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Oral History Interview

Of

Gerry M. McCabe

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Oral History Interview

with

[Gary M.] GARY MCCABE

June 24, 1976
Washington, D.C.

By Dan Fenn and William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MOSS: You're talking about a recording system that the White House Army Signal Agency set up and you were just describing what that system was; before the refurbishing and "plumping up" as you said.

MCCABE: Let me go back to where I was talking. Yes, I came to the White House in October of 1960. I had been selected from a group of people that they wanted to choose that would be kind of transition between administrations, whether it was to be a Republican or a Democrat of course nobody knew at that time, but they did know that President [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's naval aide, Captain Rand was going to go and that somebody new
was going to come in and since there was a considerable scope of responsibility there beyond the mere aide social functions, they wanted somebody there to know what the picture was. And I was chosen to be that guy.

When I got there in August of 1960 and I started to get debriefings on my job and what I was supposed to do, and it involved maintaining the shelter at the White House and other physical facilities for the president to guarantee his physical protection in the event of war, they took me over to the White House Army Communications Agency (WHACA) switchboard which was inside the shelter area in the East Wing and during the course of these briefings showed me the taping system that existed there. Of course I already knew that such a system existed in the Pentagon, and it's pretty standard practice among high level commands in the military for the duty officer to have some sort of taping system on his official telephone so that when the boss calls or some high official calls he can throw it on and then go back and find out if he heard the question or heard the order correctly. This existed under the

*Actually called White House Army Signal Agency (WHASA) during the Kennedy Administration.
Eisenhower administration and was there when President [John F.] Kennedy got there and it stayed there essentially the same during the period that I was at the White House which went until the last day in May 1963. We exercised the system occasionally; the president did not normally put his calls out through the WHACA switchboard. But we did exercise it occasionally, and on two or three occasions conferenced the high people, chairman of the in Washington, the secretary of defense, the Joint director of the Chiefs, the Joint Staff, other people who would have to participate with the president in making a decision on initiating some sort of nuclear war or major strike on the part of the United States. And we taped the president and I listened to his voice afterwards on the tape. As far as I know--I saw one of those tapes wiped clean--and as far as I know all of those tapes which were just for thrill purposes were wiped clean. And that's the normal practice in the military, that after the go ahead and exercise is over you wipe the tapes on the head and stand by for the next exercise.

Then I was saying that it was after the Bay of Pigs that I finally began to surface out of
the East Wing shelter area and have some participation in what was going on in the West Wing. That arose out of the fact that President Kennedy wanted a situation room. He felt that after the Bay of Pigs that he needed some facility there that was monitoring what was going on. President Eisenhower didn't have one. No such similar thing had existed since the [Franklin D.] Roosevelt administration when they had the Map Room, and you're probably familiar with that name although the maps have long since disappeared from there. President [Harry S.] Truman had disestablished it shortly after he got there at the end of World War II and there was no facility in the White House like that until President Kennedy wanted this in April of 1961.

Moss: I had the privilege of interviewing Admiral [John L.] McCrae who had charge of the Map Room in the Roosevelt administration.

McCabe: Yes. Well he came down and looked at the situation room and we talked about it and he reminisced and so forth. He thought what a great facility that was compared to what he had which was just some maps stuck on the wall with pins on them. But apparently President Roosevelt took a great
interest in it and always went into the Map Room, according to McCrae, on his way to the office and on his way back to the office.

Moss: What terminals did you have in the situation room?

McCabe: Yes. We were primarily hooked up to the Pentagon on our unclassified phone. On our classified phone, we were connected worldwide through what's called Washington Switch over in the Pentagon. Through the WHACA terminal and the secure facilities—and that's where the secure teletypes and phones are in the White House and I presume are still there today—is over inside this shelter area at the WHACA switchboard—we were connected to State, CIA, NSA, as it came into being, and other agencies like that. And it was a tube system, much as you see in a department store.

Moss: Okay. And where did the CAP channel operate?

