INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: KENNETH E. BELIEU

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: The Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

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G: Now, I understand that your initial involvement on the Hill preceded 1955 and that you did work with the Army-McCarthy hearings, is that correct?

B: No, I was in the army during the Army-McCarthy hearings. I was executive officer to the Secretary of the Army, Bob Stevens, who was part and parcel of the Army-McCarthy hearings, as you remember. When those hearings were over--I must back up a bit. I had no real connection with Lyndon Johnson during the time that I was in the army; we'd appear in a hearing and he'd be a senator in the group that was holding the hearing, but that's all. So when the hearings were over and in 1955 the Senate Armed Services Committee offered me a job as one of their professional staff members, I decided that with this artificial leg that I had that I probably might have a dead end in the army somewhere, so I retired and went to the Hill.

Lyndon Johnson was a member of the Armed Services Committee. Senator [Richard] Russell was chairman. Styles Bridges was the senior Republican. Lyndon was number three on the committee on the Democratic side, Russell being the chairman and Harry Byrd, Sr. of Virginia, now deceased, the next in rank, and then Lyndon. The Democrats consisted [of]--I can't remember all of them, I don't believe, but [Estes] Kefauver, Scoop [Henry] Jackson, Sam Ervin, Senator [John] Stennis, of course. And the

Republicans [were] Styles Bridges, [Leverett] Saltonstall, Margaret Smith, Francis Case, and a couple others.

A professional staff member works as a professional staff member. In those days there were just three of us, and each eventually generated work, or received work, from the various senators as fate seemed to foretell. I began to pick up a lot of Lyndon Johnson's work. I guess my first real brush, you might say, with Lyndon Johnson was he called me to the floor one day. It was a quiet spot during the Senate deliberations, and standing down in the middle of the Senate floor, he said to me, "I want you to prepare a bill transferring the San Jacinto Army Ordnance Arsenal from the federal government to the state of Texas." This arsenal had been a bone of contention for some time, and I said, "No, sir." Well, he didn't really appreciate somebody saying no, sir to him, and he reached out--he is about three inches taller than I am, I guess--and grabbed me by the lapel and pulled my face up to his chin and said, "Why?" And I about lost every profound thought I had. But I said, "Because I don't want to see a man who is potentially a president of the United States acting like he's more for Texas than [for] the rest of the country." And he let go of me immediately and said, "All right, General, you work it out," meaning do it anyway.

Well, I went through about twenty-one or twenty-two different drafts on that bill. It almost became a bone of contention between the Democrats and the Republicans because the Defense Department was up in arms on it. We finally settled on one that got, typical of Lyndon, unanimous consent, which said the Secretary of Defense would review it and decide what to do with it. Well, lo and behold, weeks later, or months later, I was getting a haircut in the Senate dining room [barber shop?] and the barber was about

halfway around my head when the phone rang and they said, "The Majority Leader wants to talk to you." He said, "Thank you, General. The Secretary of Defense just agreed to give the San Jacinto Ordnance place to Texas. You did it. I think you're great." I went back and got my hair cut. But that's basically the first--

G: Why had that been a source of controversy?

B: Oh, there had been explosions there. Usually when that happens someone wants it for a commercial park or something they think they can make some money out of, or the state wants it for some purpose of its own, sometimes for a good purpose, sometimes it's strictly human nature. You'll find that in our history most of the time where military bases pull up the civilization around it--not pull it up, but cause people to congregate around it and the land becomes more valuable. Maybe it does have a higher and better purpose. And I don't know what it's been used for since.

G: Why do you think he wanted it?

B: Because he represented Texans, and Texans convinced him, which is a legitimate thing for a senator, I think, or a congressman.

Shortly thereafter the Russians sent up Sputnik. As you will remember, there was a special committee on space established, not the Senate Committee on Aeronautics and Space Sciences that a year later came into being, but a special committee with Lyndon as chairman. It had no staff, so Lyndon pulled people in from his shop staff. They held hearings; I've forgotten the date now, but during the fall, I think, of that year. I represented the Armed Services Committee as an observer in those hearings, and they went every night until late at night. And Lyndon and I got even more acquainted during that period, apparently.

He went to the United Nations to give a speech where he announced the policy of peaceful use of outer space. About the same time, I was up here in Maryland at an antiaircraft defense establishment, NORAD-type organization, looking in a closed, dark, radar room, and a call came from New York from Eileen Galloway. She said, "Senator Johnson was talking on the plane about a staff director for the Space Committee, and I brought your name up and his eyes lit up and he said, 'That's it!'" I said, "Well, I'm up here on a military base; I can't do anything about it now. I'll talk to you later." But she had alerted me to the fact.

I went back to the office, and I no sooner got back there than there was a call to me from Rome from Senator Styles Bridges, but we couldn't make connection. I could hear the voice say, "He'll call you from Lisbon a little later on or tomorrow morning." Well, Lyndon was still up in New York. Styles called me. By the time the next morning came I had been offered the job, but I hadn't accepted it yet. The next morning Styles called me, whenever the time differential was, probably early in the morning, and said, "Lyndon's going to offer you the [job]." He said, "I want to congratulate you," and I knew what he was talking about. I said, "Well, I haven't taken the job yet." He said, "Well, I want you to take it. The committee wants you to take it." I said, "Why do you want me to take it?" He said, "Because Lyndon gave that speech on peaceful use of space, and the committee doesn't want the military to be shortchanged on this, and you'll be able to keep Lyndon from doing that."

