

# Ruth Young Watt

Chief Clerk, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, 1948-1979

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**Interview #5:**  
**The Turbulent 1960s**  
(November 9, 1979)  
Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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Ruth Watt (center) stands behind members of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, ca mid-1960s. Left to right, Senators Carl T. Curtis, Karl Mundt, John McClellan, Chief Counsel Jerome Adlerman, Senators Edmund Muskie, Abraham Ribicoff, and Thomas McIntyre. *Senate Historical Office*

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**Ritchie:** Looking over the 1960's, one thing that appeared to me was that there was a lot of interest in military activity on the committee: missile bases, missile procurements, TFX, military PX system, etc. Was there any particular reason why there was so much interest in military affairs?

**Watt:** I don't know. It just was one of those things. If they came along and we had reports or information from newspapermen, anonymous letters, letters of complaint, and from other senators, we pursued it. And some things were referred to the subcommittee from other committees. I don't know what the answer is. It was during Vietnam, of course, so there was more interest in military affairs. The TFX came about from the fact that that company in Washington State  
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**Ritchie:** Boeing.

**Watt:** Boeing bid on the contract and Senator Lyndon Johnson's state got it General Dynamics of Texas. That's where it all came about. The first we heard about it, Senator Jackson was in

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Honolulu and he called Senator McClellan long-distance to ask him to start an investigation. That's where it started.

**Ritchie:** I wondered if Jackson had a general influence on the military interests of the committee, since he was on the Armed Services Committee and had a lot of interest in aircraft and military policy.

**Watt:** He came to one hearing, the opening hearing of the TFX probe, and that's the only time he came to one of those hearings. He didn't take any part in it whatsoever. He did call to ask Senator McClellan to open the investigation, and then he was long gone. Then again, it was very political. President Kennedy was trying to stop it. He had Senator Daniel Brewster of Maryland, who was on the committee when it started, and they were sending questions to him from the White House, to ask at the hearings. Then Senator Edmund Muskie started, he was close to the White House. They had somebody up there sending down questions all the time. In fact, they tried to get Senator McClellan to stop the hearings.

**Ritchie:** How?

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**Watt:** They came up and asked him. Secretary Robert McNamara came up. Bob Kennedy who had been chief counsel came over from Justice. I remember the day they were over there, I'll never forget it because I met them at the elevator and Bob came along and gave me a kiss--after asking them not to hold the hearings. I remember because here were all these VIPs and I thought, "My gosh, what's going on?" I said, "Bob, what are you doing here with Secretary McNamara and all these people?" But he was just himself.

**Ritchie:** What did Senator McClellan think about all this pressure?

**Watt:** Senator McClellan never would bend to any kind of pressure. He just ignored it.

**Ritchie:** Did it annoy him that they were trying to pressure him?

**Watt:** I don't know. He didn't show it. He never said anything. He might have and I didn't know it, but I wasn't on the inside track on that like the professional staff, the lawyers and so on. I wouldn't know unless I heard comments, which I did not.

**Ritchie:** I've heard that McClellan had no use for McNamara, that he didn't care for him at all.

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**Watt:** I never heard that. If he did it didn't show.

**Ritchie:** He certainly pursued that TFX investigation diligently for a long time.

**Watt:** Well, it was such a hard thing to get into, and there was so much controversy. Remember that Secretary of the Navy?

**Ritchie:** Fred Korth?

**Watt:** No, it was another one, someone high up in the Navy. Someone tied in with the Navy end of the plane who said what he thought, that it was not workable. He got replaced and was given an ambassadorship to somewhere. He got transferred. Of course, the Department of the Army was all for it. The whole Defense Department was involved.

**Ritchie:** But McNamara was the principle target. They thought that he had made the decision to give the contract to General Dynamics.

**Watt:** It could have been. I don't remember that. I remember all the witnesses we had, day after day after day. Korth I remember very well because he was romancing somebody, according to the papers!

**Ritchie:** There were a lot of rumors about Lyndon Johnson's role in the TFX.

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**Watt:** Well, I think that made sense. I don't know anything for a fact, but there were all those rumors that came out.

**Ritchie:** That he had influenced the contract?

**Watt:** Well, wouldn't it make sense to you? At that point he certainly had more influence than Senator Jackson, because Jackson was not that well known and Johnson was a household word at that time, so it made a lot of difference.

**Ritchie:** Did Bobby Baker get involved at all with the investigation?

**Watt:** Not that I know of. No, Bob was not involved because he was into politics and this was a committee hearing. I've read his book and I don't believe he mentions it.

**Ritchie:** President Kennedy, when he was in Fort Worth, just before he was assassinated, made a speech about the TFX. What impact did his death have on the committee?

**Watt:** As I remember it, we had a hearing on Friday before and recessed for a week. He died on a Friday, and we had hearings scheduled for the following week, but they were just cut off completely until the late 1960's. Then they came up again.

**Ritchie:** What happened?

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**Watt:** I don't know. I never heard.

**Ritchie:** They just dropped it?

**Watt:** Yes, for the time being, and then they came back to it. I can't remember what year we came back to it, but we wrote another report. It was the F-111 then instead of the TFX. That was four or five years later.

**Ritchie:** It was in 1970. By that time, Johnson was out of the White House. So in effect they dropped the investigation during his presidency.

**Watt:** I don't know if it was by design, because I hadn't heard anything about it. I never thought much about it, to tell the truth. Of course, I didn't get into the

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politics of things too much anyway, or think about the reason why of things unless it was right out in the open.

**Ritchie:** But as far as you know they didn't do anything on that investigation during that period? They just packaged everything up?

**Watt:** Charlie Cromwell worked on that and I don't know if he stayed around for the second series of hearings, because he went to the Armed Services Committee after he left us. He had a scientific mind and he could go into the science of the thing, because it was a very complex thing. There was so much discussion

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of the model and the mechanics of how it worked, and overload and balance, and everything else. It was all in executive session, you see. The transcripts were sent over to the Defense Department for sanitizing before they were made public, they would take out material. Some of it needed to be taken out and some of it didn't. Our official reporter had an office on the third floor, and they never went out of the building, they just went to the Department of the Army for sanitizing. They transcribed and copied them on the third floor and then they went right to the Army and then came back there, so there were no security breaks. They were carefully handled.

**Ritchie:** During the 1960's the subcommittee ran up against a number of scoundrals, like Billy Sol Estes . . .

**Watt:** Oh, he's back in jail again. That was a political one, too, and it was very sad really because there was one of the witnesses who had been appointed by Senator Ervin, and Senator Ervin was very protective of his people. Up until then he and Senator McClellan had been very close, but then after that there was a politeness but nothing more.

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**Ritchie:** Because they investigated his appointee?

**Watt:** Well, they came to grips somehow, I don't remember now just how it was. They had confidential--you know me, I never make little mistakes, I make big ones--they had an executive session on this and a confidential Department of Agriculture report was put in, and they were very careful of the thing, there were only about three copies in existence. It was one that pertained to Billy Sol Estes, just spelled it all out. Well, we had the executive session and the next day nobody could find the report. They went everywhere and they accused everybody of taking it. They never found it. About four or five years later I was cleaning out my safe and there it was. It had been an executive exhibit and I had put it away and completely forgotten about it.

**Ritchie:** Well, at least it didn't get out to the press.

**Watt:** There was a staff member that used to write poems that pertained to all the funny things that happened on the committee, and I remember that because he made a big thing out of the Billy Sol Estes report being hidden in my safe all those years.

**Ritchie:** Estes never came to testify, did he?

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**Watt:** I can't remember, it seems to me that he did.

**Ritchie:** Or did he testify in executive session?

**Watt:** I can't remember. That doesn't ring a bell at all. Of course, I've read so much in the papers since about what a scoundral he was.

**Ritchie:** I know he didn't testify during the public sessions.

**Watt:** No, I don't think he did, and yet it seems to me I saw him. Maybe I saw him on television.

**Ritchie:** That was another case where Lyndon Johnson's name came into the picture again, and I wondered if there was any pressure from the administration.

