

INTERVIEW I

DATE: June 14, 1974
INTERVIEWEE: WAYNE ASPINALL
INTERVIEWER: JOE FRANTZ
PLACE: Mr. Aspinall's home in Palisade, Colorado

Tape 1 of 1

A: My Congressional District--Colorado's 4th--consisted of what is known as western Colorado. That is, everything west of the Continental Divide, plus the county of Park, of which Fairplay is the county seat; the county of Chaffee, of which Salida is the county seat; and part of the county of Lake, which is right on the ridge, of which Leadville is the county seat; and Jackson County, which is part of the North Park area, of which Walden is the county seat. Then in the redistricting in 1964 I got all of the San Luis Valley, headwaters of the Rio Grande River, with the exception of Costilla County, and I got the counties in the northeastern part of the state, Larimer, Weld, Logan, Morgan, Sedgwick, and Phillips.

F: You had to go out and develop a whole new constituency.

A: I went from Julesburg, northeastern corner, down to Towaoc, the southwestern corner.

F: That's bigger than, I think, most of the states.

A: The size of that district, of course, was equivalent of all of New England, without Rhode Island.

ASPINALL -- I -- 2

- F: You went up to Congress the same time that Johnson moved over to the Senate. When did you first get to know him?
- A: Why, I got to know him almost immediately, as far as that is concerned. He wasn't as active in those first few years, of course; the Senate was under the floor leadership of other individuals. I think that Senator McFarland was the senator just before Lyndon Johnson. But wherever Lyndon was people got to know him because he was always involved.
- F: He never stayed just on the Senate side, but a good many congressmen did get to know him?
- A: Oh, yes. He was a very astute member of the United States Senate as far as the House side was concerned, because he would come over to visit and not come over primarily to throw his weight around. Of course, he was with Speaker Rayburn all the time, working his way into leadership in the Senate right from the very beginning.
- F: The one big influence in Johnson's life that I missed was Sam Rayburn, whom you must have come to know quite well.
- A: Oh, yes. I couldn't be said to have been an inner-room worker with Speaker Rayburn, but I was chairman of my committee, and I handled bills on the floor from the first session or second session of Congress of which I was a member.
- F: Did Rayburn give you a pretty good leeway within your committee?
- A: Oh, yes.
- F: Or ride on top of it?

ASPINALL -- I -- 3

A: Oh, no. Everything that had to do with committee operations was up to the chairman. If the chairman saw fit to lean upon the Speaker or to go to him for advice ahead of time, invariably the Speaker was cooperative. If the chairman refused or failed or neglected to work that way with Rayburn, why, Rayburn let the chips fall as they would.

But I remember one of the most difficult matters that I had on the floor, especially in the early days, was the parliamentary question of whether or not we could bring up the Alaskan Statehood Bill as a preferential order. And he listened to debate between former Congressman Howard Smith of Virginia, who was a very close personal friend of Speaker Rayburn and myself.

Although he knew what my moves were going to be, he never for once gave me any idea of how his ruling was going to be until after the debate was all over. Neither did the parliamentarian, with whom I worked from the very first time I was chairman of a subcommittee in 1955 until I left Congress.

F: Did you get the feeling that the Alaskan bill was in a sense forced on the leadership of both Rayburn and Johnson, or did they enthusiastically embrace it?

A: Oh, I would say that Speaker Rayburn, being a Texan and having some of the feelings of Texans as far as bringing in new states, and especially bringing in a state without too much financial backing and also a state where three races were prominent besides the Caucasian race, was somewhat reluctant. But that didn't

ASPINALL -- I -- 4

mean that he used that reluctance to hold back when everything was in order for consideration. I never knew Speaker Rayburn to just absolutely put something under the rug because he just personally didn't particularly care for it.

Of course, we never brought up the bill in the House until we had an agreement with former United States Senator Russell of Georgia that if Alaska went through, then he would withdraw his opposition to Hawaii. I would say that there was more opposition from Speaker Rayburn and Senator Russell and perhaps then- United States Senator Lyndon Johnson to bringing in Hawaii than to bringing in the state of Alaska.

F: Of course, Hawaii represented something new in that there was no continental connection, apart from being a polyglot conflict.

A: Well, there's no continuity of land area of course. Also as far as Alaska is concerned the same argument could be used, because there is a hiatus of sovereignty which is owned by Canada. Anyhow, it was very pleasing and agreeable to work with Speaker Rayburn because you always had a feeling that he was fair and equitable. As far as Lyndon Johnson is concerned, the same thing prevailed. He might do his best to get you to do something that he wanted you to do, but he wouldn't go behind your back to do it.

F: Back there when 1960 was drawing up close and it looked as if Johnson was going to be a candidate, although he wouldn't announce, did he make any moves to try to get you to enlist Colorado in his behalf?

