

## INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 14, 1978  
INTERVIEWEE: WARREN MAGNUSON  
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE  
PLACE: Senator Magnuson's office, U.S. Capitol,  
Washington, D.C.

### Tape 1 of 1

G: Senator, let's start with your association with Lyndon Johnson when you were both in the House of Representatives. You were elected in 1936.

M: I was elected in 1936. When I came to the House I sought to get on the Naval Affairs Committee because of the nature of my district. It included the Bremerton Navy Yard, which is one of the largest in the country. We're a maritime state anyway, part of us. Then when Lyndon came along later, he was put on the Naval Affairs Committee, too. So we were there together; we were the two young members.

He took a great interest in Naval affairs and helped me considerably in the development. The Navy was at a pretty low ebb when we came in. We both worked pretty hard together to build it up. This is the authorization committee. We had a lot of help from Carl Vinson of Georgia, who became Lyndon's and my great friend over the years, personal friend. And it's a good thing we did. I think, looking back, we had some foresight because we were in a little better position when Pearl Harbor came along--not as good

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as we'd like but--to have somewhat of a navy. It was down to nothing.

G: I get the impression that one of the reasons that President Roosevelt helped him get on that Naval Affairs Committee was to get more support in using PWA funds to put men to work in shipyards, building naval vessels. Was that an issue then with you?

M: Well, it was to get more support, too, from the--Texas being somewhat interior, not as navy-minded as Bremerton or Puget Sound Navy Yard or Norfolk and places like that, or Boston.

Lyndon liked it very much. He liked the work. It turned out later that when Pearl Harbor happened Lyndon and I both had joined the Navy Reserve, and we were both lieutenant commanders. We had a deep interest in Navy things. I think he took some active duty there in the 1930s--I know I did--to keep up our commission.

G: Do you recall his defense of Walter Winchell in the Naval Affairs Committee when Admiral [Ernest J.] King and Admiral [Randall] Jacobs were trying to silence Winchell?

M: Both Lyndon and I came to his defense. It was sort of embarrassing to Mr. Winchell. As I recall it, he had been working hard with the Navy, giving them a lot of good public relations. When something happened Walter wanted to be a part of the Navy. They threatened to kick him out. Lyndon and I came to his defense.

G: What did you do?

M: Oh, we just raised so much devil around that they forgot about it.

G: With Chairman Vinson or down at the Office of Naval Affairs?

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M: We first went to Chairman Vinson and we got our support. Then when Vinson spoke, of course the Navy listened. Vinson wasn't quite so sure what we were trying to do, but we were his people and his friends. He thought we were right and so we did it. The result is that Winchell always was our long-time friend until the day he passed away, Lyndon too.

G: Did Chairman Vinson pretty much run that committee with an iron hand?

M: Yes, he did. He did. In those days you could do that. But he did it for a good purpose; he wasn't arrogant about it. He ran it with an iron hand but you had to be dedicated to navy things and naval problems. He didn't brook anybody on the committee that wasn't.

We have a story that Lyndon tells and I like to tell, that in those days, the first year you were on the committee you could ask one question. And the second year you could ask two questions. And the third year three. It wasn't a committee rule, but he adhered to it. He'd rap the gavel on you. So the first year Lyndon and I were a little bit stifled because we wanted to ask some more questions but Vinson thought that was enough for a freshman congressman to ask one. He adhered to that rule.

Strangely, how history repeats itself, Vinson sent Lyndon and I down--in 1938 I believe it was, yes, about 1938--to investigate for the committee and the Navy, the prospects of a second Panama Canal. And we did. We went to Panama. We went to Columbia, Nicaragua, Gulf of Tehuantepec in Mexico. We came back and made a report to Vinson

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and the Navy that first, we ought to have a second canal for many reasons, and second, that the defense of the United States almost dictated it. If they'd have followed our advice then, why, this thing that's going on on the floor right now on the Panama Canal Treaty might have been a different thing if we'd had a second canal.

G: Did you indicate where you thought it should be?

