

COMSAT HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with George Feldman

Interview conducted by Nina Gilden Seavey

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Nina Gilden: Let's start at the beginning, at the very beginning, when you first became aware of the idea of COMSAT and what your role would eventually come to be. Can you describe for me a little bit, the process that occurred at that time.

George Feldman: It really sprang, it really goes back to when I was Director and Chief Counsel for the Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration, which was an ad hoc committee created for the purpose of trying to create--the purpose of the committee being to create a space agency. As a matter of fact, I was totally ignorant of--is it of interest to find out why they appointed me instead of someone else?

NG: Absolutely. I want to know everything that you can remember from that time that may have led you to your involvement with COMSAT.

GF: Well, the involvement with space.

NG: ...with space in general and obviously with COMSAT later

on.

GF: Well, what happened was that I got a call from John McCormick to meet with John McCormick and Rayburn--Speaker Rayburn--and Joe Matnum, the Minority Leader. I came to Washington and they told me that they had just created a Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration.

NG: What year was that?

GF: It was December, 1957. They pointed out that the Russians had beat us into space, in other words, in October the first Sputnik went up and the second went in November, and we had to catch up with them. The Committee, of course, a Select Committee being an ad hoc committee but just for the purpose. John McCormick said, "You are going to be the Director and Chief Counsel for the Committee. And I turned to the committee and I said, "I don't even know what the word astronautics means. What you want is a scientist." And they said, "No, you've had legislative drafting experience." I had because way back I drafted the, it wasn't my concert, but I drafted the Wage and Hour Law and the Walsh-Healy Act. See, I came down here first in 1927 as administrative assistant to Sam Walsh. That goes back a long time ago, I may be two now.

NG: Don't look a day over 40.

GF: Well, 41.

NG: Ok. Touche'.

GF: But to make a long story short I said, "I want to call my wife." I called Marian and she said, "If you want to be Buck Rogers go ahead a take it." So, I took it, and it was very enjoyable, it was quite an experience. They told me that they wanted me to get the staff together. And I could get the scientists and all that sort of thing, who have the knowledge and then schedule hearings with the Committee.

NG: Do you remember who some of those people were that you hired?

GF: Yes, the first one I hired was Dr. Sheldon. And then Spencer Barisford was another one. Sheldon was then with the Library of Congress. He was interested in the field and he was recommended to me by the, what was her name, she was over the Senate Committee at the time, I forget her name. And Phil Yaeger. I purposely kept the Committee small. We had consultants and all that sort of thing.

NG: You mean the staff.

GF: Yes, on the staff, that's right. And we held the hearings, as you know if you saw the hearings, they're quite extensive. You might pore through them sometime. I have them here by the way. During the course of the testimony, in connection with the Bill, the hearings in other words, there was talk about communication by satellite and so on. And as I say the last report that the staff wrote, I wrote, well I had as much to do with it as anybody, and my thought was to have something involving the next ten years in space. And we did that report.

NG: So, almost through the next decade.

GF: And it's worth looking at. I haven't seen it. I sent it up to Boston University where they have my papers. But it is a government document, you should have no difficulty finding it. I don't think.

NG: Was that primarily about space exploration in general and less about the commercial uses of space?

GF: No, it went into a lot of things that were going to happen in space, that did happen. We talked about the moon shot and

all that sort of thing. I mean, man in space, things of that sort. I remember, in fact, during the course of the hearings when we had--and I did the questioning when Dr. Dryden, who became the number two man [James] Webb.

NG: And Hugh Dryden?

GF: Hugh Dryden was head of NACA, prior to the [NASA]. He testified that--oh, I asked him about man in space and he said, "Oh, that would be like shooting a woman out of a cannon."

NG: Interesting.

GF: Its in the testimony. He was followed by Jim McGavin and Rickover. And I asked them the same questions, and of course they disagreed with him. In fact Rickover said not only was he in favor of having man in space and all that sort of thing, he talked about going to the moon and so on. And he said that he was very much in favor of it, but he said what the would like is to have about 10 one way tickets for "friends" of his.

NG: For some reason I had that feeling that was going to follow. And then you came out with this report. The staff report.

GF: Yes, that was the last [report]. We had the whole series

of reports. They're all in there.

NG: At that time, what did you think could be the commercial uses of space?

GF: [During] the hearings, I had talked to a lot of the scientists, some of the great ones...

NG: For example?

GF: What's the person's name, the President of CalTech?

NG: Kerr?

GF: No, no, no. CalTech, he was the President. Dr. Dewbridge. And CalTech at the time was the only school in the country that gave a doctorate in astro physics. I was completely ignorant of the technical side of it, but I learned pretty fast. I was the one that conceived the idea of the handbook on space that was published and, in fact, it was supposed to be the best seller the government had.

