Interview with Robert Schaetzel, for the Jean Monnet Foundation.
March 24, 1982, Washington, D.C.

Leonard Tennyson: Bob, I think we can begin almost anywhere, that is, at the end or the beginning. One of the more conventional ways of starting out a talk of this kind is to ask you where and under what conditions you first met Monnet -- how you became acquainted.

Robert Schaetzel: In anticipation of that question, I tried to think of the answer to that. It was probably during the year 1959-60 I spent in Europe on sabbatical leave when I had a Rockefeller Public Service Award. But no, it must have been before then, because that came at the end of my 4-year stint in the Office of the Secretary, the office dealing with Atomic Energy Matters. No, I must have met him back somewhere around 1956 or so.

LT: That early?

RS: You see, we started early on getting involved in the developing Euratom program. After the Messina Conference, the whole idea of Euratom developed. I was then working on that aspect of it with Gerry Smith.[1] Monnet was greatly enamoured of the idea of Euratom and of the idea of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. He saw it, as many of us did then, alas incorrectly, as a kind of cutting edge for the next move toward European integration. Because of where we were located, and with Stanley Cleveland in the European office, we had something to do with putting together the "Wise Men's Report. It was a kind of underhanded contribution to the Euratom Treaty.

[1]Gerald Smith, asst. to the Secretary of State for Atomic Energy Affairs.

LT: Did you go over to Europe before the Wise Men's visit to the United States in order to talk with Max?[2]

RS: We had a number of extensive conversations in Europe prior to that, in Paris.

LT: I recall that when you went to Europe on the Rockefeller Public Service Award, you came to know Monnet well.

RS: Yes, actually, at the end of that (I had a 15-month's leave of absence) I received another grant from the Ford Foundation. It allowed me to work directly with Monnet for 3 months.

LT: What were some of your early impressions? Were you afflicted with a touch of hero worship? Was there any particular aspect of the man that struck you as being unique?

RS: That is very difficult to sort out. Impressions are colored by final impressions so it's difficult to recall the early ones. All of us who had the good fortune to deal with Monnet saw him as one of the 2 or 3 outstanding figures of the century, not only for his contribution but because of the way he worked -- the way he was able to deal with governments, politicians, and to move events. What I'm saying is that there were two contributions. First there was the substantive one he made in so many fields. Then in addition he revived faith in the fact that people can do something, that events are not shaped through a process of historical

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[2]Max Kohnstamm, Monnet's colleague and organizer of the Euratom "Wise Men's" visit to the U.S. in 1957.

determinism. Now I'm talking about final impressions. My first impression, having been interested in Europe, was that when I first met him, as a relatively young officer, I was not aware that I was in the presence of a great European figure. It was a different sense from the feeling I had the few occasions when I was in the presence of General Marshall. The initial impression was of remote power and prestige. With Monnet, the initial impact was his humanism. His entire behavior was contrary to the notion of a great man one conventionally adopts. This I found unique.

LT: Certainly he did seem to impress a number of people that way. But he did impress others who came into contact with him as being rather remote. So there was perhaps a matter of chemistry about it.

RS: That's interesting.

LT: But let's get on. I know you can contribute something to this exercise. It is something Max Kohnstamm has tried. It is to distill out of Monnet's behavior and operating style a methodology. Did one exist and can we talk about whether it is applicable today?

RS: Let me say that I welcome this line of inquiry. I think it is one of the real contributions that he made. For some reason or another I don't think it's won the attention that this aspect of the man deserves. I think there was both a methodology and a form of genius in him. Whether he himself was conscious of a methodology I don't know. It's rather an interesting question. In a way, it may have been something that evolved over time, a winning form of behavior. One could say he was a scientifically designed

man who went about things in a way that turned out to be extraordinarily successful.

The things that I came to recognize and appreciate were these, not necessarily in the order of priority.

