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Saunders, Harold "Hal" oral history interview

Don Nicoll

Interview with Harold "Hal" Saunders by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee
Saunders, Harold "Hal"

Interviewer
Nicoll, Don

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Biographical Note

Harold Saunders was born December 27, 1930 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Marian Weihenmayer Saunders and Harold Manuel Saunders. He grew up in Philadelphia and attended Germantown Academy, graduating in 1948. He went to Princeton University and graduated Phi Beta Kappa with high honors in English and the American Civilization Program in 1952. He earned his Ph.D. in American Studies at Yale in 1956. That year, he entered military service in a program sponsored by the CIA and was eventually assigned to be a staff assistant to the deputy director for intelligence, Bob Amory. After that, he moved to the National Security Council in the White House under President Kennedy, where he worked under the next two presidents until 1974, when he moved to the state department, where he stayed until Reagan was elected in 1981.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: Saunders family and educational background; Saunders' first wife; Golda Meir; diplomatic vs. political strategies of dealing with the Arab-Israeli war of 1967; Cy Vance; Saunders' interest in foreign policy; King David Hotel; Muskie's transition from Senator to Secretary of State 1980; Muskie's relationship with Saunders and the state department; Jimmy Carter; Secretary Muskie vs. Secretary Vance; Iranian hostage situation; "Rose Garden strategy"; Sol Linowitz; Arnie Raphel; Saunders' involvement in the government

post-Carter; Sadac Ammahdi; and Muskie's symbolic gesture to the new Iranian foreign minister.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is June 21st, 2001, this is Don Nicoll interviewing Ambassador Harold Saunders at the Kettering Foundation Office, 444 North Capitol Street in Washington, D.C. Ambassador Saunders, would you give us your full name and spell it, and tell us your date, place of birth, and the names of your parents.

Amb. Harold Saunders: Harold Henry Saunders, S-A-U-N-D-E-R-S, born December 27, 1930, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. My mother's name was Marian, M-A-R-I-A-N, Weihenmayer, W-E-I-H-E-N-M-A-Y-E-R, Saunders. My father was Harold Manuel, M-A-N-U-E-L, Saunders. They were born in the 1890s and were married in 1928 in Philadelphia, so I was a child of the Depression.

DN: And you were brought up in Philadelphia.

HS: In Philadelphia, I went to a private boy's school there, never figured out quite how my parents afforded that, because my father was out of work for a couple of years because of the Depression. But I went to a school called Germantown Academy to which my mother was attracted because it was headed by a Presbyterian elder, although it was a non-sectarian school, he was just a marvelous personality. And I went there from first grade through twelfth grade, graduated from there in 1948. And my recollections of the war years of course, therefore, were as a young teenager. I went to Princeton University and graduated there, Phi Beta Kappa with high honors in English and the American Civilization Program in 1952 and went straight on to graduate school at Yale University in American Studies and received my Ph.D. there in 1956.

And as was necessary in those days, since I was twenty-five and a half when I got my degree and had been deferred by the draft board up until that point, I entered military service later in 1956 in a program sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency through its Junior Officer Trainee Program in collaboration with the Air Force. What that meant was that I went for six months of Air Force basic training and then the Air Force waived its normal requirement for entry into Officer Candidate School, that normal requirement being four years of enlisted service before coming to OCS. They waived that requirement so I went almost immediately from basic training into Officer Candidate School at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and got my second lieutenant's bars in June 1957, was stationed at Andrews Air Force Base and then detailed back to CIA to rejoin the Junior Officer Trainee Program.

I served as my first job as staff assistant to the deputy director for intelligence, who was Bob Amory. That's the analytical portion of the agency. Then I worked for a couple of years in the Office of Central Intelligence, and then was detailed to the National Security Council staff in the White House where I began serving in September 1961 under President Kennedy and McGeorge Bundy as national security advisor, and stayed on the NSC staff until July 1974, obviously working under three presidents and three NSC advisors. By that time Kissinger had become Secretary of State, in '74, and in July I moved over to the State Department. I was flying then on the Kissinger shuttles after the Arab-Israeli war of '73.

Then I had three jobs in the State Department and left the government in 1981 because by that time I was Assistant Secretary of State appointed by President Carter. Ronald Reagan didn't want any Carter appointees around, no matter what their professional status. So I left in January-February of 1981, after having participated in the whole four hundred and forty-four days of the Iran hostage crisis. I was at Camp David with Carter, Begin and Sadat.

And since '81 I've had a career outside government engaging in what I call sustained dialogues with peoples in conflict, just as I did when I was in government but this time working with

citizens outside government. So that's sort of an outline of my career.

Of course I was in the State Department as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs when Edmund Muskie became Secretary of State. I had the privilege of working with him in a period that was of course totally dominated in my arena by the Iran hostage crisis and by the under currents of the, of what parts of the Arab-Israeli peace process could be alive during a presidential campaign and given the hostage crisis.

