

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

JOHN E. MCLEAISH
INTERVIEWED BY REBECCA WRIGHT
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS – 15 NOVEMBER 2001

WRIGHT: Today is the November 15, 2001. This oral history session with John McLeaish is being conducted in San Antonio, Texas, for the NASA Johnson Space Center Oral History Project. Interviewer is Rebecca Wright, assisted by Sandra Johnson.

We thank you again for letting us stop by and visit with you this afternoon, and we'd like to start today, if you would, by sharing with us some of your background information.

MCLEAISH: When I joined NASA, it was the Manned Spacecraft Center [MSC] at that time, in 1962. I had previously worked for the Air Force and found this really an exhilarating opportunity for me, when I joined NASA. Later I became Chief of Public Information and spent about sixteen years in that job.

WRIGHT: Did you have interest as a younger person in journalism?

MCLEAISH: Yes. I had a background in journalism. I had a degree in journalism.

WRIGHT: You served in the [United States] Air Force, I think from 1952 to 1959. Tell us about that time period. Did you do any field of journalism there?

MCLEAISH: Well, yes, I did do some journalism when I was stationed mainly at England Air

Force Base, and that was I ran, among other things, the base newspaper, which was named *The Tiger Talk*. That was a very interesting time to me. The commander of the base was an unusual fellow. His name was William A. Daniel. He's a little short guy. But he was something else. In fact, he had a philosophy that says don't ever use the word "don't." It's kind of like when you'd see a sign that says, "Don't walk on the grass," he'd say, "Use the sidewalk." It was very interesting period.

Then I was later stationed in Taiwan—Taipei, Taiwan—as a public information officer. So, yes, I did have some background in the Air Force.

WRIGHT: Then after you left the Air Force, or was it when you were still in the Air Force you went to the University of Houston?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I did go to the University of Houston when I was in the Air Force. I had spent most of my career at Rice [University] in Houston, and then transferred because Rice did not have a degree in journalism, and I could also fashion something called Operation Bootstrap, get a degree in six months from the University of Houston.

Then after that I somehow ended up working at Ellington Field or Ellington Air Force Base [Houston, Texas] just prior to joining NASA. That was very interesting, because I guess I caught NASA's attention when we had a big air show, which attracted, gosh, probably 100,000 people in one day to watch the demonstration. We had both the [U.S. Navy] Blue Angels and the [U.S. Air Force] Thunderbirds perform, plus a lot of other things.

WRIGHT: You mentioned that you might have attracted NASA's attention then.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Did they recruit you to work?

MCLEAISH: Yes. I was contacted by a fellow who was my boss for a period of time. His name was Ben Gillespie, and I guess Ben has long since left NASA. In fact, well, as far as I know, he may still live in Houston, probably does. But Ben was the fellow that really kind of attracted me to join them, and I never regretted it, obviously, because it turned out to be kind of a fulfilling career.

WRIGHT: What were you doing at the time when he contacted you to join?

MCLEAISH: I was working at Ellington.

WRIGHT: For the Air Force.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: During that time, Russia, or the Soviet Union, had launched Sputnik, and you were part of the Air Force at that time. What were your thoughts on this whole new space era?

MCLEAISH: Well, I found it kind of an exciting thing to do. It was quite different. I had

worked in the Air Force, and I guess I had left the Air Force and lived in Dallas for a short period of time and had published a book named—it was kind of a photographic book with a lot of pictures about the Air Force. But, no, I got very excited about the prospect of joining NASA.

WRIGHT: When Mr. Gillespie talked to you about your potential job, what did he tell you that you would be doing?

MCLEAISH: Well, I joined him. He ran what was then called the Industry Communications Department, which [Lieutenant Colonel John A.] “Shorty” Powers was the chief of public affairs at the time, and I guess Shorty had all these little fragmented departments, and we were a little fragmented department. That’s what I did first.

Well, I guess after we were there for a period of time, well, it was much later, I guess in 1968, I think is when I became Chief of Public Information.

WRIGHT: Could you describe for us what it was like those first days that you joined—as in the Industry Communications? How was Public Affairs organized and the structure and what were your duties?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Well, as I mentioned there were a number of small little fragmented organizations that we had – the Industry Communications Section, or Branch. We had the Internal Communications Branch. There was, I guess, the Public Information Branch, which should have been much more active than I guess it was. It was just a number of just small

fragmented operations. I guess that was Shorty's style. I'm sure you've heard of Shorty Powers.

WRIGHT: Yes. Where were you housed when you joined the staff?

MCLEAISH: Where did I live?

WRIGHT: Well, where was your office? Was the Industry Communications group with the rest of the group?

MCLEAISH: Well, no. Well, remember back in those days we were located in various offices throughout Houston. Our office—well, we moved from the Honeywell Building to a building named the Peachy Building. I guess it was owned by a fellow name Truitt Peachy, who I had known when I was in college at Rice. The last assignment that I recall is we were at the Peachy Building before we moved to the Center itself.

WRIGHT: Was the entire Public Affairs Office [PAO] in that building or was it just your branch?

MCLEAISH: No. Our branch and I think maybe one or two others, but I don't recall now for sure.

WRIGHT: Was there ever a time that all the branches got together for a staff meeting or

briefing or communications?

MCLEAISH: Well, when we moved eventually to the Manned Spacecraft Center offices, we had our office, it was mainly in a building across the NASA [Road] 1 in Building Number 6, I believe—maybe you know this—which was a rather large building. Now, we were all located in that building for a period of time. Well, that was a while back, too. As a matter of fact, that's where we were located when the Apollo 1 fire occurred. I recall that because it was a terrible night.

WRIGHT: Well, while you brought it up, would you like to share those details about that?

MCLEAISH: Sure. Yes. Well, I guess it was a Friday night, and we were all getting ready to go to a party for a fellow named [Albert M.] Al Chop, who at that time I think Chop was the deputy to Shorty. I forget the reason for the party, maybe it was a birthday or whatever. But in any case, after all of this happened, obviously we never made it to the party. It was a horrible evening.

WRIGHT: How did you receive the word?

MCLEAISH: Well, we kept getting phone calls from the Cape, from KSC, from the Kennedy Space Center, and that started it. I guess it finally evolved where we knew for sure that the crew were all dead.

WRIGHT: What was your position at the time? Were you the chief?

MCLEAISH: No, at that time I was the Deputy Chief of, I guess, Public Information.

WRIGHT: Then as that role, what were your responsibilities regarding the Apollo 1 fire?

What were some of the duties that you had to be responsible for?

MCLEAISH: Well, I became very involved in some of the news releases and answers to inquiries. When that kind of thing happens, sometimes it can become very burdensome. We had a system set up where you had to clear everything through a group of people. It became very unwieldy. We did end up doing that kind of thing.

WRIGHT: You had been there about three years, I think.

MCLEAISH: Well, let's see. Yes. Well, let's see. When I joined NASA, it was just before [Walter M.] Wally Schirra's [Jr.] first Mercury mission. That would have been, what, August, I believe, of probably [19]'62.

WRIGHT: The Mercury? No, the Gemini with Schirra as December [19]'65.

MCLEAISH: No, no. His first, his Mercury.

WRIGHT: His Mercury, October [19]'62.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Okay.

WRIGHT: So you had been there several years.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: And did you have training as you went through those years to prepare you for that new role or was it a lot of on-the-job training?

MCLEAISH: I think it was mostly on-the-job training. You did not have any formal kind of thing.

WRIGHT: How did you become informed and educated on the hardware and the systems and spacecraft that the astronauts were using?

MCLEAISH: Well, you tended to do that a lot through your own studies. I don't know if you've seen them or not, but back in those days the contractor would put together these detailed books on the hardware. I guess McDonnell Douglas [McDonnell Aircraft Corporation] did it for Gemini, and North American [Aviation, Inc.] did it for the Apollo.

WRIGHT: And Public Affairs was given a copy of those?

MCLEAISH: Yes. We had copies of those, yes.

WRIGHT: So it was basically your own responsibility to inform yourself?

MCLEAISH: Yes. You'd try to do that as much as you could. I ended up even writing a piece or two for [Dr. Robert R.] Gilruth for one of the publications, I guess one of Grumman's [Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation] publications, and then also an article where he was supposed to look out a hundred years from now and see what it would look like in 1960—well, I guess it would be 2069 or 2065 or 6 or 7, whatever.

But, yes, it was a very interesting time because a lot of things were happening. As far as public affairs, you were really dealing with first-rate newspeople. It was like the Walter Cronkites and the Dan Rathers and so on. I had known Rather in Houston before, before he left and went on to work for the network. In fact, I guess Rather was in Dallas [Texas] the day [President John F.] Kennedy was assassinated.

WRIGHT: I think so, yes.

MCLEAISH: That's when he became, I guess, the White House correspondent because of [President] Lyndon [B.] Johnson.

WRIGHT: During that time period when Public Affairs and you were evolving, what was the mission of Public Affairs? So many people have different ideas and perceptions of what Public Affairs was supposed to do or is doing. Could you share with us, as a Public Affairs

person, what you were trying to accomplish?

MCLEAISH: Well, in our own case I think we were trying to really get the word out as much as possible and tell the truth as much as you could. You're right, there was all sorts of conceptions about what Public Affairs was supposed to do or should be doing, and I think that's probably still true and maybe even more so today.