First, he did something that Machiavelli referred to in The Prince. That is he, more than anyone I have known, felt that a senior person dealing with large issues had to have and deal directly with first-class advisors. He was leery of delegating and obviously did not like to work through an heirarchy. I still find it remarkable that I was brought in originally, I presume because Monnet thought I knew something about this atomic energy field he was interested in. He could have dealt with much more senior as well as superior people who kenw more about the subject and who were in positions of authority. This was an example of his practice of looking for that individual, no matter the level, who could help him, and then dealing with that man as an equal. There was never the sense of being a subordinate, of someone being picked up and wrung dry and then thrown away. It seemed to me he dealt with everyone as equals, although in quite different ways, which is sensible enough. So there was this skillful use of people, always in an imaginative fashion.

George ball refers to another characteristic in his introductory material to Monnet's Memoirs. Monnet apparently chided George for chasing too many rainbows, of diluting himself by getting caught up in too many problems. That isn't the exact

language but the idea. In all my dealings with him, I was so struck by the way he stayed on a single target. I would come bursting in with an idea which seemed to me interesting and important. He would react, saying, "There are all sorts of good ideas, but there are only a few that are really worthy of your energies."

LT: Yes, I remember François Duchêne used to characterize this as a particularly oriental trait -- of being able to limit himself to just two or three points, never go further ahead than two or three steps, and to be patient.

RS: Yes, that's right. I can recall feeling there were a number of other things involving Europe and the world which should be included in the Euratom proposal. He, with enormous self-discipline, refused to be thrown off course. Those things that he felt were worth pursuing he would pursue with fanatical energy and concentration.

The third point is the way he prepared for everything with enormous effort and care. With monumentally tedious effort, he'd drive associates, demanding draft after draft of texts, until it was exactly what he wanted. And, as you know, I saw a lot of him because of my office. When I was in the [State Department's] European bureau, after I left George Ball's office,[3] that office became Monnet's "home" when he would come to Washington for a visit relating to some particular project he was pursuing. He would lay out his program: who he was going to see, what line of argument he would use with each person, and what kind of preparations to make.

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[3]R. Schaetzel had been in Ball' "cabinet" when the latter was Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs.

That is a methodology of a sort which obviously can be used by anyone. It is a question of having the energy and determination to prepare yourself to the same extent that he prepared himself.

The fourth point, which everyone is familiar with, that is the degree to which he always sought to see that the credit for a successful action went elsewhere. This seemed to me again to be an aspect of his genius or methodology, that a man of very considerable ego could transfer credit for his own ideas and labors to some other man. I've had discussions about this subject. Was this self-effacement or candid recognition that he lacked a kind of political presence that denied him access to the most senior offices? I reject that notion. I think that he may well have concluded that (for reasons we need not go into now) he would never become President of France or win other high office. This was either conscious or sub-conscious in that he saw his approach as the way to achieve his goals of specific political action.

LT: He was a completely self-confident human being.

RS: Oh, yes.

LT: ... who did not have to bolster his own substantial ego --

RS: That's right.

LT: ... by any sort of intellectual self-aggrandizement.

RS: Well, that's quite right, but even people with complete egos might find it hard to follow Monnet's path. Take a man such

as Acheson. He had complete self-confidence. But I cannot see him or others like him saying, "Of course I should have credit for this, but I think that it would be better placed elsewhere because that will advance the project." There is a subtlety here which Monnet had. I don't think I've seen in any other person.

LT: I was impressed early on with the way Monnet was able to handle and use people. I wonder whether you'd like to talk about how you saw this. Certainly you must have been impressed with the caliber of some of the people whom he gathered around him.

