

INTERVIEW I

DATE: December 5, 1986

INTERVIEWEE: STANLEY L. GREIGG

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Greigg's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

MG: I think you were working for [Hubert] Humphrey while [Lawrence] O'Brien was working for Kennedy.

G: No. No.

MG: Let me ask you to begin by just tracing your background very briefly here and explain how you ended up in the Congress.

G: After graduate school, I went on in to serve some active time in the navy, and while I was in the navy, I was contacted by both the small school where I did my undergraduate work in Iowa and by Syracuse University asking about the possibility of accepting administrative positions at the two schools. I weighed it very carefully and elected to go back to Iowa and accepted a dean of students, dean of men, position at Morningside College, where I also taught history and political science. And in those years I elected, with the total support of the school administration, to become active in city politics, and it was a nonpartisan type of political involvement. But I elected to run for city council back in the home city of Sioux City, which was a city of roughly a hundred thousand. And I went through a very, very tough campaign for city hall and won that campaign by a very, very sizable margin, and

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having gone in as the youngest councilman ever elected, and then I became mayor of the city.

When I was mayor, Charlie Hoven had been the longtime congressman from the Sixth Congressional District of Iowa. Charlie was an interesting guy. He had been in the Congress some twenty-four years. He was the ranking Republican on the House Agricultural Committee, and there was no one, really, that really was going to unseat Charlie Hoven. He was getting up there in the years, and he saw what was happening as 1964 was starting to unfold, and he elected to retire, and he gave up his seat. This immediately set off a lot of speculation as to what would happen in that district, which was a predominantly Republican district in northwest Iowa comprised at that time of some eighteen counties. A lot of talk centered on who might jump into that race, and I had a lot of people come to me and talk with me about it.

And one of the things that I felt so good about was that we had had a tremendous administration there in the city, and a lot of healthy spirit. So I really did start to give some thought to jumping into that race, although at the beginning I was not all that excited about it because I felt we still had an agenda there in the city that I wanted to complete. We had gotten so much accomplished that I really wanted to see it through to completion. But on the Republican side a number of potential [candidates] started to emerge, and it ended up that there were five or six who sought the nomination. I finally made the decision to get into it, and on the Democratic side, there were three candidates. It was really a tough primary, but I came out on the Democratic side with a really healthy vote and picked up the nomination. On the Republican side, because there were so many and the battle became so

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bruising, they had to go to convention, and a lot of splits developed, and they finally settled on a fellow who had served in the state legislature. Then the campaign was under way in earnest between the two of us. Again, it was a tough campaign, but--

MG: You picked up about 56 per cent of the vote [inaudible]--

G: Yes. Close to that. It may have been 54. I don't quite recall the percentage, but it was a good victory, and I felt that we had waged really a very, very good campaign. The fact that President Johnson was running so well--he did carry Iowa in 1964--we also had a very popular governor, Harold E. Hughes, who ran very, very strongly. But I felt good because people talk about the coattail effect, and I'm sure there was some of that, but I know in my home city of Sioux City, which was the largest city by any stretch of the imagination in the district, I came out of there with an incredible vote, which meant that things were going pretty nicely.

MG: What do you think were the issues that elected you, aside from the Johnson-Goldwater race?

G: Well, I think a number of things. One, there was somewhat of an unsettling field in agriculture--a feeling, I should say, in agriculture--as you know, the Feed-Grains Program had been initiated, and you would get a wide range of reaction to that program, but basically it was doing two things that helped a great deal. One, it was attempting to get a handle on the reduction aspect, to hold down all the surpluses. But also it was stabilizing the price, and nothing is more important for farmers than to have some idea as to what they might expect in the marketplace for their commodities. So I endorsed that Feed-Grains program very, very early, and I think across the board, it had a lot of acceptance.

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MG: Did your opponent oppose it, or did he--?

G: No, I don't really think he opposed it. I just made more of an issue out of it than he did in terms of what I felt was the absolute essential need for a vibrant agriculture, as it reflected the total economic picture across all of the little communities and the larger ones in the Sixth District.

