

INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: WILLIAM A. REYNOLDS WI

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL . GILLETTE

PLACE: DuPont Plaza Hotel, Washington, D.C.

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G: Let's start out with your background. You're from Oklahoma, is that right?

R: Yes, Stigler, Oklahoma, and lived there all my life except for World War II and the years

I spent in Washington. I have no desire to live anywhere else.

Any particular point which you want to [start with]?

G: How did you get into Senator [Robert] Kerr's orbit?

R: When I got out of World War II, I was going to school at Oklahoma Baptist University, and he was running for U.S. Senate in 1948. I liked him so I helped organize what we called Young Citizens for Kerr for Senate clubs all over Oklahoma. Then he was elected. After he was up here a while I needed a job, applied with him and got one in 1953 and was with him until he died. I expect Kerr and maybe Johnson and Harry Byrd of Virginia had the least turnover in the top people of the staffs of anybody up there. We never had anybody quit, seldom did Johnson, except some of the lower echelon people. The top people [seldom quit]. Johnson could be a complete son-of-a-bitch and then could be the most charming man in the world, all in the space of twenty seconds. But he had some

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qualities there that his people were loyal, just absolutely loyal to him. Like Arthur Perry.

Have you interviewed him?

G: Someone did on the project.

R: I just wondered. He was getting way up there in years. He might not even be articulate; I don't know.

G: Well, he's dead now.

R: Oh, he is? I didn't know that.

G: He was around for a long time.

R: He came here in 1919. I used to like to have coffee with him and listen to him talk about what it was back in those days.

I believe--well, I know it was Speaker Sam Rayburn introduced Kerr and Johnson. They were both running for the Senate the same year, and both were great admirers of the Speaker. He got them together because he said, "Here are two young men"--at that time they were comparatively young--"that represent states that have a community of interests that I think they ought to form a team." And they did. It was one hell of a team while they were here. Most of the time they were on the same sides; sometimes they differed. But it never affected their friendship or their loyalties. Johnson and Clinton Anderson of New Mexico and Kerr and [Richard] Russell of Georgia really ran the Senate on the Democratic side along with the late Styles Bridges, [Everett] Dirksen and some of them on the Republican side.

G: Do you think Lyndon Johnson saw himself as a westerner rather than a southerner?

R: Oh, I don't think you can put a label on Lyndon Johnson. He was like Kerr. Kerr used to

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say, "I'm not a doctrinaire. On one issue I may vote with the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations]; the next issue be with the medical association, AMA [American Medical Association]. It just depends on what the issue is." We have a tendency to label people conservative or liberals, southerners and westerners. Johnson was geographically a southerner or a westerner, or both a westerner and a southerner. As a matter of political thinking I don't think you could really label him. He had a favorite saying. I've got an autographed copy of it on my wall in Oklahoma: "I am a free man, an American, and a Democrat, in that order." Then he started listing: "I'm a father, I'm a son, I'm a taxpayer, I'm a consumer, in no fixed order." But I think those first three pretty well categorized him.

G: Lyndon Johnson had a reputation while he was majority leader of knowing just what arguments and what issues would appeal to each senator. What appeals would he make to Senator Kerr if he was trying to get him to vote [with him]?

R: Oh, he wouldn't have to make much appeal to Senator Kerr. If it was something that he had to have a vote on Senator Kerr would give it to him, unless it was something basic to Senator Kerr. But he could just say, "Bob, I need you." Same with Dick Russell. I think this is one of the great stories of history when Kerr and some of them were trying to get Johnson to run for president, that is for the nomination for president, going into 1960. Russell told him, he said, "Lyndon, if you're going to go for nationwide office you've got to have a civil rights record. I cannot support a civil rights bill. I've got to filibuster one. But I can see that you can get enough votes to break the filibuster." He was leader of the southern bloc, but he told him that. As you'll recall, the Senate passed the first civil

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rights bill under Lyndon Johnson that was passed in a hundred years.

G: Were you there when this discussion took place?

R: Yes. I was there.

G: Where did it take place?

R: Cloakroom over in the Senate.

G: Who else was present?

R: Kerr. So they did, they passed this, if you'll recall it. They passed it and then they had agreement and Strom Thurmond busted the agreement, if you'll recall, and filibustered for some time. But finally the bill was passed.

G: I gather they were pretty upset with Strom Thurmond.

R: Yes, they were, because it put them all on the spot. He made every other southerner look bad, and he ran out on the commitment he had made.

G: That's a good story.

R: It is. It's one of the great stories of history that I think you'll never see in a history book or anything. And there's nobody living now that was there. But it was that kind of a relationship. Of course, I think politicians as a class are the most tolerant people there are of somebody else's opinions. They almost have to be. Now, don't get me wrong. Russell didn't believe in civil rights, but he was being a politician and he knew that whoever was president was going to have to be for civil rights and he'd rather have Lyndon Johnson than anybody else.

G: What was Kerr's position there? I know he voted--

R: He voted for civil rights.

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So, Kerr wasn't a doctrinaire. It didn't make any difference. A fellow from Texas or Oklahoma can usually go whichever way they want to. They can go with the North, they can go with the South, they can go with the West politically. Johnson and Kerr were not a captive of the region. Hell, Johnson went liberal on a lot of stuff. They could switch hit, go either way. That's what really gave them their power. They couldn't take them for granted then. They could bust out of that and go any way they wanted to.

We were coming in from Delaware one time, Senator Kerr and I, late one night, from a speaking for the re-election of Senator Allen Frear. At this time--this was 1958 or 1959--people were trying to get Kerr to seek the Democratic nomination for president. Some of them were serious about it. Most of them were just blowing smoke up his fanny. But I talked to him about it and asked him what he was going to do about it. He said, "Let me tell you something, Bill. If the good Lord would appear to me in a vision tonight and say, 'Bob, the nomination and the election is yours if you want it,' I'd say, 'Lord, can I give it to Lyndon?'" He said, "That's the smartest man to come to Washington in my lifetime." He's talking about politically, government-smart.

But there was a tremendous bond between them that was never written. Like Clinton Anderson, too, who was a part of it, and Russell. I was sitting back in the Cloakroom with Kerr one night and Senator Russell came in--this was during the Eisenhower days--and asked him, "Bob, how are you going to vote on this Don Paarlberg going to be assistant secretary of agriculture?" The Senator said, "I guess I'm going to vote for him, Dick. Why?" Well, he said, "I'd like to vote against him. But [Stuart] Symington and [Hubert] Humphrey are leading the fight against him and I can't go with

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those liberals. If Bob Kerr would make a speech against him I could follow Bob Kerr."

So, hell, it wasn't but twenty minutes before he made the damndest speech against Paarlberg. I'll never forget. Senator Kerr stood up that night and he said, "I'll go home to Oklahoma this fall on a cold, frosty night, and I'll tell my farmers, 'Cheer up, cheer up, Paarlberg is here.'" Of course, we got beat, but that shows you sort of the relationship that was among the people that helped one another.

I would say when I was there, and I expect it's still the same way today, there's ten or twelve men running the United States Senate. But they were the ones that were willing to put in the long hours to master the details. You know, a senator's job is just exactly what he makes out of it. He can really make a productive situation out of it, or he can just get re-elected. Or he can come up here as Paul Douglas used to be, absolutely uncompromising and never gain a damn thing. Or they can come as Kerr and Johnson did and as Kerr once said, "I'd rather take home a sack half full to my people than a full sack with the bottom shelled out by presidential veto." It depends on how you approach it, but Douglas never did really get much legislation passed because he and Wayne Morse just wouldn't compromise. They worked hard but they didn't know how to compromise and work. The rest of the senators were too lazy; they wouldn't work. They'd just go party. But Kerr and Johnson and Russell and those boys did their homework.

G: I gather one of the first things that they worked on together was that Leland Olds nomination. Do you remember that?

R: No, that was before I got here.

G: That's right.