RS: Well, there were obviously two large galaxies. One galaxy, the intimate one, was made up of long-term close associates and advisers, Etienne Hirsch, Max Kohnstamm, François Fontaine, people we all know. They were people who were, in many cases, used, and almost abused. This was a side of Monnet which was less attractive. There was almost an insensitivity, it seemed to me, in his treatment of some of those people who were long-suffering, devoted subordinates. Outside of that ring, there were a number of people who were brought in when they had some expertise or role that he needed. They were a kind of retinue of advisers to be used on occasion. And then there was the big galaxy of a man who knew everybody. And if he didn't know someone, he knew someone else who could immediately get him into the presence of whomever he thought would be useful to his current enterprise. One of my most vivid memories and one that I treasure the most, resulted from sheer accident. At the end of the John F. Kennedy funeral services,

a kind of modern-day Congress of Vienna affair had been organized. All the heads of state and leading dignitaries were invited to a reception at the State Department that evening. Monnet may have been the only unofficial person invited to attend. Each dignitary had assigned to him a State Department escort officer. It was my good fortune to be assigned to Monnet. His performance during the occasion highlighted his approach to people. Mikoyan[4] was there representing the Russian government. There was a surprising resemblance between the two men. Monnet looked across at Mikoyan, who was about 20 feet away, saw him surrounded by people, and asked, "Who's that?" I told him and added, "Would you like to meet him?" He replied, "No, I just want to look at him." And so he stood there for some 10 minutes, staring at Mikoyan. Apparently Monnet felt there was some value in just staying there, soaking up the impression. Harold Wilson was there. He was then British opposition leader. I identified Wilson, and I said, "Would you like to meet him?" Monnet looked at him for a while and said, "No, I don't like his face." That was all there was to it. Apropos this reaction, George Ball for years had tried to have Monnet meet Adlai Stevenson. But Monnet had made up his mind that Stevenson was a loser. So he kept evading that contact, having decided he didn't want to waste his time. Conversely, there were occasions when he would ask us in the State Department to make various appointments in Washington for him. One person he wished to see was Joe Alsop. I

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[4]Anastas I. Mikoyan was a presidium member of the U.S.S.R.

said, "Why do you waste time on him? He is opposed to everything you're trying to do." And he said, "Now look, you don't understand, he's an old friend, and you just don't drop old friends." Out of this pattern emerges a kind of peasant instinct. He could coldly make up his mind about people he could work with, and who would be useful to him, and about others whom he had decided were worthless to him. Yet the sentiment of friendship enters in to upset the view of him as solely calculating in his relations. It's a nice mix.

LT: It's a good point you bring up. I've observed it too. You touch on something which other people who have known Monnet well have observed. It was that he had a very keen nose for power and knew exactly how to find it.

RS: Exactly. Then there was his manipulation of those people who had power. When you are dealing with collective power, it is important to find an influential person who can be persuaded and then be willing to make the effort to persuade someone else.

LT: Tell me something about how Monnet came into the John F. Kennedy orbit. He initially saw Kennedy, as I recall, three, four, five times when he came to Washington after the inauguration. Did you have any feeling about how Kennedy reacted to him?

RS: Well, I really don't -- there are other people in much better position to answer that question than I, such as MacGeorge Bundy or George Ball. I have a distinct opinion that he did not have the kind of close relationship that he had with Eisenhower.

I have the strong feeling that few if anyone really impressed Kennedy very much. That may be unfair, and it's too bad one can't talk to Monnet himself about this. I suspect he assessed Kennedy very accurately. Monnet took people in power as they were, saying merely, 'how can I move this man along the course which I want to move?' My recollection of that period is that he went about doing this in a most orderly fashion. He would connect with new people in power through others whom he already knew. I don't want to be held to this, but I think here was an aspect of the Monnet technique -- of surrounding the man he sought to influence by using all of the contacts he had and expecting that some of them would get through. These were diverse people such as John McCloy, George Meany, journalists, Dean Acheson, and such. None by himself was the sure-fire channel, but **all** were part of a carefully orchestrated campaign to achieve whatever point he had in mind. I'm unaware of anyone who's done it in this fashion. All this goes back to your original observation on methodology. I've wanted to have something done on this in a systematic fashion, for instance a handbook for people concerned with the art of government.

LT: It would take a considerable amount of rather disciplined reflection and abstraction in order to draw out from the Monnet experience anything that would approach a systematic structure.

