

Mel May
Mel Interview minus-1
Mel, Julian, and Russ meet for the first time (introductions and plans)

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the September 26 interview with Mel that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/P4BgseNKq8U>. In green are Russ's comments, and in blue are Julian's comments about and explanations of the Descriptive Experience Sampling process inserted after the interview. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt

JBK = Julian Bass-Krueger

Mel = Mel May

0:02 Mel: Hello!

0:04 RTH: Good...morning, is it for you, I guess? Good morning for you.

0:08 Mel: It is morning for me, yes.

0:13 RTH: [Pause] And I think Julian is here as well but he is not yet here, and I am recording...

0:18 Mel: Sure.

0:19 RTH: ...But when, when Julian appears let's have a conversation about that first, first thing.
[Pause] There's Julian. [pause] [Mel waves] Hi. If you said "hello," Julian, I can't hear you.

0:33 JBK: [laughs]. Okay,

0:34 RTH: Now I can hear you.

0:34 JBK: How about now?

0:36 RTH: Yep.

0:38 JBK: Okay.

About recording

0:40 RTH: So first off, let me say I'm recording. I would like to record, if every-, if that's all right with everyone. And the, and the rules for the recording, as far as I'm concerned, is that the recording belongs to the... collectively unanimously in... in agreement. So I'll maintain the recording or anybody else can maintain the recording for that, for that matter, but we won't use it until all of us say, unanimously, we should use this

recording...And, and at that time we would say, “well, this is what I have in mind”, and we can have a conversation about that but... So that’s, that would be the, that would be the rules under which I would, I would think it might be useful to record and what, what, what that says is, basically, you never know whether you want to record something until it’s too late. And, uh...

1:27 Mel: Yep.

1:28 RTH: ...So let, let’s, let’s record, but not...but not give permission to use it.

1:33 Mel: Mm-hmm.

1:34 JBK: Okay. Fine by me.

1:37 RTH: Okay. And, and second, I would say I, I haven’t met any of you, either of you I don’t think actually in person, ju-... so let’s bring, let’s bring each other up to date about who we are and how we got, how we got here. I have, I have corresponded with Julian...quite a lot, I would say...over quite a few years...but I don’t think we’ve ever actually met either live or in person. Is that... is that true?

2:05 JBK: We had one Zoom call.

2:06 RTH: Did we have a Zoom call back in the, back in the day?

About Julian

2:09 JBK: Yeah, we had one Zoom call, but I can, I can introduce myself. Um, yeah, my name’s Julian Bass-Krueger. Um...I studied cognitive science for my master’s. Before that I had studied film...and, um...I read about...uh...Russ’s work in a *New York Times* article. And I was very intrigued because I’d been doing...uh...I’d been writing, I’d been doing filmmaking that was stream of consciousness. I was intrigued by that. And I...I read a lot of his research and for my master’s thesis, I used DES, um, for that thesis. And then I also adapted it slightly, um, to look at slightly longer sections, which me and Russ are kind of in contention about—if that’s possible to do. Um, but for this project, we’re, we’re doing regular DES to start. And...so I think, um, there are a lot of interesting things that could come of it. But...uh...so I learned the method from reading Russ’s work, but we haven’t...collaborated together...

3:14 Mel: Mm-hmm.

3:15 JBK: ...So I think it could be interesting to see if we have different perspectives on how to conduct this...

3:20 Mel: Mm-hmm.

3:21 JBK: ...and then we can talk about how best to do this method...and discuss some technicalities of the method... Um, so yeah, that’s a bit about me. I’m from New York,

um... from like upstate New York, but I lived in New York City...uh... for, went to college there, and now I live in Vienna...yeah.

3:41 Mel: Cool.

3:43 RTH: And what, what I would say about that is that, that Julian and I have disagreed about some, some stuff. And I would, and, and I would hope that, that if out of this collaboration, one of the things that might come out of this collaboration is that we get to discuss some nuts and bolts of, of that kind of thing. I don't, I don't hold myself up as being the... god's expert on DES or on anything else for that matter. And so Julian may very well have some ideas that, that were, are better than mine, and I might have some that are better than his. And...and, and what I *think*, believe, I guess I would say is that...the, the best way to debate those kinds of things is in the context of an actual real live...moment.

4:27 Mel: Mm-hmm.

About Mel

4:27 RTH: And, uh [pause]. So...that, that's what I would say about that. And *Mel*, I have heard from, I guess for, for the first time a couple months ago... She expressed interest in work and she can...she can tell us...what her interest is.

4:44 Mel: Yeah. So I, I, I came across your work obviously, probably in a similar way to Julian did. And then it just started being...um, a conversation that I was having like super regularly [laughs] with people, um, at, y'know, over coffee or at dinner parties and sort of blowing people's minds...

5:03 JBK: Mm-hmm.

