INTERVIEW III

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INTERVIEWEE: GERALD SIEGEL

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mr. Siegel's office in Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

S: As I have indicated, Mike, I did not go to work on the Hill as counsel for the Democratic Policy Committee until after the election of Mr. Johnson as Democratic Leader and my recollection is, until after most of the committee assignments had been made. So your first three items I have nothing really to say much about.

On item four, LBJ's unanimous consent policy, I do have this to contribute. This was not something that he adopted necessarily for the Policy Committee. This goes back, in my recollection, to when I first met him and first went to work for him indirectly at the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee in 1950, when we issued forty-odd reports. He wouldn't issue one unless it was unanimous. We had unanimous Democratic and Republican support for every one of those Preparedness reports. I don't even recall a conscious--because we issued nothing in writing--policy of unanimity for Policy Committee. He always sought to get unanimity. That probably was the hallmark of Mr. Johnson. When he was running for election, he really wanted 100 percent, and anything short of that was a great blow to his desires. I think probably that on anything major, unless there were no real serious objections, he wouldn't come out of Policy Committee with any decision. He would wait until he had removed one or two serious doubts that senators might have had. In that sense, unanimity, yes, but as a formal thing, no. For the most part, scheduling . . .

there weren't any votes. It was done largely by meetings. This was not done during the years '53-'54, because we were in the minority. Scheduling was done by the Republicans, who were in the majority.

In terms of our position on scheduling, you just raised the bills, discussed them, [would] see if anybody had any real problem about their being brought up on the floor, and [would] act accordingly. We didn't take votes: do we or do we not schedule this? It just was, "I'd like to schedule this at this time," or Knowland or Taft would like to, "does anybody have any objection?" If they did, they would discuss it, but it was largely a matter of his conveying the Republicans' desires and finding out whether his Policy group was amenable to their plans during the minority period, '53-'54.

I think I must have missed the 1953 Rule 22 fight, if it began at the time that the Senate was organized, because I wasn't there.

G: Yes, I think [it was] one of the first events of the--

S: Of course, Wayne Morse's seating at that time . . . you're right in your notes here that it was, in Mr. Johnson's view, a Republican problem, because he had not become a Democrat. He was an independent and the Republicans were the majority in the Senate, so I don't think Morse even asked to be seated as a Democrat. That happened in '55, when the Democrats became a majority.

I don't recall anything special about Price Daniel's seating and office space. Walter Jenkins would know more about that, I'm sure.

The Hurley-Chavez election contest I had nothing to do with, and I simply have no recollection about it. I remember it went on.

I do remember Shivers' visit vaguely, because I was just getting my feet on the ground at that time. I think there was a reception

that I probably went to, but I just don't have anything significant that stands out. I know that Johnson at that time, as I am sure you know, was running for reelection in '54 already, and Shivers was a very potent enemy, a potential candidate against him for all he knew. He was treating him with deference but with dignity. I think he was scared of him, but at the same time . . . I think he respected him in some sense, and in others he perhaps didn't. I never really got to know either Shivers or Johnson's attitude toward him, but he was a pretty able guy. My recollection is, for all his faults, this was a guy of real ability. Johnson always had a sense for that and respect for it.

I don't recall President Truman's visit at that time. I do recall, of course, the discovery that Senator Taft had terminal cancer and went very fast. He started out the session healthy and seemingly strong and vigorous, and I guess by May he was gone.

G: Senator Taft and Senator Johnson seemed to have arrived at a number of understandings with regard to how they--

S: They worked very well. I think there was a mutual respect and regard, and there was trust. Each of them, I think, felt that their words were reliable. As you perhaps have learned, the early policy that Johnson adopted in '53 was responsible opposition. There wasn't any jumping into. . . . I remember one--I think you may have it down on your list later on--when the Astin fight came up, and I was sort of gung ho about making it a partisan fight. Of course, his wisdom cautioned "go slow," and he was absolutely right. Throughout that year, he picked his positions carefully. I think he recognized, one, that you had a very popular President at that time, Eisenhower, and that the worst thing that could happen for the Democrats was to get bloodied

and lose a lot of skirmishes with him in the Senate. We were just beginning to see daylight out of Korea and getting that behind us, and I think he wanted to see some constructive, peaceful periods of cooperation.

G: I get the impression that when Knowland took over, it took a few experiences with LBJ before Knowland realized that he couldn't just bulldoze over the minority.

S: Knowland was an interesting man. I always respected his honesty and his candor, but he was never a match for Johnson, intellectually or otherwise. He had no real political antennae that were reliable. He was always getting his foot in his mouth and his bottom planted on the most ridiculous political issues right up to the point where he left the Senate to run for the governorship, ran on the wrong issues, and got himself defeated. Strange guy, but kind of an attractive guy. I think Johnson enjoyed working with him, because he could pretty well manage him. He was never a threat, but there was a lot to respect in Knowland.