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- R: That was before I got here. Where was it I read something on the Leland Olds [nomination]? Oh, it was in this book [*Robert S. Kerr: The Senate Years* by Anne Hodges Morgan] this girl wrote about Kerr, but that was before my time.
- G: I guess by the time you got here [Robert] Taft was the majority leader and he was already sick.
- R: He was already ill. Then in 1952 the Republicans won control of the Senate. Then, let's see, Taft died and cut their margin to one, I believe.
- G: [Frank] Lausche was Democrat, I guess, or voted with the Democrats.
- R: Well, and then somebody else died, I think it was a senator from West Virginia, and they appointed a Democrat, which gave us--the Democrats--control of [the Senate]. This was in 1954, I guess. If they had really wanted to exercise it they could have reorganized the Senate. But Johnson didn't. He said the people voted. When they voted they selected the Republicans so we will serve it on that. Yet the Democrats had a one-vote margin. We were having a fight, a legislative fight, one night in the chamber. [William] Knowland was bemoaning the fact that here he was majority leader, how tough it was to be majority leader with a minority of the votes. So Johnson says, "You think that's tough, you ought to be the minority leader with a majority of the votes." It kept on. Of course, then in 1954 the Democrats regained absolute control of the Congress.
- G: I gather that Johnson could really outsmart Knowland.
- R: Oh, think circles around him.
- G: Can you recall any instances where he outmaneuvered Knowland?
- R: Oh, not specifically, but some of them weren't quite so glaring. But Knowland just never

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could get his thinking cap on. And Knowland was a gentleman, every bit of a gentleman, but sometimes Johnson wasn't. You have to be an s.o.b. at times.

G: I gather that Johnson could also get some critical Republican votes.

R: Oh, yes, yes.

G: How did he do that?

R: Well, he knew what each senator [wanted]. Molly [George] Malone of Nevada, they could just play him like a drum.

G: How did they get Malone to--

R: Well, Molly Malone had one speech and that was on imports. If they needed time in the Senate, whatever, they would just call on Molly and let him make his speech. Any time they wanted they could get his vote and they'd have it. Then in return they'd help Molly Malone.

G: How would they help him?

R: Oh, committee assignments or get legislation through that he had to have, the little things. Malone was sort of an egotist and wasn't very bright, so it wouldn't take a whole hell of a lot sometimes to satisfy him. Actually the year he got beat I expect that if you could really check the record, the year [Howard] Cannon beat him, Johnson didn't do a whole hell of a lot, because they didn't know Cannon at that time; he didn't do a whole hell of a lot to bring about Malone's defeat. Malone was there because of Pat McCarran. You know Nevada for years didn't have a Democrat or Republican Party. They had a McCarran, anti-McCarran party.

G: He was pretty formidable I gather, wasn't he?

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R: McCarran?

G: Yes.

R: Yes. He died shortly after I got here but he was a rather formidable opponent. Of course, in those days you had the fiefdoms up there that you don't have today. When McCarran said something the Justice Department just damn near did it, whatever he wanted. At one time I'd say at least half of the judges and lawyers in Washington, D.C. were from the state of Nevada, because they had no law school out there and he'd bring them back here, let them work for him and go to law school. Many of them stayed here then. If you wanted a ticket fixed in those days, hell, you just called McCarran's office and that would take care of it. But that's a day of the past. They can't [now].

G: What legislation was Malone interested in? Was it, say, silver, something like that?

R: Yes. Mining. You know, he was a mining engineer by trade.

G: Oh, I didn't know that.

R: Yes. And a political accident. That's about the only thing he ever had. I don't remember whether he was on the Finance Committee or not. But any time they needed him they could get his vote. He just wasn't very smart.

G: I gather Bill Langer was another one they could skim off.

R: Well, you know, Bill Langer I believe in 1948 got on the train and rode through North Dakota with Harry Truman and openly endorsed him. Yes, he was a maverick. He was a maverick, of the old--what's that league?--Non-Partisan League out there, really a farm bloc. That's what it amounted to. He was another colorful character. They had some in those days. Up there now, today, they're all bland. There's nobody really that stands out.

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Dirksen was the last of the people like that.

G: How much of Lyndon Johnson's strategy was a matter of timing?

R: I don't know. Of course, it would be hard to say. I expect a great deal of it was.

G: If some senator had a piece of legislation that he was interested in and the Leader needed his vote on a certain matter, would Johnson hold up that other bill until he got the vote on this?

R: Not necessarily. Depends on who it was. If it was somebody that he could reach an agreement with, well yes, and their word was good, he'd let it go right on through. Might be others he wouldn't. It would just depend on who it was. He'd say wait and be sure he got their vote before they got their legislation.

G: But that was a technique that he would use?

R: Oh, yes.

G: What were some other techniques that he would use?

R: Oh, he's a man of tremendous pressure. He could just put the pressure, make it unbearable. He also was a man of tremendous charm and great intellect and he could outmaneuver and outtalk most of them, and persuade them. But also by the reverse I've seen him tell some senators that they couldn't vote with him on this particular bill; it would hurt them back home.

G: Can you recall a particular case?

R: I'm trying to think of one. One was one night that Allen Frear of Delaware--Kerr and Johnson were for something. I don't remember the damn bill. But they both told him, "Allen, you can't vote with us on this." I think it had something to do with oil. But he

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was voting for them, but no. By doing such things as that they also gained the complete confidence of the fellow members of the Senate.

But Johnson was an enigma, as is any man like that. Kerr, nobody ever really knew him and nobody ever knew Lyndon Johnson, the complete, overall Lyndon Johnson, in spite of what they say. Senator Kerr's creature comforts or desires, not much. He had money and he could afford all of them and he had them, but that wasn't what he was interested in. It was the competitive process of making the money that he enjoyed most. But their emotional requirements are great. People like that, their emotional requirements are far greater than the average person. They've got to have somebody around them, and everybody around them will fit a pattern that supplies them with something in their emotional makeup. I'm not talking about sex, stuff like that; I'm just talking about friendship. Some of it might have been sex, I don't know, but that wasn't the sole criteria of it.

G: Can you recall an occasion where you saw Lyndon Johnson persuading Senator Kerr and other senators?

R: Well, yes, on Medicare. It was an issue going into the campaign. This first one was I've forgotten when. But the big one, Johnson just put the pressure on Kerr, said, "We've got to have Medicare, some sort of a medical plan. I want you to work one out." Because Kerr was the number-two man on the Finance Committee, but he was the strong man on the Finance Committee. Harry Byrd wasn't. Byrd was a gentleman. So we met, and Kerr didn't know what he was going to do. He wasn't really for Medicare, but Johnson just put the pressure, and he finally told me one day, he said, "Johnson just deviled me so

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I've got to do something." So he said, "You get a group of people over in the Finance Committee."

So we met there. There was me and Wilbur Cohen--you know who he is? He was there. This was under [Eisenhower], Eisenhower was still in office, so Wilbur was out. And [there was] the welfare director from Oklahoma, Lloyd Rader, Senator [George] Smathers, and some other senator and their aide. We were waiting on Clinton Anderson. We were going to study proposals. Kerr told us to research how much a half a per cent increase in Social Security, how much money it would bring in. Then how much benefits can we go? So we did that. Instead of saying, "Here is the benefits I want; find the money," he said, "Let's find the money first and then look at the benefits." Anderson didn't show up for some reason. He got mixed up.

In between that time and later on Kerr changed his mind, decided he wasn't going to vote for Social Security-financed Medicare. But he was acting then strictly in response and reaction to Lyndon Johnson's powers of persuasion, whatever method he was using. But on the other hand, Kerr could put the pressure on. He ran Johnson off the floor one time on a vote.

G: Did he really? Can you recall it?

R: I'm trying to think. What in the hell was it? This was after Johnson was [nominated for] vice president, the [presidential] nominee was Kennedy, and we had some--because I was down at the LBJ Ranch after he went out as president, young Bill Kerr and I were visiting with him and we were laughing about it.

G: Was that in 1960?

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R: It wasn't the big bill over all but it was something Kerr needed, and Johnson wasn't for it. But Johnson just finally hit the hall and didn't vote. But see, it worked both ways. Not that Kerr forced him off, but Johnson asked, "Well, Bob, does this mean this much to you?" He said, "It sure does, Lyndon." "Well," he said, "okay." But they didn't really have to persuade one another. It was there that if one or the other needed him, maybe they couldn't vote for him but they'd help him get some votes somewhere else. They'd often do that. They'd have to oppose it, but they'd see they could get enough votes to win. It was just a good relationship, as Senator Russell once said. He said, "Bob Kerr and I understood one another. We didn't have to communicate. We just intuitively understood one another, knew what the other wanted." And that's the way it was with many of them. Much of their relationship wasn't vocal, oral. There was that relationship there that one understood the other.

Humphrey finally became a member of that bloc. First when he came here he was a complete outsider. But they trusted Humphrey. His word was good, even though they disagreed with him on damn near everything he stood for except [agriculture]. The great common bond between Humphrey and Kerr and Johnson and Russell was agriculture. They all came from the old populist countries, you know. They were strong believers in agriculture and distrusted Wall Street.