I think there was the concern about social security. Iowa is a state that has an enormous percentage of senior citizens. In fact, it may be the number one state in the nation in percentages, and there was a lot of assault on Goldwater, if you remember at that time, on what he would do if elected to really harm social security, and I think that that was an issue in which there was a very responsive chord being struck. I also think that in a personal way that there was a very good feeling about the kind of leadership that had been demonstrated in city government. As I said, so much was being accomplished, and one could feel just an awfully good sense in the community, but--just a wide range of issues that I think really surfaced during the campaign.

MG: Do you think that the Kennedy popularity at this point, after the assassination, the regard that people seemed to have for him, did this influence the outcome, do you think?

G: I would think yes. There was an outpouring. I think that--in my particular part of northwest Iowa I detected that even more so I think in the primary. In the primary you find the kind of party loyalty that gives you a leg up, I guess is the best way you can express it, in terms of identification, and the feeling was that the shock of the loss of the President and the feeling of what his program would have been had he been able to really [have] been around longer, the fact that one of the first things that Johnson indicated was a continuation

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of so many of those programs, and I think there was just a feeling that, "Yes, we can identify."

MG: What sort of help did you get from the administration during that--your race?

G: Well, it wasn't excessive--(Laughter)--in the sense of financial assistance, but in the years that I've been associated in the Democratic Party, there's never been a great deal of money available to congressional candidates. They were exceptionally good, I think, in terms of trying to assist in some of the background materials dealing with the major issues and thrusts that one would expect in a presidential campaign. They were very good in making key people available to come into the district. I did not do as much of that in 1964 as I did in 1966, and as I reflect back on 1966, I have to say that perhaps we--we maybe overdid it a bit, because there's a feeling that you don't really need a parade of outsiders to come into the district, although you try to inject into the campaign some excitement by bringing in some personalities. But yes, in addition to some of the more recognized names, there were a lot of key lieutenants within the framework of the campaign that made themselves available and tried to assist in ways which the candidate needed. One of the individuals here, who is still here in Washington, an attorney, tells me the story that he had never seen anyone quite as disinterested as I was when he arrived on the scene. We get a kick out of it now, but he said I met with him just briefly and that I was just on the go constantly and that, while I was very appreciative of his being there, unlike other candidates, I wasn't demanding of him or of what else he could produce.

MG: Orville Freeman came and appeared in your [inaudible]--

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G: Several times. Several times, and as the farm issues became more and more emotional during that two-year span I continued to ask the Secretary of Agriculture to come into the district, because I did feel he was a very, very solid spokesperson for agriculture and he could lay it out, and my feeling was that it was the right thing to do.

MG: Well, you were elected, and you did gain a seat on the Agriculture Committee. Do you know how that appointment came about?

G: Well, it was a struggle to get that appointment, because two of us from Iowa, two newly elected freshmen congressmen, both ended up on Agriculture, Congressman Bert Bandstra and myself. We had both come to Washington shortly after our election, and we, of course, made all the calls that you normally do in trying to get as much support and build as much support to get the committee choice. I felt very keenly, frankly, that it was essential to be on the Agriculture Committee for a variety of reasons. One, my predecessor had served so long on Agriculture, and one identifies that district of Iowa with agriculture. And so I was very anxious to land a seat on that, and I remember coming to Washington and touching base with a wide range of people, from the Speaker to Wilbur Mills, who was in a key role at that time. I went to see at-that-time-Chairman [Harold] Cooley, who was the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and we really did seem to have a pretty decent amount of chemistry. And I landed--now whether behind the scenes there was the additional support from the administration for a new freshman coming in from northwest Iowa, I don't have all those details.

MG: You don't have any indication of what the administration--of what the White House did, if anything, to assist that--

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G: To assist? I'm sure that there was assistance, and I'm sure that the Agriculture Department at the executive level expressed interest, but to be able to cite specifically what kind of input they provided, or what kind of contacts, I don't have that at my fingertips.