NG: The handbook was a description of technical issues for laymen?

GF: Not for laymen, but for the trained technicians. No, I don't think a layman would have gotten too much out of it.

NG: So, it was actually very technical?

GF: Yes, very much more technical. But it was a great book. It was a real contribution.

NG: During the hearings, did you envision a system, for example, that Oliver Carr kept seeing?

GF: No, after the law was signed in July of '58, creating NASA, [the United Nations created an ad hoc Committee of the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space], and I was appointed one of the delegates to it. That was only about a six or seven week chore. Afterwards I was appointed to the regular delegation, after that. But we even talked about communication by satellite there.

NG: Were they talking at that time about a geosynchronist system or a medium altitude system?

GF: They didn't talk about [that]. They didn't get into that. It was very general. In fact, they tried even to define what they wanted to call it--the something Line. The Head of

the Italian delegation wanted to call it the--not the von Neiman Line but named after one of those German scientists. And you couldn't--it was doing it by [Inaudible]. I pointed that out and it was left out as a consequence and all that sort of thing. I don't...

NG: So, the whole issue at this point is fairly nebulous and undefined. Is that correct?

GF: No question about it. There may have been...Some of the scientists may have comprehended it some detail, but I wasn't aware of the fact [of whether they were speaking in detail about the commercial uses of space]. Although I'm pretty sure that Dewbridge talked about it as one of the possibilities. Some of them talked about it as a possibility, and some of them talked about it as a probability.

NG: "It" in this case refers to commercial uses of space.

GF: That's right...[by developing communications satellites for commercial use in space].

NG: What happened next at the United Nations hearings on the peaceful uses of outer space?

GF: Well, [at the UN I wasn't involved in discussions about

space very much]...the only thing that I remember there is when Llewellyn Thompson, who was Ambassador to [the Soviet Union] at the time, came back and briefed the committee [], (Lloyds was head of our delegation at the time). [Ambassador Thompson] talked about how technically backward the Soviets were, and I pointed out [that they had] done a pretty good job in space. That was about the only time [space] was discussed there.

NG: Were the commercial uses of space discussed by that committee?

GF: Oh yeah, the uses of developing space and so on.

NG: Was here at the UN?

GF: I'm talking about the UN. Of course there were a number of other discussions. Because I'd made a number of speeches even at that time on space. Obviously it had nothing to do with communications. I kept a number of others in there that talked about space and so on. But they don't relate to the communication end of it.

NG: So what year is this now?

GF: Pardon?

NG: What year is this now?

GF: '58 and '59. In '58 I made a speech, the end of '58, several of them in '59 and '60.

NG: But while you're at the UN where are we.

GF: Then there was an article on space that Frank Gibney and I wrote, I didn't have, I told him to take my name off it, because it was published in Harpers on the space race. But that was just before--well it was when Kennedy ran--that's right '60.

NG: But while you're at the UN, what year is that now?

GF: '58 and '59.

NG: '58 and '59.

GF: No, I was re-appointed in '59 when Wadsworth became head of mission, but I didn't take it because Kennedy ran and I got active in his campaign.

NG: Okay, so here is your initial connection with Kennedy as

President.

GF: Yeah.

NG: And his campaign. What did you do during the campaign?

GF: I was the Associate President Treasurer.

NG: Uh huh! So you were actually very high up in the campaign hierarchy.

GF: In fact, I was out to California with McCormick and Rayburn and so on; and was in on his choice of Lyndon Johnson to run with him as a running mate.

NG: I've heard many stories about that.

GF: I was there the day that the Kennedy team sent out a telegram and Johnson's group got it and they challenged him to a debate. And I remember when he--oh, Sorenson and the others wanted to go with him, and he said "No, I'm going to go alone." He went over there alone, and he devastated Johnson in that debate. Although Johnson was a friend of mine, but

NG: So now, Kennedy's won the election, now what happens?

GF: I don't know, I got into other things. Oh yes, one of the first things he did was to--I got appointed to the delegation to the [Inaudible] in Geneva. And then soon after he was elected and then when that was over they created the citizens committee on NATO. It was headed by Chris [Hood] the former Secretary of State and Will Clayton the Undersecretary, and we had--we didn't have any discussion at all there on satellites. In fact we...

NG: And this would have been what, '61?

GF: Yeah, '61, that's right and '62.

NG: But this is when the discussion is I mean, they're starting to get together the legislation, they're starting to talk about the potential for that.

GF: I was also at that time, Congressman (what's his name, from Alabama) he was head of some government operations and they asked me to be a consultant to that committee, which I took because ... while I was working with the Communications Satellite group committee....

NG: You mean after the act had been passed?

GF: After the act had been passed.

NG: So when is it that you get back involved in the space business?

