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CARL ALBERT ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW I

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Signed by Carl Albert on August 23, 1979

Accepted by James E. O'Neill, Acting Archivist of the United States on September 14, 1979

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ACCESSION NUMBER 74-159

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born in McAlester, Okla., May 10, 1908; A.B., U. of Okla., 1931; B.A., Oxford U., Eng. (Rhodes scholar), 1933, B.C.L., 1934; admitted to Oklahoma bar, 1935; legal clk. FHA, 1934-37; atty., accountant Sayre Oil Co., Oklahoma City, 1937-38; legal dept. Ohio Oil Col., Marshall, Ill., Findlay, O., 1939-40; gen. practice of law, Oklahoma City, 1938, Mattoon, Ill., 1938-39, McAlester, Okla., 1946-47; mem. of Congress, 3d Okla. Dist., 1947-1977; House majority whip, 1955-62; House majority leader, 1962-71; Speaker of the House, 1971-77. Served in U.S. Army, 1941-46, PTO. Decorated Bronze Star, Democrat.

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 28, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: CARL B. ALBERT

INTERVIEWER: Dorothy Pierce McSweeney

PLACE: Congressman Albert's office in the Capitol, Washington, D. C.

Tape 1 of I

M: This interview is with Congressman Carl Bert Albert of Oklahoma, a Democrat.

Congressman Albert, I'd like to begin this interview with a brief outline of the dates of your public service so that we may relate your career and associations with Lyndon Johnson. Before your election to the House of Representatives, you were in general law practice in Oklahoma, and served in World War II in the Army Air Force. In 1947 you were elected to the 80th Congress from the Third District of Oklahoma and, of course, continuously re-elected. In 1955 you were named as Democratic Whip and served in that position until 1961. In 1962 you were elected Majority Leader of the House and have served in that position to this date. Is this background information according to dates correct?

A: Yes. As far back as it goes, it's, I think, substantially correct.

M: Have you ever participated in any other similar type of oral history project?

A: I've had a lot of colleges interview me on similar projects, and some of the Kennedy people interviewed me on John Kennedy's Presidency and my association with him. He and I came to Congress the same day.

M: And did you sort of chronologically come up to 1963?

A: Not specifically. They were more interested in a summary of my reactions and experiences with the President rather than a chronological outline.

M: Let me just add if we come to anything which you feel that you've spoken about in any of these other projects of this nature, then we should just go ahead and skip over it because we will be able to avoid duplication.

A: Right. And I've had one with Sam Rayburn with two or three different people, but I don't think they were recorded. They were just oral and manually taken down.

M: You just tell me if we get on any areas that you've discussed before.

Mr. Congressman, you're geographically from the same part of the country as Mr. Johnson, belong to the same political party, served two years in the House with Mr. Johnson and really simultaneously assumed a leadership position in the House when Mr. Johnson became Majority Leader in the Senate. Did this sort of automatically bring you in contact with Mr. Johnson, and was this an aid to the developing of a friendship 'way back in 1947?

A: Yes, it was. But I can't remember the exact date that I met Lyndon Johnson. I shook hands with him before I was a member of Congress a time or two and when I was in Washington. He probably won't remember those occasions, but I do. But I have no idea when it was. And I don't remember my very first association with him as a member of Congress. I knew that he was a member of the House when I came here, and I saw him, I guess, on the first day. So I've known him continuously since that time.

I knew him fairly well as a member of the House while he was here. We often talked together. I think he already had some idea about me. He was very close to Mr. Rayburn, so was I, and I think Mr. Rayburn sort of keyed him in on me. Mr. Rayburn would have his board of education meetings, and sometimes we would be there together. Mr. Rayburn had become acquainted with me before I came to Congress and knew something about my background and my outlook. We had adjacent districts. He lived only six miles from my district. I think he was sort of the intermediary through which I became rather rapidly acquainted with President Johnson while he was a member of the House.

M: Do you recall any particular first meetings or impressions that Mr. Johnson left with you?

A: Yes, I remember several. I remember one time we were both standing behind the rail. We had a vote on the Natural Gas Act. I voted for it and he turned around to me and he said, "You mean a progressive Democrat like you would vote for a vested interest proposition of that kind?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Don't worry, I'm going to vote for it too when my name gets around." Of course, I was one of the first to vote, my name having started with an "A", you know. I remember that very well. We were both behind the rail not making any particular noise about the thing, but we both voted for it.

