

Interviewee: Alan Pifer

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Q: Mr. Pifer, tell us about your early life.

Pifer: Well, I was born in Boston and I grew up in a small village in Central Massachusetts called Shirley, but my parents were not New Englanders. My mother came from Illinois and my father from Indiana. My father was born in great poverty, very great poverty. And then on top of that he was left at the age of sixteen to support his mother and sister. But he managed, nonetheless, to get himself to Wabash College in Indiana where he met his tuition by running a pig farm and getting up every morning at four o'clock and going around and collecting garbage to feed the pigs. But he got to Wabash College and moved the family to Paris, Illinois which is where my mother came from, and they were in high school together there. But my father won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford and was one of the very first ones. This was probably about 1905 and he, I think, was probably in the second group of Rhodes scholars. Anyway, he went to Oxford and didn't study much but, coming from part of the country where there was no water at all, Southern Indiana, he nonetheless became a rower at Oxford and was captain of his college crew there, the Pembroke College crew. And that was the biggest thing in his life. He never got over that, and he never tired of letting people know about rowing at Oxford. And in his final years he and my mother would go there every spring and at the age of seventy-something he rode along the tow path on a bicycle and coached a crew, a very good crew, mostly Australians. But anyway, that's a little of the background about my parents. The Depression, I think, was the most important thing in shaping their views while I was growing up and then my views. My father never quite was unemployed but was awfully close to it. He was working for a paper mill in the office and had to get orders, and the mill was going to have to close if

he didn't get an order that was big enough to keep the mill running for another week. So he was under very great tension and I think this affected my life, and his, very much. Our relationship was affected by the constant tension he was under during The Depression. But it was a period when all American life was affected. There were, I've forgotten how many millions of unemployed but it was a very large figure, and it went on pretty much all through the 1930's really ending only when America got into the Second World War. But so I started out, I had two older sisters who were very, very liberal, super liberal. They somehow got to Vassar College, both of them, and I think Vassar students, most of them at that time, were quite left wing, and I think they were affected by that. And of course I was somewhat affected by them. They considered me a political ignoramus but nonetheless I acquired liberal leanings at that time. My father had been a strong supporter of Herbert [C.] Hoover until The Depression, and then suddenly he shifted over and became a very strong liberal supporting Franklin Roosevelt. I should perhaps say parenthetically that I met Roosevelt at that period. He came to Groton School which was only four miles from where my family lived, and which I was later to attend on a scholarship. But this was before I went there, and he had come because all his sons went to Groton, and he went to Groton himself. He was one of the very first people to go to the school. So when he became president he was anxious to put in an appearance at the school, and you know, of course, he was paralyzed from the waist down and had rode in this open car so you couldn't see that he was paralyzed, but he had to be lifted out of the car and carried into the chapel where there was [a] special service, I suppose to kind of bless his presidency. But anyway while he was waiting to go into the chapel and just sitting there in his car my mother suddenly grabbed me by the hand and marched me right up to, a little distance, to where his car was and said, 'Mr. President, I want you to meet my son Alan.' Just like that. And the Secret Service if they were there -- in those days there wasn't such emphasis on things -- but if they were there they didn't move a muscle. So I shook his hand, or he shook my hand and that was that. But then I did go to Groton School the next year and I think was probably the first person to attend there on a full scholarship. And this came about because my mother was a minor dignitary in the Episcopal church, and of course it was an

Episcopal school, and the headmaster of the school had come to know her and I think he thought that it would perhaps democratize the school by having one little boy who was on scholarship. But that was part of my background. That [Groton] was of course a very republican, and very anti-Roosevelt -- although finally the headmaster did come around and decided that -- you see, Roosevelt had not made much of a mark at Groton. He wasn't a very good student, and nobody ever suspected that he was going to go into politics and become a leader, governor of New York and then president of the United States. But he in fact did, and so when Roosevelt got to the White House then the head master -- the rector -- Dr. Peabody, kind of got over his antipathy to the whole idea and was very welcoming to Roosevelt.

Anyway that was part of my background. I graduated from Groton in 1940 and was admitted to Harvard. It was almost impossible not to get into Harvard in those days, and the tuition was five hundred dollars. It's now I think thirty five thousand, anyway, I had a little scholarship at Harvard but they didn't actually give it to me because I really didn't need it, particularly when I went back after the war. I had just one full year and part of my sophomore year before I decided to enlist in the army. It was right after Pearl Harbor and I just felt that I had to go in the war so I did. And I was in the war, I was away four and a half years, went in as an enlisted man, a private, and went to officer's school. I hadn't wanted to be in tanks but that's where I ended up, in an armored division, and finally was demobilized in 1946 as a captain. And had a pretty interesting war experience, not at the beginning but toward the end when we went to Europe, and then across to France, and in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. And that was pretty demanding. It was a very, very cold winter with deep snow, and we were of course living out in it. And the Germans had totally surprised us with this incursion into Belgium that nobody thought they had the capacity at that point to do. But they did and it turned out to be the biggest battle in American history, sorry, the biggest battle in history, except for Stalingrad, so it involved something like five hundred thousand men on each side. It was a pretty extraordinary undertaking, the whole thing, both on the German side, and then when we

finally rallied and realized what was happening then the American troops were able to overcome the Germans. Anyway we went across Germany and I ended up the war in Austria. Then finally was able to get back to the United States, went back to Harvard, got a very much abbreviated degree which I never was really able to add to, but they sort of let me out the back door with a degree in general studies, honors in general studies. But I never had a full four years, it was more like two and a half. That was all I got.

Then after the war I was about to start working for Harcourt Brace Publishing Company when I got a scholarship that I had hoped very much to get which is called the Lionel de Jersey Harvard Studentship, at Emmanuel College at Cambridge University in England. And this had been set up to honor the only person who was a direct descendant of John Harvard [who ever went to Harvard]. Harvard was the Englishman who in a sense founded Harvard, although really all he did was give his library which was about a hundred books. But anyway he got his name on Harvard, and this direct descendant of his had been located in England and some Americans raised the money to send him to a good school. He came from a very poor family, and then the minute the war came in 1914 he had to go in and was killed, almost the first day. So this scholarship was set up in his honor. And that's what I had. It was both academic and social, more social than academic, and you were supposed to engage in sports and, do other things of that sort, and go to the pub every night with your friends. I ran on the track team, not very well, but I played on the university ice hockey team, and we played various semi-professional teams around England, and even Switzerland.

So after that I liked England so much that I decided that I would not go home, that I would stay there and see if I could get a job. And very luckily I did get a job, no pay but I didn't need the pay because I had all my savings from the army, and I also had the American G.I. Bill [benefits]. So I was very well off, and so I was able to work in the embassy on the treaty that was to result in the establishment of the Fulbright Program in England. The cultural officer in the embassy wanted the job but he wanted to be paid in dollars, and I

was, of course, by then I was being paid, but in sterling. So he wanted me to keep the seat warm while he finagled somehow getting his pay in dollars, and he was going to leave this cultural embassy job, embassy cultural affairs officer job, but he never was able to pull that off. So the result was that I got the job and I was kind of young for it. I was about twenty-six, or twenty-seven, but anyway, since it was all new I figured that I could do it as well as the next person and why not? So I did that, got into some trouble over Senator McCarthy, in that famous era in American life. Because the State Department was so, so hypersensitive about McCarthy, they were security-clearing all of the students who got appointed to Fulbright grants which was a ridiculous waste of time and money and so on, but that's what they were doing. I had a staff of twelve or fourteen people there, and they were all British except one who was an American woman who actually lived most of her life in England but she was an American citizen, and she made a clerical error which resulted in a black woman from [a] labor college at Cornell being told that she had a grant [before being security-cleared]. Now to cut down the whole time sequence, I had persuaded the State Department to let me write the letters telling the people who got the grants that they got them, and I could then tell them about transportation and all that stuff. There were a couple hundred of them. But she gave one of the approval letters, who got the award letters, to this woman who a) was black, and b) was of pretty left wing background and was destined to spend her year in England at Ruskin College which is a labor college sort of loosely attached to Oxford. So all the makings were there for some real trouble, and it soon developed. And the State Department then took the position of the Secretary of State -- oh, for a minute I can't think of his name [Dean Acheson] -- who took the position that I should be fired because of this, and so they in fact went so far as to appoint a successor to me who was a dean from Johns Hopkins University. And he came over but I wouldn't let him in the office because, because the State Department had no right to fire me because the treaty had set up a bi-national commission who actually were the governors of the program, and my employers. And only the commission could fire me. But in any event the State Department pressed on with this to a point where finally two of the members of the British

commission¹ decided they would go over and back the Secretary of State into a corner and tell him, clearly, that if they [the department] went ahead with this nonsense about firing me that they were going to take all of the British universities out of the program, Oxford, Cambridge, and the whole lot. And they were prepared to do it. So he backed down finally and nothing ever happened. The woman came over and she was perfectly alright, and I guess McCarthy never quite found out about it because it never came up again, and I stayed on for six years² as director of the program.

