

INTERVIEWEE: SENATOR A. S. (MIKE) MONRONEY

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE MC SWEENEY

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Mc This interview is with Senator A. S. "Mike" Monroney. Today is Monday, February 24, 1969, and it is 2:30 in the afternoon. We're in his offices at 200 World Center Building, 918 16th St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

Senator Monroney, I'd like to begin the interview by just briefly touching on the dates of your service in Congress, and I won't really elaborate. I think a great deal of it is very well documented in all the Congressional records. But just to begin with, you were elected to the 76th Congress in 1939 as a Democrat from Oklahoma, and you were successively reelected to the House through 1951. At that time you were elected as Senator and served in the Senate until 1968 when you were defeated for reelection.

I'd like to begin the interview and just ask you what made you decide to enter public life and politics back in 1939?

M: I had been a political writer on the old Oklahoma News, had covered a number of campaigns, and covered the administration of several governors, including attempt impeachment of one or two. I decided when the office happened to be open that I could stand just as much a chance of being elected as most of the candidates who were running. So I started out with all the enthusiasm of ignorance, and decided to make myself an available candidate when our Congressman from the 5th district of Oklahoma had unexpectedly been stricken with a heart attack.

Mc This is 1938, right?

M: Right, 1938. So I got in the race and with great enthusiasm, I attracted a large number of people to my banner, and figured that I had the recipe for successful instant election, and got in the race. And there were sixteen others that got in this race too.

So I raised a campaign that was aimed for Mike Monroney--"not a politician," and against all the hackneyed political efforts that are generally made in the blatant appeals for votes. Instead we put up billboards and organized youngsters, and it was part of the new politics of that day. I thought I was running a very good race until we had a dinner party on election night to celebrate the election which we knew would be successful, and many of our close friends came. Along about 7:30, when the returns started coming in, I was out of the race within an hour-and-a-half, and the successful politicians with their organization and with their combination of county, city, and state professional politics had managed to win. So this was the end of my first effort.

But, by great good fortune, the man who had beaten me with most of the organized, political leaders was elected to the House. I had had the desire, I guess, to kind of forget it all and my wife and I went to New York to see some shows, then we dropped back by Washington to see what I had missed. During our visit in Washington, one of my friends--a former editor that I had worked for on the Oklahoma News--said, "Well, Franklin D. Roosevelt is going to have a press conference. Don't you want to come and hear it?"

Of course, I was willing for any diversion at that point, and so I went down there and listened to the discussion of the threat of upcoming war in Europe and all, and Roosevelt's beautiful fielding of all the questions that were peppered at him, and the way he handled it in his off-the-cuff

remarks and his cigarette holder slanting up at a 45° angle. When most of those questions were through, he opened up for everyone, and one fellow in the back of the room said, "Mr. President, I see you had lunch with Mr. Wesley Disney, the Congressman from Oklahoma. Does this mean you're going to support Mr. Disney for the United States Senate race instead of the then-incumbent, Senator Elmer Thomas," who was a veteran in the Senate. And he tilted his cigarette a little bit higher, and he said, "Indeed not! I told Wesley he should go back and run for the House where he's so badly needed, so he can serve on the Ways and Means Committee and help us do the necessary in tax legislation to supply the revenue to run this great government of ours."

I knew this was a pretty big story in Oklahoma, so I hastened out to make a courtesy call on my opponent who had won the nomination.

Mc Who was this?

M: Mr. Gomer Smith. I think I was the only one that Mr. Gomer Smith had ever beat. He'd run for almost everything. But he wanted to be a Senator, and I knew that. He didn't like Congress, or wasn't apt to. So I related a little bit of my experiences, and I said, "Oh, I heard something down at the White House, Congressman Smith, that might be of interest to you that Mr. Roosevelt, the President, said that he couldn't support Gomer Smith or Wesley Disney to run against our senior Senator." This would have left the way clear for Senator Thomas to be reelected without opposition. When I told him that the President couldn't support Mr. Disney, I could see the fire and the sparkles and all light up, because he had always wanted to be a Senator. I knew that he was still interested in that purpose. So I told him the whole story about what the President had said. I said, "People are going to be talking a lot about you for the United States Senate."

When I got home, I saw that they did talk about him for the United States Senate. The first thing I knew, he was in the Senate race, and vacated the very office he had won only a month before that--which left the way open for me to make an effort. So I did file for Congress after he got in the Senate race. By great good fortune, against another sixteen-to-one candidates, I managed to edge in by a few thousand votes. This was the way I got into Congress.

Mc: Could you describe for me a little bit about what your political philosophies were? Make that present tense, Senator, what your political philosophies are.