You may recall that when he was Leader and he found himself in opposition to Eisenhower's policies, he turned over the leadership chair and went back and took a seat in the rear of the chamber. I forget; it may have been on the issue of executive agreements, the Bricker Amendment, for all I know, or it may have come down the pike later when he was Minority Leader. But he was the Republican Leader. He was a man of principle [but] a strange man, a bull in a china shop. The style of the two men was so different.

Of course, Johnson dominated this whole period from '53 to, really, '60. With the interruption of '59, I was there in '60 again. Johnson's

performance as Senate Democratic Leader was really virtuoso. He just dominated the whole scene. Even Dirksen, who was pretty slick, was not really a match for him. Knowland clearly wasn't.

Well, foreign policy.

G: What I'm wondering here is: was it genuinely bipartisan, or was it simply informing the minority Democratic leadership after decisions had been made?

S: I can't honestly tell you that I have enough information to express an opinion on that. I think that foreign policy issues during the year '53 were relatively low-profile, and there was no occasion to get conflict going. So in that sense, it was genuinely bipartisan. The Yalta Resolution, the Status of Forces Agreement.

The Bricker Amendment: the newspapers built it up, and I suppose it was, for intellectuals, a major thing. It probably would have been a step backward had it been adopted. Johnson played a major role in defeating it. He persuaded Walter George to lead the fight against it. Tom Hennings could never have won it alone. Brilliant as he was, he just didn't have the clout in the Senate. He led the fight, but he couldn't have won it. Interestingly enough, history replays. Under Nixon the Democrats found themselves on the Republican side of that issue during the Eisenhower period, you know. Executive agreements became rather popular during Nixon's period. It depends on whose executive agreements are being gored, I guess.

Reciprocal trade: Albert Gore is my recollection of the man that led really that whole legislative fight. I don't remember anything about change in the personnel or size of the Tariff Commission.

The Customs Simplification Bill was, from my standpoint, routine.

I suppose those who were interested in it didn't regard it that way.

The Cheese Amendment I must say I don't remember at all. The Refugee Relief Act . . . you know, all of these occupied important scenes at the time, but I mark my seven years, seven sessions, in the Senate by highlights such as the Civil Rights Act of '57, the Space Act of '58, and some lesser things. Almost everything else pales by comparison with those really important legislative matters that I got involved in. There were a lot of other things.

I remember some things about the unfortunate Communist Control Act in '54, which you have on the next sheet, but I'll tell you about that later.

Abolition of the RFC: there was a certain amount of Democratic opposition, but I think most people recognized that its day had come. It wasn't any longer really needed, and you had a number of other institutions and organizations that were designed to fill the financial role the RFC had filled. Burnie [Burnet] Maybank probably led the fight against abolishing it, and I don't really remember that.

We had rubber plant facilities being disposed of, and I guess we had some aluminum plants that had to be disposed of also, and that I recall. Anyway, I know I got involved in writing some amendments on the floor for Maybank on the Rubber Plant Facilities bill. These were just relatively minor things, at least from my standpoint. I didn't get involved in the major decisions.

Small Business Administration Bill-temporary controls: I don't remember being involved in it. Wage and price controls: I didn't have anything much to do with that.

Farm Bill: you know, your parenthetical there ["(HHH gets help

from Russell)"] is very interesting, because one of the things that Johnson did as a mark of his philosophy of leadership was to get the unalikes to work together on common goals and teach them that they could disagree and still be effective colleagues when they were in agreement. This was one of those occasions. Russell and Humphrey got to know each other. It wasn't that they just worked on a farm bill together. They got to know each other and respect each other, so that when a civil rights bill came down the pike, they weren't drawing swords and muskets and standing off just firing at will. They were willing to talk with one another on it.

G: Do you credit LBJ as having gotten those two together?

S: I do. I think not just those two, but Douglas and Sparkman and McClellan and Stennis and Humphrey and Proxmire, when he came along, and Dick Neuberger, who was kind of a relatively young radical in the eyes of the conservative members of the Democrats in the Senate. Johnson went out of his way to bring them together, force them into situations where they had to work together, to get to know each other. It paid off, because when he really needed votes, where you didn't get them simply by persuasion but [by] appealing to people as loyal Democrats, this helped; Hell's Canyon issues, things of that kind, where people voted against their convictions . . . not strong convictions, because I don't think anyone could persuade anyone really ever to do that. But where it was an issue that they would have voted against, but he asked them to vote for because it was an important Democratic issue, it was easier to get them to do that, because they no longer felt that men like Humphrey and Morse and Proxmire and Neuberger had horns, and vice versa. It worked the other way, too.

