INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 11, 1978

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN SHERMAN COOPER

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Senator Cooper's home, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2

G: [Let's] start very briefly with your background. You are from Kentucky, I understand.

C: Yes.

G: And how you came to Congress? How you first became a member of Congress?

C: You're now asking me as part of the record?

G: Yes. Well, just your background briefly.

C: Well, I suppose my background was essentially political. I lived in a town called Somerset, a town of about four thousand when I graduated from high school, but in a large county. In fact, it was the largest county at that time in the state. My family has lived there since about--

(Interruption)

Well, in those early days, of course, with the small population of the state and the younger sons migrating to the West and to the South--for example I have relatives in Texas, other states--people took an unusual interest in politics, I'm sure. And then when the war came along between the states, Kentucky pretty much split up. It was about half and half. My family lived more in the hill section and

practically all of them were unionists. I had a great uncle, I recall, who was a confederate veteran, but chiefly all my family stood with the Union. And even when I was grown up, I used to see the Union veterans and the Confederate veterans meet. I knew a lot of them. I talked to a lot of them. And you had a feeling of politics. Also, a number of my family had been in local politics, I think chiefly [as] county judge, which managed the fiscal affairs of the county. Whatever they were, I don't imagine they were much. Well, my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my father had been county judges, one of my uncles, one of my cousins. So I suppose it was in my mind. I met a great many political figures, state and national, because my father was chairman of the Republican Party once. At that time luckily we were on the Southern Railroad and speakers would stop there. Candidates for vice president, candidates for president, would speak in Louisville and Lexington. My father would take me. I met them.

G: Anyone in particular?

C: In the Chautauqua, you know, you'd have political speakers come. So I think I always had an idea I'd like politics.

When I got back from law school, after about a year I ran for the Kentucky legislature and was elected. I only served one term. Then I served two terms as county judge. In 1939 I ran for the Republican nomination for governor, which was considered rather foolish because there had been very few Republican governors. I was defeated, but I was thirty-seven at the time and it gave me an opportunity to travel all over the state. It didn't cost anything then. [There was]

no television, very little radio, [you] just visited. I traveled for six or seven months. I met all, I guess you can't meet too many people that way, but I met them, both Democrats and Republicans. And I think that was the reason that later I was elected to the Senate, because I had that base.

I was in the army for nearly four years and abroad, and when I came back I had been elected to circuit judge in my absence. I started out serving as circuit judge. There was a vacancy for the Senate. Senator [Albert B.] Chandler had resigned to become baseball commissioner and I thought, well, I'll just try it once more, a state-wide race, but I really didn't have too much expectation of being elected because Kentucky never changes its registration, hardly. It's two to one. But I was elected. It might have been because of the reaction after the war, you know, controls and such, but I won by a very good majority, about forty thousand. But I was only elected for two years. At the end of the two years, in the famous President Truman victory, and [because of] Vice President Barkley [being] from my state, I lost, not [by] very much, but I lost.

G: Did you know Lyndon Johnson during this period at all?

C: No. Of course, when I was elected to the Senate, Lyndon Johnson was in the House. And [there were] very curious circumstances--I hope I don't take too much time--

G: Oh, no. This is fine.

C: --under which I met him. I had a very good friend I had been in college with who lived in Tyler, Texas. [His] name was Watson Wise.

He invited me there in 1947 or 1948, I've forgotten, to speak at a luncheon or dinner that he gave during the Rose Festival. And so I accepted. I wanted to go. I found that the two speakers were Lyndon Johnson, later to be president of the United States, and myself. I met him then. I remember we joshed about the two parties in our speeches and told stories and had a good time. I remembered him well. I remembered his look. I remembered his motions. That was my first meeting and first impression of President Johnson.

G: You were a delegate to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1949. Did you have any contact with him at all during this period?

C: No. What happened then, as I said, I met him then and I don't recall having any contact with him after that. I was defeated in 1948 so I was out of the Congress until 1953. I was elected in 1952. So when I came back to the Senate, of course he had been elected to the Senate and he was the leader already. In a very short time he had shown his abilities and leadership and he had become the leader. I was, again, just rather a freshman senator.

I served then for two years on the Armed Services Committee; and he was on the Armed Services Committee. In a committee you get to know a man much better, so I got to know him then, and of course knew him every day as directing the Democratic forces.

G: You replaced Virgil Chapman after he was killed in the automobile wreck?

C: Yes. That was the reason I came back, when he was killed. He had defeated me in 1948, and, curiously enough, I was elected to fill

out his term for two years. And so that's when I was there in 1953 and 1954, and then really began to know the President.

G: Well, let's talk about your work on the Armed Services Committee with Lyndon Johnson. What sort of a committee member was he?

C: It's probably hard for people to remember, but in 1953 and 1954 we had a Republican Senate, not a House, but a Senate, because President Eisenhower had been elected president and he was able to take along with him enough to control the Senate but not the House. So naturally the Democrats did not have as much authority as the Republicans did.

Senator [Leverett] Saltonstall of Massachusetts was chairman. Richard Russell, Dick Russell as everybody called him, was the ranking Democrat and, of course, a very, very strong man, a very strong leader. At that time I would say he was considered to be a stronger leader than Lyndon Johnson. He wasn't the leader in title but everybody considered him really the power behind the leader, although I'm not quite sure that's true. But Russell was the commanding figure in the Committee on Armed Forces, but Johnson took an active part. When there was some problem that the Democrats opposed, I remember that he would always be very strong against it.

Those two years, though, the Democrats got along very well with President Eisenhower. There was very little fighting between President Eisenhower and the Democrats in the first two years of the administration. Really, I cannot recall any very serious situations during that time except, of course, the Korean War, which was a serious situation and gradually was dying down because the settlement was supposed

to have been made. It doesn't seem to have ever been really consummated. But there seemed to be general agreement on that.

I remember we had one--it seems very interesting now--Admiral [Rickover]--he's still serving. Anyway, Admiral--you know his name, I'll get it in a minute--he's still serving today, he's about seventy-eight.

G: He's still serving now?

C: Submarine man. I had his name on my lips.

G: It wasn't Admiral Nimitz, was it?

C: Who? No. He was about to be removed. He was supposed to be the expert in the Navy on submarines. He had not been promoted [and] he was to be removed. We thought it very unfair and the Armed Services Committee passed a resolution which, after all, the Navy didn't have to observe, a very strong one, that he should be retained. And he was retained. This is right off the record for a minute. He is very friendly with President Carter.

(Interruption)

[There] developed a shortage of ammunition in Korea and a special committee was appointed. I remember Senator [Harry Flood] Byrd of Virginia was chairman. I was on the committee and so was Senator Johnson. We found out there was a shortage and we had to move ammunition from Europe and other places to Korea.

But, at that time, of course then they had to develop the nuclear weapons. You didn't have all the battle that [has] developed over arms control and weapons since that time. The United States at that

time was superior, recognized so, to any country in the world, militarily. There wasn't as much concern about it. NATO was, you know, in the process of being formed, and that was of interest. Practically all of us supported it. Lyndon Johnson had supported it. It had actually been commenced while I was out of the Senate but was still in the process of development.

That was an interesting time but one which, as I look back, considering the battles that have gone on about the military since then, I would consider it a quieter two years.

G: How about the Preparedness Subcommittee? Did you observe his work with that?