ASPINALL -- I -- 5

A: No, not directly. He depended upon his friend Ed Johnson, formerly the United States senator. And Ed Johnson, of course, was pushed out of position almost immediately with the state convention at Durango when Kennedy came in and took over the delegates under the leadership of Byron White, now the Supreme Court justice, and left Ed Johnson at home as far as delegates were concerned. But even at that, Kennedy and White only had one-half of the delegates. They didn't have a majority of the delegates until I went to Los Angeles and found out I could no longer support Adlai Stevenson, largely because of the supporters of Adlai Stevenson at the convention, and threw my support to John Kennedy. That gave Kennedy the majority of our votes.

F: Did you have any intimations that Kennedy was going to approach Johnson and that Johnson would accept?

A: No, this was . . .

F: You just learned it virtually the same way I did.

A: Just like everybody else did, I think, as far as that's concerned. We didn't, those of us who had worked with both of them, think that there could be that much rapport between those two individuals. We didn't think Kennedy was big enough to take somebody who was in many respects diametrically opposed at that time to the thoughts that Kennedy had. And we didn't think that Lyndon Johnson would be willing to be second place.

F: And give up the power of the Senate is the thing.

ASPINALL -- I -- 6

A: Yes, surely. I've been asked many times why I didn't run for the Senate, and I've been offered the Senate position as far as candidacy. But what was the need of me at the time it was suggested to me, in my middle sixties, to give up a chairmanship and the seniority position?

F: And start over as a junior member.

A: And start over as a junior member of the other body. The only advantage would be six years instead of two, and that didn't amount to much.

F: You practically represented a whole state anyhow!

A: Yes, surely. Not only that, the work that I was doing by that time. . . I was recognized not only as a congressman of the Fourth District of Colorado, but all of Colorado and all of the Rocky Mountain area.

F: Well, to a great extent, a national congressman.

A: There is a great deal of the jurisdiction of the committee which is national in scope. There is a lot of work in the eastern part of the United States for our committee operation. There is the difference between the two committees of the House and the Senate. As you know, the Senate committee has been almost always 100 per cent membership from the West. It is not so with the House committee. Our committee had men like Saylor and three or four from New York, Florida, North Carolina, and even from up in Massachusetts. So I saw no reason to run for the Senate. Of course sometimes people make

ASPINALL -- I -- 7

decisions, I suppose, on intuitive responses rather than upon judgment. And as it worked out this was the only way that Lyndon Johnson could ever have been president of the United States.

F: Did you see anything of him during his vice presidential years, or was he sort of isolated from you?

A: He was never isolated from anybody. No, he had his job to do, and for those three years he was doing a great deal of work as vice president. He wasn't on the Hill as much, but in matters having to do with legislation he took part.

F: He didn't just stay in his executive office?

A: No.

F: Where were you when he became president?

A: I was west of Decatur, Illinois, if I can remember correctly, about, oh, a hundred miles, in a storm.

F: On the ground?

A: I was driving home. I was either the last member of the House of Representatives, or one of the last two members of the House of Representatives, other than the members from Texas, to whom President Kennedy spoke before he was assassinated. Because he and I had a conference just before he left for Texas and before I left for Colorado. The Wilderness Bill was the matter that was involved. The President had asked for immediate support, immediate consideration, and I suggested to him that that was

ASPINALL -- I -- 8

impossible in the lateness of the session. He simply said, "All right, can't blame me for asking." And I said, "Well, that's fine. We'll take care of it immediately after the first of the new session." The next thing I knew of the President I turned on the radio by inadvertence, because I never use a radio in travelling, and just caught the news that the assassination had occurred.

F: What did you do? Did you come on home, or did you turn around and go back to Washington?

A: I came on home. There wasn't any reason for me to return to Washington at all.

F: But you kept the car radio on?

A: Yes, I kept the car radio on for some time.

F: When did Johnson get in touch with you?

A: Well, not until the beginning of the next session.

F: He contacted you by mail, by memo, or letter somewhere in there to ask about the status of the Wilderness Bill, I know. I presume as far as your committee was concerned there was no break in continuity.

A: That's right. You see, that was in 1963. We still had the next year to go--1964. There was no reorganization of the Congress or the committees or anything like that. I was busy during that interim and it was just natural that when the next session came into existence the Wilderness Bill was one of the first ones. It was all ready to go with the exception of some language.