**Watt:** I don't think so, unless it came through Senator Ervin, and I don't know if it came through there. I say that because he had his people from North Carolina and he was being protective of them.

**Ritchie:** What was the relationship between McClellan and Lyndon Johnson? Were they friendly?

**Watt:** I guess they got along all right. Senator McClellan went to the White House once in a while, and Mrs. McClellan and Lady Bird had been good friends when they were in the Senate Ladies Club together, and I think they had some other social contacts.

**Ritchie:** I remember that those two investigations both seemed to effect Johnson and there was a lot of talk back in 1963 as to whether he would continue on the ticket the next year, in part because of his association with Bobby Baker and Billy Sol Estes and the TFX.

**Watt:** Of course, he was involved in anything to do with Texas. General Dynamics, Billy Sol Estes, and whatever else. I don't remember anything about that at all. At the time I might have, but it didn't stay with me very long, if it did. I remember there were so many papers and documents--there were more documents than we ever had put in the record than in any other hearing, during the Billy Sol Estes investigation. There were boxes of them, and I couldn't keep track of them. Ordinarily, I could remember the important ones so that if they asked for one I could hand it to them, but we got so many that I was completely overwhelmed with them. There were just too many, hundreds of them.

**Ritchie:** It seems interesting to me that Senator McClellan, who had been so close to Robert Kennedy, and also to John Kennedy, wound up investigating members of Kennedy's administration, like Orville Freeman in the Agriculture Department, Robert McNamara in the Defense Department, and by implication Lyndon Johnson. I wondered if that didn't create some tensions with the White House.

**Watt:** I don't think so, necessarily, because from the beginning there was not that closeness between the Kennedys and Senator McClellan. He used to go up

there, I know, for conferences, but he was chairman of a committee and they all did. But I know that earlier Senator McClellan and President Truman were not that close, they didn't see eye-to-eye, but that was probably from something that came up while they were both in the Senate.

**Ritchie:** He was just an independent man.

**Watt:** Very. He was his own person, and I don't think anybody ever influenced him. He knew what he was doing all the time. I think he had a great deal of integrity. It was nice to work with somebody like that. Of course, the others are probably the same, but he was on the

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committee for so many years that I got to know more about him. He was chairman for eighteen years. And I knew his staff so well, and you can tell by a senator's staff, too.

**Ritchie:** Another colorful character who testified before the committee in the 1960's was Joe Valachi.

**Watt:** Joe was something else! He was not a well man. He'd been in jail and we got him out of prison and kept him under police protection. But at noontime I got a cot from the superintendent over in the Capitol, and got blankets and a pillow, and Joe used to go down to one of our rooms, down by 159, and he used to have a nap every day between sessions. I don't know what his problem was, but he was not a well man.

**Ritchie:** How did those hearings ever come about? How did they begin?

**Watt:** Somewhere along the line we must have gotten his name, and Duffy handled those hearings. He would know.

**Ritchie:** I was wondering if Robert Kennedy had anything to do with them.

**Watt:** He was Attorney General then, because he was our first witness in those hearings. There's that picture of him testifying. But we had

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Joe Valachi in executive session three times I think and we got a lot of material before we went into open hearing.

**Ritchie:** He was sort of a strange character. Do you have any impressions of him now, thinking back?

**Watt:** He was very protective of his family. We never knew who they were or what their names were. He had a wife and children. He went to several prisons because they the mob kept catching up with him and his life was in danger. You know he killed somebody by mistake in prison thinking they were after him, and it was a person who was not after him but he hit him with some kind of a blunt instrument thinking he was going after him. Because he knew the kiss of death was on him because of this Mafia thing. Then he told us all about the "Cosa Nostra," which is the official name for the Mafia, which we had never heard before. It means "Our Thing" in Italian.

Then he was finally in a prison in Texas or New Mexico, and Duffy used to go down to visit him periodically. Valachi was writing a book. Duffy used to go down to talk with him, and I think may have helped him out

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with his book. He was on the top floor of the prison, isolated completely. He had his television and all the comforts of home, but he was in isolation in prison for life. He died of cancer, didn't he? I remember they were even consulting with him and asking him questions about things as late as when we had the SEC hearings, because Eugene Anguilla, who came to work with us on loan from SEC, went down to see him about something officially from the committee, and I remember it was the night before he died.

**Ritchie:** Was he a good source of information?

**Watt:** Apparently.

**Ritchie:** I know there was a lot of ballyhoo about him at the time. It was a very well publicized event, but I never could quite figure out what it all led to.

**Watt:** Well, I don't know if we had any legislation from it, but at least we knew a lot about the Mafia and different individuals in the Mafia that we didn't know before. Of course, I think the biggest mystery of all time is the Jimmy Hoffa mystery.

**Ritchie:** The disappearance?

**Watt:** Yes.

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**Ritchie:** Did the committee ever consider investigating that?

**Watt:** It was very unfortunate. They had a lead from some witness who said that he could tell where he was buried and all. It was all relayed from one state to another and it was a real cloak and dagger thing. This witness, that last I heard was on the West Coast somewhere and two of our investigators went out. Then they came back to Detroit, or outside of Detroit. What their information was I don't know, but the next day the papers said they were out in the field digging, and there was a lot of ballyhoo about it. It gave the committee a real black eye. They were all for letting one of the men go, and the other one was not mentioned. But it didn't work that way because the one they wanted to let go was a person who had been hired by Senator McClellan. McClellan said, "Why should he be fired and not the man who was hired by the present chairman?" There was a big to-do about it at a subcommittee meeting.

**Ritchie:** So they didn't let either of them go?

**Watt:** No. But the fellow that Senator McClellan had hired, several years before'. was never given another assignment. He had one assignment after that, but that's all he had.

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**Ritchie:** So they had been suckered into it by the witness?

**Watt:** Apparently, but the rumor I heard was that he was killed.

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**Ritchie:** The witness?

**Watt:** This person who was the informant. Now who it was, or anything else about it, I don't know. That's one reason why we had to be so careful about our long-distance telephone calls, because that would have been a real source of information for anybody who wanted to find out who was telling what to whom.

**Ritchie:** Did you ever have any worries about having your phones tapped?

**Watt:** Our phones were checked every so often and Senator McClellan's was checked every week during the Rackets Committee because it was bugged during the Rackets Committee. Also, his phone at the Fairfax Hotel. Of course, he had threats to him at the time too during those two years. I never knew about them at the time because he didn't talk about them, but I've heard since that there were threats. I don't think Senator McClellan would have ever paid attention to a threat, though. It would just make him mad and he'd go all the way out on the investigation. That was the impression I got.

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**Ritchie:** Did you have any trouble with Valachi in terms of security, and putting him up and taking care of him while he was testifying?

**Watt:** Well, you see, in a case like that, where he was a prisoner, the Department of Justice hand led all of that. He had around-the-clock protection from the United States marshalls who protected him whenever he was staying. We've had other people like that. They passed a law a few years ago for immunity for people who would talk., and we had several of those. We had to go through a court process to get them, and then the Department of Justice would put them up and protect them.

**Ritchie:** Later on in the 1960s, the big hearings that you had from 1967 to 1969 were the civil disturbances investigations. They started out with riots in the cities, particularly in the South, and then eventually covered a wide area including college campuses, and the staff was considerably expanded again.

**Watt:** I think we hired six additional people just from government agencies on loan, because it was a temporary thing and people weren't going to leave another just to come for a period of six months or so. I think we had four or five

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different agencies that sent us people on loan. We hired a couple of people who were not working, but they didn't prove to be that good.

**Ritchie:** At the beginning there was a jurisdictional debate over who was going to get that investigation. Senator McClellan seemed very determined that he wanted the Permanent Subcommittee to investigate the riots. Was there any particular reason why he was so adamant on that?

**Watt:** Not unless it was that we didn't have anything else going at the time. Or else they were persuading him. Because many times the other senators would persuade him to take something that he wasn't that keen on.

