

INTERVIEW WITH
Captain Ralph Williams
on
June 3, 1988
for
Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



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RALPH E. WILLIAMS

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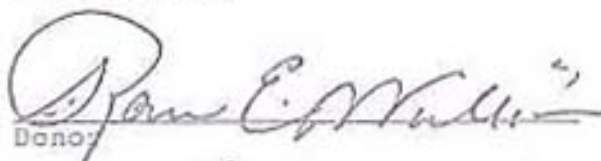
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This interview took place June 3, 1988 at the home of Captain Ralph Williams, Falls Church, Virginia. The interviewee is Captain Ralph Williams, speechwriter for President Eisenhower. The interviewer is James Leyerzapf of the Eisenhower Library.

CAPTAIN WILLIAMS: We were thinking in terms of a State of the Union address, and as the weeks wore on it began to look as though the State of the Union address was going to be sort of a lame duck effort in any event, so at some point in this two months' procedure we switched over and, indeed, wrote the State of the Union message which the president just sent up to Congress as a document--he didn't appear there to read it or anything. Then, with what was left over we began to put together this farewell message--and I don't really know at what point the State of the Union effort yielded up the farewell message. I don't know where the idea of a farewell message even came from, but the next thing we knew we were engaged in that effort in addition to the State of the Union.

DR. LEYERZAPF: I see. Mac Moos says in his interview, and I brought a segment of it along, that the idea originated with Eisenhower--not that he used the term "farewell address"--but a couple of years beforehand had told him to be thinking about something; he wanted to leave something for the American people to remember. According to Moos' story it was about as vague as that. On the other hand, one of the historians who has written on Eisenhower claims that the idea was planted directly in Eisenhower's mind by Norman Cousins of the Saturday Review. Can you corroborate or comment on either of those stories?



WILLIAMS: No, I surely can't. It could very well be that Cousins had some input to that because he did make several proposals for inclusion in the president's speeches--whether they were accepted or not--and this could very well have been something that Norman Cousins decided that the president should do, and the president could very well have picked up on it. The earlier thing may have just laid dormant in his own dustbin for that length of time and maybe Cousins just resurrected it-- I don't know.

LEYERZAPP: I see. Now, Cousins had an impact on speechmaking? Were these solicited or unsolicited comments?

WILLIAMS: For the most part, unsolicited. As a matter of fact, I suppose it was all unsolicited because we never solicited anything from anybody outside the Executive Branch. I've always maintained that there's only one other profession in the world that has as much competition from amateurs as presidential speech-writing. Everybody has some contribution to make to the president's speeches, and these things come pouring in on you from all directions all the time. Every once in a while we got something that was worth including, but most of the time it was just water over the dam.

LEYERZAPP: You don't recall cases of Cousins' meeting with the president formally to discuss some speech or topic?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't. The only time that I can remember someone coming in from the outside and directly having a major input into one of the president's speeches was Chuck Percy, who came in just about Christmas time in 1958. He had not even entered politics at that time; he was still president of Bell & Howell. He sort of fitted the model of what the president most admired in people: this poor boy from the country who had gone to the big city and made a smashing success of himself in the business world. So Chuck Percy came in--and I guess he actually stayed at the White House a couple of nights--and at some point in there he got the president's ear and said, "What we need now is to include in the State of the Union message a declaration of goals for the American people." Another segment, which was separate, was a declaration of goals for the Republican party. The president apparently bought the idea, and he sent Percy down to see Moos and me. Over the course of the next day or so we got Percy's input on the goals message, and it was to be cranked into the State of the Union message. When we got it done, it kind of looked like a cross between an alligator and a turtle--but there it was in the speech. Of course, what you do, when you announce something like that, you have to find a committee (and a chairman with some stature and reputation) to take it on and formulate the content of an action program. The president had a terrible time finding anybody who would have anything to do with it. Every press



conference for about six months, somebody would get up and bug him about when he was going to get something started on the goals program. In fact, it wasn't until February of 1960 that he finally got Walter Wriston to take on the Chairman's job, and the Commission came up with its report the following July, just about the time when the election campaign was pushing everything else into the background. So far as I know, the Goals Report still languishes somewhere in the White House archives without ever having anything done about it, and probably just as well. But only once in a blue moon did anything from the outside come in and actually get included in the president's speeches.

LEYERZAPF: I see. At this point--I hate to break a train of thought--but I'd like to go back and pick up a little bit about you, for the record. Now, I may ask you some questions that have been answered in your correspondence with us or in the copy of the questionnaire you filled out for Mr. Haney, but if I do it's because we'd like the continuity--

WILLIAMS: You just want it for the record.

LEYERZAPF: --and have the whole thing on tape for a record. So, if you'll tell us about your background and education?

WILLIAMS: Yes, well, I was born in Pecos, Texas in 1917. I went to high school there and I went on to the University of



Texas in Austin. I graduated from there in 1938. I worked at home around Pecos for about three years until it became evident that we were going to get into World War II. I made some serious efforts to beat the draft into the navy, which I was successful in doing. So I joined the navy in--I guess it was June 1941-- when I was directly commissioned as an ensign in the naval reserve. They sent us to what they call "officer boot school", which means that you get paid a little bit better than you would if you were a seaman but the indignities are about the same. This was at the Harvard Business School in Boston where the Business School was on vacation for the summer. We used the Business School facilities for our training for the Navy Supply Corps. Then I was shipped out to Pearl Harbor in September 1941, and-- typical of the kind of luck that I have--they couldn't get me out there by navy transportation as rapidly as they wanted, so they gave me a ticket on the SS Lurline--the queen of the Matson fleet--at a time, I think, when every secretary in San Francisco was taking her vacation. So it was a "pitch 'till you won" proposition for five days and I thought, my Lord, if this is the way things are in the navy where do I sign up for a permanent commission? I landed in Pearl Harbor in September of 1941 and I was there for the big show on December the 7th. I stayed there until possibly May, I guess, of 1943. I was sent back to the United States and immediately turned around and was sent back out into the Pacific in time for the invasion of Tarawa. I was

on the beach at Tarawa for about two or three months before they took pity on me and sent me back to Philadelphia. This is where I met my wife and got married and started a family. I finished the war in Philadelphia, in fact. From there we had a tour of duty in Bayonne, New Jersey, and then we were in Guam for a year and a half, and then from there back to the Naval War College at Newport for three and a half years. I had a ship out of Newport for another year and a half and then came here for duty in the Pentagon in late 1952, which I thought was going to be the end of my career but which turned out to be the salvation of it because I was here only a couple of months when I got myself a job as a speechwriter for Robert Anderson, who, at that point, was the new Secretary of the Navy.

LEYERZAPF: This would have been your first speechwriting job?

