INTERVIEWEE: SENATOR GALE MC GEE

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

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F: This is an interview with Senator Gale McGee in his office in the Old Senate Office Building, Washington, D. C. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Senator, very briefly, tell us how you left the kind of unquiet academic atmosphere to be a member of the unquiet senatorial atmosphere.

M: Well, in those old-fashioned days it was a very quiet academic atmosphere, quite a contrast to the present day. In fact some of us thought it was disturbingly quiet, and we worried lest both the kids and the faculties were becoming lethargic.

F: Yes, I remember that complacent generation. It worried me as a history professor.

M: After World War II, we always blamed it on World War II because you had a double generation in there and so many fellows were so busy making up for lost time that we thought they didn't have time to get involved in activist politics.

F: You are from that part of the world?

M: I was born and raised in the state of Nebraska, but we had strayed in a more easterly direction. We came directly from the University of Chicago to the University of Wyoming. We came to Wyoming in 1946, but I had done nothing but teach. I had been a professor of history for over twenty years in an assortment of places, stretching from Nebraska Wesleyan in Lincoln across to Iowa State College to the University of Notre Dame and then to the University of Chicago and finally from there, where I had

finished my doctorate, to the University of Wyoming in 1946.

In Wyoming I was professor of history and director of the Institute of International Affairs for my twelve years on the campus.

F: Were you active in Wyoming politics?

M: Only as a voting Democrat. I was a registered voting Democrat, as I had been for many years, although my family in Nebraska is one hundred percent militant Republican, almost unreasonable at times. I'm the only derelict in the clan.

F: I have a brother who taught for years in the University of Nebraska and I know something about Nebraska Republicans.

M: As I kid my mother, who is still alive and very active in Nebraska politics, that I had to flee the state in order to survive; that in Nebraska "Democrat" is a four-letter word.

In Wyoming I was very active all around the state as a speaker, but always on a single question and that was American foreign policy. And I had been approached by some of the Democratic party leaders to try to run for the House of Representatives. Wyoming had only one House seat, back in 1950. But the guardian angels were watching over me in some way or another and I declined. I would certainly have been clobbered in those days. But meanwhile it did whet my interest in state-wide political matters and although I never held an official party post, I did attend party conventions--things like this. I just was not a party wheel-horse as such.

F: What induced you to break loose in 1958?

M: Well, very frankly, those were the days of great idealism for me and Wyoming was a militant, extremely conservative, isolationist state.

F: Strong states rights too.

M: Well, yes, quite strong in that way. But the key that triggered my interest was foreign policy. The incumbent Senator, Senator Frank Barrett who had been in public life without a defeat all the way from the state legislature to governor to Congress to the Senate of the United States, was a very honorable man, but he was also very conservative and very isolationist. And so to me this was the reason for getting involved. Foreign policy was my professional field; I had spent my--up to that time it had been my life--speaking nationally and internationally on American foreign policy; and so from my point of view this was the crusade to try to stand for international questions. Of course, aiding and abetting this was the fact that I had crisscrossed the state, every hamlet in the state, many times, speaking on foreign policy, so that I had a small bit of an image. And perhaps even more important, I had about four thousand former students all scattered around the state in one form and another, and they were by head-count three-to-one Republican by registration. But none of them had flunked, so they became a good hardcore working group, you see, from a political point of view.

So that's what triggered my interest. And in the campaign in 1958, that became the central issue. Mr. Barrett made much of the fact that Gale McGee knew more about the world than he knows about Wyoming. So instead of denying that, we turned it around to the positive way and said indeed this is true, and this is the time that we ought to enter the twentieth century. Let's get going with it. I felt that this was strong enough motivation for the simple reason that Wyoming has two Senators just like New York or California or Texas; and that therefore a new Senator

committed to the simple fact that the world is round seemed to me was something of a contribution worth striving for.

F: Plus the fact that the Senate role in foreign policy is so much greater than Congress!

M: Yes, the Senate has a constitutional role in foreign policy in advise and consent.

F: Right. So you were elected, you came here and I presume that you were duly sworn in.

M: Well, let's don't leave one small incident there that looms large in hindsight. That was in my campaign for this first election in 1958. As the race was obviously becoming closer and closer, I was the laughing stock to begin with of both the national press and the local sentiment in Wyoming, as a hopeless case--

F: Yes, I remember your campaigning even penetrated into Texas.

M: In fact, its penetration into Texas had something to do with my ultimate success, I think, because Senator Joseph O'Mahoney, who was Wyoming's senior citizen in those days, became very active in my campaign; but the climax of the campaign, as the gap had been closing very rapidly in the closing days--near the climax would have been the end of October. Senator O'Mahoney persuaded Lyndon Johnson, the Majority Leader of the Senate in those days, to make a trip to Casper, Wyoming to speak in behalf. Lyndon Johnson came, not because of me in any respect; he didn't know me from anyone else. But Joe O'Mahoney sold him on the idea.

In Casper Lyndon Johnson, in a very rousing address with an exciting audience, the biggest thing we had had all during the campaign, made a very solemn pledge to the Wyoming voters. He said, "If you'll send me

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this young professor from the University of Wyoming to Washington, I'll do something that has never been done before. I'll put him on the Appropriations Committee the day he arrives. "Now," he said, "That isn't the way you do these things, but this is my commitment out of my respect for Joe O'Mahoney and my love for your state."

And the significant thing is that, when I squeaked through the election successfuly with just a handful of votes to spare, that Lyndon Johnson kept his word and put me on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

F: Senator Johnson would have known something about narrow squeaks himself.

M: Yes, as he said his famous cliché was "Landslide Lyndon," who won by eighty-five [ed. 87] votes. My margin was about two thousand votes, but that's pretty substantial in Wyoming but it's not anything measurable anywhere else.

F: Was there any opposition from senior people in the Senate at that time to a freshman like you going to the Appropriations Committee?

M: Indeed there was. In fact there were--I don't know how many Senators were trying to get on Appropriations at that time. In the course of Senate history, nearly every Senator tries to get on Appropriations because of it's deep-running power, real power, in terms of determining where the money goes. I didn't appreciate how much that meant until after I had been on the committee for awhile.

But at the time that I was being put on the committee, there were three members of the Senate in particular that were demanding that they be put on the committee. One of them was John F. Kennedy, who said he needed the prestige of the committee because he was getting ready to run for national office. The second was Hubert Humphrey, the whip of the

Senate, who said he needed the prestige of the committee in order to run for national office. And the third was Stuart Symington from Missouri, who said he needed it for the same reason.

F: That was rather formidable competition.

M: Well, it was perhaps the formidable nature of the competition that turned out to be in my favor, because there was only one seat to be assigned on Appropriations and the Leader Lyndon Johnson obviously couldn't divide one seat into three parts like Gaul. So perhaps I was his welcome way around that impasse of which one of those three men to favor and he would lose the friendship of the other two. And so he treated them all equally and I got the seat. As Lyndon Johnson was wont to say, he owed Joe O'Mahoney that one. O'Mahoney had been instrumental in coming out with the compromise formula that was so successful in the Civil Rights Bill of 1957. Lyndon Johnson never forgot that, felt that he owed Joe a major blue chip and this was the blue chip that he paid off, by putting Joe O'Mahoney's new colleague in the Senate, Gale McGee, on the Appropriations Committee.

F: Do you suppose he could have had an ulterior purpose of not increasing the prestige of any possible competitors--of Symington and Humphrey and Kennedy who would have all been in that class?

M: He could have had that motivation; I would have doubted it at a time like that for the reason that if he really wanted to enhance his own position, I would have thought that from among those three he could have selected the weaker and thus have delivered the goods.

F: Yes, utilize it somewhat.

M: But I do believe in coming to know Lyndon Johnson much better later that he was indeed a man of his word, and he had this great obligation to

Senator O'Mahoney and he kept his word.

F: So you started then in your senatorial career in high gear?