WRIGHT: Did you find yourself, or the other officers as well find themselves sometimes not knowing what direction to give information because the press was asking one thing and internally the employees might be expecting another one? How were you able to stay on your mission and provide that information in a timely manner?

MCLEAISH: Well, I think you did just the best you can, and you tried to make it as timely as you could.

WRIGHT: Did every piece of information that came out of the Manned Spacecraft Center during those early days, did it come through the Public Affairs Office or each branch and directorate allowed to issue their own information?

MCLEAISH: It was mainly through the Public Affairs or Public Information Office. Not totally, but I would say in the mainstream would be there.

WRIGHT: Was there a guideline, say, from Dr. Gilruth or any other manager that said this is

how internal and external communications will be handled?

MCLEAISH: Not so much through Gilruth. Gilruth tended to be more of a hands-off kind of person, as I recall, as far as public affairs. I think he was always sort of fascinated by it. But in NASA Headquarters there was a fellow named Julian [W.] Scheer, and Scheer was very much involved as far as providing direction and so on. Then Paul [P.] Haney eventually had become the Public Affairs Officer in Houston.

WRIGHT: Did Haney create a structure, a different structure than Shorty Powers once he got there?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I would say he did. I think Haney was probably a little better organized. Shorty was very fragmented in the way he had the organization going. Haney was probably not a great organization guy himself. Haney became very involved as far as the mission commentary. I later ended up as a mission commentator myself, and that was one of the jobs you had.

WRIGHT: Did your role change when Mr. Haney took over? Did he move you into a different direction?

MCLEAISH: I'm not sure he did at first. My boss for a while was a fellow named Howard Gibbons. He was the public information chief. Then Gibbons, I guess, got kind of moved aside, and then I became the Chief Of Public Information in—actually, I guess that was 1968.

WRIGHT: Did you have a large staff?

MCLEAISH: Reasonably sized, I'd say fifteen or sixteen people, plus the support contractor.

WRIGHT: Could you share with us some of the equipment and how you handled to move information from the center? I think so many times when people look back on history, they forget that the technology is very historic as well. We didn't have computers. We didn't have fax machines. Could you share with us on how you were able to release some of that out?

MCLEAISH: Well, there weren't computers, that's right, that we used back in those days. We were very big on mission commentary and the transcription of it. That became very much a major project, and putting together the way to make that come out in a timely fashion was very important. Let me think. Well, it was just a very important thing, that you wanted to make sure that you had it.

WRIGHT: Was it somewhat labor-intensive as well?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes. Yes, we had these transcript typists, and they would be in these little booths and hopefully typing away and putting the stuff together accurately.

WRIGHT: Was that real time or did they read off tapes?

MCLEAISH: No, that was real time. They were doing it as the mission was going on.

WRIGHT: Wow.

MCLEAISH: And that was different, you know. I don't think they do that anymore.

WRIGHT: Once the transcriptions were done, then were there copies made for the press?

MCLEAISH: Yes. That was the intent. The intent was to mass-reproduce them for the press. That would also include like we would have—what do they call them—during missions, change-of-shift news conferences or briefings. That would normally involve, say, a flight director like, say, a [Eugene F.] Gene Kranz or a [Christopher C.] Chris Kraft or whoever it was on duty at the time.

WRIGHT: And where were these held?

MCLEAISH: These were held, as it turned out, we had moved into what used to be Building 1, which became Building 2, I think, and they were held in there, in that small conference room. I don't know, you've probably seen it, I'll bet.

WRIGHT: And during that time period because everything was new and things continued to change, how were press credentials handed out and how did you certify who was allowed to

come on site to participate in those news conferences? How was that all handled?

MCLEAISH: Well, you did a combination of things. I guess you had some that would come from NASA Headquarters [Washington, D.C.], some from [NASA] Marshall [Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Alabama], and some from Kennedy [Space Center, Florida] , and some from JSC [Johnson Space Center, Houston, Texas]. You'd normally just certify them. Someone like myself would look at it and say, "Okay, this guy is okay," or, "This one is not." That was pretty much the way. It was a judgmental call, most of it.

WRIGHT: Did you have quite a few, once the missions started, since Gemini IV, once the missions started being controlled from the MOCR [Mission Operations Control Room] at MSC?

MCLEAISH: Yes, we did. I would say the peak number was probably Apollo 11, and we had maybe 1,200, 1,500 press. It was a very, very busy time.

Then, of course, Apollo 13 was turned out into a whole different world.

WRIGHT: Yes, it did. Yes, it did. What other materials were available for the press during the Gemini-Apollo time? You mentioned that mission transcriptions. Did you also have press kits available for them at the time before?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes. You had press kits that were released before. That's correct.

WRIGHT: Was that all under your operation as well?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes.

WRIGHT: The information that belonged in that press kit, where did that come from?

MCLEAISH: That came from a combination of places, mainly from JSC or from the MSC, whatever we were at the time. But most of it originated from with us.

WRIGHT: Was Public Affairs still segmented into the different areas then? For instance, did the Industry Communications give you information?

MCLEAISH: No. No. That had gone away. That had become sort of a subactivity within the Public Information Branch.

WRIGHT: The information about the hardware or about the spacecraft or space suits, the technical information, where did your staff get that information?

MCLEAISH: Well, you got it mainly from the contractors. Like the space suit, for example, was from—I'm trying to recall who the contractor was. I think it was—was it Latex [International Latex Corporation]? Might have been. But that kind of information mainly came from the contractors.

WRIGHT: Did you ever travel to the contractors' facilities to do those?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes.

WRIGHT: Is there one that was more memorable to you than others that you remember going and actually witnessing the making of the equipment?

MCLEAISH: Well, I'm trying to recall if there was. I went to Rockwell, or North American [North American Rockwell Incorporated] several times and had gone to Grumman at least once or twice and to McDonnell [McDonnell Douglas Corporation] a time or two.

WRIGHT: Was this to gain information?

MCLEAISH: Yes, mainly. Mainly.

WRIGHT: An understanding?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Did those trips help you later when you were doing commentary?

MCLEAISH: Yes, they would help. They did help, indeed.

WRIGHT: Regarding the responsibility of Public Affairs in external release information, did you help train other employees at the MSC in what they could or could not say to the press, for instance, the flight directors or the flight controllers or the engineers, those type of people?

MCLEAISH: Yes, maybe to a limited point. It turns out the flight directors were usually pretty savvy in their own right. I don't think you needed to give much training, say, to a Gene Kranz or to a Chris Kraft, for example, or even like [Sigurd A.] Sig Sjoberg. But, yes, you did some of it, but it was not a major thing by any stretch.

WRIGHT: But it was your office that set up the news conferences?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Tell us how that happened. When were they done as far as a mission was concerned? Was it prior and during and after?

MCLEAISH: Well, it was prior, during, and after. It was all three. We had the astronauts, we would normally set up the crew, the next crew to fly, and that was done sometime in advance of the mission, usually a couple of weeks in advance or maybe three or four at the most. We would normally do that two ways. We would have the news conference plus what we called round-robin interviews where major networks, for example, and publications would be able to interview them individually, each astronaut.

WRIGHT: Was this all still confined in the news conference room?

MCLEAISH: Well, it wasn't in the news conference room. It was more in the offices around what used to be Building 1, now Building 2. We would use some of the offices and do them that way.

WRIGHT: During the missions when you held the conferences, was there a formal announcement of when the conferences were going to be held?

MCLEAISH: Yes. We would normally put it out over the public information loop, just announce that the next news conference will be next change. We called them change-of-shift briefings.

WRIGHT: The interest of the public continued to increase during the Mercury and Gemini days, of course. Did that affect the Public Affairs Office? Did the public start to send inquiries, or did they want visits and tours?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I think we had probably an increasing number of tours. I was not involved in the tourist program, but I think we did have a lot of tourists that came about because of the increase in interest, certainly up through Apollo 11 and I guess again through Apollo 13. Apollo 14, of course, that was the [Alan B.] Al Shepard mission.

WRIGHT: Out of the special events and ceremonies and things, was any of those duties under your control as well, or was that a different area of Public Affairs?

MCLEAISH: When you say duties—

WRIGHT: If you had some special events, maybe when the president came to the Center.

MCLEAISH: Well, we got very involved in that, yes. I guess [President Richard M.] Nixon was there several times, and we became involved with that. The first time he showed up, though, he showed up as a candidate, and I think that was, when, [19]‘68. He showed up as a candidate and the fellow who later became his press secretary—name escapes me. I’ll think of it later.

But in any case, he was there. I thought he was sort of a kind of low guy on the totem pole because he was on the press bus. A fellow named Bill Plant, who still works for, I think, CBS [Incorporated], was kind of ordering him around, telling him what to do, and this sort of thing. But I did ride the press bus with them, and we got involved in that kind of thing.

WRIGHT: Early in the history of the program at MSC, Time-Life was granted an exclusive agreement with the astronauts to do their stories.

MCLEAISH: Yes, they were.

WRIGHT: How did this affect the Public Affairs Office? Did it make your job easier or did it give you extra—

MCLEAISH: It probably gave you a few heartburns, the reason being that it's like they had exclusive rights to stories. That was *Life* mainly. It was *Life* magazine.