G: I guess none of them liked Ezra Taft Benson either, did they?

R: No. Russell, I heard him say one time Ezra Taft Benson set American agriculture back a hundred years. Kerr used to make a speech in the Eisenhower days, a wind-up of Congress. We had a senator from West Virginia named Matt Neely. Did you ever hear

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of him? The closing night of the Senate before they'd adjourn, he'd get a stack of *Congressional Records* and make what he called his Tower of Babel speech. Kerr would make one all during the Eisenhower days. On the closing night of the session he would make a speech on Ezra Taft Benson. He once said, "A fellow asked me, 'How low can a man get?' I don't know yet because Ezra is still living." Oh, they had no use for him, had no use for him at all. They said Ezra Benson in four years lost more money to the Commodity Credit Corporation than all the other secretaries of agriculture combined since the office was created. But he did it on purpose. He wanted to make agriculture look bad and expensive.

G: Can you recall the rivalry with him over farm legislation in particular?

R: Benson? Oh, Lord, yes. It was flexible versus rigid. Clint Anderson was for the flexible price supports, having been a onetime secretary of agriculture, but Johnson and Kerr were for the rigid, ninety per cent parity. As Kerr used to say, a fellow asked him, Jim Patton of the Farmers Union, he said, "Bob, how can you be for a hundred per cent parity but then vote for ninety per cent?" Well, he said, "Hell, Jim, I'm like a little boy on a street corner selling peaches. A man came along and said, 'Son, what are you taking for those peaches?' He said, 'Well, Dad told me to ask for a dollar. If I couldn't get a dollar, take six bits.' That's the way I am on parity. I know I can't get a hundred per cent. I'm for it but I'll vote for ninety per cent." That's the reason I can't understand all this hullabaloo now over price support for farmers. Hell, we had ninety per cent parity for thirty years, and everybody now seems to think something's wrong. We even tried to get price supports on cattle.

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G: Can you remember the details of this flexible versus ninety per cent?

R: No, I really can't.

G: Or how they were able to get votes on this from, say, senators who were wavering?

R: Well, even a short time--of course, that was a party-line vote except for Clinton Anderson. And Langer and the boys over there, the Republicans, would go for the Democratic farm programs. Even Wayne Morse, who at that time was a Republican, would go for the Democratic farm programs. But many votes like that was a party-line vote as well as an anti-Ezra Taft Benson vote.

G: There was another agricultural measure, re-organization plan number two, which I think Johnson felt gave too much power to the secretary of agriculture. Do you remember that?

R: No, I don't recall it.

Did Jim Jones ever tell you a story when he was working for Lyndon Johnson in the White House? Something you said made me think of it. Jim said, "I hadn't been down there very long and it was cold in Washington, looked like it was going to snow, and it fell in my purview to make some decision as to let government employees off earlier or make them work. So it just looked like it was going to snow and I could just see all this traffic backing up and honking. So I let them off early. And it didn't snow. Of course there were big stories in the newspapers about this second lieutenant over in the White House making a decision that cost the federal government I don't know how many hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars." Jim said, "The President called me in the next day and I just knew he was going to ream me out. He said, 'Jim, you were scratching your ass instead of your head when you made that decision.'" (Laughter)

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As you would go on the Senate floor Kerr's was the first chair next to the door. So I was standing there talking to him about something, I was giving him a report on something. Johnson, as majority leader, came over to talk to him. Naturally when another senator comes over you step back. I did, and as Johnson turned to walk off he just turned to me and said, "Bill, go call Walter Jenkins," and tell him something, I don't know what it was now. I said, "Yes, sir." But as soon as he started on I started finishing my report to Kerr. Since he's paying me I thought maybe I ought to respond to him first. Johnson got about halfway over back to his desk and looked around. I was still talking to Kerr. He said, "I told you to go call Walter Jenkins!" Just shouted it, you could hear it. Hell, I went and called Walter Jenkins. I came back. The Senator said, "Now you can see what we have to put up with, Bill." (Laughter)

G: Kerr said that?

R: Yes, just in jest. Because working for Kerr was like working for Johnson.

(Interruption)

G: [You were going to] say something about Carl Hayden.

R: Yes. He was one of the greats. He was very taciturn man, didn't say much. But I think one of the most heated issues experienced in my years on the Hill was the extension of the east front of the Capitol. I think maybe next to the Bricker Amendment it generated more mail. You would have thought we were going to destroy the Capitol and desecrate the flag. You tried to point out to them, "Hell, boys, if we hadn't changed things as we go along, we would still have had the hitching post out in front here and gas lights." Oh, it was an emotional issue. We would just get stacks of mail, and the Architects

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Association, they got into the act.

Well, it passed the House and came to the Senate. Hayden was handling the bill as pro-president. He was just catching hell. Finally some senator said, "Carl, why are you taking all of this? It doesn't mean anything to you." He said, "Sam wants it." That's all he ever said. Well, you know, that just says a whole lot. And that was Sam Rayburn's pet. He wanted the east front of the Capitol. But I thought that puts a whole hell of a lot in just three words. But that was the relationship between them.

The genesis of the Bobby Baker thing and the savings and loan money, and Kennedy's tax proposal in 1961, 1962, whenever, it was the first really major overhaul of the tax bill in a number of years, and he changed to several methods. One of them was putting withholding tax on dividends and interest. Boy, that one caused a hell of a furor. Savings and loan really beat that because they were running around saying it was levying a new tax. Kerr told them, "It's not a new tax. It's a new method of collecting a tax. What the trouble is, you boys are not paying tax on it right now; you're not reporting it. This is a method of--" But savings and loan killed it. So that rankled him.

Bell Telephone and a bunch of the people opposed it. They came down. I've forgotten who was head of the Bell Telephone at that time. But he showed them, he said, "Boys, you can make money withholding on this dividend. You'll have that cash at your use for thirty to ninety days. You can make money." They saw that and so they switched and supported it. So he wanted to get even with the savings and loan, and also he thought that savings and loans were created for a special purpose, home building, but they were all of them starting and more so now, competing with commercial banks. So we felt that

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if they were going to compete with commercial banks then they should have the same tax liabilities as a commercial bank. Well, we started out on that and we couldn't get through on mutuals. There was just too much pressure. Well, he was still mad at Tommy Kuchel, who had run out on him on a commitment on Medicare and a commitment on billboards. We thought that nearly all of the stock savings and loan were in California. It does have a hell of a lot of stock savings and loan. Most states are mutuals.

So we got working in the Senate; we're going to levy a tax on stock savings and loans if we couldn't get it on all of them. Well, hell, little did we know. I think first it was Senator Cannon called him. He said, "Bob, my people in Nevada say you're just murdering them on this savings and loan." Well, then LBJ, who was vice president then, called him one day and said, "Bob, my savings and loan people in Texas are terribly upset with what you're doing." That sort of slowed him down when Johnson [called], but the hooker was Carl Hayden called him. He said, "Bob, my savings and loan people are just after my ass. I'm up for re-election this year." Well, here's the man that kept money coming to Oklahoma through all the years for the Arkansas River Project. So then we knew we just couldn't get it through. But he told him, he said, "Carl, I've gone too far. I can't back up. I've got to push. But I'll help you beat me. You can beat me in the committee and it will never come out." So it did. He said, "I will tell the savings and loan people of Arizona that you are the one that saved them. If it hadn't been for you they would have gotten the tax. If they don't remember you then they're sure as hell going to have a tax next time." That's the genesis of all this money they're spreading around on Bobby Baker, on the collections, you know.

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G: Baker indicates that they paid Senator Kerr to switch.

R: No, they didn't pay him to switch. Well hell, if you want to put a literal interpretation you can say that, yes. It wasn't money that went into Kerr's pocket. It was money he was going to give to Carl Hayden to help people. In today's atmosphere you couldn't do that. It wasn't anything like the sum of money that's bandied about. I don't remember how much it was. It just came basically because Carl Hayden was up and had a tough fight. I forget now who was running against him.

G: And this could make a difference in his re-election?

R: It could have made a difference because it could have beat him out there. If we had put a tax on them they would have said, "Well, here's our senior senator out there, been back there these many years, and can't block it." So there was a lot of ramification to it. That's when Kerr told him, "Well, hell, Carl. I can't back up now. I've gone too far. But I can be beat." And he was beat. But he said, "I can damn sure tell them that if they don't remember you and help you, they're going to have to deal with me in the future." That's where the whole thing is. If you want to put it in a literal sense, yes, they paid Kerr. Maybe you can say that. But it wasn't money that he's sticking in his pocket for riotous living or anything. It was money he's putting in his safe to pass out to deserving people. That's how you built your kingdom in those days. You couldn't do it today. Today's atmosphere wouldn't [allow it].