Well, that was just a conversation. I admired Bridges, but he was not my boss; Russell was. I went to Russell and said, "I've been offered this job," and he said, "Yes, I know; Lyndon's talked to me about it. What do you want to do?" I said, "I don't know.

You're my boss; you tell me." And he said, "Well, I can't promote you here, and I think it would be good for you and for us if you'd take the job." So I got unanimously fired from one committee and unanimously hired from the other.

Now, that's about all that happened for the time being. Lyndon said, "I'm going down to Texas, and I'll send for you." Well, I went home and packed a bag and I stayed there for about two or three weeks; no call, no call, and finally an air force colonel called me up and said, "The plane's ready. Can you come now?" So I went down to Austin and met with Lyndon. He said, "I want you not only to run the Space Committee, but I want you to run the Preparedness Investigating [Sub]committee for me, too. Can you do that?" I said, "Yes, on two conditions." He said, "What are they?" I said, "Your complete support and resources. If you're going to put two hats on me, I've got to have a deputy for one committee and a deputy for the other one, to make them work properly." Of those two conditions, I got his complete support all the time; even when he was mad at me I got his complete support. Although when he was mad at you it was very reluctant complete support; you had to drag him screaming and kicking to the meetings sometimes. The financial support, other kind of staff support, I didn't get completely. On the Space Committee, he delegated completely.

He let me hire everybody; he didn't butt in one way or the other; didn't ask race, creed, color, religion of me, and I didn't of the people I chose. There was only one place he butted in, and the word "butt in" is improperly used. He said, "You filled all your staff slots but one. Styles Bridges is a Republican; he's entitled to have a man on there of his choice if he wants one. Styles has never given me a bad staff man. I suggest that you [consult him]." So I took a man he recommended, and he was all right.

But Lyndon delegated completely. The early hearings, I think one of the interesting things was the competition coming and stemming from the presidential ambition of both Lyndon and [Stuart] Symington. He had a very excellent committee there, but from his standpoint he was unhappy that he had appointed Symington. That's why he held joint Preparedness-Space Committee [hearings]. If he had held Space-Preparedness hearings, with Space taking the first precedent, then Symington would have been the vice chairman, and Lyndon, with his duties on the floor, would not have been able to chair the committee all the time. So he held joint Preparedness-Space Committee hearings. That's why he made me staff director also of the Space Committee, although I didn't realize that at the time. It became obvious later, because Stennis then, who was always faithful and always there, would always be vice chairman. He was vice chairman of the Preparedness Committee, so he could outrank Symington on that basis. That gave Lyndon the kind of control he needed.

G: Was there a feeling that Symington had been too partisan in the hearings that he had held a year or two before?

B: I suppose that might have been it, but I think more it was the natural inclination of competing politicians to trample on each other as they go forward in life. I think that there's another factor you'll find in several books written. *Citadel* is an excellent book on the inner circle. There was an inner circle in the Senate, which does not exist today in the same degree that it did. It probably exists in every organization. But the chairmen were kings in those days, and the chairmen then were senior Democrats of Russell caliber and so on. They put him into power as majority leader, and he then worked so well with them that six or seven people could decide the fate of almost any bill in the Senate by a vote.

I'm digressing, I guess, but I saw a bill one time on the floor that I was managing before I went to work for Lyndon, a military appropriations-type thing. Stennis was the floor manager. On the floor in this very, almost quiet atmosphere were only six or seven senators, Stennis giving a nice talk on this thing and--I had prepared it--I'm handing him his pages and so forth, sitting down beside him. A junior senator interrupts Stennis and offers an amendment. Now, if you offer an amendment without clearing it with the chairman of the committee, in those days it was just--it was worse than violating all the rules of Emily Post. You were out of order completely, not out of order according to the rules, but out of order according to the gentlemen's practice.

So the Senator came out and he had a small bill to increase the pay of lawyers in the military, but he hadn't cleared it. I looked around when Senator Stennis had a pause, and the Senator said, "Would the Senator from Mississippi allow me to say something?" "Yes, of course." He offered his amendment; surprised everybody. And I looked around, here's Russell and Styles Bridges and three or four others, [Robert] Kerr, sitting there. And I went back to Russell; I got up quietly and went back and said, "Shall we call for a quorum?" He said, "No, tell John to call for a vote." I went back and told Senator Stennis, "Senator Russell says to vote." So when the Senator made his motion, somebody seconded it. I know Stennis said, "That's a very thoughtful thing that the Senator has brought up. I know he spent a great deal of time on it. Mr. President, I move we vote." So the Senator got shot down something like six to one, and the Senate ought to have almost a hundred votes--well, it had a hundred maybe the next year when Alaska came in.

Naked power. Strom Thurmond, who was then a Democrat, came out of the Cloakroom, and he was going to support that motion but he came out too late. The gallery would have thought these two senators that had their arms around each other were talking sweet nothings to them, but Strom comes out and he said, "You got your amendment up yet? I'm fixing to support you." The other senator said, "Where were you, you silly son of a bitch? I just got shot down in flames." But that's the atmosphere of the Senate in those days. You could poll six or seven and find out what the Senate was going to do the next day.