WILLIAMS: Yes, my experience at the Naval War College greatly expanded my horizons and I discovered that I could write things that people would read. Among my efforts were essays in the contests that were held annually by the U.S. Naval Institute, which is the professional educational institute for naval officers. Every year the Institute holds a contest--an essay contest--and anybody can enter. If you won you got \$1,500, so at my wife's strong urging I entered the contest. The first time I entered I came in second and a couple of years later I began to win. I won every time I entered from there on out and,

in consequence, I got a reputation as something of a minor prophet among naval officers. So when the Chief of Naval Information was desperately searching around for somebody who could write speeches for the new secretary, he thought about me. I was led into Robert Anderson's office one day and from the beginning we were sympatico in a way that you wouldn't believe and--

LEYERZAPP: I imagine that's very important as a speechwriter-- almost an alter ego--

WILLIAMS: It was. You have to be able to figure out what this fellow's nature is, the ways he expresses himself and what he wants to talk about. It was just natural that I could please Mr. Anderson, which I did. He would call me into his office and we'd just sit down and talk, for maybe thirty to forty-five minutes, about what he wanted to talk about in these speeches. At that point in his life he was deeply religious, and Jesus got a lot more mention in his speeches than Alfred Thayer Mahan ever did. This used to gall my navy associates no end, because they wondered what I was supposed to be doing. But anyhow, the only one I had to please in the navy at that point was Mr. Anderson. He took me on with him when he became Deputy Secretary of Defense. When he left the government in 1955, I dropped back and spent a year in the Chief of Naval Operations' Strategic Plans Division. At that point Admiral Burke (the CNO)



began to look for a speechwriter, so I spent a year writing speeches for him before I went out to Pearl Harbor for duty on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Pacific--the theatre command. I was hardly out there for more than a year when I got this very sudden, mysterious, totally unexpected call to come back to Washington. The news came to me on a Saturday afternoon that I had to be in Washington the following Monday morning--for what purpose, I had no idea. I got on a plane, and it took a long while to get to Washington from Hawaii in those days, so I didn't get to Washington until Monday morning and reported in to the Navy Department. The admiral I reported to said, "Well, I don't know what the hell this is all about but you're to go over to the White House and report to Captain Aurand." So I went over to the White House and showed up in Pete Aurand's office. Pete said, "Oh, yes. The president needs a speechwriter and you're one of the candidates." This was about 10:00 in the morning, so I sat around and talked to Pete for an hour and a half or so.

LEYERZAPP: Had you met Pete Aurand before this time?

WILLIAMS: No, I hadn't. I'd heard of him by reputation but I'd never met him. I had met Ned Beach before, but not Pete. Finally, lunchtime came and Pete took me over to the West Wing, and as you go down--at least in the floor plan at that time--as you go down into the basement to the mess, the stairway ran

right in front of what we used to call the "fish room", which was sort of a holding tank for the president's visitors until they could get into his office. At that point, there was a meeting breaking up in there and one of the first people out of the fish room was Robert Anderson, who by then was Secretary of the Treasury. He looked over at me and said, "What a surprise! We were just talking about you last week." So that explained everything. The president had complete confidence in Anderson and Anderson, in turn, had complete confidence in me, so when he recommended me to the president as a speechwriter, why, I was most of the way home. After lunch Pete took me in and introduced me to Sherman Adams who had been, at that point, impeached but not yet removed. Adams and I had a conversation and he finally said, "Well, why don't you go out and talk to anybody in town that you want to talk to about this job, and if you need any doors opened let me know and I'll get them opened for you. Now be gone." So I left and I talked to a whole bunch of people. This was at the point where Arthur Larson was leaving--he had been the speechwriter before--and I talked to Larson, and I talked to Bryce Harlow, and I talked to Gabe Hauge, and I talked to Anderson himself. There was a bunch of people I talked with. I guess all this took place over the course of Monday and Tuesday. Tuesday afternoon I came back to Adams' office and I told him that I had seen all the people I needed to see, and I very much wanted the job. He looked at me very quietly and said, "Do you know the President?"



I said, "Well, I know him, but he doesn't know me." Adams looked at me for another two years, it seemed like, and said, "Well, I expect you'd better meet him. I'll set something up." This was Tuesday afternoon. Now, to go back a little bit, all kinds of things were going on that weekend, because between the time that I left Hawaii and the time that I arrived in Washington the whole Middle East blew up. There was a coup in Iraq which resulted in the murder of the king and the prime minister and the accession to power of a radical new government. There was also a grave threat to the stability of Lebanon--this was, to put it exactly, ~~August~~ ^{July} the 15th, 1958. So there was this grave threat to the stability of the Lebanese government, and President Chamoun urgently requested help from Eisenhower. Eisenhower, in turn, ordered a battalion of marines landed in Lebanon, and Khrushchev began to make noises about shooting rockets at us. So the town was pretty much in a turmoil at that point--everywhere except the White House. You went into the White House and there was this glacial calm; nobody was flustered, nobody was upset. When they talked about anything it was usually about what they'd done over the weekend. You got the idea that these people were there to take care of things and here was one more damned problem that came with the territory and they were going to get it subdued somehow or another--and they did.

LEYERZAPF: A lot of confidence.

WILLIAMS: A lot of confidence. But you stepped out on the street and the people were listening to their radios and reading the headlines--the extra editions of the papers were coming out and the kids were hawking papers all over the street--and everybody was running around ready to dive for the nearest culvert. So this is the milieu in which I met the president, but I didn't get in to see him until the following afternoon, which was Wednesday. By that time the marines had landed, they were welcomed as liberators, President Chamoun was restored to a stable position--he was grateful for it--and Khrushchev had stopped making noises about shooting at us. So at that point the president was pretty pleased with himself, and I would say it was about the most amiable conversation I ever had with him. As I say, he was feeling no pain at that point so Pete took me over there and introduced me to him, and left. I must have been there in the president's office for at least half, maybe three-quarters, of an hour just talking about all kinds of things, just the two of us. Of course, he could be the most charming man in the world when he wanted to be, and he'd had a lot of experience making tongue-tied strangers feel at ease in his presence. We started out just talking about little stuff--light conversation. He asked me where I was from, and I told him I was from Texas, and he kind of brightened up because he was born there in Denison. He asked me where I'd gone to school, and I told him at the University, and he said, "Well, your football

team beat the hell out of a team that I coached at Benning one time." The conversation went on and on, and gradually it narrowed down to the job of speechwriting. We talked about it and he asked me if I thought I could do it. I said I was perfectly confident that I could. He looked at me right straight in the eye and said, "Now look, do you think that taking this job will in any way damage your promotion prospects or your career?" And, gosh, I almost laughed out loud. But he was in dead earnest about it so I said, no, I couldn't imagine that anything like that would happen. I said I did have some concern for him because here I was, a serving officer in the regular forces, and I would be writing speeches--and there would be at some point some political aspects to these speeches--and I didn't know exactly how I could legally handle that. He kind of snorted and said, "Hell, I'm not political; I could be here as a Democrat just as well as a Republican." So that dismissed that subject. The interview went on for a few more minutes and then it was over. At that point we agreed that I'd go back to Pearl to get my suitcase packed and my job finished up there, and I would come back in about a month because this was the middle of the summer and there wasn't a whole lot going on. So, I'd come back in a month and start the job--which I did. And I got back about the middle of August and checked in.