RS: Well, I hope that you're doing something which could be very valuable in that connection, and if you've been raising this

point with the people you've been interviewing you may have a record, which somebody can then draw on and try to extract from that what the principles may be. What I've been most concerned about is so many people have disappeared, who were in this circle -- you know, David Bruce, Dean Acheson, George Meany ...

LT: My great sadness is that this came so late. People such as André Mayer, Donald Swatland, for instance, could have contributed so much.

RS: That's right, so many Europeans, who would be even better than Americans in terms of, well -- Spaak, for instance, Beyen, and other major European figures who have passed from the scene. And yet there are still enough around, I think, out of the key group of Europeans.

LT: Well, René Pleven is still around, and some of the other early colleagues.

RS: Yes, I'm constantly startled by coming across the names of these people I thought had been dead for years.

LT: Do you have any particular observations about any of the people who were in Monnet's inside circle? I'm thinking of Pierre Uri, Max Kohnstamm, François Duchêne, and some others? Is there anything you might say about them and their relations with Monnet that might shed light on him.

RS: I think they reflect Monnet's catholic judgment. He wanted so many different things from different people that he was able to see in Uri a tremendous ability and imagination under this

façade of ego which caused so many others to turn away. I think Monnet was the only one who could pin him down and use him. As different as they were -- I include others such as Hirsch and Fontaine -- all seemed to me to share certain common characteristics. They were all men of great innate ability. None of them were sloppy workmen. All were capable of being attracted to and not repulsed by large ideas. They were all, it seemed to me, very decent people. Clearly they were all devoted to Monnet. I deliberately put Jacques Van Helmont off to one side. I would not deny him any of the virtues I've mentioned. But the relationship between the two was different. Jacques showed a kind of devotion to Monnet which didn't seem to me to be adequately reciprocated. It was almost unique in my experience to see something like this.

LT: Someone once said, viewing the two of them, that sometimes they acted like an old, married couple, snarling at each other.

RS: Tuthill recalls seeing them arriving at a railway station in London. He described their coats and hats as apparel that could have been made for Khrushchev or other Russians. Their coats came within 3 inches of the ground, virtually swallowing them. Tuthill said they looked either like Communists or anarchists.

LT: Did Monnet ever say anything to you that was particularly epigrammatic? Did you ever discover in him a gift for putting things just right? Or do you think it was borrowed from people he had around him, who supplied the words he was looking for?

RS: I don't think so. I said originally that one had to make the division between a methodology, which is transferable, and the element of personal genius. Looking back on his whole career, it is this element that stands out.

LT: An essential quality of Monnet's genius was monomania.

RS: That's an element of his real genius, that caused him to see the importance of the Community and pursue it with such tenacity. Once he grasped the essence of a problem by defining it then methodology came into play. He then began to put a plan in place, deciding on a strategy, and how to bring about the action which was his final goal. I think this is another aspect of fundamental importance, overlooked by so many people, particularly intellectuals and academics but also people in government. It is, in the final analysis, the question, "How do you get something to happen?" His constant concentration on making something happen is just as important as the idea. People have had good ideas for several thousand years, but it's the action that brings them to fruition, that is what one ought to be concentrating on in thinking about this man.

To answer your initial question, from which I have strayed, I never thought there was any element, conscious or unconscious, of plagiarism -- you didn't suggest this. He was just extracting from people things which were essential to the development of a scheme or approach to any problem he happened to be dealing with at the time. The heart of the matter we're talking about now is

that he would be able to see things still beyond the sight of other people. Yet they were not so far beyond their capacity to imagine that once he began to spin out his ideas he couldn't bring them along with him. I contrast this approach with another kind of visionary, for instance Clarence Straight. Here is another man with a vision, but a vision which was incapable of being realized no matter how meritorious. And also, Straight never had the methodology either, so that was it.