Anyway, to move on, toward the end of the program the Colonial Office in England decided that, well, it really would have been a decision of the government at large, that they wanted their colonies to participate in the Fulbright Program. So in 1952 -- '51,'52 -- that winter, I went out to the West Indies and visited Guiana and Trinidad, and Barbados, and Jamaica to talk about the Fulbright Program. Then the next winter they asked me to go to all their colonies in Africa and do the same thing. So I had by then decided I was going back to America and so they talked me into, it wasn't too difficult, to going to Africa for five or six months, and visiting all their colonies, which I did, all except Somaliland, and Gambia. But Nigeria; Gold Coast as it was then called -- Ghana later; Kenya; Tanzania, which was then called Tanganika; and the Rhodesias and the whole lot. And it was in that trip that I responded to some very strong suggestions by friends in England that I should visit South Africa. South Africa was not a British colony. It was by then an independent country within the -- self-governing country -- within the British commonwealth. Later it left the Commonwealth altogether and became the Republic of South Africa, but at that time it was still in. But it could not participate in the Fulbright Program because it was self-governing. And I spent two weeks in South Africa and met some people at the University of Capetown which later became one of my great interests, that university, and still is. And when I then went back to the United States and, as we were discussing earlier, I walked in off the street with no appointment and got a job at Carnegie

¹ Note: "British members of the commission," not "members of the British commission." A. Pifer, 8/99.

² Note: it was actually "five years," not six. -- A. Pifer, 8/99.

Corporation which is rather unusual to say the least --

Q: Tell me about that in some detail, Mr. Pifer. That first visit to Carnegie, off the street, tell me a bit more about --

Pifer: Well, how it happened was that I had an appointment with the Rockefeller Foundation and I thought I was actually going to get a job with them, and went to see them and found they hadn't done anything about setting up interviews, or anything, whether they'd forgotten -- I thought they'd made a commitment to me but they hadn't. At any rate I was kind of angry and walked out, and I had heard of Carnegie Corporation so I said well I'll just go try it, and went in and met the person who had just taken over the direction of the international program which was called the British Dominions and Colonies Program, because that's the way Carnegie had set it up, and said I'm Alan Pifer, I've just come back from, from six months or whatever it was, five or six months in Africa, and was running the Fulbright Program. And he gave me the oddest look. Finally he said, 'My god, you've got the exact profile of what we're looking for.' And he said, 'We've looked everywhere to find somebody with some experience in Africa and we couldn't find anybody.' So they hired me pretty much on the spot. John Gardner and Jim Perkins just said, 'Well you're it.' And John Gardner asked for my background and I told him that I had been at Groton, and Harvard, and Cambridge, and he said, 'Do you think you can live that down?' And I liked him instantly. And so, and I hoped I would have a job there. Well in fact I became the second in charge with Steve Stackpole, number one, in this British Dominions and Colonies Program, initially working in Canada and Australia and New Zealand, although these were the areas that Steve was more comfortable in, and very soon after joining the foundation I found myself in South Africa looking into the program there and kind of trying to breath some new life into it. It had been largely moribund during the war years of course, and then I don't know how many years later, I guess it would have been about 1965, something like that, no, '63, that Jim Perkins, the vice president of Carnegie, left to

become president of Cornell University, and I was then promoted to vice president for the whole program, not just the international program, and worked very closely with John Gardner for I guess, perhaps two years, and then John was very suddenly appointed Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare by Lyndon Johnson. I was in England and I got a cable from [Morris Hadley] the chairman of the Carnegie board saying you're it, you're now acting president. So I had to go home and, it was a big jump for me because I had not been really doing much work for very long in the American program which was after all over ninety percent of the total. So I had to work hard to fill in a lot of pretty big gaps in my background, particularly about the social sciences, about which I knew very, very little. But Lloyd Morrisett, who had been John Gardner's assistant, became mine, and also became a vice president, and he was a big help to me, and Florence Anderson, the secretary of the foundation, a very big help.

I guess the most exciting thing of that period, or at least the most demanding was the 1969 Tax Reform Act in which was brought on in part, in the part of the act that was very antagonistic towards foundations was brought on by McGeorge Bundy, president of the Ford Foundation who had done some very indiscreet things, in particular giving sort of personal grants to all of Bobby Kennedy's staff after Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. And that was the sort of thing you just couldn't do. Bundy knew he couldn't but went ahead and did it anyway, and that got the whole foundation field into a lot of trouble, and also making grants that were in effect political, and helping Carl Stokes get elected as mayor of Cleveland, first black mayor, I guess in the United States. So Congress was really out to get him, mostly the Republicans, but also a lot of Democrats, particularly southern Democrats who felt that the Ford Foundation was too liberal on the race issues. I was of course quite new, by then this was 1969, to the broader issues of philanthropy at large, and probably one of the, certainly if not the most junior, close to it, of the presidents of the larger foundations in the country. But I think there as sort of a counter weight to Bundy whom they did not like, and did not want to elect, they elected me to be their chairman and spokesperson during this investigation of foundations that was conducted by

the Ways and Means Committee of the House, and the Senate Finance Committee. Because it was tax legislation, both houses were involved. Well maybe that's a place to halt for a few minutes while I have a drink of water.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

Q: Mr. Pifer, tell me about your first impressions of Carnegie: staff, board, who taught you the tools of your trade, who brought you along.

Pifer: Well, one impression that I had was when I was offered a job there, I talked to two or three people before I -- I knew I was going to accept it, but I talked to one of my old professors at Harvard, Howard Mumford Jones, from North Carolina, history professor, because he had had some contact with Carnegie. He said that I would be amazed at two things: the fact that all the walls were covered in mahogany, and that the carpets were so thick that you needed snow shoes to walk over them. [Laughter] Of course, I had been in for an interview and I was amused at his description of it.

But it was a very formal place, very formal, and very old-fashioned both in looks and in the way it operated. The staff was 100 percent white, except for one person, Saunders, who was never dignified with a first name or with a "Mr.," a title. He had been Andrew Carnegie's valet, and he had a little hole in the corner office and ran errands such as taking money down to the bank or getting money or whatever. But other than that, there was no person of color on the staff.

And aside from Florence Anderson, the assistant secretary -- Bob Lester, being secretary at that time -- there were no women on the [staff] -- the women were secretaries and they were referred to as "girls," which was characteristic of the times.

It was a very staid sort of environment in which you felt that you had to talk in whispers.

It livened up a bit. It was a difficult period in Carnegie history, because the president of that day was not John Gardner, it was Chuck Dollard, and Chuck Dollard had had a series of mental breakdowns. Each time he had one of these, John would have to fill in for him, and finally it got so bad that the trustees did what they should have done much earlier, which was arrange for Dollard to retire and put John Gardner in the job. But John had been through that rather difficult period and he was quite tense.

It was a sort of formidable board of trustees at that time. It was what later became known as a blue-gray board, because it was all men and they all wore either dark blue or dark gray suits, so it was a blue-gray board. It contained the heads of some major corporations and big banks and people who were formidable figures in their field, but knew nothing about the things that the foundation was involved in. Most of them knew nothing about it. There were one or two exceptions: Caryl Haskins, who was president of the Carnegie Institution in Washington and a very great scientist, and one or two others. But mostly they were business and professional people, mostly lawyers, the professional people, and the others, businessmen and bankers, a lot of bankers.

So John did not feel, I guess, at that time that he could change the board. In fact, I think his attitude toward it was that if he didn't talk too long in the meetings and made it interesting and picked out just a few things, and didn't try to really describe what the grants were all about, that the board would be satisfied with that. And that was pretty much the way it worked.

I made the mistake once or twice, but never again, of telling the trustees too much, and then got all tangled up and got them confused and so on. But that was something I did learn from John, actually, make it interesting and don't tell them too much.

Well, that was what the foundation was like. For another reason it was a difficult period in the Corporation's life and all foundations, because there had been two congressional

inquiries, the Reece Committee and the Cox Committee, that had made a study of foundations, with a possible view to lifting their tax exemption, which would have been an absolute disaster, of course, and probably would have resulted in no new foundations ever being established, quite possibly so.

So out of that a lesson was learned not by the field at large at all, but by Carnegie Corporation, in the person of John Gardner and the vice president, Jim Perkins, that we should spend a lot more time and effort on informing the world, but particularly the powerful end of it, about what foundations were, and particularly who we were and what Carnegie was all about, and what Mr. Carnegie himself had stood for and what his interests were, and so on.

So we set out to do that and, in due course, hired a person who became a sort of public relations director and writer, [a] job filled by Avery Russell at the present time, and other people. Barbara Finberg was involved in that sort of effort initially, as an editorial assistant.

Well, let's see. Where should I go from there on the nature of -- have I answered your question about what the Corporation was like in that day?

Q: I think so, and I'm still wondering about how you learned this business of philanthropy. You came to Carnegie as a very young man, and I'm wondering who taught you.