M: My political philosophies, I believe, were pretty parallel to that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I had been defending him against all my strong and reactionary friends in Oklahoma as being the man of the present day, and that the attacks on poverty, unemployment, depression, and these things that brought on the bank holiday were the things that he was against. I think it has proven out pretty well that this was the pattern that brought the country out of one of its lowest points in history and up to one of its highest. So it was easy for me to defend Roosevelt, because I believed in his policies and programs.

I think if you translate it into the long range, I'd say I was sort of a populist, and I believe this was what Roosevelt was in modern day dress. He felt that we had to provide useful work for public purposes, for the unemployed. We had to take care of our youth and education under the NYA--National Youth Administration. We had to begin talking about social security, which was almost a "socialistic plot" to many people, and all of these many, many sided things that I think brought new vigor and new greatness to our country.

Mc Senator, your career in the House and Senate was very close to the career of Lyndon Johnson in that you began just two years later in both the House and the Senate. Did this sort of automatically bring you in contact with Mr. Johnson, since you were both really geographically from the same part of the country?

M: Indeed, it did. I was very fond of Lyndon Johnson when I came into the Congress. You know, to a newcomer, a two-year old veteran is very important. He was very cordial, very interested, naturally in Oklahoma, because just the Red River separates the two--and it's dry half the time--so you can't tell just where the lines divide. We've gone to war a few times against Texas on oil royalties and things of that kind as the river changed courses. But frankly we love Texans even though we have our time with them every year in the football game and things of that kind. But he was an outgoing person, and Lyndon was easy to get acquainted with. He always was, and it was part of his greatness.

Added to that, of course, was the association of Sam Rayburn--one of the truly greats, I think, of my thirty years in Congress. Sam always had an instinct of trying to feel out people that he felt would be interested in liberal government and would be constructive in their interest. Of course, Lyndon Johnson, coming from Texas, was one of Sam's boys. I felt very complimented that after a few months in there in the House of Representatives among 435, that I was singled out to be part of what we called the "board of education" that met after the working hours of the House down in Sam's very, very, very private office in the basement of the Capitol for discussions of government and current times and policies, programs and, shall we say, the state of the union, and maybe the quality of the bourbon.

Mc Who were the other members of the board of education?

M: Oh, they ranged from Wilbur Mills to Albert Gore--Senator Albert Gore now, Wilbur Mills, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and some of the rather old-timers like John McCormack and people of that nature. They were generally people in leadership roles, and men that Sam had special affection for. Usually they were somewhat geographically located to the Southwest.

Mc Do you recall the first time that you met Mr. Johnson?

M: Well, I think probably the opening day was the first day because he would never pass up a chance to get acquainted with all the newcomers and to welcome you in, because he was an outgoing person. I was always a little envious of him because he was two years my senior and seemed to know a lot more about legislative work and legislative procedures and parliamentary procedures than I did. It took me several years to learn what he had already achieved.

Mc Do you recall sort of how your first impressions were of Mr. Johnson? I suppose you probably had heard of him.

M: I'd heard of him. You see, he had been secretary to a Congressman before he ran for Congress, and for that reason, he came into Congress with more expertise than most of the newcomers have, knew the parliamentary rules and the processes of passing legislation, the importance of certain committees and, above all, the importance of the speaking acquaintance at least with the President of the United States and with the Speaker of the House and with the Vice President--or the president-pro tem of the Senate--who at that time was Jack Gardner, also a Texas, you see. In Oklahoma there's an old saying that, "if you can't whip them, join them." And you really joined the Texans.

Mc And what were your impressions of Johnson when you met him?

M: Well, that he was a probably little over-enthusiastic about what he was trying to do, and a little over-emphasis on his projects--not too much a team player with the freshmen, that he didn't spend as much time with freshmen as he did with senior members, and that he recognized the points of power even at two or three years in the Congress, and had a standing that very few men of that number of years experience possessed.

Mc Could you say what his political reputation was at that early time?

M: Well, I don't think it changed much through the years. He was a doer. He was an activist. He was willing to innovate. He was willing to offer amendments regardless of whether he was going to win in an effort to establish position of being a liberal and to establish a particular position for education, for many things that showed up later as part of his record as President of the United States. I remember very much his advocacy of school lunches and of work programs for the youth and for the art programs for the NYA and the WPA. In those days it was quite a hard fight to get enough allocation out of the WPA programs to take care of all the unemployed people in your state, and he always seemed to manage to come out very well for the State of Texas.

Mc Who were some of Mr. Johnson's closest associates other than the Speaker?