LT: I agree with you. It's too bad that in a conversation such as this, that we can't get a hold of a more structural sense of the man. He poses such an interesting question and challenge to us, looking at him retrospectively now. And he has had a tremendous impact on so many people.

RS: That's right, and one is bound to think about him these days. I've just returned from a couple of trips to Europe. And it's commonplace now to look upon Western Europe as in a crisis greater than at any time since the War. And rather than moving towards a greater degree of unity it's obviously racing rapidly away in the other direction. I was talking to a highly-placed European friend about this. He is deeply concerned with the Community, and was reaching out, asking, how can one arrest this process? If you begin an analysis of present-day political leaders, and you check them off one after the other, you ask whether they've got either the imagination or the power to try to reverse this process. Then one thinks about the people in

private life, the other day I had breakfast here with Prime Minister Martins and Leo Tindemans the morning before they started their round of discussions with the President and others. We got on this business of a "wise men's" exercise as a way of dealing with the Atlantic crisis. If you want to be frustrated, just try to think of whom you would nominate as European "wise men" today. Firstly, who is a wise man, and secondly, who is the wise man who would get any attention?

LT: I had that discussion with McCloy. Boiling it down into simple terms, it was whether, on the scene today, you can find people of the caliber, of the same broad grasp of problems whom we found after the war. I am thinking of Marshall, of de Gasperi, Schuman, and Adenauer. Perhaps the political and economic landscape has changed too greatly? I don't know. I'm tempted to think they aren't there anyway.

RS: I don't think they are. One of the questions I ask (I've talked to Arthur Schlesinger and other historians about this) is why there will be times when leaders are quite evident and times when they aren't. Certainly the latter times are with us now, not just in the United States and Europe either, but all around the world. I don't think you can say these outstanding people emerge only in times of crisis. It seems to me we have pretty authentic crises on our hands in many areas today. One of the old arguments was that the World War II and the problems of the immediate postwar period called these people into positions of prominence. I don't know what it is, I wish I knew. Going

back to Monnet I thing we wish there were someone today who had his talents. The world desperately needs that sort of person right now. I don't know whether you saw him in the latter years, but I had a number of conversations with him before he disappeared from the scene.

LT: I didn't see him in the last two years before his death.

RS: Well, I did before he pulled out of Paris. He was still active and alert. We had several long conversations in which he elaborated a theory which I'm sure you've heard from others. It is that history moves in about 25-year cycles and that a quarter-century cycle had just come to an end. He said, "I don't know, I don't understand what's happening now. It's confusing to me." If he'd been younger, had another 10 years to go, I think that with his talents and experience he would have been able to think the situation through and figure out how do we get through a totally changed international and European scene. Those last conversations were with a man who for the first time in all my experience with him was baffled. On almost every other occasion, he, in knowing what the problem was, had something to propose to solve it.

LT: He did. Remember that when DeGaulle came back into power, he said, "We'll live together," and then he added, "I think we can work together because DeGaulle believes in institutions too; the Army and the Catholic Church."

RS: That's right. That's why I'm so sad professionally as well as personally that he's not around. I feel we totally lack

and desperately need those qualities which he had so uniquely. There is an analogy here between the mess that existed during the war and immediately after the war. It was a totally changed situation. The old institutions had been found not to work. There was a sorting-out and reappraisal to do. Monnet made a unique contribution to that process. I think we're almost in the same fix now. Almost all of the policies and the approaches to problems among institutions and nations are in a process of such dramatic change that another sorting-out process must be started. Nobody has the imagination or ability to do it.

LT: Let's end on this note. We should pursue it further and in a more precise direction another time. I'd like to wind up with an obvious but a useful question. How do you see history placing Monnet in this century? In what niche will he wind up? Have you any views?

RS: I probably have more hopes than views. My hope would be that as people in the 21st century look back and try to sort out the mosaic of the second half of this century, that he will be seen as one of the great men of this period. Now, whether that's going to occur or not, I don't know. I have some doubts, for reasons that don't reflect on Monnet at all but may reflect on the times and on the analysts. If you've read historians who are turning their energies to revisionist history, one can't have a tremendous amount of faith in their ability to penetrate and see the period for what it was and the degree of his achievement.

