INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 13, 1978

INTERVIEWEE: HENRY JACKSON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Senator Jackson's office, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: Senator, let's start with 1940 and your election to the House, and Lyndon Johnson's role as head of the Congressional Campaign Committee.

J: My first contact with Lyndon Johnson was in a wire that I received from him after having been nominated on the Democratic ticket for Congress from the Second District of Washington. The wire advised that I was to receive from the Congressional Campaign Committee, [of] which he was then serving as chairman, the sum of two hundred dollars. That might not sound like a big contribution from a congressional campaign committee today, but it was a lot at that time. It came at a time when the money was much needed and it was, I must say, a delightful shot in the arm in the campaign that fall of 1940.

When I was in the House our contacts were relatively limited. I was involved more with other members of Congress from Texas than I was with Lyndon Johnson. He was not very active on the floor during those years. He was playing the role of one of Speaker Rayburn's emissaries. He helped the Speaker. He was involved in behind-the-scenes support for the Speaker of the House and of course for Franklin Roosevelt, who was then president. He had earlier had an intimate and close relationship with President Roosevelt. His tie there was

the fact that he came from Texas and was in the thirties, as I understand it, a New Dealer. And that liberal image in the eyes of Mr. Roosevelt gave him high standing with the White House.

G: Do you recall his role in 1941 in the extension of the Selective Service?

J: Yes, he was very active on that. I supported that. I supported President Roosevelt on that particular vote.

G: It passed by one vote, I think.

J: One vote, that is correct. And he was very active in that connection.

G: Is there anything else on the House years? I know you both went to war, left the Congress and went to war. Did you see anything of him while you were both in uniform? Is there anything significant before we get to the Senate years that you would like to talk about?

J: No, I think it would be the postwar years. I noticed that starting [in] 1946, 1947, he was moving towards a more conservative stance in his votes on domestic issues. He was always an internationalist and he strongly supported the foreign policy of Harry Truman. But I observed after the war his changing position on domestic issues. This was in keeping with his representation as a congressman from the state of Texas. Of course we did not have during that earlier period the so-called conservative-liberal votes, New Deal, anti-New Deal, because as we entered into the war it all changed. I think that covers that part of it.

G: When you came to the Senate you were assigned to the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations which Joseph McCarthy chaired. Did you talk to Lyndon Johnson about that when you were appointed to that subcommittee? Did he discuss the McCarthy problem with you in any way?

J: Well, I told him I wanted to go on the Armed Services Committee. I'd been on the Joint Atomic Energy Committee. There was only one vacancy and that went to Stuart Symington. He indicated to me that he needed someone to go on the Government Operations Committee who would take a tough stand on McCarthy. He was aware that McCarthy had campaigned against me the previous fall as he had against Senator [Mike] Mansfield and of course Senator Symington and others. He felt that by reason of having been in the House and so on, that I for some reason could be very helpful in representing the Democrats in a way in which the excesses of McCarthy could be curtailed. In other words, he wanted someone who could be involved in sharp cross examination and to try to slow down the whole McCarthy thrust which had reached a climax with the election of a Republican Congress in 1952. And he asked me to work very closely with Senator [John] McClellan and to keep in touch with him, which I did. And I kept in close touch with him during that period.

It was a very difficult thing for Lyndon Johnson to handle because he was under tremendous pressure from the right-wing groups in Texas on McCarthy. McCarthy had a lot of support from the so-called "oil boys." And I must say that Lyndon Johnson was very courageous about this. He had no time for McCarthy's tactics and he sort of looked to

me to play a key role as the situation unfolded. Bear in mind at that time McCarthy was calling in everyone under the sun for interrogation regarding subversion, subversion in the government, in the various areas related, whether it was the movie industry or whatnot.

G: He did feel that McCarthy was dangerous though?