McCabe: I don't know what the CAP channel is.

Moss: Okay, fine.

McCabe: And in that way we got our classified messages.
The thing that triggers my memory with respect to any change in the taping system of the White House comes about with my arrival in the West Wing and starting to develop a situation room and then improve it. And I was saying that at about the same time and I felt kind of arising out of this rivalry among the aides, the army started to expand and improve and indeed plush up the little recording studio as they called it which was kind of under the president's office in the West Wing.

Let me back you up just a moment and ask you what your marching orders were in effect for first setting up the command center, the situation room. What were you being asked to provide and by whom?

I had talked for some time with McGeorge Bundy about the possibility of having some sort of situation room available to him and possibly to the president in the White House that would contain maybe a small briefing facility, some maps, a conference room, a secure telephone, and teletypes with watch officers from the key agencies around town. I chose the Pentagon and had a military officer; the CIA, and they sent over a fellow whose name was Mcsomething-or-other like...
mine, and he later stayed there and became more [Lyndon B.] or less in charge of it during the Johnson administration. And then there was an officer from the State Department. And the three of them constituted really the watch that we maintained in there.

As far as the marching orders on the thing were concerned, it really arose out of these discussions with Bundy and it came two or three weeks after the Bay of Pigs. It was a Sunday afternoon and the president came back from Glenora, and I don't know the reason, but it was something involving McGeorge Bundy because Bundy was there. And I maintained helicopters on the South Lawn and was usually here--that's me standing there when Alan Shepard and others arrived by helicopter. I had come in and managed the helicopter landing and they had taken off and the president and Bundy and Shepard and I walked from the South Lawn through the door into Mrs. Lincoln's office. And Bundy and the president went into the president's office and chatted for about fifteen or twenty minutes while Shepard and I stood outside in
Mrs. Lincoln's office. As a result of that discussion apparently, Bundy came out and he turned to Shepard and me and he said, "We really need a situation room in the White House. How long would it take you to get one started?" And off the top of my head I estimated about two weeks, for a very crude one, and he said, "Okay, do it." And that was really the only marching orders we had.

When you were putting it in, did either the president or Mac Bundy come down and say, you know, "what are you doing, what's this, and do we need this or the other thing, or why do we need that," that sort of direction?

Bundy's office was originally in EOB. After we got the situation room installed and going—in very crude form, it still had that kind of cork walls like you see on the ceiling here and not very secure. We started to dig out the rest of the basement in the West Wing and install the offices which from the news pictures look very similar to the one that [Henry] Kissinger has used during [Richard M.] the Nixon administration. And I presume that
Kissinger has used the same one that Mac Bundy used. But anyway, Bundy moved his office into the West Wing of the White House and he brought with him--isn't it funny how names escape me--the guy that became executive secretary...

MOSS: Bromley Smith. He and

McCABE: Bromley Smith. He and Bromley maintained their offices there. There were only two only.

MOSS: Polly sent her with him?

McCABE: Yes, Polly was there and Alice [Boyce]...

MOSS: Alice Boyce.

ABE: Yes, who subsequently I guess became Bundy's secretary in New York. But yes, Polly and Alice were there too. And then I was there and the watch officers and that really constituted the people there in the West Wing. The answer to your question is, now that I've given you the background, yes, Bundy came in very frequently. Ultimately he started holding his daily staff conferences with the National Security staff councilpeople there. And he did that regularly about eight or eight-thirty in the morning. And I usually sat in those meetings at the side of the room and listened to what was going on.
I maintained a record of the comments that were made there, usually making notes on a note pad and then dictating afterwards. And these kind of became the semi-official minutes of those meetings.

When I left the White House I told Mac that I was going to destroy my notes and he said that would be quite all right. So I destroyed...

MOSS: That's too bad.

McCABE: Well, I've never talked with anybody about my...

FENN: That recording room that you were talking about, as I recall— was that straight ahead—you went down to the lunch room to the right, to the mess, and to the left was the men's room and there was also a down there with a black couch.