5:04 Mel: ...people hadn't even been thinking about...y'know, how different their internal experience might be from everyone's. And it often turned out that mine was quite different, I think, to the people that I was discussing with. So it became this like real, um, interesting point of conversation very regularly. So then I was just more interested to...learn about it. And then some of the research that you've done with people, Russell, that particularly, um, described un-symbolized thinking, that seemed to be like the first time I'd seen people describe something that felt similar to what I think happens within my brain.

5:37 Mel: [continues] So, um, I sort of reached out in the hope that, uh, like it would just be interesting to, y'know, from a personal...um, viewpoint to just... uh, be, I guess assisted and prodded to find the language to describe what's happening in my head. But then I was very interested creatively to see...um, if there are similarities or differences with people as well. So Julian, maybe a little bit similarly to you, um, I'm sort of a... a documentary TV producer. Um, so very much interested in like... social psychology and things because it's so important to my work. Um, and my biggest asset in my professional life is... y'know, in being really good at interviewing people and getting them to open up to me and things like that. So I'm very keen to learn

more...always about, um... people's inner workings and what makes 'em tick and how they're different and how to get them to be vulnerable really quickly. And, um, I think that... the way my... brain works and my internal experience is so directly linked to why I am good at my job with people, which we can get to later. But, um, that kind of led me to reach out and, and I'd love to learn more and... um... sort of... just explore where that goes as well. I think it'd be interesting for me personally, but then also inform a lot of my work. So... yeah.

7:05 RTH: So I, I would say quite a few people reach out to me and, and say, I'm interested in your work. And most of the time I don't respond at all cuz there's other things in the world to do. But yours, your, Mel, your [pause] your email came at a time when Julian was interested in working with me and... whatever the path, the path, the paths crossed at a time when I... and, and, and you're interested in, in documentary... your, your... commitment to documentary making. I, I think there's a documentary to be made somewhere in the inner experience world. And I don't, I don't... I don't have a documentary in mind, but I think there is one or ten of them, or a hundred of them to be made somewhere, *because*... I do think that people's inner experience is a) different one... one person to the next.

7:54 RTH: [continues] And I think people don't know about the characteristics of their own inner experience, probably including you, Mel, but I don't, I have no reason to believe that. I mean, maybe, maybe you're right on about your own inner experience and maybe you're 90 degrees off or whatever... that's, that's sort of what makes my work interesting. But, uh... but y'know, there's a lot of, there is a lot of filmmaking documentary stuff that seeks to... display inner experience, mu-, much of it inner speakings, and people brains are talking to it, talking to themselves, and that that isn't the way the world is, I don't think, the, the inner world is. So I think there's some... there's a whole realm out there of, of interesting possibilities... that, that I haven't really... thought about... But, but... but that's what, that's one of the ingredients as far as... as along with timing that, uh, made me respond to your email and got us all here... today.

8:51 Mel: Cool. Thank you.

Russ's plan

8:52 RTH: So the, so what *I think* we're, what, what I think the... the rough draft of our plan is, is that I will send Mel a beeper and... and then we will get together and, and, and, do some DES-type sampling with Mel... and Julian and I will be the primary interviewers... and, and then we'll have conversations about that. And that those conversations could take place during the interviews, or after the interviews, or separate from the interviews, or not at all, or what, whatever. I don't have a... I don't have a specific choreography of that... But, uh, but, but that would be the sort of the... rough draft of the framework from my point of view. And, but I'm open to suggestions if somebody's got a better idea [pause] um, I'd be happy to hear that.

9:49 JBK: I, um, within the context of the interviews... at least for some of the discussions would be good. Now, I don't know if you've looked into the book, *DES Proponent Meets*

Skeptic...but it's... uh, DES interviews of one participant, uh, Melanie, or maybe it's a pseudonym for the book... um, but it's you, Russ and Eric Schwitzgebel, who's, who's skeptical of DES, skeptical of reports of inner experience. And... so they, they do these joint interviews and... Schwitzgebel asks some questions and they, they discuss... they discuss... Um, and that format. I, I thought it was very interesting to be doing the interviews... and discussing the samples as it goes along... And I think that could work well. There's, there's the aspect that it might be... so we would be discussing your... experience, um... Mel, and, and we might be... skeptical of some things, and you'll get to see... a bit more of how DES works because we'll be voicing this skepticism more.

10:50 JBK: (continues) Um, like when I interview people... I'll sometimes voice it, but sometimes I'll keep in the back of the, my mind... "okay, maybe this isn't the case." Y'know, maybe as we train over subsequent days, we'll find that... uh, their experience is different. Because that's kind of the hallmark of DES as, as Russ kind of alluded to... is this skepticism. Like we go in with the expectation that none of us really knows your experience. You might have some ideas... maybe that you have more unsymbolized thinking than some other people... but we could get quite different results. And so... yeah, as, as we go along, I guess, we'll, we'll be having discussions... and, and... kind of really asking... um, to what extent do we trust the method...