M: In relative high gear; for a greenhorn it was something. I had never even run for county commissioner anywhere; I had run for editor of the yearbook in college. That was another squeaker; I won that by thirty-seven to thirty-six.

F: In your senatorial career then, after being named to the Appropriations Committee, did you have much of a relationship with Mr. Johnson or were you--?

M: Not intimate, that is, I wasn't on the inner club. I was not one of his confidants, but whenever I had need for a consultation with him or needed fatherly advice, he was always available. He never was, of course, prone to running around asking me what I thought about the great issues of the day.

Although I got involved with him rather early because of the Strauss case. Lewis Strauss had been on the Atomic Energy Commission and was being nominated now by President Eisenhower in 1959 for the post of Secretary of Commerce. And I was on the Commerce Committee also at this time, and that's the committee that had the jurisdiction on this case. Well, I spent a great many midnight hours studying Strauss' background and the testimony and other appearances before Congress, and reached the conclusion that on the basis of his record in public service that perhaps he was an appropriate personality for making a test case out of; namely, of having been less than forthright or direct in his language with the Congress of the United States. I felt that he was guilty of deception by semantics and that therefore we could serve a real purpose in Congress

in laying down a precedent record of demanding that public servants in places responsible to the Congress owed it to the Congress to be forthright. And so I opposed Mr. Strauss. This was a very delicate question because it raised doubts about a President's prerogatives in appointing--in filling his own Cabinet. It put the Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson very much on the firing line because of his attempt to try to get good relations and keep them going with the President downtown.

But to make the story short, Clinton Anderson, who was the workhorse on the Strauss case, was able to marshall over a long period of weeks enough votes by a margin of one or two to reject Strauss, after the case had looked hopeless. Well, Lyndon Johnson had been instrumental in tipping it in that direction, once they discovered that the mood of the country and the mood of the Senate was so closely divided on this question. The Majority Leader, I am sure, had a considerable hand in the ultimate final decision which was made. He always said to me afterward that I gave him a great many hours of sweating, meaning having to come to grips with a very delicate question that he had just as soon not have been in the firing line about. In other words, if Strauss could have gone away or we could have approved him earlier, it would have been a lot easier from the standpoint of the Leader. But once he saw the issue he had courage to stand up as the Leader in a very prominent way and cast his vote against it. But as he always said, I put him to his test as the Majority Leader very early in my career.

F: Did you--This is subjective, but do you think that his inability to get Justice Fortas confirmed as the Supreme Court Chief Justice is in any sense retaliatory for the Strauss--?

M: There were some who mentioned that at the time, and one Senator whom I'll not name mentioned it to me personally, that this was a reason--because of the Strauss case that they would hold up Fortas. In my conversations with other members of the Senate during the Fortas crisis, I could find no other instances where that seemed to surface in any way. There were, I think, two more paramount motivations. There may be those older members of the Senate, particularly on the Republican side, who might have secretly had their goodies out of it because they could remember Strauss; but they didn't say so at any rate. Even in these long protracted debates on the floor. But I think that the Southern bloc that had no love particularly for Strauss or no deep feelings about his having been involved in the first place was the instrumental one in the ultimate decision.

F: It was just an attack on the Court in a sense?

M: It was an attack on the Court, not an attack on the Justice. It was their way of getting the Court, even though they were contradicting themselves in doing so. They were prolonging Warren's tenure, whom some of them had been trying to impeach. So it was ridiculous in itself. In other words I think this was the key motivation.

The secondary motivation from the Republican side and Senator Griffin I think was strictly and purely political, namely that they were trying to delay this thing until they could have a crack at this. You see that's an understandable attribute of politics. It's not great state-craft, that's all.

I felt in contrast on the Strauss case that there was a very deep and abiding issue there that we still need to work on, and that was in terms of the requiring of a public servant in the bureaucracy, unequivocal

candor with the Congress; and Strauss was so flagrant in saying several things on the same question, often contradictory, that it seemed to me that we made some small contribution in the Strauss controversy to raising the level of integrity in government. So I don't think the parallel is a valid one there, plus the fact that the Congress overwhelmingly approved of everybody Mr. Eisenhower sent down on the whole. The Strauss case was a case that had its own ingredients that caused us to have a second look.

F: Did you see much other evidence of Mr. Johnson's leadership techniques as the Senate Majority Leader?

M: Oh, very, very much of that. Lyndon Johnson knew how to count. He didn't care where you stood on a bill; he wanted to know that you were going to stand there so he could count. And if it was a close type of thing and you were in a position where it would be embarrassing to you--many times he came to me and said "Now, I need your vote on this but you don't dare give me your vote because it would ruin you in Wyoming. I know Wyoming," which he knew well. And was always very straightforward that way and I appreciated that fact and was always cooperative where I could be.

On the other hand, where it was a matter that could have no deep and abiding concern to Wyoming, he was most persuasive as he would tower over you and get his head down close to your nose, you know, and really work you over in terms of trying to convince you to take a position that he favored.

I've never, never known him to threaten in any way. I've heard some say that he put the heat on them, as it were, but I've never experienced a single case in a vote where he threatened me to not do something that I wanted done if I didn't vote in a given way or to do something unless

I did. There were no such tactics as that, that ever came to my attention.

F: But on something like, well--Wyoming is sometimes at odds with the National Tariff Policy--

M: Yes, or oil depletion.

F: Right.

M: He knew how important that was and Texas was in a similar role in many ways, and he always--

F: [Would] leave you to represent your state and--?

M: Indeed so. And in fact, he would sometimes remind me, "Don't forget--this is Wyoming and be sure. Don't hesitate, in other words; don't let the fact that the Democratic Party is leaning the other way, don't let that influence your decision. Your state comes before your party" was his point. State interests.

And occasionally, several times in fact, while he was Majority Leader, he got little leads on some things that would be useful where--. Through the Administration, he learned for example that we were going to tighten up imports on cattle, on beef; and he would come and tell me about it so that I could make a speech on it on the floor right away. He would give me a lead on it, so that it would be something--. Since I represented cows in the state here that I would get some credits for it. He was thoughtful in that way.

Again, believe me, I was appreciative of those measures in his regard.

F: When we come down to 1960 there was, of course, primarily a race between Humphrey, Symington, and John F. Kennedy.

M: Right.

F: And a boomlet for Johnson that was very slow getting under way. Now the

evidence indicates that, to a great extent, he was reluctant to stick his neck out and didn't give a sufficient leeway to the people who had worked for him. Where did you stand in this?

M: Well, very early in the game after I got to the Senate, the Kennedys approached me, as I am sure they did every other Senator, and asked me to support JFK in the drive. My reply to them was that the Wyoming delegation had already agreed to go uncommitted; and that therefore while I would be inclined to lean toward JFK in that day, that I would make no commitment because I wanted to respect our delegation commitment to remain open. And our delegation was divided about equally the three ways between the three candidates--Symington, Kennedy, and Johnson. Symington had been out to one of our little party shindigs in Wyoming and had made a great hit out there and so he had quite a following; that is, among the actual delegates to the convention.

When LBJ became a more active candidate, this sort of caught me in a real difficult bind because I had indicated a leaning for JFK because I had been approached first by them. I was still green enough and naive enough not to play my cards close to the vest, you know. And when a good guy comes and talks to you, why you like to be outgoing with him and give him your word.

F: In the current cliché--keep all your options open.

M: Yes, keep them all open. Well, I didn't do that. This was one of the dear lessons that I learned; I didn't do that. But nonetheless I did tell the Johnson people, when they approached me on this, precisely what I had done and I felt that because I had pledged a leaning without committing myself, that I was still--that I felt I had to honor that leaning

rather than break my word. I didn't--even though I may have been stupid in doing it, I had to pay the price of my lack of farsightedness. But in any case, I was committed in an informal way.