DN: You couldn't have asked for a more intense assignment.

HS: I frequently say today that I was richly blessed by the things that I was privileged to be part of. They were formative experiences both professionally and personally. And I've been perhaps equally blessed in my time out of government by what I've been able to be involved in, what I've learned and that stuff.

I might just add one more personal note because it does have an effect on the way I look at things. My first wife died the day before the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 broke out. So I flew in Mr. Kissinger's shuttles and my own, doing my own process of mourning. But I, perhaps the event and that series of experiences that captures most what that meant to me professionally was that the first time I saw Golda Meir after my wife died happened to be the day on which the casualty figures from the '73 war were announced in Israel. And it was almost as if a, the proverbial biblical cloud was hanging over the country. And she came over to me and took my hand and she said, "I'm terribly sorry about your loss, I lost a lot of people, too. I guess we feel somewhat the same way."

What it meant to me was that if I ever forget as an American diplomat that I'm dealing with human beings in pain, I will not be doing my job. So, it was that mixing of the personal mourning with the, at least some sensitization of the mourning that all the people I was dealing with were living through themselves that I think was extremely important to me because at the . . . . It brought together the, whatever formal thinking one might do about international relations, that sort of state centered, realist paradigm, with all the things that you learn about human beings and how they interact. And of course the Arab-Israeli conflict is essentially a human conflict, what I call a deep-rooted human conflict.

And if I could bring this now to Ed Muskie, I . . . . There were several people in my life of whom he was a very important one, even though for a very short time, where I had the privilege of working with a political person, because I think politicians, at their very best, have a remarkable capacity to blend the official formal and informal personal. And so when he was dealing with a prime minister of Israel, for instance, and I have a vignette in my mind. I think one of the, I think his first exposure to, as Secretary of State, to somebody from the Arab-Israeli peace process was probably with the prime minister of Israel, Prime Minister [Yitzhak] Shamir, a relatively new figure on that scene. But I saw him looking at this man as a fellow politician, not just as the Secretary of State.

And I think it was Walt Rostow, who wrote when he left government in a preface to one of his books, that conversations between heads of state are different from conversations between

foreign ministers. A head of state will be thinking about his own political constraints, what he wants to do with the other political leader, what that political leader's constraints are, and they will even talk about their constraints in what they can and cannot do, and what they can and cannot do with each other to accomplish objectives that are of interest to both. Foreign ministers are much more likely to say, well now what's the problem, what are our choices in dealing with it, and the choices will be perhaps somewhat more technically framed than would be those between heads of state.

But Ed Muskie, of course, brought the instincts of the politician to the Secretary of State's office and that's, that immediately resonated with him. I think the other political figure that I had worked with when I was on the NSC staff in the White House, Lyndon Johnson, was my first exposure to this melding of the maybe preeminent politician with the role of the head of government, head of state in dealing with some very difficult things. In that case the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. And relations between India and Pakistan. But I saw him dealing with these figures and thinking about them as a political leader would, not as say Henry Kissinger would as a preeminent statesman, diplomat, if you will.

DN: A quick side question. Was Secretary Vance more like the traditional diplomat, or did he blend in some of the political instincts as well?

HS: Cy Vance was very much the lawyer-diplomat in the best and fullest senses of both words; in my picture of the lawyers that I've dealt with in the United States and in other countries. I developed a rather flip comment in my mind that some lawyers were bent on making problems and others were bent on solving problems. And Cy Vance was clearly in the latter, and he was such a decent human being that the legal part of him was always subordinate to the personal judgment that came out of deep experience. But the experience was essentially that of a diplomat or deputy secretary of defense.

So he had, he was not a strategizer as Kissinger was, he was not a political person as Muskie was. He was certainly not ignorant of the political dimensions of what he was doing, but that was not his fundamental instinct. Where as Muskie was certainly not ignorant of the diplomatic requirements, but his fundamental instincts were those of the politician. So you're talking about mixes in a single personality.

DN: Your undergraduate and graduate studies focused on American Studies, and your professional career, beginning with your military assignment, led you into foreign policy. Had you thought about foreign policy while you were a student, undergraduate and graduate school?

HS: Yes, I was fascinated as an undergraduate at Princeton by Woodrow Wilson, and particularly his taking American ideals into the world. All the . . . "making the world safe for democracy," all the things that we think about Wilson, and his failure. I also, I took a course with a very fine diplomatic historian when I was in graduate school, and U.S. diplomatic history. I later taught that as a, in an off-campus program at George Washington University, when I first came to Washington. So I did think about that, but the connections between my study and the ultimate practice were subterranean in a very explicit sense.