LEYERZAPF: And you said this is about a month later?



WILLIAMS: Yes.

LEYERZAPF: About the middle of August?

WILLIAMS: About the middle of August. At that point the president was up in Newport with Pete. Andy Goodpaster, I guess, was the one that got me checked aboard. He found an office for me up on the second deck of the west wing next to Bryce Harlow. I was there for a week to ten days, I guess, more or less just doing odd jobs for Andy because there really wasn't anything else to do. Then I began to hear a few random remarks about the other speechwriter, and I began to make some inquiries. There was this fellow--they thought his name was Moos--and he was from Johns Hopkins. He was over there in the east wing, they thought.

LEYERZAPF: They weren't sure?

WILLIAMS: They weren't sure! So I waited around a couple of days to see what would happen, and nothing happened, nobody said anything more, nobody got Moos and me together. Finally, I went around to see him. Well, yes, he was there, and he thought he was the speechwriter!

LEYERZAPF: Not the best example of Eisenhower's reputation for organization.

WILLIAMS: Well, you know, this was a funny thing, too. I understand that in the earlier years of the administration there was

some effort at organization--they had kind of a staff manual and things like that. But when I got there things had gone on for six years, and everybody knew everybody else, and they all knew the drill, to put it in military parlance. Now in the service the first thing when you come into a new job is they sit you down, and they give you an organization chart, and they give you a directory of all the people and a write-up of their functions, and the standing orders of the command, and you sit there for two days and read that stuff, and you're pretty well oriented to what's going on. Well, there was nothing like that at the White House in 1958. I couldn't discover an organization chart or a directory anywhere. If you wanted to talk to somebody on the staff you just picked up the phone and asked the operator to connect you with Mr. so-and-so. If you wanted to see him, you had to find out from him how to get to his office because there was no diagram that showed you who occupied which office. Finally, as I say, after stumbling around for a week or so I finally made contact with Mac. He had been there earlier as a consultant, and at some point they decided to bring him on as a full-time administrative assistant, I believe. It turned out, of course, that his sponsor was Milton Eisenhower. The more I thought about it, the more it appeared to me that there was going to be one head speechwriter and one subordinate, and it looked like the correlation of forces wasn't in my favor at the point. After a couple more days I went into Mac's office



and I gave him my pledge of allegiance. It was the smartest thing I ever did, because it cleared the way for our relationship--me and Mac. In retrospect, it could not have worked had I been the only speechwriter because, gosh, from there on out for that whole fall season Eisenhower was making one campaign speech after another for Republican members of Congress. I could never have written speeches like that. I think what happened, possibly, was that I did sow a seed of doubt in the president's mind at that interview I had with him when I raised this question about political participation. At some point it must have occurred to him that maybe I was right, and that they'd better get somebody that could do these things without actually being in violation of the law, which, of course, is the Hatch Act that prohibits regular-serving employees, in uniform or out, of the Federal government from engaging in political activity. In other words, I'm sure that they wouldn't have spent that much time on me and paid me that much attention if they hadn't at that point, in July, been considering me for the first chair. But as it dawned on them later that I couldn't fit in that first chair, they had to find somebody else. So this is the way that Mac Moos' and my arrangement started.

LEYERZAPF: So Moos would've come on after you?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he came on, apparently, during that month when I was out at Pearl Harbor getting things wound up. He was in place by the time I got back there in August. As I say, this was the long story that I said I didn't want to burden my young

friend out there in Ohio with--how the president came out with two full-time speechwriters instead of just one. Always before, there had only been one: Emmet Hughes, Kevin McCann, Arthur Larson, and then there had been a couple of others in between. But they'd only had one at a time. Now all of a sudden, he had two. I figured that the president must have decided that I could still do something for him, because he never kept anybody around that didn't do a job for him. So that's the way it played for the rest of my time there. Then a little later on, I guess in the fall sometime, they brought Steve Hess on, first as a kind of consultant. The next thing--I guess it was early 1959-- Steve came aboard as a special assistant in the White House or something of that kind. I don't know exactly what else Steve did; I think that he had some other responsibilities, maybe in connection with the party as well as helping out on the domestic-political aspects of the speechwriting effort.

LEYERZAPF: I see. So at that point there were three--

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's right.

[Interruption]

LEYERZAPF: Had you wanted to say anything further about the speechwriting staff and the set-up?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Mac was one of the nicest guys I ever had anything to do with. He was the ideal person for that job because I



never saw him flustered, never saw him distraught or burdened or anything of that nature. He always had a wonderful sense of humor, a complete gentlemen, a little wisp of a guy--you'd think that a good puff of wind would blow him away--but he sure had a lot of character and a lot of strength about him. Generally, for the first couple of months while we were still getting acquainted with each other, I would send him these big long memos about what I thought that the speech effort ought to cover--which he accepted very graciously. After the first couple or three months more and more of our interchange was just oral; I'd drop in his office and we'd sit down and talk, or he'd call me on the phone, and we'd go to lunch and talk there. So I quit writing him memos after the first couple of months. Generally, the way these things would work--as far as I know, the president may have occasionally passed on to Mac something that he wanted put in his speeches--but for the most part, he wanted his speeches to come up to him as, to use the military definition, "completed staff work": the whole thing laid out, tailored to the audience with everything in there that should be said to that audience, and to be said to the public, at that particular time. He would look at it and at this point he would begin to think about it. But he needed the full text version to stimulate his own thought processes. The more he would read, the more involved--and intensely involved--he would get. He would get completely immersed in the speech before it was over, and the thing would go anywhere

from ten to fifteen drafts--

LEYERZAPP: We're speaking of any speech; it was just his style?

WILLIAMS: That's right. His style was to come into the speech after it had been all laid out. Then he would find some things that he would throw out and other ideas that he would think about, and he would scribble them into the marginal notes. He'd call in Ann Whitman and he'd dictate maybe two or three pages of new material. And so, draft by draft, it literally became his very own speech from the beginning to the end. He would edit--not only the textual and substantive material--but he would fiddle with words, and two or three drafts later the same words would be back in that he had thrown out in some draft before. I always thought that things got better up until about the fourth or fifth draft, and after that it was straight downhill!