And I remember one time when Sam Rayburn wanted me to go on the Committee on Agriculture, which of course was pretty good for my district. Mr. Rayburn had very definite views about it. There was quite a number of members that wanted me to go on

the Committee on Ways and Means, to run for it. Mr. Rayburn said, "Well, you can win it, but I want you to go on Agriculture."

I told Lyndon Johnson and he said, "Well, I think you should veto the Speaker. It's not nearly as important to you as Ways and Means," but I followed the Speaker.

M: What did you mean by saying that Speaker Rayburn had definite ideas about agriculture?

A: He thought that his part of the country and mine, being adjacent--almost identical crops--I think he understood better than anybody the importance of being a down-to-earth member early in your career. He told me: "You get on the Committee on Agriculture. You can go up just as far as you can go from any of these other committees--don't kid yourself about that--and you'll be here for thirty years. But you get involved in all the machinations of some of these more sophisticated committees (he didn't put it in that language), you may have more trouble." He was very interested in me.

M: How had this been stimulated? Was this, as you said, that you were from adjacent districts?

A: He had spoken in my district many times. I was introduced to him before I ever ran for Congress, and during my campaign for Congress I saw him several times. Right after I was elected I saw him. But I have a lot of constituents who were former constituents of his, and they talked to him about me. His brother lived in my district, so there was really quite an association. My grandfather-my mother's father--was born in his district, and my mother was born nearby at Gainesville--just the next county to his district. So we had a lot of common associations. I had skads of relatives around Denison and Sherman, which were in his district.

M: Mr. Congressman, you're half-Texan.

A: Yes. On my mother's side, I'm Texan. I was talking to Will Rogers Jr., the other day on a television program, and he was telling about just having been up to Alaska with the Ted Kennedy committee and that he went to see his father's monument. You know, his father was killed there. He said it was isolated in an area where there's no granite, but Oklahoma granite was brought up there by Texans, and the monument was built. And I said, "Well, we like the Texans. The young people like some more of the Texans you know."

M: I'd like to have you keep telling me these asides. What do you recall about Mr. Johnson as a Congressman?

A: I recall Mr. Johnson as a very ambitious Congressman who was frustrated, in my opinion, by the fact that he was from such a large delegation-- which of course was a boon also--but by such a large delegation that he was shoved behind other members and didn't

get to get on committees that he would have liked to have been on himself. At least, that was the impression I got.

I think he was a little frustrated that so many members of his own delegation had more important positions than he had, although he was on the Armed Services Committee and quite interested in it. He was obviously a very knowledgeable person, very confident of his ability, but I think a little bit unhappy about the difficulties of surmounting the seniority ladder in the Texas delegation.

For instance, he had been defeated by Albert Thomas for a position on the Committee on Appropriations. He has told me since then had he won that, he would probably still be in the House of Representatives and he'd be number two man on the Committee on Appropriations behind George Mahon. Well, George was ahead of him. Somebody else was on Ways and Means. Of course Mr. Rayburn was Speaker, which meant that his chances at getting a leadership position were very slim in the House because it would be almost impossible to have two major leaders out of the same delegation.

I got the impression that he was a little restless and a little unhappy about that. Now I may be wrong, this is just an impression, but based on conversations that I had with him and watching him move around the House. He was very quick and walked fast between here and the Cannon Building. I'd meet him in the tunnel; he'd be walking very fast. It was obvious also that he knew what the score was far better than the average member of Congress.

M: Did his sort of close ties to President Roosevelt and Speaker Rayburn aid in his position--or bring to him more power to his position in the House?

A: I'm sure it did, but I can't put my finger on anything that would prove that. I think it helped in this sense: that every member knew that he had been close to Roosevelt and that he was close to the Speaker. And this gave him a certain amount of status automatically you know, so that when he said anything people would realize that this was not just some upstart talking. He didn't talk very much in the House, but he did move around quite a bit. He did watch things very carefully.