Two points: one, my academic programs were interdisciplinary; the American civilization program while in the English department at Princeton and American Studies at Yale. So I learned to see the world through the lenses of those different disciplines and realized that no one of them was adequate to deal with what I today call "whole human beings" and "whole bodies politic". The other was, the sense coming out of my graduate work, of a political process, of a process of continuous interaction in a whole body politic, people, institutions, institutions formal, as formal.

And I say that because I believe that it was the group of us on the Kissinger shuttles in the first half of 1974 who coined the phrase now widely used in American English, "the peace process". And we started out on those shuttles talking about a negotiating process, that is, building one interim disengagement agreement on top of another to create momentum toward a change in relationships. And we realized that we were indeed engaged in the larger change in relationships between bodies politic, Israel and hostile neighbors, and that the idea of a negotiating process was too narrow. And we began using the phrase "peace process". And I, looking back today I wonder why I was so ready to accept the idea of a political process and then at some point I realized that that was rooted in the work I'd done on my doctoral dissertation. And indeed when I wrote my most recent book titled A Public Peace Process, that is a peace process among citizens outside government. I actually quoted a paragraph from my dissertation because, in the preface because it just showed some of the roots of my later experience.

DN: What was the title of your dissertation, by the way?

HS: It was called, "The Group Process in American Sociology and Political Science from 1880 to 1930." It was a period when sociology and political science as academic disciplines were beginning to come into place in the new American university system and, uh, these people were trying to come to grips with a society that was urbanizing and industrializing with all kinds of consequences for the human beings caught up in all that. Whereas the American hero had been the freestanding individual, "I'm the master of my fate and the captain of my soul," and those kinds of lofty words. Theodore Dreiser and others were writing Sister Carrie and books about people being drowned, ground down under the weight of these social changes.

So the people in the new so-called social sciences were struggling to figure out, if it isn't the individual in the relation to the state that are the two units of analysis in understanding a society, what are they? They came from a variety of directions to focus on the small groups that people later called the sort of mediating structures between the individual and the larger society, everything from family to church to work groups, social groups, and so on. And they came to the idea that, of a continuous process of interacting within the group and among groups as the way a society worked.

DN: Now your education had prepared you, and then Prime Minister -

HS: Golda Meir.

DN: Golda Meir had crystallized your view and how to internalize it, I gather.

HS: Exactly, yeah.

DN: And as you reflect on Senator Muskie, I want to pick up before I drop it the encounter with Prime Minister Shamir. Did Secretary Muskie indicate that he and Shamir had met before?

HS: I won't mislead any listener by saying yes or no, because I honestly can't remember. My impression is that he had not. Shamir was not a major international figure. I mean, he had been preceded by real giants among the Israeli prime ministers. Golda herself, Rabin and people like that, Begin, so that he came mostly out of the Israeli political world and not a lot of people abroad knew him the way, so I suspect maybe the answer is no.

DN: The reason I raise that is that in 1971 when Senator Muskie was engaged in the run up to the '72 campaign, we went to Israel among other countries, and while there spent an evening in Menachem Begin's Tel Aviv apartment with Begin, Ezer Weizman and I think two or three of Begin's colleagues dating back to the Irgun days. And my impression is that Shamir was one of them and I wondered whether this came up.

HS: Well it could be. No it did not. Well to my knowledge it didn't come up, but oftentimes in these meetings between a Secretary of State and a visiting of leader there would be moments of private conversation when nobody else happened to be around, and it could well have come up there.

DN: You might be interested that most of that evening was spent listening to a free debate of what who had done during the 1940s, particularly in connection with the bombing of the King David Hotel. They spent more time and energy on that than in talking with Senator Muskie.

HS: That doesn't surprise me. I had my own almost daily reminders at certain times of that event, because we stayed on the sixth, when, during the shuttles with Kissinger, we stayed on the sixth floor of the Kind David Hotel. And when he was ready to go down and get in the motorcade and go to the airport, go to the prime minister's office or whatever, the Secret Service would block off the elevator. So if you didn't get down before that moment, you had to run down six flights of stairs at the end of the building where at a certain point you could see where the, whatever it was, the brick or whatever inside turn, change colors because that part was the new part that had to be replaced after the end of the building was blown off.

DN: When Senator Muskie became Secretary Muskie, it was a very difficult time I'm sure in the State Department with the clash between Secretary Vance and Mr. Brzezinski and now the transition. How did Senator Muskie deal with you coming into the office and meeting one of the people who was critical to dealing with the Iran crisis?

HS: Well, the answer to that question, he dealt with me very straightforwardly as a professional, as a gentleman, and certainly there was no feeling of tension or cause for tension with him from my part. I guess he sensed that and we never, I mean we just picked up where things needed to be picked up.

