

INTERVIEWER: Today is November 18, 2010. I am Karen Arenson. This interview is part of the MIT 150 Infinite History project.

We are talking this morning with Eugene B. Skolnikoff, emeritus professor of political science at MIT, whose focus is science and public policy and international affairs.

He headed MIT's political science department, and was director of its Center for International Studies. He was a member of the Pounds Panel, appointed by MIT's president Howard Johnson in 1969 to examine MIT's two special defense-oriented research laboratories. And later led a study of MIT's international posture when it was coming under attack for work with Japan.

He also chaired the committee that set up the annual Killian Lecture and was on the Faculty Committee that advised on the presidential search that resulted in the appointment of MIT president Charles Vest.

Professor Skolnikoff earned three MIT diplomas -- Bachelor's and Master's degrees in electrical engineering, and 15 years later a PhD in political science. He also studied politics, philosophy and economics at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and served in the White House science advisor's office under Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Carter.

Gene, thank you for talking with us this morning.

SKOLNIKOFF: Delighted.

INTERVIEWER: You have been called the pioneer of science diplomacy. What is science diplomacy and how did it come about?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, there's no easy answer, and I'm not sure what pioneer means. The idea is that science, international science and international scientific relations, can make a difference in international relationships among nations. A lot of rhetoric is given to that and very little actual substance over the years. I guess what I did more than others is to reduce it to something that could be analyzed or studied or dealt with academically.

That had led in part to variety of activities, not just mine, but the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and others have tried to capitalize on that idea of science diplomacy. It's not a very precise term, and more to the point I think is that I've tried to look at how science and international relations interact, not necessarily with the idea of diplomatic relations, just how they interact. Really nobody was doing that at the time I started doing it.

INTERVIEWER: Which was when you were working on your doctorate or when you were down in Washington before then?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, when I was in Washington. When I joined the White House office of then James Killian, who was MIT's president and the first science advisor in the White House, my assignment was to work on international scientific relationships. It was a very small staff, maybe four or five people. The same office today has several hundred. So it's not the same situation. We were more powerful than we realized, in fact. It was a wonderful experience.

But I began to realize in that experience that here was a whole unexplained area of international relations, and one that was potentially very important.

INTERVIEWER: How much have various presidents used science diplomacy?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, they all use it to some extent, usually in rhetoric -- they don't mean it. Henry Kissinger used to, whenever he'd visit some country, would promise there would be some kind of scientific cooperation treaty or agreement after he left. Most of those were absolutely empty, that is no money was allocated, nothing happened.

In some cases, especially with regard to nuclear issues and larger issues, there was an attempt to use scientific relationships to build something and build something serious. And particularly, this was in the nuclear era when the relations between the American scientists and the Soviet scientists was a very important factor in reaching some modus vivendi about nuclear weapons.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a president that you think has used it most effectively?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well actually, given the history of what I just said about nuclear relationships, I think Eisenhower and Kennedy both used it more consciously and effectively. President Carter I think tried but didn't do very much.

INTERVIEWER: Which is interesting because he had more of a technological background than almost any other recent president.

SKOLNIKOFF: He thought he was his own science advisor. He was a nuclear engineer, so he kind of sidelined his actual science advisor on a lot of things.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think Eisenhower and Kennedy trusted the scientists they were talking to more than later presidents, or that the problems loomed larger?

SKOLNIKOFF: I wouldn't try to make that comparison, but they certainly trusted them. Eisenhower called -- there's the President's Science Advisory Committee with 18 scientists that would meet once a month for two days a month, and several times in between. Eisenhower started calling them "my scientists," and he loved them. Because they provided him something he wasn't able to get out of the regular bureaucracy, which is an independent view.

INTERVIEWER: Did he come in to the presidency, do you think, having any particular grasp of science? I guess he had been a university president and a general. Had he leaned on science--?

SKOLNIKOFF: I don't think so, except that he was very close to a physicist at Columbia, I.I. Rabi. I think Eisenhower, as president of Columbia, had many conversations with Rabi -- Rabi was a very active political individual, policy individual, and I think he had a real influence on Eisenhower.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that was where the idea for the science advisory office came from? Do you know where it came from?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes. To some extent it actually existed before, but not in the White House -- not reporting directly to the president. It was set up several years earlier, and in fact, I.I. Rabi was chair of the previous committee. And it did several studies -- important studies. One of them was headed by Jim Killian, which is why he ended up as the first science advisor. So it was already having some influence, and Eisenhower had some sense of what they could provide.

Then he moved it into the White House, partly as a public relations move after Sputnik. But it was serious because he needed help. He needed to challenge the military.

INTERVIEWER: There seemed to have been some precedence for science advice in Washington, if you look at Vannevar Bush, for example, had a big impact on policy. But he wasn't right in the White House?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yes, he was.

INTERVIEWER: He was. But he wasn't called the science advisor?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, he just didn't have that title, but he was basically the same thing. He had enormous influence. And in some ways more because he would allocate the resources to MIT and other favored institutions and got others a bit angry.

INTERVIEWER: These were informal earmarks that didn't come out of Congress?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, that's basically right. They didn't originate in Congress.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that there can and should be more reliance on science advice down in Washington than there is now?

SKOLNIKOFF: Sure. The trouble is that the public has come to think of scientists as just another group of experts that is biased. I mean if you look at the debate over global warming at the moment, the scientific community is overwhelmingly convinced about the issue. And the Congress simply doesn't accept it, or at least some of the Congress does not accept it. We're headed for trouble as a result.

INTERVIEWER: You've had a long association with MIT, both as student and teacher. Let's talk about the path that brought you here. Where were you born? Where'd you grow up?

SKOLNIKOFF: Born in Philadelphia, grew up in New York City. My father and mother moved to New York after he was fired from General Electric Company in 1929 or '30. Then he opened his own little drafting design business. My father was, in some sense, not a failed engineer, but he wanted to be more of an engineer than he was. He transmitted that to me. I mean I lived the life he wanted to live, as far as engineering was concerned. Not as far as politics was concerned. He considered politics as dirty -- something that you don't take seriously.

INTERVIEWER: He and your mother were both immigrants?

SKOLNIKOFF: They both were immigrants. My mother directly from the Ukraine, my father from Crimea via Argentina -- family went to Argentina first and then came up here. They met in the United States and married here.

INTERVIEWER: Did he grow up speaking Spanish?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Do you speak Spanish?

SKOLNIKOFF: No. Nor Russian, unfortunately. It never occurred to them that it would be of any interest, either one, especially Russian -- why would I need to know, have any interest in speaking Russian? As a matter of fact, they were so unhappy about living the life in Russia at that time that they wanted to stay as far from it as they could. My mother spent, at one point, a little time trying to teach me some Russian language, but not seriously.

INTERVIEWER: Did either of them ever have any college or did they finish high school?

SKOLNIKOFF: Neither of them had college. My father had a vocational college experience in Argentina. My mother would have because she was admitted to Pembroke, but there wasn't enough money. Her older brothers were favored and went to Carnegie Tech. But my mother who wanted to be an artist, and was a good artist, was cut out from it. She never got over that. She was pretty upset.

INTERVIEWER: What were you like as a child?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh, I don't think I was anything unusual. except they thought I was probably headed for engineering because I liked gadgets. Well, we lived in the Bronx and I was admitted to a special New York school -- I've forgotten the name of it.

INTERVIEWER: Bronx Science?

SKOLNIKOFF: No.

INTERVIEWER: Stuyvesant?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, it doesn't exist now. Mayor La Guardia abolished it.

INTERVIEWER: So another one that was--

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. It was a very special school, not just science, right after I was admitted he closed it down. So we moved then to Queens and I went to regular junior high, and then I went to Brooklyn Technical High School, which is 4,000 boys, half of them headed for college, half of them headed for jobs. Not the most satisfactory environment. I never really liked it or disliked it.

INTERVIEWER: But you were good at it?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, I guess so, more or less. I wasn't that good because when I applied at MIT I was put on the waiting list. I was admitted to Cornell and several other places, but not in MIT originally.

INTERVIEWER: Why did your father think engineering was good and the social sciences weren't? I mean I guess the social scientists were less developed then.

SKOLNIKOFF: He didn't know anything about the social sciences. He knew about engineering. And as I say, I think he saw me as living, in some sense, the life that, or fulfilling his goals, which was a problem all my life, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Were you conscious of it when you were in high school or college?

SKOLNIKOFF: Not at all. This all is after the fact. For example, he was very anxious that I apply at MIT because he knew that was the best. And I basically didn't. I mean not that I disagreed, I just didn't know MIT. But he was hell bent on my coming here and I did. So, I was fortunate.

INTERVIEWER: What were your years -- well, let's stay on your childhood. Did World War II affect your life very much?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, except by happenstance -- a lot of my life is by happenstance, because I graduated from high school in 1945 while the war in Japan in the Far East was still on. A year later and I would have had to compete with veterans and I would never have gotten in. And a year earlier I would have ended up at the Battle of the Bulge, which all the 1944 high school graduates did. So I sneaked in between those. But other than that, I was not politically aware particularly. I read the newspapers, I read more of the newspapers than my friends did. I was more conscious of the world, but I don't--

INTERVIEWER: So it interested you in some way.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. There was no question that I was interested. But not in that you asked did World War II influence me directly, not especially.

