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Tape #1 -- Interview with Ross Perot

1 November, 1981

KF Okay, do you want to start by telling me how you first got involved in Iran?

HRP The company had an opportunity to do some computer work in Iran. There were a number of large computer jobs to be done over there. The first one was with the Government of Iran. The Ministry of Social Security was the part of the Government that we were involved with; and the Ministry wanted to automate the processing of the social security and the medical payments to the people in the country. We later got involved with a project for one of the banks in Iran -- to automate the bank. We did several other smaller projects in Iran that weren't that significant. One was sort of an interesting project in that we automated the Queen's office. One of her tasks that she had undertaken for herself was to be sure that she could respond to any person in the country that made a petition to her for help. This had sort of gotten out of control and some of our people were involved. It was really quite a small project compared to social security and medical claims coming in from a country of over 30 million people. And I don't remember any of the details; there are people around who would remember the details. But it was an interesting job.

KF Okay, when was it that you first got involved in Iran?

HRP I'm going to guess '76.

KF '76. And how did it come about? Did you go or did somebody go?

HRP My first trip to Iran was to go to the prison.

KF Okay.

HRP But never been to Iran until we had this problem.

KF But at some point you decided Iran was a field for EDS.

HRP That's right. Our people in marketing saw an opportunity there. They went to Iran, pursued the opportunity, the opportunity materialized. It was a fairly substantial project, we had a lot of people who were intrigued with the thought of living overseas. And that sort of thing, it seemed the popular thing to do. Everything went along fine until the revolution.

KF Okay, tell me just a bit more about what EDS would do for the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in Iran. In detail. What information would come and what information would you give out?

HRP Well, we would be keeping track of all of the people who were eligible for Social Security benefits and we would be keeping track of the payments that they were supposed to make. As it turned out, the people were not nearly as responsible for making their social security payments as they are in this country. They didn't have payroll deductions. They didn't have all the things that we have in this country to assure the collection of Social Security payments. And this needed to be done so that the fund was sound. So, you could break it into two parts, the computer programs that would allow you to collect the amounts due and then the computer programs that would account for all that and then distribute social security payments to people who were eligible for those payments.

KF Okay. So, the people who were eligible for payments would go to a social security office and the social security office could check with EDS whether they had paid, whether they were eligible, that kind of thing?

HRP Exactly.

KF Okay, I've got it. And that, you said that was '77?

HRP I believe we started in '76.

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KF And who should I check that date with?

HRP Merv. Tell ~~Merv~~ to ~~give~~ you the start date. And when you're talking to Bill Gaylord and Paul Chiapparone, you can get a much more precise definition of what we were doing in the computer area. There's a health side to this thing too. When people had health claims, medical claims -- they were submitted to this program. We were involved in paying the health claims that would come in to the xx.

KF Okay. So, people who were insured for doctor's bills. And that's actually the kind of work that you do here, except that here it's private insurance and there, presumably it was Government insurance.

HRP Well, a lot of it is Government insurance here.

KF It's the same here. Okay.

HRP Right. See, Medicare and Medicaid in this country are Federal programs. Medicare is completely Federal. Medicaid is Federal and State. And then we do a great deal of work with just the private sector -- health insurance companies and life insurance companies.

KF Okay. Good. So, EDS was doing, in Iran, the kind of job it's been doing for many years here. Okay. Now, in the skeleton you say during the summer and fall of '78, business ground to a halt and the newspaper cuttings say that the Government stopped paying you for the service.

HRP Exactly. But, I'm saying that they stopped paying all U.S. contractors. If you get a list of people who are filing claims against Iran, you find that starting about in, I don't remember exactly the last time they paid us, but let's say June or July. They stopped paying everybody. That caught my attention.

KF I bet it did.

HRP xx why are we doing this? And they said, "Be calm, this little turmoil here will all blow over." Our top people went over, came back, and said "Be calm, this little turmoil will all blow; you're doing business with a different culture, different part of the world and so on and so forth." And so, the clock kept ^{tick} thinking. And keep in mind, everybody felt that this revolution would not occur and particularly, the U.S. State Department and the people in our Government who were charged with the responsibility felt that it would go away. That everything would settle down, the Shah would regain control and be back pretty much the way things were. And this was just a temporary disruption. So our business question was, well do we just stop work, pull our people out, or do we just sort of move forward with thing as everybody was advising us to. All of the people within the Ministry were saying look,

KF The people within the . . .

HRP Within the Ministry, the officials that we dealt with were saying, "Be calm, keep working." And looking back on it see, by the time it got to October, November, they weren't working. We were working and we'd come in and there would be hardly anyone else there. Now, Paul and Bill can tell you about that. Everybody else was out in the street. So the Iranians had essentially stopped work. Well, by September, October, November, it was obvious to us that this thing was not getting better, it was getting worse. But if you talked to the State Department or if you talked to the U.S. Embassy over there, they kept saying, "The good news is just around the corner." And, this sort of reminded me of Viet Nam, where if you talked to the people in the State Department, they would tell you that everything was under control; South Viet Nam was going to survive. But if you ever went over there, particularly after we pulled out, it was obvious that they wouldn't survive and when we cut off aid, and supply of military goods to them, they had no chance to survive. So this was sort of like watching an old movie to me. And when I got into it, and we started taking our people out.

KF Okay. Do you have an exact date for that? That decision?

HRP No. But that date is available and there's an interesting story behind that and it's one of the few times at EDS that I've given instructions that weren't carried out. I went in one Monday and I said, "Look fellows, we can afford to be wrong here and I'd rather look silly for taking our people out too soon, than wish we had." They said, "Ross, it would cost x million dollars to get all those people out of there." We would lose the ^{xx, fine} ~~xx, fine~~. We can take that risk but we can't take the risk of getting all our people trapped in there. So, I said I wanted them on the next airplane coming out. Just lock xx, leave their goods behind, let's get the people out. And if you fellows are right and I am wrong, then we'll send everybody back and all we have is the transportation expense. The people who were there didn't want to leave and there's some interesting stories around that, they were really, really quite angry about just being told they had to leave. Now, that was in Iran -- that's the men, their wives -- the overall report coming back to me was great anger and hostility that we were pulling out because I was reading things in the newspaper, didn't have an accurate perception of what was happening over there, but I kept saying it's fail safe to do it. So, it's the prudent thing to do, let's take them out. If you look at the details during that period, I think, instead of leaving as planned, we got into a series of debates and it was 3 or 4 days later before they seriously started leaving. I went to New York to meet them because if they were as angry as everybody said they were, I figured the best thing for me to do was to be there when they arrived in the United States. An interesting thing had occurred coming across the ocean. I don't know why, but you should talk to people who were in that group. When they landed in New York, they were the most thankful people in the world, to be out of Iran. And I, you know, I'd gone all the way to New York and I figured everybody was going to fuss and complain, what have you, and I was going to say, "Look, it's fail safe." These people were just, if there's a trace of it I didn't get it. They were thrilled to be out of Iran, back in the safety of the United States. But, as we started to do this, this upset the Iranians. And as you get into the real nitty gritty details of this, Tom Luce, the attorney, is probably your best source about what happened, the day it happened and so on and so forth.

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KF Okay, this is the meeting on December 28 you're referring to?

HRP No, no, no, no. I'm talking about these, you know, when people came out. Between Merv and Tom Luce, they can get you all the dates. But, in terms of when we started, when we told the Ministry, that was before the 28th, that we were leaving. But right after that, they started trying to pick our people up.

KF Now, what did that involve exactly, when you say they tried to pick your people up? They came and tried to arrest them?

HRP Within twelve hours, they were . . .

KF Twelve hours from what?

HRP From the time we told them we were leaving.