**Ritchie:** Other members of the committee?



**Watt:** Well, just senators in general. It wouldn't necessarily be just from our committee. I remember I had to go and get approval from the full committee, and we had to poll the committee, because Bob Kennedy was a senator already at that point. When I went to his office I had to wait such a long time for him because he was tied up. I had to get a majority of the signatures from the full

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committee in order to get a resolution in to get authority for the subcommittee to conduct these hearings, because it was outside of our general authority, and also for the extra \$150,000.

**Ritchie:** When you say it was outside of your general authority, most of your investigations were about government agencies and their activities.

**Watt:** Initially our function was one little sentence in the reorganization act of 1946, Public Law 601, that had the jurisdiction of the Committee on Expenditures on Executive Departments, which was the name of the committee at that time. The subcommittee was set up on the basis of that to investigate wrong-doing in the executive departments, that was what it boiled down to. That was the only jurisdiction we had for quite a few years, but it covered quite a bit! All the executive departments., and it also pertained to all subcontractors for the government. I think the 5 percenters hearings were covered in that way.

**Ritchie:** But these were investigations of civil disturbances in municipalities.

**Watt:** Yes, but we had to have a special resolution to hold them, because we already had incorporated

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other areas. We even had to have a resolution when we investigated homosexuals in government, why I don't know. They had added the Rackets Committee authority when that wound up, that was incorporated in our resolution. Then after the riots hearings were over, that was incorporated in our resolution, so that gave us all that added authority. I don't know why we got it, but he must have had persuasion somewhere along the line.

During the riot hearings we had one conf' ence on the aftermath of the riots here in Washington. It was just a conference. There we-re a lot of things going on at that time, and it was not easy to get senators to attend. I know Senator McClellan sat in on it, but at that point it was not official because we only had one senator. I remember we had the chief of police of Washington and we had Ramsey Clark who was Attorney General then, as we had a lot of people who were involved in the Washington government. I remember that Ramsey Clark was so arrogant and disrespectful to Senator McClellan that I turned off on him completely. He was very arrogant in his replies to Senator

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McClellan, as if he looked down on him, and I was very indignant that he treated a United States senator like that--I still am! Another one was that Patrick Murphy, the former police chief who is back in New York now, he was there. But I remember that conference because I was so incensed to think that anybody could be that rude to a senator. We had an all day conference, I think it was made public later. As a result, this law suit that is still pending came out of that.

**Ritchie:** The McSurely case--what was the story behind that?

**Watt:** Well, we had the criminal court case, I testified during that. But in the civil case I haven't been involved. We had a John Brick, who was a writer but not an investigator, but he wanted to get into investigating. How it came about, I don't know, but he went to Kentucky and served a subpoena and got a record of these people from the county or from the state.

**Ritchie:** It was from the local police chief.

**Watt:** Or somebody, yes.

**Ritchie:** They had been organizers.

**Watt:** Yes, down in Kentucky. That's how it all came about, and the civil case goes back to the fact that they claim--and Senator McClellan asked me

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but I didn't know anything about it and didn't want to know--but the main thing they were basing it on was that they claimed that Mr. Brick went through the files that he brought back and read a letter, supposedly a letter from Drew Pearson to Mrs. McSurely. And they claim that he put them up to ridicule because he showed the letter around. Well, the way I understand it is that he showed it to Senator McClellan and Senator McClellan said, "You put that away and don't show it to anybody." And that was the end of it. That was the story I heard. They brought that up in the criminal case, too, which had nothing to do with it.

**Ritchie:** Did you have to testify on that?

**Watt:** No, they didn't ask me about it, because I knew nothing about it. I had to testify about the fact that Mrs. McSurely was subpoenaed to produce some records. When she came she said that she didn't have them or wasn't going to give them, or something. Anyway, Senator McClellan said, "You come back here next Friday in this room at 10:30 and produce those records." So then I went up and sat in the hearing room--knowing full well that she wasn't going to show up, but I had to do

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it because it was a result of a subpoena--and I was to call if they showed up with the records. I was to call Senator McClellan,, whose office was right next door. I waited there until 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock, so we would make illegal. Then I had to testify that they never showed up. That was my reason for giving an affidavit. They have all those files for this case, apparently, because I turned everything I had over to them.

**Ritchie:** The original files were returned to the McSurelys, weren't they?

**Watt:** I don't remember that. I imagine they were.

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**Ritchie:** The case really was that the committee had acquired the files from a local officer illegally; and it's been ten years in the courts, hasn't it?

**Watt:** Since 1967, twelve years. It came up again recently. They even put it to the Supreme Court who referred it back to a lower court.

**Ritchie:** Was there any other case affecting the committee like that?

**Watt:** Not that I know of.

**Ritchie:** Usually the committee would have subpoenaed the records from the people themselves, rather than from the local officers.

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**Watt:** That's right; and the funny part of it is that the original complaint was to all of the senators on the subcommittee for a million dollars, or whatever the amount was. Then it got down to Senator McClellan, and our chief counsel, Jerry Adlerman, and John Brick. And then Jerry died, John Brick died, and they were tying up their estates, which was not much, but Senator McClellan died and his estate is still tied up. Then they had Don O'Donnell come down from New Hampshire and give a deposition--this was in the early 1970's. I understand they sent for him again just the other day. They tried to get a hold of Bob Dunne who had nothing to do with it. He's over in France, and he called us all upset wanting to know what it was all about. But they are just dragging it out. So then they tried to get a hold a Don again, but he just sent a letter back unclaimed when he saw the signature on it. Evelyn Adlerman is an invalid, she lives down in Florida,, and they were trying to get in touch with her. They called me to find out if I knew where any of these people were. Most of those people just worked in government all their lives, they don't have anything.

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The sad thing, the part of it that was so strange and coincidental was that John Brick's wife works and did work for a psychiatrist. who was treating this McSurely woman. It was just coincidence, but somewhere along John mentioned that his wife worked there, and of course,, she made a big thing out of that, that he held her up to ridicule also because she was seeing a psychiatrist. So it's pretty sticky all along.

**Ritchie:** Was that the only occasion when John Brick worked for the committee?

**Watt:** Oh, no. He was a regular. He first appeared--he was a very brilliant writer, had a best seller, and was a historical novelist, he'd written some childrens' books, too, I was very fond of him--but he had helped Senator McClellan write his book.

**Ritchie:** Crime Without Punishment?

**Watt:** Yes, he had put it together for him, did the research and so on. Then he was teaching in a college in Dayton, Ohio, and he decided he wanted to come back. I think he got in touch with Margie Nocholson, secretary to Senator McClellan. He was not on the committee while working with Senator McClellan on

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the book. He was bring paid by the publishers--but he was interested in getting into investigating. He was one of the most devoted husbands that I've ever seen. He and his wife were so happy. It was just a heartbreaker when he died.

**Ritchie:** The whole riots investigation seemed so different from the rest of the investigations that the committee held. There were no charges of corruption or mismanagement . . .

**Watt:** Well, they were trying to find the causes. They wanted to get to the bottom of them so they could maybe stop them.

**Ritchie:** Did they have some sense that there was an organized movement there, rather than just spontaneous eruptions?

**Watt:** Well, some of the cities had them at the same time, so it had to be organized. But I don't even know what they were about now, it's been ten years. I remember the riots on the campuses, but I don't know what they were about.

**Ritchie:** Do you think there was a sense of bewilderment on the part of the committee, to try to find out why this was happening? Or did they have a theory about what was going on?

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**Watt:** I don't know. They called the presidents of several colleges. One day we had several presidents, professors, and Al Capp, the cartoonist testified! The scariest part of the while thing was that day that they were burning all those places in Washington and all the smoke was coming down here. We thought they were going to burn the Capitol down. That was a scary day. Were you here then?