GF: When I published, when I wrote that article on missiles and rockets.

NG: Okay. When you say that article, why don't you explain a little bit about what that is.

GF: Well, that was the first comprehensive article on communication. You have a copy of it.

NG: Right. I want to make sure that we get this on tape. What was the gist of that article?

GF: Well, the gist of the article was all of the potentials, with reference to communication by satellite and the problems involved.

NG: Can you outline some of those?

GF: They're all in the speech itself, in the article itself,

everyone of them. And as I say it was the first comprehensive article and some of them over in communications saw it because I learned later from O'Donnell at the White House...

NG: James O'Donnell.

GF: That it was called to their attention, by somebody I think was the chairman of the group, wasn't Minnow though, it was somebody else. Might have been CLayton for all I know.

NG: And you're sure it wasn't Nicholas Johnson.

GF: I'm not sure of anything.

NG: (Laughter) All right.

GF: But I know it got over there and then, oh, at that time too, a gentlemen named Hennesey, I don't know if I should go into this but he was a top vice president of the New EnglandTel, and he came to me and asked me to meet with their group up in Boston who I know very well anyway. And they wanted to retain me to lobby for TelStar. What they said was to write some articles and things of that sort, but I--they only told me that they'd cleared it with Congressman McCormick, who was then majority leader, and I said, "Maybe you cleared it

with him, but I don't want anything to do with lobbying." Not that I--I was a great admirer of the telephone company.

NG: Was this while you were an Incorporator or was this before?

GF: Before, long before. Before there was any legislation introduced.

NG: Okay. So we're back to pre- 1960 actually, or '61.

GF: It was right after that article was published.

NG: You mean the missiles and rockets article was published.

GF: Then they came to me.

NG: What was the biggest problem that you saw when you wrote that article for satellite communications?

GF: Well, I knew that the--I was sure it could be done technically. TelStar had proved that, and well I saw the frequency problems, all those things, all the technical aspects of it, more than the type of legislation that was introduced.

NG: Did you see political problems with it, internationally?

GF: Oh, yes.

NG: For example?

GF: Well, you had to line up these countries. I discussed that in the book, the article, the speech I made up at Montreal's McGill and the other one at Norman. I went into that in some detail.

NG: Well, these will definitely play a part of our record. These articles and speeches. Did you have any actual involvement in the passage of the act?

GF: Now let me think.

NG: Did you testify or

GF: No, I didn't testify, other than...I remember talking about the concept to McCormick, and I talked about how novel it was and so on. I said, "It certainly is worth a try. Because if it works, it could be a model for others."

NG: Well, when you said, "We ought to give it a try," did you, were you thinking in your mind about public agency or were you

thinking more about a private company? Or did you have an opinion?

GF: No, I was thinking of a transition from a public company to a private company.

NG: So that was sort of the idea that was prevalent at the time.

GJ: I also had in mind though, even if it was a public company to have enough control over it, just as public utilities are controlled. Other than that...

NG: What was his response? Was he convinced of the usefulness of that plan?

GF: Yes, he was.

NG: How do you explain then, if you had any opinion of it at all, about the bevy of Senators who filibustered in the Senate to keep it a public entity? Do you think that there was any real support there?

GF: No, they had their support, it was a real issue. No question about that. But....

NG: How do you think that resolved itself?

GF: Well, sort of a compromise. You start out then it gets to a point where it can be taken over by a private group, but always with the feeling that they would be subject to a certain amount of oversight.

NG: The company, you mean.

GF: The company.

NG: So basically what you're saying is your involvement was more or less informal...

GF: No question about that.

NG: with McCormick.

GF: No, it wasn't. I was very close to McCormick. It wasn't informal. We did discuss it and we talked about the public control and so on, and even talked about AT&T taking it over.

NG: And what was his opinion about that?

GF: Well, I said they got the jump on the rest of them. They were the ones who really developed the [Inaudible]. It was their concept. They were certainly entitled to serious consideration.

NG: And why do you think, McCormick as the Majority Leader at the time didn't pursue that avenue?

GF: Well, he did. No, because the others came in and after all it would give AT&T kind of a monopoly. And then they had the international aspect trouble, of course, AT&T had had experience in that connection too, though.

NG: Well, with their cables.

GF: Uh, hum.

NG: Was that ever considered a realistic proposal to give the monopoly to AT&T, do you think?

GF: Oh, that was definitely considered.

NG: And then rejected for...

GF: And then rejected.

NG: For what reason?

GF: Well, I don't know what the reasons were but I know it was rejected....

NG: Yeah, obviously.

GF: And the other ideas were considered and they came up with this one.

NG: So here we are, the act has been passed. You become an Incorporator of the company. How does that happen?