INTERVIEWER: Had you ever visited MIT before you arrived as a freshman in 1945?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, once. When I was on the waiting list, my mother who was very activist this way, made me, against my will, come up here to talk to the admissions office. I thought that was silly but I did.

INTERVIEWER: And it may well have helped.

SKOLNIKOFF: It may well have helped, I don't know because they couldn't find my file. And it turned out to be on the top of a filing cabinet. So I don't know whether it meant that they were reconsidering it or just what. No, I didn't pay much attention to that.

INTERVIEWER: What were your first impressions of MIT?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh, I thought it was wonderful. I mean as I think any college I would have felt that way. I was going to a very controlled high school that was not a lot of fun one way or another, and suddenly I'm free. I think every freshman has that sudden realization that all of a sudden you're your own master. I was happy to see my parents leave after dropping me off, and immediately found a girlfriend. It was a liberation.

INTERVIEWER: Were you an only child?

SKOLNIKOFF: I was an only child.

INTERVIEWER: It was a liberation of sorts, but you certainly had a challenging curriculum--

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes. But I didn't have a sense of the MIT academic demands that everybody has today. I mean I knew it was going to be difficult -- I seemed not to have much difficulty.

INTERVIEWER: You were well prepared.

SKOLNIKOFF: I was, well, reasonably well prepared and responded to what I was learning. I actually enjoyed the classes. So I felt I was in the right place.

INTERVIEWER: Any classes in particular that you recall or liked especially?

SKOLNIKOFF: Curiously, and I imagine we'll come back to it, but yeah, I chose electrical engineering and that was a good choice for me.

INTERVIEWER: Because?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, I was responding to a whole -- electrical engineering was just taking off in 1945. The Radiation Lab was closing down, so it was an exciting, new engineering discipline. It was changing very rapidly.

Also, and more to the point in later terms, MIT had then and still has, this requirement that every student spend at least a fifth of his or her time -- there were almost no women in our class -- in the humanities and social sciences. To me they were eye-opening, even though I don't think the faculty was particularly illustrious -- I barely remember some of the names. I do remember some. But reading Dostoevsky, all of a sudden there was a lot of things that I didn't know anything at all about. I found that very exciting -- much more so than did my classmates.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take any social science courses?

SKOLNIKOFF: There was no such thing. Almost no such thing.

INTERVIEWER: Probably a little economics.

SKOLNIKOFF: I did take -- yes, excuse me. That's quite right. I didn't think of economics as a social--. Yes, it was important to me later. We had one political scientist on the faculty, Norman Padelford, who was actually in -- we didn't have a political science department, but he was in either humanities or probably more likely economics and social sciences was what they called the department.

INTERVIEWER: And did you take classes with him?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: More than one?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, just one. He taught a class on the UN and international relations. And he was a very good teacher. Economics I found I liked very much. I would have, I think, done more -- in fact, later I had an opportunity and I regret not having done more.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do much in the way of extracurricular activities when you were--?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah, too much -- everything.

INTERVIEWER: What?

SKOLNIKOFF: I was on the crew. For a period of time I was on the *The Tech*, the newspaper. I was in a whole variety of organizations, not political ones, but the -- you know, Eta Kappa Nu and Tau Beta Pi and the others.

INTERVIEWER: The honorary societies for engineering?

SKOLNIKOFF: The honorary societies, but I ended up being vice president or president or something of them. I mean I ran for office all the time. Oh, on the radio station we had, for a period of time, I was a music director. So a lot of things.

INTERVIEWER: You were exploring or you just loved them all?

SKOLNIKOFF: I don't know, I just liked it, yeah. And I seemed to have time to do it. So I did.

INTERVIEWER: Did you study many hours? You certainly weren't huddled up in your room at that point.

SKOLNIKOFF: No. Frankly, I don't remember spending a lot of time studying. I'm sure I must have. But I got a reputation for being able to fix radios because I learned a very simple fact, which nobody seemed to know. It was that most of the trouble of little table radios was what is called intermittent -- there was some loose connection. So if you kicked it or banged on it, you fixed it. So I would take their radios and close the door and bang it and give them back a working model. I had a reputation. It was ridiculous but it was funny.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you live when you were--?

SKOLNIKOFF: In what's now we call East Campus dorms. I guess those were the oldest dorms on the campus. That's how I started anyway. And then much later in Senior House and so on. But mainly in East Campus, Hayden something, 4.01. That's it, Hayden 4.01.

INTERVIEWER: And you were in this co-op six-A program and worked at General Electric?

SKOLNIKOFF: I joined the five year Master's program , a joint Master's/Bachelor's program. I think partly for financial reasons. My parents didn't find financing easy, even though I got some scholarships here, but by today's standards the tuition was minuscule. But that made it a little easier for them and also gave me some industrial experience. That was interesting. Some of it was interesting, some of it was a complete waste of time.

INTERVIEWER: What parts did you like and what didn't you like?

SKOLNIKOFF: There was an electronics lab in Syracuse that I actually did my Master's thesis at, and I got a patent in the process for which I got paid \$25 by "Generous" Electric Company. And in fact, it was a very good patent, it's just that technology advanced and made it unnecessary. So I still remember it. I really learned a lot about how industry works in the process.

INTERVIEWER: Along the way you applied for the Rhode Scholarship. How did you happen to decide to do that?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, as so many things in my career, that was not a considered decision on my part. That is, so many things happened accidentally or because of concatenation of events. But a professor of electrical engineering, a man, Murrey Gardner said to me one day, why don't you apply for Rhodes Scholarship? And first of all, though I'd heard of the Rhodes, I knew very little about it. I thought he was slightly mad. But I looked into it and I figured well I had very little to lose, so I did.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any idea why it crossed his mind? Had he been a Rhodes or had he had other students who had been?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, he wasn't. There where a few MIT faculty that had been Rhodes Scholars before. There was a chemist, Stockmayer and some others. I think just reputation, and I was -- what do they call it -- a star in the department I guess. So they wanted to--

INTERVIEWER: Plus you had the broad interest and you were an athlete.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. I don't think he thought very much about that. I think they just thought that I was the fair-haired boy in the department, so why not capitalize on that.

INTERVIEWER: Was MIT good on pushing students to--?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, not at all.

INTERVIEWER: So this was kind of out of the blue.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. We are now, by the way. I'm part of a Foreign Fellowship Committee that actually promotes and helps students apply and very successfully. But curiously though, MIT didn't push. There were two that year from the same department. Herb Benington being another, and I didn't even know him.

INTERVIEWER: The same teacher had approached Herb you think?

SKOLNIKOFF: I don't know. I never quite found out how he ended up applying-- I never got to know him at Oxford. I was surprised. Everybody was surprised.

INTERVIEWER: Had you ever travelled or lived outside the United States before you went off to Oxford?

SKOLNIKOFF: No. And I always wanted to, so that was part of the appeal.

INTERVIEWER: Had you thought about what you might do had you not won the award?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. I was just headed, partly under my father's influence, headed for industry. I was going to be an engineer in General Electric Company -- or no, I would never have gone back there. But I was going to be an engineer.

INTERVIEWER: Did anyone at MIT help you with your application or prepare you at all for the interviews?

SKOLNIKOFF: I have no recollection of it, especially compared to what we do today, which is a lot of help, holding mock interviews and things like that, which would have made quite a difference. I had no idea what was ahead.

INTERVIEWER: But it worked out.

SKOLNIKOFF: It worked out to my astonishment.

INTERVIEWER: So what was your experience like?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, the way the Rhodes worked then, it's still more or less the same. You either apply in your home state or your university state. And because Herb Benington was applying in Massachusetts, I applied in New York, which is home. First you go through a day-long set of interviews. Out of about 15 or so people they pick -- I've forgotten now -- yeah, they send four down to the regionals.

So I went down and it's intriguing to me at the moment. But after my NY interview, which was about an hour long and perfectly comfortable, I then went back to my father's office and there was an uncle there. Remember I'm Jewish. And the uncle said, why are you letting him apply for this? He'll never get it, he's Jewish. He just was totally sure that was the end of the story. Then to my surprise I did end up going to the regional, which is in Philadelphia. There they take, it was four from several states, and you have 12 and they pick four.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think the fact that you read newspapers and were interested in current events helped you in the process?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh sure, yeah. Remember, I was applying as a scientist. And because I applied to study physics for a doctorate at Oxford, and the MIT education was sufficiently theoretical, even though I was not a physicist in a normal sense. So a lot of the questions -- I had no idea if there was any other scientists on the day-long session-- this was a real set of interviews for literally a day. I have no idea whether there was other scientists on the panel or not. But I got a lot of questions about current events, and about what kind of a scientist was I going to be, and how serious was I about science.

INTERVIEWER: And you told them you were pretty serious because you were.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, I was serious. Turned out later I wasn't, but no, I was serious. But I did get a lot of questions, as you say, about current issues. And since I did read a lot and kept up with current things, I think I answered many of them. A favorite question was to explain for a non-scientist how a particular piece of equipment works, the cyclotron in my case. And I explained very simply and straightforwardly how a cyclotron works, and that obviously impressed them.

INTERVIEWER: What happened when you went over to England?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, that was the big change. First of all, that was a full -- you're elected in December and you don't go until the following September. By the time I got to Oxford, I realized physics was not what I wanted to do. But I didn't know it consciously, so much as just knew it.