Pifer: Well, John Gardner taught me a bit. One thing that he taught me, which I have teased him about -- he doesn't like to be teased -- is that you have to be a very good bluffer, and he was excellent. I mean, he could give the impression of knowing all about some subject when he really -- I knew he knew very little about it, because we'd worked together on it. But he was a master at that, and that's what I learned, that I had to do that, that I could not get on top [of everything]--

A foundation has access to immense amounts of information and knowledge and highly intelligent, well-educated people who are constantly coming in, looking for money, of course, and foundations are looking for good people. In order to not make a fool of myself in that sort of process, I had to learn a lot, but I also had to become a very good bluffer, as John Gardner was. John also, of course, had a huge command of the social sciences, which I did not have. But I had my international experience, six years in England and six months in Africa and earlier experience in the Caribbean, so I could fall back on that at times. And there was at least one important area, which was South Africa, where I was the only one in the foundation who knew anything about it, or indeed in any other foundation. It was just unknown territory in those days.

Q: You were pioneering in that regard.

Pifer: Yes.

Q: Tell me something about the activities that you initiated in South Africa.

Pifer: Well, there were two kinds of activities. There were the ones that the Corporation was involved in and then there were a number that I was personally involved in, but didn't have too much to do with, they weren't things being financed by Carnegie, and one of them was the African Studies Association. There were about a half a dozen of us who were the founders of the African Studies Association.

Then USSALEP, U.S.-South Africa Leader Exchange Program, which was founded by the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia, and I was one of the originals, I'm one of only two people still alive who were -- that was in 1958, that that was founded. It had a joint board, South Africans and Americans, and the purpose was to -- we knew we didn't agree on most things, but the purpose was to try to have an exchange of views, and

our purpose, of course, was to try to influence the South Africans to begin to cope with their enormous problem of race relations, which was about to burst on the scene and, of course, did later, somewhat later.

We did have some influence through USSALEP. We held the first interracial conference ever held in South Africa. It had to be held at the Jan Smuts Airport lounge. [Laughter] The South African Government wouldn't let the blacks, who were part of our team, but not the South African side, wouldn't let them out of the airport, so we had the conference in the airport, in the Holiday Inn at the airport. But that broke new ground. So we kept pressure on them until they began to appoint some people of color to their board. They hardly ever, in my time of activity in it, although technically I'm still a member -- South Africans, curiously enough, were more prejudiced about having women on the board than having blacks. They were much more willing to have blacks, as long as they were male, than they were women.

Even today, there are hardly any women on that board. It's extraordinary, but there is enormous prejudice toward women having responsible positions, in all three or four -- all four communities, racial communities. That would be the white group and the colored group, which is a special racial group in South Africa, and the Indians -- Indians from India, not American Indians, obviously -- the white group was split between two-fifths were of English origin and English-speaking, and three-fifths were of Afrikaans background, Afrikaaner background, and spoke Afrikaans. So USSALEP was able to pull these groups together, but never really was able, no matter how much pressure we put on from the United States, they would always say -- and all groups, including the blacks, especially the blacks, would say, 'There aren't any qualified ones.' Which was not all that far from American beliefs at that time, if you take Carnegie Corporation with no women except Florence Anderson in a policy position.

But that was one of the things, when I became --

Q: I've got to stop you there.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO; BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE]

Q: Mr. Pifer, tell me about the Corporation's activities in South Africa under your direction.

Pifer: Well the Corporation had first become involved in South Africa as early [as] about 1910, and in making grants for public libraries, there were not a lot of them but there were a couple, in particular, that I learned about later. Then it also became involved through the Phelps-Stokes study. The Phelps-Stokes Foundation did a study of teacher training in the Rhodesias, particularly Southern Rhodesia and Kenya, and I guess in South Africa too. And Carnegie was in some way involved in that. I can't remember just exactly how, possibly we helped finance it because the Phelps-Stokes Foundation did not have very much money, so anyway, we were involved quite early but it was not a big involvement, although Fred Keppel, president of Carnegie in the 1930's did make a trip out to South Africa. He also went to Australia and New Zealand, but he made a trip to South Africa, and one of the reasons was that there was a graduate student at Columbia, at Teachers' College called Ernest Malherbe, or in English [pronunciation] Ernie Mal-her-bee, and he was a very bright fellow, and the people at Carnegie got to know him, and so when Keppel went out to South Africa he had cabled to Ernie who had gone back to South Africa just before that, saying would Ernie meet him on the dock at Cape Town with some ideas about what Carnegie could do in South Africa. So sure enough Ernie Malherbe was there and this led directly into the so-called Poor White study which was the first big thing that Carnegie did. There's been a lot of controversy over that study, which Ernie was very much aware of later. At the time it seemed perfectly natural in South Africa, and this was sponsored by the Dutch Reform church there, to think that any real approach to South Africa's problems, which were very considerable, great poverty in the country at that time

in the 1920's and 30's, could not be tackled until the very big problem of poor whites, poverty among poor whites, was tackled. So a decision was made to set up a study that was I think the largest interdisciplinary social science inquiry that had ever been made anywhere, and in fact there were no sociologists at all in South Africa so they appointed an American to that, which in itself was quite extraordinary. But the Poor White study was in many ways a very, very good piece of work. Ernie was secretary of it and kept it moving and wrote a good part of the final report, and if you accepted this premise then it was a very good piece of work, but of course the premise was highly debatable, although at the time it wasn't. The debate came later when, even in my time, I had to answer questions from rather hostile black groups. Why did Carnegie ever spend money on white poverty when black poverty was much bigger? It was a hard question to answer.

Q: How did you answer it?

Pifer: Well, by giving the answer, which I only partially believe myself, that until you could do something about the poverty among whites that they would never do anything about black advancement, that South Africa would remain a totally segregated society because the basis of it was jobs. And there was the one thing that the whites did not want was to have blacks, Africans, or even Indians or coloreds taking over jobs that were reserved for white people. So, for example, there was a total color bar in the minds where blacks could do certain jobs but no others ever. For example no black could ever earn a blasting certificate, for dynamite in gold and diamond mines. The approved method was to drill a hole and then fill it with dynamite, set it off, and then clean up the mess and ship it up to the surface a mile -- these mines are deep, deep mines. Africans could push the carts that took the residue from the explosion to the shaft and load it on and they could do jobs like that, but there were many jobs they could not do. They were not at that time allowed to work a jackhammer to open the holes up to put the blasting stuff in.

Anyway, that was the answer I gave that -- I don't know. I think that with more

enlightened leadership, white leadership in South Africa, particularly from the business community, it might have been possible to begin making some changes, of course the idea behind the Poor White study was that only after figuring out a way to get them out of poverty, would anyone ever tackle the question of black poverty. In fact the Poor White study did succeed in helping the Afrikaners get out of poverty by coming up with the idea of using government power, once they had gained power in the 1948 election, use government power in order to reserve economic development, in certain fields like insurance, entirely for Afrikaners. So they set up a lot of government corporations, the Arms Corp which made arms, the Iron and Steel Corp, and a number of others where all the good jobs were reserved for Afrikaners. And so naturally the Afrikaners began to prosper, and it is true that, at a later date, that the fact that the Afrikaners were doing well did encourage them at least a little bit to open up some of the jobs that had been reserved only for white people. So I don't know, it's not a very good answer but it was the best [I could do]. Anyway Ernie Malherbe, Mal-air-ba as it really should be pronounced, always had qualms of conscience about this, and every time I would go out to South Africa, and I have been to South Africa twenty seven times over the years, but every time I would go, I would go see Ernie in Natal, Durban, and he would say, 'Alan, when are you going to do that study of black poverty?' because he had this qualm of conscience, he wrote in the final report, I think it's the last paragraph, he says, 'Some day Carnegie will make a study of black poverty.' And then so he kept jogging me over that, and so finally when I was beginning to think about retiring I suddenly realized that if I didn't do this probably nobody would, and that -- because I was so deeply involved in South Africa. So we took the decision and, and set up the Carnegie study of black poverty through the aegis of the University of Cape Town where it was based, and I had to go out and explain to the South African cabinet what this was all about, and they didn't approve of our making the study but they decided not to stop it which they could have done easily by simply refusing to allow us to send money and to pay for it. They were highly skeptical of it, but I talked to four of the leading cabinet ministers about it and then we went ahead and did it and it was very important. It was not completed entirely in my tenure as president but it was

certainly well started during that period, and my successor, David Hamburg, carried it through to completion with enormous help from Avery Russell who kept pushing to get the report done. The leader of the study, Francis Wilson, was a brilliant sociologist but he was more of a talker than a writer, and he just would not get down to writing this report. We finally urged him to get somebody to help him write the report, and this turned out to be Mamphela Ramphela who's now the head of the University -- Vice Chancellor which is the equivalent of president in American terms. And she and Avery Russell played a big role in getting that report written, but it did finally come out and it was a very good job.

Q: Mr. Pifer, there was a long period of time when the Corporation did not make any grants in South Africa --

Pifer: Yes, yes, and that was attributable in part to feelings about apartheid, but there was also a more important element and that was that Steve Stackpole and I had decided that we should take advantage of my experience in the other parts of Africa, all those British colonies which were moving towards independence, to have programs in some of those countries like Nigeria, and Kenya, and, and Ghana, and Sierra Leone and so on, and the Rhodesias, and so since the amount of money that was available in the overseas program was quite limited, we had to make a decision to cut back on all the things the Corporation had been doing which was largely a travel grant program for middle level academics from Australia, New Zealand, Canada to some extent, and South Africa. So that was part of a larger decision really. There were some people who were quite pleased -- I had mixed feelings, frankly, but later when the whole movement came to ostracize South Africa, the cultural boycott so called, I was very much opposed to that. I felt that was a big mistake.