ASPINALL -- I -- 9

- F: You didn't really have to shift anything because of the new administration?
- A: Oh, no.
- F: Did Johnson show a real interest in it?
- A: Yes. He showed an interest. As the president, he was still working, of course, with most of Kennedy's people, and it just naturally followed through as the second year follows through in any Congress.
- F: Did you get more suggestions than you would have normally, with Johnson in on the things, that you might look into as a committee, or did you pretty well continue again setting your own pace, running it your way.
- A: I set the pace of the committee. On the other hand, I would suggest that matters in which President Johnson was interested, he followed through just like President Kennedy. He never hesitated to have his secretary call me up and ask me if I could meet with the President. He never hesitated to say that, "The President's on the phone and he wants to talk to you." We continued this way right down until he went out of office.
- F: Was the Puerto Rican situation part of your concern?
- A: Yes.
- F: Now, did the President show any particular interest in that?
- A: Not especially as far as I was concerned. As I recollect, at this time he was listening more to the State Department, the United

ASPINALL -- I -- 10

Nations position, which more or less is a senatorial operation, than to pay attention to legislation which would naturally clear through both bodies of Congress. He knew that I had worked closely with Governor Munoz and I was working with Munoz's successors. He understood all that. But as far as the question of commonwealth or anything like that, he never spoke to me about it.

F: I know that there's a long background to what eventually became Redwood National Park. But had you made much progress prior to the Johnson Administration, or had you gotten really beyond just the general talking stage?

A: As I remember, we had just talked about it, general talking stage. There was no attempt on the part of private interests to come into any real conflict with the Congress as far as area was concerned. But it was only shortly after that that the Redwoods Bill came into being, and we had to make those decisions. Some of them were pretty tough because there were a lot of people wanting more area.

F: Some people not wanting that much, or any.

A: Some people not wanting anything, and we had to make our decision then between the position of the Forest Service and the National Park Service on the part of this area. The President and Secretary Udall and those working with them, they were quite cooperative. We had no particular difficulty.

ASPINALL -- I -- 11

F: Was there any difference in Udall's procedures under Johnson from the way they'd been under Kennedy?

A: Yes, I would say there was. And as I look back over those years it's my feeling that President Kennedy was not then as ambitious in his program as President Johnson was in his day. This had an effect upon men like Secretary Udall, who was in the cabinet with each of them. President Kennedy had the charisma and the ability to speak out and project programs. He never had the opportunity to really put any program into execution because he passed away too soon. President Johnson came along. He took all that atmosphere of idealism, and sometimes I think a super-advanced Great Society, and the aftermath of the assassination, and he put into operation many of the things that I feel that Kennedy had merely wanted to talk about and perhaps didn't want especially to see happen. So Udall responded accordingly. Udall became more or less of a zealot in the interest of much land under the control of the Department of the Interior, especially for the benefit of recreation.

F: Did Johnson urge you to get on with the Redwoods? I know you had some talks with him.

A: He let us know. He let us know that many of these projects were projects which had his blessing, and he liked to have things done. He let us know that all the time. I don't know that he ever spoke to me on the Redwoods especially, but he sent messages

ASPINALL -- I -- 12

to me through Larry O'Brien's right-hand man, Desautels, who had worked for me for twelve years before he went with Kennedy.

F: Who was that?

A: Desautels, Claude J. Desautels, who was my contact as far as many of the details were concerned with what the White House wanted.

F: Did Johnson in general have pretty good staff work as far as your relationship was concerned?

A: Yes, oh yes. He had good staff work. If you're talking about his particular feeling and understanding about matters that were before Congress, I think he did. Sometimes I think he had better understanding than his Departmental Secretaries had.

F: Were you active in the campaign of 1964, or was it necessary to be active?

A: Well, I was active in the campaign of 1964 just as I had been in 1960. I campaigned diligently for Kennedy. I campaigned diligently for Johnson. There was no question in this state but what Johnson was going to carry it with a good majority. There was no question in my mind but that Kennedy would've carried it in 1964, too. Because there'd been a complete swing around as far as 1960 and 1964 in relation to Kennedy's position by the time he was assassinated. It so happens that I was reapportioned, my district was reapportioned in 1964, and I was given this large area of northeastern Colorado which was Republican and which they thought that I wouldn't be able to carry under any condition. Of course, I ended up by either riding with or riding on the coattails of President Johnson, and I

ASPINALL -- I -- 13

carried all thirty-five counties, and by a big vote. I carried my district by a larger vote than President Johnson carried my district.

F: He rode your coattails.

A: Well, I don't know whether you'd call it riding coattails. It's pretty hard to say.

F: Right. Well, you rode together. He came to Denver in October of 1964, and you met him.

A: That's right.

F: What was that day like?

A: Oh, it was a festive day, friends every place. I never got as enthusiastic in that particular reception as I did in the one when he came to Denver to go out to the University of Denver to get an honorary degree.

F: I was going to ask you about that, so let's talk about that.