Meanwhile I had been in contact with the physics laboratory in Oxford and I had everything set up -- the research I was going to do and with whom. Because at that time, especially, it was just a research degree -- you didn't take any courses. I was sure I was going to work in low temperature physics and why. It wasn't a particular field I knew, but it was easy to master it.

I got to Oxford, went into the lab to meet the professor and the others, spent an hour there and walked out and said I'm not going to do that. But I just said that's not what I want to do. It's not what I want to spend two years doing.

INTERVIEWER: What was the thought process? What was going on in your mind do you think?

SKOLNIKOFF: It's hard to -- I think I had, by then, a strong sense that Oxford was giving me a very special opportunity that I didn't have at MIT or any place, which was to get an education. So all of a sudden the idea of being in a laboratory for two years didn't make sense. I rationalized it -- well, for two years I wouldn't do it, then I'd go back to it. Well, I knew damn well I wasn't going to do that, but nevertheless that's how I rationalized it. And actually, curious, because I made the choice very firmly. I walked out of that lab and that was it. But I had no idea if I had to give up the Rhodes, I had no idea if my college would accept the change. I found out they accepted me originally because I rowed at MIT, not because of academic anything.

INTERVIEWER: You were on crew.

SKOLNIKOFF: I was on the crew. By that time it didn't make any difference. I had the choice made and that was it.

I went to see the Rhodes office, the Rhodes warden they call him -- warden of Rhodes House, and went in with some trepidation, and he said oh no, that's wonderful. If we can save somebody from science, all to the better. So that was no problem. Anyway, it turns out there's no impediment to changing your field, but he was happy I was doing it.

And then I went to the college not knowing how they would react. And I won't go into a long story, but I had a very strange interview with the senior tutor that I didn't understand at all. Who asked me the most outlandish questions about my family life, about relations with my mother, relations with women. This is my first time in England -- what are these people doing? It was like a caricature of an Oxford.

Well, it turned out that in the immediately preceding two years, there had been an American who was doing exactly the same thing I wanted to do -- switched from science to what they called modern grants PPE, and then had a nervous breakdown. And the college had a terrible time with this and they got very angry about students seeing psychiatrists and things like that. A month after this was finally settled, I showed up with the same story. So he was trying to probe how uncertain, how unsettled I was. But he accepted it and--

INTERVIEWER: And so you studied philosophy, politics--

SKOLNIKOFF: Philosophy, politics and economics, with the emphasis on the economics, actually. The politics at that time in England wasn't political science, it was British political history until 1918, which was kind of fun but of no deeper interest. Actually, I enjoyed the philosophy more and the economics more.

INTERVIEWER: But you didn't become a philosopher or an economist.

SKOLNIKOFF: No. The economist I almost did, but I ruled it out foolishly. I wasn't enough of a philosopher to become a philosopher. I had a very good philosophy tutor and we got on extremely well and I enjoyed my essays and readings with him. But it was not a field I would have gone into willingly. But I stayed in close touch with the tutor for as long as he lived, we got along well until he died.

INTERVIEWER: You wrote an article about your Oxford experience for the *Technology Review* in 1953. In it you described your transition into this new program of study--

SKOLNIKOFF: I have to go back and read that.

INTERVIEWER: --as "rather violent," is how you called it. Do you think that was hyperbole or do you still remember the transition as a time of painful upheaval?

SKOLNIKOFF: I wish I'd read it again, re-read it.

INTERVIEWER: I'll give you a copy later.

SKOLNIKOFF: I said it was--

INTERVIEWER: You called the transition rather violent. You talked about--

SKOLNIKOFF: Transition from the science to the humanity.

INTERVIEWER: I think you were suggesting that you were really not prepared for any of those -- that you hadn't had the precursors or whatever.

SKOLNIKOFF: I clearly had not, and that was why I wanted to do it.

INTERVIEWER: But you remember it really as a very good two years.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. In fact, I should have stayed a third. No, no, I remember that as absolutely a fantastic period of my life.

INTERVIEWER: In what way? What do you think made it--?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, part of it was the change in fields. So that it opened up just a whole new world to me that I knew very little about. Part of it were my colleagues, classmates -- not necessarily other Rhodes, but the English classmates that I enjoyed, thought I got on with very well, enjoyed the life. And as a matter of fact, I'm much closer now to my Oxford classmates, including some of my English friends than I am of my MIT classmates, which I think was simply a reflection of the fact that my interests had changed. Nothing wrong with my classmates at MIT, it was just that we no longer had much in common.

INTERVIEWER: Did you row crew while you were at Oxford?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, other than what they call a school eight the last week of term. No, and a matter of fact, the warden of Merton College, which is the college I was at, was a crew enthusiast, which is why I was admitted to begin with, to his college. And he never forgave me for it. Because I first actually had a chance to talk to him several months after I arrived, and when I introduced myself, he said, oh, I know who you are. Why did you not go out for the boat club? And turned on his heel and walked away -- never gave me a chance to respond. He was mad, he was crazy -- he was a Hegelian scholar. It was very typical of some of those, at that time, some of the Oxford characters.

INTERVIEWER: How did you find the tutorial process after coming from MIT where you probably had lots of lectures?

SKOLNIKOFF: It was fantastic because you write a minimum of two essays a week. I learned how to write and I learned how to express myself, and that stayed with me the rest of my life and was a very important factor. It was hard. I mean it wasn't something that came easily, because I certainly did not have much writing experience while at MIT. But that was, and still is, by the way -- Oxford still maintains the tutorial system. It's getting very expensive but it's doing it.

INTERVIEWER: Have you been able to use any aspects of the Oxford approach to teaching in your own teaching over the years?

SKOLNIKOFF: It's an interesting question. Nothing that I would single out quite that way, but I certainly demand a lot in terms of writing for students.

INTERVIEWER: And you've made students go back and rewrite.

SKOLNIKOFF: Rewrite and rewrite and rewrite, and write clearly. That reflects more overseeing theses and things than it does in class. But still, yes, it has some influence of it.

INTERVIEWER: Given the importance MIT and other universities are now placing on the need to teach students writing, do you think there's any magic or any entryway, particularly, for teaching students who are very analytical how to go about learning to write or how to write better, or is it just practice, practice, practice?

SKOLNIKOFF: I would start off by saying it's practice, practice, practice. But more importantly, perhaps, is somebody who reads and comments and critiques and doesn't let things just go by. So in other words, as always it's the teacher that makes a huge difference in this. Certainly for my PhD students, I would spend a lot of time critiquing their writing, the best ones especially. That's part of the trouble too, because the ones that aren't so good you don't spend as much time with.

INTERVIEWER: When you were head of the political science department, did you lean on other faculty members to do that?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, no. It may come to that, but I was an accidental head of the department, just as I was an accidental head of the Center for International Studies. First of all, I came to chair the department without having a previous history in political science -- I mean I didn't grow up as a political scientist, let's put it that way, and that makes a huge difference in how you think about it. I didn't lean on the other faculty members. We were all engaged in the times of troubles and the student problems.

INTERVIEWER: This was during the Vietnam War you mean?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, this was in the late 60s I guess. At MIT there was a big research strike in 1969 that became national. And we had on the faculty several who were very prominent proponents of Vietnam, Lucian Pye and Ithiel de Sola Pool. The student cry is we won't die for Pool and Pye. Well, that took up a lot of--

INTERVIEWER: You weren't focused on did they know how to write.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes. And the best students, a lot of them were in the SDS, the Students for a Democrat Society, and they knew how to write.

INTERVIEWER: Let's go back to Oxford. As you were finishing up your two years, what did you plan to do next?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it was uncertain, and again, remember -- not remember, but part of my rationale changing fields was that I'd go back to doing what I had been planning to do, because I knew my father, who was a very important influence in my life, I knew he would be unhappy with the choice. He was very unhappy with my leaving science. I had to go 3,000 miles away to get away with it, so to speak.

But I figured, well, I'll go back to industry, if not right away, soon. And I applied for a couple of jobs from Oxford. I was offered a position in the Defense Department, and then I was offered a position at MIT, just on the administrative stuff. But I was vulnerable for the draft and I wanted to get the draft over with. So I figured rather than go to Defense, I'd come to MIT, spend a little bit of time and then go in the army and then go into industry. I kept on putting it off.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a chance to stay at Oxford longer and do a doctorate?

SKOLNIKOFF: It wasn't so much a doctorate. When I finished with the two years, and I was remarkably innocent about a lot of things, and it turned out you could have a third year under a Rhodes and I didn't realize it. But my economics tutor, who was very good, said was I interested in an economic fellowship for next year. Well, I must have given 30 seconds thought to it, and I've never forgiven myself for that ever since, because I would have benefited from a year of an economics fellowship. I would have enjoyed another year at Oxford. I was so blind to so many of the things that other people would say--

INTERVIEWER: But this was a fear of your father's wrath if you spent one more year?

SKOLNIKOFF: It wasn't fear, it was just you're setting down a path and you followed that path. I ruled out all kinds of potential careers for no bloody reason. I mean I had a certain predilection to legal things -- a lawyer? God no, I don't want to be a lawyer. And that was silly, but I only came to that realization later. So why I was so--

INTERVIEWER: You didn't go back to law school at that point.

SKOLNIKOFF: No, but why I was so blinkered about other opportunities still--

INTERVIEWER: Even after your two years at Oxford.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, still puzzles me today.