So at the convention we made it very clear that the Wyoming delegation was wide open. I didn't make any speeches to them in behalf of any one candidate, but as the first balloting began and it looked like it was going to Kennedy, two or three of the states--New Jersey was a notable instance--didn't cast their ballot at all. They wanted to poll their delegation. Well, that meant that they got clear through the alphabet down to Wyoming with nine votes to go to nominate Kennedy. So by that time it was very obvious what the mood was, so I polled our delegation when they got down to Wisconsin. It looked like it was going to crack when it hit us, and we got the Wyoming delegation to go unanimously for JFK. I'm convinced that had the vote gone close at all that the delegation would have moved in the same way at a critical point like that for LBJ. But it was a very difficult one because my direct ties, my experiences, my obligations in terms of the things that Lyndon Johnson had done for me, that he had promised to do and delivered on, made that a tough one. But I felt that my word in this case was an important credential--

F: The Kennedys had done their homework a lot better--

M: Very, very much so. They hadn't started as late and they had prepared very carefully and that's where it left me.

F: Did you have any intimations that Senator Johnson might take the second spot on the ballot?

M: I had such insight on it that I got my delegation together and got on direct radio wire out to the Rocky Mountain states and just announced

flatly that this was absolutely impossible; there would be no chance of it's happening; That I knew Lyndon Johnson very well and that it should be understood by everybody that he would not and could not take that spot. Within thirty minutes he had accepted; that's how close I was to the situation, so it was ridiculous. I was very sure of those things in that day.

F: You had lots of company in that.

M: I have never been as certain again at any question, I don't care what it was.

F: Where were you when you got the news that Mr. Johnson had accepted?

M: Well, when I got the news I had just-- we were staying at a little offbeat motel that had just been refurbished out there in Los Angeles quite a ways from the hall, and I was sitting around the patio with a group of members of the Wyoming delegation; and we were laughing about how silly some of these people were, speculating that LBJ was going to be the number two man on the ticket. And we got it there, totally without any inkling or any warning at all.

F: What did you do then in the campaign?

M: Well, I worked very hard on the campaign and campaigned in Texas at LBJ's request. He felt that my presence in Texas as a liberal academic would have useful impact on some of the candidates, so I appeared several times for the Young Democrats in campus communities--Austin in particular--at Lyndon Johnson's request.

F: Did you do other states as well?

M: Oh, yes. Yes, I appeared in other states. I traveled with the Vice-President, as a matter of fact, in a couple of joint rallies. One of them,

as I remember, was in Nevada; one of them was in Arizona.

F: Did you find outside of Texas, or in Texas for that matter, much difficulty in getting acceptance of Mr. Johnson as a running mate?

M: Not in our part of the world. Mr. Johnson--

F: He wasn't looked on as a handicap to the ticket?

M: Not at all. He was a tremendous asset in our part of the world and frankly in the face of that_____. Our despair, or our confidence that he would not run reflected a despair on our part, not a point of hope--Oh no, because Lyndon Johnson was just the epitome of what we in the West felt we stood for in terms of his understanding our problems. He was our kind of man--let's put it that way.

F: After the election did you see any evidence of his reluctance to give up his Majority Leader's post, at least from a standpoint of real activity--I'm not talking about the titular post, but--

M: You're talking about putting together votes down on the floor?

F: Yes. Right.

M: I have no special one incident that I could call to mind there, but he appeared down in the Senate quite often in those days and was in conference very obviously with the key wheels of the Senate, men like Clint Anderson and Warren Magnuson and Bob Kerr in particular. And it was obvious that he was doing what he knew best, namely putting together a legislative package with enough votes to enact--

F: Did you get a feeling that Mr. Kennedy, President Kennedy now, looked on him to some extent as a legislative liaison person?

M: The fact that he did it led me to believe that it was in collusion with the President; in other words, it was obvious that John Kennedy was not

a great leader on the floor of the Senate. He did not have the greatest rapport with the members of the Senate. It's fair to say he was not a member of the inner-club, whatever that used to mean; and that Lyndon Johnson not only was a member of it, he built it for the most part in the modern sense. And that, therefore, it would have been not only stupid but irresponsible if Kennedy had failed to use Lyndon Johnson's great prestige and capability and expertise with the Senate.

F: Did the Senators resent the fact that Mr. Johnson in a sense, of course he was president of the Senate, but still he had a different position--?

M: I'm sure that some of them did, particularly those that generally disagreed with him. They used that as a handle-hold for their displeasure. But that was also true when he was Majority Leader. There were still those who resented the mere fact that he was Leader and they saw in his leadership the violation of procedures, you know, when they were looking for excuses. But on the whole I think that his tremendous respect among the members of the Senate, even those who didn't love him respected his very perceptive qualities as Leader, and I think that this tended to make it easier for him to be very active down there those first years.

F: Where were you on November 22, 1963 when the Dallas assassination--?

M: Well, on the twenty-second of November I was filling up a gas tank in my car at a little tiny town called Kaycee, Wyoming. I had just started to pull out of the station there, about noon it was--Wyoming time, or near noon--

F: It would be about 11:30--

M: Yes. And this flash came over the radio and it was a real shocker. Mrs. McGee was with me in the car and my secretary, Liz Stranigan; we were on

our way to Sheridan, about fifty miles away--eighty miles away--to deliver a speech to a noon gathering of Democrats. Of course, this just shattered everything.

Just one--well, let's go ahead with this one now, the fact--because it isn't related to the Kennedy thing--

F: Well, the thing I wanted to establish--you then came on back to Washington?

M: We chartered a private plane which turned out to be a harrowing experience. A student pilot was using us as part of his piling up enough hours to get a license. I didn't know that, but he flew us to Denver and we got on a commercial jet, the plane was filled with a lot of Washington-types, all rushing back--had funneled into Denver and were going back for the same reason--Yes, we went back that same afternoon.

F: What was the mood of the Senate when you got together with your colleagues at this time? Did they feel--?

M: Well, it was a very, very considerable shock obviously, a tremendous shock. But also an exuberance, if you dare use the word exuberance in a moment of tragedy, that here was a case where the American system paid off. You had a man well-prepared to be President of the United States moving into the gap; and there was uniformly this kind of an expression that mother nature or the fates or whoever it is you ascribe these things to was smiling kindly upon us when Johnson had taken the number two spot and now was ready to become President of the United States and we couldn't have been more fortunate.

F: And this spread across both parties?

M: Yes, both parties without any, any distinction.

F: You were going to say something else about--?

M: Well, just before that November tragedy in the summer of 1963--it would have been in, I suspect it was July--we were getting revved up for the new campaign of 1964. My second term would be up in 1964, I was having a lot of trouble out West with the John Birch Society, and I was one of the marginal seats that everybody was after. And for obvious reasons. I had just squeaked by the first time and in a predominantly Republican, conservative area.

F: You were still Freshman enough to--?

M: I was freshman enough to be knocked off, you see, so we had a little--we had a fund-raising shindig here in Washington that the Kennedys helped us to set up out at Sarge Shriver's place out north of the Bethesda Naval Hospital. And it was a fine spread, but the important thing is that that occasion was climaxed by the unannounced, unwarned, sudden appearance of the Vice-President. He came out--Jack Valenti was with him, I've forgotten the couple of other people that were traveling at the time. They were going somewhere that afternoon; we had invited him and the President, too but not expecting either to show. The President never did show but Lyndon Johnson showed up out there at this dinner for his friend Gale McGee. He stayed around a considerable length of time and made a big hit; but needless to say it made our afternoon.

Now here was a case again where it was something he didn't need to do. He had an interest in my reelection and he felt, as he always said, this kind of kinship because of Texas and Wyoming and this similar base and all that. I think he always found a kinship in the fact that he was a secret admirer of teachers. He had something of a teaching career of his own, and I think this--he always called me his professor in politics and he did show up on that occasion.

Then about three weeks after that fund-raising affair at Sargent Shriver's, we were trying to get up another fund-raiser in Wyoming; just Wyoming-types. This had never been done in our state; the largest single price on a fund-raising ticket politically in Wyoming that we knew of on record was five dollars, and in our party we didn't have that kind of money. All the oil money was on the other side and all that kind of thing, you know, and so--

F: Who was going to dig down for five dollars--?