J: Yes. He was very distressed about the inroads that McCarthy had made in the country, [by the charges] that the federal government, the State Department, Defense Department, the CIA, had been infiltrated by the communists. All of the speeches and propaganda effort on the part of McCarthy was viewed by Lyndon Johnson as, really, an outrageous course of conduct on McCarthy's part. And he felt that he had to be cut down to size, and that one way or another the truth had to be brought out, that his charges were completely out of line. He was more and more convinced as the hearings unfolded and we were outvoted in the committee. I must say that he was supportive of the efforts that some of us were making.

The climax came and he supported us completely when a man named [J. B.] Matthews was named staff director of the committee, along about June of 1953. Matthews had written an article that appeared in one of the magazines. The lead paragraph was about as follows, "The largest single group supporting the communist apparatus in the United States is the Protestant clergy." Well, when I saw that I went directly to McClellan and told him that we just couldn't tolerate this kind of appointment without any consultation on our part, and I couldn't serve on a committee that had a person with that bigotry as the staff

director after we had already gone through several months of horrendous hearings, investigations, charges, and counter-charges. McClellan supported me as did Senator Symington, and I talked to Lyndon Johnson about it, and he agreed.

G: It's been said that he perceived this moment as the beginning of McCarthy's decline, when his man went after the Protestant clergy.

J: That was the turning point.

G: Did he say that to you?

J: Well, I don't recall whether he ever said that to me, because he wouldn't have said it at that time. He may have said it afterwards. But what was to follow could not have been fully perceived at that time. But looking back, it would had to have been said in hindsight, I would think, because it led to all of the events that resulted in the now famous Army-McCarthy hearings.

G: Well, what did he say?

J: Well, he agreed. I just said I couldn't serve. We all talked to him. He agreed with the strategy that we should walk off that subcommittee. Which we did, all three of us. And that was the beginning, too, of--I remember Senator Harry Byrd, Sr. getting up in the Senate, attacking McCarthy that day for appointing this man who had taken this outrageous stand. And Senator Harry Byrd was the most conservative man in the Senate. Obviously senators from the deep South especially would be appalled by this kind of statement on the part of McCarthy's appointee.

I don't think McCarthy was aware that this individual had this kind of a background. As I recall, the man was never appointed. Then the events that ensued led to the now famous Army-McCarthy hearings, which got under way in April. But we went back on the committee after we had got an understanding agreement approving the staff and getting minority council. I had urged Senator McClellan to recommend Robert Kennedy for the position of minority council.

G: Let's talk about some legislative matters during the 1950s, when that majority was so close. First Senator Taft had the majority, I guess by two votes and then it switched. You see that list of legislation in front of you. Some of them represent legislative issues and some of them political. Is there anything in particular here that you recall Lyndon Johnson really at work on?

J: What stands out is that on foreign policy he had a very close working relationship with President Eisenhower. He made it very clear, and he took that stand in our caucuses and so on, that we had strong support from the Republicans during the Eightieth Congress, when Mr. Truman was president and the Republicans were in control. He was totally committed to the idea of bipartisan foreign policy. His policy all the way through was to give full support to the President on all matters relating to international affairs. There may have been some minor situations, but for the most part they were certainly the exceptions.

His strategy was to zero in on the domestic issues and to make and take exception where the administration was following a policy

that was contrary to the long established positions taken by the Democratic Party through the years. And he followed those basic approaches. The exception was that when we got into the Sputnik period, he moved for a stronger defense than Eisenhower. He took over the chairmanship of the subcommittee on preparedness of Armed Services and held hearings over a period of time, the thrust of which was the Russians were gaining on us in strategic arms. Therefore, there was a need to build up our defense effort. The result of all that was that we did accelerate the ballistic missile program, both land base and sea base. And he was one of the major leaders in that. All of this led to the establishment of the space committee. In these areas I would hasten to add that he took exception with Eisenhower and with the secretaries that were involved, [Charles E.] Wilson initially, secretary of defense.

