helping deal with this relationship.

Mr. McPherson: I did, and Chuck Percy was a huge help. He I think was still in the Senate during much of that period when he was vice chairman.

Mr. Vanderstar: So the two of you, you were both vice chairs?

Mr. McPherson: Yes.

Mr. Vanderstar: And Stevens was chair and then was succeeded by the others you've spoken of?

Mr. McPherson: Right.

Mr. Vanderstar: How long were you general counsel?

Mr. McPherson: That lasted a couple of years into Wolfensohn's tenure, and we

were not famously friendly. I volunteered that perhaps he would rather have somebody else do it and he asked Bill Becker, the son of the original counsel to the center, Ralph Becker, to succeed me as counsel.

Mr. Vanderstar: That's fascinating about the Kennedy Center. It's a side that one doesn't think about, but it's obviously extremely important.

Let's go on to the Woodrow Wilson deal which was something new that the Smithsonian had created while you were in the White House?

Mr. McPherson: The Johnson administration advanced this idea, and it was adopted by statute as an entity within the Smithsonian — the Smithsonian is a great umbrella organization. The Kennedy Center is a bureau of the Smithsonian.

Mr. Vanderstar: Really?

Mr. McPherson: Yes. Not the slightest reason why it should be, except to give it a respectable home in the eyes of Congress.

Mr. Vanderstar: But the Smithsonian is a again a partly government, partly private nonprofit entity.

Mr. McPherson: It's about 60 to 70 percent government funded, and the rest is private contributions. It began with private contributions when James Smithson started it, and for many years the majority of it was privately funded. But it has been majority publicly funded in recent times. It has these bureaus — the National Gallery is one, but it is quite independent. The Smithsonian has not a thing to do with running the National Gallery, but in some kind of frail, formal sense it is a bureau, the same as the Kennedy Center. The Woodrow Wilson Center is more an integral part of the Smithsonian than these others are. I'm not sure whose idea it was originally. Douglass Cater, who was a Johnson special assistant, had a lot to do with it.

Anyway, this was one of my last-day appointments. Johnson appointed Hubert Humphrey as chairman of the Board of the Wilson Center. The first executive director was a good friend of mine, the late Benjamin Reed, who had been the executive secretary of the State Department under Rusk—he was the one who called me in the Pentagon and asked whether I would be interested in coming over to the State Department as assistant secretary for educational and cultural affairs. Ben and I were close friends and had been for many, many years.

The idea of it was to provide in the Smithsonian a meeting place for scholars from all over the world who were in Washington to do work that bore in some way on public policy; for many years it was in the old Castle Building on the Mall. These would be political scientists, geographers, historians, writers of one sort or another—men and women who could be said to be connected to government as scholars in a way that that famous scholar and university president, Woodrow Wilson, was connected to government. He demonstrated in his own life a connection between scholarship and government that ought to be encouraged.

It has been a pretty good institution. One of the less publicized things it's done is to provide a landing place for political people who have been defeated or lost their positions and who aren't quite sure what they want to do next but who do want to do some writing and get started on a book that would cover their period in office. A number of my friends over the years have spent several months there. I think a typical tenure is about nine months, and a lot of people just spend maybe six.

Mr. Vanderstar: And these people become what, Fellows of the Woodrow Wilson Center?

Mr. McPherson: They are Fellows.

Mr. Vanderstar: And do they get a stipend?

Mr. McPherson: Yes, they do.

Mr. Vanderstar: And office space?

Mr. McPherson: And office space, secretarial support?

Mr. Vanderstar: Elliot Richardson's an example I can think of.

Mr. McPherson: Exactly.

Mr. Vanderstar: You've said two things. You've said a place for people like Elliot Richardson and so on to be housed for a while but also a place where scholars from around the world would come in.

Mr. McPherson: Right.

Mr. Vanderstar: Can you connect those two pieces?