M: We kind of thought Nicaragua was the best place in those days. Then when Lyndon became president, his interest in the matter was great. He appointed a commission to take a second look. Of course, when we got back, I think it was about 1939, the war clouds came out and it was dropped. He appointed a commission, headed by his friend Robert Anderson of Texas, to look at the same thing we'd looked at, and they made a report. They came up with a different conclusion though, that a second canal, the most efficient and logical place to build it would be north--in Panama--of the present canal. That's why there is in the treaty now, the proposed treaty, that Panama can deal with no one but us and we can't deal with anybody but Panama for a second canal, on the basis [that] that's the only place to have it.

Then of course our naval affairs experience was given a hand when Pearl Harbor [was attacked]. Lyndon and I went right to war. We immediately went down. We became acquainted in the committee with a now very famous admiral, Admiral Chester Nimitz [Jr.], who is from Texas too.

G: Fredericksburg, I think.

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M: And they have big carriers named after him. He was what they called in those days--now they call it the personnel department--the head of the Bureau of Navigation. And so when the war broke out, we were both lieutenant commanders. We went down and said, "We want to go to war."

G: Did you go together, do you remember?

M: Yes, we went together. We got our papers all signed. We got them to the point where all Nimitz had to do was sign them. So he looked up the day we went down there and said, "Oh, you two are here again." He was pretty busy, you know. So he signed the papers assigning me to go out to meet the New Orleans, a cruiser, which I was going to go to anyway to take active duty, and Lyndon to report to CINCPAC command. So when we got out to Pearl Harbor here was Nimitz, who was CINCPAC. Because the New Orleans got hit he finally let me go aboard the Enterprise and let Lyndon go on down to Australia, [to] join [General Douglas] MacArthur's group. I was JAG [Judge Advocate General] out there for a while.

So we separated; we didn't see much of each other during the war. Sam Rayburn got a hold of Roosevelt and said, "You ought to get those guys out of there. They've been there long enough." This was in late 1942. [He] said, "They can do more good back here." We didn't resign from Congress; we just went. We stayed in Congress, but we didn't take congressional pay.

G: What did you do about re-election? You were gone, weren't you, in 1942?

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M: I just didn't have any opposition.. Lyndon got back a little ahead of me. But I didn't have any [opposition]. No one filed against me. Then the Defense Department or the President sent Lyndon and I up to Alaska after we both got back.

G: I never heard of that.

M: Yes. We were having some trouble up there with a feud between the Army and the Navy, after Dutch Harbor. Lyndon and I went up there together.

G: Was it over supplies or something like that?

M: We were supposed to go up and see what was going on and mediate the thing. I don't know whether Lyndon went clear on out to Attu with me, but we spent some time in Dutch Harbor--the command was then in Dutch Harbor--[to] see if we couldn't straighten her around. That's after we'd come back to Congress. But they told us to go back up and take a look at it. We settled it. As a matter of fact, it was so bad--I won't mention the name of the admiral or the general--we had to stop a fist fight one night in the BOQ [Bachelor Officers' Quarters] between the two of them.

G: What were their differences? Was it over supplies or priorities?

M: They had never been put in the same area and who was the top man, who was the command, who should call the shots? It was the old feud between the Army and the Navy. We resolved it by putting the Navy--saying they'd come back and Roosevelt put an admiral, Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, became a great friend of ours later--in charge. [You] see, the Army was just up there to protect the Navy. So we went up

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there and then Lyndon and I went around--he went around and met me--to some of the navy yards to see what they were doing. He came to Bremerton. We went different places.

Then we recommended that the Navy should have a new fighter plane because we thought they were very insufficient. They started building one. That came from my experience in the carrier too, off the carriers.

G: This was a plane designed to take off from a carrier?

M: Yes, a better one. The ones they had just almost were scouting planes with some guns on them. The Navy wanted that bad. So we were able to come back here from that experience and be of a great deal of help to the Navy as the war went on.

G: Did they get a new plane? Did that come about?