KF Okay.

HRP They started saying they had certain people they wanted to question. And, they wanted to talk to Paul and Bill. And this concerned us, so we went to the Embassy, and the Embassy talked to them and they said, "Well, we think they just want to talk to you and they're not going to detain you, it's unthinkable for them to detain you," and so on. All these things that later happened in Iran were unthinkable at this point. Absolutely unthinkable that they would ever overrun the Embassy. Everybody conceived the Embassy as the safe place to be. Now, I don't know the exact sequence, but certainly Paul and Bill can give this to you. The decision was made -- the Iranians wanted their passports so they couldn't leave the country, and the decision was made that they would give their to the U.S. Embassy and not to the Iranians. This seemed to satisfy the Iranians and a number of days went by. Paul and Bill could have left the country but they felt that if they left while their people were still moving out -- now this is, the planes were leaving, people were leaving, what have you -- they'd just pick up somebody else, if that was their inclination.

KF What positions did Paul and Bill hold?

HRP They were two of the key people, and you should get exactly from them, I think Paul was our top man at that point. It changed over time, in terms of, but they were two of the top people directly involved with the project.

KF So they wanted to be last to leave like the captain leaving the sinking ship.

HRP Exactly. And particularly with the Iranians looking for them, not looking for them but wanting, detaining them by holding the passports at this point. They felt that if they just left, and they could have gotten out, they would just pick up someone else. So they let everybody else get out and then they would try to leave. Then we went through this process that I described in the outline, the Embassy setting up this meeting on December 28. Now, I was getting this back over in this part of the world. I was here, it was Christmas. And with things like this going on, there's always a great deal of turmoil and other things. My Mother was very ill. She was dying of cancer. She broke her hip Christmas Eve. I just really can't communicate to you how the children felt about her and how we felt about her. You don't want your grandmother to break her hip at Christmas Eve. It was a real trauma here at our house. She was in the hospital Christmas Day.

KF That's here in Dallas?

HRP In Dallas, and so we spent Christmas Day and had Christmas in the hospital with her. Everybody was to go skiing on the 26th. We always had Christmas here with her, and she used to go up to the mountains with us, but it was hard on her. So, once she got ill she didn't.

KF How old was she?

HRP She was 82 when she died. And, so . . .

KF Tell me a bit more about that. How did she hurt herself?

HRP She had cancer of the bone; it wasn't as though she'd fell hard or anything like that. Her bones were literally deteriorating because of the cancer. And so, . . .

KF But what exactly happened on Christmas Eve?

HRP The result was a broken hip.

KF She was in her house?

HRP Yes, she was in her house. I was not there when it occurred, but I think she was walking and the hip just gave way. That's my recollection.

KF So she would then have, so she would have fallen.

HRP But again, see, my sister is right there in the next office. She was with her when it occurred but my recollection is it's not as though she had a hard fall down the stairs or something like that, but you know, it just kind of went. Because it was defective.

KF Okay. Tell me . . . what was your Mother's name?

HRP Lulu May.

KF L.u.l.a. . .

HRP M.a.y.

KF M.a.y.

HRP L.u.l.u. M.a.y.

KF Lulu May, Lulu May Perot.

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HRP Right.

KF Okay. And she was at her house here in Dallas?

HRP Right.

KF Okay. Who was with her?

HRP My sister, Bette.

KF Bette Perot?

HRP Yes. Who is there everyday at EDS. She runs the Foundation out there. So, Bette was with her the night she hurt her hip and then, of course, called me and we went down to the hospital and she was -- made sure she was taken care of that night. We then spent Christmas Day there. Now, you really have to understand that she was, she was very small. She was about 5'1" or 5'2", but ranks right with Colonel Simons in terms of strength of character. She was tough in terms of, mentally tough. So, Christmas Day we had a good time but her big concern was that everybody was going to stick around with her instead of going skiing.

KF Which hospital was this?

HRP This was down at Baylor Hospital. This is downtown. And, again, we went downtown because that's where the cancer specialist was that worked with her. She'd have normally gone to Presbyterian, where we were today, but the cancer specialist was downtown. And special radiation machines and things like that, that they needed to work with her on.

KF Did your family go into the hospital on Christmas Day?

HRP Oh yeah, we spent the whole day down there in her room.

KF What time did you go?

HRP First thing in the morning. We took the presents down there and spent the day with her. And, you know, she, her whole attitude that day was she'd just broken her hip and you'd expect all of us to be entertaining her. She was in, the way she was put together, going out of her way to make sure that everybody had a good time and nobody was focused on the fact that she was in the hospital and so on and so forth. And was putting on an extra show to get everybody to go skiing. Margot and the children left the next morning. I stayed and didn't intend to go, and she spent all the next day. This was the 26th. And Bette and I would take turns sleeping in the room with her at the hospital.

KF Who slept there the night of Christmas Day?

HRP I think Bette slept there Christmas Eve; I slept there Christmas night and then the next day Mother was preoccupied all day because I hadn't gone skiing and there was nothing wrong with her and it was silly for me to sit around there and she felt fine and she would feel better if I had gone. Finally Bette and I said, "I'll leave and I can come right back if there's any problem." The doctor said, "Look, there is no, you know, what's happened has happened. There's not going to be any sign of getting worse, not going to get any better, and it upsets her for you to be here." I left late, now then, this is the . . . the children left on the 26th; I left on the 27th. Because I got there late in the afternoon, didn't ski, went to bed and was called the next morning. The call woke me up and that's when they told me that Paul and Bill had gone in to have this conversation with Dadgar.

KF So this must have been the morning of December, 28th?

HRP Right.

KF And you were skiing where?

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HRP In Vail. Vail, Colorado. Now there's a, you know, it'll take a while for you to, and I don't if this is part of the book -- it may not even be a significant part of the book. But, when I got the word, see, Ross was there, who's seen me get into things like this since he was a little boy. Margot was there and she's had to live with two or three things like this that really, although she really never shows anything, it's hard on her. You know, and so my family had an unusual degree of understanding of what I would probably do and without any . . . the interesting part is there was nothing discussed. Nobody said "Gee, you're not going to Iran are you. Gee," you know. I knew what they were thinking and they knew I knew what they were thinking and their general attitude was to be supportive and they knew that I had to leave right away.

KF Okay, but tell me again. Who exactly called you?

HRP Either Merv or Tom Marquez called me. And we can determine that. See, Merv has beautiful recall of details. Between Merv and Tom Marquez, they'll tell you who . . . or maybe Tom Walter called me. But one of those three called me.

KF Okay.

HRP Told me that they'd been picked up and so I said, "Alright, I'm on my way back to Dallas." There was a heavy snowstorm. So, I had about a two and a half hour drive. We had a four wheel drive, a GM Suburban up there. So, I drove to Denver; I had alot of time to think. And that's when I had the idea. I said well, we could do this, we could do this, we could get these lawyers, I'll contact Henry Kissinger . . . now all these things that raced through your mind are possibilities to pursue. Finally, though, on the way to Denver . . .

KF Tell me more about all the possibilities. See if you can remember all the possibilities that went through your mind on that drive.

HRP Well, I thought about contacting Henry Kissinger because he had been Secretary of State. He knew everybody over there. It crossed my mind that at this moment, generals were in power under the Shah. There was a general who was Prime Minister and that I should go through all my military contacts to deal with him. Admiral Tom Moorer had been Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is a good friend of mine and I knew that he knew the general who was now the Prime Minister.

KF Okay, how was Tom Moorer a friend of yours?

HRP This goes back to the prisoner of war days in that I would meet with the Joint Chiefs periodically about the problems of the Prisoners of War and their families. And he and I had gotten to be friends then.

