

Oral History of Carl Stern

This interview is being conducted on behalf of the Oral History Project of The Historical Society of the District of Columbia Circuit. The interviewer is Judy Feigin, and the interviewee is Carl Stern. The interview took place at Carl's home in Washington, D.C., on October 27, 2020. This is the second interview.

MS. FEIGIN: Shortly before we left off, we were talking about Ramsey Clark, who was LBJ's attorney general. I know you spent some time covering the White House under LBJ, so that would be a good place to start.

MR. STERN: I should mention my personal interactions and not his domestic and foreign policy agenda. My wife Joy and I used to go down to Texas when Lyndon Johnson went down there. Remember I was sort of the back-up person at the White House for the last year-and-a half of the Johnson Administration, and I certainly have wonderful memories of it. We used to go to church, for example, with Lyndon Johnson on Sunday mornings. He had this ritual where he would start off taking his daughter Lucy to a Catholic service. Then he would go back, drop her off, and pick up Mrs. Johnson, Lady Bird, and they would go in to Fredericksburg for the Episcopalian service. And then he would drop her off, and he would go back to the service he really wanted to go to in Stonewall, which was nearby the ranch. That was a Baptist service, more fire and brimstone. Sometimes it got a little excessive. I recall at one point, the minister, in an effort to emphasize a point, pulled out a pistol, which the Secret Service did not enjoy [laughter].

In any event, on one of these occasions, the President suggested that Joy and I should accompany him back to the house. We actually sat

for about an hour on the lawn outside his house, just the three of us, and I recall that he talked a lot about his starting professional life. He was a teacher in Harlingen, in the Rio Grande Valley, and he spoke so meaningfully about his interaction with Mexican-American youngsters and how he felt the need to do something to improve their lives. I mean this could have just been political puffing, but given the length and the intensity of our conversation, I think he was genuine in saying the things that he said.

MS. FEIGIN: This happened after church. This suggests to me that the family was somewhat religious. Often I think politicians are maybe just putting it on for show, but I guess he really was.

MR. STERN: I always had a feeling that Johnson enjoyed being at the church services. It gave him an opportunity to pursue friendships with neighbors and others, and it's very much in a politician's blood.

I want to point out to you that it wasn't all profound discussions of the socioeconomic status of Mexican-American children. I remember he asked us, he wanted to know what kinds of souvenirs they were selling down in Fredericksburg, Texas. That was a semi-big town nearby, where Admiral Nimitz was born. They were selling souvenirs down there, dishes, plates with his likeness on them and Lady Bird's. He wanted to know what kinds of things they were selling and whether they were sufficiently flattering [laughter].

We had been attending something called, I think it was Hemisphere in San Antonio, which was sort of a state world's fair, and we had spent some time in the museum there which featured German heritage in Texas. After we told him about it, he sent in to the house. He wanted to show us his scrapbook clipping announcing his birth in the Fredericksburg paper. It was in German. The announcement of his birth was in German.

MS. FEIGIN: Why?

MR. STERN: Because in that part of Texas, they had a large German population. New Braunfels nearby had a daily radio station which broadcast in German. So he was very much interested in those sorts of things

But I also have to tell you that one of the things that sort of endeared him to me -- he wasn't always an endearing personality -- one of the things that got to me was that he understood the limitations of his own power as president of the United States. I recall on one occasion, and I was not present, but I was told about it, some Texans came to visit him in his office, and they were oohing and aahing about all the power of the presidency, the most powerful man in the world. More powerful than Caesar or Napoleon, Charlemagne, all these people that they were naming, and he kind of took it all in, and when they were finished, he said "Folks, you see this red phone on my desk? That's a direct line to Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon. You know what would happen if I picked up the phone right now and said Bob, drop the H

bomb on Red China. Do you know what he would say to me? He would say” (I have to delete the profanity) ‘Go jump in the lake, Mr. President’” [laughter]. So he understood the limits, or at least he claimed that he did, of presidential power. He had still a bit of humility.

Also, it was interesting to see for journalists that there is a difference between the power that public figures have when they are fulfilling their responsibilities and the press which is sort of a bystander. Journalists live these events vicariously, but they don’t have any of the responsibilities. They can criticize freely because they don’t take the rap. But I very well remember, again, it’s something I was told by a reliable source. There came a time when John Chancellor, my colleague at NBC, the network anchorman at that point, was pressured, I can say that, by Johnson to become head of the U.S. Information Agency. If you remember Edward R. Murrow, he had had that job for a while. It was not unknown for a journalist to be put in that post. In any event, Chancellor finds himself at his first meeting. He’s invited to a meeting of the Cabinet at the White House, and finds himself sitting there with Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State, to his right, and Robert McNamara to his left, the Secretary of Defense. And the president says, “All right, the first item on the agenda today is do we mine Haiphong Harbor” [laughter]? He turns to Chancellor and says, “Jack, being as this is your first Cabinet meeting, we’ll let you go first. What do we do?” Chancellor sat there for a moment, a second passed, another second, and his position was in essence

being asked to pull the trigger, and he said, “I pass” [laughter]. He couldn’t or wouldn’t do it. I just tell you that story to remind you that the press can criticize and so on, but they are, after all, bystanders.

MS. FEIGIN: Did John Chancellor take the position?

MR. STERN: Yes, he did. You didn’t say no to Lyndon Johnson. Just ask Arthur Goldberg. He was talked out of a Supreme Court seat he already had to become U.N. Ambassador and regretted it all the years thereafter.

I should also tell you another day that I remember vividly, and I’ll make this my last story on President Johnson, but I was at the White House when Martin Luther King was assassinated. You may recall I had come back to D.C. from Memphis in an instance of bad timing for a journalist, and that was a moment where a lot of things changed. I remember President Johnson wandering around the press lobby, what we used to call the Lyndon Hilton, in his shirt sleeves. As the evening progressed, he ordered out the National Guard because rioting had broken out. Perhaps it was the next night after the assassination, now that I think about it. Destruction had begun in downtown D.C. as the response of some people.

Many things at the White House changed that night. I recall when Lyndon Johnson called out the Guard, those of us in the press corps went rushing out of the West Wing to do bulletins, and in doing so, one of the news people smashed out the glass in the front door of the West Wing, so for the rest of the evening while we were trying to do our reporting, there

was a glazier putting new glass in the door. That was the night for the first time they made White House reporters such as myself carry press passes around our necks. Up until that point, we just carried them in our wallets in case anybody asked to see them. That was the beginning in Washington of people having to wear their IDs. And of course that's ubiquitous today.