M: I would say that he was pretty close to Mr. Doughton, who was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, which is the most important committee of the House. He was quite close to the military program because, at that time, the military affairs were looming up into quite a good deal of importance. He was quite close to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. It wasn't Armed Services in that day. It was the

Committee on Naval Affairs and the Committee on Military Affairs. And that happened to be headed by Judge Tomlinson--in Military Affairs in the House. And he was close to Mr. Carl Vinson, who was chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee. He was always looking out after things for the State of Texas, particularly the location of bases and the development of military structure of the country because World War II had broken out, and he was concerned with what the outcome would be.

Mc How would you describe in the last few years your relationship with Mr. Johnson as he was President?

M: As he was President, our relationship was very good. He was very much a true friend, not only to myself but of Congressman Carl Albert, who had come in and had become Majority Leader of the House, and of most of the members of the Oklahoma delegation. We received great consideration as to the location of public works appropriations for necessary development of our waterways, for upstream flood control, and for agricultural situations which he was familiar with because we were pretty much the same. So this wasn't just a gratuity to Oklahoma. It was because he knew from having represented a similar area that the things that were necessary to our economy, he was trying to boost all of the Southwest. I would say that was one reason perhaps that the Eastern seaboard was never as enthusiastic about President Johnson as the Western members were.

Mc Senator, you've mentioned Mr. Johnson's relationship with the Speaker. Do you think he also had a special entree to President Roosevelt?

M: He did indeed. I always envied him his entree there because there were very few men with that seniority that were invited to the White House as often as he was or for the periods or receptions that were often held down

there by President Roosevelt for the men that he considered to be upcoming in the political picture of the country.

Mc Did you know of any reason for his close association with the President?

M: I figured because he had administered the NYA program for the State of Texas, and that he represented the largest state at that time--that was before Alaska came in--and that his close association with Sam Rayburn and all were part of the general picture of the President's affection for Lyndon Johnson.

Mc Do you recall any examples of his position in relationship to these two men of power enabling him to succeed in some of his legislation or events that occurred?

M: It doesn't hurt anything to have a friend in the White House and a friend in the Speakership of the Congress. And after all, it was rather concomitant that Sam Rayburn's district in the eastern part of Texas and the location of Lyndon Johnson's Congressional district in the west--their problems were similar, and they understood it. And Lyndon was assigned to various duties that were the choice of the Speaker, and this is only logical that he would pick someone that he had long acquaintanceship with and affection for.

Mc Did you serve on any of the same committees with Mr. Johnson?

M: No, I haven't. I served on Banking and Currency. In that, there's a rather interesting little sidelight if you have time for it, because up to the time Lyndon left the White House, he always held me responsible for getting him in trouble with the oil industry of Texas. Tulsa was my problem, because this is the oil capital of Oklahoma. We were going into war-time price control legislation, and it was very important whether we had uncontrolled

inflation during World War II or whether we would keep the dollar as stable as possible.

We knew the immense expenditures we were going to have, and without price control that was effective and rather vigorous in its efforts we would probably have wound up with a ten or twenty cent dollar. We finally passed the bill through the Congress that would provide for a strong, overall price control, freezing all the prices at what they were as of a certain date. This included the freezing of the price of oil at \$1.30 a barrel. Well obviously the costs of producing oil went up like the cost of producing everything else. But the bill provided that only price increases authorized by the Price Control Administrator could take effect, and this way we regulated the degree of give that we had to have in the production of necessary things.

The oil people of Texas and Oklahoma were violent at the fact that they would lose money at \$1.30 a barrel. Unless they had a price increase, they would lose money and produce their oil at less than the cost. They got through the Senate a bill legislating a price increase of 30¢ a barrel for oil. It passed the Senate and came over to the House. I took the lead on the floor to point out that we would lose control of almost all prices--that there would be runaway inflation. If we legislate for oil, we'd legislate for all other commodities. And particularly oil would probably go up higher because it was in great demand for our economy and war effort and things of this kind.

So when the 30¢ a barrel increase came up I took the floor and pointed that out. And here was Lyndon Johnson, who probably had more oil than I had in Oklahoma representing the people--I mean, I don't own any oil, but the State of Oklahoma had--and Texas even had more. And here was Lyndon Johnson fighting side-by-side against the oil interests that throughout

his entire career were supposed to have been the favored people of Congressman Johnson, Lyndon Johnson, President Johnson. Lyndon took the floor to help me in that fight and voted with me against the legislative increase in the price of oil, leaving the increase to the Price Control Administrator, as it should have been. He always said that I got him out on that limb, and this caused a lot of his trouble with the big oil people in Texas. But he never regretted his vote.

Mc Did you see that he had any particular special relation or how he fared with President Truman?

M: I always thought that they were very, very close. Part of the affection and close feeling that President Roosevelt had for Lyndon was transferred pretty much to Lyndon. And incidentally, when Truman was a Senator, he was one of the oft-time visitors in the "board of education" with Sam Rayburn. In fact, this was where President Truman was--with, I believe, Lyndon Johnson--at the time that he (Senator Truman--then Vice President) was called to the White House to be informed that President Roosevelt had died, and that he had become President of the United States.