A: Well, that was the day, of course, when we came out on the plane together. We got into the car together; Congressman Rogers and I were riding in the back seat with the President. We were coming up 32nd Street and turned off on Monaco. This is the colored district, the black district of Denver. He saw all these pretty homes with beautiful lawns and all these black people on the sidewalk and he turned to both Byron and me and said, "Where did these black people come from?" I said, "Mr. President, this is their residential area." And he said, "What?" I said, "Their

ASPINALL -- I -- 14

residential area." He shouted to the driver of the car, "Stop this car!" And he got out and shook hands with those people, got back in, and he said, "I've never seen a black district like this that's taken care of like this." I said, "Well, Mr. President, this just goes to show that if you give people a chance, regardless of their race or their color, that they can take care of property. It makes no difference. They'll do it." Well, we drove on perhaps another mile and he stopped the car again and got out. He stopped the car three times in that ride because he was so overwhelmed, and, I would say, pleased to think that this was a fact in some parts of the United States.

F: This wasn't exactly the black ghetto sort of situation.

A: No, sir. This wasn't a black ghetto, and it wasn't the division that you see a great deal of in some parts of the South.

F: Coming out on Air Force One, did he sort of pick your brains on Colorado, on whom he would be seeing and what he ought to [do] ?

A: Not especially. He already had that information. He was anxious, of course, to visit. But I spoke with Lady Bird because we had a few things that he had in mind, even at that time, about his own situation in Texas, as well as some of the work that was being done in Washington, D.C. Judge Thornberry, former Congressman Thornberry, had been taking up Lady Bird's time, and pretty soon he yelled over to Judge Thornberry, "Homer, you've been sitting by Lady Bird long enough. You make way for Wayne." And I went over and sat

ASPINALL -- I -- 15

with Lady Bird, and we talked over a few of the matters in which she was interested.

F: That had to do with the eventual Boyhood Home?

A: This was leading up to that, as well as some other things. Then later on the President himself became interested before he went out of office, and he said, "We'd like to see this taken care of." And I said, "Well, Mr. President, that's all right, but remember that you have to clear it through the advisory board of the National Park Service before we'll touch it. I was surprised because of his answer, and we were together when he answered me. He said, "I don't understand the advisory board of the National Park Service?" This was one of the few times I ever caught him short. I explained to him what it was, and he said, and I will always remember this, "Well, don't you think Lady Bird would make a good member of that board?" I said, "Mr. President, I think she'd make a fine member. The next thing I knew, the vacancy that was on the board had been filled, and the proposed unit of the National Park Service received the endorsement.

Then after the endorsement came through he said, "We're ready to move." And I said, "Mr. President, you're right. We're ready for the legislation." He said, "Well, you introduce it." I said, "Mr. President, I'll introduce it, but I think that you ought to get your fellow Texans to introduce the bill. If they want me to have my name on it, why, that'll be fine, but it seems to me that you've got your men there." He said, "Well, of course, that's right. So

ASPINALL -- I -- 16

that's the way that bill was introduced, and it went through Congress without any difficulty. But it was a question again of getting things done that were necessary. Of course, we all know the way that Mr. Johnson worked. He was up there at the last step as a rule and making the decisions for the final decision and oftentimes didn't understand as much about some of these minor steps that are necessary upon which to build a legislative program.

F: Incidentally, Lady Bird just finished her six-year term and they had a little farewell reception for her in April. Of course, she stays on the council.

A: Well, she's a very sweet woman.

F: Did you get the feeling that you kind of had a sub-secretary of the interior with her in the White House?

A: Oh, no. Not necessarily. She worked closer with the local group in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Lasker, I think, is her name.

F: Right. Mary Lasker.

A: And there was a good friend, former superintendent there, I can't remember his name.

F: You mean Nash Castro?

A: No, the one that was before him.

F: Well, I'm thinking. Oh, Connie Wirth, maybe.

A: No, no. He was the national director.

F: I can't think who you might be thinking of right now.

A: Well, it doesn't make any difference.

F: Right.

ASPINALL -- I -- 17

A: That's where they were working, and she was taking care of her Washington, D. C. plans. She had to do that, because in order to get the right kind of an approach to national matters she had to see that the work was done well in Washington.

F: Right. You were named Conservationist of the Year in 1965.

A: That's 1964. I just referred to the award. I have three of the awards of the conservation group. I have the award for the Conservationist of the Year by the National Wildlife Federation, and then I have the award from the Isaak Walton League, and then I have some other one--the Hamilton Preservation Medal. These were in the years when the conservation organizations were paying more attention to the heart of conservation than to either one of the extremes. The award that I appreciate the most came from the Wildlife Federation, because in my book the outstanding conservationists of the wildlife and also recreation are two good old friends, Dr. Spencer Smith, and his boss, Dr. Ira Gabrielson. Then one of the best workers with whom I did any work in Congress was the late Joe Penfold. He was undoubtedly, I would say, the most effective, detailed legislative draftsman on legislation. This includes the Land and Water Conservation Fund Bill, the Wilderness Bill, and many of the general conservation bills.

F: Did Johnson notice when you won these various awards?

A: I don't know. I'd have to go back through my files now to remember. I think on one or two occasions I got a letter from him, but I

ASPINALL -- I -- 18

couldn't say for sure. I got a good many letters.