That was also the night that they turned the lights around in front of the White House along the fence. There were lights which illuminated the White House. And of course, it is still, at least partially, illuminated at night as a tourist attraction if nothing else. But that was the night they took the lights and they turned them around. They turned them to shine out past the fence into the street as a means of seeing what was going on out there, if some of these rioters – which they were – would seek to invade the White House. So that was a night that changed a lot for reporters covering the White House and for others. It's sort of a turning point in life in Washington for those who were living here and working here then.

MS. FEIGIN: Before we leave Johnson, it occurs to me that Lady Bird Johnson owned, and maybe even during the White House years, radio stations, correct?

MR. STERN: Yes.

MS. FEIGIN: So did that, you think, affect how they treated you or did you have any relationship with her? Is there anything about her that's part of your memory?

MR. STERN: She was a perfectly fine hostess, but we didn't have much interaction. She was off doing a beautification campaign, if you recall.

MS. FEIGIN: We should say for people reading this that it was road beautification, right?

MR. STERN: Parks and roads, yes. And certainly no extra benefit was derived from her radio station ownership for those of us who were in the broadcast business. That never happened.

MS. FEIGIN: I thought they just might be kinder to you.

MR. STERN: Where do you want to go next?

MS. FEIGIN: We went from Ramsey Clark to the president. Let's go back to attorneys general.

MR. STERN: Okay. So, now let's talk about the legal beat. After a year-and-a-half, Brinkley relented and let me start doing more Justice Department and Supreme Court coverage on the TV, something which he had kept for himself.

MS. FEIGIN: Was that a unique slot? Did other stations have a legal reporter like you?

MR. STERN: No. At that time, I was the first reporter brought in to cover the law beat full time. That was the start of 1967. Others came along later. Fred Graham, for example, at CBS. I remember going to lunch with him. He wanted to discuss with me getting into broadcasting, and he did join CBS in 1972. And then later Tim O'Brien at ABC, and there were others.

In any event, you want to talk about attorneys general. My first after Ramsey Clark would've been John Mitchell. John Mitchell was

Richard Nixon 's first attorney general. He was a municipal bond lawyer from New York, and a close friend in New York of Mr. Nixon. He was very dour in demeanor but pleasant enough in person. He was like a big teddy bear actually. He puffed on his pipe. He was a very modulated sort of person. I always had the sense that he was sort of, I don't want to say amused, I'd say bemused, by what was going on in Washington. He was sort of detached. He let things happen. And in fact one could say that's how he got in trouble in Washington in the Watergate thing.

MS. FEIGIN: Do you think it just sort of happened without his being really aware of what was happening?

MR. STERN: No. He knew. You may remember during some of the hearings, I remember Mitchell was asked about a meeting that had been held in the spring of 1972, a meeting held in his office. It's a story I actually reported, Mitchell's meeting with G. Gordon Liddy and Liddy's plan to wiretap and otherwise compromise the Democratic convention which was in Miami that year. Liddy had these grand plans for prostitutes and others he was going to engage in the service of the Committee to Reelect the President. Years later, Mitchell was asked "Did you think to throw him out of your office?" and he responded, "I should have thrown him out the window" [laughter]. So I don't want to say that Mitchell was not informed. I just want to make the point that he let things happen that he shouldn't have. Maybe he was distracted by his wife Martha, if you recall Martha Mitchell. I guess I could say that Mitchell was sort of a henpecked

husband [laughter]. Martha was a large personality, as some of us remember.

I do have to tell you that I only really interacted personally one-on-one with her once. For some reason, she was assigned to redecorate the Justice Department in part, and she was up on the fifth floor.

MS. FEIGIN: The Attorney General's wife was redecorating?

MR. STERN: Yes. She was up there on the fifth floor with samples of paint, and she came into the press room, which was across the hall from the Attorney General's Office, and she grabbed me, and she said, "What's your favorite color?" I said, "Blue," and that's how come the fifth floor of the Justice Department came to have this horrible washed-out blue on its walls [laughter], which I'm happy to report was replaced ultimately by a more respectable beige, but you can blame me for that terrible blue.

MS. FEIGIN: The press room isn't still there, is it?

MR. STERN: It's basically on the first floor. That occurred years later after there was irritation over the fact that we could sit in the press room with our door open and see who was going in and out of the Attorney General's Office. I remember John Bricker, a senator from Ohio, went in there for some confidential meeting, and we became aware of that just by looking out the door. It was that sort of incident which inspired the Department, before I became an employee there, to move the press office, first around the corner, and then ultimately to the first floor.

MS. FEIGIN: I think in the early years, and I don't know when this ended, but I think Hoover had an office on the fifth floor.

MR. STERN: He certainly did.

MS. FEIGIN: Was that when you were there?

MR. STERN: I would wander down that way very often, but before we go down that road, let me just tell you one other thing about Mitchell. In the Watergate conspiracy trial, he was among those who was convicted, and he ultimately spent nineteen months as a guest of the federal prison system. He was down in Montgomery, Alabama, and I remember we exchanged correspondence.

MS. FEIGIN: From prison?

MR. STERN: From prison. Yeah, he sent me a note which I still have around the house somewhere, in which he lauded Southern hospitality to which he had been treated in the federal prison camp in Montgomery, Alabama [laughter]. So he was a man of serenity and wit, after a fashion, despite his somewhat off-putting personality at times. I enjoyed his company.

MS. FEIGIN: Okay. So he gets replaced by somebody who seems pretty bland, Richard Kleindienst.

MR. STERN: He was a lawyer from Arizona. Actually, a good lawyer, but I think all I need to say is he got caught too in the Washingtonitis. He got caught lying to Congress about orders he'd received from the Nixon White House to end, or curtail, a Department of Justice antitrust suit against a Republican party benefactor, the ITT corporation, and I think it's fair to say that although it was only a misdemeanor conviction, that he never fully recovered from that.

MS. FEIGIN: Did you have any relationship with him? He wasn't there very long I think. A year?

MR. STERN: I probably spent more time with him when he was deputy attorney general under Mitchell but there's nothing special that remains in my memory.

MS. FEIGIN: The person who follows him certainly will trigger big memories I suspect, because it's Elliot Richardson.