INTERVIEWER: So you chose to come back to MIT of all places.

SKOLNIKOFF: Came back to MIT to work on the administrative staff in the industrial liaison office, which is not a career job really. But it was, as I say, it was intended as a stop gap before I went into the army. I tried to get into the CIA -- MIT had a special contact in the CIA. I asked him to explore the possibility of two years in the CIA. And they came back and said no, I couldn't get a clearance. Why couldn't I get a clearance? Because I still had relatives in Russia. Which, of course, is they didn't want to bother.

But, of course, this is what happened in so many other parts in my life, by happenstance I was working for Jim Killian to some extent. So I got to know him and I traveled with him a little bit. So when he ended up in Washington as the president's science advisor, he offered me a job on his staff. I think if I hadn't had that personal experience with him, I'm not sure I would have -- that he would have asked me.

INTERVIEWER: So you were traveling with him as part of your responsibility for the Industrial Liaison Program?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, he was fundraising. He was the master fundraiser, and he sometimes liked to have somebody along.

INTERVIEWER: And how did it end up being you? I mean you were on staff at the ILP office.

SKOLNIKOFF: Good question. I don't actually remember that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know him from your student days?

SKOLNIKOFF: Very, very slightly.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think he was aware of your Rhodes?

SKOLNIKOFF: Probably, I suspect people were more aware than I thought.

INTERVIEWER: Did you and he ever talk about -- he ended up I think as a kind of science humanities major, as opposed to a--

SKOLNIKOFF: No. He was a editor of *Technology Review*. He was a business grad of what was Course 15 then, as a business management undergraduate -- the most unlikely background for the superb president he became.

INTERVIEWER: Right, and he didn't have a doctorate when he came.

SKOLNIKOFF: Did not have a doctorate. Well, no, as a matter of fact, when he was named to be the president, they immediately hunted up some university to give him an honorary degree. So it was Dr. Killian after that. But he never would have been a president of MIT if it hadn't been for World War II, because basically Karl Compton who was president spent much of his time in Washington on nuclear issues and science issues. And Killian ran MIT. So when the war was over and Compton was ready to retire from the presidency, Killian was -- I wasn't around then in any substantial sense, but Killian had been a successful manager of the place and trusted by the faculty. He was wonderful man.

INTERVIEWER: And the Corporation probably.

SKOLNIKOFF: And the Corporation, yeah. He was a wonderful person, much misunderstood I think -- a very shy southerner. And people had the impression that he was not very activist, but in fact he was. And a very emotionally warm person. But he buried it, so it took a while to get to realize that. I thought he was great, I loved him.

INTERVIEWER: So how much of your time did you spend traveling with him and working with him, as opposed to working for or with the industrial liaison--?

SKOLNIKOFF: Not much.

INTERVIEWER: So you did a little with Killian and mostly at the ILP?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What was the ILP program like when you were in it?

SKOLNIKOFF: It just got started.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't that old yet.

SKOLNIKOFF: It's 1948--

INTERVIEWER: Right, that it had been founded.

SKOLNIKOFF: That's right. I joined it in--

INTERVIEWER: '53?

SKOLNIKOFF: '52.

INTERVIEWER: '52?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah, '53. It was very different I'm sure than it is today. It was unformed in many ways, it wasn't clear how the faculty would respond. Immediately, because I had some writing experience, I put some material together for the companies and for the faculty about it. So I played a role, but--

INTERVIEWER: But you seem to have a sense of the vision for it. You did one other article for *Technology Review* on ILP, and in it you called it a new and important plan for industry university cooperation. And you discussed how important the young program was to bring in long-term, unrestricted revenue for MIT, and as a medium for the exchange of ideas between MIT researchers and industry.

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it sounded good.

INTERVIEWER: It sure did. I wondered was that the language they used, or did you make it up yourself?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, that was the language. I might have smoothed it a little bit, but that was the language. That was the rationale and the justification, which was that it would be good for both sides -- for industry, for new ideas, and MIT for industrial relationships.

INTERVIEWER: And it seemed to be taking off. I mean you were having some success.

SKOLNIKOFF: It actually was started by a man by the name of Bartz, B A R T Z, who started and then went to Cal Tech and started the same program, same thing. But he disappeared from sight, for me at any rate. But I think it was a successful program at MIT. I think it's a very important program to MIT now. How well it's doing, I don't follow it.

INTERVIEWER: Around the time it was created, MIT and other private universities were actually struggling financially, and some business leaders were publicly calling on businesses to help colleges. You recorded this in the article. Did you find it surprising at the time, and do you think that kind of attitude still holds -- the business saying we've got to help MIT and other places?

SKOLNIKOFF: I don't think it's surprising. I think some of the more far-seeing industries realized how much they depended on the graduates.

INTERVIEWER: Like Sloan.

SKOLNIKOFF: Not just Sloan, I mean the engineers, engineering and science graduates. You'd say that was, obviously well understood, but it wasn't well understood at all. So the idea that industry might have some responsibility for themselves, not just for the universities. So that was just really taking hold.

INTERVIEWER: In the article you also seemed very aware of MIT's finances. You talked about how the industrial liaison income was equivalent at that time to about \$25 million of endowment, which was big money then. I wondered how you had this awareness, and it may have come partly from traveling with Jim Killian.

SKOLNIKOFF: No, not especially. I think that was just one of the rationales for why the program was important. So when there were faculty, and there sometimes were challenges to spending time with these dolts from industry, which was, by the way, not a common reaction. As a matter of fact, many of the faculty really liked their industrial relationships, and many of them built on them -- you know, became consultants and benefited from it personally. I think this is just one of the rationales in the program to look how much it needs.

INTERVIEWER: Were you responsible for particular companies or industries?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. We divided up -- there was a staff of about at that time maybe four or five, and there was somebody in chemistry, somebody in electrical engineering. There were no computers then, so yes, we had our own special relationships, companies we would visit with information or arrange visits for them and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: Was being a staff person at MIT very different from being a student there? Were you conscious of seeing it in a different way?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh sure. I mean I didn't have the same challenges as a staff person than I did as a student. I used to hate the exams. I mean I was delighted when I would walk into a building that I hated to go in to at one point because it always meant an exam was coming up. And I could go in now and there was no exam. But it was different. In that process, again, it paid off accidentally later, but I got to know several faculty members "very closely." I got to know them and they began to know my strengths and weaknesses and it turned out to be important later.

INTERVIEWER: After your work in the industrial liaison Office at MIT you did enter the army. Were you drafted?

SKOLNIKOFF: I asked to be drafted, which turned out to be, I thought, foolish because this was the summer of 1955, because Eisenhower had on his desk in Denver an order that they would stop drafting anybody over 26. And I just turned 26. So I would not have been drafted.

INTERVIEWER: But you didn't know that.

SKOLNIKOFF: But I didn't know that, he had a heart attack, and that's why in never got promulgated. But so much of my accidental life -- a funny phrase to use; accidental in the sense of unplanned -- it turned out to have all kinds of unforeseen benefits for me. But I hated the army. I mean I just hated it.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, I was in the army security agency, which is the National Security Agency of the army based in Arlington, Virginia. When I got assigned there I was very unhappy because I wanted to be at the Signal Corps in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. This was much better, but I didn't know that. So I was based in what was called Arlington Hall Station. They were running tapes, so listening in to Russian Soviet communications.

Actually, during that period I took delivery of the very first videotape recorder, what we now call VCRs, which was done under contract with Federal money by a company called Ampex. I did the first tests of it and so on. And everybody understood at the time that if that could be miniaturized -- it was a great, big console thing -- that you'd have a fantastic consumer product. Well, Ampex tried and tried and tried and couldn't do it. The Japanese did.

INTERVIEWER: But it was your science and engineering background that really put you in a position to be able to do a job like that?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, remember, the army is the army, so I had a degree from MIT. That meant I was an engineer, period. It didn't make any difference what I did later. The fact that I couldn't have done any engineering designs anymore, they didn't know and didn't care. So obviously, just by the name, the prestige at MIT got me into all kinds of things.

INTERVIEWER: More than the Rhodes at that point.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh, yes. In the army, the army didn't know what Rhodes was. The only recognition I had in the army was you take an exam when you enter, and I missed one out of 100 questions. The people giving the test never had seen that. I don't know what I missed, but that was kind of an experience. And I was in basic training in New Jersey, Fort Dix. I was thrown together because I was older, so I was the uncle thrown together with kids from the slums and so on. It was really quite an experience. I hated it, but it was a fantastic experience.

INTERVIEWER: And near the end of your two years you--?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, I was working on this videotape recorder, and then one the MIT professors I'd gotten to know. Bill Linvill, whose twin brother had been my thesis supervisor. Anyway, Bill Linvill was on leave in the Defense Department doing some studies of what we now call strategic studies. It was about air defense in Europe. And he had gotten close enough to me and I to him, that he thought I could really make a contribution there.

So, Albert Hill who was a professor at MIT was then head of an organization in the Pentagon called the Weapon Systems Evaluation Group, not important -- Institute for Defense Analyses. And so they had me transferred from the army to the Pentagon for my last couple of months there. And Al Hill, being Al Hill, this organization was run by three-flag rank -- admirals and generals. And he just reveled in having me as a specialist third class show up while the project was being talked about with the senior military. The admiral thought it was great, the army general was very angry. But I thought it was funny.