McCABE: Yes. That's right.

FENN: Straight ahead there was a door and there was some— at the end of that wall before you turned left.

McCABE: Well no, if you came down the stairs from the West Wing, and then you described if you moved off to the right you'd move toward the complex where Bundy and Bromley Smith and I were. And then on the left there was a men's room. And if you
went down that hall, and I don't remember, the
next thing you'd turn right and you'd go into
the mess. And then if you continued down that
hall I don't remember how many doors down, but on
the right hand side was what we called the WHACA
recording room. And that's the room that was
improved.

ENN: What were they recording? Where were the mikes
for that?

CABE: I don't know. I never asked them; they never
told me. I used to walk in and out occasionally
and talk to the guys in there.

ENN: There was a tape recording machine and . . .

CABE: Many tape recording machines and professional
recording equipment. They told me that they made
tapes of music for the president and I'm sure they
did because he liked certain kinds of music and
we--at one time, 'Tess' and I got some of the
president's records from his room, his bedroom
upstairs and we had them recorded and I think they
were recorded by that facility on tapes and then
there was a tape deck on the Honey Fitz and that
way he had his own music on the Honey Fitz.
Okay, but that's not enough to keep all that facility busy. That was there when you first came; that was always there.

But not with as much equipment in it or as professional a set of equipment.

So what the hell were they using that for? You mentioned to me over the phone that during the Eisenhower time there would be times when he would be recording things, meetings and stuff. Presumably this was the physical facility. So what they did was--I don't know if this is right--he would say, "Geez, I've got this meeting and I want it taped," and they would then be able to pick it up and they'd pick it up in that room so there would be a mike upstairs somewhere.

I never saw the installation but that's the way it was explained to me.

By the WHACA people.

Yes. And by the guy that preceded me at the White House on the job.

Who was he?

Where is he, do you know?
McCABE: Yes, he's here in Washington. He's out at NSA; he's in that area.

FENN: Okay, so from time to time the Eisenhower administration would record a conversation, and this is physically where the recording was and this is where the tape machines were, and it was after the Bay of Pigs that you were aware that the army was really making a good deal of jazz here, fancier, more people, more equipment than they had had before.

McCABE: And I would think that General Clifton could tell you exactly about it.

FENN: He has some knowledge of it, but he thinks that Bogart's has much more detail. But he can't remember exactly when the system was installed and why it was installed; and that when and why is important.

McCABE: Yes. I can't answer you. I can only tell you that I think as far the when is, that you should look for a time period after April of 1961, for no improvements went on in the basement of the West Wing until after April of 1961. So that would be the time period. And why? I don't know;
I just wouldn't have any idea.

MOSS: What do you know about the operation of the system, the structure of it and the equipment that was being used then.

McCABE: I can't tell you anything.

MOSS: Nothing of that sort. Do you know anything of what was done with the tapes when they were recorded, where they kept them and that sort of thing?

McCABE: No.

F: What about George's involvement? Some people have said that George got very friendly with Evelyn and was very helpful to Evelyn and would work on projects for her from time to time. And if they thought that he got involved in the taping business to the extent that she was involved. In other words when she would want something to do with the tapes he would help her kind of unofficially.

McCABE: Well if that's what George says, that's what he says; I had no indication of that then and I really don't think that--my recollection is not that he spent that much time over there. The most that we really spent together
with Evelyn was to take some coffee over to her in the morning because she came to work early and we came to work early before everybody was there. And since our people were on watch twenty-four hours and had the fresh coffee already made, when George came in he used to take a carafe of hot coffee over and we got to know her and chat with her and we did some little things for her. But I wouldn't just don't remember George ever being involved in anything else.

What about the Signal Corps people. We've heard that she and they were very chummy and she was a very pleasant lady, and that they would be pretty responsive to things that she wanted.