C: I didn't serve on it myself, but Lyndon Johnson was the sponsor and initiated the idea. It was still the Cold War period, and the threat to Berlin was there. The Korean War made everyone aware of the fact that we had been caught unprepared. After World War II, we had disarmed to a large extent, not only in manpower but we had not developed and kept up our armaments. NATO was very weak. Our allies then had not made up their minds--sometimes we feel today they [still] haven't made up their minds--if they were really going to contribute the capability that they should. And there was a fear that we had let ourselves down. President Johnson always had the ability to pick out an issue, not just because it would make an issue, but because there was a need for it. We could see later on the things he did.

G: What about his relationship with Joe McCarthy during this period? Now here was a time when McCarthy was really challenging not only President Eisenhower but generals in the army. Do you recall Lyndon Johnson's relationship with McCarthy during this period? Did he actively oppose McCarthy?

C: When I went back in the Senate in 1953 McCarthy had been on his campaign since about 1949, gradually increasing it in scope and directing it against more and more personalities. When I got back in the Senate, honestly,there was very little opposition. He had quite a number who agreed with him, that there was a strong communist threat, that there was a great deal of subversion in the government, particularly in the State Department. He attacked the State Department; he attacked the military; he attacked individuals throughout the country. Once in a while he'd almost attack somebody in the Senate, if they got up to oppose him. It seemed there was very little active opposition to him in the sense of speaking up in the Senate. But it finally reached a point where a clash did come.

My recollection of Lyndon Johnson in that, and I cannot say it's wholly accurate, but I would just say there were very few people in the Senate who were making speeches. But once a motion to censure was made, then he did mobilize. Of course, he had a great many opponents of McCarthy on the Democratic side anyway, but in his function as leader he helped arrange and form the committee which heard the evidence, a six man committee. He appointed three very good men on the committee whose reputation could not be questioned. Then when

the debate began and when we were moving toward a vote, he felt that the evidence was absolutely convincing and that he should be censured. Now you ask me how I know that, I guess simply because you watch the way a man moves around.

I had one experience myself. There was a question [that] arose about--I think he was censured on two points, it might have been three--there was a legal question--it might not have been legal--a political question, that he had been censured for some statements that he had made prior to his last election. The point was raised that the election had wiped out those charges. I don't remember if there was any precedent for it, but it was a fair argument, that people in his state at least had voted for him. Maybe I was a little technical. It worried me a little bit. I had been against McCarthy from the beginning. I'd spoken against him; I voted against him.

G: You endorsed the Flanders censure motion?

C: Yes. The first one. The first one. Only, I think, nine of us or something like that [endorsed it]. He really got very angry with me about that.

G: What sort of repercussion did you feel from him for having endorsed it?

C: I never was on a committee with McCarthy so I never had any relations with him. The way he was on a committee, the way we were seeing each other, he was always very polite, very courteous to me. But I sat behind him. Once he made a speech in which he almost accused Winston Churchill of being a communist. It astounded me. There were

very few people on the floor and no one said anything, so I got up and asked him to yield to me and I just said, "It just seems to me preposterous, unbelievable, that you would say Winston Churchill had any relationship or bore any connection at all to the communists after all that has occurred over these years." He just looked at me in a very angry way but didn't say anything. But when I spoke for that first resolution, Flanders, he did turn around and tell me, "I will get you." But I never heard another thing from him. I said, "Go ahead," or something like that.

G: What do you think caused McCarthy's downfall?

C: Well, of course people have thought about this so much. McCarthy was just like I would assume most of us were in the Senate. We were average, your name wasn't before the public. Your people in the Senate might know whether you were doing something worthwhile or not, and they do. They do now. They know the ones who are the workers and the ones that accomplish something, even though their names may not be so well known.

But his name wasn't well known. He seemed to have stumbled on making a speech down in West Virginia someplace that got him some notice. It just seemed from then on he just took advantage of it. He hired assistants. He made speeches which were more and more violent and directed against persons. He got great notice over it. And they had of course found some persons who had communist connections that for a time would strengthen his position. I think he just got carried away by his headlines, by his notice, by power. He <u>had</u>

it there, because he was threatening the State Department and threatening, finally, the military, even in a way threatening President Eisenhower, and threatening him in a way that you were letting all this go on and you were doing nothing about it. He just went finally too far, where people just said, "We can't put up with this any longer." Once that happened, and he was censured, he just seemed then to begin to go to pieces.

But I wouldn't say that the Senate was at its bravest at that time. Of course you had people who believed in him, who stood by him: Senator Knowland, Senator Dirksen, Senator Goldwater, because of their strong belief that there was truth in his statement of the incidents and subversive action of the Communist Party.

G: Let me ask you a bit about Lyndon Johnson as a senator and as a Democratic leader. He has been credited with having a great supply of parliamentary skills and ability to get legislation that he was interested in passed. How did he do this, if in fact he was gifted in this respect? What made him an effective leader?

C: Well, I'll have to assume that inherently from his youth and from his background he must have had qualities of leadership. I believe that. Well, I just assume that, because the first time I ever saw him, even in that little meeting in Tyler, Texas, he looked and acted like a leader. He looked like a leader. He was a tall man. He wasn't gaunt but he was spare and strong-looking. He moved very quickly and he walked as if he had something to do. He was purposeful. He just wasn't shambling away, he was going to get something done, to [go to]

some meeting, or see some person, or [go] back to his office. These are more or less physical characteristics.

G: Did he have an ability to persuade other senators?

C: Oh, I don't think there's any question about that. He was generally known to be the greatest persuader there. (Laughter)

G: Well, what were his techniques?

C: Well, I can't speak about it personally, because he never used any techniques on me. He was always very nice to me, friendly to me. But of course you know what's been said and there's no point in not repeating what has been said, because it has been said, that he knew the powers of the leadership. Sam Rayburn knew them in the House but he may have exercised them in a different way.

He had a strong group to begin with, who were strong men around him. For example, Dick Russell--Richard Russell--was generally held to be the strongest Democrat, ablest, strongest, most skillful in his parliamentary work, strong convictions. [Johnson had] a strong southern group who were his friends. Then he had others who were not considered to be exactly in that mold. For example, he and Senator Fulbright--I don't know whether many people know that they were very good friends, close friends. I remember later Senator Fulbright supported him when he was a candidate for president.

He made friends on the Republican side. Well, he and Senator Dirksen were very close. Of course, leaders do have to work together, arranging schedules, agreeing upon bills that will be brought up, and keeping their word with each other, because if they did not the

whole institution would fall apart. That's one thing I think has been quite notable, that speakers have become pretty close to each other but their word is good. Even before Senator Dirksen became leader when Senator Taft was the leader, for three or four months before he died, I recall very well that Senator Johnson talked to him a great deal and became a great admirer of Senator Taft. I'll never forget when the news came that Senator Taft had died. The Senate was in session and someone was presiding and Senator Johnson rose and, in a voice you could hear all over the place, asked for a quorum. He said, "Senator Taft is dead. Senator Taft is dead," as if it were a real matter of concern to him.

First, he was a good leader. He knew the bills. He knew what he was driving for. Well, to be a good leader, you have to have brains. You have to know what you want to do. You have to know what legislation you want and what you want to do with it, and order it and plan it. And he had a lot of ability. Most of the legislation was good I would say. It had a purpose and so for a great many, there wasn't any problem of securing their adherence.