GF: Very frankly, I told you the only ... in trying to find out how it happened, I learned from (what's his name, I just mentioned his name) from the White House....

NG: O'Donnell?

GF: And from what's his name, what's his name, uh----, Sorenson.

NG: Uh, huh.

GF: In fact Sorenson talked while Kennedy was still in the Senate, we talked about the space thing and so on at length. And as a matter of fact, after Kennedy was elected he went to Palm Beach, and ...

NG: You mean at the time that he was determining who was going to be in his cabinet if my recollection of that is correct.

GF: Yeah, right after he was elected. And before he was inaugurated, in fact. While he was down there, one of the things that came out in the papers was that I was being considered to be the next head of the NASA.

NG: I'll be damned. Hum.

GF: But I didn't take it seriously. They couldn't have appointed a better man than Webb. I can tell you that. He is extremely able.

NG: So here, you've been nominated by this unknown person, unknown to you really....

GF: One more thing, get back to it, I just remembered. Pardon me, but I shouldn't be eating these, they're gone now.

NG: There is always temptation.

GF: I first met Webb in kind of a funny way. You remember the original space act, had appended to it; it really wasn't appendage, the creation of the space, the one that he became, that Johnson became President of--the Space Council. And he appointed Welch to be the ...

NG: Ed Welch.

GF: Ed Welch to be the Secretary of whatever it was. I had urged him to appoint Sheldon, but Simington got in there ahead of me and; but, oh, you remember that Eisenhower did nothing to implement the Space Council. And it was Johnson's baby, and he immediately activated it.

NG: When you say Johnson?

GF: President Johnson. No, he was Vice President at the time. And I remember that I had just gotten back from Naussau with my wife, and children and he--we were both sound asleep or fast asleep, the telephone rang about 11:30 or 12:00 at night or something like that, I suppose I shouldn't go into this, but the voice at the other end said he wanted to talk to George. My wife said, "Who is it?" He said, "This is Lyndon Johnson."

And she said, "I'm Lady Bird."

NG: Oh, no, she didn't believe him.

GF: And he laughed and he said no. The minute I get on the phone he said they were having their first meeting setting up some procedure for the [Space] Council to operate and (this was a Friday night), and they were meeting in his office at 10:00 the next morning and would I be there? I wasn't feeling so hot, very frankly but I went.

NG: Uh, huh.

GF: I remember that I met Webb there for the first time. And then I remember that the--that we went around the table, and I said, "The important thing is to be sure that we get a dollars worth for a dollar spent." And also that there were gray areas between what is military and what is peaceful. And the Council can play a very important role in preventing the kind duplication that might take place. And then also some of the other abuses that are taking place. I think that ultimately we put the them in our book. For example, on these cost plus contracts the different contractors would find a very useful and very learned scientist and would hire them, and give him nothing to do to prevent the competitor from getting him. And

the government was paying for it. That kind of a goose. And also I thought they ought to have a staff of accountants.

NG: You mean on the Space Committee itself.

GF: On this Council. And things of that sort. So then he turned to me about 1:00 and he said, "George, I'm flying out to Independence. It's President Truman's birthday."

NG: Johnson said this to you?

GF: And he said, "I'd like a report by 4:00 this afternoon." And I said, "Wait a minute. I can't get a report of this kind out in that kind of time." He said, "We'll give you a couple of guys." And I said, "No." Then he said, "Wait a minute, can you get me some kind of report so I can have it on the plane?" I said, "I'll give you one. It won't be adequate or things of that sort, but if you want something in more or less outline form, I'll do it." So I worked my tail off and about 20 minutes of 4:00 or half past 3:00, I came up with something ...just to satisfy him, and subsequently I did a very long report. And I went to the, you know his offices were then in the old State Department Building, you know right across from the White House...

NG: You mean the old Executive Office Building.

GF: The old Executive Office Building. I went to the Marine Guard and I said to him, "I've got to get this to Vice President Johnson. He's leaving for Independence at 4:00." He said, "He isn't leaving for any Independence. He's out riding with Lady Bird in Virginia someplace." (Laughter).

NG: So it wasn't true?

GF: I don't know. That was Johnson if you knew him.

NG: I know only what I've read about him.

GF: He was wonderful to me, though. He used to ball the hell out of everybody, but never me.

NG: He was a rough one on people. People who worked for him especially.

GF: Oh, I can tell you that. I know that. I'll never forget when we had the conference on...the House and Senate...a bill, he had Stiles Bridges with him of New Hampshire, Senator Bridges of New Hampshire, and John McCormick took me with him and Joe Martin, and when we sat there he said, "Let's get rid

of the most controversial provision between--the difference between--the Senate version and the House version on the Patten provision."

NG: And this was for what Bill?

GF: The original....