G: Do you recall the other senator, the one that brought up the amendment?

B: He was the junior senator from Texas; I can't remember his name. He was a senator from Texas.

G: Ralph Yarborough?

B: Yarborough. Yarborough, yes. I should remember his name.

G: Any insights on the relationship between Johnson and Russell?

B: Yes, they were very good until after he became president for a while. Russell remained a staunch friend of mine all the years, and later on, years later when I was under secretary of the navy and I was resigning because of disagreements [Robert] McNamara and I had, I made an appointment with Johnson through some of the staff in the White House to tell him I was going to resign, because he had appointed me to the job. I think the appointment was like on a Wednesday, and on Monday of that week I went up to see Senator Russell to tell him I was going to resign. Vietnam had just started; we had sent troops to Vietnam. I showed him a letter I had written to the President and said, "I'm going to give the President this letter." And Russell said, "Well, you write good letters,

Ken. You've written lots of them for me. But you must remember that Lyndon is not the same Lyndon we knew on the Hill. He's changed. He's not exercising the same native judgment"--meaning Texas judgment--"that he had. He's letting other people run the government for him; he's letting McNamara run both Defense and State Department. McNamara doesn't understand the art of war, and I'm afraid we're going to get into great trouble here." And I said, "Far be it for me to try to coach my old mentor, but McNamara doesn't understand the art of people. People make war." He said, "That's better. You can take that letter to the President." So I canceled my appointment with Lyndon; I just sent my [letter]. I didn't even go see him.

But Russell was unhappy with Lyndon's change. As a majority leader he knew how to touch bases, and I think Lyndon was probably *the* greatest majority leader we've ever had, one of them certainly. He was excellent at the job. He had his faults like all people do, but he knew how to get people to work on that basis, and he kept his home, country-boy roots up there. When he got down to the White House I think--he always did have sort of, I thought, an inferiority complex toward the military and one toward what you might call the Ivy League attitude. I saw it when I first went to work for him. He said, "You're going to do these two jobs for me. In addition to that, you're going to be my chief of staff," and he called a meeting of all these people and said, "Ken is going to be chief of staff and he can fire Mary Margaret [Wiley]; he can fire Mildred [Stegall]," Walt's [Walter Jenkins] secretary. Well, I knew better than that. Of course, Lyndon didn't know what a chief of staff was. He wanted to be his own chief of staff. What he wanted was an expediter, somebody that just did the things that he wanted done better than anybody else.

G: How long did you last as chief of staff? How long did that--?

B: Oh, I never did function as chief of staff completely. I functioned as chief of staff as the head of the Democratic Policy Committee. That was a funny thing; I was the only registered Republican that ever was chief of staff of the Democratic Policy Committee. He never asked me my [political affiliation]. Of course, I can't say that I was a great Republican. I voted for [Alfred] Landon in college when I was a Young Republican, went in the army and didn't get into politics, and I voted for Truman and I voted for Eisenhower. But in the army I wasn't--but Lyndon never asked me, so I laughingly say that I'm the only registered Republican that ever ran the Democratic Policy Committee. But we did a good job for him. No Republican tried to take advantage of him through my [position], and they wouldn't have gotten away with it.

If I had tried to be chief of staff--well, [I'll] give you an example here. I tried, when I started, to fire people on the Preparedness [Sub]committee staff. Now, there was a staff man on there that was from Russell patronage, from Georgia, who had been hired on a temporary basis for a short period of time during a hearing, that had now been on the committee staff for a couple of years and he wasn't carrying his weight at all. So I went around and looked at all this stuff, and I wrote a memorandum to Lyndon, said, "I want to fire these people, change these people, get new ones in." There were several, six or seven of them. Nothing happened. Nothing. Lyndon never fired anybody if he could help it, you know, and I didn't know this. Nothing happened. Walt Jenkins calls me on Saturday morning or Sunday and said, "Can you come in the office on Sunday? We've got to clean Lyndon's desk off," because quite often the papers would just stack up there. No, this was a Saturday, I beg your pardon. It was Saturday early, and he said, "Can you come in

and help me clean the Majority Leader's desk off? I said, "Sure." Then he said, "Lyndon also said that you'd never fired anybody and you've got to get some of these people gone."

That made me mad. We went in the office, and I found that memo in there. Well, I knew where it was all the time, because I went through his desk every day. Anyway, as soon as Walt and I cleaned the desk off and moved some of the papers, put his initials on them and so forth, I went right back to the Old Senate Office Building, and walking down the hall I happened to run into this guy that was one of Russell's men and I fired him right there as I walked down the hall. He knew it was coming; I'd talked with him before. It wasn't that abrupt. Sunday I get a call from Walter--and [on Saturday] I [also] went back to my other office and I made arrangements to move some of the other people. Suddenly I get a call from Walter; he said, "I talked with the boss over the [weekend] and Lyndon said that maybe we better not fire these people, especially you shouldn't fire the Russell guy." I said, "That's too bad. It's already done." He said, "Oh, my God, who's going to tell Russell?" I said, "I talked this over with Russell before I wrote the memorandum to Lyndon recommending firing him." I went in to Russell and said, "This is what I'm [considering]." He said, "Is the man handling himself right?" and I said, "No, sir, he isn't." He said, "Well, then fire him." Russell was like that. But really Lyndon was a tough son of a gun, but he also had a big tender heart and he had a hard time firing people.