G: I've heard they even raised money for Dirksen.

R: I was just getting ready to say, in that same tax bill that year [he] had some people from Chicago who were in there and he told them, "Boys, if you all let Everett Dirksen get beat

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out there, don't ever come back to see me." Now I can do it for something like this.

That's not a statement you'd go around making public. I wouldn't mind making it now because they're all dead. But he said, "Don't you come back."

But, Dirksen would do the same for Kerr or Johnson. They both were loyal to their party, but they didn't know what they might come out of Chicago with in lieu of Dirksen. And Dirksen's word was good. Regardless of what you say about him, his word was good. I used to love to hear him make a speech. He was a past master at that. But that happened.

Also one time some people from Chicago were in trying to get some help on a NASA contract I believe. He looked at them and said, "Boys, I can't help you with something that doesn't exist." "What do you mean?" He said, "I just got back from Oklahoma, and I was in every county in the state and most of the towns in the state. I looked and looked and I didn't see your name anywhere down there." The boys looked at him a minute and they got the message. They said, "Senator, we'll be back." Of course, he's telling them they better put a plant in Oklahoma. He didn't mind using that.

Jim Webb was having lunch one day and he told him, "Bob, you're going to get us all in trouble one of these days." He said, "How's that, Jim?" He said, "These reporters are on my ass saying you're using your position as Space Committee chairman, as well as your other positions up here, to get interests to come to Oklahoma." He said, "Well, you tell them, Jim." He said, "I'm trying to evade the issue by not telling them." He said, "If you don't tell them send them to me; I'll tell them. The only people that can indict me on something like that are the voters of Oklahoma. I can't concede that they're getting very

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upset about that."

Then on "Meet the Press" one time they jumped on him about a conflict of interests. He said, "Let me tell you boys, my opponent has accused me of being a big, rich, oil man. Every time I run for office they prove it on me. The only conflict of interest I'm concerned about is the one between me and the voters of Oklahoma. They know I'm rich; they know I'm in the oil business, and they still elect me." His thesis was, and I think the more you think about it, there's no way under God's green earth you can elect a man without a conflict. There's no way. If nothing else, he's going to be doing things that will insure his re-election, and he'll compromise his conscience on a lot of things on that sometimes. That's just the nature of the game. His contention was, it isn't a conflict that's bad, it's how you handle the conflict that's bad. But the reporters just naturally assume if a man's got a conflict, he's going to handle it in a dishonorable way, and that's not necessarily true. Our greatest leaders in this country have been people of tremendous wealth. And Johnson was the same philosophy. There's no way you can elect a man without a conflict of interest

G: Let's talk about the Arkansas River Project. Can you recall Senator Kerr working on this?

R: Well, of course. He became interested in that when he was governor of Oklahoma. That was during World War II. In my part of Oklahoma, some time in 1943, we had a tremendous flood down there. I mean it just inundated, killed people, washed livestock away, farm equipment, homes, just devastated it. Well, he flew over it. That's when he conceived of the idea of making it navigable, you know, containing it also.

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His political slogan until the day he died was "Land, Wood and Water." He said, "We've got to have all three." Of course, today much of the time it's substitutes, but basically it's the same thing. I've heard him say many a time, "When we pump the last barrel of oil from the bowels of the earth we'll find a substitute, but we'll never find a substitute for water." He was for clean water before these people today ever discovered it. He used to say, "The day I was born you could take a drink out of any stream in Oklahoma. If the Lord lets me live long enough, you'll again be able to take a drink out of any stream in Oklahoma." Boy, he was a nut on that. But he was smart enough to know they weren't going to clean them up overnight either.

But anyhow, he had a fellow working for him named Don McBride, who was on the Planning and Resources Committee of the state of Oklahoma, who was really his expert on water. Don was an expert. When he got up here I think the first bill really he introduced was the Arkansas, Red and White River Study. I'm really not on the details of the thing. My mind is going to be a broad-brush type of thing because that was Don's bailiwick. He sold Harry Truman on it. Of course it came about then. He just worked constantly on that. That was his pet. Of course, he could see that if we could get navigation up there it was going to help the freight rates for our farmers in Oklahoma and everybody else. Also, we needed power. He could foresee we were going to run out of electricity. He started predicting a long time ago that we'd have a power shortage in this country. He even had some people go to Russia to study theirs, how they're doing it. He said, "They're gaining on us in production of power." And then irrigation in a lot of places, they can use it to irrigate.

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I think the Corps of Engineers at that time, what they called--what was it--justification costs, anyhow, so much of it would be paid back by irrigation, so much of it would be power and navigation. But we left out the one that's created an industry, a whole new industry in Oklahoma, that's recreation. Oklahoma today has more lake shorelines than does Minnesota. We don't have as many lakes. All of ours are huge lakes, man-made lakes. The little old town where I came from, Stigler, when I came up here, I bet there wasn't three people in town, a town of about two thousand, had boats. Today everybody in town's got a boat, at least one, and it's created a whole new [industry]. I expect right now the recreation industry is the biggest industry we have in the country. But he was completely, completely dedicated to the Arkansas River. Every vote he cast, every thing he did was for completion of the Arkansas River.

G: Do you recall his working with Lyndon Johnson?

R: Oh, yes, yes. That was one of the ironies of it. After we got--the Arkansas River ain't always on schedule. Johnson came to him and he said, "Bob, the people of Texas are just murdering me on what you're doing on the Arkansas River up there. I need to do it on the Trinity or something down in Texas." So Don wrote a plan for Lyndon Johnson on his river. Then Russell came to him. He said, "Bob, my farmers and business supporters in Georgia have seen what you've done with water out in Oklahoma and they want some" for whatever river they had down there. So he drew up a plan for Georgia, whatever the river is; I don't know. He and Schoeppel, Andy Schoeppel of Kansas, Republican senator, were already working to take the Arkansas right on up into Kansas. Had they lived--Andy Schoeppel I think died just about a year before Kerr did--but had they lived,

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we would have had that thing up to Topeka by now probably, at least to Wichita.

Because Kerr was smart enough to see that everything that went to Kansas had to come through Oklahoma first. The railroads for a long time fought the Arkansas River, because they thought it was competition. And he showed them it would improve their [business] and it did. The river got the big equipment, heavy stuff, but it also increased the other types and the railroads carried them.

I'll say one thing, had the Arkansas River been completed that space center in Houston might have been sitting in Tulsa, Oklahoma, because we had the clout to do it in those days. But those missiles and things were so big, the only way you could transport them was on water. And the Arkansas River couldn't do it, didn't have it long enough. So out of that we got the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] center in Oklahoma City instead of [the space center].

G: Anything on the space program? They both worked on that.

R: It was one of the ironies, when they created that Space Committee it came out of Lyndon Johnson's old Preparedness Subcommittee. When they created it under Eisenhower it was the elite committee; it was a glamour committee, but it was the elite. Every member of the Space Committee when it was first created, both Republicans and Democrats, were already chairmen of a parent committee: [Warren] Magnuson on Commerce, Hayden on Appropriations; Bridges, every one of them, see. They needed one more spot filled on the Democratic side. Kerr really didn't want the damn thing, but Johnson said, "Bob, I've got to have you on the Space Committee. These others are all chairmen. They're not going to have time. I've got to have somebody I can depend on." So he took it

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reluctantly. But as events turned out it was great, because he was the *only* person on there that didn't already have a chairmanship. So that gave him a chairmanship. And the Space Committee wasn't a committee that required a lot of time, but by being chairman of it he got all the privileges of a chairman. But then by being number two on the Public Works and Finance, he could still run those. That gave him a real power base to work from. Now then Senator [Dennis] Chavez died that year. Kerr was number two. He could have taken over Public Works, but he'd already made an agreement with Pat McNamara to let McNamara be chairman of Public Works. Kerr could still run it. McNamara knew if he didn't get along with him Kerr could take it any time he wanted to under the rules then. Being Space Committee chairman didn't require a lot of time so he had that as a power base, plus the other two. So he had a real kingdom.

G: Do you think that Lyndon Johnson was more responsible for having the space center located in Houston than Albert Thomas?