Then when he ran for the Senate, which was, I think, during my first term--he had been defeated for the Senate once before. I've heard him talk about his first race for the Senate. I think he felt that he was dealt out of that first race. I don't know, but I got that impression--that he felt that he should have won the first race. He knew that he'd have a very difficult race the second time because Texas at that time was pretty much revolting against the Administration. In spite of the fact that Johnson had voted against a lot of Administration proposals, he still sort of had them tied around his neck, I think he felt. He was absent a whole lot that second year of my first term down campaigning in Texas.

Of course, he would show up every once in awhile and put something in the record. I remember one thing he put in the record about he was the Congressman-at-large from Texas. He put something about soil conservation in the record. He'd show up and put something in the record and take off again. He was obviously in a life-and-death struggle for his political future. I remember those things, and everybody wondered whether he could beat--was it Coke Stevenson at that time.

M: Yes.

A: And a lot of members of the Texas delegation didn't think he could beat him. They thought he would sort of be snowballed by the tide. And he was, I suppose, quite lucky to beat him under the circumstances--even though he had a lot of prestige in the House and in the State, I imagine, with the regular Democrats. He was in this unfortunate position, as I view it, that he was never the darling of the Texas liberals. And he was, to the conservative, a part of the Administration setup so he was in the middle and he had both sides either unhappy with him or not very enthusiastic about him.

Mr. Rayburn was strong for him. Mr. Rayburn disliked Coke Stevenson very much because he didn't think he was a real Democrat. Mr. Rayburn had nothing against Republicans, but he disliked Democrats who aided the Republicans all the time.

M: Were there any occasions where you sought his support for legislation or vice versa during his House days?

A: Not my first term. I didn't have any real reason to. I didn't have any major legislative proposals. It was a Republican Congress. I remember that members of organized labor from Sherman and Denison, which were on the Katy railroad which runs through my district, you know, in MacAlester--some of them came up and they were grumbling about his vote on the Taft-Hartley Act. I think they intended to vote against him even if they didn't like Stevenson; some of them were voting just a protest vote against him. I think Mr. Rayburn pretty well straightened out some of that. I don't believe he could have won without Mr. Rayburn's help with certain groups since the vote was so close. Mr. Rayburn had the confidence of the liberals, and although he was close to Johnson--probably not as liberal as Johnson, he had the confidence of the liberals--and he stayed with them on party issues better than Johnson did until he got further along in his career.

M: Did he ever talk with you about that 1948 election where he got the nickname "Landslide Lyndon?"

A: Not specifically. He just said it was a tough election. I've heard him discuss it, but I've never heard anything that caused me to think that he was particularly concerned about it. He has discussed it. He has explained certain things to me that I think others didn't understand, because a lot of people were trying to read something into the--was it Duval

County--what county was it?

M: Duval and Jim Wells.

A: Yes, Duval and Jim Wells counties, as though there were a machine that just bodily delivered the vote. I've heard him explain that, but I never was particularly concerned about it so I don't remember the details. He wasn't trying to alibi it. He was just telling what happened--not in answer to anybody, but he had a habit of sitting down and rehashing everything he had done through a certain period or that somebody else had done. He remembered all of his political experiences better than anybody I ever saw, because he seemed to just live his politics, you know.

M: Did you become what you would consider personal friends during this time?

A: Oh, yes. I think we were always friends. There was never a time when we didn't feel fairly close to one another, considering the fact that he'd been here several terms before I came and that we had no committee assignments together. But we knew one another from the very beginning on a first-name basis--did all through the House. I wasn't one of his buddies in the sense that I was on the same banquet circuit or social circuit with him, but I knew him and considered him a friend, and I think he did me.

M: Who were some of his other close associates here?

A: I think the closest person to him was Sam Rayburn. I was close to Rayburn, and, again, I think my closeness to the President and the social functions--I'm talking about informal, not the regular formal lobbying activities--that I attended were probably due to the fact that we were at the board of education together or voted alike on something or had common interests, because my district had interests almost identical with a typical Texas district. The only thing I have that they don't have is a large number of Indians. The only thing they have that I don't have is a large number of Mexicans. I have more oil wells than anybody in Oklahoma, probably than anybody in Texas. I have small farms typical of east and northern Texas, you know. And I have cattle which is typical of the whole State of Texas. I have a lot of the same problems that Texans do, and obviously we are the same people because my district was pretty much settled by Texans from the beginning.

M: Do you recall any sessions of the board of education where Mr. Johnson was particularly either taking charge in the absence of the Speaker or--?