You asked me if Russell--Russell always supported him, but I guess he felt that Lyndon kind of flew the coop when he went down to the White House.

G: Well, how would you describe Johnson's attitude toward Russell when they were both in the Senate together?

B: Oh, I think he had great respect for him, I think so. He may have expressed himself in vexation against Russell several times. He would especially have been that way on the [1957] Civil Rights Bill, because Russell was a pretty excellent infighter and had good left- and right-hand bowers to work with. But you've got to remember that Lyndon's ambition overrode his feeling toward people. He was headed for the presidency and he knew it; at least he wanted that. He also felt that he was very capable of being a good president. So it's quite possible that he said things, or you may find things in the record where it looked like he was [opposed], but I don't think he would have ever dared tackle Russell. If he had the votes in his pocket and wanted to vote Russell down and he knew he had the votes, [he might try], but he wouldn't have tackled him direct, head-on, without that.

G: You've mentioned his desire to be president. Did he ever talk to you about this? Did he ever say, "I want to run for president" or anything--?

B: Yes, he did. I put him on the airplane to go to Los Angeles when he went out there to joust against Kennedy. I was the only staff man back in town; being a professional staff man, I wasn't allowed to go to the convention and participate in the politics of it. I had been left in town to hold down the Texas office and everything else. The fact is it was kind of interesting. I'm the one that got him to wear contact lenses. He would always take his glasses off in the hearing room, and one day standing beside the world globe there I said, "You know, boss, why don't you get contact lenses? I hear they're pretty good." So he went out and got some. Well, the day he was to go out to the airport I took

him; there was just he and I in the car. We rode up in the limousine to Friendship, and we talked about sundry things, and on the way up he said, "Oh, by the way, I left my contact lenses back on the dresser. Would you have George Reedy go out to the house; he knows about where it will be, or somebody go out and get them? Mail them to me in Los Angeles so they'll get there about the time I do." And I said to him, "I wish I could go with you. I wish I could help you out there," or something like that. I said, "How do you reckon it's going to turn out?" He said, "Ken, I don't think I'm going to make it. In fact, I'm pretty sure I'm not. But I have to [try]; as you know, I've got to try." That was sort of--we shook hands and he got on the airplane and flew out to Los Angeles.

I then went out there when the convention was over. Stennis called me and asked me to come back and inspect some space stuff on the way back and some preparedness stuff. So I got there the day that they had the big thing in the Rose Bowl or wherever the heck it was, not Rose Bowl but the stadium, and then went up to his suite with all the staff as he told the staff why he took the vice presidency. I'm convinced that he took it because he didn't think Kennedy was going to make it. That's my conviction, my belief.

G: That wasn't what he said though, was it, to the staff?

B: No, but that's what came out to me as I listened to him talk. I could be completely wrong, but I'm convinced he had already put his Senate seat on ice, so he was going to stay as majority leader if the Democrats held control of the Senate. No question about that, even if Kennedy didn't get it. The last thing he wanted was to be a Democratic majority leader under a Democratic president, because you're then between the rock and the hard place.

I think also he felt that he could control the South and the West. In fact, I tried to convince him that he was a southwesterner, that he didn't have to have the South on his back. I told him that before, "If you run for president, I think if you run as a westerner you'll be better off than a southerner, with your civil rights record and all that." I'm convinced he thought that Kennedy couldn't carry the Bible Belt, being a Catholic in the South. He'd still end up being [majority leader] and then he would be presidential timber for the next time. Because when he got elected vice president he said to me, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "I'm at the end of my rope. Vice presidents go nowhere." He said, "John Connally wants you to come in the navy with him"--John hadn't talked to me--"if you don't go to NASA or the army. John is going to come in and stay a year and then run for governor of Texas and then he'll go for the Senate and then he'll make his pitch for the presidency. Because I'm dead. So you go with John."

Well, John came in to me later and said he wanted me to work for him and I said, "You don't know me." We hadn't met too much; we'd met about three or four times, maybe six or seven times. He said, "Any son of a bitch that can work for that son of a bitch Lyndon Johnson like you worked for him can work for me," and I liked John right away. He was great. He delegated, too. He was a lot like Lyndon. I enjoyed working for Lyndon. I didn't enjoy his arguments sometimes, but I always talked back to him.

G: Did he tolerate that?

B: Oh, he got pretty grumpy at times and he'd go ahead and stew on it, too, sometimes, but I know John Connally talked back to him and [Donald] Cook talked back to him. There were a few people that did.

G: Well, you know, you get this image of a staff that is intimidated by him.

B: They were. Quite a bit of the staff were. But I'd been shot at by experts, with live ammunition. One time I came back from the floor--I wear a partial bridge sometimes and I had it in my pocket, and George said, "Did he chew you out?" and I said, "No, but he left this in my hip," and I reached in and pulled my bridge out and showed it to him. George said one time, Reedy said, "Just like combat, isn't it, Ken?" and I said, "No, in combat you could shoot back at the bastards; here you can't." But I had no feeling of compunction about it. That's what made him mad at me, I would argue with him too much sometimes. But I think he respected that.