R: I wouldn't say who was more responsible. I'm not sure we would have had it in Tulsa, but there was a lot of speculation that we would have been in the running if we'd have had the [water]. I expect Kennedy was just as glad that we didn't have water so that he wouldn't have to make that decision between them. No, I don't know. Both of them, I would say, probably Albert Thomas because of his position on Appropriations. Johnson helped get it in Texas. The problem was where in Texas it was going to be, and we helped them on it. We tried to get along with Albert Thomas because he was a power. Same as the fellow from Ohio, Mike Kirwan. Did you ever hear of him?

G: Oh, yes.

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R: Well, boy, we courted him. Bob Kerr used to say, "I've kissed more asses to get where I got than any man I know. And I'll always do it, because while I'm kissing them I'm outsmarting them, and they're doing what I want them to do." He was the past master at using charm. So was Johnson. Or they could be brutal. Either one of them could be brutal. Kerr once told me--Anderson's dead now; I can say this--he said, "That Clint Anderson is afraid of me, because I know if I ever take after him I'll destroy him. You don't have to do that but once. Word gets around." So they knew how to use it; they knew how to use power. You know, not everybody knows how to use power. Most people don't know how to use power. But Johnson and Kerr and Anderson, see, were past masters. They could find the sensitive point and they could sure use it.

G: Do you think Johnson was afraid of Kerr?

R: No, no. They both respected one another, and neither one of them wanted the other for an enemy. Kerr didn't mean that he and Clint, there was any animosity between them. He just meant that Clint knows that if we ever do, you only do that once or twice and word gets around. Frank Lausche of Ohio, he just castigated him one day, and Lausche came and told him, "Bob, I guess I went too far." Lausche was a horse's ass. You couldn't depend on him. He was glamour. He'd get on the Senate floor and make speeches.

G: Of course, there's the famous episode when he took after Homer Capehart.

R: Oh, yes, yes. Well, Homer Capehart wasn't real bright, but he was real brash. That was a classic. That was a classic. Capehart never did say--Kerr said Eisenhower had no brains. Anyhow, we had to bend it, finally said he had no fiscal brains. We caught hell over that.

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Capehart never did defend Eisenhower's intelligence. He just said Kerr shouldn't have said it. You know, there's a difference. I don't think Capehart really realized what . . .

There's somewhere in the *Congressional Record*, in the Library of Congress, speeches that Kerr made that just would keep you in stitches. He made a speech on diversion I believe of water from Lake Michigan so that Chicago could flush their toilets, and I'm telling you, he had the Senate just in stitches over the damn thing. He even had the Queen of England involved in the thing, and the Empress of India. It was hilarious. But we got it through. We got it through every damn time it came up in the Senate. I don't know whatever happened to it. But it was just hilarious. Because he was clever. He was just clever as hell.

He used to tell the story about the old Methodist circuit-riding preacher, Sam Jones I believe it was, who was an actual circuit-riding Methodist. I believe it was him that told it. He said, "One time a fellow asked Sam, 'Sam, how do you know you got religion? You're saying you got religion and this. How do you know?' So Sam answered him, 'I was there when it happened.'"

Johnson and Kerr and Russell--now, Russell loved to go to baseball games. I doubt if Lyndon Johnson and Kerr ever took time to go to a baseball game. Kerr didn't drink either. Kerr's method of relaxation was working on something else. And Johnson, I don't suppose either one of them ever went to movies or anything like that. Kerr would go fishing once in a while, once a year, and he fished just like he worked, hard as hell. He'd get up early in the morning and fish until dark. Johnson same way. They didn't have relaxation. Hell, we wrote the Kerr-Mills Bill on the Fourth of July, got a hotel

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room at the old Statler Hotel, and sat up there all Fourth of July and wrote the damn thing, worked on it.

G: Who was this?

R: Me, the Senator was there for a while--he didn't stay--Fred Amer and Helen Livingston from Library of Congress, and somebody from the AMA [American Medical Association]. In going into that Kennedy thought he had the votes to put in the Social Security-financed Medicare, and Johnson thought they had it. Kerr saw a weakness in their bill. It put restrictions on nursing homes, qualifying nursing homes. Well, we started checking around the country and hell, just damn few nursing homes would qualify. We'd done our homework. It was on the Senate floor. I remember Kenneth Keating of New York, oh, he was strong for it, the Republican. Senator said, "Why are you strong for it? Your nursing homes can't even qualify." Keating looked like you just hit him in the face with a blivet or something, because he hadn't even done his homework. Most of them don't do their homework.

That's the difference between the ones that accomplish something and the ones that just sit up there and vote, vote their opinions and their prejudices. There is a United States senator up there today that I'll not call his name, he's pretty prominent--we had a Social Security bill up [one] night, and there was an amendment to it. I don't even remember what the amendment was. But he came in--I was a staff man for Kerr, you know, handling it. He came up to me and did not ask, "What is this bill?" or, "What's in it?" He said, "What's the liberal position on this bill?" I said, "Senator, I don't know. I don't know. [Jacob] Javits is for it and Douglas is against it. Now you figure it out." But

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he didn't care what was in the bill. Conservatives [were] the same way. That's where Kerr and Johnson, more so than Russell, as senators could go either way. They didn't have to worry about the conservatives or liberals. They could run with both of them.

G: You mentioned billboard legislation earlier. Do you remember that highway bill when Senator [Walter] George--

R: First came up on billboards. That time Kerr was opposed to using them. I mean, he supported the limitations put on billboards. Of course, Johnson never did change; he didn't like billboards. We laughed about it one time after--I was down in Texas with him. But he said, "Of course, the difference was the billboards supported Bob and they didn't me. That does make a difference in your feel for it."

But he was telling, too, that some bill he had that was in the Finance Committee or Public Works, as majority leader, he thought he had to get out. He said, "I had Bob's billboard bill bottled up," in the Rules Committee or the Policy Committee or something like that. He said, "I kept putting pressure on him to get the bill out, because we had to have it, the party had to have it. Never get any response from him. It wasn't long till it was getting close to adjournment. So I told him, 'Bob, what are you going to do about that bill? Are you going to get it out?' He looked at me, said, 'Well, Lyndon, where's my billboard bill?'" He said, "Hell, I had to let it go. I was against it but I had to let it go." So whatever his bill was, he got it out. Then Sam Rayburn was speaker and there was differences in the House and Senate version. But Sam Rayburn got the House to just accept the Senate version and it never had to go to Congress. It's one of the few bills. But we held it was agreed to that night.

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G: This was the billboard bill?

R: We got into it. The billboard boys in Oklahoma, well, they had been friends of Kerr's. So they sure had [inaudible]. They came to him and talked to him. He said, "Tell you what, boys, tell you what you do. I want to help you. I really wasn't thinking, but what you do, in order to help me help you, you go back and get me postcards and letters from all the farmers in Oklahoma that receive money from billboards. That will give me a political base then so I can say I'm speaking for the people of Oklahoma." They did. Hell, we got the damndest deluge of cards in here, some of them maybe getting ten dollars a month, some of them may not get fifty dollars a year. But it gave him a political base, and from then on he had a power base. He could say, "I'm speaking for my farmers back in Oklahoma," and to a certain degree he was. Sometimes it was enough to pay the taxes on the farm. But Johnson was opposed to it. It didn't cause any problems between them, you know. Johnson wasn't going to get his until Kerr got his.

G: What area do you think they disagreed the most on, Johnson and Kerr? Do you recall a particular issue?

R: I can only recall one time that there was a difference. That was on confirmation of Strauss.

G: Lewis Strauss.

R: Yes. Kerr voted for him. Of course, Johnson voted against him and defeated him. Kerr is one of the few Democrats that--I don't use that as an example very much because Strauss was going to be--what was that thing they were trying to put in--atomic energy, and of course Kerr's company was deep in that kind of stuff. That was a vote I think he

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cast, I think he was looking for the future of his [company]. Of course, he could do it in good conscience. Strauss was a man that was capable. What got him in trouble was his personality. People didn't like him.

G: I gather Anderson really led the charge on him.

R: Oh, Anderson really led that fight.

G: Did Anderson try to get Kerr to--?

R: No, they understood the situation. Kerr made no speech for him, nothing. He just cast a vote. They let it go at that. I suppose if they had really had to have had him they might have got him or he could have taken a walk on it or something. But he voted. I'd say in thirty minutes after that vote was cast we got a hand-delivered personal letter from Eisenhower.

G: How about the Albert Beeson nomination, do you remember that?

R: No, I don't recall that.

G: It was a close party-line vote.