The Northern and Western liberals began to see that the Southern conservatives and Western conservatives were men of principle, men of good will, men that they could work with and who were entitled to their support. That was just the kind of general result of his leadership. You don't want to talk about that. These bills. I just don't--

G: Let me turn off the machine.

(Pause in recording.)

S: I'm afraid I don't remember much about it, and I don't remember it with clarity, but I know I had prepared a research memo on the Bricker Amendment for Senator Johnson. Then he called me into a meeting that was going on between himself, Bill White, and Walter George. I sat and watched one of those really stellar performances of persuasion that he was so capable of with the dean of the Senate, in many ways and particularly on foreign relations matters and constitutional issues. Walter George was still a formidable guy. He was getting a little old, but. . . .

I sat there and witnessed Johnson, with just a quick reading of a memo, talk to the substance of the issue and persuade Walter George that he should not lead a massive fight in favor of the Bricker Amendment.

G: Was it purely a substantive argument, or did he use emotion and flattery and all of the things that--?

S: I wish I could recall it, but it's just too long--you know, it's twenty-four years ago, and I simply can't. I know that it was a rapid-fire, almost uninterrupted monologue. It wasn't a give-and take discussion. It was the Senator expressing just about every point of view that he thought would be effective. I'm sure he probably went back and talked about how Walter George's mother and father might feel.

G: What was George's reaction to all of this?

S: Well, as I say, he was kind of receptive and responsive to the point of view. I don't recall that he committed himself on that occasion, but then he later did on the floor. He supported Johnson on it.

G: Could LBJ carry off one of these things without making the other fellow feel offended?

S: He could and he could not. With some people, he offended them. There's no question about it. He made a lot of enemies. His style was appreciated . . . and it varied. I think you have to recognize that this performance was repeated so many times and in so many different contexts that it got to be touchy, it got to be resented fairly deeply, and sometimes he wasn't as good as others. He was a little undiplomatic, so he ruffled feathers.

But by and large, it was not these occasions of appeal and persuasion when he alienated people. I think that was done by other decisions he had to make. He had to deny people committee assignments they wanted; he had to withhold support occasionally that they wanted for certain pet projects; a lot of envy, clear, pure and simple resentment because he was where he was and they were where they were; clash of personalities, differences in makeup. It was just, I think, the price of leadership. If you are going to be a leader, you're just going . . . for example, the long years of leadership of Mike Mansfield, a contrast. He didn't make enemies, but he didn't lead, really. He was kind of a coordinator. He was a guy who kept the pack together only in a sort of . . . nonconstructive sense. It was seldom that he could really take an issue and go out and build a campaign and win it. In fact, Mike's philosophy, I think,

was, "It's my role as Leader to make it possible for every senator to do what he wants to do."

Of course, Johnson's feeling was that a leader ought to participate in the formation of each senator's views on issues and his voting position.

G: Do you remember the recommittal of the Taft-Hartley Amendment that Senator Goldwater had offered? This was a case where LBJ managed to get the Southern Democrats as well as the Northern liberal Democrats to vote together to defeat that amendment.

S: Yes. These were the occasions when he would act in a partisan way. He was able to persuade memebers of the Senate to vote against their personal views--not their deep convictions, I'm sure, but their personal preferences would have been to go the other way on that kind of an issue. He would have appealed to them on partisan grounds, why this was important to get so-and-so reelected, perhaps, who after all was a Democrat. And if we were going to get the majority, you know, it took Northerners as well as Southerners. The kinds of arguments that he would use would not necessarily go to the merits. In fact, where he knew that he was talking to someone who disagreed on the merits, he didn't try; that was silly. He didn't try to persuade him. What you did was appeal to them on other considerations which might overweigh their feelings on the merits, and that's what he did.

G: Here he even got George Malone and Bill Langer to vote with him.

S: Of course, that wasn't too difficult in those days. There were renegade Republicans, and of course, Malone was in McCarran's pocket. If you had McCarran with you, you had Malone. I'm sure you've heard the stories about when Senator McCarran walked on the floor and "Molly" Malone was

speaking, and McCarran wanted him to stop. All he had to do was walk over and go like that (motion), and Malone would stop in mid-sentence and sit down.

G: Was it true?

S: It's the truth. I've watched it. It was sort of a disgraceful thing in a way, but this was the kind of power McCarran had over Malone. And Malone wasn't really very bright. I guess he wasn't as dense as people say, but--

G: Did LBJ make any special efforts to keep Langer from voting with the Republicans on a lot of occasions?

S: Oh yes, he kept a friendly line out to him all the time. He kept a line of communication, and he would do little favors for him. When Langer wanted a bill brought up, if it didn't make that much difference we'd bring it up. He'd tell me to get it and make sure we could get it on the calendar.