G: Why do you think he was abusive to the staff?

B: Well, I've got a theory on that and it doesn't apply only to Lyndon. I've seen several senators that way. The average senator has no command education. The average senator has no management or executive experience; he's never had more than, say, thirty, sixty people [on] the average working for him. He gets adulation everywhere he goes, to the point he begins to think that everything he does is right. And on the Hill a senator is like a nobleman; he has a divine right of a king, and there's no law that applies to them except their own. The staff is bound to respond to that atmosphere and staffs like that--but you'll find . . .

Then there's another factor, I think, in it, and I don't know how you'd put this all and add it up and make it in one sentence, but senators and congressmen--senators not nearly as much as congressmen but still the same thing--have to be polite to their constituents. A jillion times a day they're bowing and scraping to somebody, so they've got to express this in a different--it's like a retort [?] in chemistry, an equal and opposite

reaction. It comes out that way sometimes. It takes a pretty good man not to snipe at a subordinate.

G: Well, you get so many indications of LBJ's temper and moodiness. I wonder how prevalent it was.

B: He didn't show it to me too much. Sometimes I'd see it when he was--he'd have a staff meeting at night and he would tell everybody how browbeaten he was and how poor he was and how little money was coming in. There's a Senate dining room in the Senate and there used [to be]--there still probably is, I haven't been up there for a while--a little public dining room adjacent to it where you can sit down; not a cafeteria, but where you can sit down. I've forgotten, Bill Lloyd, Lloyd Hand maybe, yours truly, and George Reedy were all having lunch together one time, and Lyndon walked in there. He was looking for one of us. And he blew his stack. "Five of you sitting here! I'm paying you a hundred thousand dollars, five of you, twenty thousand each"--which was a little bit wrong; we were all getting about eighteen thousand. But that's pretty close to it, so it's a good senatorial remark. "I'm paying you a hundred thousand dollars a year to sit around here and talk to each other. You should be out talking to people and selling me. You should be doing this. Belieu, I want to see you. Ken, you come on over here." I went over and he said, "Sarah McClendon is making bad articles about me. I want you to take her out and put your arm around her, get her to write good articles about me. Kiss her if you have to." It's typical of Lyndon.

The sequel to that: I liked Sarah, and I took her to lunch. Sarah couldn't be bought. What I did was for Lyndon, [but] he didn't know it. I'd write her questions to

ask Ike; I'd teach her questions to ask Eisenhower at the White House press conferences, which she started doing. He said, "Buy her a drink if you need to. Buy her a martini."

Well, later on we're having a conference between the House and the Senate on space, just after they get elected. Kennedy is going to attend this thing. They're not sworn in yet. I've had Sarah out for lunch and I've had a couple of martinis, and I've got to talk to Lyndon before the conference. We're in the little anteroom to the Vice President's office up there. And typical of *tête-à-tête*, as you do, I put my arm on his shoulder and whispered to him, "This is what you should do when Kennedy comes in, because he's against this portion, but you've got to keep your bill going or they're going to say you're gutting your own program." He grabbed me and he said, "You've got alcohol on your breath! Don't ever come in here with alcohol on your breath anymore!" I never told him I'd taken Sarah to lunch; it didn't make any difference.

No, he'd get moody, but I don't blame him on that. He would have made, had he gone to West Point, a great general in the attack, if he had learned that discipline. Had he gone to law school, he would have made a great trial attorney, prosecuting attorney. He wasn't good on the defense but he was great on the attack. He said to me one time, he almost quoted St. Paul verbatim, "I should have been a preacher. I don't know if I'd have done any good anyway. Here I am: the things that I ought to do, I don't do, and the things I do, I shouldn't do." That's almost a direct quote out of the New Testament and typical of all human beings.

He reminded me sometimes of descriptions--I never knew Sam Houston, the original Sam Houston, but they said they broke the mold. Well, Lyndon had that. He was the kind of a man who you could love one minute and want to spit right in the eye

the next minute, because he had all the good and bad in human nature, I think. And had he kept his native instincts that he exercised so well on the Hill [when he was] in the White House, I don't think he would have ever gone into Vietnam, and he would have gone down as one of our greatest presidents. Had he gone into Vietnam and finished the war, he would have been a great one, too. But he got sucked into that, and advisers that he had certainly did him no good. It was a tragedy in his life.

I saw Sam Houston [Johnson] later on. Sam, bless his heart, came up here. He called me in New York when I was assistant secretary of the navy when I was holding a board meeting up there. I was in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and I could hear the secretary run down the hall into the board meeting and said, "The President's brother is on the phone for you!" Of course, I imagine the whole navy yard was listening by that time. I picked up the phone and he said, "Lyndon wants me to come to town"--this was the second inaugural, I mean his inaugural--"and stay in the White House, and I told him I didn't want to stay in the White House, I was going to stay with you." I said, "Thanks, that's about all I needed to finish my career in government." (Laughter) And then Sam wrote this in his book. He said Lyndon said, "I wouldn't be here in the White House if it weren't for you, Sam, and people like you," and Sam said, "I said to Lyndon, 'Hell, Lyndon, I didn't even know [Lee Harvey] Oswald.'" That was typical of the two brothers. The younger brother had been dominated by the older one, yet Lyndon loved Sam, didn't know quite how to show it.