Mc Do you recall some occasions when you sought Lyndon Johnson's support for legislation, or he yours. Now, you mentioned the price control, I'm thinking this is still in the House days.

M: We were together on a good many pieces of legislation, but memory escapes me on all of the things that we worked on. I had good support from him on the reorganization of Congress, which was a very hard bill which we needed very badly to pass to consolidate the number of committees down to about half and to withdraw some of the power of the committee chairmen who completely dominated the action of the committees which they headed.

Mc That was 1948?

M: Yes, I believe it was.

Mc Were there occasions where you opposed him during this period?

M: I'm sure there were. I don't recall any definite opposition. I mean, you never get them all, and I'm sure we were on opposite sides on some things.

Mc Are there any other rather tough legislative decisions that you had to make during this time, or that Mr. Johnson had to make during these House days?

M: There's always tough decisions. Almost every day, you have tough decisions. You see, you don't have too many roll calls in the House. Most of it is done by voice vote or standing vote. To go back to those oppositions, I don't recall any stand-out affairs that were too difficult. He was pretty much for the same thing I was for.

Mc Whom did you see at that time in Congress as your principal opponents--both yours and Mr. Johnson's?

M: Usually number one, the Republicans. Lyndon was a party man, and he was a Democrat from the bottom of his feet to the hair on the top of his head. He voted pretty strongly Democratic on all occasions. I rarely can remember any occasion where you'd find him giving aid and comfort to the political opposition. And he was good at that. I mean, he'd take the floor and in a few brief remarks would attempt to demolish the arguments of the Tabors and the Wadsworths and the Dingles. He was a good in-fighter.

Mc About how often did you see him during the House days?

M: Almost daily. He was quite active on the floor and was usually there, and I was too. I saw him I guess about as much--you know, the House is sort of a convivial body, and back of the rail you chat with them and talk about problems and things of that kind.

Mc How would you rate Mr. Johnson as a Representative?

M: I would rate him pretty good, very high, and a very hard worker, and a man who knew his subject.

Mc Did he ever discuss with you his first effort to run for the Senate in 1941?

M: No. He took that effort on his own and, as I remember, he got beaten on that. But he ran a good race and like many of us, why, the first time out is not necessarily the controlling time. [If] you lose the first time, you might come back the second time. This was a special election, so it didn't interfere with his seat in the House.

Mc Did you know he intended to try again in 1948?

M: No, but everybody around there suspected that if he thought he could make it he would do so. There's no question about his ambitions politically. He was always a man to watch, and always a man that would be sure to escalate his political status if it were politically feasible.

Mc What did you see as his obstacles in running as a Senator?

M: Well, Texas is a very big state. Myself, representing the State of Oklahoma, I had only six Congressional districts in which I could develop opposition; and the State of Texas I think had about twenty-two. He came from a sparsely settled part of Texas out in West Texas, and partly because of his oil vote, didn't enjoy too great a popularity among the oil barons of Dallas and Houston, not to mention Burkburnett Field and a few other places in Texas. Almost every county in Texas, he used to remind me, had a lot of production of oil, and I had booby-trapped him into making this unpopular vote.

Mc Did he give you any advice on your own Senate campaign in 1950?

M: I don't recall that he did. I know he gave me good support--I mean, among his friends and people that would be able to be helpful in one way or

another. But you're just on your own when you run, pretty much. You can't call on very many other members to do the job for you.

Mc What did you feel were the main reasons for him getting the Minority Leadership in 1953?

M: Again, Lyndon, because of his record and because of his achievements in the House, moved to the Senate with a certain prestige; and among these was the prestige with Dick Russell and leaders of the Senate. Bob Kerr, my senior Senator, was a very great friend of his. And other members of the Senate who had been a part of the Senate "establishment," shall we say, had looked on him as one of the new leaders. So he went to the Senate with more prestige than most new members do. They appreciated his parliamentary knowledge, which was rather great, and his acumen and his ability to join, shall we say, the establishment and be a valued member of the establishment. So he went up in the Senate hierarchy quite quickly and got on the good committees, I think largely because the committee chairmen had heard about him and had felt that he was an accomplished legislator and a man that would be going far in the Senate establishment before long.

Mc Do you recall that race in 1953--that there was much hostility or much problem in selecting the Minority Leader?

M: In the Senate?

Mc Yes in the Senate in '53.

M: I don't recall it being vigorous at all. I don't even remember who he ran against. I felt he had the support of Dick Russell and a whole lot of the senior members and that it was a matter mostly of fait accompli.