M: Yes, they got a new plane quick. Yes.

G: Let me ask you about--

M: They had one on the boards, but we said, "Put a lot of money in and speed it up. Have a crash program."

G: Did he ever talk to you about his meeting with Douglas MacArthur in Australia? What they talked about?

M: No. No. He didn't. He might have when he came back. He might have.

G: I just wonder what they talked about and if MacArthur tried to make a case to him for . . . ?

M: You mean while he was in the war?

G: Right.

M: Well, he joined MacArthur's staff, as I remember.

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G: I think he was out there for President Roosevelt, wasn't he? Looking, checking on, the same sort of thing that you had--

M: He might have been but it was--no, he was out there just like I was. He was in the Navy. He might have gone out afterwards, that I don't recall. I never saw MacArthur during the war. Later on I happened to be having lunch with him the day he was fired in Tokyo. That's the only time I ever met him, the day he was fired.

G: Did he seem surprised?

M: A guy brought in the slip and he put it in his pocket and we went on with lunch. He knew what it was.

G: Let me ask you about Lyndon Johnson and Franklin Roosevelt. Did you get a sense then that he was quite a follower of Franklin Roosevelt?

M: Oh, yes. Lyndon was brought up in the New Deal school. He worked in Texas, didn't he? What was his job down there?

G: NYA director.

M: Yes, National Youth Administration. Roosevelt, particularly Mrs. Roosevelt, thought a great deal of Lyndon, because he got involved in certain things like that that were probably considered very liberal in Texas. It wouldn't have bothered me too much up in my state. And then through Sam Rayburn, of course, Roosevelt and Sam Rayburn were very close. Sam would recommend Lyndon for a lot of things.

G: I get the impression at one point during--

M: The Texas delegation in those days was very powerful with Mr. Roosevelt because of the fact that [John Nance] Garner was vice president, and as you will recall your political history, they tipped



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the convention--Texas. So Roosevelt looked toward them for a lot of advice and guidance and I suppose with some [feeling of] being grateful too, in some ways. Lyndon was very close to him as a congressman. I was too, but not as much as Lyndon.

G: I get the impression that because he had a lot of friends in the New Deal he was able to get a lot for his district, in terms of the Lower Colorado . . . .

M: Well, there wasn't much Lyndon needed for his district, really. There wasn't much. He didn't have anything in the . . . .

G: How about that Corpus Christi naval air station, do you remember how . . . ?

M: No, I don't remember that, but that might have been true. Of course, when Lyndon was president, NASA got to Houston because of that, because of me. I was chairman of the appropriations for NASA and Lyndon created the committee. I was on it until just a year ago. I didn't want to be chairman of it.

G: Was it Lyndon Johnson that did that or Albert Thomas that got NASA to Houston?

M: Well, Lyndon in the Senate and Albert did a little in the House, but not as much as Lyndon.

G: Is that right?

M: Yes.

Then he came to the Senate a little after I did and we were good personal friends in the Senate. We used to see a lot of each other socially. When the girls were very little we'd go out to

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the . . . , Rayburn and I and a few of us, Fred Vinson. Then when he was president, of course, I used to see a great deal of him socially, quite a bit. I used to go down there once in a while. We'd talk about nothing but just sort of relieve him for a while.

G: What do you think was the happiest time for him? You've known him since 1937.

M: I think the happiest time for him [was] when he was majority leader.

G: Is that right? Even happier than when he was a congressman?

M: Yes, because Lyndon knew that he wasn't going to stay in Congress. He was going to go up or get out. Once he got over here to be majority leader, he was very happy. I don't think he really thought much about it might lead to the vice presidency, or the presidency.

I know about what happened with Kennedy at the convention. He very nearly turned that down. Rayburn advised him to turn it down. I was there. He said, "You're better off being majority leader of the Senate than being a vice president. You know you're majority leader, but you're not so sure that you're going to be vice president." Of course, it turned out very fortunate for Kennedy that they finally convinced him to do it, because without Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy would have never made it to the presidency.