M: So we set up a dinner for twenty-five dollars and people said it couldn't be done. We secured Stewart Udall as our main speaker for the occasion, and we were trying to arrange for a whole planeload of Senators to go out there and say, you know, what a great guy McGee was and all the usual format.

F: And also bring in a crowd.

M: And try to get the crowd to come as a result, you see. So in this process naturally we were quite naive about a lot of things; how were you going to get a dozen-fifteen- twenty Senators out to Wyoming? Well, you could buy them all tickets, which would come to a pretty penny when you're talking about a twenty-five dollar a plate dinner in which you might raise a total of ten thousand or fifteen thousand dollars.

And so Bobby Baker, who was running the floor of the Senate in those days, came up with the idea that the best way to do that was to get some company with a plane just to fly them out there and back. He had lined up some outfit, and I honestly couldn't tell you to this day--it was one of the big companies, it was like Boeing, or Lockheed, or Douglas, but one of them, North American, it was one of the major ones. I wasn't involved enough in the financing to follow it closely; I just remember

that it did happen. And they could fly those Senators out there and fly them back and make it easy. That way it wouldn't deduct from your dinner.

Somehow Lyndon Johnson heard about this, I don't know whether Bobby Baker told him about it or somebody else told him about it, but one afternoon in the Senate Lyndon Johnson was sitting in the chair presiding over the Senate, and he sent a page boy over to collect me and bring me up to the front desk there. And he said, "I just heard that Bobby has arranged for a plane for you to fly these Senators to Wyoming," and he said, "you probably could make it all right that way." But he said, "Let me give you one word of advice." He says, "You cancel that plane right now, if you have to spend every penny you get. Lease a plane on your own and then pay for it." He said, "It'll be the best money you ever spent; don't fall for that free plane ride." And he said, "This is just personal advice from me, I've been in this business a long time, you're laying yourself open. Don't do what Bobby wants you to do! You get your own plane out there."

Well, I took that advice. I must say it kind of made you go slow to take the advice because you were thinking about three or four or five thousand dollars it took to lease a plane, but nonetheless I issued the order then to my campaign staff to go ahead and lease a plane, if we made nothing out of it. "Let's lease a plane and pay for it ourselves"and that is what we did. And I've often looked back on that, I knew nothing about Bobby Baker in those days--I didn't get along with him very well on the floor of the Senate, I wasn't powerful enough for him to be interested in, and therefore we had a kind of a strained relation in itself.

But I did listen to Lyndon Johnson and in the hindsight of the Baker episode in later years, I always thought this was an interesting footnote.

I would never have made this public until now, but it's a true story--an actual conversation as nearly as I can reconstruct it.

F: It has also saved any political enemy from any kind of suggestion that some airline company was subsidizing you--?

M: Yes, that somebody was trying to build up a stake in me and thus compromising my freedom to vote. I was on the Commerce Committee and this could have been used as a sensitive factor.

There were some Democratic Senators that year that didn't take that kind of advice and got into very serious trouble in their campaigns. They all won finally, but some of them really had a rough time of it.

F: Had to sweat it.

M: And this was--this was marvelous advice to a neophyte. I didn't know about these things, how you did them, or didn't do them.

F: You were just economy-minded?

M: Yes.

F: To continue with politics, campaign politics, for awhile and then we can come back and get on issues. In 1964 of course Johnson was the foregone Democratic nominee for the Presidency and then Goldwater developed. Now then you must have had a bit of a problem there in Wyoming because this was when the Birchers were, it seems to me that their ultimate strength was then. First of all, you had bucked a naturally conservative state anyhow and could be looked upon as a kind of one-time phenomenon; so let's talk about the campaign of 1964 when you also had the problem that Mr. Goldwater was in many ways quite an attractive candidate in that part of the world.

M: Indeed he was--

F: And so you had a coat-tail problem.

M: Yes, the real problem here was that Wyoming Republicans were really cut from Goldwater cloth. I think from their point of view, it was the other way around. Goldwater was cut from their cloth. The Wyoming Republicans in 1956, 1952, really believed that Dwight Eisenhower was a trick the Democrats played on the Republican Party. In 1960 the state of Wyoming landslided Nixon over JFK. I remember in 1964 when the Republicans were talking about bringing Nelson Rockefeller out to their state convention some of the Wyoming press editorialized on that and they said, "That's the lowest thing you could do; we just as well bring Gale McGee out to speak to our state convention as to have Nelson Rockefeller."

They were extremely conservative and so Goldwater was their ideal. But the offsetting factor was that Lyndon Johnson had a Wyoming image that lent itself to ready identification. He had been to the state many times after that first trip. He had come out in 1962 at mid-term when we had a Senate race going; at that time Governor Hickey had appointed himself to the Senate when we had a death in the Senate, and he came out at my request to help us with our state-wide ticket at the time. And he had come to Casper, he had appeared in Cheyenne; it was on that occasion in particular that the then Vice President had taken me aside when we flew from Casper over to a third appearance in Riverton, Wyoming, an airport stop over there--he had said on that occasion that "you'd better cover your cards on Cuba." That "it's going to blow up"--this would have been in the latter part of October, 1962--that "a great deal of it is going to blow on that, and you ought to play it close to the vest in the remaining days in this campaign."

He was due to come back then in 1964 and did show up in the 1964 campaign once more at Casper, which is a central point in the state and readily identifiable with him as our oil capital of the Rockies as we call it, you know.

The now President running in 1964 also took it upon himself to meet privately with the oil boys in Casper, and he really got rough with them. He read the riot act to them. In general the oil fellows in Casper, who were not only militantly Republican but they were almost equally militant and anti-McGee, and so Lyndon Johnson made it clear to them that they had better discover where their roots were; that here was a professor, liberal, who might be disposed in every other way who was a great voice in the Senate in behalf of the oil depletion for Wyoming, and that they had better not take that for granted. That here was somebody that they needed. The point that he made with them was that "you can expect to get an oil man to be with you, but when you get a professor that's willing to carry your oil for you, you've got an addition there that you couldn't acquire in any other way."

And then he used rough language with them on how stupid they were and it would serve them right if the Democrats would just say to them, "All, right, you fellows ought to go to the Republicans and get your oil depletion allowance and see how many votes you get."

F: How did they take this?

M: Well, they seemed to take it all right. It didn't happen to ultimately produce any money, but it made your soul feel good to have such forthright, blunt language used to--

F: Do you think it took some of the edge off the opposition?

M: I think it took the vigorous edge off the opposition. My opponent in that campaign was an oil man. John Wold was his name; he was an oil geologist.

F: How do you spell that?

M: W-o-l-d. And like myself he was a carpetbagger in the state. He came from other parts, but he had a nice image and a fine guy and all this sort of thing. But he was stuck with Goldwater. So we ran very vigorously against Goldwater and John Wold, who had been state chairman at the time of Goldwater's rise, was kind of stuck with all of this.

F: Part of the opposition must have been fairly vicious, because so much of it, it seemed to me, lacked any feeling of compromise.

M: Yes, that's right. And the result was the Wyoming Republicans had some splits during that over the Goldwater issue. They were beginning to move, some of them, to the center, never to the left--close to the middle, you know. And so during the campaign when the President appeared there, we had probably the biggest outdoor rally we had had ever had anywhere in the state for anybody, any time. That was in Casper. And it was a marvelous occasion. As a matter of fact this was the occasion--

F: When you came down to 1968, were you beginning to feel that Mr. Johnson was a burden to you in Wyoming?

