

INTERVIEW WITH

Robert E. Hampton

on

February 6, 1975

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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This interview is being taped with Mr. Robert Hampton in Mr. Hampton's offices in the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, DC on February 6, 1975. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff. Present for the interview are Mr. Hampton and Dr. Burg.

DR. BURG: We would start by asking when and where you were born?

MR. HAMPTON: Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, September 21, 1922.

DR. BURG: Now, was your high school education there in Chattanooga?

MR. HAMPTON: All in Chattanooga.

DR. BURG: And from high school then to one of the Tennessee schools.

MR. HAMPTON: I went into the service a few months after Pearl Harbor, signed up to go into the service.

DR. BURG: Which branch did you enlist in?

MR. HAMPTON: Air corps. I ended up in the air force with the 8th Air Force in England as a radio-radar man and had an aerial gunnery assignment. I never fired a gun in combat because I never had a chance. I was shot down over Europe on the eighteenth mission. We were taken prisoner by the Germans and I was liberated about three months later.

DR. BURG: You were in one of the luftstalags.

MR. HAMPTON: Well, I moved around quite a bit. I was at their interrogation center at Oberursel and then Gulagluft which is a transient camp at Wetzlar, I think it was, and then from there to Stalag 17A in Nuremberg. And from there we were moved to Moosburg,



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Germany. And on the march in between Nuremberg and Moosburg, I left and sort of temporarily escaped with three other men--I can't even remember their names today--and proceeded to get sick from drinking polluted waters because water is an important item. But eventually in this little village of Reichersdorf where I had hid out for four or five days I joined the column of prisoners, other prisoners being marched to Moosburg, and went back into their prison camp there because it was quite obvious that the allied forces were close because of the light aircraft that were flying liaison missions and the sound of artillery and so forth.

BURG: So you could see all five--

HAMPTON: You could see it coming real close to an end. And after that, of course, we were flown out of Europe and treated in the hospitals, drinking chalk and stuff like that for about four or five weeks because of the dysentery that had developed. Then got out of the service and went to the University of Tennessee.

BURG: Let me ask a moment--you'd been assigned to a heavy bombardment--

HAMPTON: Yes.

BURG: --group. B-24's or--

HAMPTON: 17's.

BURG: 17's. And though you were in part an aerial gunner, that was not the basic position you held on the aircraft?

HAMPTON: No, it was radio and we had some radar jamming equipment there.



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BURG: I see. And you had done eighteen missions.

HAMPTON: Eighteen.

BURG: But I think the combat total of about twenty-five--

HAMPTON: Twenty-five.

BURG: --at that point. When you were shot down, was this rather late in 1944?

HAMPTON: Let's see, I think it was February 3rd of 1945. The war was over, what, May 29, something like that--May 8.

BURG: May 8 or 9--



HAMPTON: --of '45 so it was just about three months--February, March, April and May.

BURG: Mr. Hampton, that would mean that you bailed out of that B-17.

HAMPTON: No, I didn't. I wasn't able to get out of it. I didn't have my chute on.

BURG: It was still in the rack.

HAMPTON: Well, I wore a chest pack instead of a seat pack. And the airplane went into a spin and I wasn't able to get the chute on. The pilot and the co-pilot and certain members of the crew stayed with the airplane, some of them bailed out. And he brought the airplane under partial control at a low altitude and we hit in a real muddy, open field in Germany near Erfurt, which was a deep penetration mission.

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BURG: And you got out of the wreckage without having been injured in the crash.

HAMPTON: Oh, I had some cuts and bruises and things like that, nothing real serious.

BURG: Now, let me ask you this. At that time I would think that the civil population in Germany would not feel too warmhearted about any of you gentlemen that they got, and were you captured by civilians or did regular troops--

HAMPTON: We were captured by German troops.



BURG: Luftwaffe?

HAMPTON: No, they were Volksturm most of them. I would, I guess, compare them to a national guard or home guard type of thing, you know, Wehrmacht uniforms and had rifles and submachine guns, but they weren't front-line combat troops.

BURG: So you were not abused?

HAMPTON: No. They took us to a local jail and took us in a covered truck to that. And we stayed there for two or three days. We weren't abused, but they took all of our belongings including flying boots and the usual things they take off of prisoners, I guess, your wrist watch and any other they they think they want to take. And then they moved us at night to an air base which was nearby. So we

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weren't exposed at that point to any of their population, but some other prisoners were.

BURG: I had heard.

HAMPTON: They were treated pretty badly.



BURG: Was your treatment in the interrogation center, let us for lack of a better way to say it, correct?

HAMPTON: It was correct, but, deception, you know, was used, and we were kept in a solitary type of confinement. The guards gave me something to eat in the morning and something to eat in the afternoon. We stayed in there for--I don't know exactly how many days it was before they started talking to us. But in the meantime, they had a man who was posed as a Red Cross man to come in and ask you a lot of questions which were designed to elicit more military intelligence than just your name, rank, and serial number.

BURG: They needed the number of your squadron, I suppose.

HAMPTON: We had been briefed about that anyway. But they knew what bomb group we were and they knew what squadron we were, and they had all that information. It came out when some colonel went into more formal interrogation. Of course they had our airplane. All of our airplanes had markings on them and they know what those markings mean. He had a map of our base and they knew what base we were flying out of. They had pictures of the approaches to the field and everything like that. He recited other crews that had been shot down and asked me if I was curious about any of them and tried to be

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friendly. And then he started asking me about some of the equipment on the airplane which I didn't know anything about to begin with. All I knew was when we turned it on and we turned it off and why. But they were quite well informed. I mean, we had changed commanding officers a short time before we were shot down and he had the name of the commanding officer, and he did have some information about the crews that had been shot down within, you know, three, four weeks before we were.

BURG: Had you been kept segregated during this interrogation?

HAMPTON: I didn't see any of the other prisoners.

BURG: So that you had no one to--

HAMPTON: We were just off all alone. They tried to make a point: You're not a registered POW; until you are registered there is no record of you and all that sort of--

BURG: Yes, put a little more pressure on you.

HAMPTON: Little pressure of that type.

BURG: Had you been instructed to destroy radar equipment on your aircraft or--

HAMPTON: Oh, yes. You press the detonator buttons and it's nothing but a molten mass inside, I guess. So even though they had the airplane and they see different little boxes and equipment on it, they don't know how to operate it because it's all pretty much destroyed.





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BURG: Now on that one march, Mr. Hampton, you were able to slip away from the marching column with three other men. You hid out then in a German town but without the help of anyone in that community, I would assume.

HAMPTON: No, we hid out in the woods. What had happened was that our column of people had been strafed by American airplanes. They probably thought that we were a column of Germans marching down the road or something. And everybody dispersed into the woods and then when they assembled later on and everything like that, we were being guarded by not any kind of elite troops or very eager troops. I think most of them were wishing that the war was over by that time. They weren't that alert and so forth, and so we just stayed back up into the woods and wandered around trying to find our way back to the American lines because the rumors were that we were being taken down to Bavaria to be held as hostages in any kind of peace negotiations. But that's prison camp rumor and I never confirmed it because I had so little contact with anyone after that, you know. I've read a few things and I've met some of the people that were in the big breakout at Hammelburg, Germany, where Patton's son [in-law] was there and all that. I wouldn't know, but I mean we felt it'd be better to try to get back rather than to go down into Bavaria and be held for some period of time. We had food supplies that had been picked up on the side of the road that were left there by the Red Cross.

BURG: Oh! But what you did not have was potable water.

HAMPTON: Water.



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BURG: That was what got to you. And it must have been terribly debilitating to have that--

HAMPTON: Oh, yes, had diarrhea all the time because you couldn't hold anything in your stomach. But then I did get help from this one family there in Leichersdorf. It was very difficult--the situation was in such a state of flux that it was very difficult to move around. There were people all over the countryside--troops retreating and things like that, and you couldn't very well move. And all of the bridges and everything were mined and guarded and you had to wade across rivers or streams. This was, I guess, in April, sometime in April, and it's not exactly warm over there and you get wet sleeping outside and everything--not really knowing what you're doing, just being young and foolish, I guess. But this one family who happened to turn out to be one of the, I guess he was the bürgermeister, if you have such in a little dorf, and his wife sort of, you know, gave me food and everything. I ate in this little church there for a while. I stayed in their barn most of the time. German troops started coming through there--I stayed in this little church and they never bothered to come; they'd just look on the side--

BURG: Now you were, you're about twenty-three when--

HAMPTON: Well, I guess so.