F: Did he talk with you about pollution problems or water problems?

A: Not especially. See, this was over in the other committee. This was in the Public Works Committee, and I had very little to do with that committee.

F: What about things like grazing fees?

A: We never got to the details on that. He was very much interested in the Public Land Law Review Commission work and saw to it that in most instances we had good, hard-working people appointed by the President. He was quite chagrined for a few months when it seemed impossible to get the Public Land Law Review Commission organized because of the difficulty between Senator Clinton Anderson and myself. Senator Anderson just didn't want a staff member of the House being chairman of a commission such as PLLRC, and I was determined that Milton A. Pearl, who later on was the director, and who'd worked for me and who was one of the real workmen in drawing the legislation and seeing to it that it was inclusive enough, would be a working director. Finally, Senator Allott from Colorado saw to it that Anderson gave way and paved the way to have me as chairman.

F: Did Anderson have his own candidate?

A: I don't think so.

F: He just didn't want you as a candidate.

A: He just didn't want a member of the staff of the House committee to be Director. He never said anything to me about a candidate. Of course, in many respects Anderson and I differed on conservation matters, because

ASPINALL -- I -- 19

Anderson was one of them who had to work and did work with his staff, much closer than . . . He depended on his staff, let's put it this way. He didn't work any closer with them than I did mine, but he depended upon them more in the decision process.

F: At these meetings that Johnson would have with the committee chairmen, were they just generalities, or did he sort of go from chairman to chairman?

A: He went from chairman to chairman, and he wanted to know what the program was. He wanted to know when matters were coming up. He didn't pay as much attention to my committee as he did to some of the national and international committees, because if you'll notice the publicity that's given to programs, very seldom do you have anything coming out of the Committee of Interior and Insular Affairs, as absolutely necessary during any particular session. But he always stopped as he went by, and he'd always say, "Wayne, where do you stand?" And I would tell him about the important pieces of legislation that we had, and then he'd pass on. But very often any particular--

F: He didn't particularly push one activity in Interior over another.

A: No.

F: I notice in June of 1965 you went down to a luncheon for Prime Minister Menzies of Australia, and you went to the White House. Any particular reason why you would have been there? I mean,

ASPINALL -- I -- 20

any professional reason other than just that the President wanted you?

A: I would think that the only reason at that time was my interest in the Pacific. Otherwise, my background being what it was Very few people understand how much jurisdiction this committee has as far as the globe's concerned. It's got a lot of jurisdiction. Then, of course, here again I served with Australian officers in the war. I just went down as a guest, enjoyed it just as I did other occasions in the parliamentary union operations.

F: Did the President show an interest in these outer islands?

A: Oh, yes. He didn't have time to show as much interest as I would have hoped because he depended on some of the people whom I think were just a little bit one-sided. In other words, I doubt very much if the Job Corps and the OEO services were what President Johnson was told they would be. I think they caused as many problems at that time as they did good. But he was interested, and he was interested in Samoa. As you know, he appointed my son to Samoa, and this in itself is one of the . . .

F: How did that come about?

A: Well, my son had gone down there in 1961 with Governor Rex Lee, at Rex Lee's request. Rex Lee had asked me to see if I couldn't get an attorney some place in the United States who'd go down as attorney general. I was at home at the time. Rex called me up, and he said, "Have you got anybody?" I said, "Rex, not yet." I was speaking about

ASPINALL -- I -- 21

that at the dinner table that night, and my son said, "Well, Dad, why didn't you think of me?" I said, "Well, you don't want that job." And he said, "I'm not so sure." I won't go into the reasons back of it. He said, "If I can talk to Sherry's mother-- that was his wife's mother--" "I'll let you know in the morning." Well, Rex knew my son. My son had associated with his children. So the next morning he said, "Sherry and I'd like to go." I called Rex up, and he said, "That's fine." That's the way that he went down in the latter part of 1961.

Within two years he was lieutenant governor or government secretary. And then when Rex got ready to leave, my son felt that perhaps it'd be a good place for him to finish up in the tropics. But that was all that he said. I never said anything to the President. The President and I at that time were having some differences on some legislation, I can't remember just what it was, but, as I remember, he was wanting a wilderness bill or something. He had his secretary call me up and ask me if I'd be willing to see the President, and I said, "What's wrong with you? The President's request, regardless of who the President is, is my order. I want you to understand that." "Well, " he said, "the President would like to see you then Friday afternoon at four o'clock." And I said, "I'll be there."

So I was there at five minutes of four. The President called me in at four o'clock, which was rather exceptional, to get in so

ASPINALL -- I -- 22

quickly, and he shook hands and said, "Wayne, would you like to have a drink?" I said, "Mr. President, I don't drink in the afternoon." He said, "I don't mean that kind of a drink, I mean a soft drink." I said, "Well, I'll take a Coca-Cola," and he said, "I drink root beer." I said, "That's better yet." So we drank root beer.

