

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 5/7/1968**  
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**Biographical Note**

Eunice Shriver was the sister of President Kennedy, wife of Peace Corps director Sargent Shriver and executive vice president of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation. In this interview Shriver discusses her lobbying efforts for the cause of mental retardation, the development of the task force on health and social welfare and the National Institute of Child Health and the 1963 White House Conference on Mental Retardation, among other issues.

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Eunice Kennedy Shriver  
JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

Eunice Kennedy Shriver

May 7, 1968  
Washington, D.C.

By John Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Why don't we start by my asking you, before January 1961, to what extent had you and the Kennedy Foundation been lobbying for a greater and different role by the federal government in the area of mental retardation, or had you to any great extent?

SHRIVER: Before the interview proceeds, I want to say for the record that my husband, Sargent [Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.], was crucial in all the efforts and work and direction of the Kennedy Foundation and President Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation. I shall describe some of these efforts in the following dialogue--his ability to organize, translate ideas and programs into action, to emphasize and gain support of very intelligent scientists in the battle against retardation, his knowledge of the Washington bureaucracy and medical school politics, was enormously helpful. The country, the retarded, my family, and I owe him an unbelievable debt of thanks for changing and enriching millions of lives. He is too modest--I wish he would speak himself of his actions.

Now, to get back to your question. In November of 1960, I was in Boston Hospital for a week, and I woke up one morning after the operation and I read the Boston paper. In the paper I read that Congress had just accepted a report on the conditions of mental health in the country. Obviously, some congressman had introduced a resolution for that. So I read the report in the *New York Times*--it was in one page--and I didn't even see the word mental retardation mentioned once. I thought that was awful, and I called up my father and I said to

him, "Dad, would you be willing to let the foundation [Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation] sponsor a nationwide conference on

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mental retardation, because this report has obviously nothing to say about the mentally retarded." And he said, "Just lie down and get well, for God's sake, and when you come to Florida we'll discuss the subject and see what turns up." So then when I went down there, I brought it up again. It was about a week later and.... I went to Palm Beach to recuperate. I brought it up with my father again about setting up a national committee to study conditions of the mentally retarded, and he said, "Let's go upstairs and talk to Jack [John F. Kennedy]." So I remember we went up to my father's room, and my brother came into the room. I then described to Jack what the national situation was, and my father said, "Yes, we really ought to do something. This has been a terrible situation in the country. The foundation can't go on trying to lick this problem alone; it's impossible for us to do it. It affects too many families in this country." I asked Jack if he would form a national committee to study the problem. He replied, "That's a good idea. Get hold of Mike Feldman [Myer "Mike" Feldman] and see if you can get something going on it."

STEWART: Had there been any talk during the campaign of anything you might do if the president was elected?

SHRIVER: In the field of retardation?

STEWART: Yes.

SHRIVER: No. We had not done anything in terms of lobbying with the federal government. In 1948, my father had given a few grants to Cardinal Cushing and Cardinal Spellman--the former to set up a hospital for cerebral palsy children, and the latter to set up some school for mentally retarded children and to name them after my brother, Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.], who had been killed in the war. He had no specific foundation at that time, but my father was anxious to commemorate something to honor my brother, Joe.

He asked Sarge and myself to take steps to find out what the great needs in the youth fields were. We went to Washington, Illinois, California. We talked to governors and doctors and religious leaders in every location. And we learned that very few persons were doing anything about mentally retarded children. We came back and reported that to my father. He then said to us we should go out and see what kind of approach should be made in this area. What kind of program should be developed in this area.

Sarge and I discovered the emphasis in this country was on mental health, and practically no interest in federal or local governments, schools, etc., on mental retardation. Sarge and I went to California to the Pacific State Hospital, to Washington, to Massachusetts, discovering that there were literally a handful of doctors interested in the field. Practically no medical schools. No foundations at all. Few public schools were educating the mentally retarded.

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I remember the same three names kept coming up: Dr. Masland [Richard L. Masland] (of the National Institute of Neuro and Blindness); Dr. Cooke [Robert E. Cooke] (of Dept. of Pediatrics at Johns Hopkins); and Dr. George Tarjan (of Pacific State Hospital). With the help of these men, we recommended to my father the establishment of research laboratories combined with clinical programs, specifically on mental retardation. And so they came into being. The first was Wisconsin, under Dr. Waisman [Harry A. Waisman]. The second was John Hopkins, under Bob Cooke. The third was Santa Monica Hospital (in conjunction with UCLA). Later, Harvard and Dr. Raymond Adams [Raymond D. Adams]. Also the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Laboratory at the University of Chicago under Dr. Dorfman. A program at Stanford was started because we were interested in doing something in genetics and mental retardation, headed up by Dr. Joshua Lederberg, who received the Nobel Prize in genetics, and Dr. Kretchmer. In the early days we set up a teacher training program at Peabody College which was later expanded in the middle sixties, with the help of the federal government, to the John F. Kennedy Institute on Child Health and Mental Retardation. This program was the only one created to study research approaches to the educational and psychological needs of the mentally retarded. Instead of emphasizing on medical problems, this program emphasized on the social, economic, and educational problems of the mentally retarded. Finally, we established at Albert Einstein the Rose Kennedy Center. These were all established within the period of 1954-1966. Other programs were established not related to universities, such as the Joseph P. Kennedy preschool program in New York, in the late fifties. The Kennedy Hospital was established in the 1950s, largely for cerebral palsy children. This was before we had a specific objective at the Foundation.

STEWART: You recall Wilbur Cohen [Wilbur J. Cohen] headed a task force on health and social security and you people had Doctors Cooke and Lederberg appointed to that task force. The purpose of this, as I understand, was to come up with some proposals in the area of child health, or was it more specific than that?

SHRIVER: That's not quite right. The task force on health and social welfare was setup by the president as a transition task force right after his election in November 1960. It was supposed to recommend the legislative course for the first 90 days of the administration in general terms on subjects of health and welfare. Wilbur Cohen was the chairman who, because of his interest and experience in Social Security, was chosen. Health care of the elderly was an important issue to be settled.

The Kennedy Foundation was worried that the well-being--the health of children in general and the mentally retarded in particular--would be lost sight of with Wilbur Cohen's singular concern for the elderly.

I urged my brother to add two medical scientists directly involved in mental retardation. One was Dr. Robert Cooke, Director of our mental

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retardation program at Hopkins. The other was Dr. Joshua Lederberg, who was in our program at Stanford. The task force reported its recommendations to then Governor Abraham

Ribicoff, who was to become Secretary of H.E.W [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare].

The idea of the National Institute of Child Health came from Dr. Cooke. His and our intent was to expand greatly the interest in and support of research in children's health problems with particular emphasis on mental retardation since that was the single most frequent and serious disabling problem of childhood.

Wilbur Cohen and the other 5 or 6 members of the task force accepted the idea with enthusiasm because it provided balance to the idea of Medicare--that is an emphasis on children to balance the emphasis on the elderly.

When the administration began in January of 1961, the president introduced legislation to create the new National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. There was great resistance to the creation of another Institute at N.I.H. and especially one which was age related, and health related, rather than disease oriented. The N.I.H. tried to dissuade the administration, but finally the White House made it clear that the president wanted such an Institute.

Much bargaining went on as to the name and finally a compromise was reached which met the child health approach from conception onward. The rest of the compromise was also that the Office of General Medical Sciences would be elevated to Institute status at the same time. I want to emphasize that research on mental retardation was seen as a central part of the National Institute of Child Health even though it was to cover other aspects of health and disease.

For that reason, Dr. Cooke and I served on the first council of the institute and mental retardation was one of the initial major program areas with the Institute under the direction of Dr. Robert Aldrich, a pediatrician. Dr. Dunn and Dr. Nick Hobbs [Nicholas Hobbs], both nationally known psychologist and educators in the field of mental retardation, were appointed to the Board. Their appointments signified the emphasis on child development, normal and abnormal. That was the primary task of the institute.