Q: Why?

Pifer: Because I felt that it was just hurting the people in South Africa, the people at the University of Cape Town, for example, and many other South Africans who were opposed to apartheid, and if we then went and ostracized the whole country, or all its intellectual institutions, we were just hurting our friends. So whether that cultural boycott -- I have a feeling that really didn't have a lot to do with the ultimate decision to impose sanctions against South Africa. I think it was more in the economic realm and the sports field which was very important. South Africans are fanatics about sports, and they had been denied the right to compete in the Olympics, for example, and that hurt them greatly, and other things happened -- that they were no longer welcome to play matches in England. Australia totally ostracized them, and Canada, New Zealand. So that had a big effect on them, and then particularly the refusal of the American banks, Chase Bank for example, to roll over their loans to the South African government. That hurt a lot. And then the rand began to decline rapidly in its value after that, so finally it was a combination of things but I did not feel that ostracizing South Africa was the way to go. I felt the way to go was to go ahead with the economic sanctions and -- but even there do it with great care because of course it was going to be, it was going to cost a lot of blacks their jobs. For example the decision not to use South African ships to carry goods to and from South Africa, which was I think effected by the Maritime Union in the United States and perhaps in England also, that decision immediately cost a lot of colored South Africans who were the principle labor force in the fruit export field their jobs. So there was a down side to that that was quite serious.

Q: When Carnegie got back into grant making in South Africa, and perhaps there were programs like this in other countries in Africa, too -- I'm interested in the work that you did with legal, in the legal field [there] --

Pifer: Yes, these programs were, if I recall correctly, entirely in South Africa, and this came directly from the American interest in some of our law schools, particularly in, what do you call it, the kind of law that deals with human rights, and advancement of minorities

-- civil rights law. We hired a man named David Hood, who had been Dean of the University of Hawaii law school which had a very strong civil rights thrust to it, and he had then gone on to the University of Washington, and we hired him from there. So he brought quite a knowledge of this whole field with him, and initially he was not supposed to be involved so much in the South African program, but he took to it very naturally, and very ably, and we went ahead and established two very important programs. One was in the sort of civil rights law field at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. John Dugard was the dean there, and he had been to the United States several times and knew a fair amount about this kind of law, and what Carnegie was doing. But he was interested really in the educational side of it. He wanted to see the University of Witwatersrand law school be a real center of intellectual effort in this field. The other was the -- goodness, it was the center -- can't get it for the moment -- it was not in a university, it was the center that was set up by Arthur Chaskalson, who was a leading lawyer in the Johannesburg bar, to take, to develop trial cases where they tried to establish precedents, since South African law is very heavily based on precedence, to get test cases that establish precedents that would move the barriers out of what blacks could do or in exercising, having any civil rights at all. And this was the Legal Resources Center. Sorry I couldn't get that for a minute. It became very important and Arthur Chaskalson is now the chairman of the constitutional court in South Africa. They have a supreme court which they call the Court of Appeals, but they now, as of all the changes that have taken place, have a special court that enforces civil rights law. And he's the chairman of that. So he's in a very important position, very important. And a lot of the people that -- this legal resources center established branches in each of the provinces, the Western Cape, and the Eastern Cape, and Natal, so it had become quite powerful by the time the change over came, and I think was probably one of the most important things, perhaps the most important thing that we did in South Africa, although John Dugard's work at Wits was very important also. There were other things but you have to remember we didn't have much money. We were confined to, I think, the figure was eleven percent of whatever the earnings were for that particular year, the amount that the trustees were required by law to set aside to be spent,

and not accumulated. That was all part of the Tax Reform Act. I think we're going to get onto that a little later I believe. But so what else about South Africa could I --

Q: Mr. Pifer, I wanted to ask you, between the Poor White study, the pioneering work in the legal field, the second Carnegie inquiry in to poverty in southern Africa, what difference has Carnegie made in South Africa? How would you characterize the difference the Carnegie Corporation has made to Africans?

Pifer: Well, it, I think, opened up discussion, it helped open up discussion about some very fundamental issues, and what the American role might be in that. Even in a sense a trivial, or almost trivial thing, as American sociologists being part of the Poor White study. You have to know that the Corporation was the first of the big foundations, and the largest for a long time. It's only twentieth now, but it was the largest. And it had enormous prestige so that the president of Carnegie Corporation in the 1930's or 40's was a big figure in American life and particularly in these overseas countries where we operated. And so people listened to what we said, and I think learned a lot from the academics who came over. Some of them didn't learn a thing from America, and Steve and I were very disappointed, but some of them learned a lot, and it had an effect, therefore indirectly, but an important effect in the universities; and that was that was important because Afrikaners have an enormous respect for education -- and even though they never believed in it for their black people -- for themselves, and even for English speaking South Africans, they had an enormous respect so that making a little headway in the universities, particularly the Afrikaans-speaking universities was worth doing. Otherwise I think our mere presence there said something. I think it helped other foundations get involved, and we made that effort because we sometimes, as we did in the American program, asked other foundations to join us in the funding of something, and very often the Ford Foundation did. So despite Bundy we had good working relationships with them, and particularly after Bundy was gone and Frank Thomas, who was the first black president of a major foundation in America [Ford Foundation], had been a Carnegie trustee -- he was

our first black trustee, and that goes back to -- Frank and I were close friends because we were both involved in the founding of the Urban Coalition in New York City, and worked together over that, and a number of other things. When he was still running the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation out in Brooklyn -- so we were very close friends. Also the Rockefeller Foundation had decided to set up a study of what was going in South Africa, and this would have been I think in the early 70's, something like that, and Frank was asked to be chairman of that. So he then just naturally put me on it because I had helped get him interested in Africa when he was a Carnegie trustee. So that sort of wraps that one up I think.

[END TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO]

Q: Mr. Pifer, tell me about your efforts to diversify the board of Carnegie Corporation.

Pifer: Well, I first realized that we had a problem about diversifying the board when I was asked by John Gardner -- Steve Stackpole and I were asked to give a little talk to the trustees about Africa, generally, and so we each prepared an elaborate thing, most of which I forgot. But -- a very amusing incident. I'd decided to tell what I thought was a funny joke about Africa, and in the middle of it I forgot the point, and had a moment of terror because I couldn't remember what the punch line was. And all of a sudden, miraculously a wholly new punch line occurred to me, and so that got a good laugh, and afterwards, Steve Stackpole said to me, 'Alan, that's the first story I ever heard that had two endings.'

But I realized we had a problem, and so did Steve, when we finished this and there was dead silence in the board room. Just no reaction at all. Finally, old Nicholas Kelley, who was very ancient, spoke up in his quavering voice and said, speaking about Africans, 'I believe these fellows are only just down out of the trees,' which I was so shocked at that, I could hardly contain myself, and so was Steve. But I think that was one of the points at which I realized that somehow or other I had to exercise some influence in getting that

board changed.

John Gardner was, I think, kind of resistant to it. He was getting very interested in doing other things, frankly, and he wasn't about to tackle the whole board situation at that point. We had made a little headway in getting some people of color on to the staff of the foundation, but not much. So when I took over, and particularly after I became moved from being acting president in '65 to be full president in my own right in '67, that was one of the first things I tackled. And I began looking deliberately for women and people of color who would make good Carnegie trustees, who would speak up in meetings and present a point of view but would not try to lecture the other board members, but would talk about it more in terms of what could be done and should be done by the Corporation at large.

So I made a number of forays around the country, particularly to meet women who might possibly be good trustees, and I, of course, found a number. So in due course, they got appointed, but we realized we had a problem, that the turnover on the board was very, very slow, and if we were going to wait till there were vacancies, we never were going to accomplish the job. So I talked to the trustees about setting up a special commission, which proved to be the Haskins Commission -- Caryl Haskins chaired it -- to look at questions like tenure, role of the trustees, composition of the board, and so on. And they did. They had a very thorough look at it and came up with a wonderful report, really a fine report, recommending all the things that I had been hoping they would. I did not play much of a personal role in that. They talked to me as individual members of the committee, and Caryl Haskins talked to me about some of my ideas of what could be done, but I did not take part in their deliberations.

They came up with this wonderful report, and that was voted unanimously by the trustees, and we did it. We enlarged the board. We established terms of office, which initially a term was four years, and then renewable once to eight years, whereas at that time we had trustees who had been on for fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years. So the board was sort of

stagnant.

We got a lot of new people on quite quickly, and by the time I retired, the board was really fifty-fifty between men and women, not quite because it was an uneven number. My recollection was, I had it up to eight men and seven women, and we had Hispanics and we had several blacks. So the composition was really changed quite radically. And the operations shifted very greatly, too, but somehow or other was still Carnegie, and all the best things, I think, survived that period.