BURG: --when that happened to you, which may have been of great benefit to you, too--a little older--

HAMPTON: I probably wasn't twenty-three, you see. That was in 1945. I was twenty-two. Nineteen twenty-two--was in September that year



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I became twenty three.

BURG: I see. The experience then, probably quite fortunate for you, you were a prisoner a short enough period of time so that there, aside from the dysentary, there wasn't the general debilitation of--

HAMPTON: No.

BURG: --long confinement.

HAMPTON: I went down to 105 pounds, or something like that.

BURG: You did.

HAMPTON: But that was about all.

BURG: And then several weeks of treatment to get everything stabilized and then you were released from service.

HAMPTON: Well, yes. I had ninety days of what they call temporary duty at home, but, for all intents and purposes, when I came back into the United States I never had another assignment.

BURG: Now, when were you able to enter--was it the University of Tennessee?

HAMPTON: Right.

BURG: Would that have been 1946?

HAMPTON: It was '46--had to be. I got out of the service in October 31, I think it was of '45, and I enrolled in the University of Tennessee in the next quarter that started, which was either in



December of '45 or January of '46.

BURG: And you were coming in then as an entering freshman?

HAMPTON: Right.

BURG: In what line of endeavor, Mr. Hampton?

HAMPTON: Chemical engineer.

BURG: And stayed with that for the--

HAMPTON: I stayed with it for, I guess, two and a half years and found that I couldn't stand chemistry in terms of the tedious kind of lab work, didn't appeal to me. All of the procedures and everything that you had to go through to preserve your materials that you were analyzing and so forth--it didn't move fast enough and it was too time consuming and I lost interest in it. And I switched over to a--well it would have been more equivalent to an industrial engineer type of thing but they didn't award that kind of degree. It was finishing up in economics and business organization and management, personnel administration, and that sort of thing.

BURG: Was it a B.A. they gave you then or a B.S.?



HAMPTON: I think it was a Bachelor of Business Administration.

BURG: And you would have gotten that about 1950, perhaps?

HAMPTON: Well, actually I finished all except one course in 1949. I took accelerated courses. I only had one course to finish up and I went to business school in the daytime and the university at night to finish it. And I also worked for the Tennessee Valley

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Authority in their chemical engineer laboratory.

BURG: I see, as sort of a part-time job during that period of time?

HAMPTON: Part time.

BURG: Does any particular instructor out of that period at the University of Tennessee, does his name still remain in your mind-- anyone you think who perhaps had any strong influence on you from that period.

HAMPTON: Well, there were a couple of people that stuck out in my mind more than others and one was a professor of history who was, I think, either Swiss or Austrian. I forgot which. Dr. Auniker. And then--

BURG: Auniker?



HAMPTON: Auniker. Starts with an A. And he was one of the most interesting history professors I've ever met. He had so much of a conceptual understanding of events that discussions were quite interesting and background readings and discussion with his intimate knowledge of events which went far beyond the textbook--and his ability to interpret that. And another was Dr. Tietze, and he was a professor--I took a course in philosophy of religion. And those are the two really that stuck out. Of course, neither of them were in my major. And he [Tietze] was quite interesting and the course was quite interesting.

BURG: The man in history and the other man in the philosophy of

religion, neither one of them tempted you to leave business administration and go that way.



HAMPTON: No, no. I'd pretty much determined that by the fact that I had committed two years of the kinds of courses that you take in engineering, having math and I'd taken some economic courses and other kinds of things that fit into the business curriculum. Of course, I'm always interested in history, and I always made good grades in that in high school--better than other courses--and mathematics as well. Economics and statistics and things like that always interested me, but I looked at those more as tools than avocations--the history and the philosophy more or less--things that I enjoyed doing for doing rather than for trying to achieve an end.

BURG: Do you still enjoy them, Mr. Hampton? Do you still read history and--

HAMPTON: Well, I read history quite a bit. I haven't read anything recently that goes back, but I keep up pretty much with contemporary history and current events. I worry about it in terms of what I see being used for resources for history. If the accuracy of newspaper reports finds its way into history, it will be certainly distorted. I hope we have more preceptive historians than people who base their opinions of events upon what they read in the newspapers.

BURG: We're a little shy of newspaper accounts.

HAMPTON: A lot of very interesting historical things develop you know, in my opinion, I just wonder how they're going to be recorded.

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If we had to have the cold-blooded objective historian who is not biased in his perceptions--

BURG: I think you'll find that probably the best history of this particular period will not be written for another twenty or twenty-five years.

HAMPTON: That's right. It takes that much time.

BURG: It takes perspective and a dispassionate look for it.

I was going to ask you if you like so many veterans were married at the time that you were at the University of Tennessee.

HAMPTON: No. I left the University of Tennessee and finished in the last year at the University of Chattanooga, which is called the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. And I married that last year.

BURG: You did? Did you have the experience of living in university housing?

HAMPTON: No because we lived in Cleveland, Tennessee, and I commuted down to Chattanooga.

BURG: Did your wife work?

HAMPTON: No, she was going to school with me. But she left it. I mean she didn't get her degree. She didn't finish. She wasn't very far away from getting her degree. But I guess the commuting and everything like that was too much--and the cost.

BURG: Your G.I. Bill carried you all the way through--



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HAMPTON: I'd been working.

BURG: --four years.

HAMPTON: Working part time. She worked too.



BURG: Well, I was part of that same crowd at that same time and interested in how your experiences compared with mine and with others.

HAMPTON: Seemed to have more money then than we do now. [Laughter]

BURG: Yes, yes. My wife and I observed that, too. We've thought about that. At least we had a t-bone steak once a week. It was the only meat we had, but it was good.

I was going to ask you what the first job was then that you took out of school.

HAMPTON: Well, I got interested in foreign economic policy, mainly, I think, because of the history and the economics and what I observed as, I felt, an essentially a weak position in the United States, you know in this area and had tremendous potential. And in the meantime, I became the principal of a grammar school in the area where I lived right outside of Cleveland, Tennessee. I enjoyed that very much; it was a wonderful experience. I wasn't prepared at all for doing anything in education, but I was approached about it because they wanted a man to take over the school where they'd had a lot of disciplinary problems.

BURG: It was a public school?

HAMPTON: Yes.



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BURG: And you didn't have to have--in the state of Tennessee at that time--you didn't have to have teacher credentials or principal's credentials or things like that?

HAMPTON: Well, I mean, your degree--you didn't have to have that kind of formal preparation in education and they could qualify you on a temporary basis or something.

BURG: Oh, yes, yes.



HAMPTON: I told them I wouldn't be there long. In fact, I didn't finish out the term. I just went to that March of 1950 at which time I went into the State Department.

BURG: I was going to ask you, Mr. Hampton, did you have contacts and friends in the State Department who could help you, because it seems most difficult to me: You're in Tennessee and except for TVA you haven't had a great deal of experience with government organization or anything of that sort.

HAMPTON: Well, you hear about those things through the Post Office Department and in your readings and so forth. And I had a friend in Washington who had connections with the State Department. I came up and I talked to a number of different people in personnel and everything like that. My background was quite different than most people who were getting into the foreign service. I wasn't a graduate of Princeton or any of the eastern establishment schools, which seemed in that period of time to be their major source of people. But they had other positions that were more to my liking, but I found out that there was just no opportunity to break into

the economic area, and of course you're naive about that. So I took a position as a vice consul in Munich, Germany, doing visa work, and I went to the Foreign Service Institute here for their usual indoctrination, orientation and training courses.

BURG: That's most interesting. How long were those courses?

HAMPTON: I really forget, to tell you the truth. I think about three or four months.