G: Let me ask you about President Eisenhower's proposal for an atomic peace ship, which in 1955 Lyndon Johnson opposed as more or less a publicity stunt by the shipping lobby. Do you remember that?

J: Yes. We all opposed that. It had too much of the Madison Avenue approach in it. It gave the appearance of carrying in one ship all of the things that one needed for a foreign policy. It was so superficial and patently false in terms of being able to do anything useful in light of the world situation at that time that we opposed it. He was very active and vigorous in his leadership. The result was that that was the end of it.

G: You were very active in Alaskan statehood. Do you recall his role there in the whole question of Alaska and Hawaii statehood?

J: He strongly supported statehood for Alaska and Hawaii. The Democrats mistakenly, I think, took the position that we ought to push Alaska first. I went along with that. I didn't think it was necessarily the right approach, because it assumed that Alaska would always be Democratic and Hawaii would always be Republican. I was chairman of the subcommittee on territories that handled the legislation. I sponsored both bills, Alaska and Hawaii. I think the point was that we should go forward on both. He wanted to get Alaska in first, which we did. He was very active in support of statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, and his leadership was extremely helpful. He was able to get a number of southerners who normally had opposed bringing in new states. Nevertheless, he was able to convince a number of them to support statehood. I remember specifically Senator [Spessard L.] Holland of Florida was quite active in support of statehood for Alaska and for Hawaii.

G: What were Lyndon Johnson's techniques here? How would he persuade you to vote for something that you were perhaps not really inclined to support?

J: Well, it's been described many times. He would overwhelm you with meetings, conferences, phone calls, and always putting the arm around you, not necessarily on you, but around you. When he was really interested in moving something, he worked the problem from beginning to end. It was sort of a nonstop affair.

G: Can you recall one of these Johnson persuasion efforts on you?

J: Well, there were so many of them I can't distinguish them. We had a lot of close votes. He was very good in knowing what my interests were. He worked that sort of routine very, very well. He had good intelligence on each member who would be wavering. He understood fully, I think, the philosophy, the ideologies, of the senators. He was keenly aware of what would fly with them and what would not. He always was very careful not to try to go over the line in that he would just push so hard that it would get a reaction the other way. He measured his moves very carefully. His tone was always limited from a decibel level standpoint. He didn't get into loud talk or anything. He was always mixing it with stories and mixing it with, "Well, you know, you've got that other problem over here now. And I know your interests about that," so on, so on. He'd run it all together pretty well. Time after time this was his approach on major matters. Otherwise, if it wasn't--he was always careful to make sure that he had the votes and he'd come back and double check.

G: I gather that he could often pick up some stray Republican votes on often very critical issues where they were just one or two votes apart. How did he do this?

J: Well, while Lyndon Johnson was a partisan, he was a senator, and he knew and was aware that other senators on the Republican side had problems that could not be resolved without his help. And so he saw to it from time to time that when a given Republican senator needed help on something that affected him back home, he would do it. But

there was a price. He had a long memory and he'd come back and remind them. He picked up votes that way, in a decent way, you know, in a very understanding way.

G: He was given to calling senators in the middle of the night, I understand.

J: Oh, yes. He never called me in the middle of the night but he'd call me on odd hours, Sundays and that sort of thing. But when he was really working on a problem he didn't hesitate to call you at any time. He did more of it when he was president. When he was president he called at all hours.

G: Would he ever try to get you to persuade another senator? Let's say if he thought he didn't have enough [votes].

J: Oh, sure.

G: Can you think of a particular case here? Maybe Senator [Warren G.] Magnuson or Clint Anderson, you were close to. Would he ever try to?