A: I don't recall him, when Rayburn was there, ever taking charge because Mr. Rayburn always was the dominant figure at every board of education meeting that I've ever attended. He was the only person that Mr. Johnson wouldn't take over from. On most other occasions he did most of the talking. Subsequent to Mr. Rayburn's time I've been to board of education meetings with him when he was Vice President. And he came up once

when he was President, I think, and went to the board--yes, I'm sure he did. He sort of slipped in on us one night. And Lou Deschler and I think Dick Bolling--I don't remember exactly who was there when the President--but he came over several times when he was Vice President before Mr. Rayburn died. Sometimes Mr. Rayburn wouldn't be there, and he would talk more then. But he liked to tell stories. He liked to get an audience to listen to him and tell his experiences.

M: How would you rate Mr. Johnson as a Congressman?

A: I would rate him as a very top grade Congressman who didn't have the chance to show his full capacity because he didn't get that far up on committees, and the seniority system is so strong in the House that you can't take charge unless you're in charge very easily unless you have a terrifically weak chairman. He had one of the strongest chairmen in the House, Carl Vinson of Georgia, who absolutely dominated his committee and wouldn't tolerate anything from anybody but himself unless it suited him.

I remember lots of board of education meetings, but I don't remember everything that happened at all of them.

M: Thinking back now, what do you recall about Mr. Johnson's rather quick rise to the leadership capacity in the Senate?

A: I don't know whether I'm the best authority on that or not. Of course, he had the leadership ability. There's no question about that, I think that was recognized. Mr. Rayburn thought he was an outstanding person. Mr. Rayburn was much more low-keyed than Lyndon Johnson was, but he has often told me that "Lyndon's very bright." He has sometimes described him as a little bit too eager. I think Mr. Rayburn was a patient type and Lyndon Johnson was the pushing type, you know. But Mr. Rayburn undoubtedly had an influence. He was fortunate in that an opening came in the Democratic Whip's job in the Senate, and that he was bright.

Sometimes accidents are designed, you know. Things look like accidents. Dick Russell was the strongest man in the Senate, there's no question about that. He was the dominant figure on the Appropriations Committee. Dick Russell was the one who decided, I think, that Lyndon Johnson was a good man to have in the Senate; that he would be acceptable to the northern and western Senators; that he had enough west in him not to be identified as a Dixiecrat; and that he was progressive enough not to be; and yet a person that Southerners could understand. Dick Russell was the leader of the southern group, and also the strongest man in the Senate by virtue of his power as the man right behind Hayden, who didn't work at it like Russell did, in my opinion, and really wasn't on top of the total Senate picture like Russell was. I think Johnson understood that, and I think that he made sure that Russell knew him.

I've heard him discuss in the board of education and elsewhere his feeling about Russell. I don't think he told the whole story. He was a great admirer of Russell. He said that whenever there was trouble he wanted Russell to sit behind him. This was after he became Leader even, you know, and that he'd rather have Russell's judgment than anybody. He sort of idolized Russell as he did Rayburn in the House. But I think that it was more than that. I think that he saw in Russell the opportunity for him to go up, so I think he cultivated Russell and was sure that Russell knew him. That's the impression I got from things I heard him say from time to time. Russell was in the position to deliver the job to him actually. It was almost that simple, because I've been told--I haven't discussed this with Mike Mansfield-- but I've been told that Mike said that he would give the job when he was Whip and the opening came when Johnson became Vice President, that he asked Russell if he wouldn't take over the leadership. Russell didn't want to be tied down with all the obligations. But it does show the power that Russell has in the Senate. I think Johnson's meeting with Russell and learning Russell and interesting Russell in him was the key to his rise in the Senate. I have a feeling that it didn't develop just out of admiration, although I'm sure that the admiration was there. I think it was his quick understanding of what an influential figure Russell was.

There were three people in the Congress who, after he became Senator, were very key to the life of the President. Of course, Sam Rayburn who had been all through the years and whose judgment he trusted more than anybody else; Russell, whose power he trusted more than anybody else; and Bob Kerr, whose ability he trusted more than anybody else. He was very close to those three. Bob Kerr had the talent to do the things that he himself couldn't do. He couldn't do them as well, and he wasn't in the position to do them if he could. Bob Kerr could raise money for anybody. He could annihilate anybody in the Senate in debate. He admired Lyndon Johnson immensely and saw in Lyndon Johnson, and in Russell, what LBJ had seen in them--not only somebody that he could admire, but somebody that could really help. I think Russell less than the other two were courting those two, but I think those two were really courting Russell and one another.