M: I never felt that he was a burden to me. I think that his popularity had dropped in Wyoming, but I felt by 1968 that the President was so popular in his basic broad-based programs, if ever that story could re-surface again, and that more important than his popularity that in terms of the war in Southeast Asia, he was right; that I admired him even more, if that was possible, for having stood his ground. Let me hasten to add there that in 1966 and 1967 I had had occasion to be with him more than usual,

I guess, because of the war. I often was down there just visiting. And he had asked me on one occasion what I thought the war would do to his political chances. My response, just to generalize it, was that I didn't know, but that I thought that asked the question the wrong way. I told him I thought the question ought to be, is the war in our national interest, something that we have to do for the country, and I said "Mr. President, if it is, then I would hope you would be prepared to go down to political defeat if necessary in order to stand your ground, rather than to use the war or its interruption as a political gimmick to win the election."

And his response was that he intended to cope with it in that way, whatever it required, and hoped that he could rise to that level on it.

But I had occasion then on two or three other times to go back to this same central theme that I believed our role in Eastern Asia was so significant that this was a question bigger than a man's chances for reelection.

F: Did you get the feeling perhaps that the opposition to the war was more vocal than were the adherents of the war? In other words, if you could have had a straight vote on Mr. Johnson, probably would have backed him?

M: We could have elected Lyndon Johnson in Wyoming in 1968. Now, we're not a typical state in that regard. We had a special affinity for him anyway, but I think that the country as a whole would have been surprised at his running strength by the time that 1968 had rolled around. But I deeply admire the President for the courage of his decision on March 31st.

F: Where were you on March 31?

M: I was sitting in front of a T.V. set. I was one of those that was not privy to the impending decision. Everybody is trying to say that they had

an inkling of it or he had tipped them off, but I had no tips, I had no inklings, no nothing--I want to be very level about that.

F: You're the honest man--?

M: And I was shocked. I had to listen to the replay again to still believe it. I thought I must have misunderstood it, you know. But it was a total shock. But I've since had occasion to visit with him about it, of course. How close he came to making a similar decision as far back as Christmas or January is now obvious in hindsight, as he has retold it, rediscussed it. But I think there was a genuine pressure on there for him to get out of the Presidency in order to live. I think that he--at least he made an occasion to say to me, as did Lady Bird, on more than one instance that they really believed he wouldn't live through a second term, and that he did love his family and wanted to enjoy those grandkids. That this was a fact.

But I think an overriding factor was also his own conviction that his image, whatever that image was, had become a psychological block and the chances for a breakthrough for some kind of slowing down or de-escalation of the combat, and that this ultimately tipped his hand and then this torturous decision to publicly step down so early in the game and thus lose control, in effect, of the momentum of politics for the next eight or ten months until the election; that any man who was going to bow out would have held his reins in his hands until he had picked his successor and that sort of thing. But because he was convinced that the timing of this offered the best chance to break through for peace, he made that decision in March.

F: Let's go back now and pick up your career as a Senator because it impinges

on this Administration very heavily, and on your relationships with Mr. Johnson.

As early as 1960 you were raising some questions about the fitness of military men to serve as his regulatory agencies. Would you like to expatiate on that a little?

M: Well, I felt that the military man, the 1960's--the 1970's, is a far different creature than the military man of what we called the old days--I would say pre-World War II; that he comes closer to being a philosopher today, he is politically astute--at least politically aware--and he's a much broader, more deeply based individual than we've ever known before. But it seemed to me that we were reflecting a penchant by the early 1960's of finding as cheap a product as we could get to man our agencies in the government; and the most available man very often was a general who had retired. He had early retirement in the military anyway, and that, therefore, he could afford to go to work for a lower salary. And I hated to see us filling so many of those spots with someone with a strictly military background. I think the military ought to be represented also in these things, but it seemed to me we were acquiring a preponderance of again--under the guise of saving money. And I thought we ought not to hire a man because he was cheaper than somebody else. We ought to hire a man because he was worth what the job required and that you were willing to pay him what it required.

F: Well now, President Eisenhower, you know, had left this statement of warning against the erection of a military, industrial complex in this country. Did this play any part in your thinking on this?

M: Well, it disturbs me and disturbs me yet--constantly disturbs me, not because somebody is plotting to build a military industrial complex but

because the times require crossing a crisis-bridge first. But as a result of crossing that crisis bridge, we have something that's a little bit more complex in that sense. And then you cross the next crisis bridge. And in a planned society like ours, I thought we owed it to ourselves to take the long look down the road ahead, and if there were wise ways in which we could forestall our having finally become enmeshed in a total military industrial complex, it would be in the best interests of the country. What I objected to was that we were doing this almost inadvertently or on a quid-pro-quo basis after you had a crisis, and that we ought to have a look at the big pictures as we moved along, and I still believe that. I'm not sure that I have the alternative answers to it yet, because I think we have to meet these great tests in the international field.

F: Before we get into bigger issues, you have been cited several times for working with Jewish organizations particularly.

M: Yes.

F: How does someone named McGee figure in that?

M: Well, I guess the key to it is--

F: And Wyoming is another place you hardly expect it.

M: That's right. We don't have a very large Jewish population. We have a very sophisticated Jewish population in Wyoming and I hasten to add, on the other side we have only three Arabs in Wyoming. We're totally insignificant in that respect.

The title of a speech that I used many years ago for a Jewish organization I think summarizes it. Namely that Israel belongs to the Presbyterians. I happen to be a Presbyterian. The point of the speech is

that the symbolism of Israel is not as a Jewish home quite so much as it is a people who are willing to work and to sacrifice or able to establish a dignified independence. And that this sense of independence is something that's kind of inspirational around the world. That this is what we ought to keep our eye on and secondly, they've done it so well and with such economic growth and development that it enabled us to say about Israel that what they do not with their guns but with their economic resources becomes the new opportunity; namely, with peace-time development of atomic energy, this sort of thing, water--desalinization of water which is very important to them. These great breakthroughs in science show what a nation with imaginativeness can do. So this was my general line with and devotion to the Jewish question in Israel.

F: Of course, as far as Israel is concerned too; even though it's near sea level and hot, it shares with Wyoming certain problems of aridity.

M: We have their knowledge in new sources of water and it's very helpful to us out West and ours to them. I mean we have a mutual problem, yes.

F: Before we leave that subject, you have had such places as Flaming Gorge come in during this Administration. This always creates two frames of mind in the West and one is, of course, those people who feel that the federal government intrudes on everything; and the other is the great delight in having new public facilities. So would you like to talk just very briefly on the Johnson conservation and more particularly, I suppose, Mrs. Johnson who, of course, visited your state with some success?

M: Well, first of all I think our state had within it some individuals who were guilty of gross public hypocrisy. There were people who declared war on the federal government, who in the same breath had their hand out

behind their backs demanding a subsidy of some sort. This was true of all kinds of people, and it's the hypocrisy that I attack and resent. If a man will say to me openly "I oppose the federal government, it's encroaching too much and I want nothing from it," I'll respect him, even though I disagree with him. But the man that says that and then sneaks to Washington with his lawyer to get a handout, I cannot respect. In my last campaign I exposed a number--that was probably a key factor in my success the last time in laying on the public take where everybody could look at it the record of some of our more militant attackers of the federal government and their activities back in Washington, quietly getting subsidies from the Defense Department and the Small Business Administration or somebody else. So Wyoming's in a unique position in one way; the federal government owns over half the state in actual acreage, and so we have a grave dependence--we're very conscious of the federal government. That's why it behooves us to take some of the position that the state has traditionally taken some times. In terms of conservation and in terms of resource development, nobody in Wyoming has ever batted an eye about receiving federal funds. And we're so far ahead of the game in Wyoming, the game being this continuing for the federal dollar; in terms of the total tax monies that the federal government takes in from Wyoming, we receive a good bit more of that in return in direct federal investment in the state. So we've long had that understanding and that identification.

Under Lyndon Johnson--. Well, to begin with, under President Kennedy--I was able to bring President Kennedy out to the state less than two months before his assassination. He had his first direct view of the resource wonders of Wyoming, flying over Yellowstone, visiting the

Jackson Hole country. In fact, just the Tuesday before the President was shot I was in his office planning with him on that occasion, going over a map, the August vacation for the next August where he would bring Mrs. Kennedy and the children to Wyoming to see Yellowstone--

F: And the Tetons?