KF Okay. How did you know Kissinger?

HRP Kissinger asked me to head the POW project. And introduced me . . . took me . . . he explained to me what he wanted me to do. It was in 1969. He said look, we decided ~~to~~ ^{to} Vietnamize the war; we think that will take three years. Intelligence reports indicate that half of the American prisoners of war will die from brutality or neglect during this three year period and our challenge is to get the North Vietnamese to change their treatment. We concluded, we the U.S. Government, concluded that the best way to get them to change the treatment is to make . . . is to embarrass them in the eyes of the world about the brutal treatment the men are receiving. Then he went on to explain to me that the reason they treated our men the way they did was their own outlook toward prisoners of war. From their own outlook, if one of their men is captured, he's a disgraced man, he can never return to his family or the village. I can show you many, many cases of North Vietnamese people who were captured in the South -- they felt they couldn't go home. I talked to them. See that was made by North Vietnamese prisoners of war; and, I went through all the Prisoner of War camps in South Viet Nam, interviewing the North Vietnamese prisoners. Because I wanted to find . . . in order to know how to deal with the North Vietnamese, I felt I had to understand them. And what better way -- I had a captive

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audience down there in the South and I could go in and talk to these people and find out how they were indoctrinated, how they were trained and there are great stories. For example, they would teach their young men that . . . if you die bravely in battle, your spirit rises up and fights with the ferocity of ten men, but if you ever surrendered, you are disgraced and you can never return to your family, your country or your village. Can't you see them trying to sell that to British or American troops. You know, your spirit went . . . some soldier would say, "How do you know?" You know, who's died and seen this happen, how do you know this? But, so, Kissinger explained to me this culture problem and said, "Look, the challenge is to embarrass them." I said, "Well, why are you calling me and how do we do it?" He said, "We're calling you because the Government can't do it. We need an individual who can do this with completely private funds, no federal money can ever be funneled to you. Everything you do, you've got to do out of your own pocket." I said, "Alright, well what is it you want me to do?" He said, "That's the other problem. First, you have to spend your money, and secondly, we don't know how to do it -- you've got to figure that out." And I said, "Well, is there anybody around here that can help me?" And he said, "Oh sure, there's a lot of people who can you." I said, "Who would I work with. You're obviously too busy to spend all your time on this." He said, "Well, I want you to work with my aide here." He walked down the hall into an office that literally is the size of a big closet and I was introduced to Colonel Alexander Haig. And that's when I met Al Haig. So he was to be my contact. And he didn't have a lot of ideas, so then I said "Alright." They said, "Ross, you're going to have to figure this out, but you have to clear everything you want to do with us because, obviously this thing can't rattle around like a loose cannon ball -- it's got to be tightly coordinated." I said "Fine." So then I went over to the State Department. Elliott Richardson, who was in the xx. Elliott Richardson later became Attorney General you know, and you remember the Saturday night massacre when the Attorney General resigned when Nixon . . .

KF Yeah.

HRP Okay, that's the same man. He had his North Vietnamese experts in the room and guess who was there. Sullivan. Who later was the Ambassador in Tehran.

KF Sullivan.

HRP Sullivan had come back from Laos and was sitting in the room. I explained to him that I'd been asked to do this and you have to realize that our Government is so big and it's not very well coordinated and there are always jealousies between the White House, the State Department, the Defense Department and what have you. And I was just really a babe in the woods about all this. I assumed we were all on the same side, working hard to try to get the job done. But pretty soon, we could see there were people in the room who thought this was a strange idea, thought that I was a strange fellow, wondered why Kissinger had ever come up with this idea, why was he meddling over in this area. Do you see what I mean?

KF Yes.

HRP All of these things were rattling around in the room and I said, "Look, I was asked to help; I'll be glad to help if we can come up with an intelligent plan." And that's really the question. So nobody had any idea about what to do, and so I said, "Well, these are some of the ideas that I and some of the fellows around me have come up with." Because days had elapsed between the day I met Haig and the day I was in the State Department. Now, a good man to talk to about these meetings is Tom Meurer. He's no longer with EDS; he's here in Dallas. But Tom lived this project with me for 3 1/2 years. And there's another man, Murphy Martin, who is no longer with us, who was also buried in this project with me. I think they would in that meeting.

KF Okay, let's leave the POW project.

Ross Briefly summarize the POW project.

HRP That's how it started.

Ross Briefly summarise the POW project.

KF Okay.

HRP That can go on forever, but that's not something . . .

KF I do want us to talk something more about . . .

HRP Except it ties me back to Simons; that's where I met Simons. See, at the Son Tay Raid. This whole thing turns into a spider web. That's when I met Moorer, that's when I met Haig. Now then, see, I called Moorer, I talked to Kissinger, I talked to Haig who was commander of NATO. And if you go back through these newspaper articles you're reading, you'll see Haig's name cropping up there as Carter talking to Haig telling Haig to go do things. Now the thing that you don't read in the papers then, that you read later, was that Haig was resisting mightily the idea of convincing the Iranian generals to remain in the country. Carter was trying to get the Iranian generals to stay in the country because he felt that if they ever left, the military would disintegrate, but Haig was saying, "If they stayed, they'll all be killed." So, Carter went around Haig to his number 2 man, General Hazzar, Dutch Hazzar -- who also is a friend of mine from the POW days -- a really, really good man, and ordered Hazzar to go do the job. I called Haig; Haig was not in a position to do much and came as close to telling me that he was not in the loop as he could, which made no sense to me because of what I was reading in the papers. But then suddenly Hazzar was doing everything; you started to pick up some ripples out of Washington that the President was dealing directly with Hazzar and was sending Hazzar in to carry the message. The week I was in Iran, there was an Air Force General Ghist, General Ghist, who's in Washington now, would be a good man to talk to. I went to see General Ghist who was our top military man because I wanted him to help us get our people out of jail because of the contact with the generals. Hazzar was there; I thought Hazzar could help us -- he was there dealing with the generals. So here was my opportunity. I met with both of them during that week and they just told me very candidly, "Ross, we would help you if we could." And they both said, "As Air Force officers, we really feel like we owe you a lot of help because of what you did for the Air Force people in the prisoner of war project. But let us just be candid with you. We don't have any leverage."

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KF Let's stop a moment because we got off the track. Let's go back to December 28. You're driving from the ski resort in the four-wheel truck. It's a heavy snow storm and you are thinking about what you're doing.

HRP I'm thinking about calling Moorer; I'm thinking about calling Haig; I'm thinking about calling Kissinger; I'm thinking about calling Richard Helms who had been the head of the CIA, who had been in all kinds of problems around Watergate. But he was the man that was involved in helping set up the coup that got the Shah back in. Very close to the Shah. And the Shah was still there; nobody quite knew how much control he had, but he was still there. Also, Teddy Roosevelt's son, Kermit Roosevelt, was involved in that first coup. And he was in Washington. We had people talk with him. I'm still on the road coming into Denver, but I was thinking, "Alright, who can get inside the government and find out what the heck is happening here and what it takes to solve the problems". And these were the people that come to mind. We didn't have many contacts with the Carter Administration. We had to start from scratch to develop our contacts with the State Department. I knew that Sullivan was the Ambassador and I felt good about that because I had had a lot of contact with Sullivan back in Laos. I felt since he knew me and since we had tried to be helpful in something that was important then, that he would try to help us. Then I said, "What if none of this works? What if we had to go in and rescue these people?" When you start thinking down channels, first there was just a void there; we don't know how to do that; we haven't done anything like that before. I hadn't seen Col. Simons in 6 or 7 years. Then it crossed my mind -- the best man in the world would be Col. Simons. And an obvious thing to do would be to contact him and see if he'll do it. Then I went through all these processes in my mind. Do we need to do that now or should we do it later, and very quickly concluded that of all the things that I was thinking about, the most difficult thing to do would be to get ready for a rescue. It had a long lead time; we had to start early. I believe that when I got to the Denver airport, I went to a pay phone and called Tom Marquez, discussed this with him, and asked him to call Col. Simons. Merv and the others who have worked with me for so long, they can give you...there is something about my make-up, but once something

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like this occurs and once I get involved in it, then they'll get calls day, nights, weekends. We just live it until it's done. Of all the things we'd ever done together, this was probably more important than anything we'd done. I had, I'm sure, a long list of things for Merv when I got to the Denver airport that he probably still has written down because he is very organized -- thank God he is; somebody around me has to be. But Merv, when you start thinking "who would really have the details"; what did I ask Merv to do, and probably I talked with Tom Walter from the airport.