11:38 Mel: Hmm.

11:39 JBK: ...So like... so I think as long as we go in with those expectations... um, then I, I think it could work.

11:49 RTH: Yeah, I, I've done a, I've done a couple of projects where there were dis-, discussions that... that go on. So the...the Eric Schwitzgebel and my... book was 2007, I think. And then I've got another book with, with a... literary scholar, Marco Caracciolo [JBK: Mm-hmm.] which sort of takes the [pause] the Melanie project one step farther. And... but I've also, I've also got, as, as you both know, I think a, a website that has a bunch of full interviews where, where I've discussed with myself or with... students or, or, or whatever what I think is going on in those interviews. So I've tried to be public about that. And, and, and that might be one of the places where some of the stuff that we do here, uh... might end up, as well. So I... I'm, I'm not saying I'm going to put that on the web, but I would say... I have put a bunch of stuff on the web.

12:45 RTH: (continues) I think it's, uh... I think it is a value to put the kinds of interviews that we're doing on the web... or make them public somehow. And... and we'll, we'll see how that goes. Any, any of us as we go might have a... better idea of how to put 'em, how to, how to make them public than, uh... than I've done. The, the batch of interviews on the web (I think there's eight of them now)... are... those... there's, y'know, each one of those is eight or ten interviews and... with transcripts and whatever, there's a fair amount of... work involved... in making those kinds of things public. And maybe not in the best way because... they're sort of overwhelming. Y'know, you, you gotta ride along with... eight hours or ten hours or whatever worth of interviewing. And then you got the [pause] you've got the... transcripts to deal with, and... my commentary in the transcripts and your reaction to the transcripts and... your reaction to my commentary and all that stuff. There's... a fair amount of time involved.

13:46 RTH: (continues) But... but I'm, I am motivated... I would say... to be transparent about what's going on. And I would *also* say in response to something that Julian said, it, it *used to be* that I... sort of worried that if we had a conversation back, y'know, back with Melanie and... those that... I, I don't think we involved Melanie in the conversations. And I used to worry about that because if we involved Melanie in the conversations, then that would pollute her inner experience or something like that. But I'm not so worried about that anymore... for, for maybe two reasons. One is I don't think it actually will change... Mel's experience if we talk amongst ourselves (including Mel) about that. I think her... inner experience is probably stronger than our conversations about it. That's one thing.

14:32 RTH: (continues) And, and second, if her, her inner experience does change... as the result of our conversations, well then, then... so what... I mean... so we... my inner experience y'know, not gonna change as the result of our conversations. And Julian's is probably as well... that's the... human interaction. We... expect that, I expect that we'll all be somehow altered by... the conversations that we might have. And, and so the object wouldn't be to have, to get to Mel the way she was on... September 26th, or before we started... before we started this then. The object would be, *I think*... to try to learn something that might be interesting about *something*. And... um... with the... the vantage point of... we'll *start* by trying to look at a few moments of... Mel's experience.

Mel's plan

15:27 Mel: Yeah. And, and on that, like... I'm very, um, happy to be... challenged like very regularly. So please feel free to... really push and... challenge anything that I... report back. I welcome that. So... no, no problems on that front. I'm not gonna take it personally if you [laughs] you're skeptical of some... some claim or something.

15:50 RTH: Then, and I would, and I would say... I would... I think you *should* be involved if you wanna be in a way... should be involved in the discussions that we have. And, and... you should feel free to say what you think is... ou- ought to be said about those, all those things. And, and I would say I (*I* speaking for myself now) would not... I, I don't think that you would be...you are in a position to be the authoritative, unchallenged expert. So if you say what... y'know, we ask a question, we say, "well, this is what we thought." And you say, "no, it's not *that* way." You're... I... I *don't* think that you're infallible in those kinds of... kinds of things. And that's not a personal statement about Mel, I don't think I'm infallible... infallible about things.

16:37 RTH: (continues) So if you say, well, "I think it's this way," and I say, "I think it's that way," well, that's two, two different people having two different perspectives on, on the world. And Mel has... has the advantage (or the disadvantage, one of the two) she has, she has a different... a different context... from what I would have. And, uh [pause] and then that we would have to... we would have to... take that into consideration and we'd have to... figure out what to do about that, which *doesn't* mean whenever Mel says something, we'd say, [clasps hands] "okay, Mel, that's the way it is, if that's what

you say.” That... that isn’t [pause] [Mel: Yeah.] that isn’t the way the world... the world works.

17:14 Mel: But yeah, I would love to, um... same sort of thing that you said before, Russ, in terms of writing this... um... I love how you have all the documentation very easily available on your site. I would love... to somehow... from my personal experience with it...make um... some sort of... um, slightly more... easy to consume video from the whole thing. Like perhaps, like this is just, y’know, I’m thinking... double-edged sword of like, it could be nice to, at the end of all of this have... um, some sort of artistic or documentary endeavor that is... like really short and perhaps a nice like, summation of... my experience in the research. So if that’s something that you would be open to, like it’s, I have no plans... concrete, but I just think at the end of it, it would be really cool if you... were able to have a video of the experience... that was more edited.