M: And the Tetons. And so Jack Kennedy came out there in September and we had our greatest indoor crowd in history. He filled the field house of the University of Wyoming to overflow, fifteen thousand people on that occasion. But this was followed up by the, not only the regular trips--President Johnson, who came out several times, but Mrs. Johnson's great trip in the summer of 1964 in which her emphasis was on conservation and beautification, playing up nature's beauties in the West, you know.

F: Did you float the Snake with her?

M: Oh, indeed so. This was a first, you know, for them and we went the whole way with Lady Bird out there, and she was just a tremendous success. I mean the total impact. There were those that strained at trying to make some political sort of thing out of this, but she overcame even the harshest of those with the very gracious way in which she participated and presided over these kinds of festivities.

F: Wyoming appreciated her as a guest?

M: They certainly have. They've never gotten over it yet. They've always been proud of that one. We made it a point to have all of the ladies of the state that held any kind of club office of any sort Republic and Democrat, conservative and liberal--it didn't matter what.

F: You had some kind of a big reception, if I recall, up at Jackson Lake Lodge--?

M: Jackson Lake Lodge. That was for the women of achievement in the state.

No party lines drawn, no philosophy circumscribing it, and she is just a remarkable woman.

F: I've had Wyoming women, no particular Johnson affiliation, talk to me about what a great occasion that was.

M: Oh yes, it was really terrific. It was one of the early ones in this great national crusade she ran as First Lady, and it went so well--it was a marvelous--

F: Now, your neighbor Senator Ted Moss of Utah is on the Interior Committee and, of course, Flaming Gorge cuts across both states. Did you get involved in that other than just a normal representative of Wyoming, or was this pretty well handled outside without any pushing on your part?

M: You mean getting the Flaming Gorge?

F: Yes.

M: Oh, we all claim we got it single-handedly. Actually it was a cooperative effort on the part of Utah and Wyoming, and we worked very closely together on it. We've had some jurisdictional problems on it, but nothing very serious. Just as an illustration, we've just now cleared up the dual administration that was there, not Wyoming, but Utah. But the Forest Service and the Park Service, and we've put it under one service now on the Utah side, which is--but the administrative machinery falls on the Wyoming side, so there is another way you work out those compromises.

At one time I made a drive personally to change the name of it to O'Mahoney Recreation Area, and there was a great outcry, of course, from Utah against that. But also a great outcry in Southwestern Wyoming against it. They felt that Flaming Gorge described it. They all loved Senator O'Mahoney, and I was looking for a fitting kind of remembrance--tribute--to Senator O'Mahoney. And so I held hearings out there and my people

were so overwhelmingly against naming it O'Mahoney for the strictly local color that I admitted I had been wrong. You have to ever publicly confess your mistakes, but that was a mistake. It just sounded so good to me as an idea because of my respect for O'Mahoney that I overlooked a much larger factor there.

So we all ended up on the happy side on that finally and kept it Flaming Gorge.

F: Have you got caught in any of that crossfire between the Wyoming hunters and the Park Service in the regulation of game?

M: Very deeply involved. The time that that exploded I rushed Appropriations Committee out there. We knew where the money had to come from to clear it up, and we let everybody have his say in court, to have his day of declaration. The result is we got that stopped; we educated the National Park Service on the possibilities of the peaceful transfer of the surplus out into other areas. As a result their transfer program has been stepped up; it has been unnecessary to shoot the elks since.

At the same time a lot of the more extreme elements in my own state got a liberal education about [how] reasonable and fair the Park Service was once you were willing to sit down and talk with them and to work out your differences. And it turned out to be a very constructive and notable experience on all sides.

F: Let's talk a little bit about your experience in foreign relations in this Administration. In fact, we should go back to 1961 with the coming of the Democratic Administration, because you've been quite prominent in that ever since. I think the best thing for you to do is just sort of trace the evolution of your thinking and of your experience during this period.

M: All right.

F: And, of course, any personal relationships you may have had.

M: First of all, my professional career of nearly twenty-three years before I came to the Senate was all in the field of foreign relations, or almost all of them in foreign relations. My public lecturing career was entirely in that realm. My devoted interest remains without a single break in that field. I did not make a pitch for the Foreign Relations Committee when I arrived in Washington because I was advised wisely that the position of power in the Senate of the United States was Appropriations; that whatever else this was the dream of every Senator--to get on that committee--

F: Everything leads there eventually.

M: Right. So I concentrated in those early years on the Appropriations, and had some hand to play in its annual bloodshed that went on in the Senate over this unpopular issue.

On several occasions in those early days, I talked to Senator Fulbright about the possibilities of some day getting on Foreign Relations, but in general there was a loose policy that observed that you couldn't be on Appropriations and Foreign Relations at the same time, or one of the other really major committees. It was never formalized, but this was a general tendency even though there were exceptions.

F: You get one top committee and then one kind of sat there?

M: Yes, right. And I had mark on set committees. I had Appropriations and Commerce, so no one could complain about that of one of the most powerful sets--Russell Long always told me that he'd give me anything he had in the

in the way of trade, anything, to get in such a combination as that; that he had been waiting for that for many years.

But in any case, my foreign relations activities were confined to my almost annual studymissions to several parts of the world. I think I led the first formal Senate studymission to Africa, for example, when JFK had just won. He ask me to take his younger brother along on our mission that December to Africa--

F: His younger brother being Ted or--?

M: Yes, Ted, in order to help him grow up, he said. He said he wanted to help him grow up and mature a little. Well, he grew up and matured very fast.

F: Yes.

M: But he went along to get the feel of the African question at that time. That was in 1960, December of 1960. My first mission to any foreign shore had been as a traveling companion of Senator Albert Gore, both to the Near East, where we were trying to come to grips with the refugee question in the Arab-Israeli dispute, and to Southeast Asia where at that moment we were looking for the "ugly" American who showed up only in the positive sense of the good "ugly" Americans and those who were doing it the right way.

But each year there was some target area where I was assigned to go by the Appropriations Committee since, as they said, I'm expendable. I was young enough to stand the gaff and if something happened to McGee in one of these hot areas, why the world would still go on, unruffled, you see. The Senate could still survive.

F: You feel like no one cared but Mrs. McGee?

M: Yes. Right, and she was always with me. I always insisted that whatever else, I would not go to any of these areas without her. I thought it was important from the standpoint of diplomacy, she was certainly indispensable to me physically. I'm a diabetic and she's my doctor and my nurse and my philosopher and my political adviser, everything else, you know.

So those early years were devoted to this, with annual reports on these missions. After President Johnson's victory in 1964, that is, his outright victory in 1964, and the Southeast Asian question was beginning to boil a bit, Russell Long came to see me about trading committees. The trade would be for him to leave his seat on Foreign Relations where he didn't like it--he wasn't basically a foreign relations type man and he had gotten nowhere on the committee and he didn't like the company he said on there, and all that sort of thing, it was not his cup of tea--for my position on Commerce, the Commerce Committee which I dearly loved. I mean it's one of the most exciting and personable committees in the whole Senate in my judgment. It had a great gang of Senators on it, on both sides. And I agreed to make the change with Long if the Rules Committee would endorse it. Well, to make the story short, within a few months--we can make this subject to correction on the record, it was either in the spring of 1965 or the spring of 1966--1965 I think, 1966 it would have to be--the spring of 1966, the trade finally was approved by the Rules Committee. And I went on the Foreign Relations Committee.

But, meanwhile I had become sort of an Administration spokesman on Viet Nam, starting in February 1965. At that date, that's the time when the decision was made to begin the bombing north of the demilitarized zone, north of the 17th parallel, and to step up the American commitment

there. It seemed to me basically important--my whole philosophy there of diplomacy, power politics around the world, compelled me to take this kind of a position. I can say very frankly this was less out of respect for Lyndon Johnson that it was out of my conviction about the shape of the world. I happen to have lectured on this many times before I ever came to the Senate and the record is very clear that I think we have only developed one substitute for war in this lawless world and that's the balance of power. And that--we've got to restructure the balance of power after any world war, like World War II and unless and until we do, you can't make very many stable or meaningful strides into a better future. And this is what I thought was at stake in Eastern Asia. While it was important that whatever else, we stand firmly against any efforts to change the boundaries of the configuration of Southeast Asia by force of arms. And this is what I felt was the issue in Viet Nam.