INTERVIEWER: And after the army?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, and after I became a regular staff person at the Institute for Defense Analyses, which was an organization, like RAND Corporation based in the Pentagon, doing special, what's called strategic studies for the joint chiefs of staff.

So I was there and was working on one or another project, and found I had most enjoyment and aptitude for this kind of analysis. So decided I would apply to go to RAND Corporation, which was then the leading strategic studies operation. There was an element or a section, social sciences, under the direction of Albert Wohlstetter who was the world's biggest Hawk -- I didn't know that at the time. But he had on his staff several of my Oxford colleagues, mostly economists.

So they were delighted when I applied. Daniel Ellsberg was part of the same group. Wohlstetter accepted me to join RAND, and I accepted RAND, and then came Sputnik. And Killian came down to the White House and he asked if I wanted to join him in the White House. Well I wasn't about to give that up, so I wrote to RAND and said thanks, but no thanks. I think Wohlstetter never quite forgave me for it.

Because among other things, there was an ideological difference, and the scientists were seen as a left-leaning liberal group wanting to make peace with the Soviet Union, whereas Wohlstetter saw the Soviet Union as a threat that needed to be challenged. And so it wasn't just that I went and did something else, it was I actually joined the enemy.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have pronounced political views at that point? Did you side with one versus the other?

SKOLNIKOFF: Not especially, not at the time. I did after not very long. It didn't take me long to realize what the issues were.

INTERVIEWER: So, Sputnik went up, all of a sudden there was a desire to set up an office. Killian came down. What were you doing in the office? What did you do for him? How did he go about setting it up?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, he was an active science advisor. The president's Science Advisory Committee continued, they had been moved from what was then the Office of Civil Defense or something, moved directly under the president. Eisenhower was asking Killian and the committee for all kinds of help, particularly in weapons systems evaluations. I worked a little on that, and also on space activity.

Space was just becoming an issue -- for obvious reasons with Sputnik -- was becoming an important subject. So I worked some on that. And then there was this whole dimension of the relationships between American scientists and scientists in other countries, particularly the Soviet Union, but not only. And that was my assignment. That is, I worked on those subjects. There was a panel of the Science Advisory Committee called the Foreign Affairs Panel, or something like that, under Detlev Bronk, who was president of every organization under the sun. Well, John Hopkins and president of the National Academy of Sciences and president of something else, National Science Board.

Anyway, I got along well with Bronk, who relied on me after a while, considerably. And I found there were all kinds of issues in here that I really liked, really enjoyed, and nobody knew anything about. I mean it was fertile soil. It was a subject that nobody had really written about. And some of the writing, what little there was, was by scientists, which I thought was often naive. And so I found I was in contention with some of the prominent scientists who would speak about the great value of international scientific cooperation, but they really didn't understand what the issues were.

INTERVIEWER: Did Killian actually assign you to do foreign affairs?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Given that you had no real background there, what was the ration--?

SKOLNIKOFF: I'd been in England for two years. I mean it's as foolish as that. I mean because I had two years of foreign experience and an interest. So I really was up-to-date on what was happening in the world and had an interest in it.

INTERVIEWER: You read the papers and followed foreign affairs.

SKOLNIKOFF: I read the papers and I had an analytical background. And here's where I think the engineering training really did make a difference, so it's hard to pinpoint exactly how. I think it gave me a bent for analysis that I would have had difficulty finding other ways. And it gave me a basis, by the way, of challenging. First of all, not just challenging, but dealing with somebody like I.I. Rabi and other of the scientists that I worked with all the time. So I knew what they were talking about and I knew their language. It was very important. So I wasn't coming in from left field as a social scientist. And to them, that group of scientists, that was very important.

INTERVIEWER: But you weren't challenging them on the science so much as on the question of --

SKOLNIKOFF: No, I wasn't challenging them on science at all.

INTERVIEWER: --relations between countries.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah, I wasn't challenging them on the science -- I didn't know enough about it.

INTERVIEWER: But you could follow what they were talking about.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. And could build on it or use it. That I'd been doing all my career.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get up to speed when the foreign portfolio was put on your plate? You talk about finding some writings, some of which you didn't agree with or that you thought were naive.

SKOLNIKOFF: No, not so much that. But there was this panel of the committee that met once a month, and I was basically its secretary. I had helped in working out the agenda of the committee and what it ought, what it ought to be looking at on space things for example, or on relations with the Soviet Union, or on relations with third world countries, which was a complete departure for the White House science office. So Detlev Bronk, the chair, relied on me quite heavily very quickly to lay things out and ask a series of questions and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: How much change was there as the Eisenhower administration ended and the Kennedy administration began? I guess Killian came back to MIT.

SKOLNIKOFF: He came back before. He was only--

INTERVIEWER: And Kistiakowsky--

SKOLNIKOFF: --there for 18 months. Yeah, Kistiakowsky who was a chemist from Harvard and a member of the Science Advisory Committee.

INTERVIEWER: Was it very different to work for him or with him?

SKOLNIKOFF: No. But Kistiakowsky was very much more of a scientist than Killian was. Kistiakowsky had been a major figure in the atomic bomb project. He designed the explosives for the plutonium bomb. And he was a fascinating white Russian figure -- very volatile and very interesting to work for. I enjoyed working--

INTERVIEWER: But he didn't try to redirect the office or change your possibilities.

SKOLNIKOFF: No. Not that I'm aware of -- let me put it that way. Except that I think since Kisty was much more of a scientist, better able to evaluate weapon systems, which for a period of time, was the main occupation of that office was to figure out which of two intermediate range missiles ought to be supported, which should be abandoned and things like that -- which of the space probes ought to be pursued. Kisty was in a much better position personally to make a judgment about it than was Killian.

INTERVIEWER: And then he was succeeded by Jerry Wiesner?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you worked under Jerry in Washington too.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Had you known him much from MIT?

SKOLNIKOFF: Not a lot, but I knew him, he was an electrical engineering professor and I knew him in the department and liked him.

INTERVIEWER: And did he and Kennedy change the office much?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, quite a bit. Remember, first of all, that all of these Kistiakowsky and Wiesner were both active members of the Science Advisory Committee for several years, at least several years. So it wasn't as though they were coming in fresh. They were very familiar with the issues, with the problems. And both of them, all three of them had worked on major weapon systems studies.

Killian ran something called the Technology Capabilities Panel, which basically was the one that recommended the Minuteman missile, and the others were on what was called the Gaither Study -- president of the Ford Foundation at the time. Anyway, a panel right at the end of the Eisenhower administration about assessing the actual Soviet threat. So they weren't foreign to the subjects or to the office.

Wiesner did change a lot because he was a much more activist arms controller than Kistiakowsky was, at least at the time. Kisty became so later. But Jerry really wanted to see us get together with the Soviets. In fact, Kennedy waited -- he didn't appoint him right away. He waited some because I think he knew there'd be some political fallout to the appointment. Just as I think the MIT Corporation knew there would be some political fallout for Wiesner to be appointed president, because he was such a known political figure.

INTERVIEWER: And then came the Cuban Missile Crisis?

SKOLNIKOFF: It was during while I was there. I had nothing at all to do with it.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't.

SKOLNIKOFF: No. Except the kind of rumor things that goes around, because one of the staff people from the National Security Council would come down and have lunch with us every day. So we got some sense of the tensions that were growing. But other than that I had nothing to do with it. Actually, I just recently re-read the transcripts of the tapes that Kennedy had run of the Cuban Missile Crisis which are fascinating.

INTERVIEWER: And was Jerry involved?

SKOLNIKOFF: He was involved, but not very much.

INTERVIEWER: At what point did you leave Washington and why?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, along about 1963 -- this is before the assassination -- I realized that I was in a staff position in the White House, and you don't hang around -- it's easy to hang around too long. I'm not sure I was necessarily right, but it seemed to me I was right. Meanwhile, I also was, again, feeling uneasy about the fact that I didn't know how the world worked, really worked, and particularly how the government worked. I had a lot of on the job experience clearly, but a lot of things about the Congress and what the politics behind it and so on, I just didn't have any background in. So I figured it was time I did that -- I got that.

And in addition, then it was still the political, economic and social science department, but headed by Bob Wood, who is an urban social scientist, urban political science. He wanted very much to create a science and public policy teaching unit in political science. As a matter of fact, he got Killian to give a course when he came back. And so he worked on me for a couple of years saying you've got to come, you've got to come back. And finally I decided to do it, to bite the bullet. It turned out to be harder to get the financing for it, but this is another era.

I got support from the Rockefeller Foundation because I'd gotten to know the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dean Rusk's successor, who was one of my panelists, George Harrar. And I said, any chance of getting a fellowship from Rockefeller? He said, sure, fine. Get in touch with so and so. Which I did. I got a letter back about a month later saying sorry, you don't fit any of our categories. Well, the next time I saw George Harrar, he asked me how it was going, and I said, well, I've been turned down. He said, what? So I said, well, that's what a president's for. And the next thing I knew I got a fellowship, which was not enough money but it helped.

So I came up here, actually, partly as a lecturer and partly as a graduate student.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't even think of going anywhere else.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh no. This was so obviously the right place.

INTERVIEWER: And some of it was to learn more and some of it was for the credential just to--?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. First of all, if I was going to do anything academic, which I wasn't sure I was by any means, I had to have a PhD.