MR. STERN: Elliot Richardson, right. Well of course we remember him because of Watergate and his resignation from the attorney general's position when President Nixon instructed him to fire the Watergate special prosecutor and to close the special prosecutor's office. The second in command of the Department was Bill Ruckelshaus, William Ruckelshaus, and he also resigned rather than accept that order. But staying on Richardson for a moment, he was a man of, I think it's fair to say, towering dedication and integrity. However, if you were asking for a lot of personal stories, I have to say that he was a man of much higher social standing than we mere reporters, and we didn't really mingle in his circle.

MS. FEIGIN: You didn't have any rapport with him independent of . . .

MR. STERN: Relatively little. That was true of a lot of attorneys general. I don't mean to suggest that we sat in their living rooms for long chats.

MS. FEIGIN: Let me ask you something about Richardson and the special prosecutor. I wonder if you have thoughts about this because over the years, there have been several others – Walsh for Iran Contra, Mueller for Trump, and others in between. I just wonder if you have any thoughts about the whole idea of an independent counsel or special prosecutor. You've watched a

lot of them come and go. Do you have a sense of whether they are a good alternative?

MR. STERN: The objections that were raised to them is that they sort of had unlimited budgets and unlimited time, that there was an impetus, if you will, to try to nail whoever it was that they were asked to investigate. I never encountered a special prosecutor – or later independent prosecutor, under a law that Congress enacted – I never came across one who I felt was overdoing it. One could argue about Ken Starr. I was subpoenaed twice by Ken Starr's people. I knew Ken from the William French Smith days of the Justice Department and was personally very friendly with him. He and Alice have been guests in my home. And Ken may well have gone overboard in expanding his inquiry into the activities of Bill Clinton which led to the Monica Lewinsky matter and so on. I don't have to describe all of that. But by and large, I think it was a useful apparatus, and I regret that all we have now is a statutory special prosecutor provision in the rules that govern the Justice Department, and that as of late led, for example, the current Attorney General William Barr to appoint people to look into things, calling them special prosecutors, but they are very much part of the existing apparatus that the special prosecutors were intended to supplant. So bottom line, I am generally a supporter of independent counsel, independent prosecutors.

MS. FEIGIN: In some instances – Ken Starr was one of them – reports had to be issued, and they became public. Do you think that is an appropriate part of the special prosecutor’s role?

MR. STERN: Well, as a practical matter, Congress, for example, could probably get them anyway. A problem we recently have had is that the special prosecutor's report was, shall we say, delayed and put out by political operatives in a way that misstated what the special prosecutor had found. It’s possible with anything to distort them, and make them less valuable, and that's what has happened lately.

MS. FEIGIN: I think we should just say, because people may read this many, many years down the road and not know the reference, I think you are referencing the Mueller report.

MR. STERN: Yes. The Mueller report. We’re doing this interview in the year 2020, so that'll be a reference point. So who's next?

MS. FEIGIN: Before we get to the next, if I could just pick up on one other thing you said because it’s just too intriguing to let it go. You were subpoenaed twice by Ken Starr? Why would he have subpoenaed you?

MR. STERN: Oh, that is a tangent, I don’t know if we want to really go into. The associate attorney general under Janet Reno was Web Hubbell, and he got into some trouble about overbilling and so on when he was in private practice in Arkansas and some other things. I think it's fair to say that there was a certain amount of congressional gunning for Web Hubbell as a friend of Bill Clinton, and I had worked closely with Web Hubbell when I

was a press officer at the Justice Department. We'll talk more about that later. They wanted to hear from me about Web Hubbell. If I recall correctly, I think my inquisitor was a fellow named Kavanaugh who's currently employed up at the top of the Hill at the Supreme Court [laughter]. I think it was it was Kavanaugh or a member of his staff. He was working at that time for Ken Starr.

MS. FEIGIN: Okay, so Richardson gets replaced after he quits by William Saxbe.

MR. STERN: Bill Saxbe I knew. He had been the attorney general of Ohio when I was a reporter in Ohio. He was very much bound with the Teamsters union in Ohio. I won't go into all that.

MS. FEIGIN: He represented them?

MR. STERN: Oh no. They did him favors and he did them favors. He was sort of a rough-hewn guy. I remember when the Sam Sheppard case, I think we've discussed that case earlier, was in the Supreme Court in 1966. As the state's top legal officer, Bill Saxbe decided to represent Ohio in the Supreme Court case in which Sheppard was attempting to overturn his conviction, which had occurred ten years earlier; he had been in jail all that time. He attempted to overturn his conviction on the basis that he had not had a fair trial, that there had been excessive pretrial publicity. In any event, what I want to tell you about my memory of Bill Saxbe as Ohio attorney general, was he appeared before the Supreme Court of the United States with his coat open, a pencil tucked behind his ear, hands on his hips, and he addresses the Justices as "you folks" [laughter]. I think you

understand that that is not the usual protocol in the Supreme Court. And one of the things that he was arguing, the claim that Sheppard didn't get a fair trial, among the elements of that claim was that the judge, Edwin Blythin, had told Dorothy Kilgallen, a newspaper columnist, while the trial was in progress, that Sheppard was guilty as hell, and Dorothy Kilgallen had so represented in an affidavit that was filed by those seeking to overturn Sheppard's conviction on the basis that even the judge was prejudiced. Saxbe was trying to tell the Supreme Court that they shouldn't pay any attention to that because Ms. Kilgallen's affidavit had not been taken under oath, had not been sworn to. Saxbe was not prepared. I think it was Justice Douglas asked him whether he knew a certain name, and Saxbe said yes, that's my first assistant. And then Douglas said well are you aware that attached to her affidavit was a statement by your Mr. So and So, that because of Ms. Kilgallen's prominence as a well-known and respected journalist, they would not be putting her under oath. Well, that's the sort of calamity which lawyers should avoid [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: We should say, given your description of how he appeared before the Supreme Court, that at least to this day, the federal government appears in morning coats.

MR. STERN: Oh yes. There's always been the question about women appearing. For some time they were really not permitted to appear in slacks. They were to appear in dresses. But somewhere along the line, probably when Ruth

Bader Ginsburg joined the Court, I think that disappeared as a requirement for appropriate dress in front of the Court.

MS. FEIGIN: So Saxbe is Attorney General.

MR. STERN: Attorney General, and it didn't last long. In fact, it was quite a prominent law school dean who followed him.

MS. FEIGIN: Edward Levi.

MR. STERN: Edward Levi. He was also president of the University of Chicago at one point. A brilliant academic, a quiet person, and a modest person, but he was responsible for, shall we say, bolstering the Department of Justice after Watergate by instituting the Levi Guidelines, limitations on the kinds of activities that could be used in domestic security investigations and so on. I should tell you, and we'll get to it a little bit later, the Levi Guidelines were partly the result of a lawsuit I brought, but let's save that for now.