Then later I guess it was *World Book* became involved, too, and that was more of a Houston operation. They were set up in Houston. But we worked with the *Life* people reasonably well, I think. A fellow named Ralph Morse was one of their star photographers, and Ralph, we worked out arrangements where he might shoot things and also kind of function as a pool, and we would release some of his photos. So we tried to work around as much as we could.

WRIGHT: You used the word “heartburn,” so I guess it had pros and cons.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: How did the other media accept the fact that—

MCLEAISH: I don't think they liked it. No, they didn't like it. It was more like an exclusive right to interview the—well, it also evolved into the families, too.

WRIGHT: What was your first encounter with working with the astronauts, or how did you help set those procedures up so that they would work well with the media as well as the

media could at least know that the astronauts should have some privacy as well?

MCLEAISH: Well, let's see. I became involved with the astronauts in a variety of ways. One, I'd gone on some of the geology field trips with them, to Hawaii was one of more memorable ones. We went to the Big Island of Hawaii, and that was very interesting. I guess they had a couple of teams there. One was the [Charles C.] Pete Conrad group, and then the Neil [A.] Armstrong group. But you became involved in that kind of thing some.

But over a period of time, you just kind of put procedures in place much as we had done with the air-to-ground mission commentary stuff as far as setting up the preflight news conferences. Those were kind of known to have to occur and were accepted. You dealt mainly, I guess, with Alan Shepard, because he was functioning more as Chief of the Astronaut Office for a good period of time.

WRIGHT: So when you came up with a procedure, did you take it to Shepard and worked out the details that way?

MCLEAISH: Yes, that's pretty much the way it turned out.

WRIGHT: How was the reception from the astronauts of PAO involvement? Was it something that they considered to be an asset and a benefit or something as a hindrance and an interference?

MCLEAISH: I think sort of a mixed bag, if you want my opinion. I think some thought it was

very important, some probably did not.

Armstrong I found as an extremely interesting guy. I was in quarantine with the Apollo 11 crew after they'd returned from the Moon, and that's when he had that famous quote, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." I know I kept watching things. You'd see these promos on TV where it looked like he had dropped the A. Well, I talked to him about it in quarantine. I asked him what he said.

He said, "Well, I know what I meant to say." He said, "I meant to say, 'It's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,'" and that's kind of the way we played it.

WRIGHT: I know that based on reading and research that there seemed to be a perception of tension sometimes between what Public Affairs suggested to happen or want to happen and what engineers or flight controllers or even flight directors would have liked to happen and, of course, in many cases astronauts. One example would be the Apollo 7 flight when Schirra canceled the broadcast of the TV. Can you share some details about that?

MCLEAISH: Yes. I remember that, but not in that much detail. I think that was more of a combination of Schirra becoming angry with the flight controllers. Because I think Chris Kraft may have ended up getting on the line with him, one of these private lines, and giving him hell, giving Schirra hell. Because Glynn [S.] Lunney, I believe, is the flight director that became directly involved, and I know Lunney was very upset at the time.

WRIGHT: I'd like to move into possibly asking some questions about specific missions.

MCLEAISH: Okay, sure.

WRIGHT: Because you've given us some understanding of how the organization was set up, and as we work through this we can gather a few more details.

MCLEAISH: Okay, sure.

WRIGHT: Because what we've also found is there's not a lot of history about the Public Affairs Office and how it was formed, and the procedures and where they came from. A lot of people would like to say common sense will tell us that procedures evolved because of necessity, but it's also nice to hear from an expert that was there how those happened. When Gemini IV operations moved to the MOCR, apparently the duties of the Public Affairs Office changed somewhat because it was a new time for the MSC.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Could you share with us the differences of what had happened prior to that time?

MCLEAISH: Well, prior to that, all of the missions were launched and controlled at Kennedy. Then when you moved and you moved the control center to Houston, well, that changed the whole world. It changed it basically where I guess you had the pre-launch coming from Kennedy, and then once it was launched, the responsibility switched immediately to Houston, which, as a consequence, meant that normally you'd have someone say, "Houston

is now controlling.” It was a nice lead-in line that I would use some as a commentator, and that would just kind of tend to tell you where you were.

WRIGHT: How did you prepare for that role? That was a totally new role for you to do as a commentator. Share with us how that happened and what was the purpose of that and what did you want to accomplish as you were a commentator for the Gemini Program.

MCLEAISH: Well, I guess I didn’t really become a commentator until later in Gemini. But on Gemini IV—I guess that may been Paul Haney who was the first commentator, I think, but I wouldn’t swear to it.

What you tried to do was tell as much about the mission as you could. I had become fairly good as a launch commentator, and that was kind of an exciting time to me, once you became involved with particularly in Apollo where you had all those three stages and all that power and so on and you’re sitting in Houston and that’s all happening in Florida. But, yes, I think it was an important assignment and somebody should do it and do it well, and I tried to do it as best I could.

WRIGHT: Where were you located when you were doing the commentary?

MCLEAISH: In the control center in Houston.

WRIGHT: And you had your own console that you sat at?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes.

WRIGHT: And how long was your shift that you were on?

MCLEAISH: Well, it varied. I, unfortunately, was also a commentator during the Apollo 13 explosion, and that was a terrible time. It was an awful night.

WRIGHT: Well, let's talk about Apollo 13, since you brought it up.

MCLEAISH: Okay.

WRIGHT: You were doing your shift as a commentator.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: And?

MCLEAISH: And I thought I was getting ready to break shift and go home and be happy, and then all of a sudden it's "Houston, we've got a problem," came across, and that was [James A.] Lovell. And they sure had one.

WRIGHT: How long were you there on this shift that now had just become extended?

MCLEAISH: I don't recall exactly how long, maybe ten, twelve hours, but I did finally go home and had a couple of belts of good ones and tried to sleep. Because then everything sort of switched pretty rapidly. That's when they reactivated a pool assignment, because I guess there was a real belief that this crew may not come back.

WRIGHT: You mentioned to the reactivation of the pool assignment. Let's step back just for a second. When the MOCR opened and the commentary was done by a Public Affairs Office specialist, where did you put the press during that time?

MCLEAISH: They were mainly in the news center over in Building 2.

WRIGHT: They were listening to your commentary?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, they would listen it there. Now, it turns out, oddly enough, and it was maybe very timely, the first time we had a pool located in the control center was Apollo 13, which turned out it gave you some opportunity for candor, and they could see that you weren't lying.

WRIGHT: That was quite a few missions that had occurred from the first time you had Gemini IV to Apollo 13.

MCLEAISH: Yes, that's right. That's correct.

WRIGHT: How did the pool begin? How did their place happen?

MCLEAISH: Well, there was kind of a constant pressure for a pool on the part of the press, and we tried to make it very simple. We had one writer and one—

WRIGHT: Broadcast?

MCLEAISH: —broadcast, and that was it. We said, “Okay, you’re the pool.”

WRIGHT: And who selected those people?

MCLEAISH: We let them do it among themselves. You almost had to do it that way, I guess.

WRIGHT: Did they take turns for each mission?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Well, I think once they decided that things had started to go down or not become as tense as you saw on 13, the pool kind of went away again. It became a much more dormant thing.

WRIGHT: Did you find that it assisted Public Affairs officers to have that pool?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I thought it did, because again, it kind of made you appear open and like you have candor.

WRIGHT: Where were they located in the Mission Control Center?

MCLEAISH: There was a little side booth up in—well, I guess they're in a different area now, I think. But in the old MOCR, in the second and third floor there was a little booth where you put them.

WRIGHT: They were just left alone to view?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Did they have the opportunity to hear all the loops?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Or were there selective loops that were in there?

MCLEAISH: Well, they heard the flight director's loop.

WRIGHT: They could see the viewing screens as well?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes.

WRIGHT: Then their job was to come back and meet with the other reporters and share that information?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Either that or put it on as far as the—I think a fellow named Roy Neal became very active as the pool correspondent for the television. But that got a little tricky, too, from their own behalf because you had the NBC guy. You couldn't necessarily have him with ABC or CBS necessarily, so they tended to sort of play that out as—I guess anonymously.

WRIGHT: Did you facilitate the news conferences?

MCLEAISH: Did I facilitate them?

WRIGHT: The news conferences or did the flight directors facilitate them? Who actually handled—

MCLEAISH: No, we ran them. Yes, we ran the news conferences. We would have one of our people as the moderator.

WRIGHT: Was there a beginning and end time?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: So at least they would know that you were going to start and stop at the same time?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes.

WRIGHT: I guess that helped everybody knowing that it just couldn't keep going and going.

MCLEAISH: Sure. Yes.

WRIGHT: Did you find the press at that time informed before they were asking the questions because they had read your press kits? Did you find the materials that you had given them—

MCLEAISH: I found that varied a great deal among whoever the member of the press was. Some were very bright and some were not so bright.

WRIGHT: I can imagine. When you got ready to do the commentary, did you have to do a great deal of studying on your own before that time?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I did. I'll tell you what we mainly, or what I did, and I guess the other commentators did it as well, is I would go into simulations with the flight control team, which I found very useful, particularly in the launch abort simulations, which I suppose they still do, but, gosh, I don't know. I've been away so long.