J: Well, he did on some things. Once in a while he would say that he couldn't contain Clint Anderson. And he'd say, "You're on the Joint Atomic Energy Committee with him," or "You're on the Interior Committee with him. See if you can't persuade him to take such and such a position." That happened from time to time. With Senator Magnuson he would mention to me, "Be sure that Senator Magnuson goes along with you on this." And I would say back to him, "Well, you're closer to Senator Magnuson than I am." He would always double check. I mean, he was very careful to make sure that he had corroboration for votes on anything that was really tough or difficult.

G: How important was Bobby Baker in this operation?

J: Well, Bobby Baker was his eyes and ears in the Senate. There wasn't any question about it. The only thing I saw of Bobby Baker was on the floor. I didn't know Bobby Baker as well as some of the other senators. But he depended on Bobby Baker as his nose counter and he was one of the best that they ever had.

G: Do you remember in 1955 when the minimum wage bill was passed that raised minimum wage from seventy-five cents to a dollar? The Republicans wanted to raise it to ninety cents? What happened on that?

J: I don't recall those details. Frankly, that was not my committee and I supported the dollar minimum instead of the ninety that the Republicans were pushing. But frankly I was not involved in that.

G: There's some indication that that might have been strictly a question of timing, bringing it up to a vote when the opposition was not prepared and hurrying it through. Was this [true]?

J: Well, he was the past master of maintaining a good intelligence organization. He had a network that covered the Senate like the morning dew. I must say that he was a master of the doctrine that you better have your facts first before you make a move. I observed that he was constantly checking and rechecking every single step along the way. He had an elaborate organizational mind in terms of how to approach these problems.

G: I was going to ask you about the Atomic Energy Bill. I guess that was

in 1953. It brought in all sorts of questions of public versus private power.

J: I didn't go on the Atomic Energy Committee until the end of 1954. I was off for a year and a half, so I was not involved at that point with him.

G: Do you remember the Hell's Canyon controversy?

J: Yes. Lyndon Johnson, for his growing conservatism on domestic matters after his earlier New Deal years, always stood in the tradition of Sam Rayburn and others in support of public power. He was very good on this and he was a tremendous help in all those fights. I think this had something to do with his effect on Wayne Morse too because Wayne Morse was strong for Hell's Canyon. And Lyndon Johnson was very active in our efforts to push that legislation through, despite the powerful opposition of the Eisenhower Administration and all the private utilities.

G: Why do you think he was motivated to support you in this matter? Was it a philosophical agreement?

J: Well, philosophically, the same thing applied to an oil state senator like Bob Kerr. Bob Kerr was a great public power man. Public power in Texas and in Oklahoma was related to the farmers in terms of REAs. They were able to get, for the first time, power to the ranch, to the farm. That fitted really into the populist concepts that Lyndon Johnson held. He was completely at home in taking those positions. I think it gave him an opportunity, too, to shed some of the idea that he was so conservative because of his tie to oil and gas policies of

his constituents in Texas. But he sincerely supported the public power program of Roosevelt, of Truman.

G: You were on Armed Services with him and had an opportunity to see his association with Senator [Richard] Russell. What were they like together? Was Russell sort of a mentor to him? Did he defer to Russell at all?

J: He would defer to Russell, but he'd never stop talking. When the chips were down he'd defer to Russell on the committee. And Russell was very good to him. There was a great reciprocity. Russell was the quiet student, reflective senator. Lyndon Johnson was the man of action. He wanted to get it done and he was constantly pushing Russell.

G: Do you think he got Dick Russell to move to a more moderate position, particularly in 1957?

J: On the civil rights issue?

G: Yes. In not offering a stronger resistance?

J: Oh, I think he was able to get the cooperation of Senator Russell when it came to procedural matters and to calm the fire, so to speak. He was trying to find ways and means to get the issue resolved without a big bloodletting of the Democratic Party. And I must say he was able to do a lot in that direction. There was no one in the Senate who was in a position to make that kind of move and talk in that way, other than Lyndon Johnson.

G: You must have an anecdote or two of Lyndon Johnson as majority leader.