G: He seems to have had a respect for Sam Houston's political judgment.

B: Sam was smart. He was a very finely tuned individual that, if he hadn't had personal problems, would have--when Sam wanted to give advice, he could give it. He could also

give it in the same manner that Lyndon could and make you feel like it was castor oil rather than sugar-coated. But, no, Lyndon used to listen to Sam an awful lot.

I don't know whether I've helped you much or not.

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

G: [Let's] get that on tape. Let me ask you to repeat that remark.

B: Well, quite often--annually the military would come up, or the secretary of defense, with a base closure program, and inevitably there'd be one [to be closed] in Texas because there were a lot of them in Texas. I've heard Lyndon say over and over again to the secretary of defense or Defense representative, "You may have a good reason for closing this, but give me one that will satisfy my constituents, that I can live with my constituents." Of course, that's very difficult to do with constituents whose jobs are involved there. Of course, in my opinion, generally speaking Lyndon was correct in fighting the bulk of those closures, because we'd close them and then sell them as surplus and then when we'd go back and have trouble again, we'd buy them back for a thousand times more. Now, there are some--for instance, McNamara said there were six thousand different bases. I noticed that the Grace Commission for Reagan today says there are four thousand. Well, they're counting every little recruiting station, every little kiosk, when they do that. There are not that many major stations, and the ones that have large land that you could never duplicate again, we'd better be cautious about it. So the senators that understood the military mobilization requirements, for instance, as Lyndon clearly did, have a good reason for defending them that way, in addition to their constituency.

G: Did a senator's clout influence what bases were closed and which ones were left open?

B: Yes. Yes, indeed. I've seen bases kept open because of the potency of a senator or a chairman, although not as much as most people would think. You go back to World War II days, Roosevelt said, "Whichever state gives me the most votes in the next election will get this next base," and that's how Fort Leonard Wood went into Missouri. I know, because I was in an outfit on the way to be stationed at either one of them, whichever one was built, and Truman's was the one that was built because Missouri gave Roosevelt that one. Well, maybe there was six of one and a half a dozen of the other as to where that base went.

I was asked by Wayne Morse and [Richard] Neuberger, two senators, to go out to Oregon and look at a B-52 refueling school that was in Tillamook, Oregon. I hadn't even heard about it. It was a contract school. I didn't know that--well, I did know finally that the air force was planning on putting it in Amarillo, Texas, but Lyndon never talked to me about it. I couldn't figure out why they had a refueling school for B-52s in Tillamook, Oregon, which took navy blimps, when the B-52s didn't even land there. You'd think that they'd have a school where there was a B-52 somewhere around. There wasn't one within seven hundred miles, I guess, or four hundred miles of Tillamook. So I went out there and made a decision in favor of Amarillo, which gave me great credit with Lyndon and no credit at all with the two senators from my home state. But you're right, if you're chairman of a committee, Armed Services Committee, people think twice before closing something in your state.

G: Did influential senators ever hold hostage a military appropriation or an appointment or something like that until they got--?

B: It's difficult for them to hold hostage the whole bill. I suppose they could at times maybe delay it for a while, but you might find certain items in the bill that would be desirable items that might be cut out or held hostage.

G: Okay. Now--

(Interruption)

B: [Harold] Talbott's wife had written a letter, if I remember correctly. No, she owned stock in an outfit that did business with the government. It's the type of thing that still, in my opinion, is a little hypocrisy on the Hill. A senator can get by with it, whereas a man in the executive side cannot. I don't remember the company; I think it was a small company. It was sort of similar to the problem that hit Fred Korth when he was in the [Department of the] Navy and was writing a letter on navy stationery. Talbott had not been too popular on the Hill apparently, and that might have been an excuse, but I suppose it was mainly because of that action. He was the one that selected the Air Force Academy site, which was not necessarily a popular site selection except for people in the West, in Colorado. He may well have made some enemies that way.

G: Johnson wanted it to be in Texas.

B: Yes, he did.

G: Anything on that?

B: No. Again, I was not there personally on the thing. I can remember that there were residual problems with the Air Force Academy resulting from that for a few years, not necessarily with Johnson but just generally. There was still not too great an acceptance of it perhaps.

G: Okay.

(Interruption)

B: On the natural gas bill, the last five years of my active commercial life, or business life, I was executive director of the National Petroleum Council, and the residue of that vote still lingers because all the oil people--see, the National Petroleum Council is a government-sponsored, industry-supported organization established by Truman, and it advises the government on policy or on studies that the government requests. It's always been consistent in its . . . But I went to work for the Armed Services Committee [and] Francis Case--the committee I started working with, subcommittee, was Stennis, Jackson, and Case, a three-man committee on military construction. Francis Case was the one on whose desk the thousand-dollar bill or hundred-dollar bill, whatever it was, was left. It was my job to work very closely with these three senators. Jackson and I became fast friends, and Stennis and I, and Case, too. Case is dead now. Jackson, too, both of heart attacks. Case suffered from that [incident], or was the instigator of the political noise that caused Eisenhower to veto the bill. It, in my opinion, did great damage to the gas industry and to the country, because it caused us to eat sirloin steak for thirty-five cents for a long time when we should have been conserving it and looking for more gas. But that was not part of my job up there.

