

NATIONAL ARCHIVES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Oral History Interview

with

Stanley L. Falk

March 4, 1985

at

the National Archives

Washington D.C.

Interviewed by Rodney A. Ross (National Archives employee)

Basic summary abstract prepared by Donnie Eichhorst (National Archives volunteer)

Editorial revision by Rodney A. Ross

Stanley L. Falk. Washington, D.C. March 4, 1985. Interviewed by
Rodney A. Ross.

Falk is a retired Federal historian. In 1983 and 1984 he assisted Page Putnam Miller in seeking Congressional cosponsors for the Archives independence bill.

The interview covers Falk's background, including his work as chief historian with the Air Force. In line with this aspect of his life Falk talked about his relationship with archivists and with archival records.

The purpose of the interview was to explore Falk's work with Page Miller regarding the Archives independence bill.

The interview, approximately 55 minutes in length, was conducted in the National Archives. Although almost everything on the tape can be heard, portions of the conversation are of less than satisfactory audible quality.

Abstract of interview with Stanley L. Falk in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1985.
Interviewer: Rodney A. Ross
Tape length: Both sides of one 60-minute cassette

SIDE 1

QUESTION: Background?

ANSWER: Falk's retirement from the government was not directly from the Air Force. He left the Air Force in 1980 and went to the Center of Military History. He retired from there in 1982.

Falk was born on March 11, 1927, in New York. He grew up in Queens and went to Townsend Harris High School in Manhattan. This was a preparatory high school for the City College of New York. The school was funded by the city. It was closed by the city in 1942 as an economy move. Falk was in the last graduating class.

Undergraduate work was done at Bard College where he majored in journalism. He joined the army at age eighteen and got his B.A. at the same time. In the Army he attended the army Japanese language school at the University of Michigan. In 1945 when the war ended he chose to complete the program, take his commission and go to Japan for two years.

For those two years he served as a language officer in Japan and it was there that he became involved in history. There were a number of historical sections in Japan, which were consolidated under G-2 (Intelligence). Falk was interviewed and because of his journalist background it was felt he'd make a good historian. He worked largely with former Japanese officers.

Falk returned in 1948 and in 1949 started working at the historical division of the Army History Office then at the Pentagon. He worked in the Pacific section. While working there he obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. in American history at Georgetown. He was with the Office of the Chief of Military History for a number of years and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff historical office.

From 1962 to 1974 Falk was on the faculty of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces at Ft. McNair. From 1974 to 1980 he was chief historian of the Air Force. In his last ~~three~~ ^{two} years with the government he was chief historian for Southeast Asia at the Center of Military History. Most of his writings have been in the field of World War II in the Pacific or in the general area of national security.

QUESTION: When the first time you used the National Archives as a researcher? Describe the circumstances.

ANSWER: Falk's introduction to the National Archives was from the "inside". The first Archives records he used were military records obtained through military channels. These records were still in the custody of the Adjutant General in the old Departmental Records Branch. He used them in the basement of the Pentagon.

QUESTION: Had Sherrod East come yet?

ANSWER: He was there -- at least later. The first people Falk met were people like Lois (?) Alldredge and Hazel Ward.

These records were subsequently moved to the old torpedo factory in Alexandria and then became a part of the National Archives, including the personnel.

Falk didn't do research in the National Archives itself until he was in graduate school. The materials used in his M.A. thesis were obtained through his office at work. The topic was the Bataan death march, which was an offshoot from the book Fall of the Philippines which he helped write. His first extensive use of the Archives in a non-official capacity was for his doctoral dissertation on pre-Civil War ordinance developments. Mabel Deutrich had just reorganized the ordinance records and she led him through them. This was in 1955 or 1956.

QUESTION: During your years of association with the Archives were there other Archivists with whom you worked closely?

ANSWER: Not really, since Falk didn't do much archival work with records in the National Archives building. Falk remembered working with James E. O'Neill in an official capacity on transfer of the Air Force's "Blue Book" files dealing with UFO's.

QUESTION: What were some of the problems involved with the transfer?

ANSWER: The records contained a great deal of privileged, or personal, information which had to be protected before the records could be opened to the public.

QUESTION: Military concerns or privacy?

ANSWER: Privacy. People had given testimony under guarantees of privacy. Neither the Archives nor the Air Force had personnel available to do the necessary screening work. It was worked out that the Air Force would provide Reserve Officers under the supervision of the Archives to do the needed work.

QUESTION: Were there any confirmed reports of extraterrestrial communication?

ANSWER: That's a complicated subject. You'd need to look at the records yourself. There are incidents that have no explanations. Nonetheless, there are no confirmed reports.

QUESTION: To what extent does the Air Force Historian's Office or the Center of Military History keep permanently valuable records that belong under the custody of the National Archives?

ANSWER: The Air Force and Army have relatively clean hands. The Navy has been quite reluctant with reference to custody. The custody remains with the creating agency as long as the records are being used. It becomes a question of defining "being used".

QUESTION: How did you come to work with Page Miller in the efforts for Archives independence?

ANSWER: Falk retired from the government at the end of December 1982. He had more time to do things and offered his help to Miller at a historical meeting in early 1983.

This was just after Sen. Eagleton had introduced S.905. Miller was running the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History as a one-woman office. She took him up on his offer.

QUESTION: Which bill?

ANSWER: S.905. Sen. Eagleton had introduced it and had got support from Sen. Mathias and a few others. Miller wanted to go around and talk to people on the Hill, especially those in Senate offices, and drum up co-sponsors, which is what Miller and Falk did.