Mc I think you've in part answered this, but let me just ask it and see if anything else comes to mind. How do you think Mr. Johnson went about becoming such a powerful leader in the Senate in such a short time?

M: Well, as I say, I think he had friends that were leading members of the Senate and who felt that this was a man to watch and to promote as time came about. He went over there probably as the leading member sworn in at that particular time.

Mc Did you see a change in the influence of the position of Minority and then Majority Leader, as it was under Mr. Johnson? Did it become a more powerful position with his occupying it?

M: I don't recall any great change, I mean, of the Minority Leader. I think this occurred due to the running--I think Barkley, who was the Majority Leader, ran for the Vice Presidency and was elected. I think this left it open without any line of succession, shall we say. So it was rather an easy thing, with good friends in high places, to be the favorite candidate, and this was what happened. He was made the Minority Leader, and of course when the Democrats came into power two years later, it wasn't too hard to become the Majority Leader. One follows the other.

Mc Do you recall who Mr. Johnson's closest associates were in the Senate?

M: As I mentioned, too, Senator Bob Kerr was a very close associate. There were more Southerners--I mean, men who were recognized as being Southern leaders and Western leaders. He was real close to those. He was real close to committee chairmen to many of the committees. It's hard to pick out individual members because they were so numerous, and some of them were for him. Some of them weren't.

Mc Do you recall if he had many close associates in the younger freshmen Senators?

M: He was more a favorite of the establishment than he was of the younger members. He was moving ahead of them rather rapidly and some who had been

there longer. But he also was showing great promise in his leadership ability.

Mc Thinking in terms of his whole Senate career and his whole career in the House, did you see any particular change in his political philosophy?

M: No, I don't. It seems to me that he followed pretty generally the philosophy that he had adhered to throughout. He became perhaps even a little more liberal, more concerned particularly on civil rights than he had been as the Minority Leader and as an individual Senator, because Texas wasn't at that point known as being a very liberal state on civil rights. On taxation, he was always rather conservative. If you take 27-1/2 percent depletion, he was always for that, as I was. If you have oil in your state, you're going to be for it, and actually it's for your state and for the benefit of the resource depletion of the state. But I would say, he was rather regular.

I remember the thing that I would criticize him [for] the most is being a little perhaps somewhat grasping for more power than the time and place meant. I remember a situation that took place in the caucus as he became Majority Leader. We organized, which is a very confidential organization of the Democrats. They meet and they organize. He was going out as Minority Leader and in a position of the Majority--this was an automatic step practically, to elevate the Minority Leader to the Majority Leader as you come into power, you see. And in the caucus, the vote came up that he be a member of the caucus. I remember that Senator Gore and myself, we took issue with this, and we attempted to prevent his election to being a member of the caucus because he was Majority Leader and should not have been occupying that place.

Mc Since it was concerning his seat, he shouldn't be--?

M: Well, he was the leader, and this was the caucus, you see, of the Indians and not of the Chief.

Mc Could you tell me a little bit about what you recall of the [Joseph] McCarthy hearings in 1953?

M: How much time have we got? My entrance into the Senate was filled with the agony of having been placed on crumby committees, which new members get, and I was put on the Senate Rules Committee. As a member of the Senate Rules Committee, I was promoted in my first weeks to being chairman of the Investigating Committee on the Maryland election and the participation of Senator Joseph McCarthy therein and the defeat of Senator Tydings. So I spent about three months on the unhappy task to investigating a fellow Senator--Joe McCarthy--and to try to get his fingerprints, and we did pretty well, on the smear campaign that was run against Senator Tydings and resulted in Senator Tydings' defeat. This was my first experience in the United States' Senate, and it wasn't a very happy one because nobody likes that job. We did prove without doubt that--or we thought we had proved without doubt--that he was the inspiration of many of the smear tactics, including the fake photograph with the Communist leader of the country at that time with arm around Senator Tydings--which was purely faked, and distributed in handbills by the thousands. This helped to lead to the continuing investigation of Senator McCarthy that finally resulted in the censure two years later of Senator McCarthy.

Mc Couldn't this have been done earlier, using this campaign?

M: No. You see, I was elected to the Senate the year that Senator Tydings was defeated, so this was only a few months after the defeat that this investigation was ordered by the Senate, and I had the unhappy job of listening to

all the witnesses and tracing all the evidence and bringing out a report as to the findings of fact on this fake photograph. This took a key place because it was evidence then of unfair and disagreeable campaign tactics.

Mc I was thinking, couldn't this have been used at that time as a censorship motion against Senator McCarthy?