Some said that he would use his favor to place them on committees and so forth in order to get them to vote. I'm not always so sure of that. You can get a few people to do that but I don't believe, at that time anyway, that you could get men to give up their principles just to get on a committee. Now, he placed John Kennedy on the Foreign Relations Committee when John Kennedy was first elected to the Senate. Ordinarily, he would have gone way down the line, but he knew John Kennedy was interested in foreign affairs and he placed him

there. There'd be other members on that side that were breaking up the old system of, "You started; you have a number; you're the last number; you take what's left." They [would] start at the top and give them their choices and you take what was left. He would place people now and then in committees where he thought they would have value. And also, I must be frank, I think he'd place them, once in a while, when they'd have a race coming up. He'd put them on a committee where he thought the committee would help them most in the race. That was political.

G: Can you think of any particular case where he might have done that?

C: Oh, it's hard to say.

G: As an example.

C: [In a] certain area, particularly people who come from big farming states. Farmers are very much interested. It still goes on up there. Sometimes you will hear of a senator who has been on another committee, elected on a farm committee the year before he just happens to be a candidate. And the rest the same way, the irrigation and all the reclamation projects. Well, he took advantage of those things. They were able fellows.

There was a group that I don't think either liked him personally or perhaps liked his methods. And they protested a lot and would talk and speak but somehow or other they always fell in line. He had very few that would oppose him constantly.

G: These were, I guess, the liberal Democrats that you're talking about.

C: Yes, they were the most liberal Democrats. I don't like to use names but one like Senator [Joseph S.] Clark of Pennsylvania was usually protesting. I think that one time he made a speech on the floor in which he protested his tactics and methods as leader. Senator Johnson just sat there through the whole thing and listened and never said a word, never deigned to ask or anything.

G: I get the impression--

C: He had some friends on the Republican side too. They worked together.

G: He and Styles Bridges were close, weren't they?

C: Yes, I think they got along fine. Styles Bridges was a very able fellow, a good organizer, a good politician.

G: My impression is that after Senator Taft died and Bill Knowland took over that at first they didn't cooperate. Lyndon Johnson and Bill Knowland didn't cooperate as well as Senator Taft had cooperated with him. Is that correct?

C: Yes, I think it was for this reason though. Senator Taft, as I recall, only lived five or six months. Senator Taft, despite the fact that the Democrats liked to attack him, was really well liked by them though, because of his ability and integrity. He was a tremendously able man, had a tremendous mind, to use a cliche, whether you agreed with him or not. I think that Lyndon Johnson admired him and that Senator Taft was a man who would tell the facts. I mean, I'm sure in any problem between Senator Johnson and Senator Taft, Senator Taft just told him the facts, "No, we're not going to compromise this, we're going to do this. We've got the majority. We

can't," or "We will compromise," or do something like that. I think Lyndon Johnson admired him very much. Perhaps in this case if he ever would bend a little bit to anyone, I believe it might have been to Senator Taft in his reasoning and judgment. Coming in, Knowland was an entirely different man. He didn't have those same qualities; [he was] rather explosive. They got so they worked together.

G: Could Lyndon Johnson outmaneuver Bill Knowland?

C: Yes.

G: Do you remember any occasion in which he did?

C: Well I can just remember this. There wasn't any great spread in the number in 1953 and 1954. Of course the next two years Democrats picked up quite a lot of votes. The first two years, they were pretty close. Democrats would be winning. We could have won some. Knowland was a man who would not confer with people or talk to them. He just kind of took everything--I hate to be talking about him, he's dead, but I have to tell the truth. He did not confer with his colleagues very much--[he was] a perfectly good man--while Senator Johnson was all over his side of the chamber on every issue.

He would take care of his party. When the Democrats came in power again and had a bill up and maybe someone on the Republican side would put up an amendment which was going to carry, Senator Johnson would sometimes get a Democrat to modify it someway so that it would go through as a Democratic amendment.

G: How much of his skill here was timing, knowing exactly when to bring a measure up to a vote?

C: Oh how he knew that! I recall the civil rights bill. Of course, when you consider that--which I know has been done many times--Senator Johnson, a southerner, and from the South which had opposed, I'd have to say, integration for so many years and its representatives had, and some very strongly, to think that he could so help develop a bill, to lead on his side in speaking to them and then to select the timing to bring them up, of course that was a masterful feat.

I can't overlook Everett Dirksen because Everett Dirksen had a tremendous part in that leadership. I'm sure that he and Lyndon Johnson worked together on it. There were a number of Republicans who weren't for it, you know, curiously enough, from the Midwest where they really had no problem, but Everett Dirksen got most of them in line. Everett Dirksen, also with that sense of timing, made the final speech before the vote.

But President Johnson, Lyndon Johnson, had the problem always, you know, of whether or not they would be able to get cloture and if someone would keep speaking. Then again, I don't like to be too personal, but of course Dick Russell was very strong against the bill and had tremendous ability and authority. But I think he saw that it was inevitable. It was going to pass. I just happened to pass Lyndon Johnson one evening about seven o'clock and I said, "Well, how is it coming?" "Well," he said, "if I can just reach some kind of an understanding with Dick Russell, I think perhaps we can get it

through." I don't mean by that [that] it was any kind of a wrongful understanding, but perhaps the understanding that all had been done that could be done, after that long debate, the long speeches and everything. Although Dick Russell never did cease in some objections he had to it though.

G: But he and Russell evidently did reach some accommodation on that?

C: Well, that's all I know. That's what he told me. He said, "If I can reach an understanding with him I think we can finally get the vote."

G: If you, as a Republican, had a piece of legislation that you were interested in for your state, could you go to him and get help from him on this? Was he pretty partisan in this respect?

C: Well, as I said, he would always manage that important legislation or even important amendments, somehow would always--which was natural because--come out in the name of a member of the Democratic Party. But you can't help that. They control the floor. They control the management of the bill. They control the votes, the issues, and you can put an amendment on and it becomes your amendment.

A good many things that he was for we voted the same way. I supported him in his poverty program, you know, always, and so I never had to have any consultations with him on it. I voted with him. I supported the civil rights bill, never had any problems there.

G: Now the other senator from Kentucky during the fifties was Earle Clements--

C: In the first part, yes.

G: --who was his whip.

C: His whip, yes.

G: Did he tend to favor Clements over you in terms of doing things that would have an impact in Kentucky, in your state?

C: Well, of course, naturally they always voted together. Sometimes I didn't vote. But no, because what would happen, if there was something you were working on in Kentucky, really, it would be initiated in a committee, you know.

Curiously, most of the things that Kentucky was interested in were in the Public Works Committee. We had a great many floods. We had no dams. We had no flood walls. It was amazing, all up and down the Ohio River, and rivers back up in the mountains, we had no dams. [We] only had one down there. So I took a lead in the Public Works Committee because I was in there. Earle Clements always supported me of course. But as far as that was concerned, I think Earle himself would say it, he does say it, and also the Democrats from Kentucky would say it, that I probably did more to get all those projects going than anyone else, which I think I did. But no, Johnson would have . . . .

G: Lyndon Johnson had a long history of supporting similar projects in Texas, on the Lower Colorado. Did he ever talk to you about that?

C: Oh, yes. I know that. He was very much interested in that. He always would tell me, too, of his interest in Kentucky, you know, that he had ancestors in Kentucky. In fact, one of his daughters, her middle name is a well known Kentucky name.

G: Baines.

C: The one that just got married, what's her name? Her husband is a lieutenant.

G: Well, let's see.

C: Lynda. Anyway, there was a very prominent family that, well, in the history of Kentucky had a governor, and they had the same name. He'd had relatives in Kentucky.