WRIGHT: Were you there as an observer during the simulations or did you simply practice

your commentary?

MCLEAISH: No, you practiced. Yes, I practiced.

WRIGHT: I know that in simulations they have debriefings, so were you also part of debriefings?

MCLEAISH: Well, I was not part of the debriefing where they said, "Hey, you screwed up." Because they didn't really pay that much attention to you. They let you do your own thing quietly, and that's what I tried to do.

WRIGHT: Did you find a lot of differences on how your job was affected when the off-site news center was moved on to Building 2? Was it better for your department to be on the Manned Spacecraft Center?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I think it was. I think it was once we finally moved on to the Center. It made it much easier, I think.

WRIGHT: During Gemini IV, of course [Edward H.] Ed White [II] did the first U.S. space walk, such a momentous time for everyone.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: What types of information were you able to give to the press, again, before and during and after that mission that explained? Because it was added somewhat at the last moment to do that. Were you put into the position of not having that material ready, or did you feel prepared?

MCLEAISH: I honestly don't recall for sure if we were ready or not. I know it was kind of a last-minute deal. I think Dr. [Charles A.] Chuck Berry had something to do with it. I think you've probably interviewed him.

WRIGHT: Yes, we have.

MCLEAISH: But I think he tended to be a fairly talkative guy.

WRIGHT: Once the Apollo missions began, you were still, though, doing Gemini, because the Apollo unmanned missions were starting and the Gemini Program was still going. Did you find your staff stretched of trying to handle both those programs?

MCLEAISH: No, I don't think so. I don't think we felt stretched that much. I'm trying to recall that. We had some unmanned Apollos. In fact, I became involved in one of the commentaries on an unmanned. It was Apollo—not 4, not the first one, which went very well, but this one everything kind of went to hell. It was Apollo—I want to say 6, 7.

But in any case, they were going to have a high-altitude abort or something and it became a low-altitude, and everything kind of went wrong. I remember sitting next to Chris

Kraft, who said something like—they moved the ship, and Kraft said something like, “Well, sometimes it doesn’t pay to do anything. You just might as well leave things as they are,” and which was kind of interesting. I think it was maybe one of his philosophies.

WRIGHT: During the mid-sixties when this was all going on, some of the members of the astronaut corps died in various accidents.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: How did your office handle those situations, and how were you involved in handling those?

MCLEAISH: Well, I recall very well the Elliott [M.] See [Jr.]-[Charles A.] Charlie Bassett [II] accident and also the Apollo 1 fire. As a matter of fact, the Apollo 1 fire, I ended up at [Virgil I. “Gus”] Grissom’s house, which was a terrible assignment, but somebody needed to be there to deal with the press, and I guess I was the guy who was there.

Then in Elliott See’s case, I guess I was at the Elliott See house. That was a fellow named Charlie Basset was with him.

WRIGHT: Did you find the press to be receptive of the mood of NASA, or did you find them wanting to be extremely inquisitive and looking for information that you were having to somewhat hold in privacy at that time?

MCLEAISH: It varied. It varied, again, depending on which member of the press you were dealing with.

WRIGHT: It was a difficult time for you professionally?

MCLEAISH: Yes, it was. Yes. It's not a lot of fun to be at somebody's house whose husband was just killed.

WRIGHT: There certainly wasn't a precedent for it at that time, either.

MCLEAISH: No. No. Now, I recall I was not involved in that one somehow when [Theodore C.] Freeman was killed. I think a fellow named [James] Jim Shefter showed up at somebody's house and told his wife, which became a very unsettling thing. I know some of the astronauts held it very much against him for a long time. But Shefter, I think he may have recently died, Jim Shefter.

WRIGHT: Yes, he did.

MCLEAISH: Oh, you knew that?

WRIGHT: I knew that he had passed away. Because of that incident from him, did any of your policies or guidelines from your office change in how you handled these incidents?

MCLEAISH: No, I don't think it changed. In the case of Shefter, it was more of probably a misstep on his part and it was probably not appropriate to have him show up at the house and say, "Well, he's gone," but I think he may have had some pressure from the *Houston Chronicle*, a fellow named Dan Cobb, city editor at the time.

WRIGHT: After those incidents, as well as the Apollo 1 fire, especially after the Apollo 1 fire, was there anything different that the Public Affairs changed in order to release information because of that incident, because of the accident?

MCLEAISH: Well, I think things became much more unwieldy in the post-Apollo 1 fire accident because they had a big protocol set up—I guess it was more with the Program Office—that you had to clear answers through them, and it became very unwieldy. That went on for a period of time, but over the long haul, I guess things worked out.

WRIGHT: Did that make your job more difficult?

MCLEAISH: Yes, it would make it a bit more difficult, I think.

WRIGHT: Several weeks before the Apollo 10 flight, there was a change in management when Brian Duff replaced Paul Haney. Did you find a great deal of changes occurred within your office with that change of management?

MCLEAISH: Yes, there was a fair amount. Duff is a very charming, very dapper, delightful

guy. He's different. His style is very different from Haney. So, yes, I would say there was certainly a change. I guess Duff has passed on, too, by the way.

WRIGHT: Yes, he has.

MCLEAISH: But, yes, he was in an interesting guy, Brian Duff. But so was Haney.

WRIGHT: Did your role change with the new management, or job duties increased during that time?

MCLEAISH: You say did it change?

WRIGHT: Yes.

MCLEAISH: Yes, I guess maybe it changed some, but I'm not sure I could pinpoint any particular way that it changed.

WRIGHT: It almost sounds like your job continually evolved and grew.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Is that one way that you would describe the first ten years or so?

MCLEAISH: It evolved and grew, yes. Well, I would say it became kind of different. I had a fair amount of independence as far as the job. I ran that office for sixteen years, and that was a long time.

WRIGHT: There were always situations, I'm sure, that got your attention. One of the ones that we were looking at was that on Apollo 10, Eugene [A.] Cernan decided to utter a word that most people don't normally hear come out of astronauts' mouths.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, I remember that. [Laughs]

WRIGHT: I was wondering how Public Affairs addressed that situation.

MCLEAISH: Well, you put it out in the transcript verbatim, and that's what we did. I'm glad we did it, in retrospect.

WRIGHT: Did you have any after effects of that from the press? Did they want to know more information, or did the transcript serve all the purpose that needed to be served?

MCLEAISH: I think the transcript pretty much handled it.

WRIGHT: Any public reaction that you got in your office?

MCLEAISH: It seems to me there was some. There was some little old ladies that would call

up and give you hell about something like that guy would just take advantage of me and that kind of thing.

WRIGHT: Well, of course after Apollo 10, Apollo 11 was scheduled. As you mentioned a little earlier in our conversation, things changed as far as the Public Affairs Office because you just had so many more press personnel that you had to deal with. Could you elaborate on that and tell us how your job and just the whole Public Affairs arena began to change a little bit?

MCLEAISH: Well, with the Apollo 11, there was just so many press there that, as I recall, we even had tents outside that had been set up to cover some of the press. We had begun to use that lobby area right across from where our offices were. I would say that there were also tents that were set up that were used also.

WRIGHT: Did they arrive earlier than they had ever arrived before for this?

MCLEAISH: The press?

WRIGHT: Yes.

MCLEAISH: I'm not so sure I recall them arriving that much earlier. I just recall there was a lot of them.

WRIGHT: A lot more?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: From all over the world?

MCLEAISH: Yes, pretty much. Pretty much all over the world. We had the BBC and the—you name them. They were there from—of course we had ended up with the Japanese, I think, for some of the earlier missions. Of course, you also had the Velcro [Industries B.V.] and the Fisher pen [Fisher Space Pen Co.] people. They became very active as promoters.

WRIGHT: How did that work? Could you share with us some information about that, how they promoted it?

MCLEAISH: Yes. They tended to put out little news releases and so on, and it worked pretty well. I know Paul [C.] Fisher, who I think is still alive and still runs the company.

WRIGHT: Was he there, or did he send a representative?

MCLEAISH: Well, he would show up himself.

WRIGHT: Would he?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, he would show up himself. He's the guy who once ran for president, I think, for the United States.

WRIGHT: Sounds like an interesting gentleman.

MCLEAISH: Yes, he was and probably still is.

WRIGHT: Was that another role that you served, working with these promoters of products that were being used on the missions?

MCLEAISH: Yes. In fact, I became very involved with the General Foods' [Corporation] Tang [orange drink mix] people, which was kind of interesting because they did very well, as you know, as far as promoting Tang. I think people tended to think that Tang was just a byproduct of the space program. But I dealt mainly with their ad agency. I'm trying to recall who that was. [Young & Rubicam, Inc.]. I'll think of it.

WRIGHT: Well, that was something a little bit different.

MCLEAISH: Oh, yes.

WRIGHT: Along with everything else that you had to do.

MCLEAISH: Yes, and it was a lot of fun.

WRIGHT: Did they want to come on site to do their promotions or how did you work with those companies?

MCLEAISH: It varied. In the case of Paul Fisher kind of people, he would show up on site, and he was kind of an operator. In the case of General Foods-Tang, I'm again trying to remember the name of the ad agency [Young & Rubicam] because that's who we dealt with mainly, and they would send in their storyboards, and we would review them.