**Ritchie:** I was working at the Library of Congress that day.

**Watt:** Then you were here when all that smoke was drifting on down, when Hecht's was on fire, and Landsburgs.

**Ritchie:** All of 7th Street and Blandensburg Road.

**Watt:** Yes, and 14th Street all the way out to where I used to live.

**Ritchie:** How did this news reach the committee?

**Watt:** We had our radios on all day.

**Ritchie:** You stayed at the Capitol through the whole day?

**Watt:** Yes, we went home the usual time. Of course, we went by the Southwest Freeway. We moved to "Virginia in 1967 and this was in 1968. We had a maid who had worked that day, and she was petrified because she lived down right in the middle of where it was all going on. She

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was just scared to death. But I think she had a sister who lived in Virginia and she went out there. I've never seen anybody so petrified in my life. She lived on 6th Street not too far from U Street, in that area.

**Ritchie:** Some of the testimony that I've read from those investigations was pretty violent in itself. There was a fellow named Frederick Brown with the S.N.C.C. in Nashville who talked about the need for violence. The committee members seemed quite shaken up by that.

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**Watt:** Then we had the Black Panthers from Chicago, that was a scary thing, too. They told about this church, and how they had their meeting in the basement, a dungeon under the church, and all the arms they had down there.

**Ritchie:** From out of this grew the investigation of the Office of Economic Opportunity and its funding of various groups.

**Watt:** We held hearings on that, but I think that was pretty much mismanagement.

**Ritchie:** It seemed as if the committee felt more comfortable dealing with the mismanagement of a particular government agency like the O.E.O. than they did in trying to deal with social causes.

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**Watt:** Oh, yes, because you knew the government wasn't going to disrupt it at any moment, and they were supposed to be responsible people at the head of it. But we still had difficulty getting files from them. They were sort of fending off and not giving the right information. It was not a very satisfactory investigation on the O.E.O.

**Ritchie:** Because they couldn't get material from them?

**Watt:** We didn't know really what was going on there--maybe they didn't either. But I remember that it was not all that satisfactory.

**Ritchie:** Did the committee have any connections with the Kerner Commission that was also investigating the riots?

**Watt:** No. I doubt very seriously that we got any information from them. It's the same with House investigations. The House and Senate are jealous of their prerogatives, and frequently the House will carry on an investigation the same time the Senate is. Once in a while we've said, "Let's get this going before the House side takes it on." And two or three times they beat us to the draw! So there was duplication.

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**Ritchie:** The last big investigation under McClellan was into the PXs in Vietnam. That also got a lot of public attention at the time.

**Watt:** Senator Ribicoff chaired those, as I remember. He went over to Vietnam with Duffy, they went over to get first-hand information and a look at it. I think Duffy was over there a couple of times. There were a lot of shennanigans, there's no doubt about it.

**Ritchie:** There's a line in that letter you showed me from Carmine Bellino . . .

**Watt:** That's right, he was there, too.

**Ritchie:** He said that it was the same old story "the line officers run everything until a Congressional committee finally looks into what they are doing."

**Watt:** That's why I thought it would be interesting for you to see that letter. It brought the war a little closer to you, the reality of it, It showed how they were in danger zones.

**Ritchie:** Well, it was different type of work than the committee was used to doing, under front-line conditions.

**Watt:** Yes, that's right. Later on, after Senator Jackson took over, we had one day of hearings, on some of those people who were involved. I

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think one changed his story, if I remember rightly. But there was just one day of hearings. Four of the main people came back and testified.

**Ritchie:** It's listed here in 1973: "Fraud and Corruption in the Military Club System."

**Watt:** That was the year that Senator Jackson took over as chairman.

**Ritchie:** The work of the subcommittee seemed to diminish during the last couple of years when Senator McClellan was chairman. The number of investigations declined. Was his attention being diverted elsewhere?

**Watt:** Yes. Also Jerry Adlerman, who had been with us for years, he came on the committee a few months after I did and became chief counsel after Bob Kennedy left, he retired in September of 1971. We got a chief counsel who had been on the committee during the Rackets Committee, who we thought would be good. But he was a complete wash out. He was impossible. He came over from the House side. We thought he was going to be great, we just greeted him with open arms. Well, it turned out that he was scared of his own shadow. We had one little hearing the whole time he was on the committee.

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**Ritchie:** He lacked the confidence to initiate an investigation?

**Watt:** Well, I think he spent more time thinking about the staff. I would go in and he would say, "I'm going to fire so-and-so today." The next day he was going to fire somebody else. Of course, he didn't have the authority to fire anybody, but kept tempers stirred up all the time. I was pretty unhappy at that time. In the meantime, Senator McClellan was not around. We were like step-children because he was tied in the primary. He was in a run-off for his job in the Senate.

**Ritchie:** For the nomination?

**Watt:** Yes. So he was in Arkansas all the time. He didn't have time for the committee. So in that period we were just step-children, really, because we had a chief counsel that we had no confidence in. Poor Jerry was upset because he had recommended him, but Jerry didn't know because he had seemed like a great guy. But he just didn't have it. I think the House side sluffed him off on us because they wanted to get rid of him. I've always had that feeling. He had been on the Roads Subcommittee on the House side, a nucleus of five went over

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from the Rackets Committee when it wound up, to join that committee over there.

**Ritchie:** Which committee was that?

**Watt:** It was a subcommittee of Public Works, roads and highway subcommittee. Anyway, he went over there with Walter May, and George Martin, and George Kopecky, and Jim Kelly and others. But there were a bunch from the Rackets

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Committee that went over there when the committee wound up. Then the Senator came back, after the run-off but none of us would tell him anything because we figured it wasn't our business. I wasn't about to tell him. But anyway, John Brick finally told the Senator about all the problems we were having. Everybody on the staff was saying that part of John Brick's problem was that counsel.

**Ritchie:** What happened then?

**Watt:** Then in January of 1973, Senator McClellan gave up the subcommittee. He stayed on the full committee. He stayed on the subcommittee, but gave it to Senator Jackson. Then Senator Jackson hired a new chief counsel, but the outgoing counsel kept insisting on getting a top job in the State Department. Well, they worked and got him one,

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"kicked" him upstairs in May. He was just on the payroll until then, and then Howard Feldman took over as chief counsel, and everything changed then. Senator McClellan had been chairman for so many years that I had forgotten there had ever been another chairman. Then I started saying, "I wonder if so-and-so would like this the way I've been doing it." Because everybody has different ideas. So I just completely forgot anything I'd ever done before and checked on everything, no matter what I did, to make sure it was what the new chairman was going to want. And held been on the committee since 1953, so he was not new to me.

**Ritchie:** Did McClellan continue to have an active interest in the subcommittee after he stepped down as chairman?

**Watt:** He came to the meetings and they all looked to his expertise and experience for the conduct of the meetings. He came once in a while to the hearings if we couldn't get a quorum. There was one time when there was somebody testifying who he was particularly interested in, but the rest of the time he stayed away. Well, to begin with, Senator Jackson rarely came and I think he felt that, "If Jackson

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didn't come to the hearings for me, why should I go to them for him?" I think that's the way he felt. So, anyway, I had heard rumors for two or three years that Senator Jackson was going to get rid of the whole staff when he took over. Of course, that didn't concern me because I could have retired any time after my twenty years, and I already had about twenty-five years by then, they had a big party for me on my twenty-fifth anniversary in 1972. But he didn't let anybody go.

**Ritchie:** He didn't?

**Watt:** There were a couple of people who had retired and were on retired status but had moved back, whom he let go. He didn't think we needed them. And gradually people left. They were so independent they didn't want to do what the new chief counsel wanted to do, so they quit. When you get a new chief counsel

and chairman you've got to adjust. You're not going to tell them what to do. So we lost about three or four people that way.

**Ritchie:** Didn't they drop the file clerk who kept that elaborate card index?

**Watt:** No, they just didn't send the files down to her, so she retired.

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**Ritchie:** She just quit?

**Watt:** Sure, because they weren't giving her filing to do, she was all upset. Howard didn't believe in that much filing. So for all that period the only things we have are those that Sally Olson, his secretary, kept in her file. So you had to go through the whole thing to find out anything you wanted. After a hearing was over the papers would be boxed up and sent to the National Archives.

**Ritchie:** We talked to the file clerk and she was saying that after 1973 the card system stopped, and now they are trying to fill in the gap.