Our relationship in the Senate was not as close as I would say, that is in the sense that we talked, as we later became when he was president. But I'll tell two instances which I think show something of his qualities. In military appropriations bills they always voted a very large amount for pensions or benefits that never was used. There would always be about one hundred million left over. It was curious because my good friends in the [American] Legion and VFW always were clamoring for more money. Curiously enough, for several years there, there was about one hundred million left over. Now, he had charge of the bill. So I don't know. Of course, [it] might have just been considered a grandstand play because there wasn't anything to lose in it, but I got up and moved to strike it, a hundred million dollars of that part of the bill which was to go to veterans. Of course, I was almost considered to be a traitor.

G: Like voting against motherhood?

C: It got no place. I knew Johnson knew this; there he was on the Appropriations Committee. I said, "I know this has no chance at all of talking or of being passed unless Senator Johnson agrees to it because he's managing the bill; he's on the committee; he knows it.

There's no reason why it shouldn't be stricken. It doesn't amount to much, but it would be a proper thing to do." The session was about over so we walked out in the hall. I said, "Lyndon, you know that we aren't going to use that money. It isn't much," and a lot of other things. "Perhaps we better cut more of it. But at least it's a symbol." "Well, I'll think it over," he said. Well, the next morning he got up and he asked unanimous consent if he could join me as co-sponsor of the amendment. And of course when he did that, that was all there was to it. They just struck it.

Then there was a very nice thing he did. We had a foreign aid bill up and he was on the Appropriations Committee. He had charge of it. The man who had been placed in charge of foreign aid by President Eisenhower had made some very foolish remarks in a speech. He'd only had the job a month and he condemned the Democrats and condemned Johnson and all, and there hadn't been anything done on the bill yet. He came before Senator Johnson's committee. Of course, Senator Johnson knew the bill up and down. He struck out quite a bit of it. A few of us, I think about ten or twelve Republicans, we thought at least we ought to get some of these things back in, try to, because we knew in conference a lot of them would come back in anyway. So we organized and we got two or three Democrats to agree with us.

I remember they had a book program in these foreign countries. I had been ambassador to India and I had seen these people just crowding these libraries reading these books. And the Russians had a big book program where they were cheap and they would give them to them. So

I made an argument on that and I just said, "I think the Leader's making a great mistake. These people read our history. We have some propaganda but they soon learn the propaganda, they don't pay much attention to that. They read our best literature, they read our history." But he was adamant, because he was not going to let any of it pass and none did. He won on every amendment.

But that evening, there was a gym there, you know. He used to go every afternoon to the gym. Every afternoon he'd go there and take a swim, and I did,too. I went in and we weren't in the same room and I heard a voice, "Oh, John, come here, come here." I said, "Who is it?" "Lyndon, your leader." (Laughter) I went in and he said, "You seem to be very serious about what you said on the floor on that." I said, "Yes, you made a big mistake, Lyndon, on the books. You made a mistake." He said, "Come in to see me about fifteen minutes before the Senate meets." And I went and I told him a little more about it, and he went out on the floor and the thing came up. Well, by golly, he just changed it. He changed it and put it back in.

He was always thoughtful about his family. It was so evident. He was not overdoing it. You'd see him with them, Mrs. Johnson and the two girls.

I would be dishonest if I said I liked everything he did in the Senate, all the ways he did to run his side, although he was successful. But that isn't the point because I don't have that kind of a personality or that force of leadership, and he did. But there wasn't any question that he probably wasn't the strongest leader that

probably ever served since the Congress got a larger size. You know of course in the old days when they just had twenty-five or thirty members there were always a few that stood out.

G: I gather that back when the majority was so close, they were maybe only two votes apart, he seemed to have an ability to skim off a couple of Republican votes on some very close issues. How would he do that?

C: Oh yes! One of the most famous was when President Eisenhower nominated Strauss--

G: Lewis Strauss.

C: --Lewis Strauss to be, as I recall, secretary of commerce. It was really a hard fought battle because there were strong feelings. Senator [Clinton P.] Anderson of New Mexico for some reason--well, he had been chairman of the space committee and joint committee--I don't know, for some reason, fought tremendously hard. There were some Democrats that did not feel that way, that rather thought he was an able man. It was a very close vote. But then I remember when Mrs. Smith, Margaret Chase Smith, voted against Strauss, there was kind of a gasp. And it was always thought that President Johnson, because of his association with her on the space committee, which he had initiated, you know, after Sputnik went up, that he probably persuaded her, and she's pretty hard to persuade, to vote against Strauss. She's a very independent woman. Now whether that's true or not, I don't know, but anyway that was the general . . . .

Yes, he'd come over on the Republican side once in a while, talk to people. I don't know whether he persuaded them or not but he had friends over there.

G: I get the impression that he could get Molly [Senator George W.] Malone to vote with him occasionally. How did he do that?

C: Malone prided himself on being a westerner. He wore his cowboy boots and a big hat. He'd been a boxer, he was a rough=and-tumble fellow, but a darn nice fellow. They just seemed to have similar ideas and liked each other. I don't know whether he over-persuaded him or not but anyway they were friends.

Oh, he didn't miss a thing on either side, that's all I can say.

G: Did you get an opportunity to observe his relationship with Richard Nixon when Nixon was vice president and presiding over the Senate?

C: No, I can't say that I particularly noticed it. Nixon, when he was vice president, looking back, he didn't seem to play a very strong role. He traveled quite a bit. He did preside oftener than most vice presidents preside. I just don't know what their relationship was.

(Interruption)

I really don't know. He had a good relationship with President Eisenhower. It doesn't mean they always agreed but I know that he respected him in the way he talked about him. I'm sure that he saw him. It is true that in the last two years of President Eisenhower's administration, when the question of the next president arose, he got a little tougher on the Eisenhower policies because the election

was coming up. It was generally known that he was a candidate. And it was developing that he was a candidate and Senator Kennedy was going to be a candidate. That was rather interesting.

G: Do you remember his role in the defeat of the Bricker Amendment?

C: Well, that was a strange battle that went on for weeks. Senator Bricker had of course introduced the amendment. He had more sponsors, enough sponsors, to carry the bill, over two-thirds. He also thought that Secretary Dulles had, in a measure, approved it.

It was a very difficult amendment to understand because I remember myself studying it and studying it and studying it, trying to see just exactly what in the world it meant. I was one of the two Republicans that didn't want to sponsor it. It was defeated by, as I recall, either one or two votes. One was a Republican and one was a Democrat, who changed their votes, Senator [Homer] Ferguson of Michigan, and I believe Senator, I've forgotten which Democratic Senator, but it was generally thought that Senator Johnson got him to change his vote.

G: Was that Walter George?

C: No. Walter George was fighting hard for the revised amendment, and it came as a great surprise to him because he was a powerful man. No, he had changed it from a treaty to an executive agreement, so it looked like it would go through, but it lost by, I think, one vote or two.

I would have to say that in practically every vote of any importance in the Senate while he was leader, and I'm leaving out now,

you know, there are always political votes which are purely political and of course he naturally had charge of them. And of course we didn't like that, the Republicans didn't. But on issues which were national or larger, the Bricker Amendment--while I still guess it's not wholly understood, it would have had rather a profound effect upon constitutional approval of treaties and so forth--and civil rights, [and] other matters, I would think in the eyes of history that it would be said that he took a national side and not a political side.