I believe that. I don't know that they were any more chummy with her than we were, but if she ever asked for anything of us we did it, and I couldn't conceive of the Signal Corps doing any differently. If she expressed a desire or any interest in something or other, they would do it.

You spoke earlier of the rivalry amongst the aides. This is all a piece of it, is it, who can produce
the most the quickest?

IcCABE: I think that's in the background, yes.

ENN: Any other changes in that system? You remember sometime after the Bay of Pigs maybe--and since it was going on at the same time you were putting in the situation room it would have been fairly soon after the Bay of Pigs, not more than six weeks after or something like that, is that right?

cCABE: That the situation room went in, (yes).

ENN: And that's about the time you were conscious of this plusing out of the other. Any other changes that you are aware of in that taping system. Was there any other period when they sort of, there was another quantum leap on that system?

No. That would be it.

ENN: Did you ever--did anybody ever talk about it. Did you ever hear anybody say, "Gee, the president got this taping system in the office, or he's taping conversations in the Cabinet Room," or something like that. Were you aware that this was going on on a regular basis?
McCABE: No, not on a regular basis. As a matter of fact, I can't really say that I know that it was going on. I know, however, that the capability existed and was residual there. And that if the president or one of his high level aides like [Kenneth P.] Kenny O'Donnell or in the previous administration, like General Goodpastor or Colonel Eisenhower had indicated that they wanted a conversation recorded, that there was a way to do it and put it in.

FUSSE: You mean that in addition to the taping equipment down below, there were leads and mikes and that sort of thing and activators up in the offices?

McCABE: Not to my knowledge, they weren't there. They could have been put in for certain occasions and removed.

PENN: Yes. So what we've got is a pretty elaborate system in place so that if Goodpastor says suddenly, "I'm going to see this person at two o'clock this afternoon and I'd like it recorded," that they could really pretty easily string the mikes on to work.
That wasn't President Eisenhower's style however. That's still the style of some military people today but President Eisenhower didn't do it. His style was to hold a meeting, even with high level officials from other governments, usually with himself alone in the room. And then at the end of that time, he would say, "Now I'm going to call in my secretary or executive assistant to make a memorandum or a record of what's gone on here." And at that time, Colonel Eisenhower, or General Goodpastor and a warrant officer with a stenotype would go in, and essentially there would be agreement between the two people in the room as to what had taken place between the president and that individual; and the memorandum went in the file. We were ready to do that for President Kennedy, but as you know that wasn't his style.

OSS: How would you describe his style?

CABE: Less formal, more direct. Less structured, less managerial.

Very much less structured, yes. Not less managerial--managerial in the organizational sense, yes, but no less a grasp of the essentials of what he was
involved in. I had another question that escapes me...

MOSS: I want to follow up on the Mac Bundy morning meetings, but I'd like to wait until we've exhausted the tape before we get into the long tape.

FENN: You go ahead because I had a question, but it's blithered out of my mind at the moment.

MOSS: I've had two or three people who participated in these meetings attempt to describe them to me, who was there and that sort of thing. As I understand it, it was sort of a free flowing composition, that if there was something on the table that Arthur Schlesinger was interested in, he'd wander down and join, but usually it was Mac Bundy and two or three--Komer perhaps or... 

McCABE: Yes. The names of some of the people escape me now. They came pretty regularly. For some of these guys, this was their closest contact with the Oval Office. And so they came pretty regularly. Komer came regularly. Schlesinger came unless he was on travel. One person noticeably by his absence after he joined the staff was General [Maxwell D.] Taylor. We thought that he would come, but I don't really think
that General Taylor ever felt comfortable with that staff. They were all on a first name basis and he waded in and they started him as Max and I could see him bridle a little bit at that. Besides that, I think he wanted to keep his relationship more direct with the president instead of through Mac Bundy. Walt Rostow attended regularly; Forrestal attended regularly.

SS: [

Kaysen?

CS: Kaysen attended regularly.

SS: What about down at the next level, people like [Sanuel Deaver] and Belk and that sort?