NG: The original space bill?

GF: The original NASA Bill. I turned to McCormick and I said, "John, may I make him an observation." He said, "You will make the observation." And I turned to Johnson and I said Senator, "I saw the Senate Patent Provision for the first time last night," (it was a goddamn lie by the way). And I said, "Basically, its much better than the House version and with a few changes we can, I'm sure that will be acceptable. We have no problem at all." Stiles Bridges chimed up and said, "How long will it take you to make the changes?" I said, "Oh, five or six minutes." He said, "Well, we'll give you 15 minutes." We went out with one of their people and made the changes; came back and everything was acceptable, and the thing just flew right through. Well, when the hearing was over, that night we went back to his office, to the

NG: You mean to...

GF: to the committee room in the Senate. And I won't mention the name but he gave somebody--I never heard him ball out anybody that way, but he never balled me out.

NG: He was apparently--he could be very vicious.

GF: Yeah, I know that. Bill Moyers told me about that.

NG: Well, Robert Karo has written a book...

GF: Yeah, but Karo was too...I read it.

NG: He was too hard on him.

GF: Yeah, he could be that way but then change completely, of course. But Karo doesn't give a good picture of him at all. I knew the man intimately. I can tell you better stories than that. I don't want to digress.

NG: Well, let's go back to the

GF: Well, if you want to cut that off I'll tell you a better story.

NG: Sure. Okay. Here we go. We're at the point now where you've just been nominated as an Incorporator. Let's talk about what happened as this group started to get together.

GF: Well, Phil Graham wanted to be--head the thing, and he literally told the--gave the impression anyway that this is what the President wanted, too. But I found out there was no basis or fact for it.

NG: What do you mean, how did that happen?

GF: Well, he just gave the impression that because he was head of the [Washington Post] and so on

NG: So that wasn't true? How'd you find out that wasn't true?

GF: Because of the fact, that it wasn't told to me directly, but I gathered it from talking with Sorenson one day.

NG: So he had just given this impression that he was supposed to be head of this new board of Incorporators.

GF: And nobody knew at the time that he had this mental condition you know.

NG: Although did anybody notice that he had somewhat erratic behavior, or that he seemed erratic?

GF: Well, at that point, it didn't seem to be quite as erratic as it became.

NG: You, when you say that he gave the impression that he was going to be the head of this thing, did he take over?

GF: He finally took over, yeah. And as I recall it, the only one that...I think was somewhat disappointed was Sidney Wineburg.

NG: Why, he felt that he would have wanted to sort of....

GF: Whether, he did or somebody else did.

NG: What do you mean, he was disappointed in Graham? Although Wineburg played a key role its my understanding.

GF: He did what?

NG: He played a key role on the Board of Incorporators.

GF: He did play a key role. There is no question about that.

NG: But was that difficult at that time with Graham sort of forging ahead on his own.

GF: Yeah, because then he went and took it on his own to appoint Sam Harris...

NG: Well, what was your role at that time with Sam Harris? And what was your relationship with Graham at the time?

GF: I just went along with it. That's all.

NG: So you didn't necessarily have a problem with what Graham was doing?

GF: Yeah, I thought subsequently, yes. Some of the things he did were unbelievable.

NG: For example. You can tell me.

GF: No. He came up to New York several times and about three in the morning he'd called up and wanted a sleeping pill. "Did we have a...did Marian have a sleeping pill?" We got to see him, and so he sort of hits himself on the us and so on. Then

he had this other girl from--you know about that, and all, so its no sense me going into it.

NG: Well, its just heresay. You know I've heard about it.

GF: No, that's a fact. I saw her. Where was she from, Australia or something like that? A newspaper person.

NG: That's what I understand. And so he traveled with her at this time? I mean she traveled with him.

GF: Well, yeah, they went out to Arizona with all that sort of thing. Another off the record one...

NG: Here, Phil Graham is taking the reign so to speak. And he gets Joe Charyk to come be the President of this new company.

GF: That was a good move.

NG: Tell me how that happened.

GF: Well, Joe was then over with the Air Force at the time.

NG: Under Secretary.

GF: And I remember...my own experience with Joe was that he testified before our committee.

NG: You mean when you were the staff director of the select committee.

GF: When I was chairman of the select committee. And he was very articulate and handled himself beautifully, I thought he'd make a fine choice. I thought they made a fine choice in choosing him.

NG: Who chose him?

GF: I forget how it came about. I don't remember.

NG: What about Leo Welch?

GF: Well, he came in a funny way. We were looking for a chairman and so on, and Edgar Kaiser and I were designated to meet with Welch and we took him to lunch at 21, and made the proposal to him.

NG: Oh, so you actually were the one who basically...