The reputation of the Corporation, if anything, was enhanced because on some of those things we did, under that heading of diversification, we began making some grants that were farther out in civil rights terms than anything that most foundations were doing at that time. I would say only Ford [Foundation] was a real rival in that respect. Later, of course, there were changes right through the whole field, but at that time Ford was the only one. They, as I was saying earlier, they suffered a lot of obloquy over that, which we did not at Carnegie. It was amazing.

And when later several of us, including particularly Mac Bundy and myself, had to appear before the Ways and Means Committee, they gave him a very rough going-over and treated me quite politely. I think it was simply this reputation that Carnegie had, of integrity and honesty and getting its facts right, investigating grants very thoroughly, so that we knew what we were doing. And when we did take a chance, we did it quite deliberately and warned the trustees that we were taking a chance on a particular grant that might be attacked quite strongly. The trustees, bless them, never once turned us down. They went along with what we wanted to do.

In the legal field, where we actually supported litigation, that was pretty far out for what a foundation could and should do, but we claimed that we were supporting the research that went into the litigation, so that the litigation, when it happened, was thoroughly well

grounded on its legal history and so on.

Q: Mr. Pifer, were you making efforts to diversify the staff at the same time as you were diversifying the board?

Pifer: Yes, we were. Of course, a number of women came on the board³. Some came in middle-level jobs and moved up to top jobs, senior, and some came straight from other jobs where they had had quite a lot of responsibility. For people of color, it was more difficult, because suddenly everybody wanted them. The ones who had very strong educational backgrounds and had some administrative experience, they were wanted, in the universities particularly. So, several instances where we got good people, but then lost them. Then we got one or two who did not succeed, who had been overrated for some reason or another. But we were very careful about how we handled all of that, and I think it worked out.

At some point I should mention the Gunnar Myrdal study, which led to this great work called *The American Dilemma*. I could talk about that now for a minute or two.

Q: That would be fine, Mr. Pifer.

Pifer: Well, the origins of it were in the First World War, when one of the Carnegie trustees -- and I'm never quite clear which one it was -- of that day was appalled at how poorly blacks were educated, the ones that went into the military. Of course, we had a totally segregated military in those days. But the ones that were in the war were so badly educated that it was very hard to make use of them. So he raised this question, apparently, with Fred Keppel, the president of the day, who did nothing about it for a long time, but finally, with some prodding, I believe, from Myrdal, the Corporation decided to set up the Myrdal study. For its day, it was a major inquiry into the causes of segregation

³ Note: read "staff" here in place of "board." -- A. Pifer, 8/99.

and effects of segregation in the United States.

Myrdal developed this enormous reputation. He was a Swede. The idea of the Corporation's trustees was that the subject was so loaded with explosives in America that only a foreigner could really look at the whole thing objectively enough to come up with anything useful. So Myrdal was the leading sociologist in Europe, and he was somewhat known in the United States, so they got him to organize and carry out the study.

In many ways it was a brilliant piece of work. There were a couple of problems with it. One was that the Corporation never followed up on it. There were all kinds of suggestions in the Myrdal study of what the foundation could have done to tackle the whole problem of segregation, but Keppel was interested in raising the cultural standards of the country at large through music, sets of records, and art, copies of great paintings and so on, which were given to the universities and also placed in public libraries. It wasn't exactly an earth-shaking program, in my opinion, at that time, although, again, I guess it was fairly well thought of.

But we just missed, missed the ball completely on the Myrdal study, and it was some time before we got back into that field. It was during the period just before John Gardner left, and first I was vice president and then acting president, we had a staff retreat up at Stowe in Vermont, and we all went up there, all the senior staff, without John Gardner, actually, because he was spending so much time in Washington that he didn't go with us. We had regular staff retreats later with all the trustees being there, but this was just the staff.

Everybody wrote little papers about what they thought the Corporation ought to be doing, and almost to a man or woman, they all said we were missing the boat on the whole issue of segregated society. And I certainly agreed with that fully. Really, in effect, we took the decision there that we would change the program a lot and get to work as fast as we could

on doing something meaningful on the segregation problem. We looked, quite naturally, since we were an educational foundation, we looked to the universities, and we supported scholarship programs and things of that sort. But then began working our way into things with more of a real cutting edge, like the legal programs.

Q: Okay, I'm going to stop you there.

[END TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO; BEGIN TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE]

Q: Mr. Pifer, let's talk about the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Carnegie Corporation's role in the establishment of it.

Pifer: Yes, a little about the history of it I think would be a good idea, how the Corporation came to be established, and a story which I think is worth telling. There was a thing called educational television that The Ford Foundation was involved in very heavily, and others, and there wasn't anything called public broadcasting, it was all educational television, and Ralph Lowell who was the chairman of WGBH in Boston was worried about the future funding and felt that the time had come when there needed to be public money, that it was quite an issue of whether there should be public money in educational television. So he came down to see John Gardner at Carnegie about financing a commission to look at the whole question of public funding for educational television. And John was apparently quite interested, but didn't tell me very much about his negotiations, and of course we were not involved in educational television, other foundations were but we were not, and that's why Ralph Lowell and the people from WGBH came to see us rather than some other foundation like Ford. So John had this discussion and then I went off to England for a few weeks and John, during that interim period, was appointed Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare by Lyndon Johnson so all of the sudden I got this cable saying that I was now acting secretary, [actually] acting president of the Corporation. But meanwhile I was in the Athenaeum Club in London and was having lunch there with some English

academic. There was a buffet table and you had to go and help yourself, and I was on my way, or on my way back to my table with a plate of food when there was Jim Killian from M.I.T. right there, also with a plate of food, and I said, 'Hello Jim, I'm so pleased that you're taking on the chairmanship of our Commission on Educational Television.' And he looked at me with this funny look and said, 'Am I?' he said, 'I don't -- I'm afraid--' he said, 'I don't know anything about it.' So there right in the middle of the dining room standing there I had to tell him all about this thing and apparently John Gardner hadn't ever spoken to him. He told me that Killian had agreed but he apparently never did it in his excitement over going off to Washington. So that settled the question of how Killian found out about it, and I could see he was interested, and of course the minute I got home, this was number one on the agenda because this was obviously going to be a pretty important thing.

So the commission got appointed -- the whole operation really depended very heavily on Douglass Cater, Doug Cater who was kind of the communications person on Lyndon Johnson's staff in the White House and had a background in journalism. Well, Killian did, having produced this wonderful report he then saw immediately that he and only he had to sell it to Congress. So with some help of course from President Johnson and some from Doug Cater, Killian worked the hallways, in the Senate particularly and in the House and the relevant committees, to neutralize any opposition to this commission's recommendation that a corporation for public broadcasting be established, and that it have public money in it, and that it pass -- operate somewhat like a foundation, and parcel the money out to where the developments in the public broadcasting field [were promising]. All that was fine and I was invited down to the White House to be present at the signing of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Act. Meanwhile we had been approached, and CBS had been approached, Frank [N.] Stanton at CBS had been approached, to see if we would put up a million dollars each in order to, so there'd be some working money to get the whole thing started, some up front operating funds so that a president could be appointed and an office secured, and minimum staff hired and so on. I guess, I don't know how much

President Johnson really was aware of that, but certainly Doug Cater was, and I was urged to get a commitment from our trustees as fast as possible, and I can't remember whether I did it by phone or whether we had an emergency meeting of some kind, of the executive committee which we had in those days. But anyway I clearly had the permission, and clearly Frank Stanton had got it from his board of directors because we were both there and then we were called on to get up and say a few words which we did, and each of us announced that we were -- that our organizations were committing a million dollars right away to get the whole thing started. So then President Johnson kind of looked at us both and kind of smiled and said, 'Well, with all these rich people coming here and promising money of this kind I don't think we need any government money.' And that produced a good laugh. It was a very pleasant occasion. Everyone was happy about it because the Congress had passed the Corporation Act and Jim Killian had not gotten us or himself into any trouble with his lobbying, which he had done a lot of, and which was right out on the margins of what you could do with tax exempt money and influencing legislation.

Q: Was that of some concern to you at the time?

Pifer: Yes, although I had enormous confidence in Killian and I also felt that -- see, at that time Lyndon Johnson's stock was very, very high and he could get anything through Congress. He had a lot of close allies in Congress. But I did worry that at some point down the road there was going to be a big issue over government money and how much of it, and how distributed, and all of those questions which did in fact develop later.

Q: Well, tell me about that now.

Pifer: Well, it just was very controversial and every time it came up for renewal in Congress it touched off another big round of speech making, and controversy, and opposition to spending government money for this purpose. See, the charge that was made was -- and it's possible that Johnson was particularly vulnerable to that -- was that this

new medium that had been created would use government money in politically partisan ways and that Johnson would see to it that whatever developed would be to his political advantage, which may have been fairly close to the truth. But anyway -- and then of course Nixon was then elected, and there was a move to a more conservative -- that was really the end of new additions to the great society programs, and the opposition began to solidify against those programs, and a thing like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting had some considerable vulnerability because while Congress probably wouldn't have just killed it outright they could starve it to death by, or prevent it from developing into anything really significant by just not voting the money for it.