Levi was very much a law school dean. I remember he started one meeting with some lawyers by saying, "I think I shall be brief." And then he said, "The reason I say I think I will be brief is because I have not yet considered what I'm going to talk about" [laughter]. Only a dean could come up with something like that. In fact, I was somewhat burned by a law school dean myself. I was on a project for the 20th Century Fund having to do with prejudicial pretrial publicity, and I had to make an appearance before Abe Goldstein, who at that time was the dean at Yale Law School. I argued a proposition in front of him, somewhat exhaustively I'll concede, but I thought I really had him in the palm of my

hand when I concluded, and I waited for him to drop at my feet [laughter]. He looked up at me and he said, “Mr. Stern, I want you to know you have finally succeeded in reaching my zone of indifference” [laughter]. Only a law school dean could come up with something like that.

MS. FEIGIN: I think Levi was appointed by Ford, right?

MR. STERN: Yes.

MS. FEIGIN: And I think it’s fair to say the idea was he was to restore integrity? The Department had been somewhat sullied?

MR. STERN: Yes. He wore a bowtie, and he was sort of a bowtie kind of guy. I don’t mean flamboyant. I mean quite the contrary. I mean intensely into his work, and he was a tribute to the Department and to the president who appointed him.

MS. FEIGIN: I guess he was there the entire time Ford was there because the next attorney general is Griffin Bell, appointed by Carter.

MR. STERN: That’s right. He had been Jimmy Carter’s lawyer. I don’t know what Griffin Bell knew about peanut law [laughter], but he was a friend of Carter. He was from Savannah, and the reason that’s important to this is that he had this deep drawl, what you could call the patois of Savannah. It was so extreme that when I would interview him on television reports, I, on at least one occasion that I recall, had to chyron – super his words – on the screen. I had to spell out on the screen literally what he was saying as though he was unfamiliar with English. From my years of being in the broadcast business, I don’t recall ever having to do that with anybody else.

MS. FEIGIN: He had been an appellate judge, correct?

MR. STERN: On the Fifth Circuit.

MS. FEIGIN: So he stayed Carter's whole term? Or no, he didn't, because Civiletti came.

MR. STERN: Yes, Civiletti. Actually, the next two attorneys general went by rapidly. Ben Civiletti and then William French Smith. One a Democrat and one a Republican. Both good lawyers. I don't remember anything very exciting about the Department in their tenure. Smith, I remember, was an ex-Navy man. He used a lot of Navy lingo and told a lot of Navy stories, which I could tell you, but it's a little off-topic here. He was self-effacing.

MS. FEIGIN: Let me ask you one thing. I know that Civiletti argued a case before the Supreme Court, and I think that was not unusual in those days that an attorney general would try to do one case during his tenure.

MR. STERN: It wasn't unusual. It was the practice of the Department of Justice that the attorney general would argue one case. We were just talking about Griffin Bell. It seems to me he argued a case that had to do with some endangered little fish, the snail darter, threatened by federal construction of a dam in Tennessee. But yes, that's very much a tradition. And, in fact, each assistant attorney general also has the opportunity to do that by the traditions of the Department.

MS. FEIGIN: I don't know that it's still the case that this happens.

MR. STERN: I've been gone a very long time.

MS. FEIGIN: But in those days, yes.

MR. STERN: Right. Who's next?

MS. FEIGIN: After Smith came Meese. He's colorful.

MR. STERN: Edwin Meese. He had been President Reagan's chief of staff in California when Mr. Reagan was governor, and then Mr. Reagan brought him to Washington to be White House counsel. Mr. Meese was sort of in a category by himself. He was deeply embedded in Republican politics and in his own philosophy of the law. He was always selling something, which is unlike most of the attorneys general. What he was selling was his belief in limited government, originalism, and benign neglect. He was pleasant, but he was always a little bit on edge in defending his somewhat conservative philosophy about the limited role of government. His darkest moment came in what was called the Wedtech scandal where he was accused of helping a friend and well-known lobbyist to obtain government contracts for a firm called Wedtech. There was an independent prosecutor in that case that was appointed who was highly critical of Mr. Meese in his final report, but Meese was not charged with doing anything unlawful.

MS. FEIGIN: I think there were other scandals floating around during that era. Bechtel?

MR. STERN: Yes. There were several cases. There was another one involving a pharmaceutical company. That rings a bell. I think you're right. I'm sorry. It was so many years ago. Where do we go next?

MS. FEIGIN: I think he's followed by Dick Thornburgh.

MR. STERN: Richard Thornburgh. Let's see. A former Pennsylvania governor.

MS. FEIGIN: He's again a Reagan appointee, just to put this in place.

MR. STERN: Yes. What can I tell you? He had been head of the Criminal Division earlier at the Justice Department during the Gerald Ford years. Very able,

very well-liked. My strongest memory of Thornburgh is the day that he came back as Attorney General to the Justice Department, where, as I say, he had served under President Ford as head of the Criminal Division. There was a welcoming ceremony in the Great Hall, the large structure on the first floor of the Justice Department, and I recall vividly, I can see it in my mind's eye, the crowd of Justice Department employees who assembled in the Great Hall and in the balconies and the floors above that opened out on the Great Hall, and when Thornburgh came out, this thunderous applause. I don't recall ever seeing anything quite like it at the Department, and that was clearly the way that the Department's personnel – most of them, of course, are career people – wanted to welcome him after the somewhat blighted years of the Meese administration.

I also remember Archibald Cox speaking, but not in the Great Hall. I remember Robert Bork, the Solicitor General, appearing there. We had sessions in various places, but I think Bork did meet with us in the Great Hall.

MS. FEIGIN: Why?

MR. STERN: After Richardson and Ruckelshaus declined to fire Archibald Cox, who was demanding that the White House produce certain documents and so on that it didn't want to produce, it fell to the Solicitor General, Robert Bork, who would have been the third in command. In those days, we didn't have an associate attorney general, as I recall.

MS. FEIGIN: Did Bork speak to the reporters or was that to the assembled attorneys?

MR. STERN: He spoke to reporters to explain why he had done what he did in accepting the order to fire Cox. His point being that somebody was going to do it. The White House was going to just go down the list of succession until they found somebody, so there was no point in turning the whole process into chaos. He did what he was told to do. Later on I'll tell you something else about Robert Bork, but let's hold that for later.

MS. FEIGIN: Okay. In what context, just so I'm sure we cover it.