I will say one other thing, though that I think is perhaps maybe the most, my most important

feeling about Muskie in sort of brackets, my relationship with him. I remember that the first big staff meeting that we had after he came in, and I'm going to paraphrase this and of course memory isn't always entirely accurate. But at one point he said in his introductory remarks, in a very straightforward way with no judgment intended whatsoever, nothing negative about Cy Vance, in his own, in a gentle way. He said, "Just reporting, the president feels as distant from the State Department as from any other department of government, if not more so. And he has asked me to, he has appointed me to try to bridge that gulf as well as to put a more public face." Those are my words, not his, but put a more public face, more political face if you will, on the department vis-à-vis the Congress and the American people. Implying in a way that, but not saying at all, that Vance's approach had been that of the, of the professional who had not perhaps paid as much attention as might have been desirable to the public face of the department.

But when he stopped, ended that presentation, I know that it was immediately, or fairly early. I raised my hand and said, "Mr. Secretary, perhaps my experience here is somewhat different from that of many others around the table because I worked intimately with President Carter at Camp David. And I worked intimately with him and his staff in the White House during the hostage crisis. And I really have to raise a question about his feeling, not Senator, or Secretary's Muskie's reporting, but I have to raise a question about his feeling that way about the department because we have worked extremely well together." And I said, "I'm sure you will find here a building full of people who have the highest dedication to serving their president and their Secretary of State. And I don't think you're going to feel the gulf that the president may feel, but I don't think should feel."

And the other bracket to that was at a dinner in Georgetown after we'd all left government, the hostages were home. And, it wasn't very long after we left the government, sometime still in that late winter of '81. I'm blocking on who had the dinner in his home, but we were, it was, the hostage team was all there, Christopher and Secretary Muskie. And the thing that delighted me most was when he stood up and reminisced and talked about how proud he was that *we* had brought fifty-two hostages home alive, that *we* had done this diplomatically, of course with the exception of the aborted rescue mission which was the proximate cause of his becoming Secretary of State, he didn't refer to that. But the thought that he was proud to have been part of the diplomatic effort, diplomatic at its least technical and most political, effort to bring people home alive by peaceful means meant an awful lot to me, because he came in with this notion that there was this gulf between the professionals and the political, and he left with the notion that we really had blended the two.

DN: Did you ever get a sense of whether his perception of President Carter's attitude was an accurate one at that time?

HS: I'm not sure that it, that it was, but I do have this distorted perspective in that during the hostage crisis, which was the framework by that time, not the Arab-Israeli peace process so much, I was working very closely with Hamilton Jordan. We worked, I guess this episode had pretty well played itself out by that time, but we had been working very closely with two Paris based human rights lawyers who were our intermediaries to Sadak Gobsadegh, the prime minister of Iran. And so I had been in and out of Hamilton Jordan's office and periodically he'd say, "Well let's go down and talk to the boss about this." And Hamilton's office was a couple

doors away from the Oval Office and we'd just go down.

And so when I started walking into the Oval Office with one of the Georgia colleagues, having been at Camp David, in and out of Carter's cottage, and so they certainly knew me well. But that extra little endorsement of going in with Hamilton I think made us quite close. And I just did not feel anything in Carter's own response to the episode that made that a valid picture of the president's views, which is in no way to say that Carter hadn't said something like that to Ed Muskie.

DN: How differently Secretary Muskie deal with people at your level and the next levels down I would guess, from the way Secretary Vance did? Was there much of a change in the style?

HS: I don't think people in the building felt a great change in methods of operation. I think you could pick later Secretaries of State who operated very, almost exclusively with a small coterie of people on the seventh floor around them, did not relate well to the rest of the building, but I think Muskie did. I think the difference that would be felt, which was not a matter of criticism of him, it was just a fact. In Cy Vance you had somebody who had immersed himself in foreign affairs since his days in the Defense Department. And when he became Secretary of State, we got on the plane with him and went to the Middle East within three or four weeks after the inauguration. We didn't even do a background briefing paper. We did a paper on: here are your choices and here's the way to move, ways of moving the peace process forward and here's what you might try to do. And so it was as if he'd been there right along.

Ed Muskie, a) needed more of the background material but used it extremely well. If you go back to that lunch with Shamir, I can remember being highly impressed with the way he handled sensitive issues, issues that would have been red flags for the prime minister of Israel. He said what he wanted to say but he did it with the cautious wording of a superb politician/diplomat. So he didn't need to be told much about these things, but he needed to be told perhaps more simply because that had not been his area or occupation. So that was one slight change.

And the other was that he also had to choose the problems that he was going to take a personal role in, a personal concern. That happens in anybody's, State Department; secretary will have these problems and delegate others to his deputy and to people down the line. And the most immediate manifestation of that for me was that, I guess in agreement with Muskie, Carter pretty early on I think made it clear that Christopher should take the lead role and not dealing with the hostage crisis. And of course that was by late August, early September it was almost codified in Carter's designating Christopher to form a work group. That's when we had the first indication from the Iranians that they might be starting to think about how to resolve the hostage crisis, and we got a message from high level, got it through the Germans.