G: There was an indication that he let Langer keep a little subcommittee chairmanship or something like that.

S: He probably did. That was a small price to pay for his support. He was a pretty tough character.

Now let's see, we're in '54.

G: That Gore Amendment you may remember something on, on the Reciprocal Trade extension.

S: I just vaguely remember that, because I didn't participate in the trade agreement legislation. Gore had a very good staff. Of course, I think he was clearly the dominant person on the trade agreement. Which Gore amendment? Was this to extend the Reciprocal Trade authority of the President?

G: I assume that's--

S: That's what it would have been, I suppose.

Well, it was a mixed bag, as you can see. I just can't shed any real light on it.

St. Lawrence Seaway I remember. That was a long battle, but I don't think that had anything to do with public power versus private power. The St. Lawrence Seaway didn't have any power aspects to it as much as it had waterway. . . . It seems to me--I may be overlooking something, but this was the development of locks so that you could reach the Midwestern-Central part of the nation by way of the Atlantic without going through the Gulf ports or the Atlantic-Eastern Coast ports. It seems to me that that was the problem. What you had was your eastern seaports, your Gulf seaports saying, "Look, if you build the Seaway, you're taking business away from us." I don't remember a power issue in that at all. I could be wrong about that.

Johnson was not in the forefront of statehood for Hawaii and Alaska, but I think at the time clearly it would never have come about without his help. He just wasn't one of the men pushing for it at the beginning. Now at the time that it finally went through, he was a strong, strong supporter. You know, it had overtones of civil rights. Bringing two more states in meant to Southern senators that their ability to filibuster the Fair Employment Act--and in those days, this was still a very live and frightening issue to them--would be diluted. So they were inclined to be against this. With all the arguments of non-contiguity, essentially, four more votes against the fillibuster was the way they looked upon Hawaii and Alaska, primarily; and also, I suppose they recognized that these were not likely to be financially

contributing states, that deficit spending would be increased if you did this. They were not particularly major issues, it seems to me, in Mr. Johnson's mind in those days.

The Oppenheimer thing, as a Policy Committee I think we did not particularly get involved in. I watched it. I could be wrong, but do you have any record of Mr. Johnson saying anything at all?

G: No.

S: I don't think [so]. It was a nasty, difficult, complex thing. We just stayed away from it.

You say that the Senator named Paul Douglas chairman of the Joint Committee on the Economic Report. I don't recall how that would have come about, because ordinarily the Leader didn't appoint chairmen. Are you sure that's . . .? I'm sure he would have taken a strong hand in his becoming the chairman of that committee if he were not, just by seniority, in line to get it. That's what I don't remember, because ordinarily in those days, chairmanships went by seniority unless you voted against it.

G: I believe this refers to the occasion on which Douglas wanted to go on the Finance Committee, and Harry Byrd didn't want him on the Finance Committee.

S: This was a way of keeping him off Finance. In those days, there were a lot of reasons for assignments, reasons of that kind. This may have been that, I don't recall. And let me say this. Much of the political infighting of that kind I wasn't privy to. I think Johnson treated me rather as kind of a legislative counsel. He looked to me for a lot of things, but not political. He used to tell me often about how bad my political judgment was.

I see you've got a lot of things in here. I remember the night that Johnson won the primary in '54. The first man to get up and congratulate him in the Senate was Goldwater.

Farm legislation: I never did get involved too much and Mr. Johnson never did either. He just looked to Humphrey and Russell, and Talmadge later on. Talmadge got elected in 1954. In 1955, the Senator brought us together and said he wanted us to try to work on a new farm bill. I never succeeded, but Senator Talmadge and I did work together very closely, because he became a member of the Calendar Committee. I got to know him and respect him. He is one very, very able guy.

Now, the Atomic Energy Act fight of '54 was very much a public versus private power fight, among a lot of other things. Then it got bogged down in the Dixon-Yates hint of impropriety, and that complicated things. But again, I was an observer more than a participant in that.

The Formosa Resolution was adopted at this point, but I don't see it on this list.

The Communist Control Act was an interesting episode. You know that this started as an anti-labor bill coming out of a Republican-dominated Labor Committee. There were some Policy sessions on "How do you defeat it?" because it was tough. You had a lot of Democrats who were anti-labor. Put them together with Republicans, and it was pretty clear that what you were going to get was a very tough anti-labor bill. So Johnson got the strangest participants: Humphrey, Judge Musmanno, Martin Dies from the House side. What we did was put together what I suppose we thought might just plain kill the bill, but it turned out the other way. We decided not to make it anti-labor but anti-communist, so we outlawed the Communist Party just pure and simple.