CABE: They might come occasionally if their supervisors were out of town. But it was not that well structured in the sense that it was the morning staff meeting and you would be there or the next senior representative from your office. No, it was those people that Bundy worked with directly. And if they were gone the chair was vacant. It was more than two or three people; it was closer to I'd say an average of eight.

SS: Okay, what about the sort of spooky liaison types: Pat Coyne and Tom Parrot?
Tom Parrott came pretty regularly. Coyne did not usually come.

OSS: What sort of a meeting was it? How did...?

OSS: Well, it was a very unusual meeting and it was a very educational forum for me. You can imagine that Bundy had these guys like Rostow and Kaysen and Schlesinger, all of whom were very articulate in their own right and views on what was going on in the world. It was a free flowing meeting. But Bundy had an amazing capacity to keep those guys focused on the subject and to elicit from them the kind of comment he wanted to hear—not in the yes man sense but any contradictions or disagreements and so forth—to elicit these comments from the guys and to get the conversation going around the table to where I thought this was his way of getting at the truth or getting at the nub of the problem, preparatory to going up to the president's office himself to brief him first thing on the affairs of the day. It was extremely well handled. To handle these guys around a table, keep the control over them that he did without squashing them, to get this free flow of ideas was a masterful performance every
day.

MOSS: Okay. Did they all have in hand the morning intelligence reports before they went there and was it essentially a rehash of the latest developments or were there problems that they were working on?

McCABE: I don't know. They didn't come necessarily with papers in hand, nor were they called upon to report. I don't know that I ever heard Bundy ask for a series of reports around the table or speak to someone who had been quiet and say: "What's the report from your field this morning?" I suspect however that those guys got to work a little bit earlier than everybody else and they kind of came from parent agencies like CIA, State, other places, and that they had already called over there and gotten from the executive aides of the senior people a rundown on what went on overnight for they were usually conversant with what had happened.

MOSS: Okay. Well what I'm after is was the agenda, what were the latest developments; or how are we progressing, say, in the plan for action in Vietnam?
McCABE: Yes, it wasn't a staff meeting in the sense of Bundy discussing with an individual or group of individuals around the table specific problems with regard to specific areas. He would do that directly with the individual by meeting with him or talking to him on the phone during the day. No it was more or less to interact on some of the current things in order to make sure that Bundy had the most recent thoughts preparatory to going up to see the president. But in terms of ongoing problems, things that were, papers that were being worked on perhaps between the White House and State or the White House and the Pentagon, they were not discussed at those meetings.

TAPE II SIDE I

McCABE: Sometimes if Bundy was out of town they might hold the meeting. But if they did, they were very empty, shallow things; and generally if he wasn't available the meetings weren't held.

MOSS: Let me ask you to characterize the role of one or two people: Bromley Smith's role is one that I have a hard time getting a hold of beyond being kind of a paperwork traffic cop.
McCABE: I should think that summarizes it. He did maintain some of the liaison with the State Department although there were other channels to the State Department. Bromley functioned as executive secretary at the National Security Council and he pushed some paper through. But again, like the president, Bundy didn't treat Bromley as if he were the chief of staff or his deputy or number one executive assistant. Bromley had certain areas he worked on. Incidentally, Bromley came to the meetings everyday too.

FENN: Was he sort of the Bill Hopkins of that operation then? You remember Hopkins, the expeditor who made sure the right things got signed and went to the right places?

McCABE: Well I think he did some of that for Bundy and the NSC staff, yes.

FENN: Yes, that's what I meant. In other words it was an equivalent kind of role that Hopkins had for the presidency.

MOSS: Where did his area leave off and the work that Alice Boyce and Polly were doing for Bundy directly begin?
McCABE: Well of course I saw Alice and Polly largely in the role of secretaries. Alice was number one and Polly was her assistant. Alice was working directly for Bundy across the range of things that Bundy was interested in. Polly generally looked after things relating to the Pentagon because she had been secretary to one of the previous secretaries of defense so she knew the Pentagon pretty well.