Q: Let's talk about some of the risk taking that is reflected in the grant making at Carnegie Corporation during your tenure, reflecting, I think, the risks you took in diversifying the board, diversifying the staff, supporting something like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. What comes to mind when I ask you about risky grant making?

Pifer: Well a name comes to mind, and that's Eli Evans -- well several names -- Eli Evans on our staff, and Fritz Mosher on our staff. Fritz Mosher because of his great interest in voter education, and particularly getting young people to vote, and of course at that time, unlike today, when young people are mostly very conservative, young people at that time in the 60's were very, very radical by the definitions of American life anyway, and so in supporting voter education and voter registration we were very close to the line of in fact supporting the Democratic party. And that could have got us into a lot of trouble as the Ford Foundation got into trouble over the election of Carl Stokes in Cleveland, the first black mayor of any major American city. They supported some activities that were awfully close to -- in fact that was one of the two or three big things that Mac Bundy did at Ford which got Ford into a lot of trouble, and then through Ford the rest of us -- the rest of the foundation field -- and led to the Tax Reform Act of 1969.

Q: What about Carnegie's support of black lawyers in the United States?

Pifer: Oh yes, that was one of Eli Evans' good ideas, worked out with somebody, Julius Chambers or somebody in the black lawyers field. There were virtually no black lawyers in America at that time, almost none, and Eli's idea was to get a number of law schools, particularly some of the big southern public law schools, to admit blacks. The program included finding good candidates and getting them into the law schools and then supporting them, and seeing that they had internships and so on. That was a program that lasted I don't know, maybe ten years, and was a very, very good program. Good people were selected and it very quickly got some very bright young black lawyers into the mainstream of American law, and particularly civil rights law, constitutional law, and I always thought was one of our very best programs.

Q: Mr. Pifer, going back to that first staff retreat, you are also known, of course, for having an open door philosophy at Carnegie, going right along with your efforts to diversify board and staff, engaging the staff in decision making, a very collegial approach. Staff meetings, staff retreats, these were new things at Carnegie for the most part. That meeting where you realized you had a collective commitment to social justice and the theme of social justice begins to pervade grantmaking consciously at Carnegie Corporation -- we've looked at a few examples -- I'm also thinking about women. You had been very much a pioneer in grant making related to women's rights and opportunities for women. I wonder if you would talk a bit about that.

Pifer: Well, first of all on the question of a sort of participatory system of administering the foundation, I think in the full sense of that term that did start with my administration. We had been having staff meetings, weekly staff meetings, to consider the grants that were being recommended. That had gone on many years before my time. I think maybe I was a little more welcoming of that, or even dependent on it, certainly at the beginning, and it's also true that in a very, very strict sense, I ran an open door policy. If my door was

open, any member of the staff could just walk in without an appointment and I was glad to see them, and some abused that a little bit, and some never came, but on the whole it was good for me, and I think good for the Corporation to have that freedom of access. So if people were angry over something, or whatever, they could come in and spout off, or if they had a good idea and wanted to try it out on me, of course it interrupted me but still it was far better to hear from them right away than to say come in a week from next Wednesday when by that time six other things were on their mind. The collective judgment on the grants was, I always felt, very good. But it led to some bad feeling at times because one of the staff members would have -- program officers would have -- done a lot of work on something, and in fact have virtually committed the foundation to make it a grant in the process of negotiating this, and then for us, the rest of the staff, to say, 'Oh no, we're not going to do that,' pull the rug out from under them was a very wounding, and potentially harmful thing. So, but it required that the staff members be pretty careful about implying that a grant was going to be made until they were pretty sure, or very sure that it was going to be made, and secondly that every now and then we had to recognize that this program officer would get in a fix that was not his or her fault, and we just had to go ahead and make the grant because actions had been taken on the assumption, right or wrong, that we were going to make a grant. But if a member of the staff did that too often, then they got on shaky ground with me and with their other colleagues.

Q: Mr. Pifer, how did you get interested in equal opportunity for women? Was there someone in particular at Carnegie who may have helped bring you along in that regard?

Pifer: Well, Florence Anderson, although she -- the whole social progress side of Corporation did not on the whole -- she was always, as secretary to the trustee, she was always worried about whether we were going a little too far and fast down that social justice road, but she contributed one of our very most successful programs which was the Continuing Education of Women Program at Sarah Lawrence College, and also at several big public universities, I think the University of Wisconsin as I recall, or maybe it was

Minnesota, but a number of these programs, and these continuing education programs were then copied by other institutions and became quite influential. There was a woman named Esther Raushenbush at Sarah Lawrence who had quite an influence on Florence in developing this continuing education for women, but it was one of the jewels in the Carnegie crown, there was no doubt about that. And I got interested in it. I got interested in the subject of the advancement of women in a variety of ways. Some of this was some of the things I was doing outside the foundation. I got to know Gloria Steinem, and some of the other -- Bella [Savitsky] Abzug -- women who were interested in pushing the agenda ahead for the advancement of women in American society. Frank Thomas curiously enough was not so much interested in black advancement at all. His big interest both before and after he went to the Ford Foundation as president was in the advancement of women. That was his big thing at Ford. And he and I were sort of in agreement on that, very strongly in agreement on it. I used to talk to him about it quite a bit. So then of course, as I got interested in the whole subject of women in American life I then had to have a good look at our own operations, and I saw that we were very remiss in the number of women who were advancing into senior positions, and that we needed to get more strong women onto the board and keep them there, and keep them actively involved in making suggestions and so on, and there were some very good women who joined the board, Marta [Y.] Valle from, I guess she was sort of part time at Columbia, Puerto Rican background -- I can't think of the name of the organization she represented -- but she was on the Carnegie board and unfortunately died of cancer but she was a lovely person. There were several others. Our initial appointments of Carnegie trustees were very conservative. Phyllis Gordan was a niece of Governor Lehman of New York. She was a Radcliffe graduate and very, very, very conservative, very much the scholar, so we weren't breaking any new ground in putting her on the board, but I think it helped a bit. She was a very good friend of the Haskins and it was important that one of the important trustees feel comfortable about having women on the board. But as I said earlier, I spent a lot of time traveling around the country meeting people and I would just get in touch with them and call them up, wherever it was, Phoenix, Arizona or whatever, and tell the person who I was and why

I'd like to come and see her, and say this wasn't an offer of trusteeship but I was trying to build up a list from which the trustees could then pick, meaning I would pick, the person, but I would have to get the backing of the trustees, and it wasn't embarrassing at all. They were pleased to think that they were going to be on the list and so that, if I showed up in wherever it was, they knew why I was coming and I simply told them all about the Corporation and they told me about the things they were interested in and in some cases I got back to them and invited them to join the board, and in other cases didn't follow up on it. But it wasn't difficult, but what it taught me was if you're going to diversify a board you can't just talk about it, you've got to do it. And I think I mentioned earlier in this discussion the Haskins Committee that we set up. So we had the framework right then to diversify but it was still a question of building up lists of good people, and there were some very, very good ones. There were one or two that I think I made a mistake on but not a disastrous mistake certainly.

Q: Mr. Pifer, let me ask you again about the Tax Reform Act, if I may.

Pifer: Yes.

Q: Florence Anderson, your mention of her, reminds me that I have been told that Ms. Anderson drafted the regulations for the Tax Reform Act; that Florence Anderson made a significant contribution to the drafting of the Tax Reform Act.

Pifer: Well it's quite possible but I never knew that, quite possible. But I guess that would have been -- I don't know who she would have been dealing with -- one of the things that happened was when this Tax Reform Act all blew up into real trouble it turned out that our traditional lawyers, Dewey Ballantine, were not the [right] people. We needed somebody from another part of the country, different kind of a legal background, and frankly more conservative, in the sense of being closer to other parts of the country and the feelings that they had about elitist institutions in the northeast. And so I found a firm called

Sutherland, Asbill & Brennan in Atlanta, and there was Larry Woodworth who had been the assistant secretary of the treasury for tax policy. And he became our advisor and our lawyer in all this business of the Tax Reform Act. And it could be that that was where he probably consulted Florence Anderson because she had a reputation for being the person who really understood charitable law. And I suspect that was the contact. But I don't think I was ever explicitly aware of that. Larry could talk to anybody on our staff he wanted to, and I would never have interfered. I would have expected Florence to tell me, if she was really negotiating for something that was actually going to be in the Tax Reform Act and perhaps she did. I can't remember. But that doesn't stand out in my mind.

[END TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO]

Q: Mr. Pifer, tell me about your role in the Tax Reform Act of 1969.

Pifer: Well, I did, somewhat accidentally, I think, play one of the central roles in the defense of foundations which were in serious danger of losing their tax exemption because of a kind of populist feeling that had grown up about using tax-exempt money in ways that competed with legitimate business activity and so on. This was something that some of the Western and Southern senators felt very strongly in the Senate, particularly -- and I've forgotten if I've mentioned Al [Albert A., Jr.] Gore's father [Albert A. Gore, Sr.] was senator from Tennessee, and he was a strong populist. There were others on the Senate Finance Committee, too. Senator [George S.] McGovern was another one that we really couldn't rely on. In fact, particularly Senator Gore became "the enemy" -- in quotes.