I sat on the davenport and he sat in a chair, and he hadn't yet indicated what he wanted to talk to me about. I was expecting a little bit of pressure. He called the porter and the porter took the glasses, and he turned to me -- I have a picture that shows this situation, and I'll show it to you before you leave -- [and] said, "Wayne," -- I expected it was coming -- "I'm thinking about appointing your son as governor of Samoa. What have you got to say about it?" I said, "Well, Mr. President," -- of course, I was relieved at that time.

F: "This is nicer than I thought it was going to be."

A: That's right. I said, "Well, Mr. President, when does a father give way to his son?" He said, "I like that, but your son is married to a Samoan." I said, "That's his business, Mr. President. I might not have chosen that kind of a marriage myself, but that's his business. I don't tell my children whom they should marry." Of course he was having a little difficulty at that time himself, a difficult experience, not a difficulty. He said, "Oh, I like that, but you may lose some votes." I said, "Mr. President, I don't want those kind of votes." He turned to me with that smile that he had and said, "You can tell your son

ASPINALL -- I -- 23

that I'm going to appoint him as governor of Samoa." I said, "oh, no, Mr. President, that's your business," and he said, "All right, Wayne." So two days later he sent word to the. . .

F: Owen was down in Samoa at the time?

A: Owen was in Samoa. So Owen Stewart Aspinall within two weeks came, he and his wife, to Washington. He took the oath of office in Secretary Udall's office.

F: He didn't have to be briefed on Samoa, did he?

A: No, he didn't have to be briefed on Samoa. Then we went over to the White House with the new Governor and his wife Taya, and the President and Mrs. Johnson entertained Owen Stewart's mother and his wife's father Chief Lutu, and myself out on the Truman Balcony. I suppose that is as intimate a relationship as I had with President Johnson, as far as expenditure of time was concerned.

F: Incidentally, where is Owen Stewart now?

G: He's here. He stayed for two years as governor.

F: By here, you mean--?

A: Grand Junction.

F: In Grand Junction. What, practicing law?

A: He's going to practice law. We're going to open up a law office as soon as the new building down there is ready. Aspinall and Aspinall. I will be "of counsel;" I have quit practicing law as such. After leaving Samoa Owen Stewart went to Guam with the blessings of the Department of the Interior under Secretary Hickel, stayed in Guam about four years, a little over four years. Now he's back here.

ASPINALL -- I -- 24

F: Did Johnson consult with you before he made appointments in these areas?

G: No, no. Of course, he didn't have too many appointments in these areas. You see, we had gotten to the place where the elections were taking place, and the only appointment that he had had to do with was the high commissioner in the Trust Territory. They were already electing a governor in Guam. They were already, well, they were not electing a governor in Samoa, but it was Lee and Aspinall during Johnson terms. After Aspinall came the change in administration, and the new president appointed another governor. In Puerto Rico, they were electing them. Down in the Virgin Islands, I knew who he was going to appoint down there, but then he was for the election of the governors in the islands. We knew that, so that bill went through.

F: Did Johnson or Kennedy appoint Paiewonsky? I don't remember.

A: Well, the first appointment was. . . Isn't there somebody else? No, you're right. It was an appointment by Kennedy, Paiewonsky, and he was carried over then by Johnson.

F: And he stayed down there until they were ready to elect.

A: And in the Trust Territory, if you will remember correctly, they appointed Benitez of Puerto Rico, as Deputy High Commissioner.

F: Jose Benitez.

A: Jose Benitez. He didn't prove to be too successful, so they appointed Bill Norwood, was that [it]?

F: I don't remember.

A: Yes, I think it was Bill Norwood.

F: What was wrong with Benitez? Just the wrong man for the job?

ASPINALL -- I -- 25

A: Just the wrong man for the job. A lot of pep, a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of good will, but very little understanding of the people and not a desire to get too close to them. Although he saved some lives there once when he became rather a hero when a plane went down. He's a good fellow. I'm very fond of Benitez. We have a nickname we give to him, but that's neither here nor there.

F: That's not for the tape? Did Johnson push the Saline Water Bill?

A: Yes, yes. He was favorable to this operation.

F: He gave you, I think, the first pen at the signing.

A: That's right. I have the picture, and I have the pen. The fact of the case is, he gave me a lot of pens. I was present at a lot of signings.

F: There's a lot of activity under your chairmanship and his presidency. Did he and you pretty well agree on what ought to go into a Saline Water Bill?

A: That's right.

F: Wasn't any problem of working out details or negotiations?

A: No. We came into a different era with the advent of President Johnson. Kennedy didn't get to do very much about the program. But up to that time it had been a kind of a program in the background. The new authorization became an important matter, and they were already thinking of the time that bill was signed that we were going to have a relationship between old Mexico and the United States. President Johnson was, you know better than I, very friendly to the Mexican government.