18:10 RTH: So I think that might very well be a good idea. I, I would... I would say, I would say the *possibility* of that... is, is part is... I would say maybe part of the reason why you are here today with... with Julian and... somebody else who got an email at more or less the same time *isn’t* here...

18:27 Mel: Mm-hmm.

Russ’s suggestion of a starting point

18:28 RTH: ...So I’m, I’m, I’d be open to that... as a possibility. I, I, would, I would say it would probably be to our advantage *not* to [pause] *not* to uh... *start with* the framework of *let’s try to make a documentary*.

18:45 Mel: Hmm.

18:46 RTH: I, I would say it would be better to, to start from the framework of... *let’s try to talk honestly amongst ourselves about Mel’s experience* [Mel: Mm-hmm.] and I... and maybe on the third or fifth or seventh or whatever day of that... it would start to...come... clear to Mel or to... Julian or to me or whoever, that *this is the way a documentary might work*. We could, we could think about that.

19:10 Mel: Yeah, yeah.

19:11 RTH: But, I would, I would rather have us start with *let’s be as... genuinely straightforward as we can be about Mel’s experience* and... *and why we ask the questions that we ask and why we don’t ask those questions, and why that was a bad question and... why that, that was a bad answer. And... and that was a good answer or a bad question or whatever*. We figure out... figure out that... that kinda stuff.

Procedure

19:36 JBK: Mm-hmm. I’m very open also to the idea. I was also thinking of the possibility of... doing edited shorter versions... because I do... um... I do film editing and filmmaking

too. Um... so yeah, but I, I definitely agree with your perspective on going in... not thinking about that...

19:54: Mel: Yeah.

19:155 JBK: (continues) It might come later... but, um, to set it up, I think it would be good to use... 4K recording for these... videos. I've been using this program called Zencaster... that does high quality... local recordings, so it records locally on each person's... like from each person's device. So I think that's just the technicality that could... make it go smoother if we do something with the... footage down the line.

20:21 Mel: Yeah, that's a great idea.

20:23 RTH: So I, I've got no problem with that. The... you said... you'll have to tell us how to, how to do that.

20:31 JBK: It's like Zoom, you just click on a link, but then... the, the quality is good... Um, editing is a bit trickier because it doesn't... automatically shift the windows. But then there are AI apps like AutoPod that kind of... can cut up a whole interview... or just do it by hand. But yeah, that's, that's all technicalities, I guess.

20:53 RTH: Yeah. I, I, I've been, I, I would say that I, I've been pretty happy with Zoom interviews... as, as far I like live, I, I prefer live interviews at hands down all the way. But I think Zoom does a pretty good job. And I think there's some... there's some virtue in... putting out the interviews the way I've done it on the... on the web that where, where it's obviously sort of low grade... not 4K kind of, kind of stuff. And because that's the, that's the way it was. But, but...

21:28 JBK: Yeah, we, we could still have that option if we use this software. It's just that in addition... like if we wanted to do a different format, then that could also work. But yeah, I think just having the raw footage for... people interested in the method is also really good just to have this... kind of open access data.

21:46 RTH: And I, and I've done sim-, similar kinds of things, I think, wi- with, with just the audio. So I've... I've interviewed with, with some people where we both recorded high, high fidelity audio separately... and then somebody else put that together to make a podcast or whatever.

22:03 Mel: Yeah. Cool. Yeah.

22:04 RTH: So I'm in favor of that. And, and I would also say, I don't think... I don't think the... there's any reason why there shouldn't be more than one [pause] uh... video, whatever... perspective. Mel, Mel could see it her way, and Julian can see it his way... and Russ could see it his way, and [pause] I, I think everybody ought to have some kind of veto power about that kinda stuff, because we're talking about... that's, that's sort of the ground rules of being honest, but, uh, with, with, with each other. But...

22:41 Mel: Yes, best to record everything as well as we can so that the options are there, cuz as you said at the start, Russ, "you can't get it back once it's done." So...

22:49 RTH: That's right.

22:51 Mel: Yeah. Cool. Cool. It sounds really great. I'm really, I'm certainly very interested to be involved and, um... yeah, I think that... I'm, I'm very grateful that you replied to my email, Russ, and that we're all here because... um, yeah, it sounds interesting.

23:08 RTH: So the... so what we're in agreement here is that Russ will send Mel a beeper...

23:14 Mel: Mm-hmm.

23:15 RTH: ...and Julian will... tell us how we wanna record... these things.

23:22 Mel: Mm-hmm.

23:23 RTH: And [pause] and then... then we oughta think about the mechanics. So is this a, is this a *reasonable time* for everybody? It's eight o'clock in the morning my time. 11 o'clock... for Mel.