BURG: Had you studied German earlier or was your German acquired the hard way?

HAMPTON: Well, German is easy--speaking German is easy to pick up just by sound. It was fairly easy for me. I didn't speak German fluently or anything like that. I could fairly understand it, but I wasn't that exposed to it. When I was over in Germany we worked through interpreters and most of my work was done in German to English and English to German or Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian, or Ukranian or Russian to German then to English, things like that. So working in it all day long every day you pick up pretty good. I hadn't used it for, you know, many many years but when I was back over in Austria a couple of years ago, I didn't find it too difficult to understand when I knew the general subject matter if it was around an incident such as catching a cab or ordering a meal or asking for something in a hotel or anything like that, I didn't find it too difficult. I was never a language expert.

My job was connected with issuing visas to displaced persons and escapees, defectors and people like that, screening work for the



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immigration service and the International Rescue Organization, IRO, of the United Nation's bodies. Then I came back to Washington and was assigned to the visa office writing advisory opinions on visas.

BURG: Was your tour in Germany about two years?

HAMPTON: It was about two years, I guess. I don't recall the dates.

BURG: Were you at all surprised at being offered that kind of a job. It's quite different it seems to me from the kinds of things that you had trained yourself for.

HAMPTON: Well, I mean, on the other hand I think it was a question of getting the foot in the door more than anything else. The thing is that you've got to get in the government, you've got to find any place that you can get in to get in to pursue what you're interested in. And even when you have an interest it may change, which certainly mine did, over a period of time.

BURG: Your wife was over with you for the--



HAMPTON: Yes, but she came back and had our daughter here in the States because at that time it was a fairly turbulent time and the Korean conflict was about to break out and there was an awful lot of unrest among the troops in Europe. Historically, I've never really read back in books--

[Interruption]

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HAMPTON: That and the fact that we lived about sixty miles from the hospital type care that--I was in Augsburg and the hospital was in Munich. And the time the baby was due was during the time where they have these [inaudible] and things like that. But rather than take the chance of getting caught like some people did and giving birth in the ambulance and so forth--she came back and stayed with her mother and she had the--

BURG: I'll ask you this, too, if I may. The kind of work that you were doing and the kind of people that you were meeting in your job, these must have been most unusual people with some unique stories and unique backgrounds. Do you recollect learning particular things from that experience?

HAMPTON: I learned an awful lot about what happened to people in the wars in Europe and how whole families were uprooted and separated and how they dealt with adversity and just, you know, heartbreaking stories of people that lost their loved ones in concentration camps and others that had been killed in the war and how their whole life was just taken out from under them and here they were seeking a new life in a new country and they were immigrating to America. A lot of hair-raising things, a lot of very interesting things, but a lot of times you couldn't take the time to listen because you had such a heavy work load.

BURG: It sounds like the choice of you for that job was a pretty good choice because you yourself had had a taste for a few months of dislocation, disruption and hardship.



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HAMPTON: Well, I think they wanted mainly people who could read and write and use judgment and they needed people. Ordinarily I don't think I would have been able to have gone into something like that if I tried to become an economist with the State Department, something like that. I found that I got more interested in how things were done rather than the policy aspects of foreign policy, because my exposure on that in dealing with some of the political people and the economic people, why, I felt that they were not much better informed than I was from reading the papers.

BURG: Did you find them divorced from the realities that you had seen?

HAMPTON: In talking to them you know, officials and things in the area--military, government people and all that--and their work was more of a research type of thing, which may have been fine if it fit your personality--I'd rather [inaudible].

BURG: Now, in the visa office back here in Washington, what kind of assignment was given to you here?

HAMPTON: Writing advisory opinions on the types of cases I had handled in Europe--difficult cases that would come back here to give advice where they were seeking an advisory opinion on how the matter should be handled.

BURG: I see. So you would base your opinions on your experiences that you'd actually worked with over there. How long did you continue to do that work?

HAMPTON: I don't really know. I guess a year and a half to two



years and then I went into a training program in the executive secretariat.

BURG: For the State Department?

HAMPTON: The secretariat staff.



BURG: Now, may I ask, what form did that training take? Did you continue to do your own work but diverting a certain amount of your time each day to special course work within the State Department or--

HAMPTON: We performed an actual service. We were what they call the committee's secretariat staff. All of the interdepartmental committees that made foreign policy or dealt with particular issues were made up of various bureaus and so forth, and we were to serve as staff assistants to prepare the agenda, take the minutes, work with the chairman, see that their research work was done and the papers were properly staffed, the idea being that this gave you an exposure to how the Department of State operated and how policy was formulated and how foreign policy, well, I guess is managed, so to speak, not in terms of directing its outcome but how the mechanics of formulating the policy, I guess you would say. The idea was that you stayed in that for so long a period of time, you wrote summaries of these things and digests for the Secretary; but after you were in that kind of assignment for a period of time, you would be put into other areas of operation in the department, a managerial capacity. And you sort of specialized taking the committees. Where you would go-- like I was dealing with some committees that were involved in visa work and in consular affairs and I was involved in some committees

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involving personnel and internal management of the department, things like that.

BURG: Did you work under the direction of any one particular man or woman?

HAMPTON: Well, the department has an executive secretary and he was the man who is the overall head, but I worked under a man by the name of Earl Sohn who was the head of the committee secretariat staff. And then that job was abolished in an economy move. Then I was, I guess, exercising veteran's preference or whatever the hell you call it and was given another assignment in the Bureau of Security and Consulate Affairs, and this was, here again, writing advisory opinions and reviewing evaluation, security reports, which was similar to the kinds of things that you got involved in in the visa.

BURG: This was during the secretaryship of John Foster Dulles?

HAMPTON: Yes, he had become Secretary.



BURG: I will break away from that just long enough to ask you this because I've not put the question to you. Had you at any point, let's say from your college days on, been actively involved in politics?

HAMPTON: No.

BURG: Part of the time of course you'd been overseas in Germany doing work there, so you'd never taken an interest in local level politics or state politics.

HAMPTON: No.

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BURG: Now, about what year is it that you took on this last job that you mentioned--sometime in the first administration of Eisenhower I would think?

HAMPTON: It was after I think and I'm not sure about that. I really don't remember. I guess it was about the time that Walter Bedell Smith came in and reorganized the Secretary's office and that's when those positions were abolished. And so that had to be in what--'53?

BURG: Fifty-three, I think. There was a great deal--the second Hoover Commission was out--the Rockefeller group.

HAMPTON: And then I was reassigned back to the Secretary's office, because the committee secretary and the executive secretary was part of the Secretary's office.

BURG: Mr. Dulles's office?

HAMPTON: That's right. And then I was reassigned back to there from where I was in the Bureau of Security and Consulate Affairs to become the staff assistant in his office.

BURG: Did you ever know, Mr. Hampton, how you came to be chosen to go to that level of work?

HAMPTON: I think Mr. Burns who was the administrative officer gave a list of names of people to Mr. [John W.] Hanes and [Roderick L.] O'Connor who were Dulles's principal aides, and they interviewed some people, but I guess Burns was probably responsible for me coming.





BURG: When you were interviewed, did they simply tell you about the kind of job it was or did they question you about your background and your experiences?

HAMPTON: Well, they, of course, asked all kinds of questions I guess in their job interview. I've even forgotten now any kind of questions they might have asked me about--.

BURG: What was the work assigned then that you did?



HAMPTON: Well what I did was--all of the correspondence that was addressed to the Secretary that had to be processed and staffed came into me for routing, taking advantage of the knowledge of the department that you gained from being in the committee secretariat and you send that material to the various bureaus for staffing. There's a lot of issue-type mail which you get in, which people would be interested in a particular policy issue and you develop a response for the Secretary in which this is staffed through the appropriate geographic bureaus that would state, "this is the policy and this is the answer" you know, that type of thing. And you had to assure that this accurately reflected the situation and then it was prepared in some cases for the Secretary's signature; in other cases it wasn't. I was the custodian of the Secretary's signature tape so my discussion--this was under lock and key--and we'd take things down that had been signed.