MR. STERN: In the context of a lawsuit I filed called Cointelpro.

MS. FEIGIN: Oh yes. We will definitely be discussing that. So there's one more left I think, at least in your time as a reporter covering the Justice Department, and that's William Barr, who ironically – or maybe not ironically – is back in position as attorney general as we speak.

MR. STERN: All I can tell you is that he was very tight-lipped. He operated the Department of Justice like a private law office. We got so little useful information from him that that's when I stopped going to the Justice Department on a daily basis. We just didn't get useful information from him or his staff. I should tell you also I had problems with that occasionally from other attorneys general, as well. When Richard Thornburgh was attorney general, he was surrounded by what we called the Harrisburg mafia [laughter] who protected him. They didn't need to. He was a perfectly admirable attorney general but also just very tight-lipped about what was going on inside the Department.

MS. FEIGIN: When Barr was Attorney General the first time, that was during Iran Contra and a lot was going on, including the pardon of Defense Secretary Weinberger. Was Barr involved in any of that do you know?

MR. STERN: I have no recollection, but that wouldn't be hard to explain because, as I said, things were very closed up during the Barr administration of the Justice Department. So much so that I just quit going.

MS. FEIGIN: Well your office was there.

MR. STERN: Yes. In the pressroom I had a desk. I also had a desk at the Supreme Court because I needed places to leave my coat and hat.

MS. FEIGIN: I look forward to hearing about the Supreme Court stuff. I guess we'll get to that at a later point. Let's go up the roster of courts, starting with the district court. You covered trials everywhere, but since we're doing this for the D.C. Court Historical Society, let's start with the big cases you did in D.C.

MR. STERN: They weren't all big. Most cases were heard in the old Court of General Sessions, which preceded the Superior Court of D.C. – that was a municipal court. I seldom was concerned about local matters, but I do remember going to an early proceeding there and being very impressed by Superior Court Judge Harold Greene, who later became an iconic federal judge on the district court. I was very impressed, but I don't recall what the case was. I should say that my most keen memory of the Superior Court was being in a temporary makeshift courtroom on the first floor of what is today the Building Museum. It was then called the Pension

Building. It was used after the Civil War. The Quartermaster of the Army, General Meigs, constructed the Pension Building. They gave out pensions to Civil War veterans. In any event, Judge James Belson was sitting there temporarily while the court building was being refurbished. This was in June of 1972 when four Miami men had been arrested in the Watergate building in the offices of the Democratic National Committee and they were brought into Judge Belson's court for an initial appearance minus their neckties and belts.

It was the practice then, and maybe still today, that when criminal suspects are brought in, they are deprived of what they might use to kill themselves, to hang themselves in a cell. I see that vividly thinking back to them coming to the courtroom. I remember I was sitting right next to a new reporter who had just arrived from Boston, a very young woman named Leslie Stahl [laughter]. I tried to explain to her how initial appearances work and that there was not going to be a formal charge that night.

MS. FEIGIN: At the time this probably didn't look like it was any big deal, or did it even at that early point?

MR. STERN: All I can say is we didn't know. It was all obviously bizarre. So simply its oddity was sufficient to draw our attention. It wasn't that we foresaw everything. It was quite unusual. As I recall, I think it was a weekend. On the weekends there's not much news. That was my point.

MS. FEIGIN: Is this before the courts were consolidated? Those cases now would be done in district court by the U.S. Attorney.

MR. STERN: Yes. Today felony cases would go to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

MS. FEIGIN: So you were there, and you reported it?

MR. STERN: Of course. Yes. Sure. I should tell you that at that time I did become familiar with the district courthouse, as we know it today, the Prettyman Courthouse, largely because, as we discussed in our first episode, this was the time of the anti-war demonstrations, Vietnam War, and lots and lots of things were going on. The New Mobe, as it was called, New Mobilization Committee Against the War, was operating out of an office building at the corner of Vermont Avenue and L. I remember spending a lot of time in that building.

At that point, the Department of Justice was really taking over the local cases that they perceived as involving violent or threatening conduct. In essence bringing a more serious federal charge, and some of those things were serious. I remember many days and nights on the first floor of the Prettyman building, at the magistrate's courtroom just inside the west entrance. I think Lawrence Margolis handled many of those cases. Later, I believe, he became a full-time judge. This was where the defendants were brought in.

Perhaps the most noteworthy episode at the time involved Leslie Bacon, a 19-year-old woman from Seattle, who along with other friends who were living in sort of a group house, were supposedly, and maybe

they were, making bombs up on Lanier Place in Adams Morgan. They were accused in connection with the bombing of a restroom in the Capitol building. There was such an incident. The explosive didn't destroy much, but it created a lot of noise and led to a lot of roundups.

I also recall the magistrate's office, and the magistrate's courtroom, if you can call it that, was the size of a large closet [laughter]. It was very small. We would crowd in. I remember when the columnist Drew Pearson's leg man, Les Whitten, was brought in before the magistrate. At that point at the Justice Department the prosecutors were battling with Drew Pearson in connection with documents that the columnist had allegedly stolen in some fashion from the government, and they staked out Les Whitten, his assistant, and caught him loading stolen documents into his car in, I won't say darkness of night, but I'd say darkness of late afternoon. Eventually a grand jury declined to indict Whitten, but I should tell you I have a strong memory of a wonderful lawyer, Betty Murphy, who many old-timers will recall, who came storming in the magistrate's office vigorously protesting on the basis of the First Amendment what these bootjack fascists had done to her client [laughter].

There was one incident which challenged my abilities to properly use the English language, which was an incident involving Larry Flynt. Larry Flynt, the pornographer, journalist, whatever. Publisher of *Hustler* magazine. This was some years later. There was a case in the Supreme

Court in which televangelist Jerry Falwell had sued *Hustler* magazine claiming that he had been libeled in sort of a satirical piece that the magazine had published. The case was being heard in the U.S. Supreme Court and Flynt was in the audience. He stood up and shouted a profanity.

MS. FEIGIN: In the Supreme Court?!

MR. STERN: In the Supreme Court. And he was immediately arrested by the Supreme Court police and hauled off to federal court. The judge, if I recall correctly, I think it was Joyce Green, presided over this appearance by Mr. Flynt. I could have described her in my report as matronly, but that seemed unkind [laughter]. But she sort of in a motherly fashion scolded Flynt and Flynt took it. He just meekly stood there and took it. I had to file a report about this, and I was struggling to find the right words to describe the judge's demeanor. I was trying to find the right adjectives, and all I could think of was avuncular [laughter], which I believe I used. Avuncular means uncle-like. So the question is can a woman be uncle-like, and in this case, she was [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: We can't talk about the D.C. court without discussing Watergate because you covered that case from start to finish, right?