For example, it was wonderful to listen to Bundy dictate, and I can remember seeing him walk back and forth in his office and be dictating a letter, say, from President Kennedy to [Nikita S.] Khrushchev, and he might do this on the dictating machine. And this would be something then that Alice Boyce and Alice alone would take care of and handle directly for him. This was nothing that ever went back to Bromley Smith to my knowledge, although Bromley might read it. But I mean to say that Bromley was not in charge of the editing, Bundy was doing it himself.

MOSS: What differences did you see between the activities of Komer and Kaysen?
McCABE: Well Komer functioned primarily as a, what I would call a desk officer from my experience in the Pentagon, and his ostensible area of expertise was, at that time, the Middle East and Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Arabian Peninsula. Kaysen, on the other hand, was looking mostly at foreign economic policy. There again the Kennedy staff was hard to pin down, knowing exactly what people were doing. That is it's hard for me, because I was there as I told you for six months under President Eisenhower and I could go to the chalk board and draw you a diagram. The guy that really knew about foreign economic policy in the Eisenhower administration was Clarence Randall. What was he, chairman of the board at--was it Inland Steel? Yes. And Kaysen kind of moved into that area but he wasn't so firmly boxed either. He was an idea man. I think all of these guys were idea men and that they were free to let their minds range into whatever area they felt they could be helpful to the president in.

MOSS: What about the people who were sort of in and out, not on the staff but almost in a consultant status--Kissinger when he came in, and[Dean] Acheson and
...some of the people like that?

CABE: I never saw Dean Acheson come down to Bundy's office. Acheson came in. But if he came in, he always waited around upstairs to see the president or he participated in a meeting involving the president in the Cabinet Room. Kissinger, on the other hand, came in to see Bundy and occasionally, maybe not more than three or four times, he did come to the Bundy staff meetings in the morning. I have no knowledge that Kissinger ever saw Kennedy or worked in a direct consulting role for President Kennedy.

IN: Did you pick up any indication of how Kissinger and Bundy got along—either ideologically or personally?

ABE: No, I can't really say. But then, Bundy was a guy who I had tremendous admiration for and I still do. But he wasn't an individual that you could say had necessarily close personal relationships with anybody. He was smart and he knew that he was smart and he really didn't want to talk to you too much unless you were on his level or you had some special knowledge that he wanted to discuss with you. I don't know how much of this is
appropriate to be putting on tape, but, as I say, in managing these staff meetings, he was very skillful on it. Another regular participant there was Walt Rostow, and Dr. Rostow is a man full of ideas. I wish I could recall what I heard President Kennedy say to him one day about being able to write faster than he could talk or had more ideas—and it's true. Walt could write on and on, he was full of ideas. But occasionally he would talk just a little too much and I remember once or twice, Bundy would tell him—this was to kind of turn him off at the staff meetings—all you're doing is exhibiting the problem, you're not solving it. And that would tend to silence the discussion a bit. So how he got along with these other people I don't know. It was friendly but formal—friendy but formal with [John Kenneth] Galbraith; friendly but formal with Kissinger, all of these other people that might have had... S: How about with [Dean] Rusk and [Robert McNamara]? ABE: Same. S: [John] McCone? ABE: Distant. I think that he, I don't know whether
he was on a first name basis with McConé or not. But McConé was an older man in relation to these guys. He was an entity in his own right out there. He might have been on a first name basis with him but it was more formal, more distant relationship. I was going to say that even as far as the Pentagon goes, I think that Bundy would talk more to Gilpatric and I frequently heard him refer to Ros or take things up through that channel as opposed to calling the secretary of defense. And I suppose that maybe they were close socially, I don't know, but secretary of defense is a pretty busy man and I would imagine that the number of little things that Bundy would want to know during the day, that he wouldn't be inclined to pick up the phone and demand that McNamara answer them.

Moss: Did you see anything of the activities of the Special Group, and that kind of off-shoot of the NSC?