I'll tell you a very interesting story, though. One of the first votes that I cast as a freshman congressman was a very burning, emotional issue on whether to seat the Mississippi delegation. If you remember, they were under real challenge, and I felt very keenly about the whole civil rights issue, and the issue came to the floor shortly after the House had been organized, with the Speaker being named and so on, the issue coming whether to seat the Mississippi delegation. I voted against seating the Mississippi delegation. I can tell you that there were two of us in the Iowa delegation at that time who voted that way. One was John Schmidhauser, myself, and I'll never forget--it was at the time when we had just received the appointment to Agriculture. Bert Bandstra came up to me on the floor, and he said, "My God, Stan! Do you know what you just did?" And I said, "I think I do." And he said, "Well, you know that one of the ranking members of that Agriculture Committee is Tom Abernethy of Mississippi, and," he said, "I don't know how that's going to wash as a new freshman on a committee such as Ag." And I said, "Well, I appreciate your telling me, Bert, but I really can't be terribly concerned about that." I said, "We'll just have to see how it unfolds." And, interestingly, Tom Abernethy and I became two of the closest friends that one could experience in Congress, and never once did that vote have any bearing on the kind of legislation I was able to push out of the Agriculture Committee.

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You asked about what other--I should make mention of the fact that Neal Smith, Congressman Smith, had a lot to do in assisting all the freshmen in their committee assignments, and I think so much of the credit goes to Neal because he was just one of the most respected members and had entree to people who would make these decisions, and he was very, very helpful.

MG: Was there a good deal of pressure on you to vote to seat the Mississippi delegation?

G: No, there was not, although I think there was some surprise after the vote that we expressed ourselves in the fashion that we did. But I did not feel an enormous amount of pressure, and I think maybe one of the reasons I felt that was because I had made my views rather clear from the outset, and so I was not being bombarded by those who would have hoped that I would have voted in the opposite direction.

MG: Let me ask you to talk generally about the Agriculture Committee. You've mentioned that Cooley of North Carolina was the chairman. You had a lot of people of some seniority there.

G: I really felt it was a tremendous committee. Any time that you have a committee that is comprised of people like Harold Cooley and Bob [Robert] Poage, you--Tom Aberrantly, these men had a grasp of agriculture that I felt was quite unique. When Harold Cooley left the Congress and Poage became the chairman, my feeling was that Bob Poage probably was the most knowledgeable man in America on agriculture. I don't think anyone had a better grasp of the intricacies of agriculture as did Bob Poage. But--

MG: He had been there almost thirty years.

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G: Yes, he had been there an awfully long time. I mean, just a tremendous guy, and one that I have deep affection for.

It was interesting. Page Belcher, at that time, was the ranking Republican on Agriculture. If my memory serves me correctly, I don't think Page really ever voted for any of the programs that we pushed out of that committee. Bob Dole was on the Agriculture Committee at that time. As I said, Bert Bandstra. I was right next to Kika [Eligio] de la Garza, who now serves as chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and I really reflect back and feel that it was a--Tom Foley was on the Agriculture Committee, and Tom and I were very, very good friends, and later, of course, he became chairman. I just really feel that in that particular time frame we really had an outstanding group of members. Clair Callan, my good colleague from Nebraska who had come in as a freshman, was on that committee, and we just really, I think, accomplished a great deal.

MG: Was there a cleavage within the committee [between] those members from, say, tobacco states, those from cotton states, and those from the Midwest, who were engaged in a different type of farming?

G: Well, every once in a while, of course, the various interests would surface, but I do believe there was a general attitude within that committee to try to do everything possible to bolster agriculture. What came across very clearly was that the voice of agriculture was getting smaller and smaller in the halls of Congress, and I think there was the feeling that, instead of each individual representing an agricultural constituency that went in a different direction, it was far better to have an appreciation of what the total picture for agriculture was, and I give Harold Cooley a lot of credit in terms of his recognition of what was

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happening out in the Midwest and the need for trying to strengthen a program as much as the needs in the South.

I introduced a piece of legislation that was signed into law when I was on the Agriculture Committee, and it was really a rather significant piece of legislation, and that was that--under the Feed-Grains Program you had to be signed up in the program, and you had to have your crops in the field if you were going to be the beneficiaries of the program.

I argued the point, because we had suffered some severe floods in northwest Iowa. I argued the position [that] the intent of all of this that farmers who signed up were very honorable in fulfilling their obligation, but you couldn't expect them to go out in a rowboat and plant their crops in order to qualify for the program. It received a lot of support in the committee, and it was starting to move, and I remember the day when Chairman Cooley addressed me and said, "I have a question to ask the gentleman from Iowa." And I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "The gentleman from Iowa would not have any problem if this was extended to cotton and tobacco?" And I said, "I wouldn't have any problem at all, sir"-- (Laughter)--and the measure moved, and very, very quickly, through the committee and through the Congress.