G: One of the first issues that you faced in 1953 was the confirmation of Charles Wilson as secretary of defense. There was a question whether he would retain his General Motors stock at the time. Of course he testified before the Armed Services Committee. Do you remember what Lyndon Johnson's role there was?

C: No, I don't. As I recall, President Eisenhower came in such a popular president that there was very little opposition or discussion about his choices. They made a lot out of what Wilson is supposed to have said, "What's good for General Motors is good for the United States."

G: Is that what he actually said?

C: I don't think he said it, no. I don't. He might have said it was good for both of them or something like that. I don't believe he made that statement. I remember I checked it up one time. But there wasn't much opposition to the appointees.

G: Hyman Rickover?

C: Rickover is the man I've been thinking about. He's still there.

G: Now another close vote was the Albert Beeson nomination, Albert Beeson to be on the National Labor Relations Board. Do you remember that vote?

C: No, to put it frankly, I don't.

I'm sure you'll bring it up but one of the interesting things that began to show his sense of timing and also his feeling of necessity was when the Russians sent Sputnik up. It was a real shock. It was realized that they had developed a launcher that could send a missile to the United States and we hadn't developed one. And Johnson immediately proposed the formation of the space committee, the necessity of greater research and the development of nuclear weapons.

G: Did you talk to him during this period about his concern or did he discuss this with you?

C: No. There was general agreement.

G: I don't want to miss anything in my notes.

C: He had kind of a phrase that he used on me every now and then. After the session had adjourned, we would be going down on the elevator, there had been something up that he had been very much interested in and I had voted for it, he'd pat me on the back and say, "John, you're a great American. You're a great American." (Laughter)

G: You've mentioned a couple of occasions in which you were able to get him to change his mind on supporting things. Can you recall any others where you were able to convince him to follow a particular course?

C: No. I recall when I wasn't able to convince him. In those first two years, when the Republicans were in control, I was on the labor committee and chairman of the [sub-]committee on education. I brought out a bill, aid to education. There had never been one. One had passed the Senate when Taft was the leader. I could not get it through either Knowland or Johnson; neither one of them would agree to it. Of course, later on in his own administration, one of them was passed. I don't know what the reason was at that time.

G: Do you remember the highway bills that came up?

C: Well, I should, because I was on the committee, but I don't remember particularly what aspect it was.

G: I guess one question was over funding, whether they should be sort of a pay as you go basis or whether they should have bonds for a longer range development.

C: Yes. There was always a question about the highway bill. Of course later that was largely settled when Eisenhower became president when they set up the highway fund for the national system. He took care of Texas.

G: Now, in one occasion, on a Marine Corps appropration, and I assume this went through the Armed Services Committee, Lyndon Johnson pushed through an amendment in the Senate, increasing President Eisenhower's recommended appropriation. It was a very close vote. It passed the Senate I think by 40 to 39 with three Republicans voting with him. Do you remember that vote? That was in 1955. It added $46,000,000 to the President's budget on the Marine Corps.

C: No, I don't. On appropriations bills, you know, there were so many amendments offered and cut and increased that unless you went back and looked at each one, it would be pretty difficult to remember every one of them unless there was a tremendous fight over it.

G: Now another issue that year was the draft extension in the military reserves bill, which the AMA opposed because they didn't want an extension of the doctor's draft.

C: Who opposed?

G: The American Medical Association. He managed to get that one passed, I think. Do you remember his maneuvering there?

C: Yes, vaguely. There was the consideration, you know, that if you are going to have the draft, it had to be applicable to all. I think it had to do with . . . .

G: Let me ask you some questions about his heart attack in 1955. Did that change him any as leader?

C: In 1955 I was in India when he had his heart attack, and that's all I knew. Of course I read about it and heard about it from people. But when I returned to the Senate in 1957, from then on there was never any evidence that his heart attack restrained him in any way from his energy and from his work.

G: He didn't slack up any?

C: No. Once in a while people would worry, you know, you would hear expressions of worry that he might overdo himself, but he never showed it in any way.

G: You may have been in India when the depressed areas bill was passed. Do you remember that one? That was another close vote.

C: I could have been. I don't know.

G: You've talked about the civil rights bill already.

C: Yes. If I was there I'm sure I voted for it, because eastern Kentucky was a depressed area.

G: Anything that you remember on the question of Alaska and Hawaii statehood?

C: No, except that it had his support. I'd like to make a confession. I voted against Alaska. It had some--I can't spell them out now--it had some reservations in it. But it seemed to me that there was such a large area of Alaska that was owned by the government and also again, its proximity to Russia and everything. I don't know. I had the feeling that it hadn't been worked out properly and it wasn't yet the time. But it had a minority. There weren't many.

G: Is there anything else on the Senate years that you'd like to talk about before we move on to the later years?

C: Once he showed a little peevishness towards me. Again, everybody is human. It's custom in the Senate, whoever is presiding when the Senate opens, you give the floor to the leader, no matter how many are asking for it. Well, I happened to be presiding. [Jacob] Javits got up and asked--Senator Johnson wasn't there--for the floor. He was the first one so I recognized him. Then Senator Johnson came in. He held up his hand and I said, "Senator Javits is speaking and he has the floor." I was right by the rules, and I think I was right

anyway because he had been speaking a couple of minutes. And Javits said, "I'll yield the floor to the Majority Leader," which is the proper thing to do, and Johnson said, "I asked for it in my own right." Then I went into some detail, explaining, "You do have the right when you're there, but you weren't here. Javits asked for it and he has been speaking and he'll have to yield the floor to you." He said, "No, I want it in my own right." He sat down and he looked like he was angry and disturbed, but we went on. Later on I saw him that day and he said, "John, you were right."

G: Do you have any anecdotes about Lyndon Johnson as a senator that are interesting?

C: There are all kinds of anecdotes about him, I think chiefly more when he was president and vice president, but I got under the impression that in the Senate he was--and I was only there four years when he was the leader--that he was just so intense, so intent on leading the Senate that he didn't have much time for anecdotal references in the Senate. It just seemed like he was working all the time.

G: One of the things that we always hear about him is that he would call other senators in the middle of the night.

C: Yes, I've heard that, he'd call them up in the middle of the night and wake them up.

G: He never telephoned you late at night?

C: No. He called me several times on other matters which came along a little bit later.

G: Did he defer quite a bit to Dick Russell?

C: Oh, yes. They discussed things. He'd defer to him in manner, not obsequiously, but respectfully. I think that helped maintain a willingness more for Russell to go along with him on some things that he might not have gone along with him on.

G: My impression from what others have said is that Dick Russell on one side of the aisle and Eugene Millikin on the other had two of the best minds in the Senate.

C: True.

G: Is that true?

C: I would say that while Millikin's name is not, I would say, well known, I think he was probably one of the most brilliant men I ever served with. He was on the Ways and Means Committee, a couple of times [he was] chairman, and he always led the debate of course on the Republican side. When they had a debate on a tax bill the Senate was always full and the galleries,too, because it was not only instructive but it was amusing. They would literally eat each other up. Of course, Millikin would carry that on with [Senator Paul M.] Douglas,too. Douglas wasn't on the committee but Senator Douglas had his own economic views and Millikin then would take out Senator Douglas's book that he had written, which was usually in contradiction to what he was saying. Then he would say, "You don't come before our committee and present your views. You just lie here like an alligator until you want to say something, then you get up."