BURG: You call it a signature tape. I'm not familiar with--

HAMPTON: That's a machine which duplicates your signature.

BURG: I see.

HAMPTON: As I was there more, I got into more and more things and I got into all different kinds of projects that they assigned as they got to know me and I got to know them. I was doing some things about speeches and I was doing some things about looking over reports and checking them out, that sort of thing.

BURG: Mr. Hampton, as I think back to the White House situation there, that flood of mail that came in from the American public and from overseas as well, came in and then it was broken down and some of it could be responded to in a very automatic kind of way.

HAMPTON: That's correct.

BURG: --routine kind of way. Other things were directed where they belonged. Some things headed up toward the President, would actually reach him. Now, were you engaged in something similar? Did the mass of mail addressed to John Foster Dulles come your way for you to then direct it out where it belonged or was this a very limited kind of mail?

HAMPTON: It was a limited kind of mail because there was a mail room that did a sorting of mail. Any kind of a pattern response though, that would be used in general correspondence in the correspondence unit in the State Department, would be routed to me to get a departmental position on, which may be used by a variety of people to answer the issue so that an assistant secretary wouldn't be sending something, I guess, that was different from what the Secretary said was the policy. In other words, it was coordinating all of the policy issue-type mail.



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BURG: So we might visualize a situation where you're getting some mail that says, "My personal stand on the Dominican Republic is this. I disagree with the State Department's stand." Then it would be necessary for you to see to it that answers to all letters dealing with the Dominican Republic did fit what Mr. Dulles felt about it.

HAMPTON: Our policy mail, you know certain canned answers, that issue kind of mail, we staffed it out. Actually it's handled by another division--the public correspondence division. Public relations type mail and you're getting this, you know, you get thousands and thousands of letters. They had regular robotyping machines and stuff like that. And if the head of that public correspondence had, say, a thousand letters on the subject of our Far Eastern policy, it was my responsibility to get the--what do you call it--the master kind of letter--

BURG: Form letter would go out to all those people.



HAMPTON: But that would be properly reflective of substance. All the Secretary's personal mail and other things like that, of course, that was something else.

BURG: Then as time passed, though you still did this kind of work, you found yourself being asked to do additional--

HAMPTON: Other things.

BURG: --additional things, projects of varying kinds.

HAMPTON: And I started getting more into management types of things, personnel decisions and things like that.

BURG: Did that simply come your way, Mr. Hampton, or did you actively seek more of that responsibility?

HAMPTON: No, it was just stuff that was being sort of pushed my way.

BURG: Under whom did you work at that time in that position?

HAMPTON: I guess it'd been Johnny Hanes probably, more than anyone else, John W. Hanes, Jr.

BURG: What kind of a man was he, because I think his name crops up in our work? He was an older man than you?

HAMPTON: No, he was a younger man.

BURG: Really?



HAMPTON: I think he was even younger than I am. And he was a Princeton graduate, I think. He had worked with Secretary Dulles when he started the project on preparing Dulles' papers for the Princeton Library, which I initially started in terms of putting them in some sort of order and getting the project started, of course--

BURG: Oh, you did? I didn't know that, Mr. Hampton; I hadn't realized that. These are the papers that were already created, they were there and it was necessary for you to start organizing them for shipment out; they were in part working papers?

HAMPTON: Well, we started the very initial stages of it, you know. They were working papers and all of those sort of things. We started cataloging and indexing them, the usual kinds of things that you do

to get things in order if you're going to turn them over, you know, that they're in some kind of an order.

BURG: Did you have any assistance or advice in starting that task?

HAMPTON: Well, Johnny Hanes and I sort of worked on it and it reflected Secretary Dulles' opinions and so forth. And I'm sure that what we started was polished up by better qualified people than we were because we weren't experts in history or any of those kinds of things, but it was a matter of collecting them and beginning to start it where they would be accessible and there for those people who would then take them over and do the real job of organizing them.

BURG: I didn't realize that the work had begun as early as that. That's quite far sighted--

HAMPTON: Yes.

BURG: --to do this kind of thing at that time.

HAMPTON: Well, I think he probably--because he was very much connected and close to Princeton--had agreed that he would turn his papers over to Princeton. I think that's why he started the thing.

BURG: Did you have much personal contact with the Secretary at all?

HAMPTON: I don't know how you would describe it. It wasn't on a daily basis. In some cases it was, and other time I wouldn't see him for quite some time. But I wasn't in there every day. And at first I had less than I did later because as I got into more meetings, then [inaudible].



BURG: How did you find--in your own personal observations and in the context of the work that you did, I presume you were reporting to him on certain projects that you'd been asked to do.

HAMPTON: Yes.

BURG: It's hard to put it in words, but just the kind of impression you had of that man and his qualities.

HAMPTON: Well, I think he was one of the great Americans in terms of his belief in his country, what it stood for. He was a very precise man. He used very simple language and simple sentences. I had to learn how to mimick his style of writing and so forth. He was very much concerned with the ambitions of the Soviet Union toward world domination. I think he was sort of the architect of some of the mutual security, containment policies and things like that, which he believed in very strongly. He was a very strong-willed individual. He was very closely connected with his religious roots and so forth. A very principled individual. I always felt that he always looked like he was a little grumpy, but he was a very busy man. He worked very long hours.

BURG: Did you also have to work hours like that?



HAMPTON: We all had to stay there too. We shared the things we knew and everything and so it was a good ten-twelve hour day, but he had a tremendous energy and desire--.

BURG: How did he treat the staff? You'd be in a position to observe that. Was he essentially a kind man in dealing with the staff?

HAMPTON: Yes, in terms of his dealing, I don't think he was a gregarious, outgoing type, but in a business relationship, I mean, he was very business like, very fair and all. I don't think he really interested himself personally in the personal affairs of people--he didn't have time. So I didn't have that kind of close personal relationship with him as maybe Rod O'Connor or Johnny Hanes or [inaudible], who worked for many secretaries of states, did.

BURG: There was something else I was going to ask you along those lines which has slipped my mind, so let me pass beyond it. I have the recollection that before you went to the White House you were with the Air Force.

HAMPTON: Air Force, that's correct.

BURG: Now, we have come to a period of approximately 1953. Was that 1955 when you went?

HAMPTON: I think it was 1955 that I went to the Air Force.

BURG: So you stayed in this--

HAMPTON: Right.



BURG: You stayed with the State Department in the position that you have just described to me.

HAMPTON: But the position, I'd begun to outgrow it and had gotten it pretty well organized to where it was a maintenance type of operation, a lot of the things. I was interested more in terms of the management and personnel things and one of the men who was in the

State Department was made an assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and Personnel and--

BURG: Who was that, Mr. Hampton?



HAMPTON: That was David Smith. And he asked me to come over to the Air Force and assist him. So that's why I really began to get into the personnel business and manpower and organization and things like that. I stayed over there for about two years.

BURG: Did you talk with anyone at State before you made the decision to go with Mr. Smith?

HAMPTON: Oh, yes. I told Mr. Hanes about it and the Secretary, of course, about it and told them I was thinking about it and so forth. I felt there wasn't much that really interested me there any longer, in that particular position; I felt I needed more breadth in terms of experience particularly, and, you know, you can be a staff assistant for so long.

BURG: Then you have it locked down and it's running itself pretty well--

HAMPTON: It becomes too routine. There was always some excitement and everything, but, you know, it was just time to go.

BURG: Now, when you moved into the Air Force position, had Smith's position and your position existed prior to the two of you going over, or were these new jobs that you were--

HAMPTON: No, he went over there as an assistant secretary which



was an existing position.

BURG: And had they had such a position for personnel management?

HAMPTON: Yes, they had an assistant secretary for manpower, personnel, and organization. And I went over there as an assistant deputy for manpower, personnel, and organization.



BURG: Now, what would the scope of that job be, Mr. Hampton?

Was it merely within the Secretary of the Air Force, within his--

HAMPTON: It was the office of the Secretary. They call all of the civilian echelon in the Air Force the secretariat, you know, which is made up of the secretary, the under-secretary and the assistant secretaries, along functional lines. Then you have your staff organizations underneath you that support them.