(Interruption)

B: I think that there's no question that the Case action stopped the country from having a free market in natural gas. I don't know what the resources are now in proven reserves, but they should run out probably toward the end of the century, a little bit further down the road, and maybe they wouldn't if that hadn't happened. It had, I guess, an effect of

crystallizing a lot of thoughts in the Senate. Francis Case never quite recovered from it, never even approached the close periphery of the inner circle.

G: Really?

B: No. He was tolerated and that was about it. Oh, he had his friends, and he was a hard-working senator, but he was just one who also ran. Whether he could have been otherwise, I don't know. Lyndon, of course, paid very little attention to him because he was 1) in the opposite party, 2) the only time I ever saw Francis Case, he voted on Russell's side on a civil rights bill one time, and I remember hearing Russell make the remark, "If Case is going to vote that way, I'm now ready to vote." In other words he was counting votes. I've forgotten the precise [issue] but it had to be one of Lyndon's bills.

When the Suez crisis came up, [there were] two aspects of it that impacted on me: one, the crisis itself and how the Armed Services Committee functioned; and later on, a trip that I went with Symington to Europe on it. Russell sent me to represent him. The Suez crisis was interesting from several standpoints. One of the main ones was that the military had received intelligence reports from a little-known--let's say a small intelligence officer, low ranking. I had seen these reports, some of them, before I went over [to] the Hill, when I was in the army; later on [I saw] some of them also, pointing out that the Canal could be closed. The great concern was could the Canal be closed by debris, cement ships or mines or whatever, could they close it by just obstacles?

And [Herman] Welker was out in Idaho, Senator Welker, campaigning about the time this happened, and he called me from Idaho saying, "The newspaper people tell me that I should be back in town on this thing. They say, 'What are you doing out here campaigning when the country has got a problem in the Suez Canal?' I want to come

back and get a briefing." So I arranged for [Arthur] Radford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, to come up with some people and brief him on a Sunday. Later on, this briefing was given to a full committee. At that time the question was asked: could the Canal be closed? And they said no, we could open it right away. Well, actually it was closed and didn't open for about a year. Maybe not quite a year. And that caused the same type of an argument as to why didn't you stop the bombing of the marine barracks or why couldn't you, same then as now.

Then we insisted, you know, we had joint hearings I think shortly thereafter, with the Foreign Relations Committee and the Armed Services Committee. That was the beginning of the divisiveness that now exists on the Hill between various committees on jurisdiction, Armed Services versus Foreign Affairs or Foreign Relations, who has the state--where does policy begin and stop? Today you have a jillion committees looking at them; in those days you just had one or two. Russell was able to make the two committees hold together, but it was the beginning of the type of schism now that you see. That's about it as far as I can remember on that Suez Canal [inaudible]. The trip to Europe later on was interesting from the standpoint of Symington making the statement that the worst mistake we ever made was stopping Britain and Israel from going in and taking Egypt over at that time. That's all I can remember basically right now on that.

G: Okay. Anything on Russell's position here?

B: No, I'd have to look to remember that. Russell generally held a very close hearing, said not too much in meetings, but did his work with the senators.

G: Okay.

(Interruption)

B: Ralph Zwicker had been chief of staff of the infantry division I was in in Europe during World War II. I knew him well; he had been a regimental commander and then chief of staff, and we had kept in touch with each other during the years. And of course during the Army-McCarthy hearings he was the one that McCarthy said, "You're not fit to wear the uniform," and then Stevens ordered him not to testify. That's one of many reasons that started the Army-McCarthy hearings.

Zwicker came up for promotion to major general on a list submitted by the secretary of the army, [Wilbur Brucker], through the White House in accordance with procedure, and McCarthy objected. My part in that was very interesting. Russell called me in and said, "I want Brucker"--Brucker sent his name up--"Brucker will come up and testify for him." General Mike [John H.] Michaelis of Korean fame was legislative liaison chief for the army, and I told Mike to tell Brucker that Brucker must come up and testify for Zwicker. Mike went back and told the Secretary and that made him mad and he didn't want to come up, and he sent Mike back up with a message to me. I'm a regular army officer retired. And he said, "The Secretary says to tell you 1) he's not going to come up, and 2) that you should remember that the secretary of war under law can call any regular back to active duty if he wants to, and you're a regular," even though it's not the Department of the Army now. And I said, "Well, that's fine. You just go back and tell Secretary Brucker that if he wants to order me back I'll take my wooden leg off and he can carry me back. But," I said, "Brucker is going to testify for Zwicker." General Michaelis said, "I'm going to go see Senator Russell then, if you're insisting on this." I said, "Be my guest." It was not my job to tell him that Russell wanted it; the conversation between Russell and yours truly was privileged. So Mike trots down the

hall, gets a meeting with Senator Russell and comes back in about twenty minutes and says, "Why didn't you tell me?" I said, "You didn't ask me." Brucker came up and testified.

