

BBC World Service : Witness : The Pentagon Papers.

(0.12) Back more than 40 yearsleaking...

5 Simon Watts: (0.25) June 13th 1971 Haig on the phone to Nixon with bad news. "OK nothing else...very significant... this goddam New York Times. Highly classified documents of the war. ...I didn't readdevastating security breach What's being done about it?....did we know...? No, we did not, sir..."

10 SW: The documents were an internal report - Pentagon Papers (1.16)
Top secret assessments by successive US governments about the American role in Vietnam dating from 1945 to the height of the war.

15 *1.27 DE: Each president involved from Harry Truman on (a total of 4 presidents....and a 5th, Nixon) had lied to the country and to the public and to the Congress..... On literally every aspect of the war: why they were there, what the prospects were, what we were doing, what the forecast was (casualties....)1.52*

20 D E is the man who leaked the Pentagon Papers.

Each had known...unlikely to win...so each one had kept the war going while he was in office and.... not lose Vietnam during his term in office. Not a very good reason from other people's point of view to be losing...Americans and killing several million Vietnamese. 2.25

25 Former Marine - worked in Vietnam; worked compiling the PP in 67-68;

In the end 7,000 pages of top secret material;47 volumes;

30 D E still had access to the papers when he left the Pentagon to work for a Security Thinktank : The Rand Corporation.3.08

35 *Needed cutting edge technology of the time, Xerox machines. I had an earlier machine which was quite slow, one page at a time, and to make a number of copies...a lot of time....I would work all night for many nights. Having taken them out from the Rand Corporation, from my top secret safe, a friend of mine, Tony R found me a Xerox machinebring them back in the morning.*

40 3.50 And you had your 13 year-old son helping you with this. Why?

I didn't really expect to see my children except through very thick glass in a prison for the rest of my life, so I did want them to have some feeling about why I had been doing this and why I had done it. I knew they would hear various stories - that I'd gone crazy or that I was a traitor, and I wanted them to see that I was doing this in a businesslike way, that I hadn't gone mad. And was doing what I thought was best for my country. (04.24) So basically it was not so much a matter of helping me as participating, watching, seeing what was being done. That was just a couple of nights. I hadn't meant to bring my daughter into it because she was even younger. My son was about 13 then and my daughter was 10.leave her in the car she objected....gave her something to do. So at one point actually my son was running the xerox machine and my daughter was cutting 'top secret' off the tops and bottoms of the pages with the scissors. 05.03

55 Music (song re Vietnam and more. Does anybody know it? Gonna have a whole lot of fun....)
05.26

DE copied the Pentagon Papers in 1969. It was the height of counter culture...against the Vietnam War. The 40 year-old defense analyst made friends in the activist movement and then became an unlikely rebel himself. 5.40

60 *In my case I did meet Americans that possibly none of my colleagues had met, who were on their way to prison to resist the war - non-violently and truthfully; people who were resisting the draft, were protesting and being willing to face charges and go to prison. And that put in my head something that I think was just not in the minds of any of my colleagues and that was the question : all right, what can I do to*
65 *help end this war, something, by the way, many of them would have liked to do.*

6.11 Even with the anti-war movement gaining ground, Ellsberg found it hard to get the Pentagon Papers published. Eventually in 1971 the New York Times decided to take the risk.

70 *I have to say I hadn't really expectedthey would have the guts, let's say, to face up to the government on that. So my expectations weren't very high. And they didn't tell me that they were doing it. So it came to me essentially as a surprise when somebody called me and told me the building was locked down at that moment because they were putting out these top secret documents...We were already on our*
75 *way to see Butch Cassidy so we did that and around midnight went over to the Harvard Square News where the early copies of the Sunday Times would come in and got that. Of course I was extremely elated to see that this was actually happening.*
7.06

80 President Nixon responded to the leak by taking out an injunction against the NYT. Ellsberg then leaked the papers to the Washington Post. 7.15 With the same result. Now called 'the most dangerous man in America' by the government he went into hiding 7.21 and continued to pass the documents to other journalists.

85 *They were unable to find me. My wife and I went underground for the next 13 days while I was putting out different copies to the other 17 newspapers. So the FBI had what was called 'the biggest manhunt since the Lindberg kidnapping' looking for me and that gave it all a good deal of drama, especially because I appeared on Walter Cron... 's evening newsshow one night...looking.*

90 Ellsberg eventually gave himself up and was put on trial ...espionage. But the case was dismissed after the Nixon administration used illegal tactics to try to smear him. The Vietnam War continued for another 4 years, ending after Nixon resigned over Watergate. 8.09
Looking back now D E said he thinks the P P contributed to the President's downfall.

95 *To note that an act of truth-telling here and the fear that it caused and that there might be more truth-telling with new documents did have repercussions that did shorten the war. If Nixon had stayed in office I believe there would have been at least a couple more years....cost of a lot more lives, mainly Vietnamese. So it turns*
100 *out that telling the truth can have an effect and can be worth the risk that it involves. 8.45.*

DE continues to be an anti-war activist. He lives in California.

105 Some words you need to understand:

Xerox go mad traitor classified documents draft cutting edge

Some questions to see what you have understood:

110

1. How many presidents had been involved in writing the Pentagon Papers?

2 - 3 - 4 - 5

2. Each of the presidents kept the fighting going in Vietnam

115 - because he wanted to win the war - because he didn't want to lose the war

3. Ellsberg had been in Vietnam during the war/ hadn't been in Vietnam.

4. Ellsberg photocopied the Pentagon Papers

120 - while he was working at the Pentagon - after he left the Pentagon

5. Ellsberg used a xerox machine that he had bought specially to copy the P Papers
or

125

Ellsberg used a xerox machine that belonged to a friend of a friend.

6. Ellsberg asked his 13 year-old son to help with the photocopying.

Or

Ellsberg wanted his children to understand what he was doing and why.

130 7. When Ellsberg wanted to publish the Pentagon Papers the New York Times agreed
very easily

or

Ellsberg found it difficult to get the Pentagon Papers published.

135 8. When the Pentagon Papers were published Ellsberg was delighted.

or

When the Pentagon Papers were published Ellsberg was worried.

9. Nixon wanted Ellsberg to go to prison for being a traitor. Right or wrong?

140

10. While he was hiding from the law Ellsberg appeared on television. Right or wrong?

11. Ellsberg is proud of what he did.

Or

145 Ellsberg says he thinks that he shortened the Vietnam War a little.

12. Ellsberg emphasizes that he informed the public of the real truth of what was
going on in pursuing the Vietnam War. Right or wrong?