He had arguments,too,with Senator Humphrey when Senator Humphrey first came to the Senate. Humphrey took him on but at that

time he wasn't as experienced as he became and Millikin also really took it without any question at all. I don't think Johnson ever argued much with Millikin. But he did have a tremendous mind. [Walter] George also had a tremendous mind and [was] very persuasive.

G: George I guess was known as a great speaker. When Senator George made a speech he could actually get votes on the floor.

C: Yes, he was one of those very few. First, he was a really good speaker, not in the flowery, oratorical style, although he used wonderful language and was a great speaker, but he was one that they said--and I think it's true--that in his speeches could persuade.

G: How would you describe Dick Russell?

C: Dick Russell was always considered, I would say, as an individual. Maybe the most innately powerful man in the Senate, but he did not have the success in winning his points that George would have with some others but his views were always respected and he always commanded attention for his ability and for his conviction and for his integrity. And without question there were quite a number there [who felt] that he was considered to be the leader of the southern bloc.

G: Of course in 1960 Lyndon Johnson ran for president and subsequently as the Democratic nominee for vice president. Do you think that the vice presidency was a comfortable period for him? Do you think he longed to be back in the Senate? What was his attitude there?

C: Well, I have some views on that. I think there was an antagonism that developed between Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson. How you

would describe that is difficult, I think that this is subjective. Senator Johnson knew his experience as a leader. He knew that he had dealt with the great questions that had come before us. I think he probably considered Senator Kennedy without that experience and, of course, much younger. I don't know for what other reason, but they did not seem to be on the best of terms. But I will go on from there that when President Kennedy became president and Senator Johnson became vice president--I think it is great to Vice President Johnson's credit, and one which I do not know that he receives the credit that he should have--that he was absolutely loyal to President Kennedy and I'm sure took some stands that ordinarily he would not have approved out of his feeling that he was his vice president. It was their administration and he was very loyal. No one ever heard him say a word against President Kennedy.

President Kennedy sent him on a trip around the world. I remember very well he came back and reported. He upheld President Kennedy's policy in his report. It was evident that he had made a very careful study of all the places that he had been and he stuck to it.

This is not a very nice thing to say but I think I knew President Kennedy pretty well. I never heard President Kennedy say a word against him, always spoke of him with respect. I think there might have been some of President Kennedy's adherents in the White House that were not as fair.

Tape 2 of 2

C: I remember on one occasion I went to Texas and spoke. I'm not going to tell the town or place. I don't think it was a political speech. But after it was over I was invited to a little reception, maybe fifteen or twenty [people]. We talked about a great many things. And finally someone said, "What has happened to Vice President Johnson?" I said, "What do you mean?" "Well," they said, "he's following President Kennedy on his policies and we don't like it." I said, "Well, first of all, I'm not the person to whom you should ask that question. I'm a Republican. You should probably ask him, ask Vice President Johnson or ask some of the Democrats, not me." I did go ahead to say--this is what I think--I told him, "I think Vice President Johnson is a man who is a great patriot. He loves his country. He supports President Kennedy because that is his duty. He feels it's his duty." I did say, "I think Texas is noted for its loyalty. I should think you all would appreciate that loyalty rather than derogate him." When I got back I saw him and I told him about this. He said, "John, I know that's happening. I know it happens in places and among certain people but I expected it and I'll just go ahead and do my duty."

G: Do you think he was happy or unhappy as vice president?

C: He hadn't showed any signs of unhappiness that I could see. Of course, a lot of people said he was but . . . .

G: Did he seem to have enough to keep busy?

C: Well, I doubt it. A vice president never thinks he has enough to

keep busy, you know. I do not know how much he was included in discussions of policy and that. All I do know is that he'd come to the Senate at times and talk to committees about policies and report to us when he made trips. He always seemed to have thrown himself fully into the trips, to learn everything he could to be able to report everything he could. I don't know whether he was happy or not but I think if one person feels he's doing what is useful, you've got to feel some feeling of satisfaction.

G: Of course he became president as a result of the assassination. Let's talk about the Warren Commission Report. Do you recall your first contact with him after he became president? Was this it? Was it with regard to the Warren Commission?

C: Yes. I was a member of the Warren Commission. I remember I was home in Somerset, Kentucky, and one night about six o'clock there was a telephone call. The operator said, "There's some man on the line who says he's the president of the United States and wants to talk to you." That's another thing he always did. He would call on the White House phone. He never had some secretary get on the line and say "President Johnson wants to speak to you." Just started right out.

He told me that he was going to establish this commission. He told me the persons that were going to be on it. He asked me if I would serve and I said, "If you think that I am capable of serving and want me to serve, of course I'll serve." He said, "I'm very glad." I told him, "I'll come back to Washington tomorrow and I accept." He said when I come back we'll talk about it again. I did go back

the next day and we talked about it. It was very quickly established. Within a few days we were sworn in.

G: Did he tell you why he wanted to put you on that commission?

C: Well, he told me that he had decided to put two from each house, one Republican and one Democrat. He told me, "I know you and we've served together. I've watched you, and I know you'll do what is objective and fair. I have confidence in you, and I think the Senate has confidence in you. I want you to serve. I've selected you from among the Republicans. Of course Dick Russell, naturally I want him on it."

G: You were in pretty good company there, weren't you? Did he talk about his own conjectures about the assassination?

C: No.

G: That it had perhaps been a conspiracy?

C: No. I can say this and during the entire time we were working, that there never was a suggestion from him on any aspect of the assassination or any suggestion from him that we hurry up our work. That's been said, suggested, you know, that they were ordering us to get the report out before the election and all that. Nothing like that ever came to us. It's being suggested in the reports now, you know, but it never came to any of us. He never talked to any of us. He may have talked to the Chief Justice, I don't know. But if he had on any substantive thing, I know that the Chief Justice would have told us. There was never any pressure of any kind from him.

G: This is hindsight, of course, but if you had the opportunity to redo

any aspect of that commission, what would you have liked to have seen done? What would you have gone into or done differently?

C: Of course I've really thought about it a lot, naturally, ever since the commission reported. It's just been questioned since the very beginning, you know. There have been some who have written books about it. Some of those who came before the commission were under oath, and could not back up in any way their assertions. Some of them are still writing. Some of them have made a career out of it.

We're a group that knew each other, that is, the people who served in the Congress, but none of us were particularly intimate with each other. I mean by that [that] we just knew each other. Naturally I knew the members from the House but had no relationship with them other than just kind of a congressional relationship. Senator Russell, I had served with him for a time on the Armed Services Committee and I knew him better. We had talked about various things at times but I did not have a close, intimate relationship with him then. I think that is true of the whole commission.

We didn't know what had happened when it had started. I mean we knew what had happened but we didn't know the circumstances. We made the most thorough inquiry we could at the time. We've been criticized for not forming our own investigative group but where would we have got them? The evidence was at hand. You had to move quickly. The FBI was respected at that time in a way that it's being criticized now. There was no thought at all then . . . . The CIA was supposed to be a nonpareil organization.

There have been all kinds of theories but there's never been any doubt in my mind that, number one, Oswald was the assassin, and there wasn't any conspiracy. Now lately in the investigation being held by the Intelligence Committee there have been allegations that the CIA had planned to assassinate Castro and Castro had set out to retaliate. We knew that Oswald was trying to get to Cuba but he never got there. We never found any connection.