Mr. McPherson: It certainly has provided office space and secretarial support and a pleasant environment for scholars who wanted to do research in Washington, research that could not be done very well anywhere else—with the Library of Congress and various scientific and cultural institutions around Washington. How much they have gained from intermixing, I don't know. I've been to a number of sessions in the Woodrow Wilson Center over the years and have participated in several of them as a speaker. I found them for the most part interesting, at times rather abstruse and attenuated in an academic way. Within the center there is the Kennan Institute for Russian Studies, which I think has probably been very valuable and productive. Ben Reed was succeeded by Jim Billington, another brainy fellow who has political interests and who is now the Librarian of Congress. The current Director is Lee Hamilton, who was one of the best members of Congress, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and probably the most respected Democrat in Congress over many years in dealing with foreign affairs.

Mr. Vanderstar: Doesn't the center publish a journal?

Mr. McPherson: It does, called *WQ* and it's very good.

Mr. Vanderstar: Now, how is the center funded? Do you recall when you were on the board, a long time ago? Government funded, private funded?

Mr. McPherson: Well, they get a fair amount of government funds, but they clearly have an aggressive fund raising operation going. Their last chairman, a Chicago lawyer-business man, was the personification of aggressiveness in fund raising. And they've created an advisory council, and people are on that like Alma Gildenhorn, who are formidable givers and raisers of money. So, I think they've done a much bigger and better job of fund raising than they did when I was a member.

Mr. Vanderstar: When you were a member of that board, what did that involve for you personally? Go to board meetings and what else?

Mr. McPherson: Yes, and since Ben Reed was a good friend, he would call. I cannot remember examples of what he called me about, but occasionally he would call to talk about some problem he had, ask if: (a) I had any ideas about it; and (b) if I did, would I call someone in Congress or an executive department and see if I could help repair a problem.

Mr. Vanderstar: Even though you were a board member and not a staff member.

Mr. McPherson: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Vanderstar: Okay. You were on that board for I think five years according to your resume, and then did your term expire?

Mr. McPherson: My term expired and, again, the wrong president was in office.

Mr. Vanderstar: Now, when I identified the two things I wanted to ask you about, you mentioned a third, which I certainly agree we should talk about because it seems to

succeed your term on the Woodrow Wilson Board, and that is the Council on Foreign Relations. Talk about that please.

Mr. McPherson: Okay. I was asked in the early '70s if I would be interested in being president of the Council on Foreign Relations, and it struck me as an interesting thing to do.

Mr. Vanderstar: President, not board chair.

Mr. McPherson: That's right. This would be a full-time paid position, and one would live in New York. The then-president lived on Park Avenue and was pretty well taken care of. I thought it might be exciting, to have available the resources of New York insofar as they had any interest in foreign relations and wanted to use the council. I went up to New York City and—I think Bill Moyers had recommended me to the council—spent a midday, about three hours, I guess, in the office of David Rockefeller, surrounded by French art, impressionist art for the most part. Others in the meeting and then luncheon included John J. McCloy and the chairman of Time-Life, Hesketh Pearson. There were four or five people. We were getting along well. David Rockefeller is a very nice man, very sweet spirited and quite unchallenging, and I really liked McCloy, who was robust and bearish.

Things were going okay until I was asked what experience I had had in foreign affairs. I told them that working for Johnson, particularly in the last few years of his presidency, had gotten me into a lot of foreign affairs matters, particularly Vietnam, and that I had worked in the State Department as the Educational and Cultural Affairs maven. The group was just beaming and seemed to be thinking, "You know, maybe this fellow's just fine." Then a question came up about the Middle East, and I told them the story of going to Israel just in time for the Six Day War. I expressed myself vigorously as a friend of Israel's, not really thinking that the

people who created Aramco were sitting in this room. (laughter). I'll never forget the face on John McCloy as he saw this potentially pleasant acquisition turn to dust. (laughter) I was given the equivalent of a "don't call us, we'll call you" farewell from these fellows. In another year or two, I was, despite that gaffe, elected to the board.

Mr. Vanderstar: By whom?

Mr. McPherson: By the board.

Mr. Vanderstar: And were David Rockefeller and McCloy on the board?

Mr. McPherson: Rockefeller was chairman of it.

Mr. Vanderstar: And was McCloy on the board?

Mr. McPherson: I think he was. Cy Vance was probably my promoter. He was on the board and very close to both of them. I guess I expected a lot more out of that experience than it turned out to provide. It was, instead of being an opportunity to be informed more deeply about the great issues of our era, it seemed to be mainly about salaries and pencils and typewriters—the classic bean-counting function of a board, but one that I was hoping would not be the case here. But it was. So, after one term, I asked not to be considered for re-election to the board.