So this act got drafted, and when we saw it in the foundation field, we were absolutely aghast at what was in it, and realized we had to get it modified. One of the provisions of it was the twenty-year life. Or maybe it was thirty years, but whatever. Anyway, at which point you would automatically lose your tax exemption. That would have prevented any new foundations from being established.

Well, Mac Bundy had, of course, been on the White House staff and right at the center of our policy on Vietnam. Goodness knows he should have been a little embarrassed by that, but he was a person of enormous self-confidence. The funny thing is, we had been at school together. I had known him for years. He was a little ahead of me, although in age only a year or two older, maybe two years. But anyway, we had known each other for a long time. He sort of looked on me as a little boy. [Laughter] And would never listen to anything I said. And having got us in all this trouble, he would not admit that he had caused the trouble. He just absolutely couldn't. But he had, over the Bobby Kennedy grants and the Stokes grant in Cleveland. He's the one who got us into court, so to speak.

The other foundation heads felt that same way, but Mac Bundy and I got into an awful shouting match at each other about the thirty-year life thing. His view was, 'Let's not oppose it. Let's leave it, and we'll get it changed later.' And my position was, 'Not on your life. Once that's the law, we'll never get it changed.' And the other foundation presidents -- we had a group of maybe fifteen or twenty of them, heads of major foundations -- all supported me and then kind of elected me informally as the chairman of that group of foundations, I think partially to make it clear to Bundy that he wasn't going to be the chairman, as he kind of assumed he would be, as president of the largest foundation, the Ford Foundation.

So the fight developed, and I practically had to move down to Washington. I was talking with people in the Congress, particularly the Senate. Eli Evans was operating out of -- he was my right-hand person. We had a little office in a hotel there on Capitol Hill where we could quickly get -- if we got a chance to talk to some key person, we could get there in a hurry. Of course, our legal counsel were helping; the Sutherland, Asbill & Brennan people were helping all they could.

So, finally, on the thirty-year life, we lost that in the committee, in the Finance Committee,

and we found out that the reason we lost it was because [J. William] Fulbright, in effect, exchanged votes with Gore and said he would support Gore on the thirty-year life thing if Gore would support him on I don't know, something, some important thing in Southeast Asia, Fulbright being chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Senate.

So we lost that, and then we really had to -- then it came down to a question of what would happen when it came up on the floor. Eli had one of these long tally sheets with every senator's name, and he and I were up in the balcony, not being quite sure of what was going to happen and who was going to speak for us and who against us. Of course, Gore got up and made his usual speech, and Senator [John O.] Pastore from Rhode Island jumped up and said, 'Why is my good friend, the honorable senator from Tennessee, attacking the Providence Foundation in Rhode Island?'

And Gore bought that one hook, line, and sinker, jumped up and said, 'I'm not attacking foundations like that.'

And then Pastore said, 'But in attacking the Ford Foundation the way you are, you're attacking all of us, even the little ones. We will all be hurt even more than the big ones. And the Providence Foundation resents this very strongly.' Well, of course, he was speaking for small foundations all over the country when he did that.

Then we got a very good contribution from Fritz [Walter F.] Mondale from Minnesota, and then [a] very good [one] from Fritz [Ernest F.] Hollings from South Carolina. Anyway, the vote came, and I've forgotten the exact figures, but roughly we had two-thirds, and Gore and McGovern had a third, something like that. And there was much jubilation, because that was the turning point that went ahead with the legislation, but it was refined. The most objectionable things, like in the first draft they were eliminating support of voter education entirely, and there were some foundations that felt very, very strongly about that. So we got the worst things, the worst eliminations back in again.

In the end, I felt that it wasn't a bad law, really, that there were some very good things in it, and that we'd got out of it by the skin of our teeth, but got out of it pretty well.

[END TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO; BEGIN TAPE FOUR, SIDE ONE]

Q: Mr. Pifer, tell me why you were opposed to the thirty year limit on the life span of foundations.

Pifer: Well I thought that this was a kind of dagger aimed at the very heart of the foundation field, and, even by implication, to the whole field of philanthropy because, in effect it was, well, it was more than just rapping our knuckles, it was saying there's something wrong with you, meaning foundations, we can't really trust you so we've got to be sure to put you out of business at some point in the future. You've got too much power, you're irresponsible, things of that kind. All of that was sort of implied, it was a black mark, and I felt that even if it could be changed it would still in a sense remain as a black mark that the Congress of the United States had had to do this, and therefore we should fight it. We didn't deserve that stiff a penalty if in fact we had really done anything wrong. And of course a vast majority of foundations did not feel they had done anything wrong and were rather appalled at finding themselves lumped together with a few foundations that were doing things that were, well, they were at least on the margins of -- and, of course, especially the Ford Foundation. So much of this really revolved around Bundy and his arrogance, and the role of the Ford Foundation under Bundy's leadership.

Q: Mr. Pifer, the Tax Reform Act is almost thirty years old now, what do you think the implications for foundations have been?

Pifer: Well originally I felt that it was unfortunate that it had caused a wave of caution, conservatism in foundations, and I think that was true for a while. Of course I've been out

of foundations, or direct involvement with foundations now for sixteen years as I retired in 1982. But I feel now that it – well, the whole field has grown and changed, and a lot of more interesting types of people are working in it, and a much greater variety of subjects that -- I think it would be hard for me to claim that we are now, as a field, foundations as a field, are suffering from the continued effects of the Tax Reform Act. I think it is just gone on developing and that on the whole a lot of very fine grants are being made that that do push the whole question of the role of foundations out farther in some very important directions. There is, of course -- what has happened, maybe not directly as a result of the Tax Reform Act, but certainly has happened, is that a group of avowedly conservative foundations have taken a leaf out of the Ford book and are doing things that are trying to influence the development of conservative legislation. There's several foundations, the Bradley Foundation, and the one in Pittsburgh [Scaife Foundation], I can't think of the name of it for a moment, but there are maybe half a dozen of those foundations and I think there would be agreement that they would have gone about as far as they or anybody else should go in supporting conservative causes that are really political. In other words they're doing what they say we did at an earlier period and fair enough, that doesn't bother me but I think it's gone about far enough.

Q: You coined an expression "quango."

Pifer: Yes.

Q: Tell me about that, "quasi nongovernmental organization".

Pifer: I wrote a piece called -- I can't think of the name -- it was one of my annual report essays and it was one of the first ones I did and it was it was about that gray area between the public sector, the governmental sector and the private sector, and how that played out in the non-profit world, and how the device of the non-profit organization was being used to enable this sector to do things that it couldn't have done directly. In other words, for

example the question of salaries. It was very difficult to get some of the very best people into government jobs because the salaries were so low, but by setting up a non-profit organization, institute of some kind of like the Institute of Defense Analysis and so on, Rand Corporation, you could legitimately pay higher salaries so you could support the organization with government funds but then all the government regulations would not apply because it was a private incorporated tax exempt organization. So I wrote a piece about that and I called it "quasi nongovernmental organizations," and a member of the British Parliament saw this piece that I wrote and wrote to me and said that he thought this was very interesting and he'd like to meet me. So the next time I was in England -- David [A. R.] Howell, a conservative MP -- he was thinking of it as a way of developing more effectiveness and policy formation in the British Parliament -- so we decided to have a discussion group in each country and he recruited all sorts of people like Jim [L. James] Callaghan, the man who just recently [has] been Prime Minister of England, and others, and I recruited a group of people in this country, and -- not quite as eminent at least politically as the ones in England. Mine were mostly academics. Then we had a big meeting at Ditchley, a conference center in England, and another big meeting in [this country], down at Williamsburg, and a whole lot of -- not a whole lot -- but five or six books came out of this and it was a fascinating exercise that went nowhere on the American side, but on the British side developed this extraordinary life of its own just on the term quango. Quango was actually invented by a professor at the University of Essex named Tony [Anthony] Barker. He just took my "quasi nongovernmental" and turned it into an acronym, but the term that came out sort of frightened people. Quango. What in the world was a quango? Obviously it was something evil. So the whole situation changed and the conservatives turned around having been the first ones to want to adopt it, this sort of institution in England, and said it was a labor invention. Then it shifted back again later but never -- and it still goes on. You still get big arguments going on about quangos with very little known about the history of it, but the history of it was Alan Pifer writing his annual report piece. But I had quite a lot of fun out of that.

Q: Those annual report essays have been very influential in the field of philanthropy, and I would like to get a better sense of your philosophy of philanthropy, for example do you see philanthropies as public trusts?

Pifer: Yes, very definitely. I think the realization that it is a public trust has grown considerably although you still get new foundations being established by very wealthy people who really can't emotionally recognize the fact that it's no longer their money. See they set up the foundation but they want to run the foundation and they want to have all their sons and daughters and so on, on the board, and they want to go on spending it as if it were coming out of their pockets. But it came out of their pockets and it's in a public trust now and it's taken some considerable time for some of the new big givers to recognize the fact that they gave the money away and they cannot on their own decide how it's going to be used. They've got to have a proper board of trustees and so on.