At that point we had to formulate a position for the United States on how to resolve the crisis with the Iranians. And he designated Christopher, yeah, Christopher to do that, which meant that whereas I had dealt daily, hourly with Vance on the hostage crisis, and he had dealt directly with the Iranian desk or country director, or head of the operations group. There's always a task force on a crisis in the State Department and Henry Peck was the head of that group, and Vance related easily to people in the task force.

And Muskie would not have chosen to relate as directly, but it wasn't because of standoffishness at all. He had no hesitancy on the things that he was dealing with to relate directly to the task officers the way that Vance had. It's just that the configuration of people who related directly shifted because I think, I think by that time in the hostage crisis probably Carter, and maybe Muskie quite independently, judged that it had been a mistake for Carter to tie the presidency so closely to the hostage crisis. It had been a, probably a political mistake, I mean politically in the sense of presidential elections, and possibly a mistake in dealing with the Iranians.

Carter much earlier in the game, instead of saying, "I will not campaign in the primaries until the hostages have come home," you know, so-called Rose Garden strategy. If he hadn't said that but had rather said, "I'm deeply concerned about the safety of our people, I want them home as quickly as possible, I will pay close attention to this. But the day-to-day management of this will be handled by the Secretary of State or the Deputy Secretary of State. They will convene a senior level work group which up until that time had been convened in the situation room in the White House." If he'd put it out, put it away from it him, it probably would have been better for the presidency.

The psychologists told us later on that it would have been a lot better if the Iranians, the people holding the embassy, couldn't have got their fingers on Carter so easily by his daily engagement, that he sort of walked away from them. For all those reasons, and I think maybe Muskie recognized the maturing wisdom on that point, and even took himself out of the immediate management of that, so the management of the hostage crisis moved two steps away from the president. And of course he came to office at a time when the very clearly White House directed, dominated decision to do the rescue mission had failed. And of course Vance's resignation came out of that.

DN: Had, how did the Secretary of State\National Security advisor relationship sort itself out in the transition from Vance to Muskie?

HS: I'd like to say a word about the night of the rescue mission right after it had failed, because it's directly relevant to that point. I think it's probably not breaking a confidence at this point to say this, that Cy Vance was not a man who shows anger easily or often. But that night I really saw him, heard him, there were three of us in his office at two o'clock in the morning after we sort of got away in the aftermath of the failure of the rescue mission. And I saw him truly angry about Brzezinski, partly for the role in the decision to do the rescue mission, which Cy had objected to, but, because you know the decision was made when he was out of town.

So there was that, but there was also the background of all kinds of other tensions between them. And so that was clearly in the air, and I suspect, but I do not know, that Carter must have said something, certainly to Muskie about that and possibly Brzezinski. I don't know whether any of them mentions that in the memoirs. I haven't really asked myself that question. But anyway, I think Muskie being the person he was came to office recognizing that that relationship should have to be improved.

The other thing was that I, I'm not sure in the short time that he had there that he had the time or

the opportunity to stake out strong, personally held positions on the issues that had been at issue. And those were principally in the field of U.S.-Soviet relations and of course the normalization with China. Although Vance did not object to that, it was just that Brzezinski in particular moments had grabbed them away from the State Department. So I, I think that the things that Muskie concentrated on may well not have opened the door to the kind of confrontation that had evolved over the previous three years between Vance and Brzezinski. Anyway, I think it abated to some significant degree at that point.

DN: And the president in essence had decided to rely on the State Department through Warren Christopher to manage the crisis in Iran.

HS: Yes, yes and certainly the period as I say after August, September when we had to put together an American position, we had to figure out how to put that to the Iranians, had to figure out how to accommodate the Iranians, etcetera. All of that was in Christopher's hands. Brzezinski had this, what do I want to call it, a private group, if you will, his own group that, with people from the Pentagon to design a military option. And that had been going on since the beginning I guess of 1980. You could even see it, it was no secret I don't think. But after meetings in the situation room of this general crisis group, Brzezinski would retire up to his office with a few people from the Pentagon and it was obvious they were planning a military option and I'm sure Cy knew about the existence of all that, it wasn't done behind anybody's back.

But after the failure of the rescue mission, the military option was not on, and the diplomatic option picked up again. They got together and of course political developments inside Iran unfolded to the point where the Iranians were ready to deal with us. And I think again, Muskie had a, probably had a nose for the politics of what was going on. It was on his watch that the political pieces came together in Iran in such a way as to lead to opportunities. For instance when the speaker of the, when a speaker of the new Majlus, the new parliament in Iran was finally chosen, he sent a message to him. And I think he understood why it was important to reach out in that very symbolic way. So after a period of intense behind the scenes political—slash—diplomatic activity, now was the time for political interaction, and I think he could smell that.