G: Why do you think he changed his mind and accepted it?

M: That I never did know. I used to joke with him about it. Once in a while when he'd come back to the Senate, I'd say, "Well, don't look so glum and [Grumble] do this and that." You know how he'd

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grumble and talk. I said, "You asked for it and we told you not to do it."

I think maybe it might have been--a lot of people didn't know--but Lyndon knew about his health problem long before people knew about it. He might have thought that the majority leadership was getting too difficult and too strenuous, and that being a vice president might be a little easier job, easier on him, I don't mean easier. It might have been that.

G: Why was he such an effective majority leader?

M: Well, because he just paid attention to every little thing. He did a lot of what [Robert] Byrd's doing now. He was very accommodating to people. He put a lot of IOUs in the bank and when he needed it for something he really wanted, he could pull them out. He kept in touch with everybody. Lyndon was a well liked person. He was a very human being. People thought he went around and threw his weight around. He never did that at all. He did it very quietly. He was a great detail [man]. You know, you never think of Lyndon as a detail guy.

G: How so? What do you mean by details?

M: If he had something coming up in the Senate that maybe we ought to get done. I would talk to him. Well, let's put it this way, Lyndon and I probably voted together 90 per cent of the time in the Senate. He would [say], "Well now, what about Senator A?" "Well, we don't know." Instead of saying, "Well, we'll see. I'll talk to him

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tomorrow," Lyndon would get right at it. He was a bulldog on getting things done. And if it looked like it wasn't going to go, he would leave it alone.

G: He wouldn't bring it to a vote until it . . . .

M: He wouldn't bring it to a vote.

G: I gather that a lot of it must have been timing, knowing just when to bring something in.

M: Timing, knowing just when [to bring it up]. He learned that from Roosevelt. And I did too. If you haven't got the votes, what's the use of butting your head against a stone wall. The theory being that if you have a bill you want passed and you bring it up, you're going to be all righteous, "I'm going to fight this until my doomsday. This is right," and you lose it, you are set way back. You'll never have a chance to do it again. If you haven't got the votes, wait a little while, maybe you can pick them up. Roosevelt never sent a bill up to Congress--this has been the fault with a lot of presidents down there, once in a while including Lyndon forgot the lesson--that hadn't been pretty much gone over with everybody on the Hill and you pretty well knew you were going to get it done. Roosevelt passed pretty near everything he ever sent up because there would be countless meetings, working out different language in the bill, figuring out that some senator or congressman may be opposed for this reason, trying to work it [out]. So when it came up here, it was going to pass.

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G: You were particularly active in the Hell's Canyon fight.

M: Yes.

G: Can you recall what happened in that? What did Lyndon Johnson do there?

M: I recall what happened. We lost it by one vote and the reason we lost it was Senator [Russell] Long. I'll tell you. Lyndon was involved, yes. This got tied up with the Tidelands Oil fight. We had a senator from Oregon by the name of Guy Cordan that was against Hell's Canyon. The power companies in Oregon had him right in hand. He promised Russ Long and maybe Lyndon, I don't know, that he would vote for the Tidelands if they would vote with him on Hell's Canyon. We lost it by one vote.

G: Was this the first year it was brought up or the second? It came up again.

M: This is the first big fight, I think.

G: Wasn't it also in 1957 tied to the civil rights bill in some way?

M: There was a lot of trading back and forth on that issue. It became a national issue between--it wasn't actually; it wouldn't happen today--private versus public power. It became a symbol.

Lyndon was very helpful to me on many of my consumer bills in commerce that I passed. I see you have down here one Flammable Fabrics Act. That was the first consumer bill passed.

G: That was way ahead of its time.

M: Way ahead of its time, and Lyndon helped me with that.

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G: What did he do?

M: He didn't quite understand what I was trying to do but he said,  
"All right, if you think it's all right, why . . . ." And then that  
went on.

G: How did he help you with it? Do you recall?

M: He told people to vote for it, that the leadership wanted it. He  
helped me with the Texas people on it.