GF: Edgar Kaiser and I the two of us, met with him at 21, and

were authorized to make the proposal to him.

NG: What was that meeting all about? What did that look like?

GF: Well, he had been chairman of Standard Oil and had the background and whatnot.

NG: What was his reaction?

GF: It was good. I'm pretty sure that I don't think we had any difficulty convincing him.

NG: When you made the offer to him, what kind of an offer were you making? I mean, you didn't know what this new corporation was going to look like. Nobody really knew. They didn't have any money, they didn't....

GF: We did know what it was going to be like, we had several meetings before then.

NG: So what were you offering to him?

GF: Just the chairmanship of the committee [sic. corporation]. Which would be a full time job, of course.

NG: And, so now you have Joe Charyk and you have Leo Welch. What other involvement did you have in getting this cast of characters together.

GF: We had, what's his name, Gordon who began to take care of public relations, I think.

NG: Matt Gordon?

GF: Matt Gordon, yeah. Who was very good by the way.

NG: And did you have...

GF: And also, we had a meeting, I think we had it in New York on choosing the general counsel.

NG: What happened there?

GF: And I was for um, I pushed very hard for Johnny Johnson to be general counsel.

NG: Oh, is that right?

GF: But the others, like Sam Harris, pushed for the...

NG: Okay, so you were saying that Harris...

GF: Was pushing for Troop and he got him through. Because of the fact that he had been general counsel of the SEC, I think, before that.

NG: Well, he was with the SEC and then he was with a very big law firm, that did a lot of those kinds of things up in New York.

GF: But as far as I was concerned, and I said so, I don't know Troop, but Johnson had the capacity to learn anything that Troop knew and he would make an excellent general counsel, but anyway he went onto that international thing.

NG: Right, so he didn't loose out in any way shape or form, that's for sure. What were the issues as you were getting these people together? What were the problems that you perceived that you would have to overcome to get this thing off the ground? Do you remember?

GF: I have to think. Can you probe me a little bit?

NG: Well, let's take the issue of whether it was felt that we would use a geosynchronist system, or a medium altitude

system. That was a big issue for a long time with those guys.

GF: Yeah, that's right. That was one of the things that was discussed at the time.

NG: What were they talking about at that time? What was it that they wanted?

GF: Well, they wanted to ...

NG: Let's take it one step further. They capitalized the company to the tune of \$200 million.

GF: Yeah, that's right.

NG: Which was what it was going to cost them to build a medium altitude system. That's what they figured. What happened? They didn't do it.

GF: We didn't do it, no. I think, I'm trying to think, I'm trying to think of how that 22,300 mile thing came in. Of course, you're over the equator and so on, because of the fact but the [Inaudible] couldn't...you see this is nothing but an antenna up there and...

NG: Right. And they worried about the echo problems, whether it was going to have a voice quality circuit.

GF: Yeah, and the time and all that sort of thing.

NG: But they went ahead with it anyway. Do you remember why?

GF: I think that somebody talked about the fact that they had those, most of those technical problems, that they felt they could lick them.

NG: Which of course they ultimately did.

GF: Charyk made a good contribution in many of those things. He was the one that explained most of this to us from a technical point of view.

NG: So he sort of served as the translator.

GF: And he was very good at it, too.

NG: What was his relationship with Welch?

GF: It was all right. Welch, when they had to testify before a committee, Charyk was very good at it and Welch was very

mediocre.

NG: Is that right? Well, Charyk had had experience, I mean.

GF: Well, I say, I wasn't being critical of Welch, but he should have known that because he didn't have the experience it would be better to forget about testifying himself, because he just didn't have the technical background that Charyk had.

NG: So do you think that that was a problem at that time?

GF: Not particularly. Charyk did such a good job that he had everybody convinced.

NG: Let's take on another issue. Graham had this idea very early on that we wouldn't have this big consortium thing. You know we wouldn't have what ultimately became INTELSAT. He wanted to negotiate with each different country in a bilateral negotiation. He didn't want to have this kind of U.N. type organization. He wanted to do essentially what AT&T did everytime it wanted to lay a cable. Do you know, do you remember anything about that?

GF: Yeah, I do remember something about that. It was an idea, but who planted the seed at [that] moment I don't remember. It

wasn't an original idea with him. Somebody did, not within COMSAT itself, not any of the members of the Board, but it was somebody from outside that planted that idea with him. And he didn't really...

NG: I think it was the carriers. I think it was AT&T.

GF: Could be.

NG: They, you know he was pretty tight with them.

GF: I know that.

NG: Too tight?

GF: Well, I wouldn't say that.

NG: Just a question.

GF: Well, I liked AT&T. I think they were pioneers in this field. And if it weren't for the [Inaudible], we would have been delayed until sometime long after it took place.

NG: So what do you remember about that operation?