LEYERZAPP: Overworked, perhaps, sometimes?

WILLIAMS: That's right, overworked. These things would go--oh, the major speeches would run anywhere from twelve to fifteen drafts. These would be the State of the Union types, the major addresses to NATO and this kind of thing. Others we could get cut off in six to eight--along in there somewhere. But it was always an endless iteration: back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

LEYERZAPF: Sometimes you were able to cut down the numbers, the numbers of drafts.

WILLIAMS: Oh yes, it would depend on--

LEYERZAPF: What would it take to do that?

WILLIAMS: Well, as I said, a lot of it just depended on the length and the importance of the speech and how he evaluated the importance of the speech. The ones that he thought weren't worth that much effort, he would be satisfied with six or eight drafts. But as I say, the big ones would go anywhere from twelve to fifteen--I don't know how many drafts the Farewell speech went.

LEYERZAPF: We have seven between January 6th and January 16th.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm sure there must have been others earlier than that that somehow or another got in the wrong bin or something, but--

LEYERZAPF: We don't have them.

WILLIAMS: --because we started work on that thing in early November, so there must have been several drafts that just never made it.

LEYERZAPF: Do you have any idea what it was about Eisenhower's personality, his intellect, what it was about him that motivated him to pore over, and work over, these speeches so much?



WILLIAMS: I don't know, really, unless he just figured that he was speaking for the record whenever he did, and that he wanted to be sure that what he said was what he fully intended to say, and how he understood the subject to be communicated. I suppose that he suffered so much during the press conferences from his extemporaneous utterances that he wanted to make sure anything in a formal pronouncement got his undivided attention-- and it did.

LEYERZAPP: I see. So he wasn't the sort of public servant, then, who--obviously he wouldn't take a speech and read it cold--and you mentioned something about his wanting it to reflect what he believed.

WILLIAMS: Yes, anything that he said in the way of a formal speech, you knew that he knew what he was saying, and he fully intended to say it, and it was, in every sense of the word, his speech at that time. Because he never said anything that he hadn't considered through many, many drafts of the speech.

LEYERZAPP: By the way, is it "Moos" as though it were a "z", or is it Moose?

WILLIAMS: Moos. M-O-O-S.

LEYERZAPP: I've heard it both ways.

WILLIAMS: Just like the fellow with the big horns.

LEYERZAPF: Thank you, that helps. Did he meet at times with the president on these speeches without you, or usually when together?

WILLIAMS: No, as a matter of fact, I only can recall two or three times that I was ever in the same room with the president at the time that we were working on a speech. The president dealt with principals; he didn't deal with the second tier, which was my level, except under extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, it's my impression that in many cases, if not most, he did his business with Moos by mail, even though Moos was his principal speechwriter. Moos would send the draft over and the president would mark it up and send it back, and Moos would take the thing and redraft it the way the president indicated he wanted it and send it back in and back it would come. I'm sure that at certain times the president would call him in and they would sit down and possibly have a conversation about it or elucidate what it was the president wanted. But for the most part, these things would float in and float back out again without Moos ever having gone near the president's office. But, as I say, this is just the way that I observed things to work. I don't know what Mac had to say about his own personal relationships with the president, but I gather that they didn't spend a whole lot of time together.

LEYERZAPF: I don't have the sense that it was a lot of the time, either. I was just interested in that. I guess I was

reflecting partly back on your role with Anderson; if an equivalent sort of thing had developed with either you or Moos with Eisenhower.

WILLIAMS: Well, Anderson, of course, had a lot more time to devote to thinking about what he wanted to talk about than the president. I have always thought, too, that any president who sat down and laboriously figured out what it was he wanted to say in every damned speech that he made ought to be impeached for wasting the taxpayer's money because that's what you hire other people to do for you. This is what he did. These speeches were something that the president had to do, but for the most part, they were not all that important because you found-- and this is one of the things that made writing presidential speeches so easy--was that by the time that he had been in office for six years, all the policy positions were very carefully laid out and very well established. When you talked about these subject areas you could only say just about what you'd said fifteen times before, so the art of the speechwriter was to take all these old round stones and try to make a slightly different-looking little structure out of it so it would have a little bit of interest to it. But for the most part, all you were doing was going back and looking over all these other speeches for what the president said on the same subject and skimming off the same thoughts, if not the same words, and cranking them into the new speech. In this respect, it was



almost impossible for the president to ever say anything new because events didn't move that fast and things didn't happen that would cause him to have to say anything new. For the most part, all you were doing was saying what he had said before fifty times in the last five or six years. So, as I say, it made it easy in a way because you didn't have to do an awful lot of original research because the data was all there. It did make it tough to try to dress it up a little bit so it wouldn't bore everybody to death--the same old message that he'd been saying before. This is, I'm sure, not peculiar to Eisenhower's administration; I think every administration has the same problem. Once you have said all the new things, which you do in about the first six, or eight, or ten months of the administration, you haven't got anything new to say to people until something else happens, some event transpires, or some new policy evolves. Then you can talk about that until that's beaten to death. So it's just one desperate search after another to find something that might be of some conceivable interest to people.

LEYERZAPF: I see. It's very interesting, it's one of those things that maybe seems obvious once someone starts talking about it but I haven't heard this before. Is it fair to say, then, that if you were drafting a speech--let's say to a Republican group of some sort--that you'd do that without additional staffing; Bryce Harlow wouldn't be drawn in or someone else on the staff with subject competence? You pretty much did

it yourselves, you and Mac?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we would pretty much do it ourselves. If we got too far away from what we felt safe with, we'd show it to whoever the staff officer was who would have the cognizance of that particular area. For the most part, however, we really didn't need all that much help.

LEYERZAPP: I see. Very interesting on the speechwriting process. Let's turn to the Farewell Address at this point and if you could tell us something about how that was handled, the delegation of functions between you and Moos, for example.

WILLIAMS: Well, that memorandum that I wrote on the 31st of October had one bullet and one blank as you recall. The one that survived was--I think at that point I was referring to it as a "war-based industrial complex"--

LEYERZAPP: Yes, I've read that.

WILLIAMS: --which gradually evolved into "military". The other one, of course, was sort of a cry of dismay at all the civil commotion that was just beginning. Lord, I didn't know anything about civil commotion at that point, but I thought it was a viable topic that ought to be addressed. But it didn't get anywhere and it dropped out very early in the proceedings. I don't imagine it appears in any of those drafts that you have there.

LEYERZAPF: No, I'm pretty sure that it doesn't.