Zwicker used my office to sit in while he waited for the vote; [they] had a hearing and a vote. I thought that the vote might be--Bobby Kennedy was involved in this, too. He came down to talk to me about it, and he didn't think that Zwicker should be promoted.

G: He did not?

B: No, he did not think so. At least that was my impression I got from Bobby, because he asked me a question. He said, "Do you have a dislike for Senator McCarthy?" and I said, "No, not a bit. That's over with, that's passed." He said, "Well, I can't help but liking him, too. He was wrong." But Bobby said, "I don't think Zwicker should be promoted." Not his exact words.

I thought that probably Styles Bridges, the close friend of McCarthy, the senior Republican on the committee, would pull some Republican votes against [Zwicker], or some votes. Rarely did I find the Armed Services Committee being a Democrat-Republican committee. It was usually how they thought about defense. It was pretty fine to watch them operate, because they weren't doing it on a partisan basis, very seldom, rarely indeed. The vote was, if I remember correctly, nine with one abstention. Bridges wouldn't vote against Zwicker, but he couldn't make himself vote against his friend McCarthy either, which was a very fair way to do it. I remember going back into the office and telling Zwicker he had made it. He cried and was very happy about it. What

part Lyndon played in that I don't know. Russell was calling the shots on the whole thing.

G: Did Russell say anything to reflect his attitude toward McCarthy?

B: No. Russell, I don't think, would rarely have given me, a staff man, his thought about a senator. In those days senators did not divulge their thoughts about other senators, and a staff man was rare who would ever speak against any senator. I almost did one time. Russell was having problems with [Jacob] Javits on a vote that was coming up, and I said, "Well, Javits is going to be out of town, you can probably--" He said, "No, I won't pull a trick like that on him. We don't do that on other senators, Belieu." Today would be the--I'm sure they did at times, too, then, but Russell was pretty fair about things. (Interruption)

G: I wanted you to talk about the reaction to the Sputnik launch in 1957.

B: There's a prologue to the Sputnik launch. The army sent a recommendation up from Redstone [Arsenal] about a year before--about 1954--to launch a satellite, and it was shot down as a Buck Rogers scheme. I happened to have signed the papers that sent that forward to Defense. When Sputnik went up on the Hill it was as though the United States had lost the Olympics in a way. It had a greater impact than today where we're used to satellites, but in those days the thought that here is some alien thing in space that was over our country that we didn't have any control about . . . And then it was found out that we had had programs of course going along, but nobody believed it. Why couldn't we, with all of our technology, do something like that?

I always underestimated, to begin with, the public reaction to it. Any time you held a hearing with the word space in it, your rooms were just jammed. Newspapers

were full of it, radio was full of it, television was beginning to be full of it. I remember Prescott Bush, the father of our current vice president, asking me, "How could this happen?" But nobody knew anything about space. They had to be educated on it. It became a very great vehicle for public relations, for public information, which was something that would be a delight to any congressman or senator, if you could get your hands on it. All of a sudden every person in the world that knew anything about space kept creeping out of the woodwork and out from under rocks, becoming experts. We had instant experts one day and down the next.

This special committee on space, first there was a meeting, a day or so or maybe a week of sort of like bees buzzing around up on the Hill, wondering who should they sting and why did this happen and all that. And then a briefing was called in the Pentagon, whether it was called by the Senate or whether the Pentagon--I think the Pentagon set it up. I know that I prepared a paper and talked to Russell about it, because he went down there as a representative. Who else went with him I've forgotten. Maybe Lyndon went, I don't know. My dealings were with Russell at that time. He and I had quite a lengthy discussion, for him, maybe a half hour, on what space--I remember talking to him about thermal batteries in space and how you had to get rocket thrust to put your weight up there, I mean pounds of thrust. He expressed great concern about what looked like a technical advance for Russia.

G: Was he concerned militarily or was he concerned just because of the technological--?

B: I think militarily. Technology and military stuff go pretty [much] hand in hand. The economy of a country is also part of that. There's no question that the senators on the committee the time I was there recognized that space was the high ground, the future high

ground. We had castles at one time and all that sort of--space is--you get a man up there with six weapons, like Wyatt Earp with a six-shooter, the mob says, "We're going to take this guy out of the jail," and Wyatt Earp says, "No, you're not." The fellow says, "You've only six rounds in that gun." He says, "Yes, but you don't know who I'm going to get with it. I'll get six of you." Put a platform up there with six weapons on it that can go anywhere and you'll find the Wyatt Earp syndrome up there. It's the high ground and they knew it.

From there on out until after I left the Hill, any time you held a hearing on space you didn't have enough room in the hearing room for it. Just not enough room. Television cameras would come in. We built a new hearing room in the old cafeteria there. I built it bigger than normal hearing rooms and still it wasn't big enough.

G: Was Johnson himself interested from the start?

B: Yes, I think he was. It was a good publicity vehicle for him, and he understood that, too. But he was also interested in it from a standpoint of space. His interest was such that he would call me up and say, "There's a scientist I want you to go talk to," which was beyond the realm of publicity on the thing, and I chased German scientists all over this country and went to every rocket propulsion plant in this country, watched us go from peanuts to megatons.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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