As far as any investigation going forth I certainly haven't got anything to do with it. I haven't got any objection to it. If a new investigation can turn up a fact that we were not able to find out, of course that's all for the good. It's my judgment that, even if these alleged facts are shown, these threats, it doesn't necessarily mean that there was any conspiracy. And it certainly doesn't change the fact that Oswald was the assassin.

I was interviewed on this about a month ago by BBC. I've always refused to be interviewed except casually as you might be, going around to colleges and other places. Then you submit yourself to questions and you're asked about it. Of course I'd answer. But I thought I had made a report and with everybody talking about it, the report was enough. But because of these allegations that have been made of these threats and their possible connection with Castro and Oswald in some conspiracy, I felt that I ought then to let myself be interviewed and tell all the facts that I knew, and these facts that are being misconstrued, because there are only three of us left: President Ford, Mr. John McCloy and myself. But again I want to emphasize, as

I did, that there was never any pressure of any kind from President Johnson.

G: Well, I appreciate that.

(Interruption)

C: All the states were terribly interested in the Tombigbee [River]. It had some bearing on Kentucky, I forget exactly what. I think [it was] probably more to show my solidarity with them that I went [along]. I didn't have the same personal feeling about it. I must admit that I think I could see its value--terribly expensive--but for that section. I think I probably went because the senator from Alabama and, I think, John Stennis was for it--I always had a tremendous admiration for him--and a Tennessee senator.

G: In February 1965 I think the President received an honorary degree from the University of Kentucky?

C: Yes.

G: You greeted him there in Lexington. Do you remember that occasion? Is there anything about that that is significant that you want to talk about?

C: I remember, first may I say, he had made a prior trip to Kentucky when he was pushing his poverty program. He made a tour, I think, starting in Pennsylvania and it came to West Virginia. He asked me--I think my colleague couldn't go--but I met him in Huntington, West Virginia. We flew down to some small landing spot and then got an automobile and drove up through a very poor part of eastern Kentucky. I can remember passing through villages. He would get out and shake

hands with everybody. And of course we had the Secret Service with us. The Secret Service would say, "You see how difficult it is." But he would stop every place [and] shake hands. He was very nice. I sat in the same car with him. He sat in the front seat, and I sat in the back seat with Mrs. Johnson. We were both watching him as he got out in every small town nearly and shake hands and then make a little talk and go on.

He was invited to the University of Kentucky. I didn't go down with him but I went ahead and was there to greet him. He spoke in the afternoon. Oh, the auditorium seats about twelve thousand. It was crowded in fact. There was a little incident there; it was the beginning of the kind of the anti-war feeling. There were probably fifteen or twenty students out there at the entrance. Well, we didn't like it because we felt it was an affront to the President and he didn't pay any attention to them.

G: Let's talk some more about this trip through Appalachia. Did he talk about his attitude toward poverty then, or what he hoped to do about it? Did he talk about his programs?

C: Well, he had already started this program, you know, and legislation.

G: Did you get the feeling that he felt deeply about it?

C: Yes. And I had the feeling that that grew on him for quite a while, that with the civil rights bill and then poverty, he did have a very sincere feeling about it.

G: You may want to take a break now. It is one-fifteen. Shall we do that.

(Interruption)

G: I understand that you have some memories of this Indira Gandhi visit to the White House.

C: Yes. Well, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi came here, I believe that was her first trip as prime minister, I'm not quite certain. What year was that?

G: That was March, 1966.

C: 1956?

G: 1966.

C: She had probably been here before then, but I'm not sure--no, no, because he'd only been president. And there had been strains between India and the United States, you know, always. They seemed vague; they seemed difficult to explain, to sort out. Of course, the people were always very friendly but we always have some kind of governmental problem. Even when I was there in 1955 and 1956.

But he, of course, was very nice to invite my wife and me because I had been ambassador. He invited others who had been ambassadors, too, you know. And I remember him sitting there and they both made a nice talk. Of course, usually at that kind of a thing it's rather formal and courteous, you see. But then she gave a dinner for him at the Indian residence. It's not a very large house but she didn't have as many [guests]. But she invited me and my wife. President Johnson had declined because of some business and he was sending Hubert Humphrey to take his place, but he said he would come out before. So, he did come and talked to her again. They seemed to be getting along fine. Finally, he asked, "Would it be all right if I stayed

for dinner?" Of course--I didn't hear her--she said, "Certainly," though. Of course, there was poor Hubert, you know. They had to go shuffle around the table and put Hubert up someplace.

But the amazing thing is they seemed to get along. She got up and made a nice toast, how she had been received by him with such great courtesy and thoughtfulness and consideration of their problems between the two. He responded. But then he said, "I just have enjoyed the visit to Mrs. Gandhi and enjoyed talking to her and meeting her." He said, "Who would have thought it? Here is the Prime Minister of India, descended from a long family of hundreds of years, with great scholars and statesmen," all that. "Who would have thought that Lyndon Johnson of Texas would be sitting here talking to Mrs. Gandhi?" Well, it was just his human side is all.

G: I think on that occasion he unveiled a program of aid for India that involved putting Indian currency into purchase of equipment--

C: That's right, schools and so forth.

G: --and things of this nature. That didn't really go over, did it? What happened?

C: No. I could have told him that. Of course, you know, they've got their so-called currency, where we give them money, or loan them money, or give them money and they can't pay it all back, they can use it for certain things in India, payment of salaries, this and that. But they have a clause and they have to agree to it. And they're so suspicious--particularly in education and things like that--that you are trying to introduce ideas or something which is

not in conformity with their own.

On that other trip to Kentucky, it was during the war and we flew to Fort Campbell, which is just on the line between Kentucky and Tennessee, and is the base of the, I think, 101st Airborne. I think they were getting ready to be sent to Vietnam, and so there was a big review and he spoke. Then on the way a rather amusing thing happened. He came back to Louisville. We always had to stick together because we couldn't get separated because we were coming back with him. There was a fellow running for Congress over in Indiana, just across the river, in New Albany, a fellow named Lee Hamilton. He's still up there, he's a very good man, a good congressman. And Lyndon went over there and made a speech for him and there we were too. I was there, too, and then [Thruston] Morton, my colleague. Hamilton laughs about it all the time, says he always appreciated us coming over--

G: Was he a Democrat?

C: --participating in his campaign.

G: He was a Democrat, I guess. Having two Republican senators-- Was the President amused by that?

C: Yes. He laughed about taking us over there. (Laughter)

G: What did he say about it? Do you recall?

C: Well, I don't know what he really said, I don't really know. Well, somebody could say "You've attended a Democratic meeting, you ought to attend more. You would be better off," or something like that.

G: Is there anything else here that we haven't discussed. I know in

June 1966 you met with him as a member of Congress who had been to Vietnam. There was a briefing session there in the Cabinet Room. Do you remember that?

C: Yes. That was after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, yes. Of course, it would be easier now to review everything. Actually, you know, when the French were defeated, there was some talk in this country of the United States intervening by air. Nixon supported it. Eisenhower turned it down, of course. He did provide six hundred advisers. President Kennedy was beginning to send some troops in there and he sent--I think at the time of his death there were about sixteen thousand there. They were already being fired on and that's not so well known, but I remember a committee went over there. What they were doing, they were ferrying Vietnamese troops up to the front lines and of course they were getting hit too and firing back. So it was already going on.