Really no one seriously thought it would become law, but by gosh, it did. It's been sort of troublesome for Humphrey. He has had to apologize and explain that for years. It was designed to convert an anti-labor bill into an anti-communist bill that everyone could vote for. Actually, "85-0," you'd better check that. My recollection is that a man named McCarran voted against it, because he thought it was unconstitutional.

G: Who thought of it, do you know?

S: I couldn't tell you. You know, it was the kind of thing that emerged out of a number of discussions with a number of people. I would like to say Mr. Johnson, but I don't think so. I just couldn't credit him with it directly, I'm sure it wasn't Humphrey. It might have been Martin Dies or Musmanno and Johnson recognized its . . . They would have done it because they wanted to do it; he would have done it because it served the principal purpose of making it possible for Democrats to vote for a bill that they really ought not vote for otherwise. This was essentially the purpose of the conversion or the addition to it. It really was. They were able to get out some of the provisions that would have been very troublesome to labor organizations by doing that.

G: Do you want to skip over this Western Speaking Tour?

S: This again was, I think, the beginning of Mr. Johnson's thought of the 1956 nomination. I think he recognized that his strength would have to come from the West and Southwest, and he was going to help. Of course, he also recognized that it wasn't going to be the state grass-roots Democratic organizations from which he could expect support; it would have to be from the congressional organizations. So he was there making friends by helping them get elected.

G: Now, you talked about the McCarthy censure in your earlier interview.

S: Well then, if I've covered it, there's no reason to go over it again. There is a question that you raise here about why did Senator Johnson appoint Ed Johnson, John Stennis, and Sam Ervin. The only answer I can give, and I'm not certain of it, is that Stennis and Ervin were both former judges. Also, they were both very reliable, obvious conservatives. He was not loading the committee with Democrats already against. You weren't going to win this fight against Joe McCarthy if you put Wayne Morse and Hubert Humphrey and people like that on the committee.

Ed Johnson was acceptable, I think, to liberal Democrats as well as conservative. He was kind of the old dean of the Senate.

G: He was retiring, too, I think.

S: I think he was not going to run again, and he was a close friend of Senator Johnson. I think I've mentioned to you that he asked me to help Ed. In fact, I recall Ed Johnson said he would only do it if I would help him, or some such thing. He said he didn't want to work that hard, so I did help. I wrote his portion of the report. Of course, it wasn't the hearings and it wasn't the report; it was Senator McCarthy's own stupidity that succeeded in getting him censored. When he started attacking Bennett and Watkins, that ended it. He lost every vestige of support.

G: Did you ever hear of LBJ trying to appoint an Irish Catholic Democratic senator to that censure committee?

S: I did not. I suppose a lot of people have speculated that he might have wanted to ask Senator Kennedy to serve just to embarrass him and to cripple him politically, but I don't think so. In fact, the Senator

wasn't there. He was having back troubles and was in the hospital.

G: He did try to appoint Senator George and Senator Russell, and neither one of those--

S: They probably refused to serve. And I think he wanted McClellan; he probably talked to John McClellan. You see, he used these older leaders as counselors all the time, and not only as counselors. He had the wisdom to know that if he talked with them early, that they would be there to support him later, even though they might not agree with him 100 percent.

G: I want to ask you one other question here. Did you get any indication during the McCarthy fight that his relations with Senator Symington cooled somewhat?

S: Oh, I saw that question. They did cool.

G: Symington favoring a more outspoken opposition to McCarthy?

S: That may have been a sort of beginning, because they had been very close friends. I have always held the view that the real reason for cooling was that they were competing for the same assignment, and everything else was just secondary. Now maybe Symington's performance at that time was not really too good. I think he hurt himself. Where he could have become the front runner for the Democratic nomination, he booted it. His inability to articulate strongly at the McCarthy hearings resulted in his just kind of passing an opportunity to win a lot of public support. But as far as irritating Johnson, I don't think so. I don't remember that it did, in any event. I think that when they realized that they were both running for President, there just had to be a cooling off. They were contestants, and they were right down to 1960. They were contesting for the vice presidency;

not really, because Mr. Johnson wasn't. . . . I think he was not. I say this genuinely: I think he really had no thought of becoming a vice-presidential candidate until Kennedy suggested it or somebody suggested it. I don't think it was Phil Graham, but that's what Phil Graham said.

G: Shall we go on to '55 now?

S: All right. We can spend a few minutes on this. I didn't go through this entirely.

Now, here's where I think, for the first time, Johnson had an opportunity to establish the policy of new senators getting one good major committee assignment before passing out other assignments to the older senators.

G: He himself moved from Commerce to Finance.

S: Again, that would have been to block, probably, a person that they felt might be troublesome on some issues on the Finance Committee. In all candor, I suppose at that time depletion allowance would have been one of the motivating factors, because that meant a lot to Mr. Johnson's constituents. He didn't do much for them otherwise. Assisting in the delay of the elimination of . . . and I think he was a believer. I think he'd probably, if he were here today, would say, "Well, you're freezing your balls off because you've taken away all the incentives for people to go out and find new fuel."