KF Let me just put a question in there. Do you think the way you thought about it; thinking who you could contact, then thinking now what if that doesn't work. Then thinking "if we're going to rescue them, it's gonna take a long time, step by step like that". Do you think that way of thinking has anything to do with the way one has to think when one is around computers? Think about, "what if this? if this, then this?".

HRP Well, it's the way you do have to think around computers. That would certainly be part of it. But it's kind of an obvious way to approach a problem to me. Particularly if you're into something you've never done before. It's just overwhelming in scope, which this certainly was to me. If you had two people that had been picked up in France or England ... the cultural differences are so great. Everything you think you understand, you have to forget. You can't relate this to our legal system. You should get Tom Luce to talk to you for 15 or 20 minutes about that. You realize how disorienting it is to a U.S. lawyer to try to do something over there.

KF So you called Merv...

HRP Called Tom, definitely. I'm sure I talked to Merv, Tom Walter. We had a tremendous ice storm in Dallas. You just can't believe. It looked like the North Pole. Just ice everywhere.

KF Is this when you arrived in Dallas?

HRP Yes. Margot and the children were in Colorado. I went by to see Mother.

KF About what time of day would that have been on December 28? What time would you have arrived in Dallas?

HRP You can get that exactly from the airplane ticket. I would say 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I left early in the morning. Once you get in the air, it's an hour and 20 minutes. So I was probably here 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I am sure that I had given instructions from Denver to let's start getting the best lawyers to find out what's going on and what it takes to securely release our people. Because Tom Walter and Tom Luce right away were in intensive negotiations all over this country with people that might help gain some relief and were in extended telephone conversations with the top lawyers in Iran to try to get something done. So I arrived, went to EDS. The place was covered up with ice. So we just moved into EDS. I just lived there. I slept on the floor in my office for two or three days. Because it was too hard to go home and there was nobody at home anyhow. So we just stayed there and got the whole thing put together and all these events in here. America's favorite football player is a man named Roger Staubach. Have you ever heard that name?

KF No.

JRP Nobody would believe you if you said that! But Roger is also a Naval Academy graduate and a good friend of mine and was the quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys. On New Year's Eve night -- I'm leaping ahead a little bit --, but I just lived over at EDS from the 28, 29, 30; so the night of the 31, it's still icy, and about a mile from EDS, there's a little place that serves fish. So I decided I'm going to get a hot meal. I'm tired of eating cheese sandwiches. So I drove over there. I'm sitting there eating by myself. And someone comes up behind me and puts his hand on my shoulder and says "Ross what are you doing, eating here by yourself on New Year's Eve?" It was Roger and his family! I said "What are you doing over here?" He said "Well, all the electricity and heat's out in our home. We just came over here to eat because the ice storm

had knocked out the wire." So we visited, and I explained generally what I was doing. In any book written for widespread distribution in the United States, that would be an interesting little two or three line item that here I am; New Year's Eve; first time out; Roger comes over. I told him briefly what the problem was and he was very interested. Then I went back and just pretty well was either at EDS or we'd go down to the hospital to see Mother. In a few days, she came home, because there was not a great deal that they could do for her in the hospital. But I would be at EDS or be down at her house and we were working on this. Then Col. Simons came into town. That dates around here somewhere; it's in the write up; I'm gonna guess he got here around the 31 or the 1 or something like that.

KF Do you remember what date your mother came out of the hospital?

HRP No, but that's easy to get. He came to town.

KF While he was on the way, after he had been contacted, but before he arrived, you did some work in identifying EDS personnel who might be likely candidates for a team.

HRP I called Jay Coburn in and asked him to make a list.

KF Now Jay is the fellow we flew with the other day. What was his position at EDS then?

HRP He had had a management job in Iran and was just back. So he knew the people who had been in Tehran. I asked him to make a list of the people that had good backgrounds in the military as young men, who in his opinion had good judgement and these other characteristics that Col. Simons was looking for -- and not to say anything to anybody. Only to discuss it with me. He put together the list.

KF Which he got from EDS personnel files.

HRP I think he got it out of his head. He may have then gone to the files, but I would say largely he got it out of his head.

KF So, he put together like a preliminary list. Now, did you meet with the people on that list before talking to Colonel Simons about it?

HRP Yes.

KF All right. How many people were on the list?

HRP I'm vague. I would say 12, 14 people on the list, but we . . . The number 15 sticks in my mind, but Jay can probably . . . he can show you a copy of the list.

KF Yes, I'll talk to him about it.

HRP The thing that was in my mind was what do you say to people. I had never talked to anybody about doing something like this. I didn't know what to say, I didn't know how to say it. But in my mind, I was convinced that probably only one out of five people would seriously consider going, and we would probably have to talk to a large number of people and even wind up with people who didn't know the city. That was one of Colonel Simons requirements that the person know the city of Tehran because he did not know the city.

KF Wait a minute. So, you must have talked to him before you talked to these individuals then?

HRP Well, I knew that he wanted people who had backgrounds in the military, who had been involved in ground combat and who knew the city of Tehran, and I believe I got that from Tom Marquez and Merv. See, I don't think I actually talked to Colonel Simons over the phone until he got here. Again, we need to check that out.

KF Okay, tell me now a bit more about these interviews on January 1.

HRP We met down at the Hilton Inn, that's further toward town on Central Expressway.

KF Why? Why didn't you want to do it at EDS?

HRP From a security point of view. We had a room rented at the end of a hall so that on this wall, there was a brick wall -- the outdoors and we had the next room rented and it was empty. The main thing, we felt we couldn't take chance at all of having any leaks at all when we were considering this because if and when we ever did it, surprise would be everything. And Colonel Simons was reemphasizing that to everybody on the phone as he was talking to them. Jay and the others will . . . his mind worked . . . well, the first time he walked into my office, he said, "Do you know this office is not bugged?" I said, "Well, I don't think it's bugged." He asked, "Have you had it swept?" I said, "No." He said, "I want everything, every place we need swept every day while we're doing this." Which was probably an over precaution but again, this was his business, his way of doing things. So we got to sweeping here and we swept everything every day. But that first meeting took place at the Hilton Inn. I interviewed the men one at a time and every man I talked to volunteered to go.

KF What were they told the meeting was going to be about?

HRP They weren't told . . .

KF They were just told . . .

HRP That there would be a meeting. They didn't know they were going to meet with me.

KF They were just told that they had to go to the Hilton Inn at a certain time on January 1.

HRP Right.

KF Who told them?

HRP Jay Coburn, I believe. Jay arranged the whole thing.

KF So you sat in that room and, one by one they came in.

HRP And they came from all over. See, they were not all here. And some of them weren't too happy about being jerked away from where they were because they'd just gotten back from Iran, they were spending their Christmas holidays with their family. You see what I mean?

KF I see.