Well, around the first of February or the end of January, whenever it is that Walter Lippmann used to celebrate his birthday, he had a group of people, a very large group, over to his home as he did annually, and I had been there many times. But on this particular occasion, we had a little informal conversation that afternoon that involved Frank Church on the Foreign Relations Committee; George McGovern, not on the committee; Walter Lippmann himself, in which we disagreed on what we ought to be doing. It was on that occasion that we kind of agreed officially that we ought to transfer this conversation to the floor of the Senate.

We did so within a week or ten days; we made it a matter of rather long, protracted discussions on the floor of the Senate and this, I think, became the first conscious launching of what, I guess, we had come to call

the Viet Nam debate. It began under those circumstances as I recollect it now in hindsight. In any event, by the end of February or early March CBS then staged the first of the nationwide spectacles debating Viet Nam. They had Hanson Baldwin, George McGovern and Gale McGee and--who's the professor up at Columbia that was in the State Department for awhile? Political science?

F: Roger Hilsman.

M: Roger Hilsman. We were the four who debated the question, what to do in Viet Nam and in general Hanson Baldwin and I were on one side, and McGovern and Hilsman were on the other; although Hilsman in those days and I were the closest together of any two on that panel. Hanson Baldwin was away out. He was going to take two million troops and march into China if necessary and George McGovern was going very much the other way. Hilsman and I were very close. Hilsman has since modified his position as a reflect of them. But, at any rate this was the beginning of the stepup. And the identification that followed in the wake of all of this generally led me to be selected out as a spokesman, not the spokesman, but a spokesman for the American effort in Southeast Asia. And this came more or less regularly then from there on.

As the crescendo mounted, it was then the next winter and spring that I went on to the Foreign Relations Committee, 1966 and 1967, when the committee was actively holding public hearings on the T.V. spectacles in regard to these policies--

F: Is there a basic difference between the committee when it's on T.V., the committee's behavior when it's on T.V., and when it's meeting privately?

M: Yes. It's my belief that there is and in the short time I was on the

committee, a little less than two years at that interval before I got back on at the present time, I thought there was a notable difference, The differences were two-fold that were conspicuous. Number one, when we were on T.V. some Senators on the committee were more belligerent--let's say more ham, obviously pitching for the constituent vote than they were when we were in executive session with the same witness in committee chambers without T.V. Nearly every one of the members of the committee in executive session were gentlemen, they kept their voices in low key, they expressed disagreement; but they asked the tough questions that ought to be asked of a Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense, none of this smarty business or these perorations about the dying boys on the battle field in Viet Nam and this sort of thing. That was the distinct difference between the two circumstances.

The second difference was that when we were on T.V. nearly all members of the committee would show up in order to get his free time. If you had an executive session it was desperately difficult even to get a quorum in order to have a vote on the committee. If you didn't have a T.V. camera there, the numbers of the committee members that refused to show was a disturbing factor. And this whole spectacle then led me into very open disagreement with the chairman of the committee on just the procedures, just the procedures. I felt there were too many times when the committee hearing would be staged as a spectacle rather than as a genuine service for ideas or examination of a Secretary of State's basic position and the why of it. I think this was abused by the chairman a number of times, overreached at least by him.

F: You don't think really that televising Foreign Relations Committee

procedures serves any great--?

M: Oh, I--I've revised my judgement on it. I think it did serve a great purpose and does serve a purpose. And my argument is now that the committee has to change its tactics and live up to what television now requires. I think television is here to stay. I think it does serve a purpose. I think it raised the level of public grasp and understanding of these questions, but it also led to abuses. And I believe that if the Foreign Relations Committee is to survive with a meaningful role in policy calculation that it too has to raise the level of its performance therefore in the age of T.V. I think that the committee has failed to take into account the imagery, impact, strengths or complications of this new media; it isn't like the old newspaper; it isn't like radio.

This is something new. I mean it lends credence to some of the more extreme allegations of Marshall McLuhan, and I think that the Foreign Relations Committee has more and more taken into account in setting the level of its own conduct on T.V. That if it could act on T.V. as it conducts itself in executive session it would be a far more responsible performance.

Now, this is going to cost them some viewers, but I believe that if the goal of Foreign Relations Committee is to get a higher Nielsen rating that they ought to go out of business or else go into the entertainment business and get out of the Senate. And this is where I think the lines of differences have been drawn with the chairman.

F: Does the chairman encourage dissent within the committee?

M: Generally not. As a matter of fact--. Well, I think he invites any dissident views but--. I remember one occasion on T.V. where he was a

little unhappy with my dissent, but I guess it's understandable. I might have been too precipitious in disagreeing with him, but he was beating the Secretary of State over the head pretty badly and I thought wrongly at the time. The Secretary of State was responding to an order from the chairman of the committee, and the chairman wouldn't permit him to answer the question and insinuated some things about the Secretary of States's--Secretary of State Rusk's--integrity and all of this business. So when it came down to my time to ask my questions I raised with the chairman my doubts about whether this was the way to run a hearing on T.V., suggesting that we ought to keep the questions on the subject and treat the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense at least with respect for the office, and ask them the searching questions we needed to raise but not to insult them or not to downgrade them. The response to this suggestion of mine was a reminder from the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee that he was interested in receiving these suggestions on how to run the committee from the lowest member of the committee who had been with the committee the shortest length of time. And it was a real insulting--. I probably had it coming from the standpoint of the chairman, but I didn't think it was the gracious way to handle it. I felt that he had exposed himself very flagrantly by his conduct with the Secretary of State that particular morning, and I think the record now in hindsight bears it all out. But nonetheless, he didn't particularly go for that particular comment from me.

But we all get our day. We get our chance when we are on T.V., a limited time. The more senior you are the more minutes you can steal on T.V. and when you get down to me and it's clear to the end, sometimes

they run out of time. And that's the name of the game.

F: Do you consider the committee was adequately briefed by the Administration in what was going on?

M: I felt that the committee was more than adequately briefed. These hearings were not held to learn something. They were held to, again, stage a spectacle. And it was illustrated by the members of the Foreign Relations Committee, some of them. These members weren't interested in listening to the Secretary of State, and they were not interested even in asking him searching questions. They were mostly interested in making speeches. And the committee would make speeches at the Secretary, not necessarily to him, but at him, projected toward a T.V. audience.

The curious thing about it was that most of the Senators, once they had made their speech, left--walked out; they weren't interested in whatever the Secretary might respond to later on. I can verify this because I was one of the rare ones--the chairman was the other rare one--who stayed throughout the whole thing and tried to follow the whole business. My colleagues on the committee would make their speech, get their five minutes or ten minutes on T.V., and then they'd leave. So it seemed to me to be a questionable effort to search in this public way for useful information.

F: How are you briefed by the White House?

M: Well, in two ways in my experience. One always has been in the Secretary of State's coming down into a closed session and let's have it out, "Here's a new development that's impending and here's the way it looks to us--what are your views on it?" Rusk, I think the record will show--. Secretary Dean Rusk spent more time holding hands with the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee than any Secretary of State in history, by a good margin over--much more time. He worked at it. The real explanation for the committee's hostility for him was not in his failure to brief them but in the fact that they disagreed with his position and this was the way to get it. They didn't like his position.