BURG: So your work was with that organization?

HAMPTON: My work was mainly with what they call the Air Staff. The coordination of all policy papers and directives, the review of personnel actions that were appealed to the Secretary for the final decision. We formulated the civilian personnel policy. I was involved in the formulation and the approval of policy affecting military personnel, too. So it covered the whole gamut of the personnel business.

BURG: We're talking then about literally hundreds of thousands of airmen as well as the--

HAMPTON: Right. Which was a real interesting position.

BURG: I would think it would be. You worked then directly under Smith. Now, who was Secretary of the Air Force at that particular time?

HAMPTON: I think [Harold] Talbott was Secretary of the Air Force at that time. And he left shortly after that and I think [Donald] Quarles became Secretary of the Air Force. Now, I don't--I'm not sure about that.

BURG: Easy to check out.



HAMPTON: I don't really remember. Quarles was the Secretary and Douglas was the Under Secretary, and Quarles later left to become Deputy Secretary of Defense, I think. I'm not sure about that. And Douglas moved up, but I'm just not really sure what took place because I never really kept track of those things so they all run together in my mind more than I could recall.

BURG: Were there any particular problems with which you had to cope in that position? Now, one that comes to mind, for example, is desegregation that had certainly begun in the Army say, about 1948 in the Truman administration. And I wonder if racial affairs, desegregation, or anything of this sort--

HAMPTON: That really didn't dominate too much in that period of time, at least in my area. The services had integrated six, seven years before I ever came there. And the civil rights movement and all that really hadn't begun its big push at that time. We had equal

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employment opportunity programs and things, and they were running along, but the pressures that were later to build up to put a much bigger emphasis on that never manifested themselves.

BURG: That was still a few years in the future--

HAMPTON: Yes.



BURG: --as far as you were concerned. As you look back on that period now, what drew the biggest percentage of your time and your attention in that position?

HAMPTON: Well, I think civilian personnel matters mainly and manpower planning and, of course, we always had an appellate work load but I didn't think that was as time consuming. I mean, it took a lot of time, but it wasn't the most consuming of your mental efforts. It was mainly, I felt, some of the civilian personnel policies that needed to be revised, some of the military policies needed to be changed. The Air Force was in a state of thinking about missiles and things like that and moving away from the concept of a big flying fleet with bombers and fighters and attack planes and air defense and things like that. It was the beginning of building a more sophisticated weaponry. The impact of this on manpower, of course, was the subject of a lot of discussion and everything. And then the full utilization of civilians and those air reserve technicians who would be civilians during the day and in the event of a war they--

[End of Interview]

This interview is being taped with Mr. Robert Hampton in Mr. Hampton's office in Washington, DC on August 24, 1976. Present for the interview are Mr. Hampton and Dr. Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.



DR. BURG: When we were last talking we had pretty thoroughly covered your Air Force work in personnel management and that period '55 to '57, and what I'd like to start with this morning is your appointment as Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary for Administration, Department of State. Now that's a job that you had, according to our records, 1957-58. How did you come to switch over? I assume that it was by invitation.

MR. HAMPTON: It was by invitation and happened just as a chance encounter, you know, with one of the secretary's assistants...

DR. BURG: Who was that, Mr. Hampton?

MR. HAMPTON: That was Mr. Haynes, I think, John W. Haynes, Jr.

DR. BURG: And you just literally ran into him someplace?

MR. HAMPTON: Yes, that's right. And I had decided anyway, I wasn't particularly pleased with the Air Force position because I felt that the civilian segment of the Air Force secretariat more or less played second fiddle to the military staff and that recommendations emanating from our sources were not given the weight that I felt should be. So I had indicated there that I

was thinking about leaving. I just happened to run into Mr. Haynes, and he mentioned that this position was open and that they'd like to get someone who knew something about personnel and about the Department, and so forth. And it was a position that basically was involved in the handling of all of the ambassadorial appointments, appointments to United Nation's specialized bodies, including the UN delegation each year and the various delegations that go, and coordinating all of that activity and all of the administrative work that went into the congressional confirmation process and the documentation that Secretary of State has to sign for all presidential appointees. I thought that would be very interesting area so I accepted.



BURG: Did that job involve your receiving from the Secretary names of those that he proposed to send to the Senate for these posts, either the ambassadorial posts or UN and then sort of overseeing the searches made on these people?

HAMPTON: The searches, the background investigations, the conversations between the State Department and the leadership in the Senate and the confirmation, the foreign service lists, that kind of thing. A lot of it was involved in interviewing people,

making searches, doing research to come up with names of specialists, and so forth. And it was the central repository of information that came from all over the country, from various sources both political and non-political about specialized problems that are dealt with in these advisory bodies and things like that.

BURG: A very, very broad kind of job.



HAMPTON: Yes. And the personnel area was narrow in that sense that it was related to that, but it was also involved; in terms of its substance it was quite broad. It performed a secretariat function as well.

BURG: Did you work then in that position under Mr. Haynes? Would he be the gentleman to whom you reported or how did that work?

HAMPTON: No, I worked with the Under-Secretary for Administration who was Ambassador Loy Henderson and was under his direct supervision for these matters that affected the Department of State internally. Those that were broader which involved UN matters, and so forth, I worked with the Secretary's office. I think Mr. Haynes left there shortly after that and went to another position.

BURG: Mr. Henderson, of course, his name comes up on our work, what kind of a person was he to work for?

HAMPTON: Oh, I thought he was a very fine man.

BURG: Supportive of the things that you had to do?

HAMPTON: Well, I don't know what you mean by the word supportive.

BURG: Someone to whom you could turn anytime that you had problems, a man who made your job easier for you.



HAMPTON: Oh, I think so. Mr. Henderson was primarily responsible to see that our embassies were staffed with ambassadors, both career and non-career. And we got along very well.

BURG: Did he tend to let you pretty well run things as you thought they should be run?

HAMPTON: Well, I didn't enter into all of the substantive decisions that much. Mr. Henderson worked with the geographic assistant secretaries, and I mainly got involved in the substance only in connection with the non-career, which made up about one-third of the ambassadors, about two-thirds were career. Mr. Henderson, also,

of course, was involved in assessing the qualifications of the non-career as well.

BURG: On the non-career, I assume that this brings you into direct contact with patronage--

HAMPTON: In the White House, yes.



BURG: That would mean at that time you would not be dealing with Charlie [Charles F.] Willis but probably with Ed [Edward T.] Tait.

HAMPTON: No, Bob [Robert K.] Gray was--

BURG: It was Gray by that time.

HAMPTON: --was in the job in the White House.

BURG: Yes. We've not talked with Mr. Gray; of course, we have his book to draw on. All of your work then was with Gray and--

HAMPTON: Gray and Governor [Sherman] Adams.

BURG: With both men.

HAMPTON: There were no clear-cut kinds of lines or anything like that. I mean Governor Adams would maybe work with the Secretary



or the Under-Secretary of State. He may call me and ask for information, and also when anyone's appointed to a presidential post the Secretary of State countersigns the documents and, of course, we were the ones that got that signature. It was really a signature that was one of these things that just--you know, they make a tape of the signature. I was the custodian of the key, so that nobody could have a facsimile of the secretary's signature that could be misused. So a lot of those came into my office, and usually the contact I had was, "We're anxious to swear this man in, please get the commission signed and out," that sort of stuff. Which just strictly administrative kind of thing, but it was a very important thing.



BURG: Did you ever find yourself under pressure from the White House, Gray or Adams, on any of these non-career appointments? A case where a senator's good friend and heavy contributor had put pressure on the White House and the pressure was then passed on to you?

HAMPTON: No, it didn't come directly to me. I think if they were interested in someone for an ambassadorial appointment and wanted that particular individual, I'm sure that their conversations

were mainly with the Under-Secretary. And I don't think the White House really operated on a pressure basis anyway. I don't think it was President Eisenhower's style to pressure. Of course, to say that Members of Congress or the national committee would have a particular interest in someone, I mean we were quite well aware of that, but we were under no compulsion to accept someone who really didn't pass muster in the State Department either.