HRP So, Jay can describe this to you better than I. His job was to get them there and they all got there and the reaction was really touching. There was just no hesitancy that I was able to observe. As you think about this, it's important to recognize that these men were going to risk their lives and there's every reason to be hesitant; there's every reason to come up with an excuse not to go; nobody could blame you for not going and so on and so forth. But they were very strong, very positive and then . . .

KF Tell me what you said; what were your first words when the first man came into the room and sat down?

HRP I told them all basically the same thing. I said, "You know that Paul and Bill have been detained. We have extensive negotiations under way to gain their release. There's the possibility that we won't be successful and if we're not successful because the country is falling apart, we're going to have to go in to rescue them because if we don't get them, we'll lose them. Now, just turn it around . . . if we hadn't gotten them when we got them, they'd be dead. I'm totally convinced, because there was never a chance to get them after that, and it just gets worse and worse and worse over there.

KF So, you said, "And if we don't get them, we'll lose them."

HRP Right. I told them that Colonel Simons was coming up; I had asked him to lead the rescue effort. For those who didn't know who he was, I explained who he was. And that he would pick the rescue team and I asked them if they would consider being a part of it. And nobody went home to check on it or think on it. And, I explained to them they couldn't tell their wives. If they did it, their wives would be told . . . we had a cover story about that they were in Europe on business -- some big project and they agreed to do it. Then he came to town and interviewed the men, picked his team, put the team into training.

KF How many did he pick?

HRP I don't know; get that from Jay and Merv. They can give you . . .

KF Roughly?

Handwritten notes: Merv... Jay... [unclear]

HRP Oh, roughly ten.

KF Ten, okay.

HRP But the precise number is available.

KF Okay, I'll get that from Jay then. And Jay will presumably be able to tell me a bit more about why he picked . . . END OF TAPE

HRP The initial size of the team was determined by Colonel Simons' understanding of where the men were being held and the specific situation that might result on a successful rescue, that I detailed on the skeleton -- all of which turned out not to be accurate information. But I think when you get into it with Jay and the others, the size of the team was determined by what they thought would be the method.

KF Who gave Colonel Simons this information?

HRP All of our people. Plus, we had people that we were calling in Iran for information that gave us alot of bad information -- with good intentions. In other words, they just weren't accurate. No trick.

KF Who was in charge of getting that information for Colonel Simons? Jay?

HRP No, I would say a whole group of people pulling together bits and pieces.

KF I see.

HRP We have a map and I can show you that map that was on the wall about where these people were being held. And we had other people who had seen the place. Then we had someone calling Iran and we could find out who that was -- getting information from people still in the country. A lot of it was wrong and this really didn't surprise Colonel Simons that much because he had done this sort of thing so much in his life, he knew when you get there it's never the way you thought it would be.

KF Okay. So, various people pooled together information for Colonel Simons which helped him figure out just exactly what task was in front of him. With that information, he then, he picked his team, decided the size of his team, picked his men and then put them into training. Now, what did that involve?

HRP It involved a number of things, but mainly, he was capturing their minds and hearts psychologically.

KF Oh, really?

HRP Absolutely. I would do this so poorly. Go straight to the men; ask every man that was on the team. Say now, what happened? You go out to the lakehouse and I started to drive out there with you this afternoon, but I thought we might lose too much time. But, I want you to see where the men were trained. Merv was right in the middle of that, bringing ammunition, bringing them food and one of the great stories is, he stopped at McDonald's one night to get thirty hamburgers -- one man -- and the girl says "Is this to eat here or to go?" Merv tells an interesting story about being out on the rifle range and we'll take you to where they actually did the shooting and Colonel Simons was really on top of these fellows about how to shoot and what their accuracy had to be and on

and on and on. Primarily, he was capturing their minds and hearts and he was getting these fellows minds switched back over to a kill or be killed environment from a computer center environment. Now, I have heard them talk about what he did and how he did it, which is really interesting, but I wouldn't attempt to try to say it. It's better to get it from the fellows who were there.

KF Okay.

HRP I was buried trying to get some kind of negotiations. I never thought we'd use this, frankly. And I certainly didn't want to use it because by now, see, Colonel Simons is here. Tom Luce has understood what I'd done, (the lawyer), and he's saying, "This is idiotic; you'd destroy the company, you'd destroy yourself." He was doing what a good lawyer should do. He wasn't fretting or whinning, but he was just saying, "Look Ross, I can't make a list of all the laws you would break. You would have a mercenary army, although quite small, you would be breaking all sorts of laws of Iran, all sorts of laws of the United States for a private citizen doing this sort of thing. Every country you go through with this team, you're breaking laws. Just when you set foot in a country with a group like this, you're breaking laws. And if it doesn't work, and if any of these men get killed, their families are going to turn on you, understandably, because this will really look stupid." And the best person to get that lecture from is Tom Luce because I'm sure he still remembers it, but he was really, really, really, I think, shocked that we would consider taking these . . . ever actually doing this. And, of course, my attitude toward Tom was if he had negotiated them out, this wouldn't be necessary. So . . .

KF Is Tom Luce an EDS employee?

HRP No, he has his own law firm. Very successful lawyer in Dallas. So, while Simons was capturing their minds and their hearts, I was not with them because I was totally focused on negotiations.

KF Tell me a bit more about what happened . . .

HRP On the rifle range.

KF No, in your negotiations now.

HRP I was busy sending people everywhere and calling people over the phone. For example, I would set up the meeting with Dick Helms or Henry Kissinger, and then Tom and Tom Walter would go. And I could get through the Secretary of State and then they would go up and talk to the number 2 and 3 man in the State Department. They will have much better recall of all of this because they had to go to the meetings. I was mainly coordinating the whole thing, talking to people on the phones; I had just a tremendous flurry of activity going on that I was in the center of, but the nature of my life is that finally, I don't really get to do much. I may be involved in planning and coordinating, but if it's big and complicated, you've got to have people (#71), people negotiating. We were putting a negotiating team together to go into Iran.

KF Tell me about that.

HRP Well, that started right away and I called Keane Taylor in London. He's the one I told you that I talked to in London and he thought I wanted him to go back and do paperwork.

KF Yeah.

HRP He was very negative. So, I called him, I'm sure on the 28th or the 29th in London. He turned around and went back in. John Howell, with Tom Luce's law firm went in.

KF These people went separately to Iran and met in Tehran?

HRP It's all blurred. No, John Howell, John Howell went into Iran with me. So, that's later. As just a suggestion to you, as you listen to this tape and write down all the questions you didn't get the answers to. The members of the negotiating team -- John Howell was on the negotiating team, Bob Young was on the negotiating team -- they both went into

Iran with me the week I went in. Keane Taylor was the first member of the negotiating team in the country. That's the man I turned around in London and sent back.

KF Yeah.

HRP In the early days of the negotiations, Tom Luce and Tom Walter were working in this country, having extensive conversations with lawyers, Iranian lawyers in this country who had law firms in Iran -- partners who happened to be in this country. Most of them were tied into the old regime, but they were the finest lawyers in Iran. Most of the work was done by Iranian lawyers in the country. Keane Taylor was working with them. Then, Bob Young, John Howell -- Bill Gayden came in the day I left Iran, he became part of the negotiating team -- but in the early days it was Keane Taylor.

KF Okay.

HRP Colonel Simons and Jay were there. And Joe Poche was there early, but they couldn't participate in the negotiations.

KF Okay. By the middle of January, 12 days later, ^{by} the 12th of January, the entire team and the necessary equipment was in Iran. So they must have trained for about 10 days.

HRP Yes. Now I want to make, I would say before you would put the 12th of January in your book, check it with Merv. I think that's right, but I won't make a big bet on it. It's right within a day or two.