STEWART: One more question on this, the new institute. I don't think Dr. Shannon [James Shannon] was overly enthused.

SHRIVER: I do know that my brother spoke to me two or three times, asking was it really necessary to have such an institute, that the budget was already very big at NIH [National Institute of Health], and was it really necessary to set up a whole new institute. So I did talk to him three or four times about that, and I also got the memorandum from Dr. Cooke telling about infant mortality and how little

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was being done about infant mortality and about pregnancy problems, facts which I wrote down actually and then gave them to my brother. I even told him that Hylane Membrane Disease, which his son Patrick died from, could perhaps be stopped if such an institute was started. He seemed very concerned about research stopping children's health problems. I will point out later some examples.



STEWART: When you first talked to Myer Feldman about the possibility of setting up a commission or a study group, what kind of a group did you have in mind? Was it far different from that which eventually came into being?

STRIVER: No, it wasn't. I talked on the phone that afternoon from Palm Beach, and Mike Feldman said, "I'll try to get some names together. I'll call Wilbur, and I'll call some other people around town. We'll get some names." And I suggested four or five names of people who had helped us and who I thought were very able, like Dr. Cooke and Dr. Tarjan [George Tarjan] and Dr. Masland [Richard Masland], to serve on the committee. Sargent might remember some of the others. My father then said to me, "Who's going to be the chairman?" And I said, "I don't know, Dad." He said, "Well, why don't you call Dr. Rusk [Howard A. Rusk] and see what suggestions he has." So I called Dr. Rusk, and Dr. Rusk said, "I think the best man in the country for that job is Dr. Leonard Mayo." He said, "He gets along with everybody, he knows the field, he's very good in child development, so why don't you get hold of him." So then I called up Mike Feldman, and I said, "Would you ask Dr. Mayo down. Dr. Rusk thinks very highly of him." So Leonard Mayo did come to the first meeting and later was made the chairman.

STEWART: Did anyone express any reservations about the advisability of setting up a big study such as this?

SHRIVER: I don't think so because I think everybody knew that nothing was going on in the country. There was just absolutely nothing, no matter what they say. There had been, as you know, one small piece of federal legislation. If they did express reservations, they didn't say anything to me, and they probably wouldn't, obviously. So there may have been something that these other fellows knew about, but we certainly got very good cooperation from everybody.

STEWART: There was no thought, I assume, of having the study done within H.E.W. or having it done internally within the federal government was there?

SHRIVER: No. Nobody offered that as an alternative, or it never came up as an alternative. I think the feeling was that President Kennedy said that he would like to have the study done as a presidential panel and I think everyone went along. At least nobody ever said, "Well this would be a better way to do it," which they could have said.

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STEWART: What about this whole matter of doing the whole thing in a year? This raised some eyebrows I think, initially, when it was proposed, when it was proposed to do such a large study in a year.

SHRIVER: Because we wanted to try and get legislation introduced in that January Congress. So we wanted to get the report in quickly. Also we wanted

President Kennedy to talk about mental retardation in his State of the Union message. He did, too. Leonard Mayo was very much in favor of it. We wanted to try to get something done. The need was enormously urgent, and if you get a year, you can really do a lot if everybody really hustles. Why would you need more than a year? You could perhaps make a more thorough report, but I think everyone felt that we knew a lot of things that needed to be done, and we could pull it together in a year.

STEWART: In choosing members of the panel, a number of people I've talked to have commented on the total lack of political considerations or geographical considerations.

SHRIVER: The lack of political considerations?

STEWART: Yes, which was unusual in a study of this type. Were there significant pressures from people to appoint certain people to the panel? For example, there were no representatives of organized labor, which was unusual in a study of this sort. Do you recall this being a question or why?

SHRIVER: I don't like to sound naive, but every time we'd bring up a name we'd just ask, you know, did he have any background, or did he have any imagination, or did he have any ideas about the problem? That was the reason we brought Dr. Lederberg in, and that was the reason we brought Dr. Hellman [Louis M. Hellman] from up in New York. Dr. Hellman, for instance, had not had any particular experience in mental retardation. He said to me at three or four meetings, "I still don't know why I'm on this committee, but I know a lot about obstetrics and that pertains to the problem, so I'll do my best." I think we put Seymour Kety on because, for obvious reasons, he had a lot of basic medical knowledge, and he had an awful lot of imagination, and we wanted that kind of person.

We really tried to get people who knew the problem, and we tried to get a large variety of people because we wanted to get a lot of different kinds of knowledge. Lederberg had never been interested in retardation, but genetics is very basic to the problem, so we tried to get the best geneticist in America. We got an outstanding brain man because this is the most important area of research in mental retardation. Horace Magoun [Horace W. Magoun], people told us was one of the best men in the country in brain chemistry, the same with Oliver Lourie. So that's about it. We really tried to hustle with the names of people that were good.

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STEWART: Was the primary goal initially to come up with some brand new ideas in the field, or was it to create a public atmosphere for greater acceptance of...

STRIVER: It was really primarily to come up with new ideas and new legislation because there was none. We were action oriented. In fact, when we had discussions or any division at all in the committee, it was always whether the action part of

our program was the right action. I mean, the idea of the research institute, was that the way to do it? Because we actually came up with an idea for a research institute, and there was some disagreement between some of the basic medical scientists who said, "Let's enlarge on the basic research and not set up separate research institutes just on this problem." I favored both approaches. I believed we needed the basic research and clinical program tied together to attract and educate young medical students who would be able to see and study and get involved with the retarded persons. Johns Hopkins was one of the few hospitals that had such a program. So, I knew this approach would work.

STEWART: But the public relations aspects of it were never that important or that primary to the whole purpose of the panel?

SHRIVER: No. As I say, it was really to get a program started. The fact it was the president's committee and that he was interested in pushing what had to be done for the retarded, that was our basic idea.

STEWART: The AMA's [American Medical Association] reaction to setting up the panel was rather cool, as you may recall. Did you anticipate this? Did you anticipate any opposition to the setting up of such a panel, do you recall?

SHRIVER: No, I didn't really. It wouldn't have made any difference. What could they say, because they had been just as slow as molasses themselves. Nobody really was able to say much because nobody had done anything, and I don't know on what basis they could really attack us.

STEWART: Well, I think it was the traditional thing of more federal involvement in a program that possibly should be completely handled by states. But then they sort of backed down on what they said initially. I think you mentioned the selection of Leonard Mayo. Were there any other considerations for the chairman or any other serious considerations?

SHRIVER: No. I mentioned to Mike Feldman that he had sounded like a great chairman, and the next thing I knew he was chairman.

STEWART: The panel met for the first time, I think, in October--October 18. First, do you recall this meeting at the White House, and two, after the meeting and the discussion, were you

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still optimistic that this panel would be able to do what you intended them to do?

SHRIVER: Very. I thought it was an excellent group. That day I remember Mayo was there, and Masland was there, Mike was there, and myself, and about four or five other people. He would probably remember that. Then we talked about

getting names for the larger committee and the date for the next meeting and the regular things; what we were trying to do; the possibility of setting up different study groups, different aspects; how we would divide the panels, under what subject matter, education, etc., as they were divided. We discussed that very briefly, I remember that. But the big thing was, at that meeting, we were trying to get names to put on the final committee.

STEWART: Well, after that initial panel meeting, there was an initial breakdown of the whole group into two big groups, one on research and one on services. Do you recall this?

SHRIVER: Yes, I remember that.

STEWART: This, I guess, was Leonard Mayo's technique of just getting the whole thing started.

SHRIVER: Yes. I remember we had a meeting upstairs and we discussed back and forth how we would proceed. I remember Judge Bazelon [David L. Bazelon] getting up and saying that he felt that we ought to get into the judicial aspects of mental retardation, the rights of the mentally retarded were not protected by law. He gets the credit for suggesting a legal panel. Then I remember there was an argument back and forth about the need for a legal panel. I must say I came out very strongly for that point because I felt that the legal rights of the mentally retarded had been ignored. Nobody had really paid any attention to them, and Judge Bazelon had some very good ideas. I said I hoped we would have a judicial panel. So we decided on the legal panel. That's chiefly what I remember on that meeting.