INTERVIEWER: But you were beginning to think about academia as a possible--

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. And there was no place more congenial as a possible home than here. So MIT just interacted with my life in so many different ways all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think about, when you were thinking about leaving the White House, did you think at all about should you go up to Congress and spend a couple years there and learn about that from the inside?

SKOLNIKOFF: No. I had lunch with Jim Killian asking his advice, and he urged me to come up. I didn't know at that time very much, which I have since, learned very much about congressional staff, about what congressional jobs are like. One thing that I don't think I mentioned to you any other time, was Claude Canizares and I started a whole series of seminars after Chuck Vest became president for congressional staff. But by then I'd learned that, in fact, they do all the heavy lifting. They write the legislation. But no, I didn't -- if I was going to do it I'm going to do it.

INTERVIEWER: So how did your doctoral work go?

SKOLNIKOFF: It went OK. I say only OK because I was conscious and still am that I did not grow up in the field, and that makes a huge difference. Look at the students now or the young faculty coming along, PhDs, who grew up as political scientists. They have a different feel for that subject than I do, even today.

INTERVIEWER: So you didn't come up and say, gee, I should take a year's worth of courses.

SKOLNIKOFF: I should have.

INTERVIEWER: MIT, would it have had the courses for you to take at that point?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes. A certain amount of hubris, I decided I would take the general exams--

INTERVIEWER: And a desire just to move ahead.

SKOLNIKOFF: --Yeah, without taking any courses. Which also was not right.

INTERVIEWER: But you passed it.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. But again, I was wrong, that was the wrong choice.

INTERVIEWER: And your dissertation was on what subject?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it was on science and technology and foreign policy. So I, in effect, built on what I had been doing in the White House. Later it was published as a book. It was the first book of any kind on the subject. And I enjoyed that. I think it was an important book, still is, still sells a little bit -- MIT Press. So that was the dissertation, as it was an important platform for moving on in the subject.

INTERVIEWER: So this was the early or mid-60s. Did MIT seem very different when you came back from when you had left it?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well sure, because this is now student troubles. I came back in '63 and the students were just beginning to organize, and it was really dominating.

INTERVIEWER: Even on MIT's campus by 1963 -- it wasn't all '68, '69.

SKOLNIKOFF: I can't tell whether it was just by '63, it was certainly by '65. And if I'm not mistaken, the March 4th student research strike was '65, but I'm not sure about the date, no?

INTERVIEWER: I think it was later.

SKOLNIKOFF: Later?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

SKOLNIKOFF: OK. But in any case, we were very conscious of it. Conscious enough so that I had a year's leave under a Carnegie endowment fellowship in Geneva from '69 to '60 -- of course that's later. But that's how I ended up as department chair because I was the only one that didn't have a position that everybody knew on the events of the day. So that was later.

INTERVIEWER: So after you got your doctorate, you just kept teaching -- they said stay on as a professor?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, yeah. It wasn't quite so smooth. I got offered a full professorship at Cal Tech and that got MIT off the dime. That's the first and only time I used another university in any way. Cal Tech was starting a science and public policy program under Murray Gell-Mann, a Nobel physicist. And I went out for a week and we went out and met everybody, and everybody was very fine, very kind, very nice. I didn't particularly like California. And remember, *The New York Times* wasn't printed then in the West Coast. But Murray Gell-Mann clearly would have been a difficult person to work for. So I was just as happy not to have to make that choice.

INTERVIEWER: What were the political leanings in the department and were you comfortable with them? I guess the political science department became a full department round about the time--

SKOLNIKOFF: I think 1965.

INTERVIEWER: You got your doctorate, right?

SKOLNIKOFF: I can't really answer that. But I think as most social scientists, the political leans were towards the left, though not on Vietnam. That was a very divisive issue.

INTERVIEWER: And then you mentioned that you went off to Switzerland, and Jerry Wiesner actually flew out and talked to you?

SKOLNIKOFF: He came out to ask me to be chair of the department, as if I could at that point have said no. Which I acquiesced too easily -- not to that. It's just that there was this strange kind of value system, which I have since been unhappy about. Jerry Wiesner share it, Walter Rosenblith, the provost, shared it, which is somehow that you work all the time, and you never stop -- something that was special about doing that. And they imparted that to me, and they're just wrong. When I finally took a sabbatical, which is much more recently, I realized what I've been missing. This is madness. I wrote important things or useful things, things that are important to me, and all these years I've been missing out on this.

INTERVIEWER: And that was 70s, 80s, 90s? It was when you finished being head of the CIS?

SKOLNIKOFF: It wasn't a sabbatical, but it was--

INTERVIEWER: A year off?

SKOLNIKOFF: --leave. Yeah, a year off. It was '69, '70 I think. No, it couldn't have been that.

INTERVIEWER: At the end of the CIS or earlier?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, it was much later. It was later.

INTERVIEWER: Later? Oh, so then you're into probably the late 80s or the 90s.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes, it was, that's right. And I went back to Oxford. I was a visiting lecturer, and visiting at Balliol College.

INTERVIEWER: So in your years -- I think you had a four-year run as head of the political science department. What were the challenges in doing that? What were the issues?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it was, by today's standards, very easy. I didn't know it at the time. We had a dean, an economist, very nice person, whose general view of budgets was to approve them without challenge.

INTERVIEWER: This is Bob Bishop?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. So I didn't, again, didn't quite realize that I could have submitted anything I wanted and get away with it. So the budget wasn't a big problem. There was no overview or review of tenure cases, particularly, in the school, which became a big time thing for my successors. So it was not a terribly difficult job. As a matter of fact, I became director of the Consumer Center halfway through it.

INTERVIEWER: How built up was the department by the time you became chair? In other words, here was a new department, a fairly small one at MIT, it had a niche I guess.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. We were very successful in the world at large, partly because we were so strange and unusual. Partly because we had very good people. The department grew out of the Center for International Studies, so it had people who are top of their field -- Ithiel Pool and Lucian Pye. Had a superb reporter, Harold Isaacs. Had a sociologist with a national reputation and so on.

INTERVIEWER: Hayward Alker?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, Hayward Alker not there then, not yet.

INTERVIEWER: Or he was there in the 60s. He may have left.

SKOLNIKOFF: No.

INTERVIEWER: And John Saloma I think.

SKOLNIKOFF: Saloma was there while I was chair. I can't think of the name of the sociologist at the moment -- who was a problem because he was also a drinker. So it was -- yeah. So we don't need to know the name, but -- and I had several such -- that kind of personal issues to deal with.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have to do anything to smooth over the department's reputation following the antiwar protests, or it wasn't an issue?

SKOLNIKOFF: I didn't have much to do with that, actually, because as you point out, much of that was, in fact, later. So the department was rated by political scientists, right near one of the top five in the country partly because we had all this strange crew. We had a chemist, George Rathjens. We had a very strange amalgam of people who together made quite an unusual group.

INTERVIEWER: And you were successful in attracting graduate students who wanted to work with these people?

SKOLNIKOFF: That's right. Very successful. And this has changed totally from today. The department decided, not surprisingly -- matter of fact, I don't think it had any real choice -- that it had to become a more typical political science department. If it didn't it wouldn't attract the first ranked students, because they would want to get the first ranked faculty in there to attract students. So what was exciting about it at the time, inevitably I think lost its attraction. But while I was there I was sitting on top of a gold mind of academic achievement.

INTERVIEWER: Talk about your involvement with the CIS. What stage it was in when you started being affiliated with it, and then how you became head of it and what you had to do as its head?

SKOLNIKOFF: Again, it's somewhat of an accident that I became head, just as it was for head of the political science department. Max Millikan, the first director of the Center, died I think in 1969. The question was who was going to succeed him, and Everett Hagan, an economist, succeeded him as a temporary. The obvious choice in every sense -- of academic quality -- interest was Ithiel de Sola Pool. Jerry Wiesner wouldn't have him. Not a personal matter, but I think Jerry felt that to have a senior figure like that who was pro-Vietnam would so tarnish MIT's reputation in a variety of ways. He wasn't prepared to do it. I don't know whether he was right or wrong. But the result--

INTERVIEWER: And today you don't have a feeling about that?

SKOLNIKOFF: I think he was wrong. But he was such an advocate of policy that I think he just felt he couldn't deal with somebody like Pool. No, I think he was wrong. Pool would have been superb director, and would have been very much a social science director. I, because of my background, was not a social science director. I came in with this interest in science and policy. And turned the Center as much as I could in that direction, so sponsored or supported a lot of programs in non-proliferation issues, did a lot of things with Germany and Japan.

Matter of fact, I ended up getting decorations from both Germany and Japan for all I did in our relationships. And so I emphasized that kind of science and government science and policy issue, much to the chagrin of some of my social science colleagues -- I think Lucian Pye never quite forgave me for it. And Myron Weiner, who understood, but I think also would have -- who then succeeded me -- would have done it differently.

INTERVIEWER: Did he try to re-direct it when he succeeded you?

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. He then went a direction of more migration studies and more things that were current and relevant to the social science agenda. Whereas my interests were not in the social science agenda, they were in the policy agenda. But I think that was part of what finally convinced me that it was worth my doing.