McCabe: The ExComm as they called it?

Moss: No, the ExComm were the Cuban Missile Crisis outfit; but I was thinking of the Special Group for Counterinsurgency and Special Group (512) and that sort of thing.
McCABE: No. I don't even know definitely what they were doing. I just knew that they existed, and I knew more about the counterinsurgency group than I did the other special groups, but the substance of what they were doing I didn't know about.

MOSS: Or [Brigadier General Edward] Lansdale's operation over in the Defense Department.

McCABE: I knew that it was going on. Bundy would refer to it in kind of guarded words in his morning meeting, but I feel certain that not everybody around the table knew exactly the depth of General Lansdale's operations.

ENN: Let me get back to a couple of things on the tape. Do you have any information on who could activate the recording system upstairs; do you have any knowledge of or did you ever see an activating switch in Evelyn Lincoln's desk?

McCABE: No.

ENN: You don't recall it either being there, being installed, or being taken out?

McCABE: No. I don't know. I could only speculate. As far as the phone is concerned, it wouldn't surprise me if it would have been possible for Evelyn Lincoln to listen to the president's conversations without
the caller knowing it. Many people at that time in Washington made so much noise about the fact that other people could listen in. So I'm sure that she had the capability.

FENN: Did you ever hear just sort of around the corridors about any talk between Ken O'Donnell and Evelyn Lincoln about the recordings.

McCABE: Nope. I hardly ever went into O'Donnell's office. I went in the president's office a lot of times, delivered a lot of messages, things like that. But boy, I probably would have been stopped if I had tried to go through Ken O'Donnell's office. But I was never stopped if I went through Evelyn Lincoln's; and the president wasn't surprised if I walked in and handed him a message if I came in through that room. And I suppose that Ken knew that I was doing it, but I wouldn't have thought of going in the other way.

FENN: Do you have a memorable message, anything that sticks out in your mind as particularly exciting or struck a reaction from him.

McCABE: Oh no. I delivered a lot of messages to him from time to time on things happening at the Berlin Wall
and Check Point Charlie. I had a pretty good made system set up, and contacts with people that I never saw but guys similar to myself and about my same rank at the block house in Paris and at the command center in Berlin, and we used to talk on the phone and if anything happened, they would call me. And I do remember one time when I got word that Russian tanks had shown up at Check Point Charlie during the Berlin Crisis. And I think that I was about the first man to know in Washington. And I had carried that message into McGeorge Bundy, and Bundy and I went upstairs and I told the president about it. Immediately he reached over and picked up the phone and wanted to talk to McNamara. And he did get through to McNamara and McNamara didn't know anything about it. And this began to irritate the people in the Pentagon that we were finding out things at the White House in advance of others. And they tried to put a damper on it. But I don't think they were ever successful. Of course, as they tried to put that damper on, I just keep throwing around the name of the White House
and the president and so forth.

MOSS: There are more bootleg channels around this.

McCABE: Yes. Well he wanted to know and it was our job to get it for him, so we did.

FENN: You don't know anything then about the dictabelt system on the telephones.

McCABE: No I don't.

FENN: Do you remember the names of anybody else, any of those signal corps people, anybody else who we ought to talk to who would know something—I mentioned Bowk and I mentioned Bogart.

McCABE: Bogart. Major Bogart as he was then—I don’t know what he is now, maybe he’s a colonel, maybe he’s out, probably he’s out. But he was kind of deputy to McNally and he’s obviously...

FENN: McNally is dead.

McCABE: ... and he knew all the details of it.

FENN: Okay. Do you remember the names of any other people, the names of Signal Corps people.

McCABE: No, I can remember the names of some of the people that I worked with over in the East Wing that were on the WHACA switchboard like Russell and a few other guys. But they weren’t
connected up with the White House switchboard
and I don't think they'd have any reason to know
what was going on on that circuit in the West Wing.

FENN: Okay. That's very helpful.