ASPINALL -- I -- 26

F: Right. The Chamizal was pretty worked out before Johnson became president.

A: It was worked out, but there were still some details to take care of. If I remember correctly, wasn't that bill passed during the first session of . . . ?

F: Yes.

A: I can't remember exactly, but our friend, oh, a member of a committee, helped carry it along.

F: Dick White?

A: No, Dick was in on it, but--

F: I don't remember. It doesn't make any difference.

A: Well, I can't either.

F: Was there any problem with getting that into an Interior concern, or was State agreeable to that in the beginning?

A: It must have been because they never even questioned the jurisdiction.

F: It was just a matter of routine in working out the details?

A: If there was any problem before it must have been taken care of higher up before it ever came into us.

F: What about something like the San Rafael Wilderness Bill, or the Assateague Seashores, and so forth? Did they prove to have any particular problems?

A: Well, they presented problems. Each one of those bills always presents a problem, but as far as the presidency was concerned--

ASPINALL -- I -- 27

- F: Well, that's what I meant, vis-a-vis your relationship with the White House.
- A: They never presented enough problem so that there was any particular necessity for exceptional cooperation with the White House.
- F: There was no kind of White House philosophy that said, "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not."
- A: That's right. And, of course, during those years the President and Stewart Udall were working pretty close together. It was only at the last of President Johnson's incumbency where they fouled up because of a misunderstanding and perhaps a lack of proper contact with the President by Udall, up until the time that President Johnson came out and said that he wanted seven and a half million acres of land which was public land covered into the National Park System and the Wildlife Refuges.. This was just shortly before his leaving office. Up until that time, as far as I was concerned, I didn't realize that there was any difficulty, especially between the President and Secretary Udall.

When the President called up, I had somebody with me on the phone, and then he came on and said, "Wayne, I want seven and a half million acres made into a recreation area in the National Park Service and the Wildlife Refuge Act before I go out of office I understand that you're throwing some opposition." I said, "Well, Mr. President, this isn't the way that this should be taken care of. These are public lands, and when you change the uses the Congress should make the decision." He said, "Well, I understand

ASPINALL -- I -- 28

that you told Secretary Udall that you wouldn't object." And I said, "Mr. President, Secretary Udall has never spoken to me about this particular matter." He said, "What?" I said, "That's exactly right. With that in mind, it hit me when I read it in the paper the other day that something just wasn't in accordance with our agreement. Because we had an agreement that Congress would go ahead and authorize."

That was all there was at that time. He was a little taken aback; I think that he'd been misled, one way or the other. He called back a little later on, shortly, maybe two or three days, and he said, "Wayne, what if I cut it down to 345,000 rather than 7,500,000?" And I said, "Mr. President, you're my president. I'm not going to raise hell, but I still stand on the principle that it isn't your responsibility and it isn't your authority to do this. This is congressional authority." He said, "I think I understand that, but what'll you do about it?" I said, "Well, Mr. President, there's only one thing I can do. I won't object, but you'll never get any money to administer it as such until Congress has a chance to look at it." And he said, "All right, all right, Wayne. That's okay."

F: Well, what do you think? Do you think Udall just got in a hurry and just neglected his footwork and contact work and so forth? I know it has to be a surmisal.

A: I'm willing to be charitable at this time. Of course, Mr. Udall himself wasn't beyond ambitions. He'd already served almost as long as any

ASPINALL -- I -- 29

secretary of the interior. I suppose that he kind of thought that he would like to leave a little more record of some kind. This is human, things that take place.

F: Well, it was an unfortunate thing to have happened right at the end of what had been seven and a half good years.

A: I understand that Secretary Udall almost lost his position right at the last because of this, and as far as I was concerned it was a terrible shock to me. Because up to that time we had worked very closely. I hadn't any reason to be critical at all before.

F: And then just suddenly the governmental process was too slow.

A: And then suddenly it just was too slow, and they wanted to leave some records. But the President, under the circumstances, was just as fine as any person could ever be as far as I was concerned. Far be it from me, I was a mere chairman and he was a president, but I still have my idea of what's governmentally correct and what isn't.

F: You and the President had one thing in common. I wonder if you ever discussed it. That is you both are practically textbook examples of what doctors would like to show as how to come back from heart attacks.

A: Well, of course . . .

F: I mean I can't see that it slowed you down, and it sure didn't slow him down.

A: No. It slowed us down for a while.

F: It was an interruption, I'll admit.