MR. STERN: Yes. But first there were a couple other cases I think might be worth mentioning. The *Pentagon Papers* case in 1971. That was a biggie. The reason I remember it is that's the time my back went out. I spent several days waiting for the Court of Appeals to consider the government's appeal of Judge Gerhard Gesell's refusal to block *The Washington Post* from

publishing the Pentagon's secret assessment of its Vietnam War effort. There was no place to sit. No seating up there in the hallways, so we reporters had to sit on the marble floor waiting for several days for the Court of Appeals to announce its decision. Obviously with the papers facing delays in publishing, this was a matter of hours and minutes; we were following this thing moment to moment. But that marble floor did it for me. It was too much for my back. I ended up at the Washington Hospital Center with some large woman pounding on my back.

MS. FEIGIN: Really! It was different then in the sense that the news cycle was different.

MR. STERN: Absolutely.

MS. FEIGIN: If a story came out, you might have a few hours because you weren't going to be on air maybe until 6:00 p.m. or whenever.

MR. STERN: We did file to radio on the hour. I'll tell you a story later when we're talking more about the Supreme Court illustrating the kind of problems we faced having to file on short deadlines. I do want to mention just one other thing I covered in the District Court and the Circuit Court here and that is one case which has lingered in my regrets for many years. This story illustrates the working problems that journalists have, and that was the John Connolly trial in 1974, the former Texas governor who became Treasury Secretary who is remembered of course for being in the car with John Kennedy when the president was shot in Dallas. Without getting into the intricacies of it, there came a time when Connolly went on trial. He

went on trial on charges of when he was Treasury Secretary back in 1971 that he had pocketed a bribe from milk producers to influence a milk pricing decision. He was acquitted. He was represented by Edward Williams who was quite a courtroom presence. In any event, the reason for my regret was the way that I characterized the acquittal on the air. What I said was that essentially the prosecutors didn't prove their case. It was a failure of proof, and in fact, that's what the jury foreman said in an interview given to *Newsweek* the following week, describing the result of the case. So what I said was not wrong in that sense. But I realized afterward that I unintentionally, the way I put it, I was implying that Connolly may have been guilty but the government just didn't get the job done. I injured Connolly by implying it was just a bad job by the prosecutors. I should have been more careful, and to this day that troubles me. Reporters do worry, even years later, about stories that they filed where they may have inadvertently injured someone.

MS. FEIGIN: So his lawyer was Edward Bennett Williams. Edward Bennett Williams was pretty flamboyant, or no?

MR. STERN: No, I wouldn't say flamboyant. I would say organized and well prepared. He was assisted by Michael Tigar, who I believe today is at the American University Law School. He gained some national prominence years ago when he led the student free speech rallies at Berkeley where he was a student, and Justice Brennan had selected him to be his clerk, and there

was such a hullabaloo about hiring Tigar that Justice Brennan was obliged to cancel the clerkship.

MS. FEIGIN: Oh my goodness.

MR. STERN: There are lots of things we could talk about, but we'd be here forever.

MS. FEIGIN: I'm happy to be here forever. They are fascinating stories. So, you just mentioned sort of in passing the Pentagon Papers case.

MR. STERN: I think that's all I really need to say about it.

MS. FEIGIN: Let me ask you one other thing about it because it makes me think of Ellsberg, who did not get prosecuted.

MR. STERN: Again, you're getting ahead of the story. Let me tell you a story about that case if you give me another minute or two, or hour or two [laughter]. I just want to add before we leave this subject and go to the Watergate trials, which I know you want to get to, that I was very often asked by the clerk's office or by a judge to be the liaison between the court and the press corps. I would help in the seat allocation and the daily housekeeping functions that need to be handled, information that needed to be passed between the judge and the press on things like scheduling or whether certain documents that had been admitted into evidence were available for us to see or copy, things like that.

I mentioned Judge Gesell a moment ago. I was his press liaison and I would go into his chambers in the morning and perhaps ask some questions on behalf of the press corps, and he might give me some scheduling information or whatnot on behalf of the court. He had an

office in the back of the court building looking out on C Street and the driveway where defendants and others were brought in when they were on bond and were coming into the courthouse, and he would stand by that window. He would look down and he would see Oliver North coming into the courthouse in a van, supplied by Brendan Sullivan [his lawyer]. And the guards, the protective service guards at the garage doors, would salute Oliver North as the van pulled in, and that would drive Judge Gesell crazy. He would just seethe that the guards would do that [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: We should say Judge Gesell was the judge in the Oliver North trial.

MR. STERN: That's right, that was his trial. In any event, okay, Watergate. You want to talk about Watergate.

MS. FEIGIN: We can talk about Watergate; we can talk about the Pentagon Papers; we can talk about Ollie North. You pick the one you want to focus on right now.

MR. STERN: I think readers can look up what they want to know about the Pentagon Papers case.

MS. FEIGIN: There's one thing I want to ask about the Pentagon Papers if you don't want to discuss the trial because I think there's something that's fascinating to know about the break-in of the psychiatrist's office.

MR. STERN: That's the story I was going to tell you later. I'll jump to that just as a favor to you [laughter]. As some readers may recall, there was a point during the Watergate saga when it became known that John Ehrlichman at the White House tasked Howard Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy to go out to

the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding in Beverley Hills in Los Angeles, to search for records in his files, records about Daniel Ellsberg, the person who had been responsible for delivering the Pentagon Papers file to *The New York Times* reporters that resulted in the publication of the Pentagon Papers. Ehrlichman hoped that Hunt and Liddy would find evidence to suggest that Ellsberg had psychiatric problems. Ellsberg and a colleague of his, Anthony Russo, at that point were on trial in Los Angeles in connection with having divulged these secret papers to the world. In any event, Hunt told me this story in Miami some years after Watergate, but I don't think I've ever seen it published. Hunt and Liddy had to go to Los Angeles, to Dr. Fielding's office, but being the super sleuths that they were, they didn't just go to Los Angeles. They flew to Chicago, and then they went down to The Loop to buy walkie talkies which they would need in connection with the break-in. They didn't just get in a cab and say take us to The Loop. They took a cab, bus, cab, bus downtown in case anybody was following them, then they purchased these walkie talkies and went back to the airport, cab, bus, whatever, and they get back on a plane and fly to Los Angeles. They get a car and they go to Burbank. They're outside Dr. Fielding's office, and they flip on their walkie talkies, and what do they discover? The walkie talkies they bought in Chicago have the same frequency as the Los Angeles Yellow Cab Company [laughter]. If there was ever a gang that couldn't shoot straight, this was it [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: The fact that you got this amazing story from Howard Hunt years later suggests to me that you kept up a relationship with him.