DN: We've talked about Iran. One of the other major areas that you also alluded to was the Arab-Israeli conflict, and you mentioned the visit with Prime Minister Shamir. What characterized Senator Muskie, or Secretary Muskie's interactions with the leaders of Israel and the Arab world during that brief time that he was secretary?

HS: To be perfectly honest with you, I don't have a clear memory of those interactions. And I think it was, that's probably true because there weren't that many of them simply because the peace process itself was not at the level of intensity which we'd experienced at Camp David, after Camp David. Let me just say that the pattern had been, in a presidential election year you do not expect to be intensively involved in the Arab-Israeli peace process. For instance, the Kissinger shuttles, '74, '75, '76 was a year of a lot of activity in thought but no shuttles, yet everybody knew that the art of '76 was to keep things, keep connections alive, keep the talk going, but not put the U.S. on the line during that period.

And the same was going to be true in 1980. And the form that that took had been that Carter of course had been intensely involved through the completion of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in February, March 1979. Already at the time you're looking toward the election. And I think Carter's political advisors and Carter recognized at that point that he'd have to step back. In a way it's a decision that should have been made, as I said before, with regard to the hostage crisis. But it was made, and it was made in the form of his appointing a Middle East negotiator in the person of Bob Strauss for the summer of 1979. And I took several trips to the Middle East with Strauss. The purpose of the Middle East negotiator was to take the next step envisioned by the Camp David Accords.

Camp David Accords produced two frameworks, one of, first of which, a separate document, was a framework for peace between Egypt and Israel. The treaty was concluded and implementation would proceed. The other was that once that step had been taken, the Palestinian issue was to come to the fore and there was to be a negotiation on creating a Palestinian authority in the West Bank of Gaza. And that's what Bob Strauss picked up, and his earliest trips to the Middle were for that purpose.

But as you know, Strauss was pulled off of that in favor of Sol Linowitz in the fall because of Strauss' potential contribution to the political campaign. So the whole Middle Eastern Arab-Israeli peace process just step by step moved into the background. Now Sol Linowitz said at the end of 1980, and he tried to get this message across to Al Haig, the incoming Secretary of State under Reagan, that . . . Sol, I think, used the figure eighty-five percent of the work on the Palestinian authority had been completed. So Sol had been diligent through the election year, but in the same quiet way -

End of Side A
Side B

DN: This is the second side of the interview with Ambassador Saunders on June 21st, 2001. You were talking about Sol Linowitz and his quiet efforts in late 1980.

HS: Yes, the fact that they were quiet efforts and the fact that it was Sol Linowitz, the fact that he had a method of work, and a team to work with him, meant that again the Secretary of State did not have to involve himself in that the way Secretary Vance had during the Camp David period and the period of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Vance kicked off the beginnings of the post-Egypt-Israel peace treaty Palestinian phase, but uh, even he turned it over to, turned the work over to Bob Strauss and then later on to Linowitz. But of course the hostage crisis dominated Vance's attention so it was natural for Linowitz to go about his work without involving the Secretary of State. So Ed Muskie inherited that mode of operation and that meant that he would not have to give primary attention to that. You've already spoken to the fact that he turned the hostage crisis over to Christopher, so, uh.

DN: Did you have a chance to observe Secretary Muskie interacting with Bob Strauss and then Sol Linowitz?

HS: I don't remember, I suppose we must have had some, you know, a few meetings together but I don't remember any particular, I can't bring up before my eyes some picture of any of those meetings. Of course a lot of it we kept the secretary informed regularly by memo, and of course he kept on as his executive assistant Arnie Raphel who had worked with Cy Vance. Arnie had much earlier in his career been a staff assistant in the Near Eastern bureau when I first went there in '74. So the relationships, the working together were reasonable and we all communicated just via written notes or gave Arnie something to report verbally. So the secretary was kept well informed, but didn't have to spend much of his time at it.

DN: What was the end of your time at the State Department, and the end of the Secretary Muskie time at the State Department like, as the new administration came in?

HS: Well I, I of course was by that time working very, almost completely on the hostage crisis, because in the fall of 1980, as I've already said, we had a message from the four key power centers in Iran through the Germans. The four key power centers were (*unintelligible word*– sounds like "Achmed") Khomeini, the Ayatullah's son, the new prime minister, the new speaker of the Majlus, and the new foreign minister. And the message in effect said, and this came through the Germans, "The Amman is gravely ill and we think now is the time to resolve the hostage crisis."