Then the Tonkin Gulf came along, you know, that's where the American boat was fired on, it all happened. I wasn't on the Foreign Relations Committee at the time but the Foreign Relations Committee reported out this resolution unanimously. Well, I can say and, of course it's proved, that I knew exactly what it meant. So I was not in any way deceived because I knew that we were giving him the authority to send troops if he made up his mind to do so. There wasn't much thought at the time that it would happen. I did get up on the floor and ask a number of questions of Fulbright, that if in

fact by passing this resolution that we were not only giving him the authority which he already had to protect our troops--he had that authority anyway you know--but, if he so decided, that he had the authority to send troops to Vietnam, and actually, if necessary, to North Vietnam. Fulbright answered, "Yes. I don't think he's going to do so." And I said, "I don't think he'll do so. But you never know and it can happen." So I knew. Johnson in his book, prints that colloquy between me and Fulbright, I don't know whether you know it or not.

G: Sure. That's well known now.

C: Well, Fulbright later said he had been not fully informed or something like that.

Then I heard the hearings over whether or not that boat was fired on. There was never any doubt in my mind that it occurred. Fulbright had a hearing on it. There was a question whether you can retaliate, maybe whether the method of retaliation was too strong. Anyway, well, then of course the war built up. Well, there's no use going over the whole story except that as soon as people began to get killed why of course then the agitation started, the parades and down in Washington, the riots and all that.

Then he invited a large number down to the White House--I guess that's the meeting--and had briefings by McNamara and by someone from the Pentagon and by Rusk. And somebody raised a question about his authority to send troops and he did say, "Well, you gave me the authority." Well, somebody questioned him. He said, "Well, I don't

see it." Johnson said, "There it is. I know you can read."

G: That's what he said?

C: Yes. The North Vietnamese began to say they wouldn't negotiate as long as we were bombing North Vietnam. I guess that's when I first got into it because in 1966 I did make a speech urging that--he had stopped the bombing for a time over the holidays, had resumed it though. I made a speech that we should stop bombing and see if they would negotiate. I don't know whether it appears in there or not but I went down there. I think I asked him. And we had a good long talk. He said he had stopped the bombing and they hadn't done anything. Well, I suggested that [he] call it off, give it a longer, longer time and see if they will negotiate. Well, looking back and knowing what happened later when they always saying they were going to negotiate and wouldn't negotiate--all that stuff in Paris, they never negotiated--I doubt if it [would have] had any effect, although it was earlier.

Then I guess you know when we sent troops into [Cambodia]--well, he was out then. Of course, he left. When he went out, I'll never forget sitting in here and hearing him make that speech that he wouldn't be a candidate again.

G: You offered the amendment didn't you, the Cooper-Church Amendment?

C: Yes, when Nixon was . . .

G: Would you recount the genesis of that amendment?

C: Yes. We heard, got some intelligence some way, that President Nixon was going to send troops into Cambodia. It was my idea, you know,

that it was an extension of the war. We hadn't been in Cambodia although the Vietnamese used Cambodia to get troops down. I never objected to bombing that Ho Chi Minh Trail. We heard they were going to send a body of troops over there. So I introduced with Church and also it's not generally known, but Mike Mansfield and George Aiken also were--well, all four of us introduced it, to call for the withdrawal of the troops from Cambodia on the idea that they were going to extend the war. I don't know. We fought over it about three months I think and by that time he had withdrawn them. And then in the conference it was changed. We said all forces, air, ground, all kinds. They changed it to ground forces and the President signed it. And it is the only law in history where that was ever done.

But from then on it was never a possibility. The Vietnamese set up this group over in Paris. And you know we had Averell Harriman over there and Cy Vance. I stopped there one time. Of course, we had people going over there like George McGovern. He was just one; there was lots of them went there. And they'd go talk to the Vietnamese and they would tell them, "Yes, we're willing to negotiate." But then you would go talk to Averell Harriman and Cy Vance and they would say "They won't negotiate, they don't negotiate at all. We just have useless talks with them." And so then it looked inevitable that the war was going to peter out some way, I don't know.

G: On the Cooper-Church Amendment, did you originate the idea and talk to Senator Church about it? Or did you do it both together or who had the initiative?

C: I originated it.

G: Did you seek him out as a co-sponsor or how did he get together with you on that?

C: I think we had been talking about some kind of amendment and this just suddenly presented itself as a possible invasion of Cambodia. There were a lot of amendments introduced, you know, that [said that] you had to get out by a certain date. I didn't support those because I felt that it set a precedent that presidents run the war, that you can't suddenly tell them, "You just quit right now." The constitutional method was that you could say, "We'll withhold funds. We just won't provide any more funds," which was our method, that we would not provide any funds.

I went over there twice. It was unhappy. Of course you know if the United States could have used its full forces, I assume we could have won. There's also the problem that you're thinking about whether China or Russia would intervene. At one time, you know, [under] President Johnson, they bombed Haiphong. And he did call that evening, he called a group of us down there, about fifteen or twenty Democrats and Republicans and told us all about it. [He] told us how he'd planned and that his program was to let them know of our capabilities if we wanted to use them. He was worried because there were some Russian ships in the harbor, [that] they might strike one of them. As I say, he's a very human man. He told us, "I couldn't sleep last night. I lay there all night worried. I finally knew that I just wanted to go to a church and pray. You know, I'm a

Campbellite." You know, the Christian Church in the South--they do it in Kentucky, they used to call them Campbellites. I don't know whether they did in Texas or not. Well, there was a church started about--it was a break-off from the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian --about 1850, by a man named [Alexander] Campbell who lived in Lexington. Henry Clay was one of his big supporters and it had quite a big following. It still has. It's not a large church. He said, "I didn't think my church would be open but you know Luci is a Catholic. I went and woke up Luci and asked her if her church was open. She said 'Yes, father.' She took me to the Catholic Church and we prayed." It showed the human side of him, you know.

Well, you can see the situation. You were caught where you either had to, I guess, employ the full power of the United States and maybe risk [war with] Russia or China. Of course he didn't make that decision. I always felt we just kind of backed into it. Not really. It got worse and worse, we would send more troops. There just wasn't really any solution to it hardly. But I think he always rather appreciated the fact that I said on the floor that I knew and I said the Senate has got to know this,too,so they couldn't say later that they didn't know it.

G: Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you want to include here?

C: Well, I don't know unless you can think of something.

Well, all I know is that in his relations to me he was always fair and forthright, even when we were talking about blow-ups. And,

as I say, unlike a good many men in public life, he wasn't afraid to let go and talk about his inner thoughts, you know, what he thought about things and show his feelings. As I say, [he was] more earthy and outgoing when he would talk [and] when he would meet with the members and [share] experiences with others.

G: Are you thinking of a particular occasion here?

C: Just a few things I've said, you know, like telling about the bombing and Haiphong and when he had these briefings, he would stand up for his position.

G: Do you recall the last time that you talked to him?

C: No, I really can't. I don't think I ever saw him very much after he left the presidency. I remember that before he left, the Senate had a reception for him up in the Senate, off the Senate floor. We all talked then. He thanked everybody and was nice and he said, what he often said, "I did the best I could." You know, he said that several times, "I thought I did the best I could."

I may have but I just can't remember. I don't know whether he came back often or not. But always he. . . .

Oh, I think that there is a good feeling for him among those who knew him in the Senate, despite the war and maybe despite disagreements. I believe there is a feeling of respect and friendship.

G: Senator, I really appreciate it.

C: I don't know if this is the kind of thing you look for or not.

G: That's exactly what we want. It sure is. You've given me some good

material and if you think of anything else, well, let me know and I'll come back and do another session.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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