**Watt:** You mean Frances Cresswell? It was funny, her father and mother were friends of our, he's a doctor. Frances is the youngest of six, and the others are all lawyers and doctors, and she was sort of the tail-end of the family. She had just graduated from college and the family decided it was time that she got out on her own. I mentioned that the committee might have an opening, and my husband said, "Well, Frances is looking for a job, why don't you have her come in?" I said, "They don't want anybody for a couple of months." Anyway, Watt called her and Frances came in. I have never

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met her before, but I talked with her and told her that, "They aren't even going to interview for this job for a couple of months, but I'd like to take your application." Then I went in to Duffy, who was acting chief counsel because Owen Malone had left and they hadn't appointed a new one yet. I said, "Duffy, I have a girl out here who's very nice. I don't know her, but I know her parents. She's interested in a file job. Do you want to talk to her, or should I tell her to come back in a couple of months?" He said, "No, I'll talk to her." So I took her in, and when she came out I went in and Duffy said, "Let's hire her, she's got class." So they hired her on the spot! She came to work the first of the next month.

**Ritchie:** And she's putting the card system together again? That's great.

**Watt:** Yes, she just graduated from college and never had a job of her own. Now she's had to get out on her own. But she's doing all right. She's got a mind of her own.

**Ritchie:** I think it would be good to stop at this point, and next to take up the period when Senators Jackson and Nunn were chairman. I would also like to do a little retrospective, looking

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back over how things have changed over the long period.

**Watt:** Yes, I was thinking the other day about Jimmy Hoffa and how he went on down through our lives until they were trying to dig him up out in Detroit! There

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were a lot of spaces in there, but the fact was that he was back-and-back before the committee.

**Ritchie:** When we talk about the more recent period, we can consider that a "Part III" of the oral history, and put that under restriction.

**Watt:** Yes, because there were some things that turned me off, that I would like to talk about, but I don't want them released now.

**Ritchie:** You can speak freely, but we can keep the transcript closed for whatever period you would like. But we can do it in a way that the earlier material can be made available.

**Watt:** Because I'm afraid I will be apt to be pretty critical of some of the things in the last ten years.

**Ritchie:** That's fine. Actually, one thing we are interested in is assessing how successful people, and committees, and programs were; and failures and mistakes are just as important as successes. So we do want to look at

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the problems, where things went wrong, as well as the high points.

**Watt:** Yes, because some of the behind-the-scenes things were so political, and I've always kept away from the politics. Whenever things get real political they get sticky, as far as I'm concerned.

**Ritchie:** But even your assessment of your counsel who was too nervous to begin any investigations, I think it's important to recognize that.

**Watt:** I told everybody he was nuts, he was off his rocker. I thought he was. I have a strange way of showing my displeasure. When I used to get mad at him I would slam drawers. When I got mad at Howard Feldman I slammed doors! Everybody on the staff knew when I was mad at the chief counsel!

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Oral History Interview with RUTH YOUNG WATT November 30, 1979

**Watt:** When they were making the movie "Advise and Consent," I've forgotten what year it was, it was the year we were going to Las Vegas, and President Kennedy was in the White House, that had to be about 1962, the author Allen Drury had covered our hearings for years, and of course I knew him. One Saturday morning they asked me to come in to advise them how to set up the Caucus Room for a hearing. I remember I came in and Henry Fonda was sitting in the witness chair; anyway I made some remark to him about, "this is the witness chair, and this is where so-and-so sat," and he just gave me a cold stare, as if I had a nerve talking to him. That sort of left me cold. But when I got in there I had a white blouse on and somebody from the movie company said, "Oh, you can't wear that white blouse in the picture." I said, "I'm not going to be in the picture. I'm leaving on vacation tomorrow." They said, "Well, we had planned on you doing what you do at the hearings." I said, "Nothing doing, I'm not going

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to give up my vacation for \$25.00 a day"--back then that was not bad pay. But I wasn't going to give up my vacation, we were going to Las Vegas! It was almost a free trip because Congressman James H. Morrison of Louisiana, who was then chairman of Post Office and Civil Service on the House side used to do things like that for his staff and for people from Louisiana. Macel McGilvery who was Senator Russell Long's secretary asked if we'd like to go on the trip. All we had to do was pay for our round-trip plane fare, the rest was all free, because everything was taken care of. So I wasn't about to give that up, because I had never been anywhere west of Chicago. So I called Gladys Montier who had worked with us, and she was chief clerk of Senator Philip Hart's Judiciary subcommittee. So she took the part, The movie showed her reaching for papers and all that stuff at the hearings. But I thought it had been interesting that I'd been invited to be in a movie! It was one of those things that happen on Capitol Hill that you don't expect. We've had a lot of movie people up here. Helen Hayes was at one of our hearings. I

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didn't even recognize her, but my husband came in and said, "Ruth, Helen Hayes is sitting in the audience toward the back, and she's very hard of hearing." So I went over and asked her if she wanted to sit down in front. But I wouldn't have recognized her because she had dark glasses on. Then Ralph Bellamy came when he was playing in "Sunrise at Campobello." He came and sat in on some hearing, it may have been the Valachi hearings, but I'm not sure. Then Joan Crawford and her husband, when he was head of Pepsi Cola, they came to our hearing one day and she sat in the front row. Then James-Whitmore, who played Truman at Ford's Theater; then I went up to see Gary Cooper when he was playing in "The Courtmarshal of Billy Mitchell," that was up on the fourth floor, 457 in the old building. I met Bob Cummings up in Senator Goldwater's office and had my picture taken with him. So that was the extent of my dealings with the movie crowd. You know, a lot of people get impressed with people around here, but the movie stars are exciting to us because we don't see them that much. **Ritchie:** It is interesting that people think of politics as being very glamorous, but if a movie star

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shows up in Washington they get much more attention than the politicians. **Watt:** Oh, yes. And Dick Powell came to the Rackets Committee hearings with his wife June Allyson. Senator got them seats because he was from Arkansas. **Ritchie:** I remember reading an account of the filming of "Advise and Consent," which said that some of the senators even came and stood in the crowd to watch the filming. **Watt:** Yes, that was mostly in the Caucus Room. That is such an interesting room, and of course, I could claim legal residence there as many hours as I've spent in there!

**Ritchie:** How did the committee decide when to hold a hearing in the Caucus Room? Was it just that their own hearing would not be big enough?

**Watt:** Too small. And many times during the Labor Rackets hearings, which were such big things, and we had some presidential contenders, we met in the Caucus Room. The publicity was better, and the room could handle the crowds. We had standing room only every day. Our hearing room--we had just moved into the new building which wasn't even finished--and 357 held about fifty people at the most. So I reserved the

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Caucus Room for the duration of those hearings. If anybody wanted it they had to come to me. If we weren't using it we would release it, but otherwise even the Senate Ladies had to reschedule their annual luncheon for Mrs. Eisenhower. They made arrangements to have it in the Supreme Court room because we couldn't give up the Caucus Room. And they had had it reserved way ahead, but we took precedence. I was quite surprised because usually the senators' wives get precedence, but I think Mrs. Nixon worked it out (he was vice president at the time) so that they took another room, but they had used the Caucus Room for years.

**Ritchie:** We ended last week at the time when Senator Henry Jackson took over as chairman of the subcommittee, when Senator McClellan became Appropriations chairman. I get the feeling from your previous statements that Senator Jackson had not been a very active member of the committee. Is that true?

**Watt:** As far as meetings were concerned he always came, but he'd never been all that active. He kept a hand in, but the ranking minority member was always much more active than he ever was. But he was next in line and he held on to the

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subcommittee because he had the seniority to take over as chairman. Two or three times Senator McClellan said he was going to give it up and then didn't. I had heard rumors from uptown that Jackson had said he was going to clean house and get rid of the staff when he did take over, which didn't happen--it was probably just rumor.