BURG: So all that was necessary for you to do was to explain the individual circumstances connected with a possible appointee and to explain why that appointee was not in the State Department's judgment--

HAMPTON: Right, and, of course, we had access to the background investigations, reference checks and things like that. If they didn't check out, we'd simply convey that news, and it was generally deemed that--

BURG: And the White House accepted that?

HAMPTON: Yes.

BURG: Mr. Gray or Governor Adams.

HAMPTON: Yes. You have a lot of people that are candidates for ambassadorships that never get appointed.

BURG: Yes. I don't know Gray personally--did you find him helpful in his office on these matters?

HAMPTON: Oh, yes, I think so. Yes.

BURG: Always cooperative and never, oh, what's the phrase I'm looking for--never high-handed in his dealings with you.

HAMPTON: No. He was not that type person.



BURG: Governor Adams--who has, I think, a reputation for having the capacity to be testy, short and abrupt. How did you find him, sir?

HAMPTON: Governor Adams was not--I mean, yes, he was testy in terms of--he was extremely intelligent, and he was very precise and exacting. But he was not the type of person who was arbitrary or precipitous in matters. All he sought was proper handling of something and getting of whatever the response might be quickly and efficiently. I didn't find him the type of person that was on the affirmative side being testy, I mean being arbitrary in

that sense. On the negative side I think that he was the person whose main responsibility was to say, "no," and it was on that vein that he got his reputation for being testy. Because once the answer was "no", the answer was "no". And I don't think he was ever the kind of person who really pushed clunkers in any kind of jobs, so he was sort of a front man for the President. He took most of the heat and that's how he got his reputation. It was in terms of having to say "no" and being the type person that was willing to do it. But he wasn't the type of person that substituted his judgments readily for other people's judgments, but you had to know what you were talking about.

BURG: Then you found him to be a good listener and appreciative of--

HAMPTON: Yes, I think so.



BURG: --the kind of information that you could give him. Did your job also entail contacts with particular people on the Hill? Or did that vary a great deal?

HAMPTON: Well, no, I didn't do those kinds of contacts necessarily myself. They were generally handled by the Office of Congressional Affairs who took the work that we had prepared and they would go to the committee chairman and they would go to the Republican senator or Democratic senator from the states and discuss the nomination and get their reactions to it. So I didn't have that kind of a direct dealing with them, and members of Congress who recommended people for advisory committees and things like that, normally submitted things in writing. And so the contact then in that sense, was on that basis more than conversation. A lot of times we would have conversations with members of Congress, or the Republican National Committee or whoever happened to be the advocate or a particular individual for whatever it happened to be. That was more or less the extent of our contacts in our office; it wasn't that wide-spread at all.

BURG: Did your job bring you into contact with the Secretary himself at any point during that period?

HAMPTON: Oh, yes, sure. Yes.



BURG: Under those circumstances would you go to his office then and discuss some particular individual? Is that the kind of

contact you--

HAMPTON: Well, you usually were discussing documents and those documents involved individuals, giving him an option or choice of different individuals and different directions to go and that type of thing. And sometimes I was present, sometimes I wasn't present.

BURG: Again with him, how did you find him in these personal contacts where you were called in? What kind of an approach did he have in these business matters?

HAMPTON: Well, he was--here again you had a very precise man, and a man who knew what he was about, and he would either accept something--and he'd obviously have had discussions with other individuals about the matter, and he'd either make up his mind, "yes," or "no," go back to the drawing board or do something else.

BURG: Chase it further.



HAMPTON: And, of course, I had more contact with him when I was in his office as a staff assistant handling his personal correspondence, than I did in this particular job. This job is

more of a secretariat kind of a function. I would interview people and review certain documents and make certain preliminary judgments and screen away, obviously, people who were unqualified and performing a courtesy interview, a lot of these things. Those that were going to be the crown prince, of course, all of the credit and so forth and that kind of thing worked somewhere else rather than my office. [Laughter]

BURG: Can I ask you this--it's asking you to look back quite some time and to render a judgment--can you now recollect what area of that job gave you the most personal satisfaction?

HAMPTON: Well, I think that the view that one got of the organization of the State Department and its relationships with a lot of the external kinds of activities and international organizations, the learning process was quite satisfying. The other thing, just the challenge of doing administrative chores precisely and efficiently and making it possible for your superiors to make decisions on the basis of good information and going it in a manner that just made their job easier for them. Establishing some systematic approaches to these kinds of problems which are critical and in which following the proper procedures avoids problems in terms of



sensitive foreign relations. Because we had very definite steps that were involved; we had to have a permission of the foreign government, which is called the agrément, which was their agreement to accept a certain individual as an ambassador. And these had to be done properly so that the U.S. government wasn't embarrassed but seeing that we paved the way for Senate confirmation to avoid any embarrassment and to withdraw a nomination. And I can't think of many mistakes that we made. We had one ambassador that received some bad publicity in his confirmation process, but he was an individual that I had interviewed and had not recommended for an ambassador's post. But it was one of those things that there was a mystery surrounding his appointment, and I never really knew what basically it was.

BURG: Can you give me his name?



HAMPTON: Gee, I can't remember his name, but he was Ambassador to Ceylon. He was confirmed by the Senate but he couldn't pronounce the name of the head of the country to the satisfaction of Senator [William J.] Fulbright; got a lot of publicity.

BURG: I remember the incident now.



HAMPTON: And he was a very successful owner of a chain of women's apparel stores. He was a good manager, but he wasn't necessarily a person you'd want to send to that particular country at that time.

BURG: And your recommendation had been to that effect?

HAMPTON: That's right.

BURG: It's my recollection that he had great difficulty with the names of Ceylon geographically, place names, and knew nothing about the country.



HAMPTON: Well, most ambassadors are not well informed about a particular country because they go through intensive briefings and everything like that. It's their general background and everything depends on what the problems of the country are, what you need, and what the linkage is with that aspect of foreign policy. An ambassador is the personal representative of the President.

BURG: Yes. In seeking agrément for ambassadors, representatives to Iron Curtain countries, did you find dealing with those countries significantly different or more difficult than dealing

with western or Latin American countries?

HAMPTON: At times it took more time. If time is considered a difficulty, I would say in that sense it was a little slower and that was a difficulty. But knowing that it involved more time, I mean, you planned around it.

BURG: Yes. It just seemed to me--

HAMPTON: So it never created that kind of a problem.



BURG: Where it was a matter of the amount of time it might take the bureaucracy of that country to process the paperwork--

HAMPTON: Yes.

BURG: --rather than stiff-necked position taken towards one of our proposed people.

HAMPTON: Right.

BURG: If you look back on the period, is there now a headache, a particular thing that sticks out in your mind from that period, that part of your career? Something that didn't please you about

that job?

HAMPTON: Well, it was the kind of job that once you got things organized and things running smoothly, then it didn't have as much depth in it that a person who had had the experience that I have would want. But it's part of the learning process and I didn't view it as an end, myself. But it was a very sensitive kind of a job. I would say that I don't think the job itself had much impact on the running of the Department of State or anything like that. It was a support, a staff kind of job. And of course, as to how it operates, and how it was used was strictly up to the Secretary, so I didn't get into those kind of things.

I enjoyed the contacts with people who were being appointed the assistant secretaries, and the appointed ambassadors and got to know them and in that sense, I found it very satisfying. I wasn't in the job long enough to have in my own mind any dissatisfactions with it. And what the job was depended upon the Secretary; how big it was or how little it was.



BURG: And for you the greatest challenge and pleasure in that job was taking over and putting together files and staff so that all of this could be done and done well, done efficiently and

effectively, and that--

HAMPTON: And was supportive of the Secretary and dealing in an area that was always likely to make the headlines. Trying to do it in a low key way.



BURG: And once you had gotten on top of that job, then a part of--

HAMPTON: Part of the challenge leaves, of course, and then it becomes a maintenance function.

BURG: Exactly. Was that what had occurred then in 1958 to cause you to accept that next job which took you to the White House?