The other way that we were briefed--we were sometimes called down to the White House to sit down with the President. We'd get around a round table there with the President in which he would just start out by saying, "Okay what's your solution? What's your judgment?" and get everybody's ideas, or he would fill us in on what this latest break had been, we would be briefed on it without being told what they were going to do. I was never mindful of any instance where they told us something they were going to do or had already been done. They would brief us on what might have blown up in the way of a crisis and here were the options and get some reactions. But again, it seemed to me that wherever this was feasible, they leaned over backwards to stay in touch. And I know on many occasions there were others that I wasn't involved with, that only involved the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Foreign Relations Committee in which these efforts were made. So I think there was a very conscious effort, an especially conscious effort, made by both President Johnson and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense to try to keep the appropriate committees abreast of what was going on. I don't think that really was a critical issue.

F: As a rule did the whole committee go?

M: Not as a rule. On most of the key things the whole committee didn't go, but just the chairman and the ranking minority member. But on a good

many of them, I felt at many sessions we had--the whole committee was invited but the numbers of them that didn't go then was amazing.

F: From what you could sense at these briefings, whose advice really mattered to the President? Who was the really important adviser or advisers?

M: You mean around the President or from the committee?

F: No, around the President.

M: Oh, it was my impression that the ones he leaned on, the strongest during those years, were obviously Rusk and McNamara and Mac Bundy and Rostow. It was my experience with them that he leaned on them very heavily. They were probably the closest.

F: What about within the committee?

M: Within the Foreign Relations Committee itself, I guess he used to lean on the chairman, but it didn't develop that way. It came during my time there, at least I was called down there many times for consultation, but mostly most of the consultations with me were at times when we were getting ready for a floor debate and I wanted to update my own information; or we were getting ready for a debate on some campus or on some T.V. show, and I was simply trying to make sure that I was current all the time. And in general I was called upon by them to represent them on public occasions that way. Whenever they needed a program leveled or distributed fairly on all issues, I was often designated.

F: When the committee met at the White House, did you get the feeling that there was an honest seeking of opinions or this was just a piece of window dressing in which the President could get over his views?

M: I felt that the briefing part of it was very straightforward. In terms of getting other views, I don't know that you can say that. The views were

always solicited, always asked for. Now, whether they were rejected or not, I think it would be impossible to determine. How much they sank in and modified or helped or went into the scales of balance on a final judgment that was reached, I don't think there would be any way for any one of us to determine. But they were always asked for.

F: From what you know about it, was there any essential difference between President Johnson's procedure with the committee and President Kennedy's?

M: Well, I don't know because I wasn't on the committee under President Kennedy. And I was never knowingly called down there to consult on foreign policy with President Kennedy except when I came back from a foreign trip. Kennedy always gave me the opportunity to debrief in his presence so that my judgments were directly explained to him.

President Johnson always--seemed to me--worked at that a little harder as far as I was concerned. That probably was because I--maybe I was one of the few friends he had left in Foreign Policy at this stage. But in any case, whenever I went somewhere around the world, he always gave me time alone, no one else present, in which he didn't say anything-he didn't tell me. He was willing to listen and particularly when I had just gotten back from Viet Nam several times. I made four or five trips to Viet Nam.

F: You came on before the Dominican situation was completely settled?

M: Yes.

F: Did you see any evidence of the President's procedures there?

M: No evidence of his procedures except in our overall briefing, which included Senators, not just the Foreign Relations Committee, at that time and following it. But this, again, reflected the lack of interest of a

good many Senators who became the more vitriolic critics to even show up for something like this, to get filled in, even if they didn't like what they heard. The numbers of Senators that would attend some of those things I think was quite revealing.

F: Do you think that to a certain extent dovishness within the committee became almost a fad? In other words what I'm getting at, people become doves because it's the thing to do, or did it come out of conviction? I know that's subjective--

M: Well, that's tough. There were some very genuine, very genuine doves that had nothing to do with anything but the fact that they were born and raised doves. There were some that I think had their finger in the political winds and began conspicuously to waiver as this became increasingly unpopular. And their own shift came less with a sense of understanding the basic issue in Eastern Asia than with determining that people had had enough of it. And in my judgment, that's a wrong basis for a decision in foreign policy. I think it may be a legitimate basis for a decision in some surface domestic issues, but not in foreign policy.

F: Were the doves organized loosely or otherwise? In other words, did they caucus, did they--?

M: The doves had caucuses but these were larger than the Foreign Relations Committee by that time when they were caucusing. They were caucusing as a group. And I hasten to add, I was often invited to these caucuses. It wasn't a matter of cloak-and-dagger operations. And I often made it a point to attend for my own education. At least I would like to think that I had never closed my mind on this. I wasn't irrevocably committed; in fact, one of my problems is that I was not sure I was right. Not certain.

Some of the doves came to be so sure they were right and everybody was wrong that it was impossible to get a dialogue going with them. I'm still not sure I was right; I'm still not sure I'm right now. But as you resort these things and you try to fit the pieces back together again and again and again, I still come out essentially with the same position. But it's a worrisome one and it's a troubling one, especially in the middle of the night, you know, when you can't hear anything but your own conscience. It really bothers me, but I still think it's close to the mark.

F: I'm not going to editorialize here, but I've been concerned in the academic community, for instance, that some minds are as closed on this issue from the standpoint of just a good, academic discussion as, say, trying to talk integration to some red-necked Mississippians. It's just not discussable.

M: Some of the worst--. Some of the most emotional reactions on this question have been in the academic community, in the very area where it should never happen. That is, whatever else, tolerance is at the root of the pursuit for knowledge. Tolerance of another point of view, the understanding of the right to think otherwise. But I have had more near-violence and more obscenities from the academic community that disagreed with my views than anywhere else, where they don't want to talk about it. They tune you off, tune you out. And this is too bad.

F: It's hardly intellectual.

M: It's not. It's anti-intellectual.

F: Right. Do you think the coolness between the President and Fulbright hampered the work of the committee?

M: Yes, I think it did, because it came to be reflected in the chairman's

leadership. And I felt the chairman was forfeiting some of the responsibilities or obligations of being chairman because of this deep bitterness with the President. And in fairness to the chairman, Mr. Fulbright used to say that whatever else, he was a free man and he wasn't giving up that freedom. But I argue that he gave up freedom when he came to the United States Senate. He has to say things as a Senator that--or has not to say things as a Senator that he might feel free to say as a private citizen.

But secondly, he gave up a great deal more freedom when he became chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The whole world judges this committee as a responsible agency of the government of the United States. And this entails some sense of responsibility which I didn't think he always exercised. Now then this is an open question. He argues that it's his job as chairman to think otherwise and to differ and to carry this on in a very public, international way. But I think there are some very strong lines that ought to be drawn there.

F: Do you see any evidence of either critics or supporters of the President's foreign policy being either rewarded or punished or does this seem to be almost a vacuum?

M: I don't see any substantial evidence either way. I think that you can select ours in certain cases and conclude that's what has happened. There are too many other things present in both cases, like Senator Morse's defeat, or Senator Gruening's defeat. I think those defeats had little or nothing to do with their Viet Nam positions. On the other hand, you lose a guy like Frank Lausche who was very much on the President's side in the Viet Nam issue, I think the Viet Nam issue was irrelevant. So I don't know that there was any evidence in that way at all.

F: What did the Administration do, if anything, to exert pressure on the Foreign Relations Committee to develop support?

M: I was never aware of any pressure of that sort, except to sit down with them, to brief them, to be at their beck and call when they wanted them; I don't know of any other pressure that was brought to bear. I was never mindful of it; there never was any pressure brought to bear on me.

F: Did Viet Nam affect policies in other areas that the committee is concerned with?

M: Well, I felt that I was knocked off of the committee perhaps because of my unpopular views on Viet Nam. You see, in 1968 the Republicans picked up some new seats; therefore, you had to redistribute the membership on the committee. And it meant that as the low man on the totem pole I would be the victim. But the leadership, Mansfield and the minority leadership Dirksen, agreed to expand the size of the committee by one to save me. The chairman of the committee was very adamant on it; he wanted to cut the committee back. In fairness to Senator Fulbright, he had been trying to cut the committee back for many years but had always lost.

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By Gale McGee

to the

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