KF So they trained . . . so you decided to put them into Iran.

HRP No, Colonel Simons decided.

KF Oh, I was going to say, before you knew whether you were going to use them.

HRP It's a very important point here, once he arrived, without ever saying in a deGaulle "I am in charge; you will do things my way; you fellows are amateurs; I am a professional, don't second guess me". It was just so obvious because he was so overwhelming by his personality. He never had to say those things. I understood it; he understood it. He took charge. He didn't spend much time with me because he didn't need to spend much time with me. He knew what he had to do; he knew I couldn't help him much in getting it done. His problem was to capture the minds and hearts of these men; make sure that he had the right team. And in his own words, "get over there" because the only way you would really know how to do it is when you could be there. Now this, if you look back through his history, he would always try to go to the place he was going to do the job. There are cases where he would hide out for six weeks. There is one case where he hid out for six months on an island in the Pacific. He was a man that could eat anything. He loved good food, but he would eat anything. And he loved Margot. He just thought the sun rose and set on Margot. We had ~~coconut~~ one night. He looked up at her and said, "Margot I can't eat that." Which was just totally out of character for Simons. So she laughed and we had something else. Later I said "Just out of curiosity, Colonel, I've never heard you ...". He said, "Ross, we hid out one time for six months on an island and had to eat coconut. Can you imagine how old coconut gets after six months?" I said, "Colonel, what was it like?" He said, "It was a jungle?" I said, "Was it just overrun with Japanese?" He said, "No, down where we were, there weren't any Japanese." I said, "Just out of curiosity, why wouldn't you send a man out at night to catch fish?" He said "We were about 300 yards from the ocean. Don't think we didn't think about that day after day after day. I never let them go to the beach to catch fish." I said "Why's that?" He said, "That's a risk we did not have to take." And that's Simons. He would say that again and again. That's a risk we did not have to take. That's the way his mind works. But he would always to get there, get in position, study the place he was going to attack close us. He always found that he changed his plan once he was there. We live in an age now where most of our intelligence is gathered electronically. One of his more colorful statements was "I have never once in my career attacked the roof of the building." See satellites look at it this way; you look at it this way. He

said "give me a set of trained eyes on the ground that can come back and report what they say. Satellite helps you find out where the building is. Once you know, you've got to send people in to look at it. And preferably to live in the area and really get a feel for when the traffic flows and when people are up and when they are asleep. The odd things always get you; if you don't know that the garbage trucks go through the streets at 3 in the morning, and you're trying to roar through the streets as you make your getaway, and finally your whole plan falls apart because the garbage truck stops on a narrow street and you should have known that, because it stops there every night in the narrow street. Your satellite doesn't tell you that. Your man on the ground tells you that. He took the men, trained the men, he made the decision when to leave.

KF Let me make this clear. The decision to use the team had not been made at this point.

HRP He and I had a clear understanding that if we had to use it, I was going to use it. Because there was no point in going over there, in taking those men over there, if the time came we wouldn't have the will to use the team. So he and I had a clear understanding about that. We both hoped that we would not need to use the team. But he would not have gone if he had thought that I wouldn't have given the instructions to use the team if it came to that.

KF Do you know what equipment they took?

HRP Merv knows exactly. Get the colorful stories of how they smuggled the buckshot into the country. Some of this sounds likes a book you wrote because it gets down into the nitty gritty. You could buy birdshot in Iran. The Shah wouldn't let them sell buckshot. But a shotgun shell full of birdshot can easily be adapted to buckshot simply by dumping the birdshot out, putting the buckshot in, putting the wadding back in, and then you've got a lethal round of ammunition. Ron Davis hurt his shoulder in this business of practicing jumping from the wall down into the Volkswagon van with the top cut off. Simons took advantage of that. Had his shoulder all wrapped up and made a bean bag up with the buck-

shot in it. He went in, and I think that was the plan to take the buckshot in; double check that. I think that's the way the buckshot was taken in. Jay, I believe took in the first piece of double bottom luggage. I think he took it in with nothing in it, just to see if it would work. But all the details of how the equipment was handled and what the equipment was, you can get very precise answers on that. You can get all the way back to the purchase orders because Merv is very orderly and would be able to account for everything. I know he bought 10,000 rounds of ammunition to practice. Because that seemed like an awful lot of rounds of ammunition.

KF 10,000 rounds for practice?

HRP That was my understanding. That's what Simons wanted. Now Simons had lived in a system where you had to fill out forms to get equipment. And for the first time in his career, he would just tell Merv what he wanted, and a few hours later, people would start showing up with sacks full of whatever he'd asked for. We'd just go buy it. Remember he'd been there two days, and he was walking down the hall with this near smile that you would rarely see on his face. And I said "What's up, Colonel?" I never called him Bull. There are little nuances here. Merv called him Bull, Jay called him Bull, I called him Colonel. Bull just seemed corny to me. He didn't react to whatever you'd call him anyway. So I said "Colonel, what's up?" He said, "You guys don't have a system here." I said "What do you mean? We're in the systems business!" He said, "No you're missing my point. I just tell Merv what I want and he goes out and gets it. I haven't signed a sheet of paper yet. You don't have any idea how much of my time and energy used to go into getting new equipment we needed for rescue." In the book The Raid there are some stories about things that he finally went out and bought equipment with his own money for the Son Tay Raid. But he would get that frustrated trying to assemble what he needed. But here, he would ask for it and a few hours later, he would have it. He had everything he wanted. So he felt good about the support; I think he felt good about his men; and about the only thing he told me about the men before he left that I can recall that this was the most intelligent group of men he had ever taken on a rescue. He liked that because he was a thinker and he liked

thinkers. He said, "Now my challenge would be to get them to turn their thinking switches off when it comes time to do it because we don't need everybody developing a plan on the fly which you have to do." You've got your plan, but then as you get into it, in the middle of whatever you're trying to do, things change. And one person has to make the decisions. He was a little bit intrigued at how he would finally get these people to stop thinking. He loved their ideas; he encouraged their ideas, but he knew there would be a point when he didn't need open debate and a free floor discussion. That they need to take orders. They can tell you how he handled all that. He handled it; there was not question who was in charge. The thing that intrigued me from the stories of the men coming out is that as the Iranians would take them out of the trucks for interrogation coming out overland, it was always obvious to these people from a totally different culture who couldn't speak a word of Col. Simons language, that he was in charge. The presence that he presented, they would always go to him as the man in charge. Then

Rashid █ would get in the middle of it because █ could talk to them. Simons and █ had a special relationship. He liked █ because he was so quick and so sharp. █ took instructions well from Col. Simons. I think when you get down to the nitty gritty when I mentioned the other day that while Col. Simons would be the great character in this book, on the trip out, now that I'm hearing stories that I haven't heard before -- and don't read anything into that -- we're down to a level of detail I never went to before. These are not new stories that people make up about █. People tend to make up stories about themselves as I listen to them over time. The guys that make up the best stories weren't there. Jay and Joe and the guys that were there, the stories are so overwhelming, you don't have to add to them. █ did some things...I don't believe Simons gave █ all the instructions. I think █ really used his head in two or three places that made the difference. It can make him a fascinating character in your book. There were times when he was on his own and separate. There was a time they were holding all the people in this Mosque. █ left and did several things. Now Jay and Joe between them can say "Well, Col. told him to do that he did that on his own", but it's my impression at this point that he figured out several pretty ingenious things on his own that may have really made a difference in terms of getting them past where they

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were. They did one dumb thing. These are things I just live in fear that no one will tell you. Somebody told me verbally that I have known...no, it's not in the skeleton. They would write on the windshield of the carryall of a felt tip pen in Farsi, and that in effect was your clearance. We finally..