MG: Was this H. B. 111?

G: I don't quite recall the--I could check on that.

MG: You were also very active in Food for Peace, as I understand.

G: This was an area in which the committee spent a great deal of time, and there I give an awful lot of credit to Secretary Freeman for the way in which he presented the program. It was the type of program that, again, addressed a very, very sizable need throughout the

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world. I remember the issue itself in its final phase--it became rather costly to me personally--

MG: Let me ask you to analyze this in some detail. Go into some detail about it.

G: I guess the best way I could do that would be to suggest that, as we looked at the entire issue of what might be not only an effective mechanism to show our concern for peoples around the world, we also felt very keenly that within the miracle of agriculture we had the capacity to respond in a way that would assist both the American farmer and, at the same time, making these commodities available for distribution around the world. There was opposition, of course, that was building to this, particularly if the feeling was that the particular area of the world where some of these might be going did not coincide with the views of this nation and its democratic principles and so on. But I think the underlying premise was that there was a lot of hurt being felt. I know we spent a lot of time talking about the distribution aspect, how successful it would be. It was one thing to make it available; it was another thing if it would really get to the source where it was really needed. But we spent hours and hours in this dialogue and debate on Food for Peace, and when we finally voted for this piece of legislation, as I was indicating a little earlier, I remember the fact that we made some of it available to Egypt, and we got into this debate on the floor about, at that time, Nasser, and what he had told the United States to do, namely--literally--"go to hell," and the feeling on the floor was to ask why would we be responding. After I cast that vote, I caught a lot of flak back in the district from the Jewish vote saying to me, you know, "What in the hell are you doing?" You know. And my response was, "I was really responding to families and kids and mothers that needed"--

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MG: Did you see it principally as a foreign-aid type program or a program to boost domestic agriculture?

G: Well, I saw it--in my own view--I saw it as a great humanitarian program, and I heard some eloquent statements in terms of the capacity of this country to respond, and I--one could not divorce the fact that it had foreign policy implications, but I thought it was extremely healthy. My attitude was that it was a very genuine undertaking. It was really aimed at trying to alleviate some tremendous problems around the globe, but, at the same time, it had some beneficial effects, naturally. If it boosted our standing in the world, so be it. I could feel that few could be critical of that. But also, if it was to assist in the farm economy, again, we had the capacity to produce. It made an awful lot of sense to me.

MG: What was the impact on India's own food production apparatus? There was some feeling that this would prevent or retard the development of its own agricultural--

G: Well, there were those discussions. It centered mostly along the lines of if this program really provides the foodstuffs to the extent that we are talking about, does it diminish the kind of ongoing program that was so essential in getting the agricultural economy revitalized in a country like India? On the other hand, it was obvious that the situation in India was not going to turn around that quickly, that it was going to take some years before all of this could completely sort out.

More discussion, if I recall correctly, centered on the distribution aspect, as I said earlier. If we move these supplies, are they really going to reach the area? How are they going to be handled? We also got into a discussion about the diets of people and how this really fits into the overall area of fulfilling needs. But I don't recall that, from my point of

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view, there was ever any question about the program being pushed aside because some countries felt that it would be detrimental to building their own agricultural strength.

MG: Now, the program was also a lever for the White House to attempt to exact some reforms, at least from India, in terms of democratic reforms, government reforms, and things of this nature. Do you recall those, and whether or not Food for Peace was effective in bringing about changes that this country regarded as desirable?

G: Well, the one thing that so many of us felt in terms of our imposing a type of demand for a nation to get its house in order--it seemed to me that while that issue continued to surface and some success came as a result of nations starting to turn the corner, it was never couched in a way that I felt was a threatening sort of thing to nations around the world. My own feeling was, and I think this was shared by a lot of my colleagues, and that was, sure, try as hard as we could to force these nations to pull their apparatus together and really start getting serious and producing. But primarily, we felt that there was a great need and this nation had the wherewithal and the abundance to respond.

MG: Do you feel that there was any difference in understanding of the program between the U.S. and India?