23:36 JBK: It's good for me.

23:37 RTH: We could do it later, as far as I'm concerned. Probably not earlier... but, uh,

23:44 Mel: What, yeah, what time is it for you, Julian? It's, you're the latest on...

23:47 JBK: About, uh, for me it's now like 5:24.

23:51 Mel: Yeah. Okay.

23:52 JBK: So yeah, starting five or six. I could go later too... but it's... like, it's a nice time for me, I would say.

23:59 Mel: Yeah, same, Russ if an hour later helped you, like I could do midday, like, but any... the time we started or an hour later I think is sort of our... best bet. But whatever... works around this sort of slot.

24:14 RTH: Yeah. I, I would say that this time is okay with me. Just makes... I just have to wake up. But I can, I can deal with that.

The contract

24:25 JBK: And when we start sampling, do you think... we want to do consecutive days or... I, I don't know, with, with your other video recordings... did you do a weekly... a weekly thing? Or did you do it every day?

24:40 RTH: Well, what, what... what my *method*... generally is, is we agree to *one thing*. So *today* we have agreed... that, that we would video this and everybody would own it. And that we're going to send a beeper and whatever...

24:57 JBK: [laughs] instead of ti-.

24:58 ... And then... and then, and, and we'll set a time. And then next time, we'll, we'll, next time we'll start the whole agreement process over again, from my point of view. So just because we agreed to something today doesn't mean that we sh... that we're *bound by that* the next time around because... life changes or whatever. And when we get into sampling, Mel should have the possibility... uh, with no... recriminations or whatever, say, "shit, I... I don't want to do that! Now that I know... what my inner experience really looks like to the beeper or what these guys are gonna say about it or whatever... I don't wanna be a part of that." She should have, she should have that right. And so I would say... everything ought to be... starting from scratch every time. And how often that generally works in practice is, I would say... the... sort of one, once a week is... the way it generally goes, but... but many times I've done it more frequently than that. And many times I've done it less frequently than that. So... but I, I would say that... it's gonna take me a week to get Mel a beeper. So it's... uh...

Julian comments: A lot of the convo on this day is general procedural stuff. But this point really struck me as interesting. The way Russ allows for renewal or exit and any time and doesn't force intimidating commitment is something that I'll take on in further research. The post-interview question—*so should we do it again?*—is such a natural way to keep a project going, if there's still interest.

Russ comments: I call this the "one legitimate relationship": persons coming together as free agents with as little manipulation as can be afforded. Science generally requires "consent," which I think is *not* adequate. Mel doesn't know what this investigation will reveal about her experience, and it is *not* adequate for her to *consent* to its exploration. The investigators can (and did) forthrightly describe the process, but the best Mel can legitimately do is tentatively agree to give it a shot—and even that should be up for grabs on the possibility that she will change her mind about it. And the same is true for Julian and for Russ. So if consent there be, it should be at the end of each interview (*so should we do it again?*) and at the beginning of each interview, and at the beginning, middle, and end of each sample.

This is a very big deal, of fundamental importance. Typical science is fundamentally manipulative, with the consent form designed as a way of limiting some aspect of the investigator's manipulation. DES is fundamentally egalitarian, with Mel, Julian, and Russ each individually responsible co-investigators.

About the beeper

26:05 JBK: I've tried setting it up with iPhones and I... or with, with smartphones, and it used to work, but... now I can't get the beeps to go through the earpiece. I think they changed the software. So... [laughs]

26:18 RTH: How did, how did, how, how did you set it up? Did you follow my instructions? Cuz I've got on the web instructions for how to do that.

26:24 JBK: Um, yeah, I've done those... um, and it used to, used to work, especially on, on Androids... but on the iPhones now the... alarms always go through... the, the phone itself and not through the earphones. Um, so [laughs], it's just something annoying that... when I try to do this method now... I can't figure it out.

26:45 RTH: Huh! So, so even, so even setting up the alarms according to the instructions that I've put up there... so you're basically putting a beep into... into your music file and... displaying a beep in as, as the alarm, the alarm doesn't go through your earphone.

26:59 JBK: Yeah. These days it goes through the phone itself. Maybe not interesting to Mel, but [laughs], this is, yeah. One part of the method is that the beep has to go through the earpiece because it kind of solidifies the moment of experience. It kind of... it make, makes it more accessible to the person...

27:17 Mel: Yeah.

27:18 JBK: ...Um, because you're not like thinking about, "oh, it's coming from my phone now"...

27:21 Mel: Mm-hmm.

27:22 JBK: ...so... yeah. It's... so for you, you'll have these legit, real beepers... that Hurlburt designed... but when, when I try to do this method... it can be these tricky practical things that...