M: We didn't realize that we should censure at that time. We merely brought out the report. Then it was the continuation of Senator McCarthy's efforts. And I finally had gotten off this committee and on to another one that was a little more pleasant and a little more constructive when, after the McCarthy hearings, you'll remember, in which he was so brutal in the treatment of witnesses, various things. This developed then on the censure.

Mc Weren't you a part of the select committee on standards and conduct?

M: Yes I was a member of Senator Stennis' committee and the investigation of the Senator from Connecticut--Senator Dodd.

Mc Could you continue and tell me what activities you had at the event of the censure of Mr. McCarthy?

M: I made several speeches on the censureship when it was brought in, but it was brought in by another committee. I felt that since he had continued even after finding of the fake photograph and all to carry on the Army--remember, the hearings were between McCarthy and the Army, and that they had failed to discharge a man that he had claimed was a Communist. He was a medical assistant or something--I've forgotten. He had been so brutal in the hearings, and it was the outgrowth of that and the television film that, I think, appalled the country as to the brutality of Senator McCarthy's attack on the military establishment and on the Congress that led to the final censureship. Senator Watkins, I think, proposed it.

Mc Do you recall what activities Mr. Johnson had in more or less the management of this or the direction of it? It was while he was Minority Leader.

M: I don't know just what part he had in it. I know he took no efforts to try to withdraw from it. But I don't think he was too active as Majority Leader. It was something that was within the jurisdiction of the committees, and he did nothing to stop it or to prevent it, of course.

Mc Do you recall any of the circumstances around Mr. Johnson's heart attack in 1955?

M: I remember what a shock it was to everybody--about the 4th of July, as I remember. He was going out to a garden party out in Maryland--in Virginia, I guess it was--and had this very severe heart attack and was taken to the Bethesda Naval Hospital. And everybody was very much concerned that this would disable him permanently from further leadership roles.

Mc Had his mode of working, his heightened activity--had there been any forewarning of it?

M: Everybody blamed that on him, but when he got out of the hospital he went right back to the same schedule, had one or two other heart attacks, but it didn't seem to slow him down or lessen his determination to carry on. Many men would have maybe taken it as a signal and would have withdrawn from active participation and the vigor of a political day or political programs that he maintained, but he came back and started right into the heavy schedule again.

Mc I was just recalling something I had read on the McCarthy hearings about your being in Europe at the convening of one of these select committees.

M: Yes.

Mc And didn't you decline to return?

M: I had been promising my wife that we would go to Europe for years, you see, and so we finally started out at a time when there obviously wasn't anything in the legislative field. We had landed in Italy or some place to enjoy a long delayed vacation and they wired me to come back. I had been sitting around for months and all and nothing happening, so I said, "I can't come back now. I'll be back in two weeks." And so they said they couldn't wait that long, so they started up. Senator Hayden, I believe it was, who was chairman of the full committee, took the position that I would have had as chairman of the subcommittee.

Mc This didn't have anything to do with your reluctance to get involved in the McCarthy investigation?

M: No, it would have been harder for me to get involved with my wife's giving up of the trip which had been promised her for years than to come back and listen to the hearings all over again.

Mc Senator, how would you describe Mr. Johnson's relationship with Eisenhower?

M: I think they enjoyed, because they were fellow Texans, a compatico position that has rarely been enjoyed by a President with a Majority Leader, which he was in the second two years of President Eisenhower's term. I think he did everything in the world to give adequate support to President Eisenhower for the important items that he approved of, and never exploited his position to try to tear down President Eisenhower.

Mc As you know, Mr. Johnson had the reputation of a political wheeler-dealer during his Majority Leadership. In 1955 he managed to get through--or you, I think, managed to get through a very sizeable increase in public housing. Didn't you work on that?

M: I've always supported public housing and all, but I don't recall that I was-- I was not on those committees at that time. I know I voted for it. I've

always voted for public housing against the wishes of my state. They didn't like public housing, but I felt it was necessary. But I couldn't claim any great leadership in that field.

Mc Do you recall what activities Mr. Johnson had in this passage of increase in public housing?

M: He was for it, and this represents a change from his position, I think, in the House. As he took leadership role, he took more a national view than he did a parochial view. Public housing was very unpopular in Texas, as it was in Oklahoma, but both of us voted for it and supported it through the years.

Mc I believe it was in 1960 when you first began having some really serious fights on civil rights bills and aid to education. Do you recall what activities you participated in, and Mr. Johnson, too?

M: I conducted the hearings part of the time on the--it was in Commerce Committee, and I chaired the meetings. The fact of the matter is I presided over the testimony that the third party candidate for the Presidency this last year was testifying on. Because of his insinuation that Martin Luther King was a Communist, we got in quite a fiery exchange over this. I learned to not respect the man, but to respect his ability to defend his position. But we passed--this was the first--the open lodging bill, and I participated in getting that one through which was very unpopular in my state--but necessary, I thought, and it has worked out quite well. Mr. Johnson, who was Majority Leader, took an active part in helping to see that this civil rights legislation was passed.