M: Sir, do you recall occasions during these Senate days where as you--?

A: I hope you don't show all of this to the President. He might say, "You're a damned liar."

M: We can work that out.

A: Because I want to talk frankly, I want to tell you just what I think, right or wrong, you know. Of course, I may be wrong.

M: That's no problem. We want to get it. It's very valuable to have someone who has sort of witnessed the development of his career along the way. There are many people's opinions to get and collect, and I think they all fit into a picture and we want to get them.

Did you have many occasions to associate with Mr. Johnson in his Senate days in cooperation with getting legislation through the House and Senate?

A: Yes, because I became a member of the leadership while he was a member of the leadership in the Senate. I think I was more available to Speaker Rayburn and more in tune with what he wanted to do than anybody else in the leadership. I think that's one of the reasons why Mr. Rayburn wanted me to be Whip, you know. He thought my slant on legislation and my outlook generally was closer to what he wanted done than probably anybody else in the House, because they considered older and wiser men than I when I became Whip. There were other members of the House that were considered, and I think Mr. Rayburn thought I had what he needed, and I did work with Mr. Rayburn very closely on things that he wanted done. So did other members, but I think he thought I had the slant better. And the President knew that; that is, Johnson knew that. And he trusted me, I think, implicitly all through the years thereafter.

Mr. Johnson had a very strange career during that period after he became Majority Leader. When did he have his heart attack?

M: In 1955.

A: 1955, yes. It was 1956, I suppose--when was the Lebanese landing?

M: I'd have to check that. It was either 1956 or 1958, and I would just have to look.

A: Well, it was during a Democratic convention in Chicago.

M: 1956.

A: 1956. I suppose Johnson had recovered by then from his heart attack--had just recovered. When was it that he really began making his name as a leader in the Senate? I remember a lot of members of the Senate quit being critical of him during his first years as Leader. They said he was afraid of issues, you know. Yes, I've heard that, and that he wasn't going far enough to suit the liberals. And he never did go far enough to suit some of them. But I remember Mike Monroney being critical and some of them saying, "he ought to get out as leader unless he can go further on some of these issues"--that sort of thing.

M: Do you recall any of these particular ones that they--?

A: No, I don't. But I remember at one time at a party at Mike Monroney's house they were discussing him, and they said, "well, he just wouldn't take a stand." This was during the early days of his leadership. There was some feeling that he was not very strong on the issues, that he was too sensitive to his own political career and was walking a tightrope too much. When was it that he got out his ten point, was it ten points, or whatever it

was--his own state of the union message--when was that?

M: You're pinning me down on the dates, but I can fill that in later on.

A: I can't get all these things together because chronologically I'm trying to figure out how they happened. I know right after he had his heart attack and recovered and had a party with me and others--I mean, he and I were both at the same party at somebody's house. I don't remember who. But we were talking, and there were two or three around him talking--he was talking about how this heart attack happened, I think, down in Virginia, and that Clint Anderson was asking him questions, very discouraging-type questions. He was telling him that he was having a heart attack. And I said, "Well, Clint can be a little funny--"

He said, "Oh he can be terrible." So then he said to me that, "It just demobilized me. I'm through." He seemed to have a feeling that he was absolutely done, that his daddy had died with a heart attack. He said, "I wouldn't run again for love nor money." He said this. He said, "I just couldn't survive it." Of course when he did recover, he recovered completely.

And it was after that, I think, that he really began becoming a great national figure. He never did have [Alben] Barkley's eloquence or rhetorical style or wit and those things that made Barkley such a popular leader and such a popular after-dinner speaker and so forth. And he didn't give the appearance of being as liberal as Barkley. But I think underneath he was probably more liberal than all of these people. I think he was just trying to add his ducks up, you know, and see what he could do.

I knew he was ambitious. I knew he was ambitious from the beginning. He always wanted to forge ahead. We were at the Chicago convention, and I think it was the occasion of the Lebanese landing. And President Eisenhower, right in the middle of the convention--what happened in 1952! It couldn't have been in 1952 because Eisenhower wasn't President. But we were all in the middle of the convention, and we all had duties at the convention. Rayburn was the permanent chairman, and Johnson was a delegate. I was a delegate.