27:34 RTH: I'm, I'm *picky* about the beep. I, I, I think the beep may, the, the *mechanics* of the beep, the... the *physics* of the beep, the, the auto... or the... audition of the beep is a big deal. You gotta have a fast rise time beep. And there has... and it has to mean nothing else... other than *this is the time for me to sample* [pause]. And... so I've built a beeper that, that does that. But... but now everybody's got a smartphone. And so I put instructions for how to, how to, how to do it. And I'm disappointed to hear, Julian, that it doesn't work anymore. I'll have to, I'll have to play around with it... myself, but. But it's [pause] um... you'd think it would be an easy thing to do to use a very smart phone to do what my very dumb beepers do. My, my beepers are really quite... quite crude and, uh... But they're better than anything that I've been able to do on a smartphone.

28:27 JBK: There's, there's gotta be a way, but I think it might involve some programming, which... y'know, [laughs], I don't really want to have to go into that, but...

28:37 Mel: So, sorry, just quickly on that, Rus, so did you spend a lot of time finessing the, the beep itself?

28:47 RTH: You mean back in the day?

28:49 Mel: Yeah, like when you were first, like, coming up with the beep, like it, as you just mentioned, of like how long it goes for like pitch and things like that. Like, did you do that?

29:02 RTH: [Pause] I, I don't think I can give an honest answer to that, cuz it's 50... 50-some years ago now. But, uh, I, so I think what happened, it was, it was... I built the beeper [pause] with a beep that I thought was gonna be pretty good. And it turned out to be pretty good.

29:24 Mel: [laughs].

29:25 RTH: I think, I think that's the, I think that's the way it is. I don't believe, I don't recall, let's put it this way, I don't recall playing around with different frequencies of beeps. I had in mind... what I thought a beep oughta... oughta be like... and I made it like that [pause] and it worked.

29:44 Mel: And here we are. [laughs]

29:44 RTH: Something, some, something like that. I, I don't, I, I, I don't, I don't hold.. Don't hold me to that being a vertical account because... well y'all... maybe you don't, but... everybody in the rest of the world knows that what I think about retrospection, which is... *I don't trust it* and, uh...

30:01 JBK: [laughs].

30:02 RTH: ...But including my own, or *especially* my own...

30:05 Mel: Mm-hmm.

30:06 RTH: ...But I... what I don't recall having... having played around with it. What, what, but I have, I have over the years become convinced that, that there are features of the beep that has, it has, you have to have... you have to have sudden rise time... and you have to have [pause] unambiguity—unambiguous beep—it has to mean one thing and not... nothing else. Like the... some people will say, “well, I'll try it with my phone. I'll just, when, when my phone rings, I'll use that as a beep.”

30:36 RTH: (continues) And that doesn't work... because the thought process, then you have a thought process, which is something like, *oh, that's my phone. I'm not supposed to answer my phone. I'm supposed to think about what's going on with me.* But by the time you go through that thought process, then you've lost... most or all of what, what's in inner experience. So it can't be that way.

30:53 RTH: (continues) But to come back to your, so back in the day, now that I'm thinking about it, I, I have played around with other kinds of beeps. So I, now I have a, a mental picture in which I think I, it's in my closet actually by, but I've built back... so I built beep, I built beepers when there, when there weren't beepers available. And... y'know, they didn't exist. And, uh... so I built mechan- uh, vibrating... things to... and decided that, that they didn't work, because the, the vibration... is a... sl-, relatively

slow rise time deal. If you're, if you're interested in inner experience, you can't use a, any kind of a vibrating thing that I've been able to find, y'know. There's always the possibility that somebody can do a better vibrator than I... that I can do, but... that I have done. But I think it takes too long for the body to process vibration.

31:53 Mel: Hmm. Makes sense.

31:53 RTH: And I've also, and I've, I've also used flashing lights. And flashing lights aren't as good either... but I've never, I've never built... y'know, like a glasses with... with LEDs in 'em that, that would flash. Maybe that... maybe one could do that. But... um, I think there's, there's logic to saying that the auditory system is the fastest... has the fastest access to... this kind of processing.

32:17 Mel: Hmm.

32:17 RTH: But that, y'know... I've never... I've never done a really good... visual beeper, so I don't really know.

32:26 Mel: Interesting. Okay. Um, and then I suppose, Russ, once a... beeper arrives, then we'll meet back and then you'll talk me through the logistics of that next time?

32:35 RTH: Yes. And I, and Julian, you wanna be part of that conversation? How do you, how to use a beeper?

32:41 JBK: Mm-hmm.

32:41 RTH: Okay. So what'll so, so the mechanics of it is, I will send you a beeper. When you get the beeper, you will... let us know "I've got the beeper," and then we will by email, figure out when, when we're gonna do this again. And, and, uh, we will... that will be what I would call the day zero... when in my, like in my lexicon, day zero is when... you've got the beeper in, in your hand, and we're gonna, we're gonna decide exactly what we're gonna do about it. And those conversations *typically* are... 15 or 20 minutes long. But... if we're gonna have conversations about it, then that goes... then might be longer than that, but...