Mc And there was aid to education too that occurred--

M: Well, always true from the beginning in the House and in the Senate. The fact that Lyndon Johnson had been a teacher and had come from a teaching

background, he always leaned over backwards to get federal aid to education. The fact that it was finally passed, and became a very important part of our support of education federally, was due in strong part to President Johnson-- then Majority Leader Johnson's activity. It was hard legislation to pass because you had the question of parochial schools. What do you do about those? You have the question of the fear of federal government takeover of the classrooms and all these ordinary arguments against it. But the need was obvious and the necessity for the legislation being passed was evident, and he went right through with it.

Mc Could you describe Mr. Johnson's techniques and procedures as Majority Leader? I'm thinking in terms of did he know what the state of every bill was in every committee?

M: This was his strong point. He knew what was happening in most of the committees every day. He knew what progress was being made. He kept track of them and if you were chairman of the committee and the bill that he felt was necessary to get out wasn't getting out, he was knocking on your door wanting to know why it was delayed and why we didn't get it out and what the chances were of getting it out and who was against it and who was for it. Few Majority Leaders, House or Senate, who I served under had the day-to-day feel for the urgency of passage of legislation or what was holding it up. He was very diligent in this regard, which I think is probably one of the real reasons for his successful leadership of the Senate and his successful operation as President of the United States.

As President he would call you up, "When are you going to get that so-and-so bill out? What's holding it up? Can't you get busy and get it out?" And he didn't hesitate if he felt you were blocking it to call you

and tell you. He'd follow this kind of thing clear through and would know what the vote count was going to be.

Mc What sort of techniques did he use to sway the votes or to pressure members to vote for something that he was for, or oppose something he was against?

M: I'd been down to look at one of the new planes that were coming off the line in Marietta, Georgia--Lockheed down there. We were coming back in to Washington feeling no pain at all, and got in, and they said, "They want you on the floor right away." So I went to the floor and lo and behold, they were getting all ready for a roll call on Medicare.

So I was sitting there, getting ready to vote, and my vote in the past had been against Medicare because my senior Senator, Bob Kerr, had waged the leading fight against it. I had felt the plan hadn't been quite carefully worked out enough to provide for the financing of it and the participation of the doctors in it and was looking for some kind of compromise where the doctors would actively support and participate because they were the ones that were going to administer it.

So lo and behold, we started the roll call vote and I got a call from the White House in the cloakroom, and I went there and he said, "Mike, I'm short one vote on Medicare. Are you going to be the one that'll block this?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. I've voted against it before and I've supported my senior Senator on the thing. I'm just having a hard time making up my mind. I believe in Medicare. I want it, but I want a program that we'll have a consensus on."

He said, "Well, your vote is going to be the deciding vote, and I sure do need it."

I said, "Well, I don't know, Mr. President, what I'll do."

I came back and sat down as it got nearer and nearer my name on the roll call. Finally I voted for Medicare, and my vote was the one vote that was changed from before to be for it. I'm always glad that I did. I think it's a great thing, and our fears were not well-grounded as to its ineffectiveness.

But this is how close he was watching these things that he was tremendously interested in. It was more than just winning the fight-- it was a matter [that] he believed in the program.

Mc And he knew who to get to, too.

M: He knew who his friends were, and he didn't hesitate to lobby.

Mc Was the personal call enough to persuade you?

M: I was uncommitted, you see. Nobody was counting me for or against it.

But the vote of the year before was the controlling vote. The program had been changed some and I liked it better, but I still had some doubts as to whether that was the time or whether that was the program.

I always had hoped that we would be able to provide for the medical insurance under private insurers, you see, and that we would get ourselves out of the administration of it. And it was worked on, and we did get to that on Medicaid and on some of the things that went in the bill that helped to make it a little more palatable. But it cost me the vote of most of the doctors in Oklahoma.

Mc During his Majority years, did you recall occasions where he would trade a vote--I mean, "You do something on this one, and I'll do that?"

M: I never saw that at all. He would come back and try to present a quick argument--you know, this arm around your neck and all this business, you see. But I was never offered anything for my vote, and I don't think any

member of the Senate would be susceptible to that. But he could wheedle the votes. "I need it, I need it, I need it!" And you'd listen to that, but not offer a trade, or say, "I'll get your bill out if you'll vote for mine." You just don't do that.

Mc What about his position of getting people in good spots on committees, or designating good office space in the new Senate Building, things like that?