Howard Feldman came in as chief counsel, smart young man, inexperienced but smart. He didn't quite know how to handle people when he was under pressure. I liked him very much, but I used to get furious at him because under pressure he was difficult to deal with. He had made me promise to stay as long as he did, when he first came, because here I was teaching the "ABCs" to the new ones coming in. Some people just can't take pressure, and he was only about twenty-nine or thirty years old and didn't have much experience. But I think a great deal of him.

He went into that law firm--they set up their own law firm--and before the first year he'd bought a hundred-thousand dollar house. They have contracts with oil and gas companies. When they started out there were three of them,

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and now I think the law firm has at least fourteen people in it, and that's only three years later. So they're doing very well. Bill Van Ness who was chief counsel on the Energy Committee--it was Interior then--he went, and another from the Commerce Committee, and I think there was a fourth from the House side, they started the firm. They've really got beautiful space; they've got all of one floor in a new building near Dupont Circle. Then Owen Malone came along after Howard.

**Ritchie:** You said that the ranking Republican was more active on the committee than Jackson was. Is that true in general, that the ranking Republican is the next most active member of the committee other than the chairman?

**Watt:** As a rule. Of course, on some of these committees you've got subcommittee chairman and if they've got a subject that's real newsworthy they get it, since they are chairmen of subcommittees. So the ranking sometimes is and sometimes isn't. Now Senator Mundt was very active. Senator McCarthy was first minority, and he was pretty active. He and Senator McClellan got along well. Senator Mundt was very conservative, and after Senator McCarthy

died Mundt was ranking minority. He was very active, and he and Senator McClellan had the same conservative philosophy.

As a matter of fact, the day that President Kennedy was assassinated, Senator McClellan and Senator Mundt were airborne over St. Paul when they got the news. Senator McClellan was on his way out to a testimonial dinner for Senator Mundt in South Dakota. Senator McClellan got off at St. Paul and came back. Senator Mundt went on, he couldn't very well do anything else because of the dinner. But there was that closeness. They sort of thought alike, being of the same philosophy, ultra-conservative.

Then when Senator Mundt gave up the subcommittee--for a while he was incapacitated with that bad stroke--Senator Javits became the ranking minority. He was pretty voluble in seeing that he got a staff member and no matter what report we wrote, he always had a minority report. That was just his policy. The others haven't done that. Then they had a choice, they could only be ranking on one subcommittee, and Senator Ribicoff's subcommittee on reorganization was planning to

reorganize the whole government that year, so Senator Javits had to give up ranking on the Investigations Subcommittee if he wanted to be ranking on that. So he gave us up, thinking they were going to be very active reorganizing the whole government. So Senator Charles Percy moved up to ranking minority member on our committee, but in the meantime Senator Ribicoff's subcommittee didn't do all that much that year, so Senator Javits didn't have that much to do. I don't know how much of a disappointment it was to him, you would never know because he's so busy on the Labor committee anyway, and Foreign Relations. See,

he came under the "grandfather clause" for Governmental Operations. When that became a major committee it meant that those who were on at that point could stay, but they couldn't get another one. They had two major committees and this was now a third. During this last reorganization I think they eliminated that; they eliminated the "grandfather clause" so Muskie gave up the committee. I think he was the only one because Senator Jackson and Senator Javits, and maybe Senator Ribicoff, those three got

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special permission to stay on after the reorganization. Senator Javits had interest in government reorganization which another committee does now, he's still on our subcommittee. Senator Jackson was going to be chairman of the subcommittee and naturally he didn't want to give it up. He has Armed Services and he's chairman of the Energy Committee. Those two had been under the "grandfather clause," but there was one on each side, so it was evened off and was apparently no problem in doing that.

**Ritchie:** What about Senator Percy, has he been an effective member of the subcommittee?

**Watt:** Very, very active. He's more active than any of the others have ever been. He had a good staff. Senator Percy is the kind of person who if he wants something he goes after it, and if there is an objection to it he still persists. I admire him for it, of course at times it's difficult on the majority people. He gets one-third of the salary money that the majority does. But they have a certain allotment and if he wants to pay less money to people he can get that much more. He had Stuart Statler who has gone to the Consumer Protection Agency, but I just had a great deal of admiration for him a smart young man.

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Senator Percy just was able to find people. I suppose a senator has to take his counsel's word for things because he can't do it all, but he was gathering these newly graduated students from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, from out in the West, all these bright young men coming in on his staff. If they made out really well they stayed six months to a year and a half and then would move on and somebody else comes. He just has a bunch of brilliant young men over there, but they get so that they want to run the place, and I used to run into that. I had them come in and tell me how to run the hearings! But they were young, and when you're that age you know everything.

**Ritchie:** I notice that Senator Percy chaired at least one hearing on the hearing aid investigation.

**Watt:** That's right, and he's running the hearings they have right now. Now Senator Nunn chaired it, but the minority did all the work on it. I think there was part of one day that Senator Nunn couldn't be there that Senator Percy chaired. It's unheard of almost for a minority member to chair a hearing.

**Ritchie:** That's what I was going to ask; I didn't think that the committee had a practice like that.

**Watt:** But I think you will find that Senator Nunn was there most of the time. He was in and out.

**Ritchie:** Is it because Percy was the one who really wanted to hold those hearings?

**Watt:** They did all the work on it. His minority staff did every bit of the work on it. Of course, the chief counsel wrote the opening statement for the chairman and the press release, but now every press release that goes out is a point effort of the chairman and the ranking minority member, Nunn and Percy, before it was Jackson and Percy.

**Ritchie:** Senator Percy seems to have a very good sense of public relations. His hearings lately had a masked witness and steering wheels of cars which were bound to attract newspaper and television coverage.

**Watt:** Yes, before I saw it on TV I knew it was coming up, I heard about it when I was in a couple of weeks ago. He can go ahead and do things that they can't do in the Senate and get paid for--I was in and had to tell them that there was no way they could do it. Myra, my replacement, had to tell them, but being new she really didn't know. Of course, she goes to the Rules Committee the same as I always did. They just

say, "We have to do this!" Well, you can't do it, you can't spend government money for things that are not legal. But they got around it somehow, I'll have to ask Myra how they finally got around paying for his expenses.

**Ritchie:** Of this masked witness?

**Watt:** Yes, because they put him up in this big, hotel. You can't pay hotel bills for witnesses! One time we did have a witness who was in prison down in Florida and we paid for the witness and the matron--it was a woman, a murderess--to appear before the Rackets Committee. We also paid for the matron, to make sure the witness didn't run away. So there are certain things you can do, but everything is set out in the law, what you can do and what you can't. If you didn't limit it there would be many things that people would take advantage of.

**Ritchie:** You said that when Jackson took over as chairman he didn't change the staff dramatically the way it had been rumored, but were there any changes at all? What was the difference between Jackson as chairman of the committee and McClellan as chairman?

**Watt:** Jackson's favorite was the Subcommittee on National Security, which merged with us. He was greatly interested in foreign policy, the Russian grain sales and all that. So that was his main interest with that part of the subcommittee, and they worked closely with him. They had an office right next door and they were part of us, but they weren't; they were a separate entity

actually (except that I paid all the bills). He had Richard Perle and Dorothy Fosdick, who are both brainy, brilliant people. The others were sort of incidental.

**Ritchie:** Did the subcommittees really merge, or were they really two separate entities that just happened to be under the same chairman? Did they work together?

**Watt:** Not really. We had one fellow, Elliott Abrams, who worked closely with them. I think probably he and Richard Perle were friends before when he was a practicing lawyer in New York. Then there were two or three that he employed from Washington State that worked very closely with that group. But with the regulars that had been on there before there was very little contact. If the girls couldn't do the work, Dickie (Dr. Fosdick) would bring it over to

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me to get somebody on our staff to do it. Or we'd go over there, once a year Richard Perle would dictate and we'd send one of the girls over, because they only had a couple of part-time people over there. But as far as the work was concerned, Dickie kept abreast of all of it, but she didn't really participate. If we had an organization meeting or something, she was there. Or if we went to the Rules Committee to get money and all that sort of thing. But as far as the actual things we were working on, no, they had a separate operation.