WRIGHT: That really was something different from your everyday activity, then, wasn't it?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Sure. Yes, it was. It was different. It was kind of fun, though.

WRIGHT: Did you work with other departments, because Tang, being a commercial product, but yet it was going toward the food and nutrition area of the program, not necessarily Public Affairs, did you have to coordinate with these other departments as well?

MCLEAISH: Yes. We would normally send that out to the cognizant technical person to look over and review for technical accuracy.

WRIGHT: Then it all came back to you to ship back to them?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Goodness. Like air traffic controlling out of our office, wasn't it?

MCLEAISH: Well, kind off.

WRIGHT: Everybody filtered in and filtered out.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Where were you on Apollo 11? Tell us what was your role and what job you were doing at that time.

MCLEAISH: Well, Apollo 11, I was several places. One, I did a little bit of commentary before I went into quarantine. I was at KSC [NASA Kennedy Space Center] for the pre-launch. I did not get that close to the launch, and then I caught an airplane back to Houston, I guess to get ready to be locked up, right after I had done a little bit of commentary.

WRIGHT: Was this a commercial flight that you took back, or did you have an airplane that brought you back?

MCLEAISH: I'm trying to remember. I think it was commercial, but I wouldn't swear to it.

WRIGHT: I was thinking about that coordination again.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes. Yes, I think it was.

WRIGHT: So were you in quarantine waiting on the crew?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: You were there before they were?

MCLEAISH: We were there before they showed up.

WRIGHT: Were you checking it all out for them?

MCLEAISH: Well, not exactly, but that was in, what, Building 37, I guess, was where they were located.

WRIGHT: How were you selected to be the one to work with them in quarantine?

MCLEAISH: Well, I'm not sure I know. But it turned out I enjoyed it after it was over, well after it was over. I didn't look forward to it at the time.

WRIGHT: How did your family feel about you being secluded for that amount of time?

MCLEAISH: Well, let's see. It was a couple of weeks, I guess. Well, my wife would come

out periodically and talk to me through the glass. That's the way families did, I suppose.

WRIGHT: Did you have any personal concerns about possible health issues?

MCLEAISH: No, I didn't really. As a matter of fact, I even tasted a little bit of Moon dust, just to say I'd done it.

WRIGHT: Did you have a chance to watch the EVA [Extravehicular Activity] and see everything, be a part of the actual activities before you went into quarantine, or were you into quarantine before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon?

MCLEAISH: No, we were in quarantine. Once they had landed, that's when they said, "You get over there." They figured, okay, time's up, but you did see him on the Moon in quarantine.

WRIGHT: Could you share with us some of the conversations that you had with the astronauts? You mentioned you had gone on geology field trips with them, so you weren't strangers with them.

MCLEAISH: Oh, no. No.

WRIGHT: You had a chance to spend time with them. Could you share with us some of their thoughts or maybe some of the questions that you might have asked them in order to prepare

some of the releases and the reports that you issued from there?

MCLEAISH: Well, I'm trying to recall. Yes, they were a very diverse and very different group of people themselves. Pete Conrad, who I guess now is dead, he had, what, a motorcycle accident?

WRIGHT: Yes, he did.

MCLEAISH: Of course, Armstrong was very quiet and very unassuming. In fact, he was an interesting guy to me, particularly in quarantine. It was kind of like he'd had had the world lifted off his shoulders, is the way you kind of sensed him as feeling. Then there was [Edwin E. "Buzz"] Aldrin, who was quite different at the time. In fact, I think Buzz became—I guess he's officially named Buzz now.

WRIGHT: That's what I hear.

MCLEAISH: He was quite different. Buzz, I think never quite got over the fact that he was not the first man to set foot on the Moon but the second. [Michael] Collins was very different, because Collins, he never set foot on the Moon, and he was a very bright, intelligent guy who I was always impressed by.

WRIGHT: Did you have a defined purpose or a defined mission as being part of that quarantine team?

MCLEAISH: Yes. I was supposed to brief the press, which I tried to do, and I caught hell a time or two because they didn't feel that you were telling them everything you should be telling them.

WRIGHT: Were you in that position of trying to choose what to tell, or did you just didn't have a lot?

MCLEAISH: Well, no, I had a fair amount. I thought I was putting out more than maybe some of the press thought I was.

WRIGHT: Was everything from you issued via print reports, or did you give broadcast or how did you handle that?

MCLEAISH: It was briefings. I would come in for, I guess, a briefing to the press. It was kind of like a little news conference.

WRIGHT: So you came out of the quarantine area to do that?

MCLEAISH: No. Remember, that was all behind the glass.

WRIGHT: So you just came so they could see you?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I came out, and they'd see you through the glass.

WRIGHT: It's pretty interesting. Was that a set time that you did that every day or just when you felt it was necessary?

MCLEAISH: I'm trying to recall. I'm not sure it was a set time, but we did it several times. Then there was—I guess I had a nice private room until a young lady named Heather Owens, I believe, got bounced into quarantine.

WRIGHT: That's different.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: How did that happen?

MCLEAISH: Well, she became contaminated some way. They were all dealing with these Moon rocks and that kind of thing, and so I lost my private room there in the last day or two, I suppose.

WRIGHT: Did you get the couch? [Laughs]

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: What was your reaction of seeing Moon dust or knowing that you were with objects that came from the Moon?

MCLEAISH: Well, I found it interesting, the fact that—I just took a little thing and just said I might as well taste it and go out first class, if that's what's going to happen. Turns out it didn't, obviously.

WRIGHT: So I should ask you what Moon dust tastes like.

MCLEAISH: Well, you can. I'm not sure it—it was kind of tasteless, as I recall.

WRIGHT: Tastes like Moon dust, huh? [Laughs]

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: That must have been a very special time in your life to know that you were the first to see those or be that long with those materials.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Well, it was interesting. I guess that was mainly off the space suits that had come in. I'm trying to recall. I guess they arrived maybe before the crew, because the crew had shown up in this trailer. I don't know if you recall or not, it was sort of a trailer that they moved in. They were playing this thing for all it was worth, as far as possible contamination from lunar soil or Moon dust.

WRIGHT: Quite a difference from where they had been and now they were in this secluded area.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: How many people were involved in the quarantine?

MCLEAISH: Let's see. I'm trying to recall. Not that many. There was two doctors and myself, several technicians, and a fellow named—his last name was Graham, I believe, and he was kind of like the head technician. I'm trying to recall the doctors' names. One later went to—I believe he's in [Temple], Texas, and the other went to the Eisenhower Clinic [Eisenhower Army Medical Center], and he's the one that—well, gosh. Names kind of escape you.

WRIGHT: Sure. Did you meet together as a team prior to going into quarantine to visit with these other people, or were you all cast in there around the same time?

MCLEAISH: Probably showed up about the same time. I don't recall that we had any big formal meeting. We might have done something one day in advance or several weeks in advance, but I don't recall any big particular—

WRIGHT: Did you have very much association with the other people that were in quarantine?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, pretty much. I'm trying to recall the doctor's name, the one that was really a very pleasant guy and I got along well with. The other doctor I think came back with the crew. He was on the ship. [Dr. William R.] Carpentier was his name. You know him.

WRIGHT: I've heard that name, yes.

MCLEAISH: It was Carpentier, and if I can remember the other fellow, because that's the one that I really had gotten fairly close with.

WRIGHT: When you were released from quarantine, did you have a chance to take some time off and be with your family and be somewhat on a normal routine, or were you right back into your normal day-to-day activities at the office?

MCLEAISH: Well, I think I probably took a little time off, but not much. I don't recall any extended period of time.

WRIGHT: Did you have an opportunity to take much time off at all since the time that you had started with NASA to this time, with all of the continuing missions and changes?

MCLEAISH: Some, but not a lot. I guess I was not that big on vacations at the time.

WRIGHT: Were your days long as well? Did you have long hours?

MCLEAISH: Sometimes. It varied, and it varied pretty widely.

WRIGHT: Apollo 11, you mentioned so many people had traveled throughout the world to be at Houston to see this happen or be a part of it happening.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: What was it like for Apollo 12? Did you have that same type of interest?

MCLEAISH: Probably lesser so. Not as many. Again, that's predictable, I think, because you'd already had men on the Moon. In fact, Apollo 12 was kind of—I don't know if you recall or not, that's where they lost the picture from the surface of the Moon, and that kind of did not help, I guess, as far as the appeal or interest.

Apollo 11, I do recall some things that when I was in quarantine, they had a—I guess it was Armstrong's wife at the time, they had a big sort of—well, he had a birthday in quarantine, and they had a big birthday party for him. I remember sort of—well, that's one thing I didn't talk to the press about, and I told them I wouldn't, and I kept my word on that. I guess Neil came—well, he cut the cake, and did a lot of things. But, in fact, I guess he was born—his birthday, I think, must have been in August.

WRIGHT: I think it's in August, yes.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Now, you've talked to him also?

WRIGHT: Just recently. He was able to find time for us in his schedule. He came down for his annual appointment with the medical staff around his birthday.

MCLEAISH: Oh, okay. Well, good for him.

WRIGHT: So that's why I knew when his birthday was.