This converstion is variously layered. We haven't talked very much about his contribution to the war effort, what he did for this country, or for the business of building Europe, all that's in the books. We're also talking about something which would take a special historian to deal with. That's the question of method. How did he achieve these things? It may not be of great interest to historians of the period and other observers. And then the other reason that I'm not sure that he'll be recognized for what he was is that his contributions to the allied war effort were, in a sense, ephemeral. They contributed to a result. That was terribly important. But they don't stand out as an act of leadership such as winning a battle. The process of European unity, as Marjolin said, has been since 1966 or '67 in a period of stagnation or stalemate.

LT: '65, to be precise.

RS: Whatever the exact date. In any event we've now had a protracted period in which the European Community certainly doesn't capture the imagination of the man in the street. To the extent that a man's contribution is measured by the success of what he spent a lot of his life on, I think that I would be disappointed. I don't think Monnet will get the recognition he deserves. But maybe I'll be wrong, maybe historians will fool me.

LT: I hope they will. We'll talk about this again. Thank you, Bob.

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ERRATA: Jean Monnet Fondation Interview with
Ambassador Robert Schaetzel.

Page 4, line 13: "people who knew..."

Page 14, line 5: "Clarence Streit..."
line 7: "also, Streit..."

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BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION April 1980

J. Robert Schaetzel, former U. S. Ambassador to the European Communities (1966-1972), is a writer, lecturer and business consultant whose special areas of interest are Western Europe, particularly the European Community, and foreign economic policies. Since his resignation from the Government at the end of 1972 after 27 years in the State Department, he has continued to visit Europe frequently in order to follow closely European developments.

His book, "The Unhinged Alliance--America and the European Community," was written under the auspices of the Council on Foreign Relations and was published by Harper and Row, August 1975. A German edition was published by Econ Verlag in 1977 under the title, "Ein Bündnis geht aus den Fugen, Amerika und die Europäische Gemeinschaft." He has written articles for Fortune, Reader's Digest, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Affari Esteri, Daedaleus, Europa-Archiv and other publications.

Mr. Schaetzel served as Chairman of the Task Force on Consultation for the Trilateral Commission in 1975 and 1976 and is associated with a number of organizations devoted to the improvement of Atlantic relations:

Vice Chairman, Atlantic Institute, Paris
Board Member, Atlantic Council, Washington

Member Advisory Council, Johns-Hopkins Bologna Center
Member, Council on Foreign Relations, New York
Member, Trilateral Commission

He is also chairman of an American committee which administers a program for the exchange of experts between the European Community and the United States Government.

He is a member of the Board of Honeywell, Inc., and is also a consultant to Honeywell. As a Senior Fellow of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation since 1974 he has visited the following colleges: Kalamazoo, Pomona, Whittier, Ripon, Carleton, Grinnell, Colby, Kenyon, Guilford, the College of the Pacific, Eckerd, Oberlin, Washington and Lee and Dickinson. He is also a member of the Board of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

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Born in Holtville, California, January 28, 1917
Pomona College, B. A. 1936, LLD 1966
Harvard Graduate School 1940-1942
Bureau of the Budget 1942-1945
Department of State 1945-1972

- Work dealt with economic side of the Department; subsequently, with the disarmament and atomic energy office.
- Attended the National War College 1954-55
- Received Rockefeller Public Service Award 1959-1960 (study of Euratom and the Common Market in Brussels)
- Detailed to assist incoming Kennedy administration in preparation of task force reports (disarmament, foreign economic policy, etc.); directed the task force on organization and personnel policy of State Department Nov. 1960-Jan. 1961
- Special Assistant to Under Secretary of State 1961-1962
- Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Atlantic Affairs 1962-1966
- Ambassador to the European Communities, Brussels, Belgium 1966-1972