I remained active in the council for a long time. Sometimes I was a speaker, and I went to many meetings. When the Cold War ended and the Wall came down, I decided, not very wisely, that there was really nothing else to know about foreign affairs. The great struggle that had involved all the world on one side or the other being over, there was no reason to go across town, at that time, 24th and M Street, to attend meetings and listen to people talk about Nicaragua and redevelopment in Tanzania. It never occurred to me that we would find ourselves in the situation we are in now [in 2003]. I'm going to rejoin the council just because it is a good

place to learn something.

Mr. Vanderstar: Terrific.

You mentioned your son at the Kennedy Center.

Mr. McPherson: Yes.

Mr. Vanderstar: And that prompts me to get back into your family and so on during the period after you left the White House. You were living in Chevy Chase Village at the time?

Mr. McPherson: I was.

Mr. Vanderstar: Talk about your family

Mr. McPherson: Both my children, my older children, Coco and Peter McPherson, went to Sidwell Friends. Coco went from there to Grinnell in Iowa and Peter, to my astonishment, went to Sewanee.

Mr. Vanderstar: Oh, boy.

Mr. McPherson: I was much moved by that. I didn't expect that he would, but that's where he went.

My wife and I became increasingly alienated and, as with most people who have had the same experience, it's hard to isolate any one cause or any one time. I suppose some people do look back at particular critical events, but in my case it was just a sort of a deterioration of a relationship that had become strained over a long time. My wife was very intelligent, eccentric — southern eccentric — and given, in the latter years of our marriage, to drinking too much. I separated from her in mind and body long before I left the house.

One night, very late in that time, I was on a bus called the L-1 bus. This was an express that went from Chevy Chase Circle, stopped once around Van Ness where UDC is now,

again in downtown Washington, and finally on the Hill. Then it went back, came back through the same stops. So it was an express, cost 75 instead of 40 cents and it was arranged like a Greyhound bus, reclining seats with a little light over your head.

Mr. Vanderstar: A reading light?

Mr. McPherson: A reading light. Wonderfully convenient when you travel to work. I began using it after the astonishing morning in 1969 when I walked out of my house and realized that there was no black limo out there to drive me into work. I had to get to work by other means.

One night I was going home on the L-1 in an absolute blizzard. It had been snowing for half a day or more and there was probably a foot on the ground—the bus was doing its best to wallow through this on Connecticut Avenue—when I saw, sort of by the side of my eye, a woman get off the bus. She was wearing a raccoon coat, and she stepped with rather melancholy slowness across the street. I figured out later, many years later, that it was in part because she didn't see well at all that she was having a hard time picking her way across the street. But I was just hit by the sight of her and the way she was walking. So I started looking out for her on the bus. I would even hold my *New York Times* wide across the seat next to me until the bus stopped at Van Ness where she got on, and I would fold my paper and she would find herself sitting next to this old geezer. She was 15 years younger than I.

She realized after a while, after a month or so of this behavior on my part, that there was something afoot here and she'd better quit riding the bus, something that was in her best interest. And she stayed away for a couple of months. I was dismayed. She says that she had a dream one night that caused her to get back on the bus. Well, over time, I got **up** the courage to invite her to lunch and we started seeing each other. We got married in 1981, which

is now 22 years ago.

She worked on the Hill, incidentally, for a very nice, profoundly conservative congressman from Ohio, a Republican. He had a lot of seniority and almost no influence for his great seniority. He was on the Appropriations Committee. He was once nominated by the Hill newspaper to be chairman of the Obscure Caucus. (laughter) The staff was a particularly pleasant one. My wife was his legislative director for defense and foreign policy issues; she is a firm and committed Democrat and has been ever since we've been married, but at the time she had that connection.

Incidentally, we thought we were extremely clever in concealing this relationship from anybody. When we got married, on a wonderful October day in St. John's, Lafayette Square, we went over to a glorious wedding party in Prospect House in Georgetown, overlooking Key Bridge. A lot of friends from my political life were there. And there was this enormous spray of flowers and it had a card on it, "Congratulations from the Gang on the L-1 Express."