INTERVIEWER: And the distinction between the social science and policy is what? Is policy more hands-on? Social science tools can be applied to policy?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. That says it succinctly. Social sciences by and large is not automatically concerned with policy implications. Individuals may become so, and even some fields become highly policy relevant. But by and large, it's interested in its own agenda.

INTERVIEWER: A more theoretical agenda?

SKOLNIKOFF: More or less, yes. That's often giving it more credit than it deserves, but that's right. And this is still true today. Matter of fact, I'm -- well, it's off the point, but I'm urging MIT to do more serious, real social science research and how science and policy interact, rather than just being policy-relevant.

INTERVIEWER: And you're saying you're urging them now, or that you--

SKOLNIKOFF: Now. There are several proposals to create some new centers of research, and I think policy -- rather science and policy ought to be such a center. We're not doing it, nobody is doing it.

INTERVIEWER: So this wouldn't be at the CIS?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, no, no--

INTERVIEWER: And this would be as part of the science technology and policy program?

SKOLNIKOFF: You're way ahead of me. It's not clear what it would be part of. Matter of fact, not clear anything will happen because it's a big reach for MIT. It's a kind of subject that to do right, to really study how science interacts with government, and to study it in a way that's not superficial, that takes money, it takes senior people.

INTERVIEWER: Is it happening anywhere? Cal Tech, Harvard--

SKOLNIKOFF: No, not really happening anywhere.

INTERVIEWER: --Oxford?

SKOLNIKOFF: No. There's a center at Arizona State University, of all places, that is doing something along these lines. But it's not--

INTERVIEWER: That's because of Mike Crow.

SKOLNIKOFF: Pardon me?

INTERVIEWER: That's because of Mike Crow and who has his doctorate in public policy, right?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes. But even that's foundering, especially on financial grounds.

INTERVIEWER: One of the issues about the Center for International Studies -- I mean there are I guess many layers, but besides the question of the pro-Vietnam tilt was the CIA sponsorship early on, which I believe was still in place when you started doing--

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did any of your work fall under their rubric, and how did you feel about it? Did you have any strong feelings one way or the other?

SKOLNIKOFF: I did not have any strong feelings. It seemed to me absolutely appropriate that CIA would support research. Obviously, the students didn't agree with that. But when I became director, I had no CIA support for my own work, and I immediately -- there was a turn -- did a couple of symbolic things. There was a room in the Herman building that was given over to safes for classified material. Well, I disbanded that office and I turned it into student carrels, student study space, and several things like that, which sort of defused any problem.

Even then I was attacked, and it turned out there was a big meeting in Kresge. I had to defend the CIS budget. And some student had dug up the fact that I had a -- there was one project in the center for the Office of Naval Research, and he challenged, how could I do something like that? And I couldn't remember what the hell it was. And it was a history of the office of naval research that a colleague -- it first came to me but I turned it over to a colleague. But aside from that I was -- but you had to tread carefully, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: And this was, you took over in '72 I believe.

SKOLNIKOFF: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: So even after the height of the protest it was still--

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. We had a bomb -- Bill Bundy, McGeorge Bundy's brother. Bill Bundy who had been assistant secretary for Far East, meaning he was in charge of Vietnam, came up for a year or two years to write a book. And we had a bomb one night at 2:00 in the morning. It was clearly directed at something close to his office. And Dan Ellsberg was a visiting fellow--

INTERVIEWER: At the Center?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: When you were director?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it was the end of his two-year stint when I became director. And I had the unnerving experience of having him come to see me wanting to extend for a third year at no cost to MIT. And I knew there'd be a political brouhaha about this one way or another. So I put him off for a while, I said I'd think about it.

INTERVIEWER: This was before the Pentagon Papers.

SKOLNIKOFF: This is before the -- no, after the Pentagon Papers had come out.

INTERVIEWER: After the Pentagon--

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes. And he was headed for trial that September -- this was about April or May. I first checked with Jerry Wiesner who was either provost or president, I think he was provost at that time.

INTERVIEWER: He would have been president by the 70s.

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it did not make any difference. I asked the question, did he care? And he gave exactly the right answer, which was, you decide. So he could always say, "that that fool Skolnikoff made a stupid decision." I mean I knew he was going to do that, but that would seem to me an appropriate thing to ask him.

And then I consulted -- I'm getting into more detail than you probably want -- but I consulted with a lot of people in the newspaper business -- the press. Particularly the then managing editor of *The Washington Post*, Howard Simons, who had been much involved with Watergate. And this was right after MIT had refused to hire Walter Rostow back to the economics department, from which it took a lot of beating in the press. This was seen as a political decision -- we didn't hire him back because of his role in Vietnam.

Anyway, I consulted with Howard Simons and with others -- they all said the same thing. You are going to be pilloried. I finally realized it was more of a -- and I was academically very pure, necessarily -- it was more of a political decision to re-appoint him, because he had done nothing. For two years he'd been on a fellowship and he'd been absent the whole time. He'd contributed zilch, Dan Ellsberg, to the Center. So I realized there was absolutely no academic justification to re-appoint him. And so to re-appoint him was only for political purposes, to avoid embarrassment.

So, I don't know whether it was the right decision or not, but I finally said the hell with it and I said no. What I hadn't realized, what Howard Simons hadn't realized, and what Dan Ellsberg hadn't realized was that he was going to be in trial in September, and he was being portrayed in the press always as a researcher at MIT. We had no interest in saying, oh, he'd long since left. He had no interest in saying that he left. Nobody did. We put a little notice in *Tech Talk* so that we were covered, that it wasn't secret. And the press never caught on. So I lucked out.

INTERVIEWER: Backing up a few years, in 1969 at the height of the antiwar protest, Howard Johnson put together a panel, Pounds Panel, to advise him on what to do with MIT's two big defense-oriented labs, and you were a part of that. How did you come to be on it and what do you recall about that experience?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, it was obviously a fascinating experience, and it relieved you from some teaching, by the way. Bill Pounds whom I knew but not very well, but I since gotten to know much better, but I liked him very much. And the panel was one of these ridiculous panels in many ways. It had all points of view represented from the labs, from the left, from the right. Bill did a masterful job in orchestrating it.

INTERVIEWER: Noam Chomsky was on it.

SKOLNIKOFF: Noam Chomsky was on it. There was a young STS--

INTERVIEWER: John Kabat?

SKOLNIKOFF: John Kabat -- Johnny Kabat was on it, and several senior people from the labs. I actually ended up writing the first draft of the final report.

INTERVIEWER: Those Oxford skills really helped.

SKOLNIKOFF: I volunteered. I mean that's the kind of thing I enjoy doing. The final report was different, obviously, but it wasn't all that different. And what's interesting in retrospect is that the report, as I recall, actually recommended keeping both labs functioning. And Noam Chomsky signed off on it, and Cabot signed off on it. And they reneged later, but at the time they didn't.

Then Howard Johnson's decision to spin-off the Draper Lab -- what became the Draper Lab -- that was a surprise to everybody. That was not what we had recommended. But Lincoln Lab was another thing, and that's been a very important relationship to MIT.

INTERVIEWER: In 1990 another commission you ended up on, actually you chaired, was the study of MIT's international posture in the face of criticism. What were the actual issues, and how did you shepherd that through, where did you come out?

SKOLNIKOFF: The issues were more what the press was raising and Congress was raising than anything else. MIT had started getting some Japanese support. This was the late '80s when it looked as though the Japanese were taking over in electronics. The question was are they milking MIT by giving MIT money and then taking our technology and going back home and then beating us over the head with it in the market.

The question was well, maybe they were or maybe not, and if so, so what? So it was a very interesting panel, included Nicholas Negroponte in the media lab, and several others from other parts of MIT. And the issues were very real issues, and again, had been unprobed. We, MIT, had been approving international relationships without question -- willy-nilly -- with very little faculty involved. There was a committee run by Jack Ruina who was supposed to approve these various projects, and never met--

INTERVIEWER: Was he vice president for research at that point?

SKOLNIKOFF: He might have been. He was certainly still in the electrical engineering department.

So these were, in some ways, it was an eye-opener to me about not just what made MIT tick, but also the ways around restrictions. It is an absolutely unspoken -- not unspoken, a very clear law, you don't appoint to a chair anybody who's a beneficiary of the company that gives the money for the chair, that kind of thing. Well, it turns out you can get around it if you try hard enough. Nick Negroponte was very effective at getting around these things. So I learned all kinds of little techniques like that, not that I used them. But that there's very little, even at a university, that's clearly black and white, more shades of gray.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the committee come out? What did you recommend?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, more or less, and we were criticized by some as being a whitewash. We came out where, in some sense, you would expect that we said that these international contacts are absolutely critical. That MIT was committed to quality and we had to accept faculty and students from any place. And we couldn't be influenced by the money that came with them or didn't come with them. We said that very clearly. I think people who are unhappy said, oh well, that's just pat, that's just rhetoric. We didn't think of it as rhetoric at all. And that, I think, went over very well as far as the faculty. That report is still being used as kind of a background for many of the international activities and reports today.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there's anything about it you would change or do differently 20 years later as the world has changed and MIT has changed?

SKOLNIKOFF: I'd have to look at it again. Nothing special, no. I think we just didn't think that we were being seriously influenced by getting a chair from Toyota Motor Company, and to think otherwise seemed to us foolish. There were some very important issues. We, at that time, had some students from Iran who were studying nuclear engineering, for example. We had some students from Taiwan who were studying missiles. So there was a clear example where MIT was not asking all the right questions at the right time.