M: Mr. Johnson was a "favorite son" that year.

A: Yes. That's what I wanted to talk about. On the trip from Chicago to Washington Eisenhower sent a plane out after us--a Presidential Plane--and brought in all the leadership that were out there. They were sitting on the left side of the plane just facing one another with a little table in between, and Lyndon was talking to the Speaker. I was sitting just across the aisle from them reading a paper, and I heard them get into this discussion about the Presidency. This had to be 1956. I remember one thing Johnson said, "You know, I've supported you, Mr. Rayburn, in everything you've ever done, and

I've never asked anything of you. But I need your help. I want to get the nomination for President of the United States and the place to start is with you. I've got to have you." And they talked on and on. Mr. Rayburn was very mum. I think he probably took a dim view. He probably thought he was going up a blind alley. He didn't say much. He said very little. He was slow to commit himself. But he decided, as I recall--and I didn't hear him decide--but during that trip Mr. Rayburn decided to go all out for Lyndon Johnson. And, of course, he was with him from then on. And when we got to Washington and we met at the White House and they took us back--Dick Russell was not a delegate to the convention, but LBJ got him to take the trip back. I'm sure that he got him to do it--work among the Southerners to see if they couldn't get some support for Johnson at the convention through Russell. So they all went for him, but of course Stevenson had the thing locked up, and he didn't get very far. But it did sort of launch him, I think. But I was sitting right close to them when he was really giving Mr. Rayburn a selling job. That's the first time I ever saw him where he completely dominated a conversation with Speaker Rayburn.

M: Was this the first time that you had heard him mention his desire for the--?

A: No, he was already a candidate with certain Texas people, you know. They had placards out--"Love that Lyndon," and things like that that they were passing around the convention. But he was trying to get Mr. Rayburn, and I'm sure he got Dick Russell, to see if they couldn't make it more than a favorite son operation. So they did. After that Mr. Rayburn, as I say, always supported him, and I suppose Dick Russell did too. But I remember that occasion well.

M: Did he ever talk with you about the disadvantages of being a Southerner in wanting to run for the Presidency?

A: Well, not actually while he was a candidate. He never did say anything. But he always emphasized in talks that he had with me that Oklahoma and Texas were not really a part of the South. They were a part of the West, as well as of the South--more probably western than southern. I've heard him talk about the ties that they had with the West--The Spanish background, the large Spanish-American population, the Great Plains regions. A lot of Texas, of course, is completely un-southern, just completely. There are portions of East Texas that are quite southern and some of it semi-southern. But Texas has had a better tradition of being more tolerant of their politicians on race and other issues than the so-called "solid South." I don't think anybody ever considered it in recent years a part of the solid South. I think that started with Arkansas and Louisiana and went east.

But I have heard the President later talk about the difficulty of being a Southerner, even a Southwesterner, when he got to be President. Senator Connally told me--he was rather a pompous fellow, but very bright, very articulate, terrifically witty--he told me a long time ago when I first came to Congress--he was a good friend of Elmer Thomas, who

was Senator then from Oklahoma--. He told a number of us at a dinner--I don't know how it occurred--we just happened to meet, a bunch get together, at the blue Room at the Shoreham. Somebody asked him why he hadn't run for President. He said, "A Texan couldn't be elected President, he'd be wasting his time trying." Senator Connally--I heard him say that. I assume that was common talk in Texas.

M: How would you describe Mr. Johnson's working relations with President Eisenhower?

A: I think they were very good. I think he was very cooperative with the President. He never did dislike the President. But I think most of what Eisenhower said some time ago to justify his Presidency, the programs he advised that had been passed during his Administration were primarily Democratic programs and rewritten by Johnson and by Democratic chairmen and Rayburn. I think the so-called Eisenhower program was in reality a Democratic program, that they took most of them away from the President and changed them around and passed them. But they never did give the image and they never did say, never did Rayburn or Johnson in my presence ever say, "Let's try to beat Eisenhower on this." And I think that's the difference between Jerry Ford and them, and I think that's why the majority is so much more. We don't go around trying to harass the President. We try to improve on what he suggests.