STEWART: I've heard conflicting reports as to how successful this initial breakdown into the two sections, research and services, was. Some people have said it was a total waste of time and that the panel didn't really start to progress until it was broken down into the....

SHRIVER: Into the smaller ones. I agree. I can't remember we did anything. I can remember that big meeting, and after that I don't remember anything until we really got into those smaller meetings.

STEWART: Which was after the first of the year.

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SHRIVER: Yes. And we started to break down into various divisions with chairmen. I think then that lit the fire. We really started to go then.

STEWART: Where did the real impetus come for the missions to various countries, do you recall?

SHRIVER: This I remember well. I remember we were at the White House one day for some meeting of the panel with President Kennedy, and President Kennedy said to me after the meeting, "What's the situation on the mentally retarded in Russia?" And Nick Hobbs, standing next to me, said, "They're doing some rather interesting work, Mr. President, especially in education, Dr. Luriya's [Aleksandr Luriya] work." The president said, "Well, it might be interesting to find out more about that." Then he turned to me and said, "It might be interesting, Eunice, to find out more about that." And I said to him, "Jack, that's a good idea. I'll talk to Leonard Mayo about it." He said fine. That's exactly where it started.

So I went to Leonard, and I said, "The president's very interested in us maybe getting to Russia and finding out what's going on." Leonard said that was a marvelous idea. But I remember that day exactly. President Kennedy was the one who said, "I'd like to...." I think he felt that if we did that, it would help relationships with Russia. The relationship between Russia and the United States was his primary concern; it developed into something larger for us.

STEWART: It's interesting because Leonard Mayo had mentioned that he thought it came from the president, but I wasn't sure whether you had talked to the president before he suggested it to Leonard Mayo.

SHRIVER: He is right. No, it came right out of the president. The three of us were talking right there, I remember it as if it were yesterday. But when I said it to Leonard, he was very enthusiastic and picked it right up, and we moved from there.

STEWART: I've heard conflicting accounts of how successful these trips were in terms of new ideas that people obtained from them. Do you recall your feelings after the trips as to whether they had been worth the effort or not?

SHRIVER: I think they were worth the effort for me because they emphasized the basic approach which we later pushed in our report, which was that community services should be built up and that big institutions should not be built up, and all kinds of community services were not only better for the mentally retarded, but they were far cheaper and a much more modern approach. I had just been reading about them all along and no community really had them. But to have a whole lot of community services for the mentally retarded is what they did do in the countries we went to. You could see them in operation and you could view them. So when I came back, I was much more interested in pushing that approach than I was before I went. So for me it was helpful.

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STEWART: Which of these missions did you go on?

SHRIVER: I went to England and Holland. That's where they had some very good workshops. For example, in Holland I remember seeing those. The wonderful

way they make sneakers, for instance, which is a big industry in this country in the south. They were all making sneakers over there and shoes. They were all trainables. Also the physically handicapped worked with the mentally retarded in these shops. So those kinds of things I think were very helpful. And that was the basic approach in our report, or one of them.

STEWART: There were things, then, that you people saw that...

SHRIVER: Made a difference to me. Dr. Cooke was on my panel and so was Dr. Hellman. Dr. Davens [Edward Davens] was also, from Baltimore.

STEWART: There was some discussion at one point of a long-range program of exchanges of people and a greater program for the dissemination of information on an international scale. I don't think, from the accounts that I've heard, that these programs fully materialized, or at least materialized as well as you expected.

SHRIVER: I don't think they materialized at all. I mean, I don't know any exchanges that took place.

STEWART: Do you know why or do you...

SHRIVER: I don't think anybody pushed them or stayed on top of it. It was a nice idea. I talked a little bit to some people in the embassies as to how you could get them back and forth under the leadership program, but I never did anything about it when I got back here because we were so busy on the report, and I don't think anyone else did. I think it just died for lack of interest. But that was only an extra appendage. It had nothing to do with the report really.

STEWART: Was the visit of Dr. Kan [Osamu Kan] from Japan as successful as you had hoped? Do you recall that, or is there anything about that?

SHRIVER: Yes, that I remember. Well, I don't think it made any major differences in the report. That was Leonard Mayo's idea. I never was very excited about it. I wasn't enthusiastic because I knew they weren't doing much in Japan. I've been there myself. I don't know why it ever came into being, frankly.

STEWART: To what extent, if at all, were you involved in any comments or getting any comments or recommendations on the budgetary levels in 1961 and 1962? There was a slight increase in the HEW budget for mental retardation. Were you at all involved in that?

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SHRIVER: Under the maternal and child health project. I remember that very well because we went to Dr. Oettinger [Katherine B. Oettinger] and Dr. Lesser

[Arthur J. Lesser]. I talked several times to them, and they kept telling me that they were going to ask for additional funds. At that time it was twenty-five million dollars for maternal and child health, and it was five million for some other kind of maternal care. And that was all for the country. So I had several discussions saying that it was unbelievable that they were trying to operate on a budget like that. Dr. Lesser said they were going to ask for some more funds, and I said, "How much?" He said, "Maybe five million in each of those three sections, maybe ten." I said, "Dr. Lesser, that is a joke."

I urged him to think in terms of what he thought was necessary. I said, "I hope his request would be three, four times larger than the present request [maternal and child health, cripple children's]. I think Sarge made some calls to Wilbur Cohen on this as well.

We did get into the maternal and child health section of the bill, three or four times larger amount of money than originally intended by Dr. Lesser. I used to say in my speeches in those days that more money was spent on pregnant cows than on pregnant women.

STEWART: Let me ask you some other questions about the whole public relations aspect of this. The president, of course, during his administration gave a number of speeches on the subject of mental retardation. Did he give as many speeches as you would have wanted him to?

SHRIVER: He was marvelous.

STEWART: Was there any reluctance on the part of his political advisors?

SHRIVER: Never. We'd call up, and we'd say to Mike Feldman, "Put it in the congressional message, put something in about mental retardation." And they'd put it in all the time. Each time he sent up a message to Congress, he always put in mental retardation. In his speeches, if he were making a speech on child welfare or anything to do with children, he'd always put in a big thing on mental retardation.

When I called him up about having receptions at the White House. I even called him up one day I can remember, and I said, "Jack, some group interested in mental retardation (I can't remember now) is coming to Washington." Could I have them at the White House for reception?" He said, "Well, Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] isn't here." And I said, "Well, could I still have them at the White House?" And he said, "Fine. Have them at the White House. Talk to Tish Baldrige [Letitia Baldrige] about it, but don't run up a big liquor bill on me. Serve some kind of punch." And with that, he hung up. I said, "Fine." And we had them at the White House. He

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wasn't able to come, he was in New York. But we had it.

Everything we asked him to do, he was just fantastic. Then I asked him to make a few phone calls when the legislation came up. He was at the Cape. I went in with some names of people, including Wilbur Mills [Wilbur D. Mills] and others, and wrote them all down on a piece of paper and said he'd do it. He couldn't have done more as far as that went.

STEWART: Were there any public relations type projects that you weren't able to get off the ground? For example, there was a suggestion that an attempt be made to set up an international year on mental retardation. I don't know where this came from or what ever happened to it or whether it was serious or not but...

SHRIVER: Well, I don't even remember discussing it. I was only interested in getting out our report and getting everybody concentrated on getting the report written so we could get the money. The other things I think were all just maybe people's ideas, or superfluous, but that wasn't the point. The point was to get a report and get it to Congress.

STEWART: As you said before, there was no real focus in the panel's work on the whole area of public relations. You felt that this could come later.

SHRIVER: Later. We never gave releases out after any of our meetings. We never tried to get to the public--like the Advertising Council, which we did later to promote the understanding of mental retardation. While we were writing our report, we concentrated on just that one objective, to get the report and try to get hundreds of millions of dollars which were needed. What difference does anything else make really?

STEWART: A few other actions not specifically related to the panel that went on during that period. There was some difficulty, I believe, in getting the Office of Education to raise to a division status their branch or section for exceptional children. Do you recall this, and was this typical of your dealings with ...

SHRIVER: Typical of the way the government was until President Kennedy got in there. It took me three days to find out where the Department of Special Education was, dealing with the retarded. I couldn't find what floor it was on, or the office it was in, or where it was, or, anything about it. It was just a laughing roaring joke. I thought that was shocking and so did, I think, everybody else on the panel. And so I merely tried very hard to change that, and they gave me a lot of talk over there about making it a division.

Sarge was very helpful on this and kept saying to me, "Push hard, get this department up to status of assistant secretary."

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STEWART: What finally happened?

SHRIVER: It finally ended up a bureau, The Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, headed by Dr. Kirk [Samuel A. Kirk]. This was satisfactory because they told me all of the wonderful powers it was going to have. Anybody who's in the field knows



that education of the mentally retarded is fundamentally the most important thing and I, as well, as others, wanted special educators to have power and much, much more money. The section was almost nothing in these respects in 1960.

STEWART: To what extent, either on this or on other matters, did . .

SHRIVER: Every time I went in there I'd talk to Leonard about putting into the report a demand either for an assistant secretary or a bureau chief. I talked to Wilbur about doing this, that we couldn't administer any new education programs if it was going to be only a bureau. And Wilbur said, "That's right."

STEWART: To what extent did either Ribicoff or Secretary Celebrezze [Anthony J. Celebrezze] get involved in things like this or in anything as far as you were concerned?

SHRIVER: I went up to see both of them maybe twice while I was there. They would encourage and say they hoped everything was going fine. Frankly, when we had problems, I would call Mike Feldman, and we got our help through him.

STEWART: And through Wilbur Cohen.

SHRIVER: Mike Feldman was the person we dealt with 90 percent of the time.

STEWART: Primarily.

SHRIVER: I think. And through the White House. If we ran into a problem, I would call him. I talked to him a lot about the bureau. So I honestly used the White House because we were under pressure for time, and it was a great cause and we just couldn't sit over there forever, that kind of thing. I knew that the President was interested in this and that he would want it that way.

STEWART: You, at one point, were very critical of the action taken by the federal government in hiring the mentally retarded. Do you recall this? And then you had some discussions with John Macy [John W. Macy, Jr.]. Were you generally satisfied with what John Macy was able to do?

SHRIVER: Yes, I was. What happened was.... Do you want me to tell you what happened with Macy?

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STEWART: Yes.

SHRIVER: What happened was that the President's Committee on Employment of the

Physically Handicapped invited me to speak on the mentally retarded. I wanted to give the speech because I felt that this group wasn't doing anything for mental retardation and that the title of the committee should be changed to include mental retardation.

STEWART: I was going to ask you about that.

SHRIVER: Therefore, I thought if I spoke to them, I might have a chance of getting that done. So I then said to myself it would be interesting to find out about how many retarded are working in the government. So I did make some phone calls over to the Bureau of Employment Services at the Labor Department to try to get some statistics. I couldn't find out anything. Then I called a local place out in Rockville to find out, and a man laughed and said, "Of course, we don't employ retarded." And hung up. I never did talk to John Macy before I made the speech. Anyhow, I did talk to Sargent, and then we got some statistics together showing that nothing had been done. So I did make the speech saying that nothing had been done to employ the mentally retarded in government, yet other handicapped groups were working in the federal government, and that it was a disgrace, which it was.

John Macy then called me up the next day and said he'd read the speech and would I come down and talk to him. Very nice about it. I went down and we had some laughs. He was very helpful. He said, "I admit we're wrong and you are right, and we'd like to do something about it." So it made it quite easy. Sargent was with me at the meeting, and John Macy proposed several things that could be done, one thing we discussed was that the president might send out a letter to agency heads asking them to employ the mentally retarded. I spoke to Mike about this. He drafted a letter and asked President Kennedy about it. He said it was okay with him, if John Macy went along. So the letter was sent out. John Macy was very encouraged by President Kennedy's interest and he proposed several other things like changing the civil service requirements. He can tell you about those things.

From the foundation we wrote, I think, letters to various places asking their cooperation in hiring the mentally retarded. So anyhow the program went from there. But John Macy was always very helpful. Sargent was interested in this program, too, and helped enormously. Perhaps you might ask him about some things.

STEWART: Were you directly responsible for getting that president's committee to change its name or to drop the word "physically"?

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SHRIVER: No. I think that John Macy got it done after that. It was a result of our work on the committee, yes. We wrote to them--I think Mike Feldman can remember that--we wrote to them asking that they do that. Anyhow, they did it a few months later. I also said something about that in my speech, that I would hope they would change their name. They may have been thinking about it a long time, too, but they hadn't done it, and they certainly hadn't done anything more for the retarded.

STEWART: When you first started to think about the exact type of report that the panel would come out with, was there any real discussion as to just how detailed it would be or whether it would be aimed at a wide public or what?

SHRIVER: One of the big problems we had was whether we should put in the report all that should be done for the mentally retarded on a federal scale, or whether we should try to put in what we thought could be done, what we could get through the Congress. There were a number of people who thought we should put in all of the needs, so the country would know where we stood. Others wanted just to have put down a clear and precise statement of the needs, what specifically would meet the needs and why, and what would happen if certain legislation was passed.

This report was written for consumption and passage as bills by the Congress. I knew what President Kennedy would support and what he wouldn't. At least, I thought I did. We wanted legislation passed, and that was always the aim of this report.

We tried mostly to cover the needs of the retarded, quite specifically in short range objectives and also long range objectives. I knew President Kennedy was interested in specific action, on specific items, at specific costs (in some cases specific results), which could be enacted at the next session of Congress.

For example, we picked twelve institutes to do research over four years. We thought that many could be staffed by doctors and research people, etc. We knew about how much each would cost because the Kennedy Foundation and Sargent had already set some institutes up. Dr. Cooke had the figures. We gave the figures to the Bureau of the Budget, and they accepted them, and so did the Congress. That is the advantage of private foundations doing things on an experimental basis so that government can support expansion of such programs based on accountability, based on specific knowledge of cost control, quality control.

STEWART: Well, would it be right to say that from that general attitude and from that general approach, you then went to some people in the Bureau of the Budget and people in HEW and people like Myer Feldman and had them go over the report in draft form?

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SHRIVER: That's right, we did. And we had some ideas ourselves. As I remember, I don't think they knocked anything out of our program of what we wanted to get done, but you can check this. We had figured it would cost about two hundred and eighty-five million dollars, and they went along with us all the way, as I remember.

STEWART: This review, however, by people in the Bureau of the Budget did cause some grumbling among some of the panel members. Do you recall this, and had you anticipated this?

SHRIVER: Well, there were a number of people on there, scientists, like Dr. Lederberg, who of course thought that we ought to have a whole basic research program

that would cost hundreds of millions of dollars. He used that approach. He wanted to build another NIH, you know. So that caused some grumbling, yes. I think that was a minority, as I remember. And it was impossible to do it anyhow. You just wouldn't have gotten anyplace. But that's exactly what he wanted, another NIH approach to the whole problem of mental retardation.

STEWART: No, I was thinking more of the fact that here the panel had produced this report, and in preliminary form, before it was finally approved by the members of the panel, it was being reviewed by people outside of the panel.

SHRIVER: What happened was it was written by us first. Then we sent it over to Mike, who then sent it to the Bureau of the Budget. It's true the report wasn't in final form. I think Mike was worried about the cost. Later when the report was finished and those ideas were being incorporated into a draft of the President's Message on Mental Health and Mental Retardation, I saw the final draft and thought it awful. I was home one Sunday afternoon reading it. I called up Dr. Cooke, and I called up Mike Feldman, and I called Leonard Mayo, and I said, "You know, President Kennedy's never going to be happy with this. We won't get anyplace, "Will you come out, and meet with Sargent and me?"

So they all came out on a Sunday. You might ask them about this meeting out there; it was the funniest meeting--and I said to Dr. Cooke, "We have nothing.... You know, everything's just so vague and so general. We ought to put in some sort of institutional things that we can ask for." I said, "What institutions are there that would provide more training and more people in the field?" Then Dr. Cooke said, "Well, the best way to get more people is to set up these university related centers," and he explained this concept. And I said, "How many, what would be the cost," etc. We discussed the concept for about one hour, and then I said to Dr. Cooke and Dr. Mayo, "Will you two go in the other room and write a paragraph to put in our report to the president?"

They went in the other room and wrote a paragraph asking for these "university related centers." I said, "How many do you think we should ask for?" And Dr. Cooke said, "Let's ask for four a year for the next five years. Three for the first year." I said, "Write that down." So he wrote that down on a piece of paper, and we then sent it down the next day. I said to Mike, "Are you going to get it in?" And he said, "Well, there'll be complaining about it." And I said, "Otherwise we have nothing, it's so general in that section."

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So he did, and then Wilbur Cohen got cross about that because he said that would throw the budget off. Mike talked to Wilbur and the Budget Bureau and helped lots in keeping this item in. I talked to someone at the Bureau of the Budget, and asked Wilbur at Mike's suggestion. What finally happened was they took some money out of Community M. R. facilities causing some resentment, and also added a little money to the overall program. I am confused about the sequence of timing here but Mike Feldman could help you.

STEWART: Well, Leonard Mayo talked...

SHRIVER: Dr. Cooke might know, but that was an interesting day. You might ask them about that day, Dr. Cooke and Dr. Mayo.

STEWART: Leonard Mayo described a very long meeting that you and he and Feldman and someone from the Bureau of the Budget had in going over the Bureau of the Budget's recommendations on the report, or suggested changes, I assume. Do you recall that?

SHRIVER: I can't really recall it too well.

STEWART: As he described it, it was in Myer Feldman's office, as a matter of fact, and Myer Feldman was asking you people whether you would accept some of the suggested changes that the Bureau of the Budget was making and you, I guess, went through the whole report that way.

SHRIVER: Vaguely. Ask Mike. I think we discussed ideas like, "You accept doing it in three years instead of two years?" But there was never any suggestion, as I remember about eliminating any of the programs or saying, "We just can't afford to do that; you just cannot put those research institutes up;" or "you cannot have these federal scholarships to train teachers;" or "you can't have the maternal and child health or these programs." The Bureau of the Budget never said that to us.

STEWART: The actual costs weren't included in the final report, or at least to any great extent. Was there any discussion . .

SHRIVER: You mean, after.... that we didn't put it in?

STEWART: In the report.

SHRIVER: No, we didn't put it in. But we always knew how much the package would cost even during our discussion throughout the year. I talked about money a lot--so did Mike--because I knew my brother was not going to support anything too big and expensive, and we might end up with very little if anything. We always put into the report what we felt we could get, not everything that was needed in the field. We didn't want the report rewritten by the Budget Bureau, all chopped up and have important things eliminated. This would mean months of delay.

STEWART: There was considerable difficulty drafting and approving the reports on...

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SHRIVER: One thing that I do remember that was low, that we weren't satisfied with--was this planning money. A number of people wanted to get more planning money to the states, which was really very small. I think it was a million and a

half dollars for all the states but I never got terribly involved because I thought most states knew what was needed and money should go to implementation.

STEWART: It was about forty or fifty thousand dollars to each state.

SHRIVER: Per state, that's right. A number of people did not feel that was going to make any major difference because it was so small. But they thought it was important enough so they'd keep it in, and we did it.

STEWART: Do you recall this whole controversy between the biological and the behavioral research people?

SHRIVER: I sure do. Yes.

STEWART: Other than the inevitable divergence between basic and applied scientists, were there other considerations involved?

SHRIVER: Well, I think in the biological, as I say, there were people, basic scientists like Dr. Lederberg, who felt we should approach the whole research problem in mental retardation as a very basic medical research problem, and that nobody knew anything about mental retardation, doctors, and we should try to get a lot of fundamental information.

There was another point of view, and I subscribed to this and Dr. Cooke subscribed-- that we should do that, but that we should also try and set up these research institutes at various medical schools which would concentrate on the problem that was encountered, and that all the disciplines could be brought in that they wanted to (like basic medical discipline, basic genetics, basic molecular biology, basic brain surgery, these other things) as long as they were directed at the goal of preventing mental retardation. Like Dr. Cooke, I always believed that the clinical program must be part of a research program. I felt strongly, as the Kennedy Foundation had set up two research institutes. I had heard arguments versus clinical programs, but I believed the opposite.

In the end we got these research institutes. As I said before, we got four of them into the actual proposal. I don't think that made the basic scientists madly happy. You could ask them. That was a problem, and we tried to reconcile it, as I said, by doing both, by setting up research institutes and university related centers and by demanding more money for basic research.

STEWART: Well, they were just opposed to any hint that there should be a directed or a programmed research.

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SHRIVER: Yes, they felt that scientists should not be directed at all. Scientists sometimes forget this money is all public money and people do want services to mentally retarded children. We felt that because there was so few services in the

community for retardation programs and that parents had no choices of the kinds of services for their children, that specific institutions, like half-way homes, teacher training, etc., should be a strong part of the report.

STEWART: Did this difference of opinion carry over into the emphasis in the report on the socio-economic and cultural causes of mental retardation? Weren't there some people on the panel who weren't that convinced that it should receive such an emphasis in the report?

SHRIVER: That the educational and the social aspects shouldn't?

STEWART: Yes.

SHRIVER: I think they fought very vigorously, like Dunn and others, that it should get a big play. And I think Leonard did a very good job in trying to get them to get a play. But what is your question?

STEWART: But I think some were convinced or felt that the relationships between educational deprivation and, to a lesser degree, social deprivation and mental retardation hadn't been proven as conclusively as the report says it has, or at least hints it has.

SHRIVER: I think that the educational aspects of mental retardation came out. But I don't think there was anybody who felt that should be the major theme in the report. People like Dr. Hobbs and Dr. Dunn felt strongly that educational changes could eliminate much mental retardation. I agreed with them and pushed strongly the need for more teachers of mentally retarded children. The number of teachers at that time was a joke. We were told by Wilbur Cohen to push for more teachers of the deaf and we would get legislative support from Senator Hill [Lister Hill]. So that item was put in the report also. We discussed new teaching techniques and the need for more federal funds to educate the trainable.

We talked very little of, I remember, at the big meeting about cultural deprivation. Education was the emphasis. We never discussed poverty and retardation that I remember. Maybe there was some small emphasis on social causes. We had educators on the committee and, as I remember, only one sociologist.

STEWART: There has been a claim, I guess, that there's a direct linkage between the proposals in the Panel Report for preschool programs-and the Head Start program. Do you go along with that?

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SHRIVER: Well, no. Head Start was truly a creation of the poverty program under my husband, Sargent. Certainly in the president's report we mentioned the need to educate preschool children, but as an education program, not a

comprehensive effort like in Head Start. The retarded made a major contribution to Head Start. People should remember that. Let me explain.

In the early 1960s Sarge and I went to visit Susan Gray at the Kennedy Center in Nashville. We watched her work with economically deprived youngsters whose I.Q. was low and motivation was low. Sarge saw that Susan Gray was able to raise the motivation and the I.Q. He said, "If Susan Gray can do this in Nashville, this should be done throughout the country." And there was the germ of the initiation of Head Start. One must not forget how much the retarded contribute to the education and many other aspects of the good life for all children.

One other thing, I would like to mention is Dr. Elizabeth Boggs' work. She was very supportive of comprehensive community services for an entire community. Many of us spent hours talking about the ideal community. We had an ideal community for five thousand, for nine thousand, for fifty thousand. Every day we'd have a new map on the wall as to what are the ideal community services for the mentally retarded. So we spent a lot of time on that kind of thing.

STEWART: You mentioned that the president read at least one of the task force reports. Did he read the rest of the report before it was presented, do you know?

SHRIVER: Well, I know that Mike Feldman gave him a synopsis both in writing and orally of all the panel reports. He was really interested in all our work and kept asking about it.

It was right in the midst of the missile crisis. I thought it was particularly moving the way he treated us on the day we came and presented the final report. He said to one of the chairmen, "I'd like to ask you this: What can we do in the federal government today to cut down on infant mortality?" He said, "I think it's awful in the District of Columbia that." And then he gave the statistics. And he said, "I think that's terrible. Now, can any of you doctors here tell me what we can do about that?" When we gave him the report he spent over an hour with us, and said he'd do all he could to get it through the Congress.

STEWART: What about the problems of converting all of the proposals that were in the report into both the legislation and specific actions that HEW could take? Was this handled initially, as far as you were concerned, in a satisfactory way.

Luther Stringham, I believe, in Wilbur Cohen's office, did a lot of this. Do you recall being satisfied with how quickly and how readily...

SHRIVER: Yes, I thought they did that very well. But in all fairness, I think that most of the things that were in the president's request were the things in the report that we felt very important

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Mike Feldman knew how H.E.W. worked, and he helped us crystallize what we thought we must have, what it would cost, and what would remain then. He told this to HEW, they told it



to Budget, and we all agreed. H.E.W. worked under orders from the White House and Stringham and the others essentially followed instructions.

For example, we knew we wanted to train new teachers, and we knew we wanted to set up the research institutes, and we knew we wanted the additional funds. So I think it was quite clear just exactly had had to be done. After we got the report in and we presented it to the president, then I waited for a couple of months, and when it went up to the Hill, then I went back again and started to pay some visits to the Hill. So, when it came out of H.E.W., it was really about what we thought it would be. They did it very well. They did not slice it or take away, in answer to your question.

STEWART: There were some things dropped. For example, the National Institute of Learning, which was proposed, was later dropped.

SHRIVER: Yes.

STEWART: Do you recall this? Were you in favor of...

SHRIVER: Not at that moment, no. I never thought that would get through for a long time that the only way you change troubled young people is contact with attractive, successful young people--not through conversations but having a very attractive young fellow play with a delinquent is much more effective than having a psychiatrist treat him, unless he's terribly disturbed. So I gave this speech: And I also said that I had called attention to the President that this ought to be enacted.

Actually, I had talked to President Kennedy about a domestic peace corps two or three times in the White House. He was quite bored with me and the idea at first. After the fourth time he said, partly to stop me talking about it, "That's a good idea, Eun, why don't you talk to Sargent about it?" I said, "Well, is that all right?" And he said, "Yes, go ahead and talk to him." So I did talk to Sargent, and I said would he do it. He said he couldn't do it because his program was overseas, they were having a lot of problems with it, and he didn't want to get involved in a domestic situation. So one night again I said to Jack, "Well are you ever going to do this? It would be wonderful for the young people, it would be wonderful for you. It would be a great boon to all these underprivileged kids." And he said, "Are you ever going to get off my back on it?" And I said, "Well, Jack, I think you're just missing a great bet." He said, "Well, why don't you call Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy]. See if Bobby could get it going." He said, "It's not a bad idea. Why don't you see what he's got?"

So I called up Bobby, and I said, "Jack said that maybe you could get this thing started. Would you be willing to do it? I'd be glad to help." And he said, "Well, I think it sounds good. I'll put somebody on it." So he did. It was Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett] that developed it, and I didn't really get

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very much involved at all on it. Bobby decided he wanted to do the work on it, which was fine. And I think they managed to get it through the Senate, as I remember but they could not get it through the House. And then, of course, when Sargent got hold of the Office of

Economic Opportunity, he got VISTA [Volunteers In Service To America], which is really a domestic peace corps, as part of his program. And it's worked out. He got it through both houses, and it worked out very well. He was the best person I knew in getting legislation through. But I don't claim a lot of credit because I'm sure people had anyhow. My husband pushed that very seriously. That was his idea more than anyone's. And he talked to Wilbur about it many times; it came up a little bit at the meeting; it's still being discussed these days. But nobody was clear enough exactly what it could do, and it was the kind of thing I knew President Kennedy wouldn't endorse unless we had a much better idea of what we wanted. We didn't really have a good enough idea.

STEWART: There were other proposals in the report that, like the Institute of Learning, went far beyond the area of mental retardation. I think there was a suggestion for a domestic peace corps in there. Do you recall being in favor of such proposals in the report?

SHRIVER: Yes. I gave a speech on the domestic peace corps out in California in 1962 at San Jose College when I got a degree, because I've always believed that they ought to have a domestic peace corps in this country. I talked to the President about it. But that's another story. And I asked, I said to Leonard (Mayo), "You know we ought to try to get that in because that's where we'll get the kids to work with the retarded." So they put it in, but I never thought it would be enacted through this report. It was just put in because I felt terribly strongly about it. But, again, that didn't bother me, taking it out, because I didn't ever think it would pass. I think some things were just put in because certain people pushed them. They didn't have enough thought behind them to be part of the legislation. So I certainly wasn't disappointed. I'd like to say something about the domestic peace corps.

STEWART: Yes, certainly.

SHRIVER: In 1962, I believe it was 1962, I gave the speech--the exact month I don't remember but it was at San Jose College where I received a degree--on the need for a domestic peace corps in the country. Actually, I think many people must have probably had the idea because it was a logical thing with all of the social problems to meet and to have the young involved. I had been dealing with delinquents for ten years. And it was just pathetic, the fact that there were no young people to really work with juvenile delinquents. I've felt about the domestic peace corps before, and it was a logical development to the overseas one. But I think that it should be expanded, as I've said a million times, to all young people. And in my speech I asked that all college students in the country and high school students give at least a year of their time to domestic social problems because then you could really change them. And it's the only way, I still think, you'll ever change them. And we're changing them, and I think it's because the young are involved.

STEWART: Were you generally optimistic that the legislation proposed in early 1963 would go through as rapidly as it did during that session?

SHRIVER: Yes, yes.

STEWART: There was no fear that it would be...

SHRIVER: No. Because I think that whenever I went to the Hill, they were really interested. There was John Fogarty, Lister Hill, Paul Rogers and a number of others who were behind us. So there was never any problem. And I don't think it was only because I was the sister of the President, because I know Bobby had some problems with juvenile delinquency with different people, and they didn't get some of their programs through. But always with mental retardation. I think all the congressmen felt that, "My God, this is something none of us have done anything about, and we'll do something." And it was really very pleasant compared to anything that's happened since.

STEWART: Let me ask you one other thing. The mental health and mental retardation messages were combined, and eventually the two bills...

SHRIVER: Were combined.

STEWART: At least the facilities construction bills were combined. Were you in favor of this? Were you fearful that the mental health part wouldn't get the type of...

SHRIVER: Well, Wilbur was very nice about that and asked what I thought about combining the mental health bill and the mental retardation bill in one package. And I said that that was fine, but I wanted to make sure that mental health would not in any sense prevent the passage of mental retardation legislation. He felt that attaching the mental health bill to our bill would get the mental health bill passed. Quite frankly, I was pleased at this request because mental retardation was always the underdog and now it was the leader.

I said "Okay, if you want to attach mental health to our legislation, fine, but don't lessen our chances." And he said positively it wouldn't and that it would be wonderful for all groups. That was fine. But I asked that several times, and we kept our eye on that all the time.

STEWART: Were there any other programs or areas that you felt might, so to speak, jump on the bandwagon of mental retardation because it had such an impetus.

SHRIVER: Well, I do think that, as I say, the maternal and child health legislation and the crippled children legislation certainly tied themselves to mental retardation, but that was fine. I said to Dr. Mayo, who had been interested in crippled children all his life, that mental retardation had to now receive a lot of new and increased services and equipment if the crippled children legislation was to get a big increase in funds. Leonard agreed enthusiastically. The mentally retarded were getting very little help at the

time. We made an investigation and the retarded were really discriminated against. So everybody got help in the new increase in funding.

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STEWART: There was a question of including or not including staffing money for university related centers.

SHRIVER: Oh yes, that was a terrible mess.

STEWART: And you decided not to?

SHRIVER: Yes. I didn't make the decision. What happened was this money was taken out of the community facilities construction section of the legislation to pay for the construction of the university related centers which we added for at the last moment (see above). We got 7.5 million to build these centers the first year. However, we couldn't get staffing money for these centers. Wilbur Cohen kept saying these centers could get money from N.I.H. But N.I.H. wouldn't. Years later we still had to fight every year for special funding. I said to Dr. Cooke, "If we don't get money in the mental retardation legislation, we won't get anything new next year. They will be tired of us."

But Wilbur was very opposed to this. Dr. Cooke was in the middle, and Wilbur opposed it. So it was a battle. I think we could have won it. But we didn't win that, and we've paid for it ever since. And today we still don't have adequate funding for it.

STEWART: You were going to mention some of the people in Congress whom you had dealings with.

SHRIVER: Yes. I went to see Wilbur Mills. And I went to see John Fogarty, and I went to see the chairman of the House Labor Committee and several members of the House Appropriations Committee. I went to see Representative Green [Edith Green]. I remember talking to her. And I went to see two or three of the Senators, like Lister Hill. I also gave five or six names like Wilbur Mills to my brother, who made the calls for us. And two or three of them mentioned the fact. Wilbur Mills said, "Oh yes, I've heard from your brother. We're certainly going to do everything we can. I think it looks very good." About ten people I talked to.

STEWART: Was there anyone who you felt wasn't that favorable that really presented any problem or any problems of serious concern?

SHRIVER: No. I think that none of them really gave any trouble. Congresswoman Green asked several questions about the education of the mentally retarded. But I would not say that she was against it. She was, more concerned. The other people always seemed to be so enthusiastic about it.

STEWART: How significant a role or how successful a role did Dr. Warren [Stafford L.

Warren] and his office play, both in the passage of the legislation and the other work they were doing?

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SHRIVER: Well, Dr. Warren was not, as I remember, active in the passage of the legislation. Or if he was, I was not in contact with him. We were trying to get somebody to take that office as special assistant to the president so that the interest obviously would continue. I think it was my own idea, that they put somebody in President Kennedy's office to show that the president would stay interested. So I went to Mike Feldman, and I asked him about it. He said he'd talk to the Bureau of the Budget, and then he called me back, and he said, "The Bureau of the Budget is opposed to this." And I said, "Well, I felt like it was a great idea." He said, "Eunice, all I can tell you is that the Bureau of the Budget is opposed to it." I said, "President Kennedy will have to make the decision. I'm going to go and see the president next week. I'm going to recommend it. But why don't you come with me and give all the arguments against it? And then let the president decide."

So Mike Feldman and I went into Jack's office. I said, "Jack, I would hope that you could have a presidential assistant on that level so this interest in mental retardation would continue and things could be followed up on. And it won't be expensive," I said, "because we're not asking for a big office, but we'd like to ensure that the legislation goes through and that other things happen." I said, "Mike says the Bureau of the Budget's opposed to it." I turned to Mike, "Would you give the arguments of why they're opposed to it?" And Mike then gave--the arguments opposed to it. And Jack said, "I've heard them both. We're going to have a presidential assistant." I said to Jack, "Do you make up your mind that quickly about everything?" He said, "Something as easy as this, and if it doesn't cost practically any money, I do. So let's go ahead and do it, Mike." And that was the end of that. We both walked out of the office, and that was the end.

So then I called up three or four doctors, like Dr. Masland, I said, "Who would do this well?" First, I went to Dr. Cooke, and I asked him if he'd take it. He said no, he couldn't come. Then I talked to Dr. Cooke two or three times about what suggestions he had, and nobody very exciting came through. Then I called Dr. Masiand and said, "Who do you think?" And he said, "Well, there's this wonderful man, Dr. Warren. I think very highly of him. He's at the University of California, and he's done this, this, this." I said, "Fine." Then I called Dr. Tarjan and said, "What do you think of Dr. Warren?" He said, "He's very good. He's done this, this, this." I said, "Fine. He sounds good enough to me." I called up Mike Feldman, and I said, "Would you write him a letter from the President and ask him to come down?"

So, they wrote him a letter. And I met him and was not terribly impressed, in fact, was rather disappointed because he was older and less aggressive and less imaginative and rather slow moving, I thought. And then we brought him in to the president. The president talked to him for about fifteen minutes. Then I went in to him, the president, and asked him what he thought of him. And he sort of shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well..." He didn't seem very impressed. He wasn't impressed with him either. But we were sort of stuck with it. So I went along because we were rather desperate at that point. And he came into the office.

And I don't think he did an effective job, frankly, because he wasn't any of those other things. I don't know--if we had to do it over, I'd try to get a different, younger, peppier guy. I never thought he was.... I think what he was

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interested in, he did well, and that is that he was interested in the whole problem of mental retardation among the rejectees in the armed services. And he tried to promote that whole idea, that a lot of these people were being rejected and were mentally retarded and that the armed services had a responsibility to them. And this he sort of went off on a tangent about and didn't do anything about the things that the panel had done. So he just did what he wanted to do I think.

STEWART: But many of the proposals that were made by the task forces of the panel were picked up by the H.E.W.

SHRIVER: Yes, they were. Fortunately, they picked them up, and we didn't have to have somebody stay on their back. And Mike continued to help the doctor, as I say.

STEWART: Just one last thing. Where did the idea for the White House Conference on Mental Retardation come from? Do you recall?

SHRIVER: The White House Conference?

STEWART: Yes.

SHRIVER: You mean the whole thing?

STEWART: No, no. There was a White House Conference on Mental Retardation in August, I believe, of 1963, held down at Airlie House?

SHRIVER: Yes, that was sponsored by us. Leonard Mayo had the idea and pushed it. And President Kennedy made an address over the loudspeaker system. He couldn't be there in person. So Sarge actually gave the keynote address. The representatives from all the states were there.

STEWART: This wasn't concerned with the passage of the legislation, really?

SHRIVER: No, it wasn't really. It was really to get the states to set up a State Department of Mental Retardation apart from State Departments of Mental Health. In the past many states did not even have departments of mental retardation. And if they existed at all, in 90 percent of the cases they were brought well down in the bureaucracy of mental health.

STEWART: Can you recall the degree of detail with which the president understood the

whole problem of mental retardation?

SHRIVER: Well, let me say he was involved, right from the beginning, when the first meeting took place. We had our first meeting at H.E.W., and called everybody over there. And he spent an hour with in the Fish Room, met everybody, and asked, as I say, some questions about the problem and seemed really genuinely concerned about it.

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He was interested in children's diseases. I remember out on the boat one day he said to me why did he have to support another national institute; why were they proposing it to him and why should he back another national institute of child health and human development because it was going to cost a lot more money and he was having trouble with the budget; and what were some of the reasons. He was interested, but what were some of the reasons. He'd just read the report. And then, as I say, I told him about virtually nobody studying anything about infant mortality or with very little knowledge about prenatal diseases and that sort of thing. And I said, "What about your own son? You probably wouldn't have lost one of your children if we knew more about prematurity." He said, "Are they going to study that kind of thing at the NICHD, prematurity and that sort of thing?" I said, "Yes, Jack. And then that's what's going to stop it." And he said, "Well, that seems to really be worthwhile."

So I think he was always ready to try and find out something new about it, and when we asked him to come and speak to the National Association for Retarded Children, there were fifty other luncheons he could have gone to. Also, he gave me permission to hold two or three receptions for people interested in mental retardation, one of which he came to. Often doctors interested in mental retardation were asked to general receptions. He never turned down at any time anything we asked him to do about, or for, the mentally retarded.

He presented the first awards at the Kennedy Foundation Awards Dinner. How the field of retardation misses him. And he came and spoke at that. So it was not, in any sense, just a political thing, which it could have been. But he was really, you know, involved-maybe not terribly scientifically, but certainly the best way he could be involved, which was to appear and talk. That's about as much as you can expect a President to do--and push legislation. You cannot expect him really to have a lot of knowledge. As I say, he proposed that Russian visit.

Then, too, he assigned Mike Feldman this Special Council to watch over the mental retardation legislation and inform him what was happening. No other president has ever assigned a special assistant to cover a particular area like that and have particular responsibility for mental retardation.

STEWART: Considering all of the other health problems...

SHRIVER: All of his speeches. I think, as I say, I don't remember ever asking anything that he didn't do in the field.

STEWART: Considering all the other health problems and all the other pressing problems that undoubtedly people were urging the White House to back and to back strongly, was there ever any

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fear that politically it might not be that sound or wise to go into mental retardation in such a big way in opening themselves up to the change that they're not giving equal attention to a lot of other pressing problems?

SHRIVER: I never heard it. That's probably true. I think maybe among the mental health people, there might have been some feeling about that. But I think it ought to be clearly understood that President Kennedy's commitment and his actions and everything else were involved in the retarded, and that the other people were fine but he never had any more interest in that than he did in fifty things. But he did have a lot more interest in the retarded. And not just because of my sister.... Of course people might say maybe he was interested and he pushed something just because he was personally interested. But I don't think so. I think he saw right away that this was something that had been neglected, and he had a rather sympathetic outlook about children.

I remember one other thing that he did, to show, again, his real interest in this field much more than in any other field, when the poster child was around. Maybe the poster children come from a lot of different illnesses, but he was particularly anxious about the retarded child because he did it for us twice, that is, the two years that he could do it. The first time it was a little mongoloid boy. He was very cute. We used that as the national poster. And he spent quite a little time with him. The second time two sisters came, and I remember one had PKU [phenylketonuria], not the other because science had discovered how to prevent it. He was very kind. He walked in the garden with the one that had the illness. I remember he spent some time with the mother, which you might be interested in. He talked with her and asked about it and said how fantastic it was that in a few short years you could prevent a form of mental retardation and therefore he felt that he'd like to do all he could to prevent other forms. And he spent, as I say, over an hour with both of them. So, again, I'd like to reiterate that it was retardation that was his great interest.

STEWART: Practically everything that you did that involved H.E.W. or the White House was done through Myer Feldman or with Myer Feldman.

SHRIVER: Yes.

STEWART: There was no one else in the White House who ever got involved substantially?

SHRIVER: No, it was all Mike. And he was terrific.

STEWART: Well, is there anything else?



SHRIVER: Although certain aspects of the program were passed under President Johnson's [Lyndon B. Johnson] administration, the fact of the matter was that the legislation itself was through and the budget was drawn up and the groundwork had all been done, and it was practically just a case for President Johnson to sign it. I think President Johnson's done many things that have been very worthwhile, but I think to be completely objective, that we would have to say that it was President Kennedy's legislation, 98 percent of it because there was nothing

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really to do, practically, except sign the bill.

STEWART: This reminds me of another question. Had you people thought of precisely what processes should be set up to really carry this thing on? Wasn't there, for example, some talk of a citizens committee, such as the Hoover Commission had, to see that the proposals were implemented?

SHRIVER: Yes, there was that suggestion. I favored having a single person at the White House as an assistant to the president, so I never pushed the citizens committee. And there were several people that did, but I thought that was sort of a waste of time at that moment. What we had was legislation, and we wanted to get it worked on. We didn't really need a great big citizens group to do, what, I didn't know. And nobody else seemed to know, except generalities. So I didn't push that, and I did push the other. Then I went back to the foundation, and I tried to push the public understanding of the problem of mental retardation. Then we got into the Advertising Council campaign. And that we got some cooperation from N.I.H. on. And then we tried to do through the Foundation a whole public relations effort to understand the problem. And, coupled with the legislation, that was really the approach to mental retardation we tried to follow in those three or four years. And I think Sargent managed to get, I think it was, twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars from H.E.W., and we put up, I think twenty-five, and the Advertising Council put up millions, and put a whole big public relations effort behind the public understanding of it. So I think we moved quite well in those two or three years. But that was the gist of what we were trying to do.

STEWART: Did you always feel that you had as much cooperation from professional groups, medical groups, as you could expect? I'm thinking first of groups of doctors, the A.M.A. and the College of Physicians and so forth.

SHRIVER: That's a good question. But I never paid much attention to them. Leonard Mayo got in touch with them, and he tried to get their backing. Ask him. But we really tried to get prominent individual support from people. You know, we'd try to go to a doctor who knew something and get his endorsement before we presented the program to the President. We sent it up ourselves. And then when we did send it to the

President, we got in touch with people, like, recall Dr. Rusk and people like that, to write stories about it. But we didn't try to get any endorsements. It's a good idea.

STEWART: There was some criticism, I believe, that the National Association for Retarded Children was getting too much of a play, possibly, was too intimately involved in this whole situation. Did you ever hear this criticism or fear that...

SHRIVER: No, I didn't. And I don't think that it had much authenticity because Dr. Elizabeth Boggs, who represented them, was on the committee. She is a very articulate, aggressive woman, and a

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and a very fine woman but she talked a lot and maybe they felt that she was just too much. But I mean otherwise she was the only one on the commission. We called in the NARC sometimes for consultation. I did myself. There was a very good fellow, Dr. Dybwad [Gunnary Dybwad], whom I liked very much, a tough and aggressive fellow. And I asked him to come down two or three times. I asked him things. He went up to testify for the bill. So they gave advice, but they weren't at all a controlling factor at any time that I remember. I know they weren't.

STEWART: What was your opinion of the other association, the American Association of Mental Deficiency? Were they of much help throughout both the deliberations of the panel and in putting the proposals together?

SHRIVER: The report together? Well, I think Dr. Mayo would be better to talk to about that, and Dr. Cooke and Rick Heber. I did not use them. Again, two or three of their members, like Dr. Tarjan, were on the committee, but they came as individuals. I don't know that they were any particular... We always kept after just people, individuals, and we really had very little to do with organizations.

STEWART: You never had any contact with any labor people over all the problems involved in hiring the mentally retarded people, did you?

SHRIVER: At that time we didn't. We had one businessman on the committee who was from Sears Roebuck.

STEWART: Oh, he was the personnel director or something?

SHRIVER: Yes. Dr. Tudor [W. Wallace Tudor]. And he gave quite a lot of, talk about how Sears was going to help the retarded and then hire them. But as it ended up, he gave, I think, some money or his company did--ten thousand dollars to

them. But there was no real leadership from him. And there was no real thing in our report about employment either. I mean it could have been maybe a factor if we had had a stronger person.

STEWART: But there was no discussions with any labor people as such?

SHRIVER: On hiring them, no. To repeat myself, we weren't trying to get things done. We were really all trying to focus on the report all the time. And then, after the report--everything that was in it got done.

As I've said in another interview and John Macy covered it in his interview, President Kennedy was the first president to change the Civil Service laws to let the retarded work in Civil Service and he also hired a retarded person in the furniture repair room in the White House. I just called him up on the phone one day and asked him if it was okay to get a job in the White House for a retarded person. He said, "If he can do the job, it's fine with me." It took the Secret Service three months before they cleared someone to work in the White House. It took the president about thirty seconds to decide.

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[END OF INTERVIEW - JFK #1, 5/7/1968]

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