MCLEAISH: Well, that makes sense.

WRIGHT: He allowed us some time during that.

MCLEAISH: Well, good. He was very a interesting guy, I felt.

WRIGHT: He still is.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: His legacy lives on, as so many of the rest of them, especially with the publicity and the movie from *Apollo 13*, so many people have their own interpretation of what happened during that mission, and you'd told us earlier that you were working on the console when the words came in from Lovell.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Could you describe the environment, the atmosphere that was in the MOCR at that time?

MCLEAISH: Yes. I was totally confused. That went just beyond my comprehension of what was going on. I kept thinking, "Well, this thing, they'll say it's a glitch and it will go away." Well, it didn't, sad to say, but it did turn out to be a great mission in terms of the flight control team. That's when they had become the real heroes.

WRIGHT: Also, we talked about, too, of all good timing, I guess, that the members of the press got to see firsthand how that whole operation worked.

MCLEAISH: Yes. They did. Yes.

WRIGHT: Did you notice anything, maybe a different attitude from the press because they actually got to see that firsthand?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I think there was an appreciation that, "Gosh, they're telling us the truth," and that was good.

WRIGHT: What changed with Apollo 13 as far as debriefings and news conferences? Were you having to have more because of that crisis situation than you had had in the previous

missions?

MCLEAISH: No, I don't think you had more, that I recall. But I had done some commentary on that mission, and I was not that involved in the news center. I guess I was on the shift with Kranz, who overnight became kind of like the lead flight director, which was interesting. He's a very interesting guy.

WRIGHT: Were you somewhat with him during this whole time so that you could report or with be him during the news conferences? Was that part of your role?

MCLEAISH: I don't recall if I was with him in the news conferences or not. I may have turned that over to someone like [John E.] Jack Riley, who was my deputy at the time.

WRIGHT: Was there a twenty-four-hour news coverage going on during Apollo 13?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: When did that start for the Manned Spacecraft Center?

MCLEAISH: Well, I think we always had that. Yes, we also had that for missions. Even those where you had the overnight sleep shifts, we always had—in fact, that was one of my earlier assignments, I handled the overnight shift, and that was terrible.

WRIGHT: Were you busy during that time period?

MCLEAISH: No.

WRIGHT: But you were on hand in case—

MCLEAISH: In case you had a—

WRIGHT: Did you work day and nights then when you were on the overnight shift?

MCLEAISH: No, just mainly nights. You did twelve hours and twelve hours, as I recall.

WRIGHT: Were you in Building 2, is that where you were located?

MCLEAISH: No, I think when that occurred, we were still over in the building across the street, Building Number 6.

WRIGHT: Apollo 14 was the final manned mission that Brian Duff was the manager during that time, Public Affairs manager, so you once again had another change of management. Mr. [John W. “Jack”] King stepped in.

MCLEAISH: Yes, Jack King, that’s right.

WRIGHT: Did you again have changes in your organization, or did the functions and the roles and responsibilities continue?

MCLEAISH: No, I think we stayed pretty much the same. Pretty much the same, yes. King had come to us from Florida, the Kennedy Space Center, and Duff, I guess, well, he went on to HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare], I believe.

WRIGHT: I think so. Well, on 15 from what I've learned is that you weren't a commentator, you were starting to manage the Apollo News Center?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: How did the Apollo News Center evolve, and what was its purpose, and what was your role with that?

MCLEAISH: On the 15?

WRIGHT: Yes.

MCLEAISH: Well, I think I ran the news center, but I don't recall any big difference. On Apollo 16, I became a commentator again.

WRIGHT: I also noticed that you were paired a lot of times with Jack Riley. Was that

something that you liked working with him?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Well, now, Riley and I are very close, not only business associates but close personal friends. In fact, Jack, well, he was number two guy in the office and had been that for years. He had a great sense of humor. In fact, what was the guy's name that was the San Francisco columnist for a number of years? I'm trying to recall. He wrote something like some big promoter had written him and said that he was going to have the first topless place on the Moon, and Riley drafted the answer that said, "Dear So-and-so, bare breasts implode on the Moon." [Laughs]

WRIGHT: Probably wasn't the answer he expected.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Apollo 15 was the beginning of the science missions.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: So your staff had to become informed on again new information.

MCLEAISH: Yes. That was [David R.] Dave Scott's mission, and we got caught a little bit by surprise by some of the things they were doing with the first-day covers.

WRIGHT: Would you elaborate a little bit on that and how that affected your office?

MCLEAISH: Well, yes, it affected us in that I guess it looked kind of sleazy. It was Scott—who was it, [Alfred M.] Worden?

WRIGHT: [James B.] Irwin.

MCLEAISH: And Irwin, yes. I think Scott may have been kind of the ringleader. Well, he was the commander, so you would assume he was the ringleader. But they were selling them at like \$1,500 a whack, I think, and they had a bunch of them. Yes, that had an impact. It didn't make us look good.

WRIGHT: Do you feel like your office had to do somewhat of damage control?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: How did you manage to accomplish that?

MCLEAISH: Well, I'm not sure you ever accomplish it fully, but we did try to do damage control.

WRIGHT: It was also a time when we had a press conference that came from space. In August of [19]71 on their return home, they did a press conference. Do you recall any of the

information or how that was handled coming from the crew?

MCLEAISH: Let's see, that was the Scott, Irwin, Worden crew. No, I don't recall it offhand, but I know we'd planned to do that kind of thing, and I guess it worked out reasonably well.

WRIGHT: When you worked as a commentator, you certainly worked with quite different flight directors through your career.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Did you have to change the way you did your role based on the flight director, or did you have a continuity of how you did your job?

MCLEAISH: Well, I tried to do it pretty much the same way, but I know I tended to maybe talk a little louder than I should have, and I know Kranz didn't like that, particularly as far as launch.

WRIGHT: Did you have any other feelings or comments from the other flight directors on your job?

MCLEAISH: No. Not that I can recall, no.

WRIGHT: Did the flight directors, in your opinion, in your experience feel like the Public

Affairs console was a needed console in that room?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I think basically most of them did, including—who was it, [Clifford E.] Cliff Charlesworth. I guess Charlesworth—no, he's no longer with us.

WRIGHT: No.

MCLEAISH: Charlesworth was one that I think was very pleasant. I would say that most of them were reasonable. I know Lunney was a very good one to work with. And Kranz. Kranz was different. He was very methodical and by the book, a very interesting guy.

WRIGHT: There's always been somewhat of a perception that there's been a tension between the Public Affairs Office and maybe the flight controllers or the engineers or other groups on the center. Did you ever feel like there was a tension between your office?

MCLEAISH: I never felt it that much with the flight controllers. Maybe to a degree it could be maybe with some of the engineers. I think that varied pretty widely.

WRIGHT: Do you have any idea why they felt that there should be a tension?

MCLEAISH: No. No, I really don't, because I don't think there should have been. I left NASA, I guess fairly early in the Shuttle Program, and that was interesting, too.

WRIGHT: Quite a different spacecraft, wasn't it?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, it was.

WRIGHT: In between the last Apollo mission of 17, of course we had Skylab.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: The Public Affairs Office now again continued covering twenty-four hours a day. However, you were having missions that lasted weeks instead of days. How did your office adjust to this new era?

MCLEAISH: Well, you did that a little differently. I'm trying to recall. Apollo-Soyuz was very interesting, because that was a challenge. Apollo-Soyuz, because you had the two languages, you had the voice-over. Like we had—well, I'm trying to recall. We had a fellow who was an excellent Soviet interpreter, a Russian interpreter, I should say, and he would interpret what they were saying and kind of do a voice-over, and that was interesting. That was a big challenge as far as a mission.

WRIGHT: Did he do this out of your new center or was he doing it in the MOCR?

MCLEAISH: No, he was doing it in a room next to the control center. I guess it was one of these staff support rooms.

WRIGHT: And you coordinated all of that information out of there as well?

MCLEAISH: Yes. We used that as a voice-over, and he went—it was kind of like you could hear the Russian in the background, but you could hear his voice going over it, so it worked very well. I guess that was [Donald K. “Deke”] Slayton’s mission also. He was on that. Then I know the landing, that’s when they had a problem, and I forget what the problem was.

WRIGHT: I think they had problems with the chutes not opening properly, and they had inhaled possibly some gasses.

MCLEAISH: Yes, that was it, yes, the inhalation. I recall that because I started getting phone calls in the middle of the night on that.

WRIGHT: What was your reaction and actions when you would get these phone calls? How did you start to get the process rolling to get this information out?

MCLEAISH: It varied pretty widely, depending on who called and what they wanted. You’d go to the experts as best you could. Again, if it was you’re an important member of the press, and I guess you could say all of them were at least in their own minds were important, but—

WRIGHT: Did time serve as a bigger factor or did you try to—

MCLEAISH: You say time?

WRIGHT: Yes, the timeliness or did you try to gather information as you can to have a complete report?

MCLEAISH: I think it was a combination of both. You'd try and get it fairly timely, but you'd also want to make sure it was accurate as best you could.

WRIGHT: So much information to gather from so many sources in such little time must have been such a challenge that you looked at every day.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Or especially in these crisis situations at that. During Apollo-Soyuz in 1975, NBC approached NASA to broadcast from the Mission Control Center.