HAMPTON: No. I wasn't seeking another position or anything like that. It happened that Mr. Gray was being promoted to another job as secretary of the cabinet, and the position in the White House became vacant. Mr. Gray asked me if I would be interested in the position in the White House, being considered for it.

"Well," I said, "I don't know what all you do but sure, I'll be considered for it." Then the next thing I knew I got a

telephone call from the Under-Secretary, I think at that time Mr. [Christian A.] Herter, and said that he'd been called by Governor Adams at the White House and that the Governor wanted to talk to me. I didn't know what it was really about. And so I thought, "Boy, I must have really fouled up on an appointment some way or another," and I was going over there for a Saturday morning meeting to be chewed out for something. What it was was the Governor wanted to interview me in terms of being Bob Gray's replacement.

BURG: And asked you to come over on a Saturday?



HAMPTON: On Saturday, that's right. So I went over there and talked to the Governor, and I talked with General Persons, and then I talked to Mr. Gray for a little bit. I got a call a few days after that from Governor Herter who asked me how I felt about going over at the White House. And so I said, "Well, I don't know, from everything that goes on over there I'd say it would be a real challenge." I talked it over with Mr. Henderson, Ambassador Henderson, and he thought I should stay at the State Department. He said he could detail me over there, and then I

could come back to the State Department when I was finished there, but that's an old story. But anyway, I decided to accept and in a short time I was over there.

BURG: Did Mr. Henderson indicate to you why his advice was to accept a detail over there and to return here. Did he think that for your career it would be a better--

HAMPTON: Yes, he thought from the career standpoint that not to give up a career in the government by accepting an appointive job in the White House. And so he wrote me a letter to that effect so that I could exercise reappointment rights if they--

BURG: If you decided to go over and not simply be detailed over to the White House.

HAMPTON: Yes. And I found that very flattering.



BURG: It was a very kind thing for him to do. May I ask why you did not follow that advice from Mr. Henderson?

HAMPTON: Well, I felt that going over to the White House, in a sense and becoming identified politically with the political aspects of administration, you more or less sort of leave that neutral position of career service.

BURG: And if there was--

HAMPTON: And even if it was opportunity to go back, I'd probably be unacceptable to the other people because they wouldn't understand the nature of the job or the conditions under which I was detailed. Although the White House used a lot of details.

BURG: Yes, I know they did.

[Interruption]



BURG: So if there were a Democratic administration you would have very effectively cut yourself off from return to State, probably.

HAMPTON: Well no, I never viewed that as a feasible--. Career people would come to me and ask for advice about accepting a political appointment and depending on the nature of the job-- what it is--my advice to most of them is that you're really making a decision to leave the career service and may become unacceptable in terms of the view that I held that the career civil servant should be not prominently identified with the goals and objectives

in a political advocacy role. That's why the non-career jobs were set up, to protect the civil service people from this kind of thing as well as to provide the administration the opportunity to get their people in those kinds of positions where they're in an advocate role.

BURG: You ever have cause to regret the move you made?



HAMPTON: No, I've never had any cause to regret. I think that it's probably one of the most interesting jobs that a person could ever have because there's no other position in government that I know of where you become familiar with the workings of every department and independent agency as you would in that job. Because filling those jobs you have to understand what the mission of the agency is and what the requirements are to accomplish that mission in terms of the qualifications of individuals considered for those jobs. And you get an overall conceptual aspect of how the government operates, what each department and agency does and how it does it. A wonderful opportunity that just--it's just not present in any other kind of single job.

BURG: May I ask--what kind of a conversation was it that you had with Governor Adams? Did he go into any detail on the nature



of the job that you were being considered for?

HAMPTON: Well, the first thing he looked at me, and he said, "My, God," he says, "I looked at your biography and--you were born the year I graduated from Dartmouth. You're a young man." And he says, "Do you think you can handle a sensitive job like that and keep your name out of the newspapers?"

I said, "Well, I don't know all about the job, I have a general feeling of what it is, but I certainly am not running for any political office, and I have no desire to become a celebrity in the newspapers." I don't know why he said that. But obviously he viewed the job as a job where the individual was in a staff-support kind of thing and that while he expected you to use good judgment and everything, that your discretion was limited by supporting the decisionmakers and that protecting them from having to make the less significant decisions is where the discretion came in.

He gave me more of his views of how the office, he would like to have it operated, and he said, "I've got a reputation of being hard to get along with. I just demand that people do their jobs and do them well and don't make mistakes." [Laughter]

BURG: Certainly easy to carry out that mandate. [Laughter]

HAMPTON: And he said, "I'm not very tolerant of people who do not give all of their efforts to doing their job," which I could respect. I had great respect for him. Handling a very, very difficult job and taking a lot of beatings for decisions which he was made to do. I found him very fair; found him to have a real knack for precision in information that was provided to the President of the United States. That he was just intolerant of the thought that any information that wasn't correct could be given to the President. And if he found a mistake--I remember one time, it was a routine paper. We prepared the staff papers and normally we listed names of people who were involved in the Senate confirmation process and one of the clerks in the office made the mistake of listing a senator and that senator was deceased. He called me up on the phone and asked me to come down to his office. And he said, "Hampton, don't you ever read the newspaper?"

And I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Well, Senator so-and-so is dead. You've got him listed here as the ranking majority member on the commission that should be consulted about senate confirmation."



He said, "Don't let that happen again. We're supposed to inform the President so that other people who see these documents know who he's supposed to talk to and you don't talk to somebody who's dead."

So it was a facet of his personality, this in terms of a demanding precision. I found him an extremely honest individual and I guess the [Bernard] Goldfine issue was something that was vastly understood. Because one of the things that Adams always cautioned us about the White House staff, he said, "We must always be aware that whenever the White House calls a government agency or sends a piece of correspondence that many people might perceive that in a way that was not intended and that your responsibility is to assure people that the White House is, in many cases, the court of last resort for citizens who have a problem with the federal government and that our interest is seeing such problems are resolved properly and efficiently and not an effort to influence what that decision might be by those that have the responsibility of making them." And that really stuck with me ever since that time, because it is something that people in agencies tend to over-react when the White House



expresses an interest in finding out something [assuming] that they're [The White House] trying to necessarily influence the decision, even though it might be just a stamped piece of correspondence which says "referred for your attention". The fact that there's always been deadlines in answering correspondence and everything in the White House, that sometimes it's misinterpreted by the agencies as an old form of pressure or desire to influence an outcome, and he was very cautious about that. And that's why the irony of the situation was that he was used without his approval or without his knowledge by Mr. Goldfine who got an appointment with a couple of trade commissioners, which he himself wouldn't do. I'm sure he never had anything to do with that.

BURG: Yes. But caught by it and politically hatched as a result.



HAMPTON: That's right. But I found him a real challenge to work for and I got in the office at, I don't know, six-thirty, six forty-five, around in there. Oh, about ten minutes to seven in the morning; I mean, he was ready to talk about personnel matters.

And he would leave at seven o'clock at night, and he very seldom ever accepted any invitations for lunch. He ate at the White House staff mess and conducted business during most of his luncheons, and if he ate breakfast down there, it was to conduct business. He's really an extremely fine man to work for, and I got along with him fine. That's not to say I didn't get chewed out a few times, but on the other hand whenever I did I recognized that he was right. [Laughter]

BURG: You never found him chewing you out when he was wrong.

HAMPTON: That's right.



BURG: Was he generally respected by that staff, insofar as you could observe?

HAMPTON: Oh, I think they had a tremendous loyalty and affection for him. At least no one ever came to me and said anything bad about him.

BURG: Yes. The staff reaction to his leave and the circumstances under which he had to leave--

HAMPTON: Oh, a lot of teary eyes there.

BURG: Yes. A very sincere feeling about it. May I ask you, if when he spoke to you on that Saturday morning and described the job, did he indicate any departure from the way in which the job had been handled under Mr. Gray?

HAMPTON: No and I don't think that would be his style or fashion or anything. He didn't go into that kind of detail or anything like that. He didn't indicate any dissatisfaction.

BURG: Broad sketch of the job and that was about it.