G: Oh, sure. Sure. I do think that. I don't recall any of the real detailed feelings being expressed that the program would take a toll in terms of--say, what it would amount to as far as India was concerned, but I do believe that there were always some questions raised as to the motivation. Sure.

MG: Any other specific recollections of Food for Peace?

G: Let me give that a little more thought, and I can--

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MG: Okay.

G: --come back to that.

MG: Another measure that you supported was the Appalachian bill.

G: Yes.

MG: Was this a problem for you in your district? Did constituents see this as setting up competition for their own agricultural efforts?

G: I don't recall that I ever really received any heavy flak on that issue. My views were very well known in the district in terms of why it was so important to try to assist all segments of the American economy that were hurting, and I really did look at it more in terms of the role of a member of Congress nationwide than how it might impact on my own congressional district. And, sure, you would get some reaction as to, you know, "Our interests first," but the situation in Appalachia, the kind of picture that was being presented to us, was so devastating, and in terms of this whole concept of a "war on poverty," how one addresses the underlying problems, I think you really just have to at times call these decisions and go ahead and take the issues one by one, knowing full well that you're not going to have total support in the whole district.

MG: Were there any that you favored in principle but just believed that you just couldn't support, that the opposition among your constituents was just too strong?

G: Are you talking about legislation generally, in terms of the Great Society?

MG: Yes. Well, rent supplement, for example.

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G: (Laughter) Well, that's a very interesting story. Before I hit rent supplement, let me just say that at the time of Medicare, I had enormous opposition back home to Medicare, enormous opposition.

MG: Describe it.

G: Well, the doctors, of course, at that time accused you of moving right down the road towards socialism and were just extremely adamant in their views about the whole Medicare package. We caught it from every angle. I made it clear very early on that I favored Medicare, and I received literally hundreds of letters in opposition to it, but primarily campaign letters.

MG: An organized--

G: An organized effort. It wasn't from the rank and file constituent. I addressed that issue head-on, because I really felt that what was happening in the country was just severe for the elderly in terms of adequate health care. So even though that opposition was heavy, and I remember we used to grind out responses by the hundreds, if not thousands, in answering the kind of concern being expressed, the bottom line was that I felt very, very good about voting for that piece of legislation. And it wasn't too long before the doctors were convincing the American people that it was really their program. And that's the interesting twist in terms of politics.

But going back to the rent subsidy measure. That was one issue that was not looked upon with any particular favor back in my home district. But I personally felt that I could square that issue, having been mayor of a city of about 100,000, knowing the kinds of concerns that one realizes in a city. Rent subsidies for a city like New York City [are] far

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removed from Sioux City, Iowa, but problems that I felt were very, very real and needed to be addressed--and this was a program, really, that I think was about the first genuine programs of President Johnson. So many of the programs were a carry-over from the Kennedy Administration, but this was one that I know the President felt very keenly about. When the aides continued to do their vote counting as to whether or not this piece of legislation would be supported by me, I was a little standoffish. I did not commit myself early to that although personally I felt that I could square that very easily and not have philosophical problems whatsoever. And it just so happened that that piece of legislation was under consideration when I went home for my wedding. We were married in June of 1965, and after the wedding, I was a little concerned about being out of pocket for an extended period because we had so much legislation, and frankly, we had a superb attendance record and a fine voting record in terms of being there on the floor, and so I said to Cathy [Cathryn] at the time, "Well, my preference is to head back, and we'll find time later on to really break away." And I came back, and I walked onto the House floor, and the rent subsidy measure was being considered on final passage. The roll call was made, and I noticed in the gallery there were a number of White House aides, just almost beside themselves because it was a cliffhanger of the first order. And on the first roll call, I passed, but on the second one, I voted for it, and I felt that a couple of them were just going to literally fall out of the gallery because I--if I've got the vote correctly, I think it passed by two votes.

MG: It was two or four or something--

G: Something in that range.

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MG: --very narrow.

G: But they had never counted--they had never counted on my vote.

MG: Well, you had voted against the supplemental, I think.