M: Did his appearing to work in cooperation cause him any disaffection among his party?

A: No. I don't think anybody complained. I think they thought as long as the program was good--they had supported similar programs. Most of what President Johnson did was not enough for the average liberal in the House, but it was better than the alternatives before them, so they supported him. They weren't very strong for him in the 1960 campaign. I heard Californians and I heard members from the East and the North say, "We can't win with Lyndon Johnson. We've got to go for Kennedy or somebody. Johnson won't sell our way. He's too conservative. He's too moderate. He doesn't go far enough out with the Democratic party and many of the Democratic party traditions." Not until after he had become President and had put over two or three of the Kennedy bills did they really get behind him in all sections of the country.

M: Did he ever talk with you about the McCarthy hearings?

A: No, he didn't. I don't recall his ever discussing the McCarthy hearings with me.

M: I think this was one thing that sort of elevated him to a more prominent position in his leadership nationally.

A: I think so, too. But he didn't discuss it with me. Of course, Mike Monroney was slashing at McCarthy all the time. He discussed it with me several times. And it was a Senate matter, and I didn't get involved in it too much. We never had it over here at all, you

know. But Johnson, as far as I know, never did say anything about it. I've heard him talk about McCarthyism after the fact several times after he was President and Vice President, but not during the fight. I don't recall it ever being brought up at any board of education meeting when I was present and he was present, both at the same time. That's where I generally saw him, either at formal meetings of leadership or at Mr. Rayburn's office during the early years of his leadership in the Senate and of his total Senate career. I saw him much more socially after he became Vice President than I did while he was leader of the Senate, because he used to have us out to his house here when he was Vice President a lot, quite often, particularly after I became the House leader. But we've been friendly all the time and have seen one another quite a bit. We didn't often go out on long sessions together and talk about everything.

M: Do you recall any specific pieces of legislation that sort of illustrate the tactics and techniques of trying to get them through the houses that you and Mr. Johnson discussed?

A: We discussed quite a few of the bills that came up during the time when he decided that he was going to be a legislative leader of the Congress, which in a sense he was. He was certainly the front leader. He took initiatives that Mr. Rayburn never did take. When he got his own state of the union message, he discussed it with Mr. Rayburn, but Mr. Rayburn would never have done that. He was not interested. He was interested in taking things as they came and handling them. But he did discuss that, and I heard him discuss it.

I heard him discuss, for instance, the Civil Rights Act--the one that he passed--and he discussed it at length with Mr. Rayburn in my presence. Mr. Rayburn was a little slow to give on it because it was much easier to pass that bill in the House than in the Senate, and I don't think Mr. Rayburn was as interested in going as far as the President wanted to go on that. But he finally decided to do it. Then Mr. Rayburn, of course, became the real driving force on getting it finally through the House. He didn't say anything, but he talked to members individually. As a matter of fact, he talked to me about it. We went to Monmouth to the annual race track event that Jim Auchinshcloss used to give in New Jersey, took a bus trip from the train over. Mr. Rayburn said, "I want to sit with you on the bus trip. I want you to help get this thing through when it comes back from the Senate. It's right, I've made up my mind to it." This was only a few years after he told me when somebody had jumped on him in his district about the civil rights bill or anti-poll tax or something that he wrote a letter to the newspapers of his district and said, "Here's a speech I made against civil rights in 1921." He defended himself against these attacks that he was giving in to the civil rights movement. But when he decided, he said, "Now, this thing is right. These people are human, and this ought to be done. They'll work out the jury trial aspect. I wanted that. It was understood--they wouldn't put that in in the House, but they'll put it in in the Senate." So he talked to me about it all the way from Trenton to Monmouth in a bus. Johnson had talked to him about it.