Some of the other things here I . . . .

G: Anything about his role in the Tidelands other than what you've  
already mentioned?

M: I mentioned that part of it. Of course, most of the people in the  
South were against the Tidelands bill.

G: Do you remember the Leland Olds nomination?

M: Yes.

G: Is there anything about that that is significant that you want to  
talk about?

M: No, except we in the West were all for him because he was a great  
pioneer with us in farm cooperatives and development of public power  
and things of that kind. We thought he was one of these pioneers in  
that respect. But I don't remember how Lyndon voted on that or what  
he did about it, between you and me.

I see you have his itineraries. He loved to travel and go out  
in the area.

G: He came to your state in 1955 I guess, didn't he, or 1954?

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- M: He came out with me several times, not several, four or five times. He used to come out there. Then they had my twenty-fifth anniversary in Congress and Kennedy came out. Lyndon was ready to take the plane to come that night from Texas. He was in the airplane. They were ready to take off and they stopped and word came up that Sam Rayburn died. So he naturally cancelled that [trip].
- G: Do you remember the Trade Expansion Act in 1953? I think you indicated at the time that the administration, the Eisenhower Administration, had failed to protect the wool industry properly.
- M: No. I don't recall that. I probably voted with Lyndon on it because out in my state--I'm sure I did--we have wool too, not as much as the Texas thing.
- G: I gather from going through these legislative issues that occasionally he could get some stray Republican votes.
- M: Yes, yes.
- G: When that majority was very slim, much to the consternation--
- M: Yes. We had to in those days.
- G: How did he do that? How did he get Molly [George W.] Malone to vote with him?
- M: Well, because Lyndon worked with them on some things. Lyndon, although some critics say he was nothing but a New Dealer, was actually a moderate. The New Deal, all of us, were a creature of the times. We needed to be doing something, no matter what it had been called. It was a moderate approach to different things.

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G: Do you remember the defeat of the Capehart Amendment to the housing act?

M: Yes, I remember something about that fight, but I can't recall a great deal about it.

Here is the tour of the Western states: visit to [Senator] Ed Johnson. I see he's got Irv Hoff there in Seattle from my office. I met him out there. I went with Lyndon to some of these campaign things.

G: Was he an effective speaker in the Northwest?

M: Yes. He had his own way of speaking. He had a western approach. He looked like a westerner. He talked--no matter how hard he tried he had certain Texas or western phrases that out West created the impression, "Well, he's one of us." Lyndon was no great spellbinder or anything. [He gave] kind of a homey speech. And he'd have anecdotes.

G: He was a great raconteur.

M: Oh, yes. We had a lot of stories about different things.

G: How did his power differ from Senator [Richard] Russell's power, let's say?

M: Lyndon was gregarious. Dick was a loner.

G: But they were both very powerful men, weren't they?

M: Dick was powerful because he was chairman of Appropriations.

G: That was really the main reason?

M: One of the main reasons, sure. It was the position he held. But he was a loner. Dick was a very--he knew the Senate rules, he did his



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homework well, but he was kind of a loner; he didn't go out much. Lyndon was gregarious. When I came to the Senate Walter George was the power. He was chairman of the Finance Committee. Dick, for a long time, was chairman of the Armed Services Committee. So in that sense, it would be like you'd say that [John] Stennis is the power now because he's chairman of Armed Services. He's a power in the Senate.

G: What I'm getting at, I'm wondering if there are some characteristics, whether it be hard work or knowledge of the rules, or committee position, that makes one senator . . . .

M: No. No. I think it was Lyndon's approach to people. He treated guys like they were equal with him. Strangely, Lyndon was a good listener. He listened. Like Rayburn was. They'd come up with something. Dick was a little aloof. I don't remember Dick ever joking very much, or being with people. A lot of getting things done up here is getting along with everybody and everybody says, "Well, I like that fellow. He's a good guy." It isn't all going over there with legislation.

G: Do you remember the Strauss nomination? Lewis Strauss.

M: Oh, very well. I handled it in my committee.