J: Oh, Lord, you got me. I'd have to think about it later. [There were] so many of them, you know. Lyndon was--the incidents were just, some of them, incredible and innumerable.

G: Could he outmaneuver Bill Knowland?

J: Oh, yes. He had a genius for letting the other side [run loose], whether it was Bill Knowland, who was a real warm friendly guy when he was off the floor, but when he was on the floor he was like a bull in the china closet. Lyndon would kind of let him run loose, and then in his oratory--I'm referring to Knowland now--he'd get carried away. Then Johnson would just quietly stay back, but he was tense. But he did it from a very quiet stance, and then cut him with one or two sentences. He wouldn't get into a long argument. But Knowland was a big, husky sort of fellow who at times would be like an unguided missile, going off in all directions. And Johnson would just allow him to do it and then he would move in on him. That happened over and over again. It was a different thing in the dying days of [Robert] Taft, of course, because Taft was majority leader until his death, majority leader until July.

G: I gather that Johnson and [Everett] Dirksen were more equally matched than Johnson and Knowland had been. Is that right?

J: Very much so. Dirksen was very astute and adroit. Dirksen was able to anticipate Lyndon's moves and he knew his methodology. He was a spellbinder on top of it and a great orator, a great charmer. The result of it all was, however, that Johnson and Dirksen got along very well. Their role was one of substantial cooperation in areas

that could have lead to just confrontation. Instead it led to cooperation.

G: Remember the defeat of the Capehart Amendment? The housing bill, I think that was the case, where Johnson got Senator [Hubert] Humphrey's plane landed and rushed him across town to get him back for the vote. Was this an ordinary technique of his?

J: Oh, he was doing that all the time. He was sending for airplanes and [anything], depending on what it was, you know. During the Eisenhower years you couldn't get that cooperation. But that's a part of his total attachment to detail, to know where a senator [was], if he was missing, "Where is he? When can we get him in here?" so on and so on. Every possible detail relevant to what he was trying to do was at his fingertips. He would have it available. He did too much of that. I think it lead to his first and second heart attacks. He was just very tense and worked up.

G: How did that heart attack in 1955 change him?

J: It slowed him down temporarily, but only temporarily. I remember going out to the hospital to see him, out at Bethesda. You know, I tried to kid him and a lot of other things, but he was always after, "What's going on now? What's going to come up next?" He was on his way to recovery at that time, full recovery. It slowed him some. I think it made him more of a reflective majority leader. He, physically, did not try to move as fast as he was moving before.

G: There had been some talk of Johnson for president in 1956 before that heart attack. And of course that collapsed whatever feeling

there was. Did he sense this? Do you think he was discouraged by that?

J: I think he went through a period of discouragement after the heart attack, not knowing what would happen to him next. But that didn't last for long and by 1957, 1958, he was going full bore.

G: Here's another close vote on the Marine Corps appropriation in 1955, where he recommended forty-six million dollars more than the administration had recommended, and it passed by one vote. Do you remember that vote?

J: We had so many of them. No, I don't remember the details on it. But you bear in mind we had a very close [majority,] whatever it was, one or two votes in 1955. That's when Wayne Morse and all that sort of thing happened. It was a razor thin margin and he had to really count noses. And that was his greatest single professional attribute in his leadership. I mean, bear in mind he had a great personality, he was a charmer and all that, but it had to end up in getting something accomplished. He had to work with this razor thin margin and he was able to do it. Because he did all these details. He was privy to those details, he knew about them. I think it's just too much of a load for any one person to carry. You couldn't do it today. But he did it.

I've got about one more minute. I'm past due. I've got to go [vote].

G: Is there anything, Senator, that we haven't talked about during this period that you would like to address yourself to?

J: I just haven't had time to reflect on it. If I do get more I'll let you know and then we can get into the presidential years next time.

G: Good. Yes. I've got a lot of material.

J: I just apologize for . . . .

G: No. Thank you so much.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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