**Ritchie:** When Jackson left the committee, did that subcommittee leave as well?

**Watt:** He's still vice chairman. I think there are a few--Richard Perle and three part-time people on our subcommittee payroll. Dorothy Fosdick works out of that office, but she's on Senator Jackson's payroll, just transferred. They get pretty good salaries and I think Senator Nunn would like to have that himself, to pay one of his people, because as I said that operation is not one that he takes part in that much. They only have hearings every one or two years, but they write

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reports and they do an awful lot of work with the State Department and so on. You don't necessarily have to have hearings to be active.

**Ritchie:** Senator Jackson had a bright staff around him and he had a lot of interest in international affairs and energy and military policy, but was he a very effective chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee?

**Watt:** He had hearings that he chaired on energy--and we had joint hearings with the Interior Committee, before it became the Energy Committee--we had several Cabinet level people up to testify, at one time we had witnesses who represented all the big oil companies in the country--we had that in the Caucus Room, I remember them all lined up the width of the room--that was the year he was running for President, so he was pretty busy anyway. Then we had hearings on grain for Russia, those were the things he was interested in, the international picture and energy. The other hearings we had he farmed out to Senator Huddleston who chaired them. Then Senator McClellan asked Huddleston, who was at the end of his first year, Senator McClellan was just very much impressed with

him and asked him to go on the Appropriations Committee, so Senator Huddleston had to give up Government Operations. Then Senator Nunn took over chairing. The only one that Senator Jackson chaired was the one hearing a year that was the National Security hearing. Of course, I handled them all, but that was just at the clerical level.

**Ritchie:** So he was something of an absentee chairman?

**Watt:** He was around and took an interest. He always had all the information that everyone else had. But he had two other big committees that were very active; Energy Committee had hearings every day; Armed Services Committee is a very active committee. So actually it was a time thing.

**Ritchie:** What about his presidential race? Did that eat into his time on the subcommittee?

**Watt:** Not really, I think it would have been the same. For instance, they had a special train that went to New York when he was in that primary, that's the only one that I remember. When he was running he got the Washington legislature to vote that if he didn't get the presidential thing he could still be elected to the Senate--they'll do that,

you know, Lyndon Johnson did it. I don't think it ate into his time that much. We knew he was running, because they had a special committee for the presidency and I know there were people on it, one girl from National Security who was on our payroll left and went on that payroll, and there was one man from his office that had been there for a long time, who had been chief counsel of Post Office and Civil Service when Olin Johnston of South Carolina was chairman, and then Jackson had him in his office--he's now mayor of Harper's Ferry, his son-in-law was on our staff until recently, Keith Atkinson.

When you talk about staff staying, Bob Dunne had already made a commitment to teach in a school in England but they did ask him to stay on. Paul Kamerick had been there a long time and he was not that active during the period of the last year's of Senator McClellan's chairmanship. We had that counsel who sort of queered everything, so Paul Kamerick retired. We had two people reimbursable from GAO, they retired and we were paying them the difference, one of those retired annuitant type of

things. He got rid of them because he didn't think they were needed, they really didn't do that much anyway. He got rid of the ones who at that point weren't very active. Of course, Howard Feldman was the one who made the decision, because the Senator had no way of knowing who was who or what kind of work they did. John Brick got sick and died, that was that first year when Jackson was chairman. Now the girls were the same, the staff editor was the same.



Al Calabrese had been on the subcommittee since 1955, and he was an investigator. He was a little quick tempered and some little incident happened. He was down in the cafeteria having coffee and they wanted him. Howard got a little upset that he was down there so long, and Howard called him on it, so he quit, got mad and retired.

Then we had the GAO people and had to let them go. For years we had them free, with GAO paying. So any of them that were still on had to go back, we had about three of them that had been on for quite a few years. We didn't take them on, but they didn't want to transfer to our payroll because of the fact that the insecurity was so great at that point.

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We didn't know how long Senator Jackson would be there, we didn't know if he wanted to keep people--see he had some of his own people he wanted to hire. So that's about it. Right now there are only three people on the staff who were there when McClellan was, one since 1953, the other since 1956. I was the oldest in terms of service for many, many years. Now Lavern Duffy and Rosemary Kennedy are the two longest serving. There is also Roland Crandall, but he was with the Government Printing Office and worked with us while he was on their payroll, when Senator McClellan was there, so that makes three.

**Ritchie:** Right after Senator Jackson took over in 1973 the Watergate scandal began to appear. It seemed surprising to me that a committee like yours which was so interested in corruption in the government really didn't get involved in the Watergate investigation very much. Was there any particular reason for that?

**Watt:** I'm not sure that we had the authority.

**Ritchie:** Wouldn't it have come under your general authority to investigate executive malfeasance?

**Watt:** But this thing started with political parties, it was a break-in at the Democratic headquarters.

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That was what it was all about. The fact that the President and the people around him were involved harked back to the political thing. I don't think we had the authority. We didn't want it anyway, because the full committee could have taken it. But you see, Senator Ervin was chairman of the full committee at that time, and he became chairman of the Watergate investigation. And as a result they did nothing on the full committee for all that time, just sat around doing needlepoint. So I don't believe there was anybody on that subcommittee that would have wanted it. It almost had to be a select committee.

**Ritchie:** Why don't you think anybody would have wanted it?

**Watt:** Well, to begin with, you have almost as many Republicans on the subcommittee as you have Democrats. There would have been just a battle, a fistfight. That's the way I feel about it. For instance, on that committee we had Javits, Percy, and Brock (who is now chairman of the Republican National Committee). But I don't think it would have been the right forum for it.

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**Ritchie:** The subcommittee did investigate Robert Vesco, who was peripherally involved with Watergate.

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**Watt:** Well, that was because we were having hearings on the SEC, and it came about through his SEC involvement. There was a lot of corruption there with the SEC, and then his name came into it. Then of course they tried to make a little political hay out of it.

**Ritchie:** Who did?

**Watt:** The Democrats, which was natural. I don't know how much there was on the Senate level, but on the staff level it was certainly a political thing.

**Ritchie:** On the staff they saw that as a good political move?

**Watt:** Well, it could have been from the top down, but I don't know that. I just know what was going on at my level.

**Ritchie:** What in particular was going on?

**Watt:** Oh, they were following up all these leads. And you remember we had Elliott Roosevelt come back from Portugal, and there was this whole big tie-in.

**Ritchie:** You never got Vesco to testify, did you?

**Watt:** No, he never came back to the country, because he would have been slapped in jail. Right now he can't come back, although they would like

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to get him back. They even tried to involve him in the White House now, in the Carter administration. Somebody tried to bring him into that, and how much there is I don't know. I've seen pictures of him, and he keeps popping up in different spots, not only on the Republican side, but on the Democrats side, too. And somehow there was a tie-in to narcotics traffic. It's all very much in the shadows, in the gray area.

**Ritchie:** So would you say that the Vesco hearings were mostly to raise some publicity at the time? They couldn't get him back or prosecute him, but they could get some publicity.

**Watt:** I'm not sure how important that was. It kept popping up, but with a name like that you can't help but get publicity. The same thing happened with the Murray Chotner case, they tried to make political hay with that. We had executive sessions, and they went to California in 1956. They had his brother and him both. Later Murray came here and was killed in an automobile accident; he had the most beautiful wife--boy was she pretty. But it was those gray areas where you are not sure whether it was political or not.

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**Ritchie:** During that whole period there were certain high points in terms of getting attention, like the Vesco case, or the Russian grain deal, and the fuel shortages. But my general impression is that the subcommittee didn't get the same kind of press attention then that it had gotten in earlier years.

**Watt:** No. Well, there were so many other subcommittees that had sprung up, even the subcommittees of Governmental Affairs were investigating some of the things that we had the authority for. Senator Chiles has one that we could very well go into. They all have different names now, and I don't recognize them, but thank goodness we're still Investigations. There are many things that other committees have gotten that we could have done, but you have got to have someone who is chairman that's not too busy and will go after these things, and say to the counsel, "You get your staff and go after this and get ready for hearings." You've got to have an interest at the top. There might be an interest, but other things will take priority. Of course, national security and energy are topmost in people's minds now, especially in Senator Jackson's.