MCLEAISH: Yes, they did.

WRIGHT: You helped negotiate that agreement.

MCLEAISH: Yes, I did.

WRIGHT: Tell us about that.

MCLEAISH: Yes. I guess they used the floor above or below, I don't recall which. Jim Kitchell [phonetic] was the guy's name who was the NBC man at the time that handled their space stuff. Yes, they did broadcasts from there, and it was an interesting way to do it. They just came in with the proposal and I guess I talked to—I'm trying to recall, maybe it was either Jack King or [Harold S.] Hal Stall.

WRIGHT: I'm not quite sure.

MCLEAISH: It was somewhere in that time frame. But we put the deal together, and it worked out, I think, reasonably well.

WRIGHT: Were you surprised that a national broadcasting system of that type wanted to come in and start using that as their background?

MCLEAISH: No. No, I don't guess I was. They had covered the space program pretty thoroughly.

WRIGHT: How was it set up when they broadcast? Was it in actually the MOCR?

MCLEAISH: Yes, it was in—and I forget which floor. I think we were out on the second floor and they were the third floor, but it was a separate floor.

WRIGHT: Did you have to secure special badges and credentials for them to move their equipment there?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I think we did. As I recall now, we had to do that kind of thing.

WRIGHT: I guess somewhat restricted they were put in that area.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Well, that had to be very interesting. How long did they do that? Did they just do that for that one mission?

MCLEAISH: One mission, yes.

WRIGHT: Of course, it was the final Apollo mission as well.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: You moved into the Shuttle time period, and there were some years that you didn't have missions.

MCLEAISH: Well, that is true, yes.

WRIGHT: How did Public Affairs adjust to—

MCLEAISH: Well, that was kind of a miserable time, frankly. I guess we had these things at Edwards [Air Force Base, NASA Dryden Flight Research Center], where they had flown. Then you had all the tile coming off and that kind of thing, and that was different. But then finally I guess I did the first launch commentary for STS-1, which was [John W.] Young and—

WRIGHT: [Robert L.] Crippen.

MCLEAISH: And Crippen, yes. As I recall, that was launched on April the 12th, 1981.

Right?

WRIGHT: That's right.

MCLEAISH: That was kind of an exciting mission.

WRIGHT: How was that for you to see the excitement back in the space program?

MCLEAISH: Well, I liked it. I liked that a lot. I guess I also did the commentary when Sally [K.] Ride flew, and Jack Riley we used as the landing commentator on, I guess, most of them.

WRIGHT: Of course, now it's different that we had a different type of landing on the spacecraft now.

MCLEAISH: Yes, we did. Yes. The landing, I guess, was at Edwards.

WRIGHT: The approach and landing tests and other testing that was done for the Shuttle was done at Edwards. How was your office involved in releasing the information of what was going on down there?

MCLEAISH: Well, we tried to send someone there. I think I used a guy name Bob Gordon some, who spent some time there. In fact, he was covering the Shuttle Program at the time for us. The way we set up the organization, we gave people beat assignments, like someone would cover the Shuttle program, someone would cover some other program.

WRIGHT: Was the majority of the Shuttle information that was being released to the press from NASA coming from your office at JSC or was it coming from Edwards?

MCLEAISH: I'd say most of it was coming from us. Yes, most of it would be. Because Edwards was more of a facility. Plus they only had, as I recall, back in those days they had several sort of a one-man operation, a guy named Ralph Jackson who ran the their office.

WRIGHT: Was Public Affairs on every center a bit of its own entity or did you get direction

from NASA Headquarters on how Public Affairs needed to be handled?

MCLEAISH: Well, I think it varied pretty widely as to who you had in charge in Headquarters. A fellow named Julian Scheer, you know, made sure you ran it his way. Then you had a fellow named John Donnelly, who I guess to a lesser degree may have been that way. Then I guess recently they've had some that—I've lost track of what they do.

WRIGHT: But your office was pretty much through Haney and Duff and King. You guys created your policies and guidelines?

MCLEAISH: Pretty much, but you also conformed. I think Scheer is the one that finally moved Haney out. He kind of moved him upstairs. They gave him a strange assignment, and Haney didn't accept it.

WRIGHT: Because so many new things were happening at that time, I was wondering if there was a funnel that controlled most of the information, because you had mentioned that Dr. Gilruth really didn't get involved with Public Affairs, but I was wondering if there was—

MCLEAISH: No, Gilruth, I think he found it sort of fascinating. He seemed interested, but he knew he was not—Gilruth was not a forceful, dynamic sort of guy. He was not a [Dr. Werhner] Von Braun, and he probably knew that. But he was a very charming, delightful guy, as I'm sure you know.

WRIGHT: Other situations that occurred during those later years of the Apollo time and moving into Shuttle involved medical discussions as more broadcasts were being done and, of course, the press was more involved on the day-to-day activities of the missions. There were a lot of discussions about how medical information could be transferred or not transferred. How did your office deal with those privacy issues, especially during Skylab when there might have been discussions or could have been included in the transcriptions of medical discussions?

MCLEAISH: Well, I'm trying to recall how we did that in Skylab. Because Skylab, as you pointed out accurately, is very long-duration missions. They went from twenty-eight days to fifty-six. We operated a little different in Skylab in that we kept the news center open, but it was kind on a low-key basis. As far as medical, I think we had some things where you declared them private, as I recall, the medical stuff particularly.

WRIGHT: Was your staff privy to those private conversations?

MCLEAISH: No. My recollection was that we were not.

WRIGHT: So you basically turned that over to the flight control team and the astronauts to handle that?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: If they considered it to be private?

MCLEAISH: The doctors, Chuck Berry or whoever was the doctor at the time.

WRIGHT: Another area that you were in during the Shuttle time is reviewing and approving some press releases that the government contractors wanted to release regarding their products. Do you recall any of those situations where you were reviewing information that they wanted to release information on their own about what they were doing for the Shuttle?

MCLEAISH: Now, who was that?

WRIGHT: The contractors that were building parts of it.

MCLEAISH: Oh, the Rockwells [North American Rockwell Corporation] and the—well, I'm not sure I remember that in any kind of specificity. Well, I guess Rockwell was the prime. I don't recall any problems with release of information.

WRIGHT: Did they have to check with your office before they released information?

MCLEAISH: They were supposed to. In most cases I think they did.

WRIGHT: Was that part of their contract?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: That they couldn't release things without going through you first. Another change in NASA during some of your final years was that we had a new class of astronauts for the first time in a long time. In [19]'77 they made the announcement that we were going to have a new class. Well, they selected that class in '77.

MCLEAISH: Included the women, yes.

WRIGHT: How did your office handle this information? Was it anything different than you'd done before? Tell us about that time period.

MCLEAISH: We did it pretty much the same way. I'm trying to recall how many we had in that first group. Do you have a number?

WRIGHT: I have six female and four minority astronaut candidates in that class.

MCLEAISH: All right. That sounds right. Plus there were—

WRIGHT: Plus, of course, the rest of the—

MCLEAISH: There may been like thirty.

WRIGHT: Thirty, I believe.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, okay. No, we put out the releases pretty much in a standard kind of way. I do recall trying to—I was talking to Dan Rather, trying to sell him on the idea of a *60 Minutes* thing with the women, which he found interesting, but I think they finally decided not to do it. But I figured that was worth a pitch.

WRIGHT: Did you have other venues that you tried to use to promote NASA? You mentioned just then about talking to Dan Rather and trying to get this idea out to the public that they were selecting women. What other types of things did you do to help promote NASA to the public?

MCLEAISH: Well, I'm trying to recall. I'm not sure I had any that was as specific as that. I remember the name of the ad agency, Young & Rubicam . That was Tang-General Foods. I wanted to say that.

WRIGHT: I wonder how many times that people do remember Tang and not remember—you always remember it to be part of the space program as well. That was an interesting fact for us to find out was how a lot of that came through your office.

MCLEAISH: Yes, it did. They were really first-class people to deal, the Young & Rubicams were.

WRIGHT: Did you have people, vendors and such, that would come to you for help to get their products to be incorporated with the space program? Would people approach you first or did you just get them after they had been approved by the NASA management?

MCLEAISH: Probably we had some that might have approached you first. I think Velcro became very active. A fellow named Harold Williams was their PR [public relations] man for a number of years, and he was local. I guess he also handled some of Fisher's stuff. He got kind of involved in the off-beat sort of stuff, slightly different kind of contracts.

WRIGHT: You spent more than twenty years of service with NASA in Houston and have done such a wide variety of activities during your responsibilities. What do you consider to be your most challenging milestone in your career?

MCLEAISH: Most challenging milestone. Well, I'm trying to think what would be the most challenging.

WRIGHT: You could share with us more than one, if you'd like.

MCLEAISH: Okay. Well, I found Apollo 11 very exciting and the fact the quarantine assignment was different and that was interesting. The early Shuttle missions I thought were exciting and different.

Skylab was quite different in that it was a new challenge. Skylab, because of the length of the missions, as you pointed out, we had the news center operating, but not at full

tilt twenty-four hours. We might have a couple of people on versus the full staff twenty-four hours a day.

But as far as the most challenging, I don't know how you decide that.