G: Can you tell me the story of that? That was a close vote there.

M: Well, the story of that--when he was with the Atomic Energy Commission, chairman, and Clint Anderson, who was a great pal of Lyndon's and mine too, from New Mexico--when I say that, you know

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I'm thinking too [that] the westerners kind of had a gang by themselves. Nobody had a meeting of western senators, but they were kind of always together.

G: [Robert] Kerr I guess was one of them.

M: Yes. I don't know why. It's just like sometimes an ethnic group will get together that way.

But he was a very arrogant fellow and he's the only guy I know that could strut sitting down.

G: This is Strauss you're talking about?

M: Strauss. Clint Anderson's a great big guy like Lyndon, typical westerner, both of them could wear a western hat. Clint just thought that he didn't confide with the committee and that he would be a bad secretary. So when he was appointed secretary of commerce we opposed him. We let Clint come into the committee and ask questions and he was very arrogant in front of the commerce committee. We didn't think that he had the temperament to be a secretary of commerce. That's why he got defeated.

G: It seems like in that vote the Democrats voted overwhelmingly against it. How were you able to get the entire party, virtually all of it in the Senate, to vote the same way.

M: Well, because Strauss was one of these real outspoken, rabid Republicans.

G: I see.

Did Lyndon Johnson's heart attack in 1955 change him much?

Did it make him . . . ?

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M: It slowed him up a while. I remember when it happened. He was down in Virginia. In fact, I was going to go down there that day. I didn't know the people, they were friends of Lyndon's and Lady Bird's, and they'd invited me. It was on a weekend. For some reason I didn't go. Then I heard later what had happened. It slowed him up a lot. He wasn't as physically active after that as he used to be when he was younger.

G: Here is a case in 1955 when the minimum wage bill was raised from seventy-five cents to a dollar. The Republicans wanted to do it to ninety cents.

M: Well, we just outvoted them. I think it's that time. We just outvoted them.

G: If you had something in your area that you were interested in, a bill, maybe a private bill or something like that, a project, would he pretty much hold that up if he knew you were wavering on something?

M: Oh, no, no, no, not with me, not with me. We knew each other too well. He might do that with some other senator but not with me, nor would I do it with him. He knew pretty well how we stood.

He didn't like McCarthy.

G: Did he ever talk to you about McCarthy?

M: Oh, yes. "Don't you think," he said, "we've got to do something about this fellow?" I said, "Well, I guess sooner or later we're going to have to." Then we let it rest a while and then break out again. I kind of had a little hope that he'd get better and sort of repent, as it were. He got worse. Lyndon decided to go ahead.

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G: He seemed to have followed Senator [John L.] McClellan's lead pretty much on that.

M: Well, after he decided to go ahead. We had a Policy Committee meeting, and, of course, McClellan then had a lot of expertise on how to conduct investigations. That's how McClellan came into it.

You've got here: went to Mayo's. I used to talk to him a couple or three times and kid him about this operation. I remember one time when he was running for the Senate, and we'd been such good friends in the House that I kept watching the returns up in Seattle. Then they'd come in and he'd be ten votes ahead, and then it would be later in the day and night or something. So when he was ahead I sent him a wire. [In] the wire I sent I remember saying, "Sure is some landslide." That's how he got the name "Landslide." He showed everybody that wire. Then it came in that he was behind. So I sent him the second wire saying, "I'm getting tired of this. I'm going to bed."

G: What was his relationship with Vice President Nixon during this period? Did they get along well? Did he trust Nixon, do you think?

M: Oh, I don't think they had much dialogue, contact. Nixon was a loner. He never had any particular contact with anybody except minions he'd have around him.

G: In 1955 on the Social Security Amendment, when they reduced the old age and survivors insurance payments to age fifty. That was a very close vote. Do you remember what he did to get a majority there?

M: No, I don't remember that. I remember that I voted with him.