We took a trip to Germany with Christopher, talked to the Germans about this, and to talk about some of the issues that were outstanding and . . . Well, it turned out later that the Germans would not be the intermediary. Somehow through a variety of channels we made it, uh, tried to find a way to ask the Iranians whom they would like to have as the intermediary. And the new foreign minister of Iran had been appointed and then almost immediately went to New York for the annual session of the U.N. General Assembly, where foreign ministers assemble. The Algerian ambassador there had taken the new Iranian prime minister, who had hardly been out of the country before, under his wing and acted as a mentor, a guide, and that was much appreciated. So ultimately the word came back that the Iranians would like to work with the Algerians, so that's what happened.

But starting at the moment when we got that message, Kissinger, I mean, uh, Christopher under instructions from Carter formed a group, a working group, to lay out the American position. And it included a trans–, cross-governmental group of top, Carter's own, the deputy secretary of the Treasury, and somebody in Justice Department, Defense, the legal advisor of state, somebody from the White House staff. And all, out of the nine people I think seven were lawyers, and the two who were not were Arnie Raphel and myself, all for good reason. The big issue was the fact that we'd frozen twelve billion dollars of Iranian assets and if they were to be unfrozen, that had to be done in a way that would stand up under challenge in the American courts, so it was a major problem.

In any case we, the Algerians were selected, the Algerian team made three visits to the United States, we made three successive visits to Algeria. Our position evolved through those, in those three steps through those three visits back and forth. And meanwhile, the Algerians took our position to Iran three times. And so my fall, to get back to your question, my fall was taken up by that work and the Algerian visits here, our visits to Algiers, and so I ended my government

career as it turned out, the last few weeks of it being spent in the embassy in Algiers, with Christopher, working up terms of the final agreement.

And then of course I think everybody's familiar with the drama of inauguration day and what we were doing there and what Carter was doing in the Oval Office, and so on. Then I, Christopher came home but we all greeted the hostages in Algiers, and Christopher came back home and he left office. I went to Reisbaden with the hostages and spent some time with them there, then came back independently. While I was in Algiers the, three or four days before the, well maybe a little bit longer before the inauguration, I got a message from David Newsom who would be the acting Secretary of State through the transition. He was then the undersecretary for political affairs, just saying that he'd been told that no Carter appointee should be in his office on January 21st. And so I communicated with the executive director of my bureau who would have, be my link to the personnel system since I was not a career foreign service officer, that he sort of had to manage my, quote, retirement, unquote.

But Newsom recognized that somebody needed to be around after January 20th, who could bring back to the department and ultimately testify before congressional committees, on the agreement that was made with the Iranians on the release of the hostages, because that was going to have to be implemented in the next administration. So he arranged to hire me back as a consultant. But according to the laws you have to be a citizen outside government for three days, I think it was, before you could be hired as a consultant. So I resigned, retired, whatever, the previous Friday and then inauguration day was on the Monday or Tuesday. So for those three days, at the time of the signing of the agreement and everything else, I was a citizen outside government with no official responsibilities at all. But that was the end of my government career. Of course I spent those last two weeks in Algiers so I was not with Muskie in his departure from the department. I'm sure that David Newsom has been somebody that -

DN: Yes, I've interviewed him.

HS: You've interviewed him. Well he's told you much more intimately the Muskie side of all that. So. I think I ought to say one other thing, that there's a part of my statement that Muskie was secretary during a period when the hostage crisis entered a more political than diplomatic phase. My point goes back to a conversation in January 1980 between Cy Vance and a senior Islamic political figure named Sadac Ammahdi from the Sudan. He was in Washington, talked with Vance. Because we had made an effort to reach out to Islamic figures like that, to see whether there were those who would weigh in in Tehran on our behalf, with the argument that taking hostages is not a good Islamic thing to do. Anyway, this Islamic statesman told Vance very simply that, "You will not get your hostages back until Khomeini has put all the pieces of the Islamic revolution into place."

And there had already been a constitutional referendum, I guess, in December, this was January. And following that there was a presidential election, then there were a couple of stages of elections to the new parliament. And as the new parliament took its form, there were a number of, we would say, 'challenges of credentials' for elected people. They would not use those words in Tehran but that's about what they did. They challenged people who were elected, on the basis of their credentials, for being seated in the Majlus. This was part of assuring the

predominance of the revolutionary party in the Majlus.

But anyway, in the spring these events were unfolding, but then as I mentioned before, a speaker of the new Majlus was chosen, a prime minister was appointed, and of course confirmed by the Majlus. A foreign minister came into being and was confirmed and so on. And it was at that moment, after all this had been done, and I think the speaker of the house, somebody there, sent a congratulatory message to the new, we would call him speaker of the Majlus. And I think, I can't remember this exactly that Muskie said that either also send a message or send one to the new foreign minister, there were a couple of those kinds of exchanges. All of that surrounded the initiation of this incredible first message that I mentioned earlier from these four figures in Tehran.