WILLIAMS: Moos' way of doing this was just to sit down and talk about the content of these speeches as we would formulate them, and if you had something that you thought ought to go in you made a pitch to him, and he'd think about it. If he liked it he would ask you to write up a full-text version of it--just a monograph, just a piece of the speech, whatever the topic was that you'd brought up. Then I'd put in mine, and I guess Steve Hess would do the same thing and Mac would take them and--he always called himself a carpenter--he would tack these things together--plus his own contributions, whatever he thought should go in. So Moos was the processor, and he was the one who produced the draft that went up to the president. At that point he asked me to work up something on the so-called war-based industrial complex, which I did. And, as I recall, there wasn't all that much change to it from start to finish. I customarily worked very carefully on the first draft in all my writings and usually--in the case of Anderson, for example, I never had to do much more than a few word changes to that first draft--so in this case there were some, possibly some minor changes, but I think for the most part the president eventually said just about what I had written in the beginning.

LEYERZAPF: That's what I see looking through these drafts; in fact, I xeroxed some of those portions and here and there maybe changed a word or two, but there's very little of that.

WILLIAMS: Well, I was lucky because not many pieces got by



without a lot of scrutiny and changes.

LEYERZAPF: Changes of that nature, where he deleted a word or two and added one or two--that's the kind of thing about this file that shows up.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LEYERZAPF: Then, given what you said about his going back to square one sometimes, perhaps by the final reading he--I didn't check it against the press release copy--he might have put them back in, too.

WILLIAMS: Yes, possibly, I don't--

LEYERZAPF: It would be quite a chore for any researcher to go through all of that; it was a chore for me to go through it and try to sort it out. In this October 31 memo from your papers at the Library we find the phrase, "the war-based industrial complex". Do you recall who was responsible for that phrasing?

WILLIAMS: Well, that was my original thought off the top of my head. But as I got into writing the thing, it looked like what we were really talking about was a military-industrial complex rather than war-based. I think the "complex" part of it came-- you know, you get to the end of a sentence and you don't know how to end it up and this word comes to you and you write it in and that's the way it fits and that's the way it came out. But I remember specifically very well the phrase, "the military

industrial complex". It seemed to describe what it was I was complaining about.

LEYERZAPP: So you, then, were responsible for that later shift from "war-based" to substituting "military"?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's right.

LEYERZAPP: That's been something that historians have been interested in for a long time and had many questions about.

WILLIAMS: As I explained to our young friend out in Ohio, you come out of these things and you sit down and you call your secretary in and you dictate off the top of your head what it was that you remembered about the meeting. This is the way it came out first, on October 31. And then you look at it and you think, gee whiz, I really didn't exactly mean it that way and this "merchants of death" reference is a bunch of stuff. So as I sit there in my solitude, facing my typewriter, some things get squeezed out and other things come in and this was the way that the "military-industrial complex" replaced the "war-based industrial complex".

LEYERZAPP: I see. Moos has commented in his interview about-- you referred to his dustbin--he made comments about that in the interview and made a rather cryptic remark that he picked up that habit from H.L. Mencken.

WILLIAMS: Yes.



LEYERZAPF: Did he ever speak about his relationship with Mencken? Was Mencken a mentor of his or something?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he was. I'm not quite sure what their relationship was except that Mencken, of course, was the major domo of the Baltimore Sun for years and years. I think at one point in his life Mac worked as a reporter for the Baltimore Sun. I think he and Mencken had their contact through Mac's efforts as a cub reporter, or whatever he was, and he was a protégé of Mencken in that respect. Mencken apparently had a very strong influence on Mac's life, and he always spoke very warmly and respectfully of the old curmudgeon.

LEYERZAPF: That's fascinating. I was curious about that. You mentioned Steve Hess. In looking at the Farewell Address, from what I've been able to read in Moos' interview and elsewhere, I can't find evidence that Hess was one of the participants in writing that. Do you know whether he was involved in that or not?

WILLIAMS: He may not have been. I can remember a few meetings where the three of us sat down together and talked about it, but for the most part Mac dealt separately with Hess and me. I don't know to what extent Hess contributed to the State of the Union message, but he and Mac were very close; he was, in turn, Mac's protégé. Mac was a political science professor up in Johns Hopkins and Steve was one of his prize students. This was how Steve got into the White House staff--through Mac.

LEYERZAPF: All right; that helps round out the picture about the speechwriting staff.

WILLIAMS: In fact, he and Steve wrote a number of things together including a book called Hats in the Ring. I've got a copy upstairs that I'll show you. They were, both of them, exceedingly interested in domestic politics and Republican politics. This Hats in the Ring was a collaboration that they did--as a matter of fact, they wrote it while they were both on the White House staff. It describes the nominating processes of the two parties, how you got these people on the slate for president and vice-president. So my guess is that Steve's contribution, for the most part, had to do with the political speeches that the president made; he'd provide the input for that plus reinforcing anything Mac had to do on his own in the way of domestic politics. For the most part, that was their field. They more or less gave me a clear field in anything that had to do with national security or military policy and that kind of thing.

LEYERZAPF: I see. So those segments of the speech, then, that dealt with those issues were drafted by you?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LEYERZAPF: Moos also mentions that--as he recalled very early on with the first draft or two--when it first went by the president, that the president pulled Milton in. Can you comment on that at all?

WILLIAMS: No, I can't. If Moos said that he did, I'm sure that was true because, of course, the president and Milton were very close. I know that Milton occasionally would come in and he would be in Moos' office talking, so I'm sure that Milton had a very strong influence on many of the things that the president said.

LEYERZAPF: You didn't see drafts coming back, though, that had Milton's hand-editing on it as though he was getting involved, in a detailed sense, in the speech?

WILLIAMS: No, no, I did not.

LEYERZAPF: I'm trying to define, to figure out exactly what Milton's role would've been. Maybe we can only surmise, but if you could help with that, we'd appreciate it.



WILLIAMS: With regards to this particular speech?

LEYERZAPF: With this particular speech. Moos just mentions his having--or the president having--shown it to Milton.

WILLIAMS: Yes, as I say, I really don't know to what extent, if any, Milton participated in the drafting of the speech. So far as the actual drafting is concerned, I'm sure it was for the most part Moos' effort; whether or not Milton influenced the president to have other things included, I just don't know.

LEYERZAPF: I see. I'm trying to get all the players sorted out. This may seem overly meticulous to you, but these questions

have come up--

WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm sure they have.

LEYERZAPF: As much as we can we would like to fill in the rest.

WILLIAMS: Had Milton anything to say about this particular aspect of it?

LEYERZAPF: The only reference I know of is the comment in Meos' interview about--I think I brought that part of it along, I didn't bring the entire interview. Have you ever seen this interview before?

WILLIAMS: No, I haven't.

LEYERZAPF: That page may be where I picked this up.

WILLIAMS: Milton and the president sitting down together and working on the talk--this would be what you're wondering about?

LEYERZAPF: That's what I was wondering about. I guess I was wondering whether it was just a matter of Milton approving the basic sense of the speech and the ideas that were in it, or just how involved he got.