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I'm looking at some of these things. Of course, Lyndon and I worked very closely on the civil rights proposals, in particular, because I was chairman of the commerce committee. We had the interstate commerce. I started it with a bill which would prohibit segregated restrooms, hotels, things, anything in the interstate commerce. And that helped start it. Then Lyndon and I joined together one time to abolish the poll tax.

G: These are two interesting questions. The poll tax, was this something he had been for abolishing all along?

M: Not particularly, no.

G: How did he feel about that? What was his attitude?

M: I think he didn't realize it made much difference, when it became part of a package, and it was the easiest one of the series of packages to get passed. And we finally did it.

G: Did you talk to him about that? Did you convince him that--

M: Yes. But I think the priority with him on getting the poll tax passed was not as great as the accommodation part of it, the voting rights part of it, and the discrimination in employment.

G: You've known him so long, was there an evolution in his thinking on civil rights?

M: I think so, yes.

G: How would you chart that?

M: I think the evolution came from his association with the youth movement in the beginning when he was young, then with the Roosevelt crowd, the group down there who were pushing it, and the fact that

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we wanted to do what we could to keep the black votes in the Democratic Party, show them we were doing something. Took a lot of nerve for Lyndon to do it because it was not popular in Texas.

G: Particularly, I guess, in 1957 when they passed that first bill. Do you remember working with him on that?

M: Yes. I think we talked about it a great deal.

Let's see here. Bob Kerr, Lyndon, and I were all three good friends. Frank Stanton was a good friend of his, that's due to the broadcasting.

G: Anything on the Alaska-Hawaii statehood involving Lyndon Johnson?

M: No. It would never have got through without his help.

G: What did he do in particular?

M: Well, let's put it this way, if leadership had been against it, they wouldn't have made it. But he was neutral about it. He didn't carry any banners or anything for it.

G: Was it a problem to get John Burns to accept waiting a year for Hawaii rather than keeping the twostates together?

M: That wasn't such a problem, it was more Alaska coming along and Lyndon and Senator [E. L. (Bob)] Bartlett and I were good friends. We wanted Alaska. Lyndon knew it was coming sooner or later. He might as well accommodate the Democrats in the Senate who were for it. He knew it was coming sooner or later.

G: If there is anything there that rings a bell that you want to talk about, just [go ahead].

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M: What's this here? Here's a letter from Lyndon. Oh, this is during the war.

G: Yes. There's your letter to him underneath it, a handwritten letter.

M: Oh, yes. I say, "I had dinner with the top."

G: Who was that?

M: That must be Nimitz. Yes, that must be Nimitz, Nimitz or [William Frederick] Halsey, because it should have been Halsey.

He wanted a new assignment.

G: What did he want to do, do you know?

M: "Any new developments in our status there?" Well, he must have come on back here when I didn't know about it. He must have written me from Washington. "I suppose you have kept in touch with Rayburn. Let me know. Well, it seems to be functioning okay. We were worried about the coming campaign. Maybe they'll call us back anyway. Feeling great. I'm still afloat." That's a pretty good letter, isn't it? Yes.

G: Yes. You can keep that [xerox copy] for your files.

I get the impression that there was a movement afoot during this period to name him secretary of the Navy and yet it never happened. Do you remember that?

M: That I don't remember.

Here's how he answered me. This is March 26. You see, he'd gone back to the coast. He says, "I'm still on the coast."

G: Is that 1942?

M: Yes.

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G: He hadn't gone to Australia yet. He was waiting to go.

M: No. No. But he'd been out there. He'd been out with me. He was someplace, because we met in Pearl Harbor. We went on the Tokyo raid right after that, April 12, because it's my birthday. "I'm still on the coast." He went back to the coast for something. We went out there by ship, the two of us, from San Francisco.

G: Why did he put you on the Appropriations Committee in 1953?

M: I suppose because I wanted to get on it. I was on Judiciary Committee and I wanted to get on Appropriations. [You] see, I had so much going out in my area, dams, navy yards, resources, irrigation.