Mr. Vanderstar: So much for your secret. (laughter)

Mr. McPherson: So much for all this clever evasiveness on our part.

Mr. Vanderstar: If you don't mind my asking, how did Coco and Peter respond to this new person in your life whenever they found out about it from the Gang on the L-1 or whatever source?

Mr. McPherson: Pleasantly but remotely at first. It has taken many years for that to change, and today the relationship is fine. They get along well and talk very easily.

Mr. Vanderstar: If they become warm, that's a blessing.

Mr. McPherson: It is, yes. We were just in New York this weekend with my

daughter.

Mr. Vanderstar: After your separation from Clay and before you married Trish, where did you live?

Mr. McPherson: I lived in Woodley Park Towers, a wonderful old apartment house. If you ever have the occasion to need an apartment, I recommend it. It's just up the street from the Zoo, and it's where Justice Brennan lived. Very commodious apartments, great big high-ceilinged spaces, a very pleasant place to live.

Mr. Vanderstar: And then when you got married?

Mr. McPherson: When we got married, we spent six months living there and looked for a house. One day Trisha pointed to an ad in the Post that had a little picture of an old, Victorian house, and it had the legend, "View from the tennis court." Well, that sounded pretty neat. I had been playing tennis two or three times a week for about 35 years in Washington. Played at St. Alban's for most of those years. We went out to Kensington, which I knew very little about, it's out Connecticut Avenue about a mile and a half beyond the Beltway—

Mr. Vanderstar: Is it beyond the Beltway or just beyond Western Avenue?

Mr. McPherson: Beyond the Beltway.

Mr. Vanderstar: I was thinking of Kenwood.

Mr. McPherson: Most everybody knows Kenwood. Kensington is just not that well known. It is a pleasant, late 1890s community. It would be great if it didn't have an eight-lane Indianapolis speedway — Connecticut Avenue—running down the middle of it, which divides it in two and makes the eastern side, where we are, about as remote from the western side as if we were in a different county. On our side, which is to the right of Connecticut as you go out, there are a number of houses that were built in about 1895. The first one to be built is

now a nursing home on a circle and our house faces the nursing home.

In the back yard, sure enough, there is a tennis court. It became a place where I rejoiced every Saturday and Sunday to play tennis. It's a wonderful old house, built in 1894, a four-square Victorian, absolutely square. Very high ceilings, lots of windows and light. We have put a lot into it. My wife, after she left this chairman of the Obscure Caucus, got started in what she really likes to do, which is decorating. She has her own business, and she has made our house her lab. It's a wonderful place.

The best thing we did in the mid-1980s, was to adopt a baby. We tried to have a baby and, being unsuccessful, we adopted in a remarkable way, by advertising. There is a lawyer in College Park who specializes in family law, and I think what he really commits himself to are family abuse cases and that kind of thing. But what pays the bills is a very sophisticated operation in which he helps couples place ads—usually in very small circulation papers in small communities around this area—using a *nom de plume* and inviting calls from persons who may be about to have a child and don't think they can manage it. After four months and several meetings with expectant mothers, which were unsatisfactory, one evening we got a call from someone who just sounded right. I got off the phone quickly and gave it to my wife. After about a month and a half the mother gave birth at a hospital in Baltimore. We were expecting it to be a girl and had all kinds of names for her.

I was called here in the law office by the mother, who said that she had just given birth to a boy. I was absolutely bowled over, but I immediately produced a name. It didn't take me five minutes to know the name I wanted—Sam—for two of my heroes in life, Dr. Samuel Johnson and Sam Houston, with Sam Rayburn thrown in for lagniappe. So we drove over there, and Trisha began several days of spending time with the mother, a very nice woman who was the

manager of a shoe store in Glen Burnie; she already had a child and did not think she could manage a second. Sam turned out to be a handsome baby. He is now **16** and a sophomore in Gonzaga here in town.

Mr. Vanderstar: Was he born in '87?

Mr. McPherson: No '86.

Mr. Vanderstar: Okay. Well, that's a wonderful story. Maybe that's a good one to end today's session on and then we'll get back to some of your activities such as the Czech caper.