GF: Well, the one thing I remember, God, I'm so vague about it. I must say that. I know we went along with the other idea, I think that the military wanted the lower one, too. But that that was separate thing they wanted for themselves anyway.

NG: So you don't really recall how that decision...

GF: No, I don't recall. But I think it was because of the fact that the experts in the field, or those with expertise in the field, felt that you had to get the higher, I think NASA, I'm pretty sure, had something to do with influencing the committee about that.

NG: Uh, hum, SITCOM. Which was a synchronist satellite system.

GF: I'm pretty sure that's what happened but I can't say absolutely that that was what happened.

NG: Well, how did they get Graham off this bilateral negotiation stance that he had taken? Do you remember that?

GF: Well, they just went ahead and I guess by that time...they had felt that he wasn't too uh, I'm trying to think...

NG: That's okay. I'm probing your memory for things for

details that happened 20-25 years ago. This isn't easy.

GF: And I've done so much since then, a lot of things.

NG: Sure, this isn't the first thing on your mind.

GF: No, not by a long shot.

NG: Are you saying that maybe he had already lost his credibility with those people?

GF: Yes, that's what I was trying to say. I'm pretty sure we had lost our respect for the man, but I mean, his judgment in any event. But he was being spoon fed by somebody at the time, and he didn't have any--I mean Charyk who was the only one who really had the technical competence in the field, as I recall it. We did have one or two people on the staff though that were pretty good.

NG: Do you remember who they were?

GF: I'm trying to think. Did we or didn't we, I don't know.

NG: Well, you mentioned Matt Gordon. Why did he stand out your mind?

GF: Because he did a good job.

NG: Why did you feel that?

GF: Well, the way he handled public relations and so on. I thought he was a pro, a real pro.

NG: Very savvy.

GF: And highly respected by the profession, too. He was a great friend of Reston's for example. And they all, I still think he is quite a person.

NG: I just, I met him last week, he was really quite a--got a story at every turn.

GF: Yeah, but he'd been living this thing for a long time and consequently--and I haven't. So I'm sort of vague. I did a lot of homework, while I was with the, before I was with the Board, and afterward, when I made those [Inaudible]. I did a lot of homework, but when I went up and spoke at the, at that session at McGill and also the one in Oklahoma.

NG: So Graham then leaves the picture. Sam Harris essentially

takes...

GF: Kind of took over, yeah. I remember the hearings they had up on the Hill, when what's his name made a jackAss of himself, I mean, what's his name, he's one of the, he stayed on as a director.

NG: Well, there was Sundeland.

GF: Sundeland. Yeah, he testified and boy they had to change the record.

NG: What happened?

GF: He testified before the committee that Glen Anderson chaired and Stew Simington and so on, and he just didn't know what the hell he was talking about. And Stew Simington went after him. But they changed the original record.

NG: What did they take out?

GF: I don't know, but it was substituted for some other things. I didn't follow it.

NG: But what we see now is not what happened during that

hearing.

GF: No. It was not good.

NG: And you felt that happened because someone, for what reason?

GF: Well, Sam Harris told him he couldn't make it. So he had Sundeland to do the testifying and it was a mistake.

NG: Sundeland just wasn't up on the issues and the technology?

GF: And another thing. Another thing too, on the selection of the outside public relations of what's its name? I think they still represent you don't they? What's its name? He's here in town with his brother, they have a public relations, but his father used to be a newspaper man. Neumeier.

NG: Oh, the Neumeier people.

GF: Are they still with the...

NG: I don't know if they are, but for example they were the people that brought Matt Gordon around, or he had some kind of affiliation with the Neumeier people.

GF: Did he?

NG: Uh, hum. He mentioned that to me.

GF: Well, I wanted Anne Rosenberg. I still think it would have been a better choice.

NG: And what about the Neumeier people?

GF: They were good. I know them personally and socially I knew of them, but I thought Anne would do a better job. You've heard of Anne, she was former Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary of Defense during the war and a great friend of Roosevelt's, and a very brilliant woman. She died recently.

NG: So your activities along that time, were you very active with the board?

GF: I was very active.

NG: What were you doing during this, while this whole thing was going on?

GF: Going to the meetings. All I was doing was practicing law.

NG: But I mean, in terms of the board. What did you feel you offering to them that was different from what everybody else was doing?

GF: I think I knew more about outer space than they knew, and I attended some of the meetings that they held, different representatives of different other government agencies.

NG: So, you'd sort of been in and around the business long enough that you knew the people?

GF: I knew people and I knew where to find knew where to--not being a technical expert in the field--I always knew the good people that had that expertise.

NG: So you knew where to go for information. Sort of a Washington phenomena, if you don't know yourself, always know where to go.

GF: That's true.