"There are new developments concerning that situation. I do hear indirectly that Sam is going to the boss and ask him to recall us." That's what happened, Sam did. I guess he got lonesome. Yes, that's right, Sam did.

Now he went back to the coast for some reason. I was aboard the Enterprise when I got this. I probably didn't get this until I got back in three weeks later. Because when I--I don't have a date on mine, do I? No, I don't have a date. Isn't that funny, it doesn't have a date on there. He's got a date on his. Now mine came to Pearl Harbor.

G: He had evidently been out in your district.

M: We went out there together by ship. But he'd been up in my district. Yes, isn't that funny. He must have written me a note and told me he'd been up there, while he was still in the Navy. He might have had some assignment up there, going around to the--



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G: I know he was in San Francisco during this period.

M: Yes. He might have gone up to Seattle. He'd been up in my district. That's what I see. I think he was trying to get down to MacArthur then, or down out in the Pacific, get back in. I don't think this was any secretary of Navy deal.

G: I think this was a little later, but his name was mentioned as one who might be nominated.

M: They probably sent him back to the coast for something, and he wanted to get back out. [He was] probably jealous of me a little because I was on the Enterprise, you know, envious, "Well, you're out there." And if I said, "tops," he must have asked Nimitz, because when I was ashore a couple of times, Halsey and I would go get off the ship and go have dinner with Nimitz, at the sub base, from Fort Allen.

G: Senator, what was Lyndon Johnson like? I've asked you a lot of specific questions, but I guess you knew him as well as anyone. What was he like as a person?

M: Oh, he was a very, very--he was a fellow you liked to go fishing with. He was a lot of fun, had a good sense of humor. He's a very compassionate fellow. Can I keep this?

G: Sure.

M: He was a soft touch for his friends. He acted kind of gruff but he really wasn't. [He was] like an old shoe, you know. I really believe that the Johnson family wouldn't have had a nickel if it wasn't for Lady Bird watching the purse. He'd give away everything. Anybody wanted anything, he'd give it to him.

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G: Was he moody?

M: No, he was never moody. He was never moody. He was very active all the time. He couldn't sit still very much, until after--he'd have to move around.

G: Why was he that way? He seems to have been almost a driven man, someone in a hurry.

M: Well, he was just one of these fellows that was--yes, in a sense. He wasn't driven, but he just felt he wanted to accomplish something. If he didn't have any particular objective, he'd start out to look for one. He loved politics, the intrigue of politics, and was very good at it. But he never held a grudge. He never got mad but he remembered. He never really ever flew off the handle too much. Now, like Truman for example, Truman would have his ups and downs, and he'd start to talk about somebody and, golly, he'd just [be] very emphatic. Lyndon was kind of quiet about it.

Sometimes he was almost a bore when you went out because he wouldn't forget politics. If you were going someplace for an evening to just forget about politics, gosh, he just kept it up sometimes. I would say, "Why don't you quit talking?" But he was very intrigued with politics ever since the beginning.

G: He was a very persuasive man, I understand, on a one to one basis.

M: Yes, he could make the best arguments. He was always trying to sell something to somebody, some idea. He used to do this when we'd have something we wanted to get done in the Senate and there was something to be done. Say there were three or four of us around him, he'd say,

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"Now, Magnuson, you do this and you do that. And Senator A, you do this and you do that." He'd delegate these things out like a guy starting a battle. "And then you report and we'll . . . ." He loved that intrigue of planning.

G: I gather that Bill Knowland was just no match for him in terms of--

M: Oh, no. Bill wasn't any match. Bill was a plodder. Bill had a tendency to put things off until tomorrow. He had some fixed ideas, very conservative, and Lyndon could just talk circles around him.

G: How about Johnson and [Everett] Dirksen?

M: They got along fine.

G: They must have been pretty evenly matched.

M: Yes. As a matter of fact, they were a little bit alike, personally, their sense of humor. They got along fine.

Well, I've got to go. I think that's about all I can think of now.

G: Well, thank you so much, Senator. I certainly appreciate it.

M: Thank you. Thanks for these letters.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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