He'd talked to us about several of the things that he had on that list, and most of

them were fairly easy in the House. One thing that he talked to us about was federal aid to education, and Mr. Rayburn was very anti-federal aid to education. He wouldn't agree. He agreed to put it down, but he complained about it. He didn't like it. He thought we were changing our way of life to do that. He didn't live to see the big education acts. He was all right on the National Impact Area Bill. But when we had the National Defense Education Act up, I was Whip. Carl Elliott from Alabama handled it in the House. The conference committee had agreed, and we had a conference report, but it was the last day of the session. Carl was carrying it around, and I had promised the educators I was going to try to get it through. Carl couldn't get to Mr. Rayburn very often, and I stayed with him. I asked him a dozen times. He said, "Well, we'll get to it." He had that way of vanishing right when you were about to get him ready to do something. He didn't want to do it. So I just stayed with him until the wee hours and we passed the conference report on the National Defense Education Act which Johnson wanted passed very much. The only other person in the world that knows this is Carl Elliott. You can ask him. We just bothered--and when it was all over and passed, Mr. Rayburn saw me out in the cloakroom and said, "You know, Carl, I just don't think much of this sort of thing. This is not your and my way of doing something." He said that to me, after the National Defense Education Act was passed. So President Johnson, as I say, Leader Johnson then, was quite interested in the bill.

Rayburn had a far better image early, or all during the 1950's, with the liberals of the country than Johnson did. But Johnson was actually more liberal than Rayburn was. They just didn't know it. But Johnson was more cautious than Rayburn was about his political future until he had his heart attack. After that, after the 1956 election, he began moving ahead, not as fast as the liberals wanted him to, but he began moving ahead with national issues then. That was the making of the President back then.

M: Mr. Congressman, Mr. Johnson did, of course, gain his reputation for being the wheeler-dealer manager of many pieces of legislation. Does anything come to mind--the tactics and the techniques that you saw Mr. Johnson apply of getting legislation through that he wanted?

A: Just about every bill. Whenever we passed a big bill that was a tough bill, I had a feeling we ought to relax and celebrate a little while. But when you would go down to tell him about it, he would ask you about some other bill that he thought the world depended upon. He never dropped his intensity. He was one of those salesmen that just never quit pushing. He wanted it done, and he wanted it all done, and he wanted more done. He was a great salesman. His greatest talent was his absolute tenacity. He never, never relaxed. He'd move not with just one thing, but with everything all of the time.

He didn't have the ability to--I don't know whether it's good or bad--he didn't have the talent for doing something and relaxing, backing up, taking a new look. For instance, I've ridden with him on his ranch--maybe he and one or two others would be there, going

around to show us his deer and his grass and bluebells or whatever it happened to be in season. And he'd say, "Look at that bull over there. Isn't that a dandy!" And right back, "We've got to get so-and-so to get this bill." You know, he never dropped it long enough to really get to enjoying what he was doing, although I think he did. He loved his ranch, and he loved to go there, and he loved to have people there. He loved to be with people. But he was so possessed with his eagerness to get his whole program through that he just seemed never to be able to let up long enough to relax and start over again. And I think of all the Presidents that he had this talent more than any of them. I don't think Roosevelt or any of them began to have his talent to the degree that he had it. I think he subordinated everything else to it. By that, I mean I don't think he read a lot of books or did a lot of things. He would read newspaper articles that dealt with politics and government. I don't mean politics in the partisan sense, but I mean the operation of political process. I don't think he ever let anything, except maybe his family life, subordinate his interest in politics.

M: Do you recall any occasions where he sort of outwitted the opposition or fooled the opposition into any sort of confidence and managed to get legislation through in that way?

A: I know there are lots of occasions where he did this. In terms of specifics, he--usually he did his by driving, getting hold of somebody and seeing if he couldn't get something done, or getting hold of a person. He pushed ahead. I think he took too seriously some of his opposition, because I don't think they ever meant that much to his program or to him. I think he took Jerry Ford's tirades about him too seriously, going around the country. But Jerry Ford's--I like Jerry--really had no effect on his legislative program or on his career.

The thing that really caused him trouble politically was the Vietnamese war. There's no question about that. Everything else--he could have thumbed his nose at anybody in either political party and had no trouble at all. I think he could have been nominated and been reelected regardless of that. When Hubert Humphrey could come within such a few points of getting the election, I don't think there's any question that Johnson would have been reelected had he been willing to put up with what he would have had to put up with to get it. But there isn't any question either but what they had really slashed him on the war--not on himself or his programs or anything else, or on his methods, not on the basis of what anybody had said--but whether it was just the fact that the war was dragging out, or the American people were too impatient. I think that was his problem.

M: Do you recall any occasions through any of this period where you told him that you couldn't support him on--that you had to oppose some piece of legislation and how it developed?

A: I think I supported every piece of legislation that he recommended of any consequence at all except the Gun Control Bill.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]