And I didn't say earlier that, in the message they said, "In addition to them we want to get this settled," they said, "the Amman will be giving his speech in a few days and he will outline the four conditions for the release of the hostages." And indeed that did happen, which gave clear legitimacy to the message we'd received. So, I just wanted to put the Muskie period in that very clear political scenario, that we had been advised to pay attention to.

And of course actually, meanwhile we were doing diplomatic things with people in Europe and we enlisted, we went to see Kreisky, the chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kreisky. And he went back and forth to Iran for his own reasons. We talked to him about getting messages through. We talked to all the European governments about whether in the post rescue mission phase, there could, new channels could be opened for a diplomatic resolution of this thing. Of course, all that was devised and carried out on Muskie's watch. So again, he was involved in the new political chapter in dealing with the hostage crisis. Although, and he was fully supportive of that and obviously blessed that it was reported to him. So, but it won't be in Warren Christopher's context.

DN: Was the Islamic revolution complete, from your point of view, after that set of elections?

HS: Well I don't think the revolution was complete at all, but the, the point that the Islamic Sudanese (*unintelligible phrase*), they were, and so Khomeini had the institutions of the Islamic revolution in place. Now obviously the revolution, here we are in June . . .

DN: (Unintelligible phrase)

HS: . . . in the year of 2001 and it's still going. In one way or another it's been going on ever since. But I think institutionally the -

DN: You had all the pieces in place.

HS: The pieces were in place, and that seemed to be a fair prediction.

DN: I'm going to ask you some questions about post State Department period, but are there any other observations on your experience with Senator Muskie, Secretary Muskie which you wanted to make that we haven't covered?

HS: I don't think so, except for one thing. And that is that, although the two principal things that I was spending time on were not at the top of his agenda the way they had been at the top of Secretary Vance's agenda. Through the contacts that we had, which I hardly even remember in any exact nature, we obviously developed a very nice relationship. And I use that, there are some relationships that I've had with people like that, Jimmy Carter would be another, that they, there was a human dimension to it. I think not going anything beyond the fact that we worked together, but there was a mutual respect and a warmth about the relationship, as well as the professional qualities that you would expect. I would like to just put that on the record, that I came away feeling, despite the shortness of our working together, that he stands as one of the people that I respect for both the human and the professional, as well as the high political qualities of the person.

DN: Now after both of you had left the Department of State, I understand that he consulted with you from time to time, or sought your advice on a number of issues, particularly relating to Southeast Asia? Or is that a misreport?

HS: Probably not Southeast— I think that's a misreport. I remember getting some specific questions, I think maybe in his post governmental role he was dealing with the . . . Somehow I seem to remember some questions regarding relationships in the oil, in the oil business and a couple of other things like that. But I just really don't . . . I obviously answered questions and maybe wrote him a memo or two, or something like that. But there were no big and continuous operations of that kind.

DN: In the course of your experiences with Secretary Muskie, and thinking about your own perspective on building relationships between people and peoples, did you and he ever talk about his views on the political process and the question of civil discourse?

HS: No, I don't remember any, any conversations of that kind. I think it was in, these issues were implicit in the support that he gave to the political and diplomatic process in dealing with the Iran hostage crisis and the efforts in the Arab-Israeli peace process which were, had a very strong political dimension. So I think the, the sense of being easily on the same wave length in conducting a peace process rather than a diplomatic process, or a, an effort to resolve political problems with Iran, all of that, I think there was almost an unspoken or implicit support for it. But I don't remember any explicit conversations. You don't have a lot of philosophical discussions in the heat of battle, so to speak. And it's a rare moment when you step back and philosophize, and that's highly regrettable but I think it's probably true. In any case, I don't remember any, but I would have valued them.

The other point is, I think, that I would really value such a conversation today, because a lot of what I've done since I left government has involved a conceptualization of the experiences that I had while I was in government. I'm quite confident that I would not have written about or even thought about the things I was doing in quite, in the same way that I do now. We did conceptualize the peace process; we did understand that was a political process. But even at that, when I wrote my book about the Arab-Israeli peace process in 1985, I conceptualized it in a far more, uh, what word to use, "mature" way than I would have when I was actually doing it. I

think I did reflect on what we were doing, I think I did use conceptualization as a way of explaining what we were doing to other diplomats, members of Congress and so on. I found that a thoughtful way of imbuing what we were doing with a higher sense of purpose and strategy. So I did that, but I'd really value reflections today with an Ed Muskie, and I do with Jimmy Carter for instance, or with a Cy Vance. But I, you, in the heat of battle -

DN: You don't get that chance.

HS: Don't get that chance, you don't take the chance.

DN: Thank you very much (*unintelligible phrase*).

HS: Well thank you for the opportunity to. It's been a pleasure of going back to those days with you.

DN: Thank you.

End of Interview