MR. STERN: No. It's normal in the journalism business that a little while after people are released from prison, there are sort of "Where are they now?" stories. It's sort of a staple of the news business. I went down to see how he was doing.

MS. FEIGIN: So Watergate.

MR. STERN: The first thing you've got to know is there was more than one Watergate trial. There was a whole series of trials. I tried to be helpful. I was also the liaison to Judge Sirica and the courthouse and the court's clerk. A wonderful fella. I think his name was Jim Davey. I appreciated his help, and I tried to be helpful. In any event, we worked out the accommodations for where the press would sit during the trial. Basically an allocation because there were many more reporters who wanted to cover the case than we had available press seating. In fact, I remember that we set up a large press room on the first floor of the courthouse. But even at that, several press organizations placed trailers, mobile offices if you will, on the grass outside the courthouse to accommodate their staff and also their photographers who operated outside the building when defendants and others came and went.

Judge Sirica had a phobia about elevators, and that's why his office and courtroom were on the second floor so he could take the escalator which operated only to the second floor without having to use an elevator.

I think Judge Sirica would allow me to say we became good friends during the course of our couple of years working on Watergate matters. In any event, big moments.

A big moment came actually before the first trial, late in the summer, maybe in August. The Watergate burglars were already appearing in Judge Sirica's court in connection with pre-trial matters, and there came a point when the James McCord letter, I think that following February, revealed to the judge the White House cover-up. Actually I had that story the previous August but to my disappointment . . . well, let me tell you what happened. The Watergate burglars and their handlers, Hunt and Liddy, and James McCord working for the Committee to Reelect the President, were represented by a number of lawyers including William Bittman and a New York lawyer, Henry Rothblatt. I knew Henry Rothblatt from ALI, the American Law Institute, and he and Bittman were leaving the courthouse after a hearing and getting into a cab, and I jumped into the cab [laughter] as they were going back to Bittman's office, which, as I recall, was at 815 Connecticut Avenue, what we would call lower Connecticut Avenue. In the course of talking, Rothblatt acknowledged to me that he was being paid by funds from the White House, as were the burglars. In other words, hush money. If I recall correctly, it turned out later – it came out during the Senate hearings – Bittman was being paid with \$100 bills taped under a shelf of a telephone booth at the National

Airport by Tony Ulasewicz who was always the money man. He would carry a coin changer on his belt [laughter]. These were really wild times.

In any event, they get out of the cab. In those days, we didn't have cell phones. I raced back to the courthouse in a cab, and I go to a phone booth I know exists on the first floor near the Office of Attorney Discipline. I remember it as though it were yesterday. I get on the phone, and I call my New York office, and I talked to John Chancellor, our news anchor at the time, and Christie Basham who was the Nightly News producer in charge of the big program and tell them what I had learned, and he and Christie said no, we can't run that. It was too unbelievable. They didn't use that word; that's my word. I don't recall the word they used, but it was "who are we" to be saying just because Henry Rothblatt, who they'd never heard of, said something to me in a taxi cab, "who are we" to be putting that on a national television network? I did manage to get a short spot on radio, but that story didn't get on television. Not then. It did later. So that was a bit of a disappointment, but if anybody doubts my version, David Halberstam put that story in a book that he wrote a few years later, so at least I have one place you can look it up.

MS. FEIGIN: Just related to hush money, I have a vague memory that there was a plane crash with Hunt's wife. Is that correct?

MR. STERN: Yes. In Chicago.

MS. FEIGIN: And there was a question of whether there was a lot of money on that plane.

MR. STERN: Yes, I can't help you on that. I don't know.

MS. FEIGIN: Still unresolved. She died in that plane crash?

MR. STERN: Yes she did. Very sad. In any event, the major Watergate trial was the one that was a conspiracy and cover-up case that went to trial in the fall of 1974. I have a strong personal memory of when the verdict came, which was on January 1, 1975, from in front of the courthouse I broke into the Rose Bowl game on television reporting on the conviction of John Mitchell and H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman and so on. I recall throwing it back to [sportscaster] Kirk Gowdy [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: Are you saying that the jury was sitting on New Year's Day?

MR. STERN: Yes. Once that jury was in deliberations, they voted to keep going.

MS. FEIGIN: Were they sequestered?

MR. STERN: Oh, were they ever. I could tell you some stories about that, but again, we'd be here all day.

MS. FEIGIN: Well, if it's a good story, I'm happy to hear it.

MR. STERN: We don't have time for all that. I mentioned Gordon Liddy several times and I should tell you the Watergate defendants of course were sentenced to prison time. I had known Liddy earlier. He had been an official at the Treasury Department when I first knew him. I went with him to a forensics laboratory in Bel Air, Maryland. He was working on a project. Senator Muskie had introduced a bill to ban Saturday night specials on the basis of safety, that they were inherently dangerous, and that's how you could get them off the streets, these cheap handguns. Poorly made,

supposedly. So Liddy, and I went with him, went up to this laboratory in Bel Air where they were conducting experiments, tests, with Saturday night specials to see if in fact they were more dangerous than well-made expensive weapons. By the way, the answer was the Saturday night specials were just as good. So the premise they were going to use to ban Saturday night specials didn't prove useful. That's how I got to know Liddy.

So Liddy comes out of prison. He's in Danbury, Connecticut, in the federal correctional institution there, and he served forty-nine months, and we go up to meet him when he comes out. We want to interview him. I remember he came out, and he wouldn't say a word except he said something that I remember, "Wer immer streband sich bemüht, Den können wir erlösen." We all kind of look at each other. He jumps into his car, his wife's in the car, and off he goes. Well, we start chasing him. While we're chasing him, we're frantically on the car phone trying to reach some German professor at Columbia to find out what it meant [laughter]. It turns out it's a quote from Goethe, and apparently it means "Who strives always to the utmost, for him there is salvation." So we pursue him down the Connecticut Turnpike. He's returning to his home in D.C. We pursue him, and we're speeding and at one point we're on the New York Thruway. He's speeding. We're speeding. At one point – he doesn't want to be interviewed, obviously – he jumps over the median strip and does a U-turn. We, of course, do the same. Then later he does

another jump, and finally we're beginning to run out of gas and he's running out of gas. This has been going on now for more than an hour where he's trying to shake us. Both cars pull into a gas station. We're both throwing money at the attendant. In those days there was no self-service. We're both throwing money at the attendant to gas up our cars because we know whoever gets filled up first is going to get out of there. We chased him all the way into New Jersey, and finally he reached a hometown he grew up in in New Jersey, and he probably knew all the back alleys, and he escaped us.