A: Little did we ever talk about it. Only he sent me a letter of concern when I had mine, and I certainly sent him a letter of concern and made my personal position clear that I thought he ought to kind of rest a little while and build himself back up. He couldn't rest like I could. See, up to that time I'd been working twelve or sixteen hours a day, just like he did. I was not one who had hobbies and played, neither did he to any great extent. But I was in a position so that I could cut back to ten to twelve hours a day instead of twelve to sixteen and work gradually into it. His problems kept coming up. Now, I had nobody on the committee to just fall back on except my subcommittee chairmen, who were all at that time working with me, taking care of their work, and I had a staff that was as loyal as. . . . I didn't have to worry about my staff. But for some reason or other, I was able to make a recovery that he never was able to.

F: Did you ever discuss foreign affairs with him?

A: Not to amount to anything. We discussed matters having to do more or less with atomic energy, and that was about all.

F: Yes, I knew that. You were a member of the joint committee?

A: I was a member of the joint committee before he became president, or before Kennedy became president. I was chairman of the raw materials sub-committee, and this got into some matters with other countries. I suppose this is one of the reasons why I went down to the dinner with Prime Minister Menzies.

F: Did the President show a real interest in this raw material?

ASPINALL -- I -- 31

A: Yes, oh yes. He knew.

F: What did you do on this committee?

A: What did we do on the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy?

F: And on the Raw Materials Committee?

A: Well, on the raw materials we kept as complete an inventory as it was possible to keep. At that time we controlled the price. We knew where the bomb power was and the different improvements that were being made all of the time, and we also knew where the other producing nations were. We understood what was happening in South Africa, in the Congo, and what could happen in Australia.

F: Well, now, when you change sizes on various stockpiles, who makes that decision.

A: That was a military decision as far as . . .

F: Would they advise with you on that before they'd move?

A: It had nothing to do with material. This just had to do with the finished product. The price was pretty doggone consistent throughout all those years with the enriched material. Of course, we controlled the enrichment facilities. There were those of us on the committee who controlled also the fact that we didn't want imports at the time, that we wanted our producers to be protected, not to the exclusion of good relations with other countries, but at least to the question of the basic welfare of our industry.

F: Did President Johnson ever talk with you about energy resources, and the shale oil possibilities?

A: No. He was pretty well oriented to the question of oil and gas, and

ASPINALL -- I -- 32

the oil shale wasn't at that time any pressing problem. It wasn't until later.

F: It was kind of a little like when I was a kid, you talk about perpetual motion.

A: Sure, and I've talked about oil shale now since the 'teens, and we may be a little closer to meeting [the need] than before, but not too much.

F: You went down for the dedication of the Boyhood Home?

A: Yes, I did.

F: What'd you do?

A: Oh, I visited with the President, Mrs. Johnson, visited with members of the Park Service and went out to the home.

F: Ate some cornbread?

A: Oh, yes. We had a nice meal, just generally good times. I was supposed, I guess, and I think I can say this with the necessary delicacy, to ride in the old automobile with the President and Mrs. Johnson. But this honor was taken away from me by someone else who was a little bit closer. But they were very nice, and they were very appreciative.

F: Did it pretty well come out the way that you anticipated, back when you were considering it in the committee?

A: Yes. And, you know, we went out on the farm. You asked what we did. We went out on the farm, and as we were coming back looking around on the farm here was the former President riding out there on his horse to see if things were being done like he wanted.

ASPINALL -- I -- 33

(Laughter)

F: (Laughter) He had his eye on every sparrow.

A: Yes, sir.

F: You went back down to the Library dedication.

A: That's right.

F: What did you do there?

A: I attended the ceremonies. Of course, I didn't take part in them. I enjoyed it. It was very nice, and I went down at the special request of the President and Mrs. Johnson, although I had nothing to do with the Library at all.

F: I thought it was a great gathering of the Clan.

A: It was very good. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the way it was put up. I thought that we might have rain, but it didn't rain.

I would say that, by and large, President Johnson was as human a president as you would ever find. He knew politics, but he also liked friends. He also liked people who knew their job. He wasn't a browbeater as far as I ever knew, at all. But he was a wheeler and a dealer as far as political activities were concerned.

F: He knew what Wayne Aspinall could do and what he could not do.

A: I suppose as much as any president he knew the workings of the legislative department or branch of government, and he respected it. It's true that Kennedy should have known, but Kennedy never worked at the job like Johnson did. Neither did President Nixon. He never worked at the job. I would be the first one to admit that my favorite president of this century, perhaps, as far as personal

ASPINALL -- I -- 34

operation is concerned, President Truman, didn't know the legislative process as well as President Johnson. He hadn't served in the House, and when he was in the Senate it was an entirely different operation. He didn't have the authority in the Senate that Lyndon Johnson had.

It makes all the difference in the world if you have a knowledgeable president and a president who has the ambition to get the things done. If he can ride over some of the people on the legislative level he'll ride over them, especially if they don't do their homework. If they do their homework, he'll cooperate, as President Johnson did. I think he's one of the outstanding leaders of this nation.

F: I thank you Mr. Congressman.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and of Interview I]

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