R: What was that?

G: I think he was [appointed to the] National Labor Relations Board. Let's talk about the natural gas legislation. That was something that Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kerr worked on.

R: Well, Kerr used to say, "That is the most bipartisan issue I've ever seen. Both Democrat and Republican presidents have vetoed natural gas legislation." You talk about sick people. The first one, of course--the one Kerr got when he was up there and Harry Truman vetoed, that hurt Kerr politically in Oklahoma. So from then on he really didn't

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take an active part in it. Here he was in the gas and oil business. So Mike Monroney usually handled it.

But on that one that Eisenhower vetoed, John Connally had been up here for weeks and weeks, had a hotel room down here. Everything was just going beautifully, till that damn [Howard] Keck of Superior Oil--if you had ever seen a bunch of men that would have run a oil man out of the country. The members of Congress were just sick. Of course, [Francis] Case wasn't very damn bright anyhow for doing what he did. He was a prim little so-and-so. Eisenhower I thought showed his true colors when he vetoed it, see. It was a sick bunch of people down there. It was sick. Kerr used to say, "About the time I can get oil boys in such a posture that I can admit to my Democratic friends I am one, somebody like Keck will come along and do something." The oil boys--it's not so much anymore, they're changing--but at that time many of the men running these companies were the men that created them: "This is mine. Ain't nobody going to tell me how to run my business." They were arrogant. Most of them anymore are professional managers, professional presidents, you know. So there's not that degree of arrogance that was once oil boys. Besides that, the oil boys, they're in trouble right now. They're in bad trouble.

G: Do you recall how they got other senators to support the bill initially?

R: No, because we played low profile, very low profile on that. Mike, as I say, was handling that, and his staff man was an Oklahoma boy, Tom Finney, who's now dead. We had a great part in it, but Kerr didn't go all out publicly. Now I'm sure behind the scenes he'd talk to this one or that one. I do know one time he walked in the office and asked

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everybody, "Can you get checks cashed at your bank?" Well, it turned out the damn oil industry had made some commitments and had run out on them and he was making them good. Lot of money, lot of money was coming out of his pocket. But he said, "They made them, and I'm going to [honor them]. Now I got to work with these boys up here."

I think one of the interesting stories on the Medicare bill, the day that we beat the Kennedy bill that was a close vote. The galleries were just jammed. I mean they were jammed. The White House thought they had it. Well, Kerr knew what [West Virginia Senator] Jennings Randolph was going to do, had known it for some time, but he couldn't afford to say anything about it. We always kept putting him on the other side, because if he had ever let it get out that somehow it got to the White House they [would] put such pressure on Randolph he couldn't have stood it. So he just sat there, didn't say anything. When he cast that vote you could just hear the gasp in the gallery. Wilbur Cohen, who was under secretary of HEW [Health, Education and Welfare] at that time--[Abraham] Ribicoff was secretary--called me. He was just heartbroken. Wilbur Cohen is a decent, good man. In fact, as Kerr told the AMA when Wilbur was coming up for confirmation under Kennedy, we went out to Chicago and he told the AMA, "If one person from the medical profession appears before that Finance Committee opposing Wilbur on the basis that he's a communist, then you're going to lose the best friend you've got up there. If you want to oppose him on the basis that you don't agree with his stand on Medicare, that's fine, that's your right. But you're not going to slander him." They didn't even appear to oppose him. (Laughter) So he and Kerr and Johnson, I expect Wilbur Cohen wrote most of the social legislation for Kerr and Johnson, even after he had left the

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administration under Eisenhower and was out at [the University of] Michigan.

But anyhow, he called me that evening down at the office. He said, "Bill, the White House is going to get Jennings Randolph. They're going to get him on that vote. They're after him right now. Don't tell where you got it; I'm just giving this for your information." I said, "Okay." So I got hold of the Senator, went up on the Senate floor and got him, told him. He said, "You go back to the office and wait on it." In about an hour he called me and he said, "Meet me over at the bath house." In his later years he was so damn busy I did most of my business with him when he was either taking a bath or taking a shit. You can edit that; I'm sorry.

Anyhow, he was in there and he said, "You know that phone call you was telling me?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I went over to see Wilbur Mills and we just got on the phone and we called Larry [O'Brien]. We said, 'Now, Larry, we understand you're out to get Jennings Randolph. We just want you to know that you can if you want to, but anytime you start a fight with him you start one with us, too. Now if you want to take us both on or all three of us on, that's fine.'" Hell, that's the last you ever heard of that business. No more.

Another way he worked, I can't call the name but a friend of mine--Jim Webb was the NASA man. Well, the Kennedys, especially Bobby, didn't quite trust Jim Webb because he was a Kerr-Johnson man. So a friend of mine called me one day and said, "Bill, do you know Jim Webb?" I said, "Yes." He said, "What kind of fellow is he?" I said, "Nice. Why?" "Well," he said, "the White House has called me and want me to go down and be his assistant and report directly to the White House, keep them informed on

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what's going on." I said, "Well, let me talk to my boss." "Oh, hell, no," he said, "Don't mention that to your boss." I said, "Yes, I've got to. That's too big. I've got to."

So I went and told my boss. Most people would have gotten mad or something. He didn't. He looked at me and said, "Do you know this fellow?" I said, "Yes." "Can we work with him?" I said, "He's our friend. He'll help us wherever he can unless he's under direct orders otherwise from the White House." He said, "You go back and tell him to take it. I'll go get a hold of Jim Webb and tell him, 'Jim, why don't you call the White House and suggest they put their own representative down there in your agency and report to them.'" So, hell, they did it and he just outsmarted them right there. This fellow then was our friend; they had their man down there, and Jim Webb had a man there that he made a friend out of. It worked out beautifully. But instead of raising hell or saying, "Why, them dirty so-and-so's," he just outsmarted them.

G: That's a good story.

R: But Lyndon Johnson, he was a catalyst; he was a real catalyst up in the Senate. Back in those days, by golly, they earned their money. He kept them in sessions late. And he could play Eisenhower like a drum, even after he became president. If he got in trouble he'd call Eisenhower, and Eisenhower would just fall for it hook, line and sinker.

G: Remember the fight over the Bricker Amendment?

R: Yes.

G: Can you recall any of the particulars of that?

R: No, as I was going to say, that was one issue that generated almost as much emotion and mail as did the extension of the east front of the Capitol. That was a very dramatic thing.

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Kerr voted for it, because we were up for re-election that year. Johnson voted against it. He survived but it was a tough one. I still don't understand all of the ramifications of it. It was just such an emotional damned issue that half the people that were writing in didn't know what they were writing on.

G: I guess Johnson got Senator George to offer that substitute.

R: Yes. There again, Johnson could play Walter George like a drum. Walter George was a great stately gentleman, and a man of integrity, but he wasn't exactly a mental giant.

C: Why don't you take a look at this list and see if you remember any of the particulars on some of this legislation.

R: One thing, Lyndon Johnson was seeking the nomination and so was Kennedy. Oh, Kerr was a big Johnson man. Oklahoma went out there, went all out. We had two delegates from Oklahoma with half a vote each that were for Kennedy. But in those days we voted as a bloc, unit rule. One, of course, was Howard Edmondson; the other one was a former state senator. But we went out as a bloc for Johnson. But he told Lyndon, Lyndon, I can't match Joe Kennedy dollar for dollar, but I can damn sure make him spend more money than he intended to spend when he set out." (Laughter)

G: That's a good story.

R: Those are the little things you don't ever see in history books and what make it [interesting].

A lot of this I don't remember. Anything I could say on it would just be . . .

G: This item here in 1955, this tax bill, when LBJ was supporting a tax cut of twenty dollars. He got most of the people on the Finance Committee to go against Harry Byrd and

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Walter George. [He] had a press conference with Kerr, [Russell] Long, Smathers, Frear and [Earle] Clements endorsing this plan that the committee chairman opposed. Do you remember that, how they were able to get them to do that?

R: Well, in the first place, again Harry Byrd just didn't represent the committee, really.

G: But the committee members didn't want to offend Byrd, did they, because he was powerful?

R: The average committee chairman in mind, Byrd wasn't built that way. He just wasn't equipped to be that kind of a chairman. As Kerr used to say, "It really wasn't his fault. The same reason a bull don't give milk, just ain't made thataway." But I remember one instance. Remember the DuPont divestiture bill, tax bill? Well, back in 1956 or 1955, somewhere along in there, Harry Byrd announced he was not going to run for re-election. That would have put Kerr chairman of the Finance Committee. Well, big business of the country, not realizing Kerr was business, didn't want that wild-eyed radical from Oklahoma writing the tax laws. So they put the pressure on Eisenhower to put the pressure on Byrd to seek reelection. So Eisenhower did. Kerr, I heard him state, tell, that out of it became Dulles Airport, that Eisenhower agreed to build Dulles Airport at Chantilly, Virginia, in return for that. He said, "Now that's some of that Harry Byrd economy you're always hearing about."

But one of the leaders on Eisenhower was DuPont. Well, along came this court decision where they had to divest themselves of this GM stock, that the Christiana [?] Corporation--well, anyhow, it was going to depress the market, everything. It was bad to have done all that. What they wanted was some legislation; it was special legislation

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type, but also some general good permitting it. They went to Harry Byrd and he wouldn't help them, wouldn't touch it. And Eisenhower wouldn't help them. So they got Senator Frear, who of course would do anything for Kerr or Johnson, and Frear brought over the chairman of DuPont to see Kerr. [Crawford Hallock] Greenewalt was his name; he was chairman of the board. Well, he was everything Kerr wasn't. He was a very sophisticated, erudite fellow, bird-watcher, cultured. You know, Back Bay Boston, you might say. Here was Kerr, had just got in from Oklahoma. And Kerr would wear the same suit and shirt for a week. He'd change once a week. If the pockets were torn, they were just torn. He'd just get that last nickel's worth of wear out of them. Well, he brought him in there.

Well, Kerr remembered what DuPont had done to him before, and so he was rankled. So when they brought him in there he wouldn't even get out of his seat to shake hands with him, wouldn't even extend his hand to him. Frear introduced them. They sat down. Greenewalt didn't know what was going to hit him. I expect he had completely forgotten the other incident. Kerr looked at him. He said, "Greenewalt"--he didn't even call him Mr. or anything, it was just "Greenewalt." That old boy's eyes, you could see them, he just wasn't used to being addressed that way. He said, "DuPont don't mean a so-and-so to me. You can't help me and you've already done me a dirty turn. But if my friend Allen Frear would come over to me and say, 'Bob, let's move the Senate Office Building,' I'd just grab my shovel and say, 'Allen, where do you want to put it?'" He passed it and Kennedy signed it.

Later on Greenewalt came to Oklahoma and spoke to our Chamber of Commerce

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in Oklahoma City, and he told them publicly, he said, "Boys, I'm a straight-voting Republican, money-raising Republican. But if I were living in Oklahoma this is one Republican that would vote for a Democrat named Bob Kerr." That didn't hurt us with our business--the business and oil industry generally always fought Kerr. But old Greenewalt, he sure was twisting and turning, but here the great friend, Harry Byrd, wouldn't help him. And of course Frear ended up getting beat anyhow. But we formed a hell of a good alliance then with the DuPont people. I'll never forget the look on that man's face.

G: Anything else on the Finance Committee?

R: Well, when I first came up here--this has as much to do with the relationship of LBJ and Kerr as it was--we had a tight money policy investigation under the Eisenhower Administration under George Humphrey, who was secretary of treasury. But Byrd wouldn't even let Kerr hire one staff man. The rest of them Kerr had to pay out of his pocket. But I think it's still a classic in hearings up there. Nothing concrete ever came out of it except that the Eisenhower Administration did loosen up on money a little bit. But their theory, they always argued, Humphrey did, Secretary of Treasury Humphrey, that interest was not a cost of living, shouldn't be figured in interest rates. I never could quite fathom that one. They wanted the high interest rates. There was a time I could probably, but that's been a long time ago and a lot of water's under the bridge.

G: Also in 1955 the Democrats were able to raise minimum wage to a dollar from seventy-five cents, and the Republicans wanted to raise it to only ninety cents. Evidently that was a Johnson maneuver where he was able to outmaneuver Spessard Holland on that, I

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guess, who was leading the opposition to that. Do you remember how they got that majority?

R: No, I don't. I sure don't. That in 1955?

G: Yes.

R: No, I don't.

G: There is another issue on President Eisenhower's atomic peace ship, where there was a very close vote. Evidently that's the one where they brought Senator [William] Fulbright back. Do you remember any of these?

R: No, I've even forgotten that one.

G: Can you recall any others along these lines?

R: No, because when I was there if the Senate was in session I loved to go over there. I was single then and I'd stay all night listening, because you'd pick up these little bits and pieces. My interest a lot of times wasn't the big issues; it was just the little byplays that would come out of them. You can hear a little piece of gossip here and a little piece of gossip there. I remember on Medicare again, I was standing in the Cloakroom and Albert Gore--of course, Gore was leading the fight for Medicare--was sitting out there and Senator Humphrey came out, sat down beside him. He said, "Albert, what in the hell is going on here?" Gore said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Bob Kerr has maneuvered us in the position that he's got all the business elements and the most conservative people in the country supporting the Medicare plan that is unlimited. He's got us liberals in the position of supporting a pay-as-you-go plan. Now if that's not a switch! Hell, he's got all the doctors up here supporting one of the most socialist programs there is." That's true,

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of course.

G: How did that evolve though?

R: The big issue in it was that under the so-called Kerr plan you had to meet a needs, so-called needs. And under the Social Security-financed plan it would be automatically yours. Well, that sounds great you know, in theory, but it damn near destroyed the Social Security system. That was Kerr's big argument in those days, and back in the early fifties, too, when they first brought up the disability provision of Social Security. He was against it. He forced them to create a separate trust fund for that. Then when Medicare came along they created a separate trust fund there. But he said, "Boys, there's no way, no way, you can tell me how much hospitalization will cost. No way. What's going to happen in Congress out here, you can see that the Social Security withholding tax is getting more and more each year, and the laboring man is beginning to feel it in his take-home pay. You're going to get in the position out here one of these years, so Congress will add benefits to Medicare, Social Security bill, and won't have the guts to raise the tax accordingly. Once you do that, you've destroyed the Social Security fund and the federal government is going to have to step in and appropriate general fund money to pay the obligations. There's no difference between that and what we're doing on that."

And it's come about just about the way he said it was going to come about, because Social Security is in trouble, and it's the medical side of it--it's not the retirement--it's the medical side of it that's causing all the problems. He was never against Medicare. They tried to put him in a position against Medicare and he wasn't. He was against Social Security-financed Medicare, and there is a difference, you know.

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G: Capehart Amendment, do you remember that, on housing?

R: Vaguely. Vaguely. It's still on the books as I recall.

G: Well, this was a situation where the Democrats were trying to get more public housing units and the Republicans wanted a more restricted measure.

R: Yes.

G: Do you remember when Johnson had his heart attack in 1955?

R: Yes, very well, very well. That sent a shock wave through Washington the likes of which hadn't been experienced until President Kennedy was shot, I think.

G: Do you think he had presidential ambitions before that heart attack?

R: I think so. I don't think there's any doubt about it. It may not have been right in the forefront of his mind, but there was always in the back of it. The South had always wanted a president.

G: How do you think the heart attack changed Johnson?

R: I didn't notice it changed him any except he quit smoking.

G: He was still just as fast-paced?

R: Dynamic and hard-working as ever, and just as hard to get along with at times and just as completely charming at times. The only thing I could see that it was, he did quit smoking, and he was an incessant smoker. But it did do that. Then I think he started smoking again just shortly before he had his final attack, didn't he?

G: How did they deal with Joe McCarthy?

R: That was, I think, a real tribute to Lyndon Johnson's sense of timing. Because Joe McCarthy did immeasurable harm to public servants, public officials. He's got them to

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where even today they will hardly make a decision because it may come back to haunt them. His charges were just loose, but yet there wasn't anything you could do at the time because he had people of the country with him. And so no senators will--a few that did dare stand up to him got beat! So it was just a question of out-waiting him. In the meantime, of course, he did untold harm to trust in government. But Johnson bided his time. He knew that sooner or later it was going to turn on him and give him an opportunity. Then when this fellow from New Hampshire [Vermont], [Ralph] Flanders, put in that statement, hell, it was a natural. But I tell you he had every Democrat there and voting on that issue. It was another tense moment.

McCarthy was no good, no good. Hell, you'd see him at the Carroll Arms--I don't know whether you were around there at the Carroll Arms Hotel up there. He had lunch over there every day and he'd get drunk. But you never knew when somebody sitting in there wasn't on his payroll and would hear bits of conversation. But the way Johnson handled that, he knew that at the right time he could get him. But he had to wait until the right time. The people of the country used to beg Kerr to take him on, because Kerr was so articulate. He said, "Why, I'm not going to get in a pissing contest with him. I have nothing to win, nothing to win. But sooner or later he'll kill himself." And he did. When they censured him, then of course, hell, in just a little while he died. But that was a great tribute I thought to Lyndon Johnson.

I'm not saying the country don't produce people like Johnson and Kerr and Russell anymore. I'm sure they do. But in today's atmosphere up here they can't operate the same way they did.

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G: Anything else that we haven't talked about?

R: I think that's about all. Might not have been much that you could really do anything with, but it was kind of pleasant to sit here and talk about them.

G: It sure is.

R: And the older I get the more I want to talk about the old days, you know.

But for years our hall, our offices in the Old Senate Office Building were right across the street from one another. That's before Johnson became majority leader.

Really, Russell and Kerr put him in as majority leader. I think there was a story--you know, up until him no majority leader had ever survived. But he was smart enough to do it, and he was tough. Goddamn, he could be tough. You'd call the Policy Committee when Harry McPherson was there and also Gerry Seigel. Have you talked to Gerry?

G: Yes.

R: To get a report on the status of a bill. Hell, Lyndon Johnson may have answered the damn phone himself.

G: Really ?

R: Yes. I called over there one time on a bill and got hold of Gerry. He started telling me and the next thing I knew a voice butted in, and it was Johnson. Now he didn't know who it was. I mean, he just took over and took the greatest time--

G: Really? What bill was it?

R: I don't even remember, but I was impressed. He was just built that way.

Bill Kerr and I went down to see him after he was out as president, because Bill Kerr, Senator Kerr's son, was always Lyndon Johnson's favorite, and he always wanted

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Bill Kerr to run for office. But we went down there thinking that, you know, we're just going to go out and see him, say hello, be there thirty minutes, an hour at the most, and that would be it. Well, we got out there and [Chuck] Robb and his wife, whatever her name is [Lynda], were there, plus Bill White, the author, and his wife. LBJ had on these jumpsuits, you know. We sat there in their house and talked a little bit and he said, "Let's go for a ride." He's driving. We drove all over the Ranch, he's showing what he had, talking about old times. Soon on his radio Secret Service came on and said lunch was ready. Hell, Bill and I didn't think we were supposed to--we had no idea we were going to stay. But we did, we stayed for lunch. Well, they had a buffet. Everybody went through the line except Lyndon Johnson. He sat his ass down in a chair and they served him.

But we talked. Bill and I got ready to leave, he said, "No." So we got back in the car, and he's got a beautiful place you know, and he knows it and loved it. We'd see all these exotic animals had been given to him, and we ended up leaving there about four o'clock. We'd been with him all day.

G: What did he say about Senator Kerr?

R: Oh, a lot. He said, "Bill, this reminds me of when Kennedy sent me to represent him over there," on some function. He said, "I got to Seoul and my Lord, I never saw as many people in one place in my life, just as far as you could see was people. Just as a matter of curiosity I turned to Syngman Rhee and asked him how many people were here. He turned to the Vice President, the Vice President turned to the General. It went all the way down the line to somebody way down there, asking how many people was there.

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Started back up, this lieutenant started passing it back up." I think he was real powerful [?] too, as president. "Got back up here, he reported to him, he turned to me, he said, 'Well, Mr. President, they say there are only five hundred thousand people here. Sorry, but that's all the people we got.'" He said, "Now, Bill, I'm sorry, but this is all the land I've got."

That's when he told me the story about Kerr holding up his bill until he could get a billboard bill out of it. It was just a personal relationship. And, too, much of it at that time was on Fred Harris, who was a senator, and the Kerr people put Fred here and he turned out to be a complete horse's ass. Didn't turn out that way. He was when we sent him up here; he just had us fooled. Johnson was just talking about he didn't much care for Fred Harris, and neither did I. It wasn't anything really that we talked monumental, it was just pleasant visiting where he had no worries and concerns and you could sit and talk to him.

He was, as I say, the most approachable man at times and yet could be the most difficult man at times. He was a *prima donna*. All politicians are egotists or they wouldn't be in politics. Of course, Kerr said, "I prefer to call it self-confidence," but it's the same damn thing, every damn one. They got to think they can save the world or they wouldn't be the ones running. It just depends on how they handle it. But Johnson had more than his share of it. But in spite of all of it--of course, I think most world leaders have been equipped that away. There's just something in their make-up that does it.

But I'd say overall, Johnson, if they hadn't gotten bogged down in the Vietnam War--here's another interesting sidelight to that Vietnam thing. They blamed Kennedy;

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they blamed Johnson. Eisenhower got us in Vietnam, started it. I was sitting there listening, Kerr and Russell had gotten back from a White House conference. Speaker Rayburn had gone. The leadership you know, both House and Senate, which was Democratic, and of course minority leadership [had gone]. [John Foster] Dulles wanted to send some advisers, 20,000, 25,000, I don't know, into Vietnam to help them. The Democrats begged him not to. Russell--they were talking to Kerr--told him, "I told [him], 'Mr. President, don't do it. You send 25,000 now and you'll have a quarter of a million in two years.'" So the people that became the hawks was the original doves. But as Russell once said, "When he committed the flag to Vietnam, then he committed me." So they supported Eisenhower. Eisenhower has taken no blame for this, but he's the one that got us there originally. Then they turned out supporting him. Then Lyndon Johnson was really trying to get it over with. I think the military used him, lied to him. I don't know that, but I sort of suspect that. But I think he was just trying to end it.

G: Did you see Johnson any as vice president?

R: Oh, yes.

G: Did he have much contact with Senator Kerr? What was his mood like then?

R: Well, of course, politicians being what they are, he's seeing Kerr get all the publicity and getting the things, the power, that Johnson once had.

G: Did he resent it, do you think?

R: Oh, basically, underneath, I'm sure he did, but he's also man enough to know that Kerr was still his friend. But any politician is going to say something; they're just built that way. But Kerr was getting all the publicity and had Kennedy's confidence. The fact is, I

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guess Kerr's home was about the only private residence Kennedy ever stayed in while he was president. He came down to Oklahoma. But no, there was no hard feelings there at all.

G: Do you think that Johnson as vice president was excluded from a lot of the policy decisions by the administration?

R: Not by the President. I think he probably was by some, his brother and some of the others, but not by Kennedy. Kennedy knew what a proud and sensitive man Johnson was. Also Kennedy knew without Johnson he could not have won. He had to have him. Because he wouldn't have carried Texas and the South, some states of the South, if it hadn't been for Johnson. So Kennedy knew that. Bobby Kennedy I think would do anything in the world to exclude Lyndon Johnson, but I don't think President Kennedy ever deliberately did.

(Interruption)

--you know, you don't speak of that then. Harry Wimbard [?], I was talking to this fellow Harry Wimbard, made me think of it, [who] was state chairman. Harry said, "I went to the Governor one day and said, 'Governor, you know Tulsa is just daring us to come over there and hold a rally.'" Tulsa in Oklahoma is where all the Republicans really are. The rest are Democrats but it's a stronghold for the Republican Party. It used to be the oil capital of the world. "What are you going to do?" The Governor said, "Let's have one."

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--Leonard Hall [?], bought radio time. He said, "During the war, anybody that was physically able or mentally able was either in the service or working in a defense plant

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for big money, so you can imagine what type of state employees we had. We got this hall and the Governor then let all state employees off in that area for that afternoon with the suggestion that they might want to attend that meeting. That was before the days of the merit system in Oklahoma, and the suggestion of the Governor was a pretty strong factor. We told them to be there ahead of time."

"But we were having a hard time getting a preacher that would give the invocation because the Republicans were just putting so much pressure on this. So we finally found one old retired Baptist preacher that wanted to be chaplain at one of the state institutions; he needed the job. He agreed. So we got all the boys there ahead of time, the state employees, and explained to them what the purpose of this was. We said, 'Every time the name Franklin D. Roosevelt is mentioned we want you to whistle, applaud and clap just as loud as you can because we want the people listening to the radio to think what a crowd there is here at this Democratic rally.'" Harry said, "Everything went fine, went along fine, except we forgot to tell the preacher not to mention the President by name in his prayer." (Laughter) So he said he never did get to finish his prayer.

Lyndon Johnson was a great natural born storyteller. He could just keep you spellbound in a situation like that.

Well, that's about all I've got unless you've got something else you want to ask me.

G: Well, I certainly do thank you.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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