G: I had voted against the supplemental, but I felt very keenly about this piece of legislation. I remember walking back to the Capitol, and my administrative assistant, Jack O'Brien, met me as I was going into the office, and I said, "Well, Jack, some will think that a liberal attitude really came forward today." And he said, "Congressman, you have to do what you have to do." And I was in the office for a brief period of time, and a special letter was delivered by messenger. It came from Larry O'Brien, and it said, "Dear Stan: I just have to tell you how deeply appreciative we are of the vote that you cast today, and the President particularly, and please know that it was a measure so important to the President, and we are very, very grateful." And I remarked at the time, you know, I said, "Well, that O'Brien is really some key guy. What a maneuverer," you know. And just a little later, a letter arrived from the President, and in essence it said, "Larry tells me of the vote you cast today and why it will be important for me to come to Iowa at some point when you demonstrated today what it meant to me."

(Tape 1, Side 2)

MG: Well, now, did you vote for it or did you vote "present," or what did--?

G: I voted for it.

MG: You did?

G: I did vote for it. Yes.

MG: Was there much White House lobbying--

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G: Oh, sure.

MG: --on you in that? Tell me the nature in this particular measure.

G: Well, I think the--and I'm trying to think who some of the individuals were at that time. There just seemed to be more intensity in trying to get this piece of legislation through than in some of the others. I was visited numerous times, and I think I really demonstrated that I was a very good listener and said very frankly that this was giving me some problems in terms of its assessment back home, but that they were not problems that were of a major variety, but I had voted for the bulwark of the Great Society programs. I also realized that the issue of a rubber stamp was more and more a daily assault. The Republicans at that time kept grinding out all of their literature that was moving in all of these congressional districts, and I think we were trying to address that issue as best we could, but they kept pounding away at it and pounding away that Johnson was exacting everything from this group of freshmen, and that all they were doing was marching to his orders. And I just indicated to the crew that continued to come back that I would take it under advisement. But it was--it was heavy.

MG: There was a memo in our files suggesting that the President even called you on that measure.

G: Yes. I don't recall the President calling me on that issue, and I don't believe that he did.

MG: Were there any--did the White House try to set up any *quid pro quos*? Did they, for example, promise to advance some project in your district or any--?

G: No, they did not, and I would have no part of that. I felt that the kinds of requests that I would make of the administration, particularly for postal facilities or for water projects,

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sewer projects, and so on--I felt that we were very successful in the kinds of internal grants that were being awarded. I did have tremendous support in some new postal facilities, but God knows that some of the facilities that were constructed in those years replaced some that were just beyond description. But I did not--no, never once in my time in the Congress did I ever get into that kind of a bargaining position where these aides would come in and indicate, subtly or otherwise, that if I could see my way clear to supporting the administration that they, in turn, would make things available to me.

MG: Okay. And did you get the feeling that they would be holding up any projects until a vote on such and such--?

G: No, I never saw any of that happening. I really felt that, while it was alleged that some members didn't have the same kind of success that I enjoyed, that they felt that they were being singled out, I never had any first-hand information that that was actually happening.

MG: H. R. Gross is the example that comes to mind as someone that just didn't receive a great deal of attention from the administration.

G: But I would also think, knowing H. R. as I do, that--I don't think H. R. would have wanted very much from the administration.

(Laughter)

I really don't believe that he would have. I think his view in the Congress was, the less government interference in his congressional district, the better. And yet I'm sure there were times when several of those small communities in his area were in need of a variety of internal improvements. But I think that he would approach it in a way that--"I'm going to

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 speak my piece, and I'm going to give you all the hell you deserve, and I don't care whether
 you respond or not."

MG: Okay.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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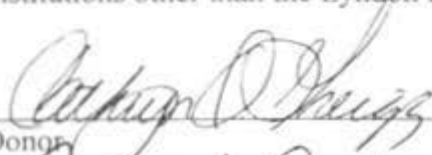
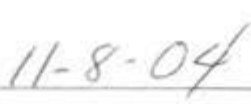
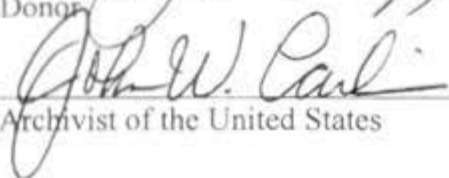
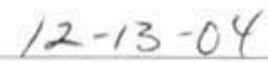
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Stanley L. Greigg

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Cathryn Greigg, of Bethesda, Maryland, do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted with my husband, Stanley Greigg, on December 5, 1986, in Washington, D.C., and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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