KF Window of the what?

HRP With a felt tip pen they would write on the windshield in Farsi. It said something "these people are cleared". Keep in mind, they finally had that on the windshield. Everything is going swell. They're going through roadblocks. It's raining; it's muddy, and finally ^{Rashid} [redacted] decides he should press the windshield washer and get the mud off the windshield and washed off the felt tip pen. I believe the way it occurred that it was right after he made that mistake...everybody made mistakes on this thing. When you look at all the creative things that ^{Rashid} [redacted] did, the fact that he made that mistake was understandable and I think it makes him more human. He was not a superman. He was thinking "mud" and we also lost the Farsi message. I would imagine Simons said some colorful things to him at that point.

KF Couldn't they have written it on again?

HRP Yeah, ^{Rashid} [redacted] could have. We couldn't have, but ^{Rashid} [redacted] could have written it on again if he had a felt tip pen. Cause he knew what the words were. Farsi just looks like squiggles. You saw the message. ^{Rashid} [redacted] could have written that..that's an excellent question. I don't have the answer to that. Ask everybody that one. Ask Jay, Joe, ask all of them because he didn't do that apparently. And they got in hot water in the next town. Nobody knows if the Farsi would have meant anything in the next town. They didn't get into hot water because they said "where is your clearance on the windshield?". Because they had to start at square one and reestablish who they were.

KF Now while all this is going on. How did the team get to Tehran? On a regular commercial flight?

HRP Yes, commercial air. We can get the details to that. No problem to that. Who went in, what sequence, how they went. The great story about Col. Simons going through the airport. The Iranians suddenly showed interest in Col. Simons just because of the face, I think. They wanted to know who he was. He said "I'm a farmer from Florida." They said "Well why are you here?" He said, "I have never seen a revolution. I am an old man, and I thought this might be my only opportunity to see a revolution."

KF Why was it a requirement that the ransom should be paid through the banking system?

HRP Fair question; ask Tom Luce and John Howell. That was just always there. From our point of view, it was not our requirement; it was their requirement. The Iranians required this. I figured always that the money would be gone. Even though it was being paid through the bank. Now we had some pretty tricky stuff set up around there. We had a letter of credit; we finally talked them into letting us do it with a letter of credit. Now this gets complicated, but this again sounds like one of your books. Get them to explain the letter of credit and how they intended once Paul and Bill were out in effect, to default on the letter of credit. They weren't sure they could do it, but they thought they could do it. My attitude was fine to put all that in there, but let's get the guys out. The things they had set there were never a contingency. The Iranians never saw that. The whole problem was the banks were closed. Have I told you that the Shah didn't believe in telephone books? Imagine trying to find anybody in a city of 4 1/2 million city people that's in chaos, nobody's at work, and there are no telephone books. You would have to find a banking official; you would have to find somebody at the bank who knew the banking official's number. Fortunately we were working with the bank through a computer program. So we knew people in the bank.

Not so

KF This is the Bank of Iran? The National Bank?

HRP Omran. Bank Omran was the one. We worked with all the banks. We had the money to Kuwait in the branch of Bank Omran. And Dadgar said, "No I want it in the country."

KF Who said that?

HRP Dadgar, the prosecutor. We said, "Fine, get Bank Omran to take." The officials in Bank Omran didn't want to take it. And none of the other banks in Iran wanted to take it. In a revolution, you don't know who is going to win. In that part of the world, if you're on the losing side, you probably get killed. There's nothing like due process. Just go back to when Andrew Young "Khomeini is a saint".

KF What he actually said was "Khomeini may turn out to be a saint."

HRP Is that what he said? Whatever he said. But you look at the perception of how brutal the Shah. Well, the Shah was Rebecca from Sunnybrook Farm compared to Khomeini when it comes to killing people, right? In that environment, which the Persians understood. We didn't understand, but the people over there understood. The smart thing to do is to go into neutral and do nothing. Don't make any decisions. And that's what happened. The banks didn't want to touch anything that had to do with the revolution. If the Shah had persevered, then they could have looked awkward by having been involved in this activity. Nobody wanted to do anything and everybody was staying at home and nobody wanted to talk to you. Day after day after day, the negotiating team had to go find somebody around the bank and try to get them to take the money. We were running out of time. The money was in Kuwait. Dadgar was insisting on having it in Iran. He was sending a fellow around at night saying just give half of it to me in Switzerland and we'll forget the whole thing. We went from the point where when we started, the Shah was in the country and the State Department said he would never leave, to the point where the week I was there, the Shah left. I watched him leave on Iranian television. Saw the whole thing build up for hours on Iranian television. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but you could see it. Tom Luce was at the State Department in Washington, went into see the head of the Iranian desk, our top man for Iran, and said "the Shah has just left the country". The guy said, "That can't be true." Now for hours we've known it in Tehran. I was in Tehran, Tom was over here. And he said "Where did you see it?" He said "I just saw it on Walter Cronkite out in your waiting room." The guy stopped the

meeting; turned on CBS News; saw it and called Secretary Vance and said "the Shah has just left Iran". Now that's the way I guess the Secretary of State got the word. Now when you keep in mind that everybody in Tehran knew it for hours; it's incredible. The State Department felt like this will all take care of itself. The Shah will prevail; they will go back to the old way and this is just a temporary tempest that we are going through. People used to say, "what's it like in Iran?" And I'd say, "which day?" And that's very important, because what worked on Monday wouldn't work on Tuesday, would have sounded silly on Wednesday and only an idiot would have brought up as an idea by Thursday. And yet on Monday, it would have been a solid idea. If you are trying to do something in the United States or Great Britain, things just don't change that quickly. But over there, it was just constantly changing, constantly deteriorating and we were running out of time. We had the money to Kuwait; couldn't get it in. When Dadgar started this bribe business, that was a bad sign. Then the Shah left the country, then Khomeini came in. And the real turning point in my mind was when Khomeini started talking about cutting off the hands of Americans. Now that was a symbolic statement, I think it was a colorful way of speaking. But we had two people that were completely at his mercy. We were just dead in the water on the whole negotiation. The night after Jay met with the fellow and he told him that if we didn't agree to this it would go badly the next day and it just went terrible the next day, that was a strong enough indication to me that the man was representing Dadgar. The whole thing was just falling apart all around us. I can't describe the chaos. There is a very important point in this whole thing in terms, as I think I mentioned to you the day we met is that if you talk, particularly to young people in this country, they assume around me, that everything I try to do, works well. Which is not true at all. That I never hurt, I never bleed, I never cry, I have no feelings of fear. You have all these feelings; everybody has those feelings. As we were going through this, I felt like I was inside a popcorn popper. Everything was different every day, plus the fact my mother was ill and I was absolutely devoted to her and our children were devoted to her and we were devoted to her just because of what she was. When I got ready to go to Iran, by then she was in pretty bad shape and there was a chance that she might die while I was gone. I just felt obligated to tell her what I was considering

doing. So I went down to her hospital room and I explained it to her. Now she knew about Paul and Bill and she was keenly interested in them. I told her I was thinking about it. These are her exact words. She said, "You don't have a choice. They are your men; you sent them over there. They didn't do anything wrong. Our government won't help them. You are responsible for them. It is up to you to get them out." Now she said all that, knowing that she could be sending me over to wind up in the same place they were. You say "when did things really crystallize for me in terms of what my responsibility was", that was probably a significant point as any. Here's this tiny little woman, dying, she can be that crisp in her thinking, and she had the ability. And when you're in a situation like this, you have all of these ancillary thoughts that will always cause you to take no action. You start worrying about what could happen in terms of legal problems; you get into all that and you say, "wait a minute. We'll move heaven and earth to negotiate them out. We're spending a lot of money but we won't risk people's lives." That would be very understandable; I think that even Paul and Bill would have understood that. So that conversation with her was a real key point in my mind that this is what we had to do. Then I went over and did things that were covered in the outline there. I may be rambling away from your question, but that was a really...in the thinking process of getting it done, that short conversation with her was a very key point.