M: He had no control over the office space. This goes to the Committee on Rules and goes by seniority. If you've got the seniority, you get the office space--Republican or Democrat, it doesn't matter. And so you get it. Of course, I was lucky. I got some space nobody wanted, and it turned out to be the best room in the New Senate Office Building when we moved over there. Committees? No, I don't think so. Your committees usually make these assignments. He could probably help by recommending a member to a certain committee, but I never had asked him for help and never received any that I know of.

Mc What about fooling the opposition into false confidence on a vote, or perhaps delaying a vote until some of them had gone away and then collecting all of the proponents of a legislation?

M: This is kind of an old wives' tale. You know, you credit a lot of things to political shenanigans, but all a minority has to do if they don't want a vote is to tell the leadership usually that they are not prepared to vote that day and ask that it go over. To my knowledge the Majority Leader, whoever he would be, would say, "Okay." Because if you don't do that, they'll just talk all day. So you don't gain anything, so you might as well be a good sport about it.

But this is credited to his being a political finagler. He's not. But if he has all his supporters there, or, let's say, if he doesn't have them

there, he'll be sure to delay the vote--which is practical and the right thing to do until he has his members there. This is what slows up the Senate. That's why we vote Tuesdays or Thursdays. Nearly everybody--Democratic votes--are usually away on Mondays back home talking, and they're away Friday, Saturdays, and Sundays.

Mc Do you recall any examples of this?

M: You could look up any Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and you never vote on those days. You're used to it so now you don't expect any votes excepting on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Mc I've read somewhere in some of the books I was doing the research in, Senator, where they referred to you as "troublesome" Mike Monroney. Did this have to do with any occasions where you opposed either Mr. Johnson during his Senate time or during the Presidency?

M: I don't recall many cases during the Presidency. I'm sure that I opposed him at times during his Majority Leadership because I've never been an Establishment person. I always have taken the right and privilege of calling them as I see them. And if I didn't like it, I would take the floor and blast away. It wasn't against the Majority Leader. It wasn't against the President. It was the fact that I didn't think it was good legislation. But I don't recall many of those times. There may have been more than I think.

Mc Senator, during Mr. Johnson's service in the Senate, did his power and influence as Majority Leader decline any in that he had to probably submit a great many compromises in order to avoid veto from Mr. Eisenhower?

M: This is hard to say unless you have the individual bills because each bill before the Congress has a certain temperature. I mean, it's high or it's

low, and Presidents, if they find a high temperature disagreement, would veto. But if it was a minor disagreement, they'd sign it with a part of the message saying that, "I don't like this," or, "I don't like that, but the overall good of the bill makes it necessary to pass it," because no President gets legislation through exactly as he wants it. Some handicraft and all has to go on among the legislators--who think they know more about it than the President--and often do.

Mc Was he using any power from his own party members in the Senate--the Democrats--by working with Mr. Eisenhower on several programs?

M: I don't think so. I think that he felt that the country had to go on, and we had problems, and that a position of being obstructive was a bad position to put the Democrats in; that whenever there was no reason for strongly objecting to the bill, then it should go ahead as the President proposed but not to be a rubberstamp. I think he used good judgment in selecting the key issues of opposition and made his fight on those, and then didn't worry about the little piddling items that he might say, "Why didn't you do it this way instead of doing it that way."

Mc Do you recall any sort of stories or anecdotes during the Senate and House years regarding Mr. Johnson?

M: There must be a jillion of them, but I can't recall any at the moment here. I'll think of a dozen after you leave.

Mc How would you rate Mr. Johnson as a Senator and Majority Leader?

M: I would think he would be one of the strong Majority Leaders. I say that advisedly. I think he was probably a better Majority Leader than he was a Senator. I think the pressure was on. He had the interest then of the nation to consider rather than the interest of the State of Texas, and that

he had drive to achieve and to carry out a program that he thought was effective, and he felt the sense of history to this achievement.

Mc Do you think the power of position of the Majority Leader has declined under Mansfield?

M: The aggressiveness that President Johnson has, or that [Alben] Barkley had, or some of the others, has not been exercised by Senator Mansfield, who is more or less anxious to let the committee chairmen carry forward their work without domination or great direction. Sometimes this delays the program a lot because committee chairmen and committee members are not always willing to face up to taking the bill up at this particular point, and he doesn't do anything as President Johnson did as Majority Leader to say, "Well, we've got to pass this this afternoon and get it to the President tomorrow morning." I think President Johnson was more of a dynamic leader and one more in command. I think Senator Mansfield is more in association with the committee chairmen to work out compromises and still preserve the good points of the bill.
[end of tape]

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By A. S. Mike Monroney

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, AS. Mike Monroney, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed

A. S. Mike Monroney

Date

Feb. 2, 1972

Accepted

Harry J. Hinton - for
Archivist of the United States

Date

March 11, 1975

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