G: I'm sure he felt a good deal of competition from the DNC and the ADA.

S: Yes. It was during this '54 . . . I don't know, maybe it started earlier than that, when the National Committee set up an advisory group and asked Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson to serve on it. It might have been

earlier, in '53. I guess it was; I can't remember. They refused to serve. They felt that it was improper for the congressional leadership to be members of a non-congressional advisory group to the Congress. They said, "Fine, you go ahead." They weren't very happy about it. There was a real brouhaha. Again, it was essentially a difference in the party makeup. The National Committee at that time was disorganized. It had lost the election. It didn't have really much strength other than Congress, and the congressional leaders weren't about to share their power with the National Committee, is what it really amounted to, I think. They certainly saw the political issues differently, but on the whole they kept shaking hands and they kept friendly. There wasn't a complete rupture.

G: In early '55, LBJ went to the Mayo Clinic to have a kidney stone operation. I believe you indicated that you drove--

S: Yes, it was either the first or the second trip that I recall going out to the airport with Tommy Corcoran in Senator Johnson's limousine to meet him on his return. We went back to his house on 30th Place. In fact, it must have been the second one, because he dropped his pants and showed us that steel corset that he was wearing at that time.

G: That would have been the second one.

S: It would have been the second trip, because I remember his doing that in the living room.

The ride back was largely taken up with Tommy talking about the political prospects of the '56 nomination for Mr. Johnson as he then saw it, which sort of fascinated me because I didn't really know anything about it. I just listened with my eyes open, probably my mouth

open, too. It was obvious that they were looking down the road.

G: What was Senator Johnson's reaction to this?

S: Interest, but at the same time, as I recall, he was really very reserved and very unresponsive. I think he was listening and acknowledging, but I don't think he was believing. Well, I don't know. I can't remember now how the report that Tommy was making went, whether it was encouraging or discouraging. I have always believed that at some early point--this may have been too soon--that the Senator recognized that getting the Democratic nomination, as distinct from winning a presidential election, was an almost impossible goal for anyone from the South or Southwest. I have said to my friends, "President Carter owes Senator Johnson and me a small debt that he may not recognize, because if we hadn't passed the '57 Civil Rights Act, no one from Georgia would have been listened to as a possible Democratic nominee, even this year." I say that simply because after '57 came '60 and after '60 came '64 and after '64, '65. You laid the foundation for putting at rest, finally, the major issue that divided the Democrats of the North and the South.

Johnson knew that, and at that time nothing had been done. In fact, the school decision had just come down and in a way kind of revived the heat. In any event, I can't honestly say. I feel he went to Chicago in '56 knowing that he didn't have a chance. I think he went to Los Angeles in '60 knowing privately that he didn't have a chance. But he had a lot of people wanting him to make the race, and he made it. Of course, history, fate, brought about the circumstances which might very well have been the only ones that could have made him President in his lifetime.

G: Do you remember the tax bill in '55?

S: In '55 or '54?

G: Fifty-five.

S: Oh, this was when we undid some of the revisions in the '54 Bill. We eliminated the dividend tax credit and reduced the exclusion. I do remember a little about that. I remember Senator Kerr, who led the fight to do it, saying once in a private meeting how much it was costing him personally to do it. It was a bundle, too, because he had a lot of dividends coming to him, and this cost him a great deal of money.

Yes, that was a political fight, no question about it. I think that everyone recognized that here was where you could divide the Republicans and the Democrats, clearly because this was a benefit to the high-tax payers and not to the majority of voters.

G: I think in one of the Policy Committee meetings, LBJ used the argument with Senator Russell, who was sort of wavering on it, particularly the twenty-dollar rebate or whatever credit to low-income earners: This was a Jeffersonian principle, and the Republicans were sponsoring a Hamiltonian. Russell said, "Well, I guess I'm a Jeffersonian."

S: He was a Jeffersonian, but he really was a Hamiltonian in economic matters. Well not really, actually, but he was conservative on economic matters. Great man. Russell was just tremendous.

G: This was evidently the only party vote that the Democrats lost that year. They lost by one vote.

S: One vote, yes, but making the fight, actually, was almost more important than winning the fight. And it did the Senator a great deal of good with the labor people, although. . . . I think somewhere you had

a question about: did labor come to feel better about him as a result of his efforts on their behalf in these various issues? The answer, I think is: some did, some didn't. The major portion of labor organization members, leadership, never were strong for him, actually, until he became President. Then I think they did become believers. They didn't trust him before. They just assumed that he was another conservative, anti-labor Texan. For the most part, he had few friends in the labor area until he became President.