KF We are almost to the point now where you went across. What made you go there? You told your mother you were thinking...

HRP I'm going to tell you the real reason. And then to avoid lawsuits and embarrassment to people, good people who are still here, I got tired of guys getting scared and coming home. Now, that was my problem and I decided "to hell with it". Once I go, then nobody's got an excuse not to go. Plus, I knew that it would be good for Paul and Bill to hear directly from me. I just didn't believe that the Iranians were that organized. And they weren't.

KF To catch you.

HRP To catch anybody. I went to London. Stayed at the Holiday Inn at the airport near Heathrow. We couldn't get a plane. A guy finally got a Jordan flight into Imman, Jordan. The King's sister sat right in front of me. I thought...

KF The King of Jordan.

HRP Yes. And her little children were running around and everybody on the airplane was preoccupied with keeping her happy. The movie hadn't quite finished when we started to land. She wanted them to circle until the movie was finished. Bob Young and John Howell...

KF Do you remember what the movie was?

The Jewel

HRP No but John Howell will. John's mind works at that level of detail. He'll remember that. He and Bob were with me. We got into Jordan in the middle of the night and went through that airport. I can't describe the Imman, Jordan airport in the middle of the night. But it looks like all of the bad guys of Jordan sleep there. They may be pillars of the community, but these are really, really hard looking people. There were no apparent taxi cabs. We got somebody to take us into a hotel. We can give you the name of the hotel, and everybody assured me this was the best hotel in Imman. That whoever built it, the seat of the john touched the bathtub. You had to put your feet in the bathtub to use the john. It was my only vivid memory. I thought these people; there's a great opportunity for a civil engineer over here! Then we got up the next morning. Arab Wings is I believe owned by the King of Jordan. I believe that is why they can fly when nobody else could. They had these Lear jets going back and forth. And we thought we might have to hang around Jordan for a few days until they were flying just tapes, but no camera crews. But lo and behold, we got up the next day, and they had a plane just flying tapes. The first plane...

KF Do you how that was organized that you could...it was NBC, wasn't it? Who called who?

HRP No, let me see where you can get that. First question is: who found

Bob Young Bob Young

Arab Wings? Merv can tell you that. All of this when I got there, was set. And I don't know who did it. But it was done. I'm not even sure that it was working. But Merv can tell you, or Tom Marquez or Tom Walter. These are the people that were planning all this. The first plane got about halfway there and had mechanical problems and came back. I remember we had mechanical problems where there were two river that came together, and the pilot who was British had just pointed out that we were at the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates River. Theoretically, I guess it was just for familiarization. Then we turned around, came back, got another airplane, and flew in. When we landed, the Iranians were used to seeing people bringing tapes with them. We didn't land at the airport. Here's the main terminal where the big planes land. This airplane taxied on down and lined up in a line of little airplanes.

* *Post wondered what was the significance of that world history was not his strong point.*
KF Wait a minute now. Throughout the whole of this story that you have told me so far, this is the first time that you have done anything dangerous.

HRP That could be. It turned out, it wasn't dangerous at all. The most dangerous part was riding in the first Lear jet, in retrospect. It had a problem. No big serious problem. We were pumping a little bit of adrenalin by the time we hit the Tehran airport.

KF Yeah, that's what I wanted to ask you about. Expand a bit on that. You were pumping a little adrenalin, but what was going on in your mind as that plane landed in Tehran.

HRP You have to understand that any time you are in a situation where you feel you could have a problem of safety, you become incredibly alert. An animal does, a person does. I think this is a by-product; you start pumping adrenalin. So right away, I said "Okay, so now we are coming down and it is time to be thinking and using your head." It wasn't a frightening experience, because nothing came along to frighten me. There were guys all around with machine guns and they came up to the airplane with their machine guns. But you could this part of the pattern. They didn't come charging into the airplane, saying "Well, we've got the ugly American". They were just around there with machine guns

with a sling on their back. The pilot walked me down to wherever the tapes were to be dropped and directed me. I walked through the area, dropped the tape; they stamped my passport, just assumed I...I never said I was with NBC; they never asked me. They were used to seeing NBC people come in and do this. And I went right through there and that was it. Now, I felt very safe in the city, because it was big, it was chaotic.

KF Just explain to me about that dropoff of the tapes. These were blank television tapes for the...

HRP In a little net bag. It was kind of like...loose net. It was a net-type bag, full of tapes.

KF But why did you have to drop them? Why didn't you have to give them to NBC in the city?

HRP There was a place you left them at the airport.

KF And that was just NBC's arrangement.

HRP That's what the pilot told me to do. I just took his word for it.

KF Presumably, somebody from NBC came and picked them up. Perhaps delivered more.

HRP My impression is that they were running a shuttle. Everybody was allowing this to continue. Khomeini wasn't in the country. He was coming in a few days later. His people in effect had control of everything at that point. They were allowing this to continue because they wanted publicity.

KF Okay. And so you walked into the city?

HRP No. I walked through the airport. Then...

KF Okay, now you're out of the airport. Feel relieved?

HRP Not nearly as relieved as I felt when I got out of the airport going the other way. I have never felt more relieved in my life than when the men came across the Turkish border. You learn a lot about yourself as you go through life. I've been around people that would not be able to handle a stressful situation for very long. I always try to be sensitive to that because everybody has a breaking point and you just find out where yours is sooner or later. But I really couldn't relate to it, because if it didn't impact me, why should a person get that upset about it. And I could never understand why people reacted the way they did when they reach that point. But we sat there for three days waiting for those fellows to come across the Turkish border with every chip we had on the table. Every single chip and the fact that I was going to wind up in prison if it didn't work. Nothing I could tell you about this experience or any other experience I've ever had in my life. I've had some pretty colorful experiences in Laos and Vietnam, but they were brief. We were landing one time and they opened fire on us. The airplane was shot out, but that happened so quickly, I never really got that excited; it was over before I really figured out what was happening. But I had three days to figure out what was happening here. With everything there. And then you think about even being in Turkey. Turkey is not the best place in the world to be thrown in jail. If this thing doesn't work, it's just a question of where I wind up in jail. The best place in the world would be in the United States, for me. And the worst place would be have the Turks send me to Iran, which they might or might not do. So the tension there dwarfs anything else that ever occurred. When I was boy throwing papers out in the country on Sunday morning and it was just absolutely dark, and I knew somebody was going to try to rob me every Sunday morning. I was a whole lot more alert then than I was going into Tehran. But believe me, it's a new experience and certainly had my attention, but nothing came along to really excite me. So I got through the airport and went on out. They had a hotel room reserved under another person's name. There was no trace that I was in Tehran. Then I started meeting with the fellows and getting up to speed.

KF Let's go step by step now, because this is all your experience. You don't know the date that you landed. — 13 January

13 January

HRP But that's easy.

KF This is Day One. You went out of the airport and what, you got a taxi?

HRP No, I believe Keane Taylor picked me up.

KF Keane Taylor picked you up and took you to a hotel. Do you remember which hotel?

~~Crown Hyatt~~ Crown Hyatt

HRP The Hyatt. It's got more of a name than that. But we can give you a full name. It's a new hotel.

KF Do you remember your impressions as you made that drive from the airport? What did Keane Taylor talk to you about? What did you see?

HRP No, I remember my impression...

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO