INTERVIEWEE: A. WILLIS ROBERTSON

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

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M: I might start off by giving a brief biographical sketch of your life and then you can correct me. According to what I've found out, you were born in 1887 in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and educated at the University of Richmond.

R: Well, my father, a Baptist minister, was temporarily located. Both of my parents were Virginians. That dated back to the Jamestown era. On his mother's side, my father's ancestor came to Virginia in 1619.

M: You have a noble heritage.

R: Both my parents were Virginians and my father's ancestor, who came to Virginia in 1619, was a graduate of Oxford and Surgeon-General for Governor Yardley and came over with the troops to protect the colonies. And they all got massacred in 1622. He and most of the rest of them.

M: You're a lawyer, by profession?

R: Yes.

M: Or politician, perhaps more accurately? Served two terms in the Virginia State Senate; served in World War I; entered the United States House of Representatives in 1933 and served until 1946 or '47. There must have been a lap of terms.

R: Yes. I was elected in 1946 to fill a vacancy.

M: And then into the Senate from 1946 until 1967? You served on various committees, such as the Banking Currency, Appropriations, Steering Committee, Joint Committee of Defense Production, and since 1966 you have been a consultant for the International Bank for Reconstruction Development? Is that correct--since 1966?

R: That's right.

M: I might also point out that these taped interviews are considered confidential by the University of Texas. The tapes will be typed, you will be sent a copy, and you will be given an option of putting restrictions on this if you wish.

R: Well, I don't plan to say anything that I would mind...

M: This is as you wish.

R: I turned all my papers over to the William and Mary College. Because they have a fine... Well, it's the second oldest college in the United States. Fine library down there. But they were not to be disclosed during my lifetime.

M: Well, I just thought you might want to know that this will be under the direction of the National Archives.

R: On this I am going to be cautious as to what I say, so....

M: At any rate, in the letter you sent to Dr. Frantz, you pointed out that you were on a committee with Richard Kleberg. You were the chairman....

R: Yes.

M: In such a capacity you must have run into his young assistant, Lyndon Baines Johnson.

R: Oh, yes.

M: Do you remember any early impressions of Lyndon Johnson?

R: He was...a handsome, attractive young man and seemed to be dedicated to his work and anxious to make a mark for himself. 'Course, he's 20 years younger than I am. He was 25 and I was 45. I was Dick Kleberg's age.

M: Over the years, since you first met Lyndon Johnson, has he changed much? His drive and personality?

R: I'd say right much. He's matured, he has the assurance of established power, and he's a statesman who is well-grounded in the practical art of politics.

M: Did this skill come from his long years and experience, or help from older men, or how did he acquire all this?

R: He eventually made contact with all of the political leaders of the Nation, and he has got a vigorous and logical mind. And he developed his... grasp of government, and I think his ambition grew some, too.

M: Well, maybe. I suppose you have to be ambitious to reach the highest office.

R: Oh, well yes, that's right.

M: He has a reputation of being a very hard worker--hard driver. Is that well-founded?

R: He's a tremendously hard worker. After he had his heart attack, I was very much disturbed with the hours that he was working. And having enjoyed wonderfully good health myself, I thought I'd tell him my prescription for good health.

M: And what was that?

R: I said, "You must have a short nap after lunch each day. You must take some exercise in the open, preferably in the swimming pool, and you must be in bed by ten o'clock every night." He kept that up for a little while but not very long.

M: He took your advice for a short time?

R: Oh, yes, because we were close friends, and he had respect for my judgment.

M: Did you visit him in the hospital after the attack?

R: No, I didn't visit him in the hospital.

M: But he did take up his hard routine fairly quickly after that?

R: Soon after he came back to the White House...no, I mean soon after he came back to the Senate. Let's see, he wasn't President when...

M: As I recall, he was Majority Leader.

R: Majority Leader, that's right.

M: That was in 1955.

R: Well, when I gave him this advice he was President and I heard how he was working until 12:00 and 1:00 and then be up at 7:00 the next morning, and going to all these formal dinners and things of that kind. It was when he was President that I was afraid he'd have another heart attack, and I gave him this advice.

M: Do you suppose that the offices that he has had, such as Majority Leader and Vice President and President, demand this sort of activity? That it would have to have a man like this that would be hard driving?

R: I'd say that the Presidency is a tough job, and a man's got to be in a position to put in a lot of long hours, because he has got to be there all the time more or less when the Congress is in session; and he must be familiar with all the legislation. And that takes a lot of time. Then, you don't get very far as a leader unless people follow you.

M: What has made him so successful? As a leader?

R: He had a capacity for friendship. He has demonstrated ability. He had objectives that a good many people concurred in...programs. Then he knew how to push and appeal to people. Some people said that sometimes he'd get pretty ruthless, but he never did with me.

M: Do you suppose he treated people differently, depending on the person?

R: I wouldn't say.... We were good friends, and he knew I was very conscientious in the way I voted, and when he explained a proposition to me, he knew that if I could conscientiously do so, I was going to go with him. If I couldn't go with him, I'd explain to him why. And he never disturbed me.

M: He never bothered you after that?

R: Oh, no.

M: Some of the books that have been written about him like to talk about his harsh treatment of some people and how he would argue with them.

R: Well, he'd argue with them; he'd promise them benefits; and then he'd threaten the hell out of them. That's what they claimed.

M: But this never happened to you?

R: No. It never happened to me. He never promised me any benefits. He always did for me whatever he could, just like when he was a member

of the Texas delegation. I was a young man and in 1937, Virginia didn't rank too high among the States. He and the Texas delegation supported me for membership on the Ways and Means Committee. That's the most important committee in the House--handles taxes and tariffs and foreign trade and social security. And it also was the Steering Committee, Committee on Committees. It selected the Democrats that went on the other committees. It's recognized by everybody as the most powerful committee in the House, and the next one is the Appropriations Committee. That's a very much larger committee. Only 25 on the Tax Committee and there are 50 on the Appropriations Committee. That's broken down so that it has a Subcommittee on each one of the twelve departments, and then one on foreign aid. And then, I also believe they have one on Supplemental Bills. But 14 different subcommittees and they're the ones that hear the testimony. They're the ones that frame the Bill. And the other members can be heard and to offer changes, but not much is done in full Committee. It's the subcommittees that generally write the Bills. There were no subcommittees in the Ways and Means Committee. All of us acted on everything we did.

M: So he helped you get on the committees that you wanted and then helped--

R: That was his first term. He was a member of the Texas delegation. Yes, he voted for me. He'd served under a very conservative man. I thought probably he was more of a moderate than Dick Kleberg. I think he supported practically all of the Roosevelt New Deal program. I supported a good deal of it. Relief spending got to be inefficient and too much. The CCC camps, a good thing. FDIC insurance with the

banks, a good thing. Homeowners Loan Board to make loans to save property was a good thing. There were a lot of good things in the New Deal. The work of the RFC was a good thing. Johnson supported all of those and he was a great friend of Roosevelt and admired Roosevelt. When he was in the Senate, I still looked on him as a moderate. Just as we look on his great friend John Connally, when he was proposed at Chicago as the running mate for Humphrey, he was called a conservative, but he's what I would call a moderate. He wasn't one of these flaming liberals, you know, or leftists.

M: Did you consider yourself a conservative? You've been characterized as one.

R: I was called by some opponents as a reactionary. Most of them just said I was a conservative. But when I was in the (Virginia) State Senate I was known as a liberal. I supported all the liberal things and was an active supporter of Woodrow Wilson and all of his programs when Champ Clark and a lot of others said he was going to wreck the country. It's all a definition. People change, so the term is relative as to what has happened before as to what your position is.

When I was a young man in the State Senate, I was looked on as one of the young liberals of the State.

M: When Lyndon Johnson became Majority Leader in the Senate, he apparently worked with Eisenhower to help Eisenhower get through legislation, and yet Eisenhower was Republican and Johnson was a Democrat. Now, you as a member of the Senate, what did you think about that sort of thing?

R: I thought that was the right thing to do. I'd known Eisenhower a long

time; I was a friend of his and a great admirer of his, and I never held back my support of any of his programs simply because it came from a Republican source.

M: You would judge each issue on its own merits?

R: On the merits. The same way when Lyndon Johnson was President he adopted the Kennedy platform of 1960 and went beyond it; and he sent up some rather extreme public housing and urban renewal proposals to our Banking and Currency Committee, but everyone of them came out of the committee. I never held any of them back; I sometimes joined in the minority report but whatever he wanted, I thought, well, he's President and he's entitled to have his bill come out and be discussed.

M: You supported Lyndon Johnson for the Presidency in 1960, did you not?

R: Yes, I did, and I was very much pleased when he was put on the ticket. Kennedy put him on the ticket to carry the South, but Virginia didn't go for Kennedy. It was for Johnson. But the platform was the most liberal one that the Democrats have ever proposed.

M: Do you think Johnson's position on the ticket, then, was a key issue to the Kennedy victory?

R: Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about it.

M: If it had been someone else, then....

R: Oh, I think if he hadn't carried Texas, he wouldn't have won.

M: Were you disappointed that Johnson accepted the Vice Presidential position?

R: Well, Virginia, as I recall (I was not at the convention), supported him for the Presidency. No, I was not disappointed. I'd known him since

1933 and I thought very highly of him. I knew he was an able man and a man of lofty aims, although he didn't hesitate sometimes to use earthly means to reach them. In other words, he was a statesman who had been well trained in practical politics. But he was a Southern man.... They called him Western, but we called him Southern, and Texas was in the Confederacy. And I always felt very close to Texas because Sam Houston was born just six miles from where I live. I was once chairman of a committee of the Kiwanis Club to build a monument at his birthplace and we invited leading Kiwanians from Texas to come up and we had a big celebration.

M: Lyndon Johnson was a fan of Sam Houston's as I recall. He was a great admirer....

R: Yes, he was. Sam Houston was really a great man, and he was a fine military leader and did much to win the independence of Texas from Mexico, a good Governor and he was an able representative in the Congress. And of course you have to admire his courage when he lost his popularity in Texas because he refused to endorse secession. He said, in effect, "We fought for the Union, and Texas has helped to make the Union, and I'm not going against the Union." But his son served in the Confederate Army.

I've always admired Texas and felt close to Texas, and in the House had many things in common with the Texas delegation. I felt very close....

M: What did you think about Sam Rayburn? You must have worked some with him.

R: He was a very able man...a very able man, and I expect made more of a reputation than any Speaker we've had, maybe with the exception of (Joe) Cannon, and Cannon made it by the exercise of arbitrary power.

M: What do you mean by reputation?

R: I mean national reputation as a leader of the House and by being able to get things done.

M: How does a person like Rayburn or Johnson in a position as Speaker or Majority Leader get things done? Can you give me an example of a bill or issue? How do they go about doing this? Is there any technique?

R: Each bill comes up and stands on its merits. And no one approach will cover all the various issues. But the party leadership may agree--you may have a caucus, don't you see? And when you have a caucus the leader always tells you what the party position is; he tells you what his position is.

M: The leader will decide this and then tell the caucus--is that right?

R: The Speaker would always address the caucus; and other leaders--a chairman of a committee to which a bill would go--they'd explain the Bill, and then they'll take a vote in the caucus. And if the vote in the caucus supports the bill, you are bound--morally bound--by that vote unless you stand up and say, "I ask to be excused because before I knew this position was to be taken, I had positively committed myself to do something different." Then you'll be excused. That was the mass method and then there may be calls from the President. There will be calls from the White House liaison man; for instance, Larry O'Brien was the liaison man for Kennedy. Mike Manatos is liaison man for

Johnson. He'll call members of the House and Senate and say, "The President would like very much for you to do so and so." Never any threats. They just let you know what they want done and you can draw your own inferences.

M: What's the position of a lobbyist in something like this?

R: There are two types of lobbyists. There are lobbyists who merely go before a committee and explain a bill, and if he's for the bill, he'll try to put a good light on it. If he's against the bill, he'll point out what he thinks are the objections to the bill. That's what I call a high-type lobbyist. Lobbyists--I didn't have many of them to call on me of that type but occasionally they'll come to your office and try to personally harangue you on a bill. I don't think that's a very proper type of lobbying.

M: Do you have to be careful with a lobbyist in getting involved in bribes or other unethical.... As a politician, do you have to be careful about that sort of thing?

R: I never have had any trouble in that score. Really I don't know of any instance where lobbyists tried to.... I've heard of several cases where somebody is supposed to have offered some money, but I don't think it was a registered lobbyist who did it. And I have no personal knowledge, and certainly nobody ever approached me from that standpoint. Lobbyists registered or unregistered. But I don't think they operate that way. And I don't think they'd better.

M: Speaking of a caucus operation, after Lyndon Johnson became Vice President, there was some attempt apparently to have Bobby Baker, who had been his liaison man, become Secretary of the Senate under

Mansfield, and there was objection to this. From what I have read, you objected to Bobby Baker's being Secretary of the Senate at that point--in a caucus.

R: He was a friendly little fellow, but I never thought he was very broad-gauged. He was very astute in finding out for the Majority Leader how Senators planned to vote so that he'd know whether to bring a bill up or whether to approach the Senators or what to do.

M: I suppose that's important aid to the Majority Leader.

R: That's important aid. I never knew until the public exposure that he was operating a house down there for the entertainment and influence of people, and his other wheeling and dealing; I never knew anything about it until they made the public charges; but there was a staff man there that was really a fine man and senior to him, and I preferred him and I voted for him and he was elected.

M: Some place I read that the reason those of you who objected, or at least some of them--I don't know if this is your case or not--was because there was some fear that Johnson, no longer a member of the Senate except in his capacity as Vice President but not an elected Senator, might try to dominate the Senate through Bobby Baker.

R: I don't recall any suggestion of that kind. It was just...a very popular man and senior to Bobby and we preferred him and liked him and that was the main reason. I never heard anything about Bobby Baker trying to exercise influence on the Senate after the Majority Leader had become Vice President.

M: Were you shocked when Baker was exposed?

R: Oh, yes, I was very much surprised. I didn't know.... I never dreamed that he was into all that kind of stuff.

M: There has been some talk in the books and articles that Lyndon Johnson as President merely got into law John Kennedy's program. John Kennedy had fashioned a legislative program, and then he had been killed, and that there was some blocking of this program at the time of his death, but that Lyndon Johnson took over and moved this program through in 1964 and '65. Does this make sense to you?

R: As I've previously indicated, the 1960 program might be called the John Kennedy New Frontier Program. It's the most liberal one we've had, and Vice President Johnson endorsed that program. But Kennedy didn't have any success in putting it through. When he became President...

M: Why did Kennedy have trouble?

R: Well, it was a radical program and the Congress wasn't prepared for it. The country wasn't prepared for it.

M: Did you object?

R: Oh, you bet I did. You bet I objected. He wanted to greatly strengthen the Civil Rights laws and he had a lot of things in there that had gone 'way beyond anything that we had had before. So he didn't get much of it through. Now, of course, it may be that the fight he made for things that didn't go through helped Johnson to get even a bigger program through later on. I couldn't say about that. But in any event, Johnson was successful where Kennedy had merely proposed an idealistic program but couldn't move it.

M: Why was Johnson successful? How could he get through such a program? That Kennedy couldn't?

R: To begin with, he went in with a national rating of unprecedented proportion, I think, of popularity. It was 76 percent or something. It was up as high as Eisenhower ever was.

M: Support of the people then.

R: And when he would recommend something, it was as though three-fourths of the people are telling Congress, "This is what we want you to do." And that carried great weight with the Congress. And then with all this expansion of government activity, the tremendous amount of patronage involved...

I remember when I was discussing with Vice President John Nance Garner my opposition to a third term for Roosevelt, he said, "How can you beat a man with $10,000,000,000 to spend?" And you couldn't.

But during the past eight years, our expenditures for the social welfare program...it was proposed and started by Kennedy but really implemented and put through by Johnson. But in eight years that increased $34,000,000,000. That was just the social welfare program. You had thousands of jobs going up everywhere, and then you had a tremendous expansion of our military program, and people wanted those plants, and you had the space agency...tremendous...billions of dollars being spent, and plants that would mean a great deal to the community like that big one put down there at Houston. Why you know what that meant down there.

M: Oh, yes. Meant quite a bit. As a conservative, did you go along with all of this?

R: No, I did not. No, I did not go along with all of it. I went along with the military program; I went along with the space program, although I said that I thought there were too many urgent domestic needs for us to be trying to put a man on the moon right away. I thought that could wait. That was estimated to cost about $6,000,000,000; it's a heap more than that now, but I thought that was.... In those days, a billion dollars was a heap of money.

When I was elected to Congress in 1932, the total expense of the government was only $4,000,000,000; and now the interest on the national debt alone is over $13,000,000,000. Don't you see, that's just interest.

M: Did you go along with the Civil Rights?

R: Indeed I didn't. And neither did President Johnson when he was in the Senate from Texas. He joined the South in opposing that...made several very good speeches on the subject. I thought that was an unconstitutional program, and whatever should be done on that ought to be done on the state level. That doesn't mean that I'm against equal rights; I believe in equal rights, equal opportunity; but I think recognition should be on the basis of character and ability and not give a man a special right because of his color. I don't think he's entitled to any special privilege either because he's white or because he's black, brown or yellow.

M: But you would have preferred the states to handle this?

R: I'd prefer.... I hated to see so much power being transferred. And I thought the Supreme Court in 1954 wrote new law into the Constitution

when they reversed all previous decisions on the subject of separate and equal schools, and said it was unconstitutional unless you mix them all up together. And they've even gone so far (and Wallace is making quite a to-do of it) that if you have a colored school on one end of the town, where the colored people live and where they prefer to go to school, and the white school in another where the white people live and where they prefer to go to school, you've got to take buses and send the white students over to the colored area, and haul the colored people.... And neither whites nor blacks like that, and I don't see any legal justification for it.

M: Do you think that can all be worked out on a local level, say a municipal...

R: I think it ought to be. That was the principle of Thomas Jefferson and I always claim that he was a great liberal. You see, Washington's party was the Federalist Party, the party of the great Chief Justice John Marshall, and later became the Whig Party, and the Whigs went into the Republican Party. But they were the conservative party, and Jeffersonians started out calling themselves Republicans and then Democrat-Republicans and then Democrats. It was the party of what we sometime call the poor man, the party of the masses. As a matter of fact, Colonial Virginia was aristocratic--Virginia didn't go Democratic until 1828.

M: Is that right?

R: Yes, they turned Jefferson down; they wouldn't have his school program. They gave him the University of Virginia because they wanted to send their boys there. But if a man couldn't send his children to a private

school for preliminary training, then let him grow up ignorant. They didn't want to be taxed for a public school to which the children of what they called poor white trash could go to. And, of course, they had slaves in those days, and they didn't get an education either.

With reference to education, Jefferson said keep it at the local level. So I always felt that as far as possible, we should let the counties and the cities run the public schools. They should meet standards set by a State Board of Education--and since the states had sources of revenue, utility taxes, sales taxes, sometimes revenue from oil like they get in Texas, they should help the localities. But I never thought that it was the responsibility of the federal government to get into the field of public education. I resisted that and got criticized, of course, by those who would like to unload that on the federal government. But I took the position--I'm a Jeffersonian Democrat; keep these things close to the people. And keep your state control. I said, "Certainly it's the obligation of Congress to follow its appropriations and that means for federal appropriations, federal control," and so I oppose a federal aid for public schools. I remember one time Bob Taft, speaking against federal aid for education, said, "If we get into it, it would cost $3,000,000,000 a year." Well, we haven't been in it very long, and it's costing more than that right now, don't you see? And the end is not in sight.

M: You must have opposed Johnson's Education Bill that came out.

R: I did.

M: The aid to the elementary.

R: Yes. Now, I did support his loans to the schools for classrooms and

M: For construction purposes?

R: Yes. But they were loans and that didn't involve any federal control. And at that time the federal government could raise money much easier than the localities. We didn't have any authority for state bond issues in Virginia at that time. We have a constitutional amendment pending now that will authorize the state to borrow up to $81,000,000. That's one percent roughly of the assessed value of the land in Virginia. But pay-as-you-go was one of the things that Harry Byrd put through, and I helped him to do it. We wouldn't issue bonds to build roads. We'd pay for them as we went. We have as fine a road system as any state, about 50,000 miles of major roads. The State maintains all the minor roads, county roads, and all the state roads and builds them, and we don't owe a penny of debt on any of those roads; and nearly all of them are paved well. I don't know of any state that has a better highway system. And, of course, as I look back on it now, we might have been a little too cautious in opposing bonds for the development of our colleges and in putting taxes on--for education. I think I favored more of that than Harry Byrd did, but I was with his organization, and as I say, I was six years in the State Senate and at that time was known as a liberal. I was one of the patrons of the highway system; we didn't have any roads. I helped to put through a new school system. I helped to put through a workmen's compensation law. I helped to put through a law to protect women and children in industry--all those things back past 60 some years ago, anathema to the conservatives, you know.

M: But you think those kinds of programs would be better on a state level?

R: Oh, absolutely. Virginia has--is not up to, well certainly on the per capita expenditure--I don't know how the quality rates--probably we rate better on quality than we would just on a money basis. But on a money basis we rate pretty low. I think President Johnson's absolutely right--one of the essential needs of any nation is to educate the people, but I favor with state and local funds.

Now, at the World Bank we deal with 40 some nations where the income is less than $200 a year. Ninety-five to 98 percent of those people are illiterate. Even down in South America there are many illiterates--and all over Africa, of course, and lots of places in India. In India they don't raise enough to feed themselves, and you've just got to take education to the masses of the people if you ever want to develop a decent standard of living. And Johnson realizes that. And he decided the states weren't going to do it and the national government has the biggest tax-raising power--that's the income tax--it takes from 20 to 50 or 60 percent of whatever you earn, you know. And the states don't have a tax that anywhere equals that. So he's just going to collect that money and then spend it. But I say--you take the Headstart for instance--I sent both of my boys when they were five years old to private school to get them started before they entered the public school and it helped. One of them entered college when he was 16 years old, Phi Beta Kappa when he was 19. But I think that that private school cost me about $20 a month, something like that. Not over $30. And we had a federal Headstart program--I was checking on just one Virginia

county, and it ran for three months and cost $1,000 per pupil for three months.

M: That seems pretty expensive.

R: If you can't afford it. Nice thing; it gave them a fine meal in the middle of the day and maybe two meals, I don't know.

M: Why would it cost so much?

R: Well, that's what I say. When the federal government gets in it, you've got all these office holders and they're high-paid people.

M: So you would then agree that the education is important, but it ought to be handled on a local level.

R: That's right. Could do it for half the money and then there's another thing. The time will come--I was reading the history not too long ago of France after World War II, when the left wing Vishey Government got control of the schools. They taught in the schools disloyalty and that military service was not to be observed. They abolished the draft; and the military power of France went down to little of nothing. Now, suppose you turn your schools over to the federal government and the Doves take charge of the federal government. Do you think they're going to preach any military service? They'd abolish West Point and the Naval Academy and the Air Force Academy; there wouldn't be any ROTC training; and they'd write histories that wars were caused by evil, vicious, ambitious men. There wasn't any good reason or necessity for war if people wanted to live in peace. And the way to keep people from going to war is to keep them from having anything to fight with. See? Well, we think it's absurd to assume the Doves would ever get

control of our government. They didn't make much show at any of the state conventions. But they aroused much more attention when they spoke than I thought they deserved.

M: What's your position on the Vietnam War, then?

R: To tell you the truth about it, I was a great admirer of General Douglas MacArthur. He was given a luncheon by President Kennedy. At that time we just had observers over there. MacArthur was sitting on the right-hand side of the President, and I was sitting right across the table from him.

M: Was this a big luncheon?

R: No, just a few members--high-ranking members on the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees and personal friends. A few members of the House and Senate. I said,

"General, what do you think of our getting committed in this war in Vietnam?" And he replied,

"Never send a military man into the jungles of Southeast Asia."

When I read in the Post in March of 1964 that there had been a proposal that we get into that war and end it quick and easy, I sat down and wrote a long letter to Mike Manatos. Most of my letters went to Mike because I knew he would bring them to the attention of the President, and the President could answer them if he wanted to. If he didn't want to, Mike would answer them. And I gave him a lot of reasons why I thought we ought not to get involved in that war.

But we got involved. I was on the Defense Subcommittee, Appropriations Committee, and I went all out with the military to give them

what they wanted. I regret that the President took civilian advice rather than military advice to stop the bombings in '65. I think we could have won it then in '65. So my feeling--I have a mixed feeling; the President felt that Eisenhower and Kennedy had committed him and...

M: Did he consult with you or other Senators about this before he escalated?

R: I was not on the Military Affairs Committee. I was only on the Appropriations Committee. Oh, no, he didn't consult with me. I reckon he consulted with somebody--I don't know, but anyway, it has turned out now that we are practically precluded from a military victory because we have said we are not going to do what at one time we could have done and that was to bomb their instrumentalities of production before they'd gotten so strong and with much help from Russia. Now, we're committed not to do that. And we're limited to conventional warfare in a very restricted way, and we just hope that we can negotiate ourselves out of it. This is certain to be right; however, we can't just tuck tail and run away because we not only would forfeit the confidence and the good-will of all of the decent people of the world, but we would invite similar outbreaks elsewhere.

M: Your feeling then was that we should not have gotten in in the first place.

R: Not as a war.

M: But once we were in, we ought to support the military.

R: Once we were in, we should do like we'd always done in the past. Within bounds, let the military handle the strategy of it.

M: What kind of bounds would you place on--?

R: Well, if the military says we can end it by atomic bombing, public

opinion would be against that. You cannot resort to that means of a quick ending of this War. We must use conventional means. And then if somebody says, "Let's bomb the capital city," we say, "We can't make war against innocent women and children." Again for humanitarian purposes we don't make war that way, and we would forfeit the good opinion of our world friends.

M: So you would agree to limits.

R: Oh, yes. I believe in civilian control of the military. Do you remember Patrick Henry said when he opposed the ratification of the Constitution by Virginia? It was only ratified by a ten majority, and without Virginia, there wouldn't have been a Union because we were the biggest, richest and most populous state. Henry said, in effect:

"This Constitution gives both the sword and the purse to the Congress, and when you do that, the people will lose their liberty."

Well, they made the President Commander-in-Chief. I think that there should be civilian control over the military, but I don't think that civilian controls should take the place of military experience in either tactics or strategy.

M: This brings up an interesting point. You said you knew MacArthur. And Truman, in the Korean War, had to remove MacArthur from command, supposedly over a question of civilian control of the military. Do you recall that incident?

R: Yes.

M: Do you remember what you thought about it?

R: Yes, I was very much embarrassed. Unfortunately, MacArthur stepped

out of line. He authorized Joe Martin to say that he'd be available as a candidate for the Presidency against Truman. And that infuriated Truman so that he sent him a telegram in the middle of the night, "You are fired." MacArthur was the most brilliant commander we've had in our generation. And equals the all-time great. But he made a tactical blunder there.

M: So you would have to agree that Truman did the right thing?

R: I would have to agree that you couldn't have a great and popular general in command of the biggest land forces we had and running for the Presidency at the same time.

M: You think that would be dangerous?

R: Yes.

M: How long did you know MacArthur?

R: I met him when I was a major and he was a brigadier general in World War I.

M: You were in the service together?

R: No, we were not. But I met him right after the War was over, and I was in Washington at that time. I was serving in the office of the Adjutant General of the Army. And he came by for some reason, and he'd been named superintendent of West Point. I believe the youngest superintendent they ever had. I was a member of Sons of Confederate Veterans--my grandfather was a Confederate veteran killed at the Battle of Cold Harbor--my mother's father and nine of his brothers were in the Confederate Army, and five of them were killed. And so I was very much interested in the Confederacy. We celebrate what we

call the Lee-Jackson Day on January 19--Lee's birthday. On January 19, 1919, I was asked to make the speech at the annual dinner of the Sons of Confederate Veterans on the influence of Jackson's strategy on World War I. As a major I didn't know much about strategy, knew a little about drilling troops and what not. So I sat down and wrote a letter to Douglas MacArthur and told him what the subject was, and he wrote me a long essay, saying that his mother was born in Norfolk--he had a high regard for Virginia. He said Stonewall Jackson was one of the greatest soldiers this Nation had ever produced, and he went on to point out how Stonewall Jackson's strategy of interior penetration had been used in the Battle of Cross Keys and Port Republic. Lincoln had sent General Burns down there with 45,000 men (Jackson only had 19,000) and told him to wipe out Jackson and end that campaign in the Shenandoah Valley. Well, not knowing where Jackson was, Burns split his forces. And Jackson moved in between them and hit one at Cross Keys and the other at Port Republic. Jackson defeated both of their units. By a tactic of what is called "interior penetration."

Burns later retreated up the valley and General Early's cavalry caught up with the wagon trains. In the abandoned wagon trains there was a considerable amount of whiskey. So instead of chasing Burns across the Potomac, Early's men started drinking whiskey. Jackson, a Presbyterian and a good Christian man, was very much offended, and he bitterly criticized Early and never used him again. But anyway, when Burns got across the Potomac, he said it was murder to fight

without reinforcements.

The other example I used in my talk was what we call Jackson's Turning Movement. Jackson was sent by Lee to turn the left flank of Howard's 11th Army Corps in the Battle of the Wilderness. Howard didn't know where Jackson was. Jackson came up on his right flank and started rolling Howard's men into the center, and the next thing you know, Howard's corps was in full flight. MacArthur said Allenby used that tactic when he landed at Gaza to take Jerusalem. The Turks didn't know where he was coming from, and he turned their flank like Jackson did at Chancellerville. MacArthur added that all of the English generals had studied Henderson's Life of Jackson, and that they knew his tactics, and that they were much used in World War I.

M: MacArthur wrote you a letter about this?

R: Oh, yes. I made a speech that greatly pleased my audience. Thanks to MacArthur. He was a grand man, a great friend of mine.

M: What impressed you so much about MacArthur?

R: His brilliancy and ability, and knowledge. He was just a born leader and well, of course, I reckon he was a little conceited. I reckon most men of extraordinary ability are. But he just had extraordinary ability. I shall always cherish my memory of him and the fact that I knew him when he was just a brigadier general in World War I.

M: You've also mentioned in your talking (Harry) Byrd of Virginia, a fellow Senator. Did you work closely with Byrd?

R: We were born on the same street in the same town of Martinsburg, West Virginia, and the same doctor brought us into the world. I was

thirteen days older than he. At 28 years of age both of us were elected to the State Senate. And he was my deskmate. In 1925 I was one of the leading sponsors of Byrd for Governor of Virginia, primarily on our road program that he and I had framed and put through and the pay-as-you-go program. And lower taxes on farm land. And good roads for the farmers. He was elected by a tremendous majority and he named me as a member of his Cabinet. I was practicing law, and it was an honorary position. It was Chairman of the Commission of Game and Inland Fishes.

In 1916, I had framed the first state-wide game law we had ever had in Virginia. One thing--it appealed to the farmers. I made it a trespass to hunt on farm land without the farmers' permission.

M: The farmers liked that?

R: Yes, oh, you bet. They had been run over by city hunters who would cut the wire fences and shoot their stock. And then I remembered as a boy seeing quail hung up like bunches of bananas, selling 2 for 15 cents. You know, they trapped them and nearly wiped them out. They would dynamite and seine the fish in the stream and they would kill the deer all the year round so that there weren't many left. I got that law through when I was in the State Senate. The first year that Byrd was Governor they revised the game laws and separated the Game Department from the old Commercial Fish Department and created the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries. And Byrd insisted that I be chairman of that. That's the position that Dick Kleberg took in Texas after he left Congress. The head of the Game Department. It

may have been this interest in wild life conservation that drew us together in Congress. He and I got through the Committee on Agriculture, a bill to put a license on migratory--to hunt migratory birds known as the Duck Stamp Law. And we've collected millions of dollars out of that, and we saved the ducks that way.

Then I helped to enact a law called the Pittman-Robertson Act--the states have collected nearly $200,000,000 out of that for game. I was on the Ways and Means Committee when the proposal came after World War II to take off all the war excise taxes. I said, "Well, the sportsmen don't mind paying a tax on guns and ammunition if we'll keep that 11 percent tax and set it up as a special fund to be allocated $3 to each one that the state puts up for upland game." And that's the Pittman-Robertson Act.

M: You must have had a long-time interest in conservation.

R: Over 50 years. I was a member of the old American Game Association, and I was on the Advisory Committee of the Biological Survey. I was on the Commission to buy refuges--the National Migratory Bird Commission to buy refuges and pass on the design for Duck stamps.

M: You must have agreed then with Franklin Roosevelt's conservation program?

R: I met him before he was President. When he was governor he brought Henry Morgenthau down to my hometown. Henry Morgenthau was head of his conservation department, which also had the game. And I was Game Commissioner at that time. So we discussed conservation and I supported his park service, and then we established the Shenandoah

National Park. There are more visitors to that park than any other one in the United States.

The Yellowstone was our first one. It was the first one in the whole world, but our most popular one is the Shenandoah National Park. And I helped put that through. Then I supported a proposal to build a highway on top of it--the Skyland Drive. In 1934 I supported the program of what we called the CCC Camps, Civilian Conservation Corps. Incidentally, I got more camps for my district than all of the rest of the states put together.

The first camp in the United States was built in my district, and the President came down to dedicate it. Senator Byrd and I met him at Harrisonburg, a little town in the Valley at the end of the Southern Railway where he was met by him limousine. He was sitting in the middle of the back seat, and I on one side and Byrd on the other as we started up the Blue Ridge Mountains.

And I said to the President, "Mr. President, don't you think that's pretty scenery?"

And he replied, "Yes, but you haven't got any lakes."

And I said, "No, I admit we haven't got any lakes."

So when we got up to the camp, I said to Bob Feckner--he was head of the CCC--"Bob, the President said that we ought to have some lakes. Could you build them?"

"You find me the site and I'll build them," he replied.

So I couldn't get back to the little town of Waynesboro quick enough. It was on the edge of a National forest, where I had set up

a 2,000-acre game refuge, and I knew there was a good trout stream there. I said to Waynesboro friends, "Bob Feckner says he'll build us a fine lake here, if you'll furnish the land."

"There won't be any trouble about that," they replied. So they furnished the land, and we built Lake Sherando. Feckner put two CCC camps there and named both of them for me. That was the first lake that the federal government ever built--Lake Sherando.

After that the CCC camps built hundreds of lakes to promote fishing and swimming and water conservation. When we had to abolish CCC for the draft in 1940, we turned that work over to the Soil Conservation Service.

I told the head of that Service: "There's one thing you've just got to do. You've got to carry on my pond program." And he said, "We'll do it." And they have since built thousands of ponds. They'll pay up to 50 percent if any farmer wants to build a pond, if he has a suitable location for it. Built thousands of them and it has meant conservation of water and water recreational opportunities.

M: Did you tell President Roosevelt about the lake that you had built?

R: I don't remember. I didn't like too much to tell him how I had used his name to get it. But that's the way I got it. And that started the whole program. I'll admit I got the first one. Later the Soil Conservation Corps built a cutstone building at Sherando--a wonderful building, and people just pour in there, for bathing and fishing and what not.

M: Is it still good fishing?

R: Fairly good.

M: You said there was a good trout stream up there.

R: Well, I remember Virginia once had a very reactionary member of Congress named John Randolph of Roanoke. He was a brilliant but a mean cuss. And he didn't like the public and he said, "the public--it is a beast." Now, you turn the public over to good hunting or to good fishing and put no restrictions on it, it won't last. I don't know what restrictions they put on Lake Sherando, but it was over-fished and it's not where I go to do my fishing.

M: You've got your own spots.

R: Well, I know where good fishing is.

M: Back to Lyndon Johnson--after he became President he supported Civil Rights and the passage of Civil Rights Acts.

R: He supported Civil Rights, with all due deference, beyond what he did as a Senator from Texas.

M: Why do you suppose he did that?

R: He probably realized that the nation was demanding a broader coverage than what we had. He probably felt that he was elected as a national leader, and that he owed it to the nation to give them leadership on it.

M: In other words, he was President of all the people?

R: Or else, it may have been that when we thought he was kind of a moderate in the Senate, he was a liberal all the time but just conceding to the sentiment in Texas. And that this was his real sentiment all the time. I just don't know but it can't be denied that his votes on Civil Rights in the Senate were not the same as his position as President.

M: But you as a conservative, as a fellow Senator when he was there, you can accept this: You would oppose his Civil Rights Bill, but as President, you would accept this in him, this change?

R: Yes. It never made any difference in our relationship.

M: It didn't upset you or strain your relationship?

R: No, no, I just felt that he was in a bind, so to speak, and he couldn't do very well anything else, because that was the national trend, you know. All we could do was to filibuster and to get the best settlement possible and eliminate some of the very worst things and take the rest of it.

M: Did you work with Harry Byrd closely in your relationship in the Congress?

R: Oh yes. Two of the same party from the same state can't be on the same committee. I wanted to be on the Tax Committee. I'd been on the Tax Committee (in the House) and I helped to write twelve tax bills during that time. I'd led the fight for the Hull reciprocal trade agreements. In the Senate, Byrd was on the Tax Committee, which was called the Finance Committee. So I took the two committees of my predecessor, Carter Glass, who was a very distinguished Senator--he had been chairman of the Appropriations Committee and the chairman in the House of the Banking and Currency Committee, and is the father of the Federal Reserve Act, and he had been President pro tempore of the Senate. And I succeeded him in 1946; and he was on Appropriations and Banking and Currency, and I took those two committees. I became chairman of Banking and Currency and the sixth ranking man

on Appropriations. One of my subcommittees was Armed Services in the Defense Department. I was a close friend of Senator Chavez of New Mexico, and when he developed a throat cancer, he asked me to handle that bill, and for two years I handled the appropriations for the Department of Defense. During that time I was in close touch with the White House and there was one thing that I was very much interested in--building the big airplane carriers. McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, thought they were sitting ducks for planes and he was against them. I took the matter up directly then with President Johnson. I wrote him what the testimony of the Naval experts had been, and he put the carrier in his report. And we got it in the bill, and we got the appropriation, and that ship was dedicated in August and was named John F. Kennedy Airplane Carrier.

M: And you were proud to get that through?

R: That's the way it got in the budget.

M: After the 1966 election, you took this job here? How did you get this job? Was it based on your prior experience, or did Lyndon Johnson have anything to do with it?

R: I had had experience with foreign trade and financial matters for thirty some years. And I was certainly familiar with our banking laws and with the other financial institutions--savings and loan, home loan; and we supervised the Export-Import Bank operations. And at that time we had jurisdiction of the International Bank and its operations. I used to attend the annual meetings of the bank as a friend of the Secretary of the Treasury, who is a Governor of the World Bank. I

was chairman of his appropriations. And we were good friends. I also had two very close friends in the Senate who wanted me to stay in Washington. Two or three people offered to contribute large retainers if I'd go into law practice. And I said, "No, I'll never be a lobbyist. I just won't do it. If you pay me a hundred thousand a year, I won't do it." Two Senate friends said, "Well, how about being a consultant to the World Bank?" "Well," I said, "if they will employ me as a part-time consultant so I'll be free to get away when I want to. I may want to do maybe a little hunting and fishing and maybe a little loafing." I didn't know it, but they went down to see the President, and I didn't know about it until two or three...

M: Who was this?

R: They are two friends I don't wish to name. In the Senate. They went down to see the President and he spoke to the Secretary of the Treasury. Of course, he was my close friend, and he is a governor of the World Bank; the United States is the largest stockholder. And he recommended me to the President of the World Bank, and he gave me this position as consultant.

I just agreed to work three days a week. And that's all I get paid for, but I work usually five days a week because I'd rather work than loaf. I like to work.

M: You've been connected with the United States Government for a long time.

R: Yes, thirty-five or six years.

M: What major changes do you see occurring during this period? From the time you started to where we are now? Is there anything that has

developed in American government that disturbs you?

R: Yes, there are several things. One is it has gotten too big for any man to keep up with.

M: Do you think the Presidential job then is an impossible job?

R: In some respects it's impossible. He can only hit the high spots. And he has to trust a lot of people to tell him what is going on.

M: Do you see danger in this?

R: How can anybody keep up with $181,000,000,000? You can't do it. You can't even visualize a billion dollars.

The second thing has been a clear usurpation of power. By an allied branch of the government--the judiciary. The men selected to interpret the Constitution have been rewriting it. That disturbs me.

The third thing that disturbs me has been what started out to be a program of equal rights is gradually being turned into a program of special rights for the non-white. They have a certain element that has always been bad actors. They've been turned into very dangerous criminals. And we haven't come to grips with them. And that has had a degenerating effect upon our nation so that we have an 18 to 20 percent crime raise every year. And if it keeps on, we'll end up in anarchy and revolution.

So I'm not surprised that Nixon can make the control of crime his number one program. That's very vital.

Second, he said, "If elected, I'm going to curb these expenditures." Well, he can't curb them much. He can't keep them from rising. He can't cut much because we've got these built-in programs; now you

can't back away from them. You see? For instance, you authorize so many units of public housing. They're going to cost you $18,000 to $20,000--the government. But it's over a period of 40 years; but once you've started it, you're hooked for 40 years to keep contributing, don't you see? And it's what we call backdoor financing. They get funds directly out of the Treasury, and it doesn't show up out of the Budget.

Those are some of the things that happened since I was first elected to the Congress that disturb me; and for some of them, there is not a very clear answer. For others, there are. I think that we should closely scrutinize those put on the Supreme Court from now on and see whether they are dedicated to what we call American constitutional freedom. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, but within the limits of the Constitution as written. And as intended by those who used that language.

The second is, we must make the criminals respect the law. Now, you had down in Texas, or was it in Texas, a trial judge called Lynch. I don't know whether Texas claims him--anyway, you know, he was the fellow, when a man was accused of stealing a horse, which is the same as murdering a man out in the wilderness, who would say, after a prompt and brief trial, "you are guilty;" and in a few hours that man was hanging from a cottonwood tree. And they quit stealing horses. It just didn't pay.

There is a provision I think is good in the new Gun Law. It's a special provision if a man uses a hand-gun in committing a felonious crime, he gets an extra penalty for the gun. Over the above what he

would get for the crime itself, whether it would be rape, or robbery, or murder. The second time the penalty is doubled. And in each one of those instances it cannot run concurrently with the other penalty, and there can be no parole.

M: Do you think that would help with the crime?

R: We talk about puritan ethics. The pilgrim fathers had faults, I think, and in some things were not too commendable. But there's one thing that helped their manner of life and that is they believed that God was going to punish them if they did wrong. And they didn't think there was any question about it. And they believed that there was a hell; you'd go there, you know. And they weren't like this old farmer at the Methodist meeting. The preacher said:

"Well, hell is a lake of brimstone and fire. And sinners will be plunged into that seething mass, and there they will simmer and broil through all eternity."

An old farmer stroking his chin whiskers said, "Parson, did you say that hell is a lake of brimstone and fire?"

"Yes, that's what the good book says. And that sinners will be plunged into that seething mass, and there they will simmer and broil throughout all eternity." He said, "Yes, brother."

"Well, Parson, I just want to tell you, the people won't stand for it." But among the Puritans they believed that God was going to punish them. And that kept alive what we call the "Puritan ethics."

Now our ethics have broken down. The Supreme Court won't even let school children say, "Oh, Lord, we bless Thee for a bright

beautiful day." You can't even mention His name. They haven't ordered us to take "In God We Trust" off the coins yet, but if that were taken to the Court, they might do it.

Anyway, we've gotten a long ways from the real bedrock of what had been the conerstone of our virtue and good government. Good government in a democracy depends on self-government. Self-government depends on character; and character depends upon moral beliefs and faiths. I think there is a general weakening in the nation of Christian beliefs and faiths. We wouldn't need so much civil law if people had a little more brotherly love in their hearts.

And then, in addition to that, those who are willful, deliberate violators must be made to fear the penalty of the law. That it doesn't pay. I was at one time a public prosecutor--called in Virginia, Commonwealth's Attorney. In your state you may call it District Attorney, State's Attorney, or something. But I prosecuted for six years. And I really made it tough for the guilty. In my home county there are few crimes of violence. Strict law enforcement has helped.

M: Well, you have stated what has disturbed you in this long period of politics. Is there anything that you see in this period in your political career that you find hopeful? That is, an accomplishment of the American people. In politics.

R: Yes, there never was as much interest in education. I can remember when I was a boy didn't ten percent of the high school graduates get to college. Now, about 50 percent go. I think, undoubtedly, that education is one of the hopeful things of this nation.

And I think our industrialization, which has opened so many new fields of man's dominance over the laws of nature holds great promise. Man can make a living with much less effort, leaving him more time for culture and recreation. I think that's a good development. I know when I was a boy working on the farm, we would start working at seven o'clock in the morning and work until sundown. A fourteen-hour day. And even when you're young and strong, that's tough. I've come in, eaten dinner, and dropped down on the front porch right on the floor, and gone to sleep in two minutes.

You can stand that, but you don't enjoy it. And nobody has to do that any more. A welfare program is necessary but there are too many, I think, who have lost their pride and are not only willing to take something for nothing, but prefer it. To be supported without working--that's a bad development. I think cripples and women and children should have help. But take some healthy man who ought to be working and just won't do it--if you find a job for him, I think he ought to either have to take it or else get off the relief.

M: I appreciate the interview.

R: Well, I've given you, I think, some very rambling answers. I hope maybe that thirty, forty, fifty years from now when some research professor at your great University turns this tape on, he may get a little inkling of some of the problems that have bothered us in the good year of 1968.

M: I think they will. Thank you very much.

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By A. Willis Robertson

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