WRIGHT: Your staff, did you have a lot of turnover or did you find that people wanted to work in that office and stay there?

MCLEAISH: I don't think we had that much turnover. We had some. I know [Robert V.] Bob Gordon finally quit in sort of a huff because we hired a fellow named Dave Alter, who he did not like, and that turned out to be kind of a different operation, too.

WRIGHT: Were you able to add on staff when you needed it at busy times or was your budget pretty restricted?

MCLEAISH: Well, it's begun to rain again, ladies.

WRIGHT: I think it is.

MCLEAISH: I'm sorry. Sorry we brought you over to all this weather.

Yes, we were able to add staff some, I think. But it was not like you had a *carte blanche*.

WRIGHT: Do you believe that NASA gave you a direction to have an open policy with the

press, or did you believe from your experiences that there were a lot of restrictions on the information that you could—

MCLEAISH: Well, I think when you say NASA, I think if you say like Julian Scheer, yes, he wanted you to be very open and very candid. He also had a policy which I liked, whereas you always spoke for attribution. You did not say “an unnamed source,” and I liked that.

WRIGHT: Is there a time during your career that you think back and think the most fondly of? It might have been the early days or your Apollo days. I know you had mentioned about the quarantine time, but I was just wondering if there was a span of time that you just—

MCLEAISH: Yes. I thought Apollo days were extremely interesting. That’s when you had contacts with people like [Walter] Cronkite. In fact, I guess Cronkite even called a time or two. It may have been [General Thomas P.] Tom Stafford being on the—about the time he was getting ready to be launched for Apollo 10. I remember he had talked to Cronkite. Tom, he had a tendency to break all the conventional astronaut rules. He was an interesting guy, too. He kind of reminded you—he sounded a little bit like Lyndon Johnson.

WRIGHT: Well, he’s from Oklahoma. That’s not too far away from Texas.

MCLEAISH: No, that’s right. That’s right.

WRIGHT: Are you a native Texan?

MCLEAISH: Yes.

WRIGHT: Where are you from originally?

MCLEAISH: I was born in Houston, grew up down in the Rio Grande Valley, a little town named Weslaco, and went to college at Rice [University, Houston, Texas] for three years and then finished at Houston [University of Houston, Houston, Texas].

WRIGHT: At any point in your time did you ever think about jumping to that other side, to move into the broadcast or the print side and leaving NASA?

MCLEAISH: Not really. No, I never had that kind of an interest. I think I was probably well positioned in the kind of job I had.

WRIGHT: After you left NASA, did you continue in your journalism career?

MCLEAISH: I haven't really done that much with it. As you can see, we live here now and they're kind of happy that we do.

WRIGHT: I had read somewhere where you work as somewhat of a consultant with children's books on space, is that true?

MCLEAISH: Yes, I did do some of that. I'm trying to recall the name of the outfit. But I did do some. It was more of a technical review thing, where I would review some of their stuff.

WRIGHT: That knowledge is still back in the recesses of your mind, I guess, all those years.

MCLEAISH: Yes, I guess. That was sort of fun. They didn't pay much money, but I really didn't need to get much from them.

WRIGHT: As we close today, can you think of anything that you would like to share with us that we might not have covered, maybe a special story or a unique memory, any anecdote that you can think of that we can add?

MCLEAISH: Well, let's see. Let me think. No, I can't think of anything. You got to meet and be around a lot of interesting people in that time frame. Norman Mailer covered the space program.

WRIGHT: What was your impression of him?

MCLEAISH: He was different, very interesting. In fact, he was somehow tied in, I guess, with a lady who worked for *Life* magazine at the time. Her name was Dodie Goodwin.

WRIGHT: Yes.

MCLEAISH: You know her?

WRIGHT: I know that name, yes.

MCLEAISH: Okay. But I recall, in fact, we have a picture of I think it was one of the news conferences where I'm behind the glass, because we were doing it that way just to practice, I suppose, pre-mission, and Mailer is sitting out there and she is and some of the other press.

[Referring to rain] Boy, oh, boy, oh, boy. You're going to drive back tonight?

WRIGHT: No, we're going to be here in town.

MCLEAISH: Oh, well, I'm glad to hear that.

WRIGHT: Yes, we are, too.

I was going to ask Sandra as well, did you have any questions you'd like to ask?

JOHNSON: I just had a couple. During the time that you were in quarantine, what exactly did you report on? Did you report on the astronauts' day-to-day activities?

MCLEAISH: Yes, that's what you tried to do as much as you could. There was a time or two I got the astronauts a little upset with me, at least in one case, I guess it was Collins more than anything else, where there was a church service, and I reported honestly the only one that showed up was Armstrong. I guess the only reason he showed up was because I had

showed him a release that said we were going to talk about this. He showed up and I guess Aldrin and Collins did not, and they were not happy.

JOHNSON: Did they have any duties during that quarantine time that they were supposed to be doing, any sort of thing?

MCLEAISH: No.

JOHNSON: How did they pass their time or how did you pass your time?

MCLEAISH: Well, they had debriefings, and I did sit in on some of their debriefings to listen to those, and that was kind of a fascinating thing to do. But it was also fascinating because you could see Collins was not—he knew he was not on the surface of the Moon, so he would be sitting there reading something like *Aviation Week* while they were talking about all what they had done and this kind of thing.

JOHNSON: Did they get to see any of the news coverage of their actual flight once they were in quarantine and any of the reactions? I'm thinking particularly the pictures that we've all seen of people standing in Times Square [New York City, New York] and people just watching it in awe. Did they ever get to see any of that during quarantine?

MCLEAISH: I'm not sure that they did during quarantine. They probably did afterwards. They went on this world tour. In fact, I guess Julian Scheer is the guy who led them on that,

that was quite an interesting thing.

JOHNSON: You also mentioned that you went on the geology field trips.

MCLEAISH: Yes.

JOHNSON: Did you go on more than one?

MCLEAISH: I went on, it seems to me, two or three.

JOHNSON: What were your duties while you were on those trips?

MCLEAISH: To deal with the press.

JOHNSON: Just the press that would be there?

MCLEAISH: Yes, those were all on the Big Island. You started in Honolulu [Hawaii], okay, and I guess that became such a good deal because the Hawaiian Village Hotel took us in and really gave you first-class royal treatment. I recall one of them—who was it? Aldrin was there, and he had some good-looking chick with him, not his wife, obviously, since she was back in Houston or wherever, but they were introducing them and that kind of got to him, and you could see that he was trying to not show up too good. But the shows were really quite good. That's when Hilo Hattie—know the name? Well, she was a big entertainer in

that era. Because this was—when—the middle sixties. Yes.

No, that's mainly what you did. You dealt with the press that was there.

WRIGHT: Well, it sounds like never a day went by that you weren't doing something different from the day before.

MCLEAISH: Well, it was an interesting time in my life, I'd have to say that.

WRIGHT: One thing that I didn't ask you about that is kind of the obvious, but maybe not the most interesting, was all the paperwork that you had to do. Was there a lot of procedural writing and structuring and that type of work where you were at your desk doing administrative work or was your role such that that wasn't a big part of it?

MCLEAISH: Well, that was a part. For example, I did write the ground rules for the pool operation that we later went to.

WRIGHT: How were those received by the press?

MCLEAISH: They tended to like it. I mean, they liked the fact they were inside, and I guess it worked out pretty well.

WRIGHT: Your staff, did they travel quite a bit throughout the missions or were they pretty much housed at the—

MCLEAISH: Well, it depended on which mission. Jack Riley, for example, spent a lot of time in Moscow [Russia] before the joint Apollo-Soyuz mission.

WRIGHT: Did you end up traveling quite a bit other than those ones that you mentioned, or were you pretty much at the Cape [Canaveral, Florida] or at Houston?

MCLEAISH: I was mainly at the Cape or Houston. When we used Jack mainly, he became our Soviet or Russian expert, and he dealt with some young guy over there that is probably an old guy now, named Dennis Shinko [phonetic], who may no longer be in power or doing anything.

WRIGHT: Did you have any interactions with the Russians that came here?

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes, I did. In fact, I think in the TV room in there I've got a thing of our joint—well, it's the thing we used in the newsroom. It was kind of part in Russian and part in U.S.

WRIGHT: Well, I'll have to take a look at that and see that. What an interesting time especially since you had served in the Air Force during those cold war days and now that you were working with the Russians in the space agency, it's quite a change of time in just twenty years.

MCLEAISH: Well, yes, it was quite a change. Yes, it was. In fact, in the Air Force I was stationed in Taiwan, I think I'd mentioned to you. That's when the Chinese Communists were shelling Quemoy, and that was an interesting time, too, because they had this plan where they did it only on odd days or something. That was back in the early or late fifties.

WRIGHT: Well, it seems like you have had quite an interesting life and met a tremendous amount of different people.

MCLEAISH: Yes. Yes. I have enjoyed a lot of it.

WRIGHT: Well, we certainly have enjoyed the time with you this afternoon.

MCLEAISH: Well, thank you.

WRIGHT: We have learned a lot. Again, we thank you.

MCLEAISH: Well, now, I appreciate your coming by, and I hope it works out.

WRIGHT: It did. We appreciate all the information you've given us.

[End of interview]