HAMPTON: Well, he didn't talk a whole lot about the actual content of the job as much, on the assumption that having worked with that office and so forth on the ambassadorial appointments and these other things that I had a general idea of what all the job was about.

BURG: Were you significantly younger than Mr. Gray?



HAMPTON: Gee, I don't know. I don't know whether I was significantly younger or not. I don't know how old Bob is. Let me say I looked a lot younger than most people would look; I didn't show my age. [Laughter]

BURG: Because my recollection of your photographs in the White House staff book, that you, Willis, Tait, Gray, all of you look fairly young. I was a little surprised at his comment that if you said you looked a lot younger than you were that might explain that. Did General Persons in his conversation with you this morning shed any more light on the situation that you were stepping into in the nature of your job? Or was his kind of a pro forma--



HAMPTON: No. It wasn't pro forma. He had me in the office and asked me if I'd like a Coca-Cola, and being a southerner of sorts, I enjoyed having a Coca-Cola mid-morning there. He talked about the sensitiveness of the job. One of his major responsibilities was congressional relations. He talked about the confirmation process, talked about how it was necessary to work with the committees that confirmed nominations, both Democrats and Republicans, and accurately accessing their views of these people and that we tried to do this in a way that we didn't create an embarrassment for the President, the Administration, or the individual. We tried to take these soundings informally before the nomination or before the President actually ever even signed the nomination and talked about dealings with

members of Congress in a way that wasn't offensive to them and saying that ninety-nine percent of the time when things came to my office that I would be in the position of turning people down for requests. I should be courteous in terms of being liberal with my time in interviewing people even though the person stood no chance of being considered for a Presidential job or that they were a serious contender for a political position in one of the agencies. That I should return calls promptly and correspondence should be prompt and that everything should be considered in this sensitive light. Also not to take advantage of the position. That it was a position of considerable responsibility.

They were very sensitive men. They were very senior men, and they had obviously had a lot of time in public life and were reflecting Eisenhower's personality and everything. It was that kind of thing, and asking me questions about my background and the usual things that--but the interview was a lengthy interview, wasn't just a come in and look at you and go out.

BURG: Yes. It sounds very thorough.

HAMPTON: Yes.





BURG: Was it put to you in almost the words that you used to me that these attitudes were a direct result of the President's own attitude toward these things.

HAMPTON: I think so. The implication was there, if not said directly. It was very heavily implied.

BURG: When you went then to Mr. Gray for the final conversation, significant conversation of that day, did Gray pass on to you any helpful pointers about the job that he was leaving that you were about to take up?

HAMPTON: Well, of course, I knew Bob very, very well, and this was an entirely different line of communication in terms of talking about it. And we talked about the mundane things about the job, and how it operated and that sort of thing. But that was to all come later, wasn't a part of that--in fact I don't even think I saw him that day except to go and maybe say hello or something.

BURG: And the invitation then to come with them arrived shortly thereafter?

HAMPTON: That's right.



BURG: And may I ask where you were physically in the White House. You took over Gray's office space.

HAMPTON: I was, gee, upstairs right across from the room where the telephone operators were. I guess that's--what would that be, West Wing.

BURG: I think West Wing.

HAMPTON: Yes. Up by the top of the elevators and the offices there was a stairwell, and I was right--when you turn left out off the elevator and right there.

BURG: How big a staff did you take over?

HAMPTON: I didn't take anyone over.



BURG: Well, I meant take over in the sense of have as you came into that job.

HAMPTON: Oh. Let's see, one, two, three--I think there were five people there.

BURG: Clerical people, by and large?

HAMPTON: One person was administrative and one person was more

to get your job done.

BURG: Do any of those now stand out in your mind as significantly different from the procedures that were followed when you got there?

HAMPTON: Well, you bring about changes differently and I found in a short period of time that your biographic files were not as useful as you would want them to be because they were outdated. The availability of people for top-level jobs is only but a short span, and if you had biographies that you retained because the person that was in the job felt they were significantly well-qualified, I found that when it actually came to assembling panels of people to be considered for jobs that on contact that their availability was limited. So I wanted to revise that to where we were doing more advanced planning in terms of exploration of terms and those kinds of things in order to plan for the recruitment of an individual, say if the President did not desire to reappoint someone for a term.

We were able to utilize various sources to get candidates for jobs because you don't have people that are recommended for every job, and many of the people that are recommended for a job



are not acceptable anyway. And so you have to plan on a certain amount of recruitment that you use various sources like key members of Congress who are knowledgeable of certain disciplines and the Republican National Committee in terms of utilizing prominent individuals in the party who are acquainted with people in the academic community or in the business community who have an outstanding reputation in a particular field. And then you always had the question of conflicts and political acceptability, you'd go through an awful lot of names a lot of times before you get to that and sometimes they'll have very strong political support. People, key members of Congress, who take a dim view of accepting someone else when they were advocating someone else. So, it's all a much more complex kind of situation than people recognized.

But the key factor was planning because it was absolutely predictable every year that you would have a certain number of recommendations and you have certain people that you're going to remove. The thing was to keep the President and General Persons and Governor Adams and, later, Gerald Morgan and people like that informed of who was being considered and who was available and that sort of thing. What jobs were available, when they became



available--

BURG: And who was due to go out.



HAMPTON: Right. And, of course, you always wanted to plan for a dignified exit of people whose terms were expiring so they could make their own personal plans. So we tried to get a decision at least six months ahead of time on whether or not the President desired to appoint someone. So you had to find out, in many cases by checking with the chairman of the board or the commission, so forth, about an individual--what kind of member he'd been for the commission or how effective had he been and all that sort of thing--before you made a recommendation and presented it to the President. These things were all worked out between Governor Adams and General Persons and Gerry Morgan, later Dave Kendall. You checked references and all of that sort of stuff, plus your investigations that you always brought up to date. And then a determination would be made, and if an individual was not to be reappointed, you always felt a need to tell them that their term was expiring. The President has determined that another individual would be appointed to that, and to give them an

opportunity to seek another position and submit a resignation at the end of their term. You know, a dignified exit where everything happens to work out.



BURG: Did you ever encounter a case where an appointee, on finding that he was not to be reappointed, made any fuss? Any kind of fight?

HAMPTON: I didn't run into that as frequently as people might assume. There were occasionally people that felt that they deserved reappointment, and they wanted to stay and as a result they would garner some support to have that decision reconsidered.

BURG: Did you have to cope with it yourself, Mr. Hampton, or was that something that General Persons or Governor Adams--?

HAMPTON: Well, normally--. Well, I couldn't say normally because there's no such thing as normally in that business. It was always a matter of judgment, and it depended upon a variety of circumstances and in some cases it was better for me to do it in a routine way. In some cases, where we knew that there was strong political alliances, it might be better to leave it to General

Persons or somebody who was higher up.

BURG: Would those circumstances also dictate whether you did this by means of a telephone call or by a letter, if you were having to say to someone--

HAMPTON: You would never do it in a letter. You'd always do it face to face.

BURG: I see.



HAMPTON: Most cases are face to face. Not a cold telephone call. At least I never used telephone calls.

BURG: That part of your job, I would suspect, was one of the more difficult parts to have to handle.

HAMPTON: Yes.

BURG: I'm running low on time. We have just a moment or two. May I ask you to what extent this job brought you into contact with the President himself?

HAMPTON: Ninety percent of the time Governor Adams would take in the paperwork and, later, Gerry Morgan, after Governor Adams left. And General Persons would do it. And then even later I

think maybe Dave Kendall and Gerry Morgan did it. Occasionally I would go in with Governor Adams or someone, but I didn't deal on a day-to-day basis directly with the President.

BURG: On the occasions when you did, it was to get elucidation on some particular person?

HAMPTON: Well, usually, in terms of recording the President's views and receiving guidance as to how to proceed in a given task, or it was taking an individual down there for the President to interview who was being considered for a post. And in some cases the President would interview the people, but in most cases he left it up to us. And then, of course, the usual ceremonial things and kind of staff meetings, but it wasn't a direct working relationship with the President.