INTERVIEWER: And did the panel say that?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And do you know if MIT changed the processes and procedures after that?

SKOLNIKOFF: The big question was how do you do anything about it? Because if you put the faculty in charge of approving every such relationship, you'd never get any work done. The faculty would never do any work, so it became fairly undoable to vet every single possible--

One of the amusing things that a later provost called in Suzanne Berger from political science -- the guy who became president of Washington University in St. Louis.

INTERVIEWER: Mark Wrighton.

SKOLNIKOFF: Mark Wrighton. And his intention, as I understood it, had been to ask Suzanne to head up a Faculty Committee that would really look at what could be done. Well, she came out of that meeting with \$100,000 and a commitment for new relationships which became the MISTI program -- relations between MIT and about nine other countries.

INTERVIEWER: Building on the Dick Samuels-Japan relationship model?

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. And that had not been my thought or assumption. But she, Suzanne, is very creative in that way. And Mark Wrighton was smart enough to respond to it. That's been a fabulous program.

INTERVIEWER: Was she head of political science at that point?

SKOLNIKOFF: Not at that point.

INTERVIEWER: But she was involved somehow.

SKOLNIKOFF: As far as I know. No, I'm quite sure she wasn't head of the department.

INTERVIEWER: Are you still involved with MIT today? You're an emeritus professor -- do you teach at all or write?

SKOLNIKOFF: I'm not teaching at all, I miss that. And I miss it because the students really make you read. I mean giving courses means you've got to keep up with the literature and if you don't -- giving a course you don't keep up with the literature. I have given occasional lectures at request. But I am involved with a whole series of things. I mentioned before this series of annual seminars we've had with the congressional staff, which was Chuck Vest's idea saying that these are the people you want to reach, and MIT ought to be reaching them. And preparing them for the decisions they're going to have to make.

We did that for 15 years, and it was a very successful set of seminars, very interesting set of seminars. It's in abeyance at the moment because we've run out of money, but I'm still involved if it reappears.

And I'm involved with, I mentioned earlier, MIT has a Foreign Fellowship Committee under Linn Hobbs, a mathematician I guess -- a metallurgist-- which reviews all student applications for the Marshall's and the Rhodes and the Fulbright, and we give them mock experiences in how to conduct themselves at interviews and what to emphasize and what not. That's been very interesting. One is repeatedly incredulous at the quality of some of these people. I mean the things they've done at their age is unbelievable. I look back to when I was applying for a Rhodes and it's just another universe entirely. They're an exciting group of people.

INTERVIEWER: You've been involved in a number of policy issues, among them climate change. You wrote an early article predicting that the US would have difficulty working with other nations on this. What did you actually say and how did you come to work on that subject and how did you know?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, this was a subject -- first of all, it fit exactly and my bag of tricks. It was a subject that involved detailed policies and detailed politics, involved science and technology very directly and heavily. There's a small number like that that just are things that are natural for me to pursue. I had been following this one for quite a long time, but long before it became the issue it is today. And long about the late 80s I decided now or never I should write an article about it. I didn't realize that it was never if I didn't do it then, because it became such an incredibly broad subject. Now I've tried to come back to it and it's just too big.

INTERVIEWER: And what drew you into it in the 80s? Was it other faculty members?

SKOLNIKOFF: No, no. Just interest. Here's the subject -- why is it so hard to make any progress? And by this time I understood how the Congress worked, and I understood how the government worked, and I understood how the UN worked and so on. So I had a particular background of knowledge, and I could make choices and could emphasize certain things. The economics training helped because the issue of a discount factor, that is how you measure the future against the present, is a very big part of this issue.

INTERVIEWER: And externalities.

SKOLNIKOFF: And externalities, yes. So I was able to put together what I still think is a very good article that was published in *Foreign Policy* magazine, which really I think laid the whole thing out in many ways. So I was very pleased.

INTERVIEWER: So is there any advice you would give the government or policy people now, how to get this off the dime, so to speak, or how to move it--

SKOLNIKOFF: We're not going to get off the dime.

INTERVIEWER: You don't think so.

SKOLNIKOFF: Not for a while. It's become such a volatile, political issue, and if you read the current *New Yorker* with Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Talk of the Town*, about what the Republicans are saying about it. The new Speaker of the House says the issue is almost laughable and so on. And from where senators would hold hearings about all the bad things the scientists have done. We're showing the worst features of our political process.

INTERVIEWER: Do you get any sense that the science community will mobilize? Is there any effort at MIT to say this isn't where we should be now?

SKOLNIKOFF: There are efforts of the students and some of the faculty. MIT, the research projects, as far as I know are leaning over backwards not to take political positions, particularly the one I'm most associated with, the joint program on the science and policy of climate change, which is joint between economists and the atmospheric scientists, which is a superb program and very big and doing some very, very good work.

They advise, the Congress when asked, they occasionally write pieces when they're not asked about what the choices are. But by and large, as a program they stay away from getting involved in this political debate, which is meaningless at the moment. And other, the Center for Environment and Energy Policy Research also the same thing, they stay away from overt policy positions. And that's appropriate. But individuals don't.

I mean individuals are very active. The one major atmospheric scientist who's a skeptic, who says it's not happening, is a member of the EAPS, Environment -- whatever it is -- Atmospheric Planetary Science. Richard Lindzen who is behaving very badly, not the positions he's taking, but because he's accused his colleagues of actually lying. It seemed to me that's a no-no. The provost ought to be saying something to him, but I don't imagine he has. And so he is perhaps the most activist on the wrong side of the fence -- as far as I'm concerned, the wrong side of the fence.

INTERVIEWER: You've become I think the impresario of the emeritus faculty lunches this semester.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did that happen and who comes and how many people do you get?

SKOLNIKOFF: Jack Ruina preceded me in that role. When he was ready to retire from it, he was looking for somebody who tended to know more of the faculty, the science and engineering community, than most. I fill that bill because I do know -- over the years have worked with a lot of the faculty. So I wouldn't say I was happy to do it because it meant some work, but it turned out to be no work at all. And it's run basically by the president's office, they do all the logistics. I pick the speaker, and I've sort of alternated between a policy person and a scientist, more or less. We just had Jonny Gruber from Sloan School talking about health care just last month. We get about -- it varies -- we get someplace between 40 and 70 faculty each time.

INTERVIEWER: And these are all emeritus faculty?

SKOLNIKOFF: All emeritus faculty. And they tend to ask very good questions, as you'd expect. They tend to be right there. Paul Samuelson used to come regularly. Bob Solow hasn't been coming as regularly. He was for a while. In other words, it's a fairly--

INTERVIEWER: Great group.

SKOLNIKOFF: Yeah. And people like to come, they see old friends. So it's no work to do, and faculty by and large always say yes when asked to give a talk, a two-hour talk.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything we haven't touched on that you think would be interesting to cover or add at this point, as we near the end of our two hours?

SKOLNIKOFF: Well, no -- that's a good question. I have to think a little bit about it.

I finally left the Center directorship -- it was just a personal anecdote. But I left after being director for 15 years, which I realize was too long. And what I realized was too long was because when John Deutch, the new provost, offered me \$100,000 to start some new programs, instead of saying, oh boy, now I can really do something, my first reaction was oh, what a lot of work. And I realized at once, with that in mind, that's the time to quit. So I did. And I think it was five years too long.

I think the Center continues to have a very good reputation. It's now got better office space -- a better office space and I blame Walter Rosenblith who, as provost, we had to move out of the Herman building because we were just too crowded. And Walter said, oh I found you new space in what was E38, an office building by the subway, and that's all that's available. I'll give you two floors and fix them up.

What I didn't know was that they'd already made the decision to make this building right across from where the Herman building, E40, and turn that into an academic building. A much better location for the Center, but Walter, which is typical, he wanted to do it one way and he never even let me know there was a possible alternative.

INTERVIEWER: So this is on Main Street.

SKOLNIKOFF: This was on Main Street right opposite the hotel. **INTERVIEWER:** It's becoming, finally, more and more important. MIT's about to try to redo the subway area and make it more of an entrance to MIT.

SKOLNIKOFF: But the important point was that by moving from Herman building, there was a big gulf between the political science department and the other members of the department who are part of the Center.

INTERVIEWER: Although it's only about, what, a block or two away. It's not right next door.

SKOLNIKOFF: It doesn't make any difference. It's huge, that's a huge gap. And it did make a difference. It's been corrected now, and a matter of fact, every Thursday we have a lunch, one day in the department, one day in the Center. All of that is in part to redress this situation that I created by accepting Walter's largess.

Other than that, I'm not sure other than that I continue.

Well, one thing just as a sort of a more personal point. I mentioned earlier that I find my closest colleagues, closest friends, not just colleagues, were my colleagues at Oxford. And I essentially know none of my MIT classmates. I knew one or two and then lost contact, which I didn't expect and I didn't do for any reason. So it was a good indicator to me of how that Oxford experience had changed everything in my--

INTERVIEWER: But it sounds like you have a lot of bonds with other MIT faculty.

SKOLNIKOFF: Oh yeah. The faculty I've been close to. And these seminars we did were based on faculty, and the faculty were delighted to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I will let you head off for the political science lunch. We are out of time.

SKOLNIKOFF: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: I thank you very much for an interesting conversation.