33:21 Mel: Cool. Sounds great.

More about the contract

33:24 RTH: But even, even the conver-, the conversations like today, there, there's... there's a fair amount of thought or practice or trial and error, whatever... that go into why this conversation is this way. And I start with the conversation about the recording, cuz I wanna do the recording, but I wanna... but I also want to make sure that... I have conveyed that... the recording doesn't belong to me. This process doesn't belong to me. DES doesn't belong to me. Nothing belongs to me. I'm one... one person on a trajectory through trying to make sense of the world. And... other people are on their own trajectories trying to do the same thing. That... all that is... is part of the DES process, actually. It might, might seem like a conversation that— which it is a

conversation, but it's also... it's, it's also a... an integral part of... trying to convey to Mel, who's gonna be a subject in, in this research, that, it's... that there's nothing that I'm imposing on Mel. She's... she's gotta be a free agent in this regard. And [pause], and so I'm, I *am* [pause], walking up to my side of the chasm and saying that the... Mel on the other side, well, y'know, this could be *interesting*. I'm gonna send you beeper. We can, we can see whether that's interesting. Julian and I have, might have some conversations over there and you might have some conversations over here. We're all [pause], we're all sort of free agents... from the ground up... basically.

34:56 Mel: Right. Sounds good to me. Happy to be involved.

35:00 RTH: All right. So anything else that we should be talking about... about today? And I, and I guess, well, let me ask one more question about the, about the mechanics of it. So it would seem to *me* that it would be a good idea for us *not* to have... two, on— one-on-one conversations about this. If we wanna have conversations about this, it ought to be three-on-three conversations.

35:25 Mel: Sure.

35:25 JBK: That makes sense.

35:26 RTH: And, uh [pause], and, and it's not because I don't think one-on-one conversations are a good idea, but it... and as a general rule, but it [pause]. Y'know [pause]. It, it rai-, raises the possibility of, well... if Julian and I had a conversation, then Julian and I would know something that Mel doesn't know. And then we might get into a position where... y'know [pause], do we have to go back and tell Mel about that conversation? And that would be... not, not, not that Julian and Russ would try and be hide something from Mel or whatever, but it's just, it makes those conversations awkward. So I would... *I would* recommend that we agree that if we're gonna... do this, we ought to do it as a group. And, uh [pause]. Anybody have a thought about that?

36:14 JBK: Yes, that makes sense to me... so we can all... all be involved in everything.

36:20 Mel: Yeah, that sounds good to me. But I'm also happy with whatever, if at some point you guys decide that... it would be valuable for you and the research to splinter off and... have conversations that I'm not privy to, then... that's... fine. Like, whatever you think is most suitable for the best... research.

36:38 JBK: Yeah. I think eventually... through these processes of... coding samples, and... I think it might be, you might not wanna be there for all of that... um, but that's usually after... everything. Um, so... I think... for the sampling itself, I think as... Russ outlined, sounds good.

36:58 RTH: And I guess I would also say in that, in that regard, I'm... I, I think [pause]. I, I said at the outset that the videotapes... oughta be the... the property of the... collective. And what I, what I *generally* say about that i-... for this is a... this is a little bit of a different way, this is a three-way thing, which is... not, not, not my usual way of operating. U-, usually there's three... there's three or more people involved [pause]. But all but one

of them is on *my* team... basically it's... pe-, people that I control and... to the extent that I control anybody. But the... the [pause]. And, and so what I say in that kind of a, what I *would have said* if, if this were *my team* against Mel, so it's sort, sort of a deal, is that *Mel owns the videotape*... that Mel can do with a videotape, whatever the hell she would like to do with the videotape.

Julian comments: Looking at the transcript, phrasings like "*my team* against Mel" seem adversarial. But this goes with the *it's not about the words* discussion we'll continue to have. It's said in a kind of winking way. Acknowledging that different parties have different desires and the point of a project like this is to meet in the middle. I don't think it's worse (and it may even be better) than standard scientific phrasing: interviewer, interviewee, participant. Going beyond words, the whole gist that Russ is consistently conveying is that each party has free rein to shape this whole business how they want. By contrast, conventional science can seem like: sign these forms and now we'll examine you as a specimen.

Russ comments: RE adversarial terms: I think in general that it is desirable to apply terms to myself that are as negative or problematic as can be applied. I find that it frees the discussion: it encourages people to be critical of me if they feel critical (which is often a good way to learn something), and it tends to separate the words from the concepts (here, calling into question what is a *team*, what is *against*).