NG: You get to the point where, now where they're going to elect a board of directors.

GF: They're going to what?

NG: They're going to elect, the changeover from the Board of Incorporators to an actual company. They go through the capitalization....

GF: Then what happened with me was that Kyle Albott was then majority leader, in '52, 1952 McCormick was chairman of the when Stevenson ran, was chairman of the platform committee and the drafting committee, and he drafted me to be the chief counsel of both committees.

NG: So this would have been for the '64 election.

GF: That was '52. So in the '64 election, I did that in '52, and he gave me no time, I had no background in it, other than the fact that I had been up on the Hill and all that sort of thing, but he, and as a consequence, I had to work, I had Marian out to Chicago, the convention was at the Stevens Hotel then at the time, and we stayed at the Drake. Fortunately, Pearl Mesner was out there so she and Marian stayed, were together all the time with Colonel Donovan in there, and I worked an average of 28 hours a day. So I wasn't going to have that happen again. And so Kyle called me about two months before the convention and told me that he wanted me...oh, they

asked me again in '56 and '60 I had another thing with Kennedy, in '64, as I say, about two months, he called me and told me he wanted me to be his chief advisor, counsel, and all that sort of thing to the platform committee. So I said to myself I'm glad you gave me at least this forewarning, because I'm not going to go through what I went through before. And so I had, I didn't stay on the board.

NG: And so at that point, you basically severed your relationship with COMSAT?

GF: That's right. I resigned.

NG: So let me just get the time straight here. You would have, this would have been in 1964 and what say, May.

GF: That's right. May or June. May it was I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty sure it was May, yeah, I'm positive, in fact it was. It was a couple of months before, just as the board was going from the transition from one to the other. So I just took this other one, other thing, and this, I was still practicing law you know, and I couldn't continue to do everything, and I did this because, first, I was interested and Johnson was running again, and he kind of spoke to me about it. And so I did it and then the--one of the reasons I needed

the two months was because you can draft the whole thing, you see and have it all ready. And you have a big group that comes in and then you go into the small group that does the drafting. But, furthermore, I had another hint of something else that I was going to get some big appointment and all that sort of thing. And I didn't know what it was. So as I say I used to go to the White House at least twice a week and work with Bill Moyers on the drafting of the platform. And we had 99% or 95% of it all drafted when the committee got together.

NG: Interesting.

GF: And the convention that year was in Atlantic City, however, the platform committee met in, what is it, the old [Inaudible], you know the one up by the Shoreham Hotel, the one on the hill.

NG: Oh, yeah, the Waterman Towers.

GF: Oh, year, that's right. Not Waterman Towers, is it? Used to be Wardman Park.

NG: Wardman, that's it. Its Wardman Towers now.

GF: And we--I'll never forget, we met there on a--the full

committee was to meet with the witnesses on a Monday. So we had a cocktail party on a Sunday at the Wardman. Kyle was there and Bill Moyers was there, I was there, and we mingled with a group of delegates to the platform committee and I was around, you know, talking to them and all that sort of thing, and they were having cocktails, oh there must have been at least 75 or a hundred of them, maybe more. And all of a sudden Johnson and Jack Brooks, Congressman Brooks, walked in and they were back there talking to Kyle and Bill Moyers, and then all of a sudden, I was over talking to some people in the corner, and I kind of looked up and saw them and I noticed that somebody pointed to me and they began walking toward me, and Johnson said to me, "George, Kyle and Bill were telling me what a great job you do." And he said, "I want to tell you how deeply I appreciate it." And he said, "After I'm elected, after the election," he said, "I'm going to make you an ambassador."

NG: And there we are.

GF: And he remembered it.

NG: He obviously did. Let me ask you one last question. They say your were the first, I've heard the story that you were the first Incorporator to be named.

GF: That's right.

NG: I don't understand. How did that happen?

GF: I told you that Ken O'Donnell told me that somebody talked to the President...

NG: And you don't have...

GF: ...when they were discussing who to appoint, and talked about this article that I had done on missiles and rockets. And I guess he felt because I had the exposure and because of what was said and because of the work, and maybe the fact that I had worked on the campaigns, maybe that might have had an impact. But I was told it was that missiles and rockets article.

NG: Is that right? Well, I'll make sure that we make due note of that.

GF: I don't know whether he read it, but whoever read it must have figured that I had some knowledge of what it was about.

NG: What...

GF: You read that article, and you can see its pretty comprehensive.

NG: Absolutely.

GF: It isn't long, but its comprehensive.

NG: Perfect. Are there any other issues that we haven't talked about here on the record that sort of, have come to your mind that you feel like I overlooked, that you feel that were important, that stand out in your mind?

GF: If I think of them, I'll call you.

NG: Okay. Great.