WILLIAMS: I cannot remember ever seeing any editorial writing or any inserts that Milton ever provided. My guess is that all he did, possibly--if he had any input to the speech--was just to talk to the president in general terms and the president either did something about it or he didn't. But, as I say,

I can't see Milton sitting down there with Mac Moos, cheek by jowl at Moos' desk, writing in words for the president's speech-- I don't think he operated that way.

LEYERZAPF: You mentioned in one of your letters to us that the military-industrial complex portion found a rather ready and willing receiver in Eisenhower.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LEYERZAPF: As though it didn't surprise you, perhaps, that he would've left that alone and left that in, pretty much as it was. Could you comment on this idea?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I can. Throughout his entire administration Eisenhower suffered the slings and arrows of people who wanted more money for defense, and more airplanes--mainly more airplanes because the air force had only been in existence about ten years and they came out of the army with a bee in their bonnet. They were going to conquer the whole world, I suppose. It had the energy of a new organization, with a new mission, and nothing was going to stop the U.S. Air Force. They'd had good tutelage there because the fellow who had brought the army air forces up to the point where it became the U.S. Air Force was an absolute master at publicity and public relations. This was good old Hap Arnold. I guess he's one of the great unsung heroes of the thing--he never got the credit that I'd thought he'd always deserved for his contribution to the

independent air force of the United States. But anyhow, the air force, United States Air Force, just considered themselves to be the only reason that the United States was still free in the menacing world of communism. They had a tremendous network of help among the aerospace suppliers, and the congressional people who benefitted--whose districts benefitted--from these contracts. They cultivated the newspapers, and worked the media for all it was worth, and politicians. So they had this great complex, if you will, to support the programs that the United States Air Force thought it needed. Meanwhile, Eisenhower had come in, in 1953, and one of the first jobs that he had was to get the armed forces back down to a reasonable size from their peak of the Korean War. So he presided over the demobilization of at least a million men--I think the force level went from about three and a half million men down to two and a half million, and the major weapons programs were cut back proportionately even more. Moreover, these cutbacks were proceeding at a time when much of the public was caught up in the Reds-Under-the-Bed hysteria of the McCarthy era, and when both the U.S. and the Soviet Union acquired the hydrogen bomb. And the president made his own contribution to his troubles by an almost obsessive concern in his public remarks with the need for fiscal restraint and balancing the budget. So the Democrats figured they had a live one: here was a miserly president pinching pennies at the expense of the nation's security, and wasn't it just awful, folks? And, with the appropriate coaching from the Air Force and its

supporting industries this angst eventually came to focus on a yawning "gap" that was supposed to exist between the long range bomber capabilities of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and this terrible "bomber gap" became one of the Democratic campaign themes in 1956. There wasn't an iota of truth in it, of course, but it was about all they had to run with, since no Americans were getting shot up in wars anywhere, the country was booming along with almost no inflation, and they were up against one of the most popular presidents we ever had. In the end, they didn't get anywhere, but I can't help but think that it must have rankled the president considerably. He was a Type A personality and he didn't suffer criticism gladly from anybody, especially from fools.

LEYERZAPP: Eisenhower's frustrations with these criticisms--

WILLIAMS: So then, of course, the election was held in '56 and he was resoundingly re-elected by a huge majority and things kind of settled down except that there was still this undertone of, "Why aren't you buying more missiles, why aren't you doing this, that and the other thing?" Then the campaign of 1960 came on. Eisenhower was not running, but Nixon was essentially running on his record, and it started all over again, only this time, instead of being a bomber gap, it was a missile gap. I guess at that point there was Kennedy, Johnson, Symington, and possibly Humphrey, I think--four contenders for the Democratic nomination. All four of them, particularly Symington and Johnson, played up

this terrible missile gap, that Eisenhower had just let the United States missile effort go to pieces. Of course, at this point, you must remember, it sounded like they had a good case because the Soviets had Sputnik up in 1957, followed by several other heavy pay-load launches. They even hit the moon with a rocket in 1959 and we still hadn't gotten much of anything up there to speak of. The conclusion was that since we couldn't put anything into orbit, why, we were defenseless as far as missiles were concerned because it takes rockets to make them go, too. So all through the spring, summer and fall of 1960 there was this drumfire of criticism of Eisenhower's reputation on the missile gap. Of course, there wasn't any truth to that, either, and when the Democrats came in the following January and they looked around and realized that they were now going to be responsible for the defenses of the United States, why, all of a sudden the missile gap just disappeared. And McNamara admitted it. There was no missile gap, as you may recall. I'm sure, again, that since Eisenhower-- it was his administration that was being strung-up by the lynch mob--that this must've gone down with him just about the way that the bomber gap did just four years before. Of course, on my own part, I had similar feelings and I'm sure that when Eisenhower saw that all laid out there, why, he must've thought,--"Boy! That's what I want to say!" And apparently it was what he wanted to say because he made so few changes to it.

LEYERZAPF: As you said, virtually none, none of importance,



none of substance.

WILLIAMS: Right.

LEYERZAPF: And, of course, the wording in that does refer to the "combination"--yes, "we must never let the weight of this combination"--and it's referring there to what elements, in the use of the word "combination"? I guess it's just another word for the "complex"? Well, I can give it to you--one draft.

WILLIAMS: You mean the "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military industrial complex?" I believe that the final version was--I can remember--"unwarranted influence, either sought or unsought."

LEYERZAPF: Yes, that's true. It does read that way. Here's the final version.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that's right. And it was just, as I say, I think his sense of fair play had been outraged by the liberties that these Democratic politicians had taken and he just wanted to set the record straight. I do think that he could also envision the possibility of this thing getting out of control and inducing the government to do some very dumb and dangerous things at the behest of these people who had so much influence. Gosh, they had hundreds of billions of dollars worth of spending power, and they blanketed the entire country so that you got congressmen from all over the country beholden to them, labor votes, local politicians, satellite industries--all of whom have money and voting power. I can imagine that he figured that if the thing ever got unbalanced--and this

is, of course, the thing that he had to bear in mind: that it's not just the military-industrial complex that could run away with government policy; other things could, too, unless the government is protected by the checks and balances of its constitution and the natural pluralism of the people who can be trusted to be sensible enough not to be swept away by any of the propaganda of a fear campaign or that kind of thing.

LEYERZAPP: "Balance" seemed to be an important word to him; I believe that the military-industrial complex portion is prefaced by a paragraph on balance.

WILLIAMS: Yes, it is. He went to some length to explain that in the text of the speech, and then later on in his book, Waging Peace, he expanded on that. This was certainly in keeping with his philosophy, because he did deeply believe that this country was capable of doing anything it wanted to do provided it could weigh the differences and find the right combination, which would be the balance.