Q: I don't know that that perception is limited to family run foundations and I'd like for us to stay with the large general purpose foundations such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, Ford, and for you to give me a sense of your philosophy as to their purpose, their mission, what role ought they play in American society?

Pifer: Well I'm not quite as doctrinaire on that subject as I used to be. I used to feel that it was wrong if they spent their money on anything except policy oriented things, and that they had an obligatory role in American life of helping to develop social and economic and policy dealing with the environment and so on. But I think that was a little too extreme. I think there is a role for foundations supporting innovative institutions in conservative ways, that is, that they are willing to put up the operating funds for some, well, I'll give you my favorite example which is Heritage College out in the State of Washington that I've been very active in helping grow and develop. It is breaking a lot of new ground in the question of older students. The average age is thirty four, they almost without exception

come from below the poverty line, the students. Well over half the enrollment is minority, half of which is Indian and half of which is Mexican American, and it's just a very, very -- and it's turning out people with very good degrees. It's got a wide entrance but a narrow exit and we need more institutions like that. So I can see, in talking with large foundations about Heritage College, I think I did succeed with some of them in convincing them that it was a perfectly respectable thing to give unimaginative money, just plain money, running money, operating money, to an organization or an institution that really was, in itself, innovative and breaking new grounds. So that is a modification of my previous position which was that the grants themselves really ought to be innovative and breaking new ground. I think if the question is what is the institution itself doing, and I personally am disappointed when I see enormous sums of money going to some institutions that are already very well funded, and very little going to the small institutions, and that's why I started really, or helped to start, but really started this organization called CAPHE, the Consortium for the Advancement of Private Higher Education, because I wanted to see some of the best of the small colleges get some chance to get some of the big philanthropic money which they were pretty well frozen out of because they were small, and Heritage fit that category of course. But I don't know if I've answered your question but --

Q: I think you have. And CAPHE was one piece of a very large program at Carnegie devoted to higher education, Carnegie in fact has long been identified--

Pifer: Yes, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education under Clark Kerr, and the Carnegie Council on Higher Education also under Clark Kerr, and a number of other things that -- it was always one of Carnegie's bread and butter interests, topical interests until my successor came along and he had other interests, but I've been hoping frankly that his successor will take the foundation back into the field of higher education as a field in itself, and figure out what some of the real needs of institutions are today and what can be done about them, and where Carnegie might fit into that into that picture.

Q: Let's get back to grant making, program activity related to women for just a moment because I did want to ask you about the Eagleton Institute.

Pifer: Ah. Well I've forgotten which one of my colleagues, it may have been Florence Anderson, it was certainly Avery Russell, they were involved in this program at Eagleton of training women for political life. And I thought it was a good program and supported it every time they brought it up -- two or three years ago, maybe it's four or five now, time goes by so rapidly, but I got this mysterious invitation from the Eagleton Institute. It's a program under the Eagleton Institute and I can't remember the name of it, but I got a mysterious invitation from the director of that program asking me if I could attend their annual meeting in San Diego and particularly attend the dinner. So I did and when we all filed into this huge room and I think I was the only man in this whole place, a couple of thousand women, and I found that I was seated at the head table and there was silence and anticipation and all of a sudden the door opened and Anita [F.] Hill came in, and came up to the head table and unfortunately I was not seated next to her so I didn't have a chance to really talk to her, but it was a pretty exciting moment because I personally felt very strongly that she was right and that she should be supported.

Q: Mr. Pifer, let me ask you if you think government has a social responsibility and let me ask again what your sense is of a large, general purpose foundation in society, its role in society. Does that sort of organization have a social responsibility, too? How do the two connect, if they do at all?

Pifer: Oh, I think that's a very tough question because it covers so much ground. Yes, there is a responsibility there, but I think despite the fact that they don't own the money any more that there is a responsibility also to the private interest that established them. It's become public money but you know if a donor like Bill [William R.] Hewlett of Hewlett Packard, and David Packard who, both of whom have established enormous foundations,

they were interested in certain things like the environment, and it seems to me that a foundation, at least for some years, should pay some attention to the things that the founders were interested in if they're legitimate worthy things like environmental programs then they should do that. So the public responsibility is modified in that situation. Is that what you were driving at?

Q: An organization such as Carnegie, though, really doesn't have that kind of direct --

Pifer: No. No.

Q: I really want to stay with, I'm really asking what's the point of an organization like Carnegie? What do you think it ought to be doing? Do we need foundations?

Pifer: Well, in a way you could answer that by going to the charter and seeing what -- the Carnegie charter is a more specific one than any of the other big foundations. It's "for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding". That's Carnegie's own deed of gift, that phrase, and it's a pretty good one. It's tight enough so it's just not all over the map, let's see, the Ford and Rockefeller was something about the welfare of -- I've forgotten it, but it's very broad. It's unlimited, it would take you anywhere. And I think that, well, if that's the way the donor established it, then the trustees have an obligation within that to figure out what they're going to do with it, and if there's no indication then the foundation does become subject to vacillations depending on who's in charge of it at that particular time. Carnegie kind of foresaw that and it didn't worry him too much. He said in effect if he appointed good people they would appoint good people, and he did agree that from time to time the foundation would slump in its vitality and so on, but that he was confident that it would come back again. And that has -- on the whole, has been true I think.

Q: It's interesting to me now thinking about the concern, around the time of the Tax Reform Act, about the possible imposition of a life span on foundations, that that was

perceived as punishment, as somehow negative. Now, thirty years later my understanding is that even some people in the field of philanthropy do not have a problem with a life span for foundations. That the large purpose general foundation, in perpetuity, is something kind of, that's up for debate, the viability of such a thing is up for debate. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Pifer: Yes I do. I think it would be a mistake to -- it should be voluntary, that is if a particular foundation wants to do it fine, and there have been some, there have been some famous cases where foundations spent their capital and spent themselves out of existence. Fine if that's what they decide they want to do, but I would not want to see it imposed on everybody. I think that would be a great mistake.

Q: Would that be something that you could imagine Carnegie doing voluntarily?

Pifer: No. No, I don't think that would ever happen. I mean some of the, the best things we've ever done like our support of the Public Broadcasting field and developing that field I mean, thirty years would have been long since gone by and we would have been out of business if that had been the law. So again you go back to Carnegie's view that things will wax and wane but, but in time some new people will come in and very important new things will happen.

Q: Let me ask for your view of Carnegie's future at this point. How do you see the Corporation now, and in the years ahead? I hear all the time about the Myrdal study, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Sesame Street: fabulous, fabulous, contributions. I often wonder what is going to resonate in the same way for people soon, or in ten years or twenty years hence.

Pifer: Well I wonder too, and I don't frankly see that a whole new blossoming of the Corporation in the immediate future. I'm not saying that critically, I think that some of its

programs are kind of worn out and it has of course a new president who's new to the foundation field, and he's still feeling his way. I would expect there might be a period of several years before it's clearly apparent where the Corporation is going. But I hope it won't be too long a period but it's not necessarily a bad thing unless the present people there go on living on the past. They've got to invent new things, new programs, find new exciting needs for the kind of money the Corporation has, and that's their biggest responsibility. They can't -- just because there have been some good programs in the past -- they can invent new programs within tried and true fields, higher education, a very good example. There may be all kinds of very exciting new things that could be done in the field of higher education whereas the field itself would be old hat. That's alright.

Q: Do you think that foundations ever sacrifice innovation for success? I'm thinking about risk taking again. Have foundations in America been taking enough risks in your view? And how about Carnegie under your presidency?

Pifer: I think the first question is almost impossible to answer but the second question did we take risks? Yes. We took considerable risk when we got into the whole field of use of the law in civil rights situations. I mean actual cases, trial cases. When we supported the research work that was needed to bolster the case for this or that development in the civil rights field we were out at the limits but nothing happened. We made the grants and there were some good ones, some not so good, but it was risky, particularly in the climate of that time where there was all this concern about foundations meddling in social policy and that's the way it was put by the conservative side of American life.

Q: And yet beneath all of Carnegie's activity, or it has been put to me, is an attempt to influence public policy--

Pifer: Well, you know, you influence -- any spending of charitable money is influencing public policy, any, because that money could have been spent on something else. So by

default, if you just go on supporting things that you've always supported, or other people have always supported, and that don't really do much to make this country a better place, or a fairer place or anything, you are implicitly making decisions about social policy and I think most people in the foundation field don't recognize that. They just don't realize that that money could have gone into many other things that might have been very much more important. So yes we took risks but I don't think we ever got in any sort of serious trouble. One of the reasons is, and I've often emphasized this to foundation people, is that you've got to have a well documented case so that if it does unravel you've got a clear paper trail of why you made the decision, and what happened in it, and so on. It's the off-the-cuff things like the Ford grants to Bobby Kennedy's staff, which was, you know, a humanitarian gesture, but foundations aren't there to make humanitarian gestures that -- they're there to make grants on a competitive basis with many other good causes and so, well --

[END OF INTERVIEW]