You know, you're talking about just the twenty-dollar tax credit, and I'm--

G: No, this was part of it.

S: No, no. It was tied to the heel of the stock dividend exclusion. They made some changes on that, as you know. You won part and you lost part on it. It was a good fight. I think he felt not too badly about losing the vote on the twenty-dollar tax credit.

I don't remember this Truman visit. I remember one in 1960 when I was back from the business school, working during that regular session. Milton Kronheim had a luncheon for President Truman down at Duke Zeibert's. That was a small group. It was the first time that I really got to know President Truman. I sat right across the table from him; we visited, and I enjoyed him. This was 1960, and he was getting on in years, but he still was a vigorous gentleman, a great guy. I don't remember this occasion, except I remember him speaking, and I probably was on the floor, listening.

The Rayburn dinner I don't remember.

The Highway bill was another major piece of legislation in terms of the national economy, but again, Senator Gore took leadersip on that.

He was an interesting man.

G: This was the occasion when Senator George lashed out against a provision in the Gore Amendment that would allow the federal government to control advertising rights on either side of these highways.

S: States' rights.

G: Yes. Do you remember that speech?

S: I do, and why he did it, I'll never know, except for Coca-Cola. They had a lot of roadside signs, I suppose, in those days: "Drink Coca-Cola."

G: Evidently he defeated it right on the spot. They immediately took it out when he launched into this.

S: He had tremendous clout. That would have been in '54, but you see, he didn't run in '54. That's when Senator Talmadge was elected, and Senator George dropped out of the primary. So what you're recalling is in '54, it had to be, but it would have been on the early debates, probably on the highway bill, which I gather really didn't pass till '56, did it? Maybe it was '55.

G: Do you remember the defeat of the Capehart Amendment for the Housing bill?

S: Vaguely. I think probably Senator Kerr led the battle against it. He usually enjoyed a debate on the floor with Capehart, and he just made a monkey out of him. But again, that was one of those not too frequent occasions when the Senator recognized that he had a good political issue that the Republicans and Democrats could divide on, choose up sides and have at each other, and they did.

G: This was an occasion in which the Democrats needed some extra votes. The real estate lobby had evidently lined up quite a few votes for the Capehart Amendment. LBJ got Hubert Humphrey's plane landed in bad

weather. Do you remember that at all?

S: Yes. Yes, I do, but I wasn't directly involved in those efforts that it took to get Humphrey to the Senate. I remember all the excitement and drama of his getting there--he just made it--and, of course, the delay in order to [give Humphrey time]. He had everybody asking, "How am I recorded?" The system of keeping the vote open for a late senator was really fun.

G: He must have had a lot of tricks to stall.

S: He was a tremendous parliamentarian. He knew the rules, and he insisted that I get to know them. We used every rule that would serve our purposes and used it properly. In '56 or '57 we lost a fight that I think was not . . . had to be '57, I guess. I can't remember now. The Civil Rights bill came over in '56, but we didn't take it up till '57. The rule fight came in '57, and the question was whether a single objection by a senator would bring a House passed bill to the floor for immediate consideration, rather than have it be referred to committee. The liberals were aware that the bill would be sent to the Judiciary Committee, it would never see the light of day, they thought, and with reason.

I remember doing a lot of work on that for the Senator and for Senator Russell and coming to the conclusion that the Vice President's ruling was absolutely wrong, that never did the Senate intend for a single objection to expedite the process. It was designed to slow the process. In effect, a single objection would have meant that a bill on the calendar would go to committee, not come to the floor for immediate consideration. Anyway, we lost the fight, but then Johnson worked out a compromise where the bill, as you know, went to Judiciary with a fourteen-day discharge limitation.

I notice in here: "On June 18, Johnson suffered severe chest pains while on a ride with Senator Smathers." That I didn't know. As you know, it was July 5, wasn't it?

G: Second.

S: [July] 2 that he had his heart attack.

G: Do you remember the Minimum Wage bill, when they raised the minimum wage from seventy-five cents to a dollar. That was evidently the day after the defeat of the Capehart Amendment.

S: Again, this would have been a strong partisan-type issue, and Johnson would have had to persuade many of the conservative Democrats to go along on that kind of vote--because they weren't believers--to win it. And you know, he was winning it with a minority. Oh no, is this in '55?

G: Yes.

S: Well, he had a one-vote majority. He might as well have had a minority. In those days, the Southern Democratic-Northern Republican coalition was very much alive yet. It was hard to win those issues.

G: I guess he didn't talk much about these legislative victories to the press for fear that it would erode his ability to continue to do that.

S: He talked about them, but he never publicly talked about how he won them.

G: Did he do that privately?