RE "meet in the middle": That implies some sort of compromise when I don't think there is compromise, there are parallel tracks. The main object for us here is to grasp Mel's experience with the highest fidelity we can muster, and as far as my participation is concerned, there is no compromise about that. If we get to the point where I, in my best judgment, think that we are compromising about the fidelity of Mel's experience, then I will withdraw my participation. At the same time I happily accept that each participant can, does, and must shape the interactions according to their own interests. Julian might be interested in conversations about DES procedure; Mel might be interested in how to craft a video; Russ might be interested in how to transmit things about DES that he finds important. We may find a way to scratch all three of those itches in activities that overlap in time, but that doesn't make any of them compromises.

37:54 RTH: So she has 51%... of the vote. And she could say to *Russ* [pause], "this is my inner experience... I revealed something about my experience that I don't want out there on the web for the, for the rest of your life. No, you cannot use that video." And she, and she should, she should have control over... that. [Pause] And so as a... general rule, I would say... what, what I do belongs to Mel. She can do with it, she can do with it whatever she wants to do with it... but I can't do whatever it is that I want to do with it because it's *Mel's* inner experience. But now we've got sort of a three-way deal involved, and it's sort, sort of hard for me... to, to say. But, but what, what I'm trying to convey here is that Mel oughta be able to make whatever videotapes she wants to make or show whoever it is that she wants to show... as far as I'm concerned. But now there's *Julian* involved and... that might not be true for Julian. And, uh [pause]. So we're trying to figure out how to...

38:53 JBK: Yeah.

38:53 RTH: ...how to deal with that.

38:54 JBK: I can't really... um, I, I might waive my, my veto power because... I don't really see myself needing it... unless I do a really terrible job as an interviewer and then think... "Oh... y'know, I can't have a career in... academia, because of how bad I am." But [laughs] I'm not, I'm not too concerned about that. So I might... might defer to, to Mel because I mean, it's... this is *your* experience. It's more personal *for you*. You have more of a reason... than me to... to want this public or not want it public. So... I think to make it easier... y'know, could give you 51% [laughs]... 51%, we each have the rest or something like that.

39:42 RTH: Well, and I, any, I think actually the way.. The way it actually works out is that it is, it can be personal... all the way around. It can be as personal for Mel as it is for... Julian... or as personal for Julian as it is for Mel... or for Russ for that. But [pause], it, it's personal in different ways because we each have different... contexts and different, different, uh, interests and... y'know, different tra-, imagined trajectories or whatever.

Julian comments: Looking back from the perspective of the end of sampling with Mel, this is true. It is very personal for me. Especially moments where my questioning went wrong, where I had certain blindspots, and where I tried to defend these blindspots.

40:15 JBK: Mm-hmm.

40:15 RTH: So [pause], so I think at the very least we ought to... take each other into consideration. Um... it's hard for me to imagine that I would not let you, or either one of you, do whatever it is that you wanna do with it, y'know. If Mel were to make a... video and... do whatever with the video, then I would have the right, I would think to... to say, *well, I, y'know... she showed some stuff and it was... she cut that... unfairly and... made me look like an idiot, which... I'm only that not quite that much of an idiot or whatever*. I would have the right to... to *respond* [JBK: Mm-hmm.] if, if she were to do something like that, which... I'm not worried that she would *do* that, but [pause]. But that would be that, that from my, in my *general* way of doing things, that would be what 51% of the vote means. She can do whatever it is that she wants, but then *I* can do whatever *I* want with whatever it is that she wants... that she's done. And uh...

41:08 JBK: Yeah.

41:11 Mel: Yep. I think everyone's on the same page of... the group would tick off anything. And if anything makes anyone uncomfortable, then we raise it and... take all of that into consideration. But definitely sounds like... everyone... agrees on that front, so... I'm not worried. Thank you for... the trust.

41:29 RTH: So, so normal... What, what I would really like to do is to say, I think, I think that's good. I think that is the way we should do it here. And that is the way that I said we should do it at the beginning. So I'm in agreement with that. What, what *I want to* say is that that's different from... the way DES usually is. Whereas D... where, where I explicit-, *I* explicitly say at the beginning of DES... it's *your* videotape and if *you* wanna

do with it, whatever it is you wanna do with it, *you* can do that... without taking into consideration, well, it might hurt my feelings or whatever. That's not...that... And, and the general... *rule*... it's *yours* and you can do it whatever you want. But here it's a different deal cuz there's three of us. And... and... so I don't know exactly how to... how to figure that out.

42:15 Mel: Yep. I'm happy with that. I've just keep it... an open dialogue.

42:20 JBK: Yes.

42:25 RTH: Anything else we should be talking about today?

42:28 JBK: All good on my side.

42:31 Mel: Yeah. I don't have...

42:32 RTH: So I will send, I will send a beeper sometime this in the next day or couple, couple of days. And... it should arrive, I would think by the beginning of next week. And so maybe by a week we could, I suppose, schedule... a time ...

[They compare calendars.]

45:28 RTH: ... work that out.

45:29 Mel: Perfect.

45:31 JBK: Perfect.

45:33 RTH: Alrighty. Thank you very much. Look forward to it. Be interesting to see what happens.

[They say bye.]