LEYERZAPP: So it's consistent with his overall philosophy?

WILLIAMS: Right.

LEYERZAPP: Really consistent, which probably does explain why it went virtually unchanged. Philosophically, he'd have felt comfortable, as you see it, with this sort of thing? It's followed by that section warning against a scientific-technological elite,

or a combination or some kind that could be a problem--now, you drafted that section?

WILLIAMS: Yes, and I don't know at what point that got into the speech. Does it appear in these drafts that you have?

LEYERZAPF: Yes, it is in these drafts, so it apparently got in before the first of the year.

WILLIAMS: It got in before, and probably as a substitute for the thing that didn't fly about the breakdown of orderly societies. It's kind of a subset of the military-industrial complex, too, because for the most part these very complicated and sizeable scientific and technological establishments were born out of the military research and development of World War II. In that respect, they're part and parcel of the military; they're the scientific element of the military-industrial complex. And scientists are corruptible, too. There's a great art of grantsmanship that the scientific community--or at least certain individual scientists--engage in, whereby they make certain findings and a lot of times they don't even bother to have a peer review; they go immediately to the newspapers with their findings and they get everybody all upset. This is particularly true, I think, in the environmental part of the scientific community. I can well remember, at the crest of the environmentalist wave, where some professor down in Texas came forth with a--he was just sure that we were going to burn up all of the oxygen in the atmosphere and all suffocate because of the lack of oxygen. Well, of course, this is ridiculous,



and you do have people who are willing to prostitute their profession because it gets them money. It all gets back to the well-established principle that the way to get people to act on something is to scare them to death. This is one of the games, the gambits, that the military--and particularly the Air Force--have been known to engage in. It's a sad fact, but it's true, that at budget time, why, your worst enemy becomes your best friend and your erstwhile comrades-in-arms become your opponents and your rivals. I couldn't even begin to guess how many billions of dollars that Nikita Khrushchev got for the U.S. armed forces by all the table-pounding and thundering around that he did. In the Pentagon we used to go up to Congress with these appropriations bills, just praying that the Russians would do something to scare us so that the Congress would loosen up and grant the appropriation. A case in point, was--this would be in 1956 or '57, in that time frame, I forget exactly when it was, it could be pinpointed down--the navy had a money bill before Congress and it was just on the razor's edge between failure and success. And the point at issue was about ⁷⁰⁰~~300~~ million dollars, or something thereabouts, for a carrier, an aircraft carrier. At that point, Khrushchev came to pay his respects to the United Nations. You may remember this, a very celebrated scene where he got up and he ranted and he raved and he took off his shoe and he pounded on his desk with the shoe and the navy's bill passed that afternoon by a resounding vote. I always thought that they really ought to have named the carrier the "Nikita S. Khrushchev" instead of the "Constellation" or whatever it was that

they really did name it, because we never would've gotten it if it hadn't been for him. Well, now, you see, the Russians have learned something about that and they don't give us all that good support anymore.

LEYERZAPP: Interesting. That was no mere coincidence, then?--the shoe-pounding incident and the appropriations bill?

WILLIAMS: Right. He got us a billion-dollar carrier out of that just as sure as the world.

LEYERZAPP: Was there anything further that you wanted to say about the Farewell Address, given your role in it?

WILLIAMS: No, I can't think of anything, except to emphasize again that it's the president's speech; he said it, and he understood it, and he meant it, and he is the author and nobody else has any claim to the authorship of that speech because, as you can see, he was not a man to let anybody put words in his mouth. If he said those words, he meant them.

LEYERZAPP: OK. I'd like to go back just a little and fill in a few areas. I read through your papers last fall at the Library, and a couple of questions about your role struck me. I did want to ask you if your formal appointment to Aurand's office was just that, or did you have any duties apart from speechwriting? Did you work with Pete at all?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I did, as a matter of fact. This was another very satisfactory arrangement. I was detailed to Pete, and according

to the wiring diagram (if there had been one) Pete was my only boss; it went from me to Pete and from Pete to the President. The dotted line, of course, was really the meaningful one; it went from me over to Mac Moos. My primary duty, which everyone understood, was to assist Mac in the drafting of speeches, and I could help Pete with whatever spare time that I had available to give him. From time to time he would have me do little monographs, very simple things that he liked to have some particulars on. I think I did something on the Messerschmidt 262 one time, and, oh, critique certain papers that he would have been interested in. I think mainly it might have been just for his own curiosity; it wasn't any official work that he had in mind. I even made a trip out to Abilene for Pete when the museum was getting started and the purpose of my visit out there was to see what contributions the naval aide's office could make to the museum exhibits. And this sort of thing, kind of in the category of odd jobs. But when Pete would be out of town--which was a good part of the time that last year, when Eisenhower was doing so much traveling--Pete would go in advance and set up the logistics of the trip. Whenever Pete was out of town I'd move over into his office and I'd be the naval aide. But still, as I say, my primary duty was first, last, and always with Mac Moos.

LEYERZAPP: You mentioned the monographs you wrote. I know I came across a rather lengthy critique of a Kissinger article--perhaps out of Foreign Affairs, I'm not sure. And I was curious as to who asked you to do it.

WILLIAMS: I think that this was another request that Pete made of me. I don't know whether the memorandum even specifies--memorandum to Captain Aurand, or what--but I'm almost sure that I did that for him, unless I did it for Mac--I don't know. But it didn't go any further than those two; I was not hired to do think pieces except on request from Pete and Mac.

LEYERZAPF: I see. I'd found it very interesting, and wanted to ask that question because you went at it in some detail. I picked something else up in one of your letters written to us--no, this would've been in your papers--that suggested that at some point--at least the idea was floated through the White House or to whomever--that certain NSC policy papers be written up as white papers?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

LEYERZAPF: Do you recall that incident?