MS. FEIGIN: Who is the "we?"

MR. STERN: Me and the camera crew. Fortunately they were driving. If it had been me, I wouldn't have done it on a bet.

MS. FEIGIN: Just to back up a bit, to get back to the trial. I want to get back to Judge Sirica for a minute because I think the trial itself was extraordinary, and he was unusual in lots of ways, I think, and maybe you can enlighten me on this. He was a very involved judge during the trial.

MR. STERN: He was the chief judge, but you're right. Even if he had not been, people forget that John Sirica was old school. He was tough and canny, and he had a very fixed sense of right and wrong, and people may forget how he used long prison sentences as a means within his power to get the break-in Watergate defendants to reveal the truth about what had happened and who they were working for and so on. Judge Sirica used his power to give tough sentences, but it was also within his power to reduce those sentences

later. I believe there was a statutory period of 120 days or so. I may be wrong about the timing, but it was within his power to reduce those sentences if the defendants he had sentenced cooperated with the government, with the prosecutors, thereafter, and he used that power, that instrument, to expose much of the evidence that came out in Watergate. Not to diminish what the prosecutors, Earl Silbert and Sy Glanzer and Don Campbell, not to diminish what they were doing, and I'm confident they would have gotten to the bottom of it even had there been no assistance from the defendants, but Sirica's familiarity with using the techniques available to judges to induce defendants to talk was very much in evidence in the Watergate trials.

MS. FEIGIN: Was he also a judge who threw questions to witnesses while they were on the stand?

MR. STERN: Occasionally. Sure. He would pop in with a question. Normally, it was to display incredulity at what the defendants had just said. However, my most unforgettable moment didn't occur in court. I was also covering the Ervin Committee hearings in the Senate and filled in at the White House occasionally.

In those days, on Saturday nights, which was a slow evening, NBC broadcast *Saturday Night at the Movies*. Correspondents were assigned to go down to the White House to sit there because we covered the White House in those days very extensively, all the more reason because this was the Watergate period. In any event, initially, unbeknownst to us, the

President was at loggerheads with Attorney General Richardson, who he had ordered to fire Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor, and to close down the entire special prosecutor's office over on K Street. Richardson refused to do so, and then Ruckelshaus refused to do it, as I said earlier. Solicitor General Bork issued the order. We became aware of it as the prosecutors and staff were reported piling out of the K Street office carrying files they didn't want to leave there. They came thundering down the stairs of the office building. I didn't see it personally, but I was told about it, carrying under their coats various documents that they had obtained during the course of their investigation. So it became known in minutes what had happened. This probably was around 9:30 at night, so I did a quick TV bulletin from the White House lawn. Then I had to do what was called the 11th hour feed. That's a minute-long piece at the 11:00 hour that's fed into our owned and affiliated stations on the network all across the country. So I had to try to describe in a minute what had happened. Now I could have begun it like a wire service story. "President Richard M. Nixon tonight asked for the resignation . . ." but that would not capture the enormity of what had happened, which was very much apparent to any reporter. So the lede on my story was – and sometimes I'm proud of it, and sometimes I think it went too far – the lede on my story that night was "President Nixon tonight jumped from the frying pan into the fire." Well fortunately it turned out it was a valid lede because in

the days that followed all hell broke loose. It's also interesting to me how little the White House personnel understood what they had done.

MS. FEIGIN: You mean the consequences of what they had done?

MR. STERN: What the consequences would be, yes. As I was leaving the White House that night, going back to my car parked on the Ellipse, I went down West Executive Drive, which is that space between the Old Executive Office Building, sometimes called the Eisenhower building and the West Wing side door. Here it is around 12:30 in the morning, and I'm going back to my car. We're in the half light of this alleyway and out of the West Wing come two people that I know, Richard Moore, who I had known at the Justice Department as a counsel to John Mitchell, and Bud Leinbaugh my old friend from the FBI who was on a detail to work in the White House press office. And as I'm going by, Moore grabs my arm and he says to me, "Masterful, wasn't it?" I looked at him, and he says, "The President has finally cut off the hemorrhage of Watergate." I looked at him and I said, "You guys are crazy" and I walked off [laughter]. They didn't comprehend what they were setting in motion.

MS. FEIGIN: White Houses are always bubbles I suppose, more or less. Before we end today, one more thing about Watergate, although there may be more to discuss about it, but let me get this in because you did so much reporting for Watergate. I know you were nominated for an Emmy for this. I want that to be on the record.

MR. STERN: Yeah, but I didn't win [laughter].

MS. FEIGIN: I know, but you had very interesting people up with you for the award.

MR. STERN: The award was for news broadcaster of the year or something like that. I lost to Bill Moyers. The others were John Chancellor, Mike Wallace, and Walter Cronkite. I think there was also another. Harry Reasoner. But that's a wonderful bunch to be thought of with.

MS. FEIGIN: It is. Let me close with this question because it's something I've thought about a lot. When people look back to the Cronkite era and they talk about it in golden terms, and that whole era when you were reporting is the golden era in many ways of news, one of the things people always say in contrast is how today news is one side or the other. It's not impartial as it was then, but I do remember vividly, certainly on the CBS news – I don't remember this on NBC – but you would have Eric Sevareid on Friday in a segment where you would hear his opinion. You knew what he thought. It was separate from the news. It was his private analysis, but it was out there. You knew where he stood personally, but you didn't attribute that to his reporting. When people talk about now versus then, I always wonder how it was able to be done then in a way it isn't now.

MR. STERN: It's just a different business today. John Chancellor did some of the same things on NBC, but surely your admiration for Sevareid is justified. I think of him every time I go past his house, what was his house, on Bradley Lane. He certainly contributed to the public understanding of what was happening. He had the ability to think more profoundly about what was occurring, and that was a real service. But television news

today, in which pieces have to run a minute or less and sound bites three or four seconds, it's a different business today. Perhaps we'll get into that later in our discussions.

MS. FEIGIN: I hope we will. I hope there will be an opportunity to do that. Thank you so much.