They started in April. Once a week they'd go to Senate offices, beginning with those of Governmental Affairs Committee members. Miller and Falk would talk with legislative assistants about the bill. They found initially that people hadn't heard about the bill.

Falk and Miller had a fact sheet which they took with them. They continued to work at this through the spring, summer and fall of 1983. By the time they finished there were fifty Senate co-sponsors. Falk believed that in a majority of cases cosponsorship resulted from the Miller-Falk visits and follow-up phone calls.

QUESTION: Did Miller go out alone or were you two always together?

ANSWER: Miller had interviews and would see people on return visits and she had other things she did. Most of the Congressional office visits, however, were by the two of them. They'd meet at her office and walk over to the Hill.

In the fall the House companion bill, H.R.3987, was introduced by Rep. Jack Brooks. Miller and Falk turned their attention to that side of the Hill. They started with House Government Operations Committee members. Falk remembered talking with Rep. Brooks who hoped Miller and Falk would work on the members of his committee. Brooks commented that he himself could stop legislation if he wanted to, but he couldn't necessarily pass it.

From this time on Miller and Falk concentrated on the House. They found that in most offices they were well received in their talks with legislative assistants.

QUESTION: Any anecdotes?

ANSWER: Miller and Falk passed Sen. Barry Goldwater's office. They went in and talked with the legislative assistant.

SIDE 2

Falk felt the best anecdote was his conversation with Rep. Jack Brooks reported earlier. He told again of the process of his and

Miller's meeting with legislative assistants. On the whole Falk found it a worthwhile, satisfying experience in which he felt he made a contribution.

There were no real frustrations. Some people that seemed supportive never did sign up. Some of them would not sign on a bill that they were not directly connected with. Falk mentioned being disappointed when Sen. Gary Hart did not co-sponsor. As it turned out they did not need him anyway.

QUESTION: What contact, if any, did you have with Ed Gleiman, Ira Shapiro or Marion Morris?

ANSWER: These were Miller's contacts. Miller and Falk worked with them, initially with Ira Shapiro. Miller and Falk talked with Shapiro and told him what they were doing and he advised them. They kept in touch with him. Miller met with Marion Morris and Falk met with her a couple of times.

In the House Miller and Falk worked with Rep. Brooks' man on the committee, Bob Brink. They talked with Ed Gleiman, but the bill had not gone to the subcommittee on which Gleiman was working. Falk noted that they talked to people in both parties. The bill was easy to sell because the people who were supporting it represented the whole horizon of political opinion.

They were able to tell legislative assistants that the bill was not a partisan issue, rather it had to do with the heritage of the country, etc.

Falk noted that it was nice to work as a team because it was less lonely walking around and they were able "to spell" each other if one of them ran out of ideas. They were knowledgeable in different areas, with Falk especially knowledgeable about military records. He felt they were a good team that got even better as they went on, feeding each other their lines, etc.

QUESTION: During that time period did you have conversations with people at the National Archives on strategy?

ANSWER: Miller handled most of that. Falk attended one luncheon meeting in Bob Warner's office, but Falk didn't remember when it was. Mostly Falk talked with people on the Hill.

QUESTION: The original House and Senate versions of the bill differed markedly. Which version did you favor?

ANSWER: The main thing was to restore the independence of the National Archives. If there were problems with the legislation you could argue for additional legislation to remedy it later on. The key thing was to undo the wrong done in 1949. There were differences, arguments back and forth, but it was important to keep in mind the main issue of independence.

QUESTION: It would seem your position was close to Ira Shapiro's point of view.

ANSWER: Falk respected Ed Gleiman's point of view, but felt you never get 100% of what you want in any piece of legislation. The key was the independence of a new agency in an administration that was opposed to new agencies. There were enough problems just getting independence.

QUESTION: After the Senate and House passed their respective versions of the bill, did you continue to be involved?

ANSWER: Falk pointed out he and Miller did go to some of the committee meetings just to talk to some people. His involvement came prior to the passage of the bills.

QUESTION: Anything to add?

ANSWER: No, except to stress how important it is to get a proper Archivist in the job. Falk found the experience interesting and satisfying. He felt he gained knowledge about the legislative process. He wished more people had the time to get involved in it.

POSTSCRIPT: Falk told of his work on the files of the Manhattan Project from 1959 until 1961 or so in Alexandria at the torpedo factory. In this matter he worked with Bill Nye and Eddie Reese.

Falk indicated he had never had an unpleasant experience in working with someone from the Archives who wasn't being helpful.

POST POSTSCRIPT: When Mabel Deutrich retired, there was a farewell dinner for her at the Officers' Club at Ft. McNair. Jim O'Neill asked Falk to come and to speak. That would have been in the late 1970's.

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of

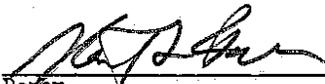
Stanley L. Falk

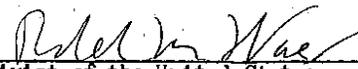
In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I,

Stanley L. Falk of Alexandria, Virginia
(name) (city and state)

do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of a personal interview conducted on March 4, 1985 at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and prepared for deposit in the National Archives. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The tape recording shall be available to all researchers upon its being accessioned by the National Archives.
- (2) The transcript shall be available to those researchers who have access to the tape recording, as soon as the National Archives' processing schedule allows sufficient time for transcript preparation.
- (3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.
- (4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the National Archives to researchers upon request.
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