WILLIAMS: Yes, that was sort of an early abort, but it never really did have any support, I don't think, from the top people in the staff. I think the impetus came from Gerard Smith, who at that point was kind of in the middle ranks of the State Department personnel. This, again, was an effort to extricate the president from his preoccupation with the budget and to prove to the people of the country that the United States really wasn't in danger by publishing a white paper that would lay out the true facts of the balance of power between the United States and Russia so that people could see this and dismiss all the Democratic propaganda for what

it really was. The intentions were wonderful but the execution was just impossible. The basic policy paper that we went through from, I guess, the Truman Doctrine--or at least it evolved out of the Truman Doctrine--was NSC 68 and this was the containment policy. Along with that was added the Dulles Doctrine of so-called "massive retaliation". I think his exact words were, "Retaliate massively at times and places of our own choosing," which we could certainly do at that point because we had a virtual monopoly on atomic weapons. The idea was to scoop up these and other basic national security policy papers and massage them into something that would be so sufficiently sanitized that you would not be compromising security, and yet would give the people a factual basis for making their own decision as to whether or not the United States was in jeopardy. But the problem was that everything that you could possibly say openly had already been said. If you really got into the meat of these papers, then you were talking about orders of battle, and sources of intelligence, and enemy intentions, and the most highly sensitive kind of information--and you just couldn't do that. So all you had--when you had wrung all of the good stuff out--all you had left was what we'd been saying publicly all along. I don't know how many tries I made at that thing and, of course, it always failed on the security aspect. The intelligence community was just petrified that we would give something away--and I didn't give anything away--and as a result, there was nothing to show. I could never produce anything that Gordon Gray was happy with. I think that the reason--the most that he would ever tell me about it--was that, I think

his words were, he was not comfortable with it. I think that, basically, he wasn't comfortable with the whole idea in the first place, which made it easy for him to be uncomfortable with that particular project. So it finally just withered away and died, and that was the end of that. But it started out as an effort to rebut the Democratic contentions that Eisenhower was neglecting national security; but you just couldn't get to the post office from there.

LEYERZAPF: It's a very interesting story, nonetheless. Do I understand, then, that you did go so far as to prepare drafts and they were circulated--

WILLIAMS: Oh yes.

LEYERZAPF: Did they go as far as to the CIA or only as far as the NSC staff?

WILLIAMS: I think the only person that I ever sent them to was Gordon Gray, and he was never that much in favor of it to begin with.

LEYERZAPF: The idea originated with Gerard Smith?

WILLIAMS: I think it was Gerard Smith's idea.

LEYERZAPF: Which worked it's way through whom to you?

WILLIAMS: I don't know whether Smith himself contacted Moos or whether he got one of his bosses to talk to Mac; but anyhow, Mac took it on as the kind of thing that we would help out with if we could.



LEYERZAPF: But from the State Department, as it were?

WILLIAMS: Right.

LEYERZAPF: The initiative lay there. A very interesting story-- even though it didn't come off--the fact of the effort being made. Like anyone else at the Library I've not read every page of twenty million pages, but I can't say it doesn't exist on paper some place, but it is the first I've heard of the white paper concept.

WILLIAMS: Well, probably the reason you didn't hear about it was because it never got anywhere anyhow.

LEYERZAPF: I might just ask you, since we've talked at length both about the Farewell Address and the speechwriting process, are there any other major speeches that you recall working on that maybe were particularly difficult or required additional staffing-- anything memorable about any other major speeches?

WILLIAMS: The only other memorable effort, of course, was the Percy episode, but I don't know of any other; the rest of them are just more or less cut-and-dried speeches that came off successfully so that we didn't have any spills or catastrophes. This is the happiest that you can be as a speechwriter, to get your boss out and let him make a speech and get back to his office without finding a note on his phone pad to call his boss. I'd struck out on that a couple of times, too, for other people. I was working for Rogers Morton when he was Secretary of the Interior, and the speech was addressing the balance between environmentalism and

development. Rogers Morton, being secretary of the interior, was right in the middle of it. I can remember we'd write these speeches out and the full text version would be released to the media. I can remember so well this peroration that he ended the thing with, which I wrote in my inimitable style, and the final declaratory sentence was the the United States does not have to choose between environmental degradation and economic development; this administration is determined that it can and will have both! Of course, he never said it; I don't think he ever used anything I ever wrote for him. But by that time six hundred copies had all gone out to the media, and gosh, this crazy sentence said exactly the opposite of what I had intended to say. I got a terrible ribbing from all my friends and associates in the media; they'd call me up and say, "Hey, what's this about you're going to have both environmental degradation and economic development--isn't that an interesting feat?" They were very nice about it--nobody could hate Rogers Morton, anyhow--and nobody hated me, so I got away with it. But this is the kind of thing that can happen, and our great success, of course, was in not having the president say anything like Ronald Reagan did about the Indians last week.

LEYERZAPF: I guess I missed that one.

WILLIAMS: Oh, you missed that one, too? Well, somebody got him to talking about the American Indians, and then he went on at great length about all these oil-rich Indians and that we shouldn't have given them all of this fine reservation land. I think he said every wrong thing he could possibly have said about the Indian question. And he'll be

digging his way out of that for the next six months and for the rest of his administration, I'm sure. But anyhow, this is the great hazard speechwriters have, having your boss say the wrong thing. It's much more important not to say the wrong thing than to just say the right thing. There have been more deathless phrases that lived to haunt their authors than a little bit.

LEYERZAPF: So you were in a speechwriting capacity, then, for officials after 'sixty-one? You had other jobs of that nature?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I first went back out to Pearl Harbor, and I had a strict, straight navy supply job for three and a half years. I came back in 1964, and I retired at that point, and using my only known discernible talent I went to work in the Interior Department, mainly as a writer. I wrote for the assistant secretary of the interior for awhile, and when he left I went on up--

LEYERZAPF: Which administration would this have been?

WILLIAMS: This would've been Nixon's administration. I was down in the bowels of the organization until the next administration came in, and the same thing happened at that point that had happened in the Eisenhower Administration: they began to look around for speechwriters for the new appointees, and they found me. I got the job working for a gentlemen by the name of Hollis Dole, whose picture is right up there above the Admiral. He was another wonderful person. He was assistant secretary of the interior for minerals and resources. He died last year suddenly of a heart attack, and I lost a very good friend. After he left the government, I went to work for Rogers Morton and I think



I wrote twenty speeches for Morton and I don't think he used a single one of them. So at that point I hied myself off to the U.S. Geological Survey out in Reston, Virginia, and I spent the rest of my government time out there.

LEYERZAPF: And what kind of work did you do?

WILLIAMS: Generally, writing speeches for the director.

WILLIAMS: I see. And this all came about because of your experience and talents that sort of surfaced at the Naval War College?

WILLIAMS: At the Naval War College, right.

LEYERZAPF: As I recall, on your vita, you have a bachelor's in business administration?

WILLIAMS: Yes, I suspect that most people never do what they get educated for, and I was no exception. Well, of course, my bachelor's in business administration was my ticket to the Naval Supply Corps. For a number of jobs within the navy I did practice my profession in that regard. But about half the time I was totally out of my educational environment, working just as a writer of various and sundry descriptions.

LEYERZAPF: Have you ever engaged in any free-lance writing?

WILLIAMS: No, not really. It didn't pay nearly as well as writing for the government.

LEYERZAPF: I was referring just to moonlighting, just as Moos and Hess did.

WILLIAMS: No, I'm lazy and I don't do any more work than I absolutely have to. I didn't have to work, so I didn't.

LEYERZAPF: I see. Well, I have no further questions. Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

WILLIAMS: Well no, not that I know of. This might be a good place to conclude things.