S: Sometimes, yes. We had these sessions in his office where he would let his hair down and relax and begin to reminisce. They were great. I just wished we had taped them, because I can't recall them with any reliability. Those are the types of things that I feel I shouldn't comment on. It would be one part reality and maybe eighty parts construction.

G: On the grants to local airports, here, I understand, is one case where he brought it up out of order, essentially, because one of the opponents was not there. He just had it passed before it had--I guess it was supposed to lay over on the table for twenty-four hours or something after it passes the--

S: Theoretically, it does. It can be reconsidered any time for twenty-four hours after passage, the next legislative day.

G: Did you ever hear of him doing this, bringing it up before this twenty-four hour period?

S: To reconsider and end the possibility of a revote?

G: Right.

S: Yes, that was a standard parliamentary procedure. Often after a bill passed, you would get a motion made to reconsider, so that you could table it, and that ended it.

G: No, but I mean here, evidently bringing it up and voting on it before the opposition would--

S: --get itself straightened out? Yes. He had an enormous sense of timing, knew when to move and when not to. He not only could count votes, he could see them coming or going in either direction. No I don't have any recollection of any specific issue. You're getting right up to the point of his heart attack.

G: Do you remember this McCarthy Resolution that was designed to tie Eisenhower's hands at Geneva? Here was a case where the Republicans wanted it killed quietly in committee, and LBJ insisted on having it brought out and kicked around.

S: Whether he was the one who really wanted it or whether he was doing it because he was asked to do it by some of his other Democratic senators,

I don't know. He certainly did feel that none of this under-the-table business. . . . You know, there was a lot of resentment about Eisenhower's treatment of General Marshall, his refusal to reject Jenner and McCarthy. They figured it was a Republican problem; let it come out.

G: In this debate, LBJ seems to have generated a big argument between Capehart and McCarthy.

S: That wasn't hard to do.

G: Well, they were both quite conservative, weren't they?

S: Yes, but neither one was sufficiently bright to avoid the pitfalls. He would have found something to disagree on and get them fighting between themselves. That was not too difficult to do.

McCarthy was beginning to disintegrate in those days. He was behaving irrationally, unpredictably. It's hard to know what really happened. Capehart was kind of a pleasant old stumblebum. He was a nice guy, but he just didn't have much capability.

G: Is it true that Senator Kerr once referred to him as a rancid tub of ignorance? Did you ever hear that?

S: I've heard that. He probably did and took it out of the Record. He would have taken it out of the Record. He may not have said it on the floor, but "rancid tub," I don't know.

He used to irritate him, but I think he rather enjoyed debating with him, because he could always josh him. He was a perfect foil.

Isn't that funny. I thought it [LBJ's heart attack] was after the Fourth of July holiday, because I went out to the hospital that night. Then I worked the rest of that session with Senator Clements, who I guess is still alive, but very, very ill.

G: Yes, he is.

S: He doesn't look well. Last time I saw him he was awful. Do you know where he is now? Have you gotten his recollections?

G: We had one interview with him and would like to get more.

S: You had better do it soon.

G: Let me ask you about this memorandum on the Natural Gas bill. Did you ever get any indication that after LBJ's heart attack he continued to promote this bill while recovering?

S: Again, this is certainly one issue on which--I never got involved in the Tidelands bill or the Natural Gas bill. The only time I got involved in the Natural Gas bill was after that Case disclosure that he had been given $2500 as a contribution. Then we had another committee set up. Then I drafted a bill called the Clean Election bill. It got introduced, I think, with 85 senators supporting it, or some such thing, but it never passed the Senate and never passed the House.

G: Here's another document that I guess indicates the sort of leverage he was using to keep Wayne Morse aboard.

S: No question about it. I don't remember it, but this was his means of knowing. . . . I've said it many times. One of the principal reasons for his success was that he knew more about each member of the Senate than they knew about themselves, and he did it by facts.

G: This is a list of projects in which Wayne Morse was interested.

S: Exactly. He knew precisely where the Senator was interested in getting help. He also knew where his hostilities lay.

There are so many things here we're not going to have time to go into. Grace Tully's role was really relatively minor. I think, in all candor, here was a very, very loyal employee of FDR who had fallen on difficult times. No one was looking out for her, and LBJ did,

and took her under his wing.

G: How long did she work with him, do you know?

S: Well, she was on our staff for quite a number of years. She was there from, I believe, either '54 or '55, probably '55, certainly until he became Vice President. Then, I think, her health may have given out and she retired. By that time I guess she had a sufficient retirement built up. You know, she's still alive.

G: Yes.

S: "What changes did the heart attack make?" Slowed him down, depressed him. He recovered, and then you would never have known he had had one. He used to tire. I remember that during the long, long filibuster sessions in '57, which is two years after his heart attack, at the end of the day, he would look awful, but by the morning, he was refreshed.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II.

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