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**Ritchie:** I would have thought that Jackson, with his presidential ambitions and good staff, would have been able to generate more publicity through that committee.

**Watt:** He was not that interested in investigating wrong-doing and so on. He was interested in energy and the armed services. Now, of the things he could do on that committee, he did have energy hearings and the Russian grain deal, but that was the only thing. The other things we went into really weren't of a political advantage to him, except that one senator said at one time that he would get his name in the paper, good or bad, he didn't care as long as his name was in the paper so people didn't forget. Anyway, I remember back when Truman was on the committee, his name was on the front page of the papers every single day, so his name was a household word when he became vice president under Roosevelt. And that was all good, he had a good publicity man, press man.

**Ritchie:** Didn't Jackson have his own public relations man?

**Watt:** Yes, Brian Corcoran.

**Ritchie:** Did he handle public relations for the subcommittee as well?

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**Watt:** Not really. He would go over the press releases that we gave him, and once in a while he would add something. He would come over to the hearings and see what was going on. Seeing that I was handling all the press distribution, there was really nothing for him to do, unless the press wanted some special information that the committee didn't have. But he was there to see that the press got things, and I had done that for years so he didn't have to worry about it. The circulation was there.

**Ritchie:** Did Howard Feldman have good relations with the press, too?

**Watt:** Yes and no. He would have a little conference with the press before a hearing, but if a call came in and he wasn't there, he was not good about calling the press back. Let's put it this way: he was not with publicity. I think he thought Corcoran should do it. Now Jerry Adelman, Frip Flanagan, Bill Rogers, Bob Kennedy really went all the way out to be nice to the press. After that we didn't

have the same relationship because the chief counsels were more intent on getting the investigations going and they were not that

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interested in the press. Up till then every one of our chief counsels was really good about the public and the press.

**Ritchie:** Was the same true about Owen Malone?

**Watt:** Owen Malone didn't want to talk to anybody in the press, as far as I know. I don't think he was interested. I don't know if he didn't want to handle them, or didn't have the experience to handle them, or if he just didn't want any part of it, but he saw very few of the press. Most of the time we used to have reporters in and out all the time, and after a while we didn't have anybody from the press come in. Individuals make a lot of difference with the success of a committee. I think this new man is going to be great.

**Ritchie:** Who is that?

**Watt:** Marty Steinberg. He came after I left, but he's a real smart young man, has a nice personality. How he operates, I don't know. They've been having hearings all week, but of course the minority did all the work on it--they've been working on it for months.

**Ritchie:** One other point, I understand that before the Army-McCarthy hearings one senator could hold a hearing by himself.

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**Watt:** There's a resolution setting forth what a quorum for a hearing is. In most cases the committee sets what the quorum shall be. Well, up until that point you could have a hearing with just the chairman present. When the three Democratic senators left the committee in July of 1953, and then came back in late January of 1954, one of the stipulations was that there would be at least two members present at any hearing where there were witnesses being sworn, open or executive. That went on for two or three years, maybe more. In about 1957 or 1958 we had a great deal of trouble holding hearings because we couldn't always get two members. So then they put a stipulation in that two members would have to be present unless an authorization was signed by the chairman and the ranking minority member that a one-man quorum could conduct a hearing, open or closed. That was repeated each year in our rules for about five years. And then they just dropped that and made it a rule in the Rules of Procedure which were approved by the subcommittee, which made it legal.

**Ritchie:** That's something that always surprises me whenever I go to a committee hearing that there often is just one senator there.

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**Watt:** There are so many committee hearings, and the senators are on so many subcommittees. There are very few Democrats now who aren't chairmen of subcommittees. Even this new reorganization has enlarged the subcommittees. They were trying to cut down, but they cut down on the full committees, and of

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course, the subcommittees are more expensive than full committees, because they are allowed a certain number of people on the full committee. If you appropriate money in a budget . . . for instance, we were appropriating money for a staff with the minority, because they get a third of the staff and a third of the salary money. Last year when I made the budget up we made it for thirty-eight or forty people. On the full committees the maximum that you can have is twelve, including the minority. So that's quite a difference, and actually they are not saving any money. They are going to have these committees one way or another.

**Ritchie:** Does it affect the work of the committee in any way that only one or two senators show up for committee hearings?

**Watt:** The staff does all the work anyway. The staff briefs the committee members. We used to have

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a briefing for the senators before a hearing, and then it was up to them if they came or not. Frequently, they would send a representative from their staff; some of their staff was assigned to the committees. Of course, now they have that special resolution that they passed two or three years ago, where one person is hired to work with the senator and all of his committees to keep him up to date. They work out of his office, and it's a separate fund and it's not paid by the committee.

**Ritchie:** Do the staff members prepare the questions for the senators to ask?

**Watt:** Yes.

**Ritchie:** For senators other than the chairman?

**Watt:** What we do is to make up a folder for each senator on the committee. The ranking minority chief counsel gets all the material that's being prepared in advance and then he takes it to the ranking party members. It's mostly the ranking minority member and the chairman who are the most religious about coming. In that folder we put all of the statements of the witnesses for the next day, all the questions that have been prepared by the staff based on

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interviews plus the statements (a witness is supposed to present his statement to us forty-eight hours ahead, or the day before anyway). Sometimes the staff works way into the night on these things because they kept revising them. Then there's the witness list and the opening statement of both the chairman and the ranking minority member, and any other pertinent information like exhibits that they might be interested in and would be put in the record later. Each senator gets a folder like that. I think that the subcommittee has probably always been better prepared than most subcommittees and committees.

**Ritchie:** Did they handle the Bert Lance hearings?

**Watt:** No, that was the full committee, but there were two or three of our staff working on it.

**Ritchie:** There was some criticism at that time that the senators themselves didn't ask very good questions, and that the answers evaded their questions.

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**Ritchie:** There's been some comment that senators working out of prepared questions aren't very good at thinking up follow-up questions when the answers aren't to the point.

**Watt:** Well, the chief counsel is sitting right there and he's worked on the hearing for months. Our staff has not had that problem, I don't believe. One time, during the time when Senator Jackson was running for president, he had Senator Huddleston and sometimes Senator Nunn chair the hearings. Senator Huddleston worked for two years I guess, he chaired all of our hearings because of Senator Jackson's involvement elsewhere and he did a good job.

**Ritchie:** What was it about Huddleston that made him stand out?

**Watt:** I don't know. Just his interest and his personality. But he was well-prepared and did his homework. And he had Carolyn Fuller who worked on committees for him; she worked for a Virginia senator at one time. She worked right along with him and kept him briefed. She came down to the committee and got all the information for him, as if she was on the committee staff. And she worked with the chief counsel and minority and the people who were working on a particular hearing. He was, as well prepared as any chairman that we ever had. Because he had someone to look out for him; and apparently she did the same thing for him with the Agriculture Committee--of course, they were in committee all the time! But I was very much impressed with Senator Huddleston and liked him very much.

One day we were going to hold a hearing and couldn't get either Senator Huddleston or Nunn, so Senator James Allen chaired it. Of course, he was so busy on the floor of the Senate and in the Agriculture Committee that he had not been to the hearings at all. One

of our staff who had worked on this particular investigation went up and in a half an hour briefed Senator Allen. He came and chaired that hearing, and you would have thought that he had been there and knew everything about it. It was just astounding. What a brilliant mind he had. And to see him you wouldn't get that impression. But that was a brilliant hearing and he had only a half an hour's briefing.

**Ritchie:** He had a very retentive mind for detail.

**Watt:** Yes. He could just glance at something and take it in. But it was beautifully done.

**Ritchie:** There have also been considerable changes in the size and functions of the staff to help the senators.

**Watt:** About three years ago they hired extra people, not on the committee payroll, but they were on a special payroll working in the senators' offices. They held up on our resolutions until that went through. A staff member would maybe

personally handle maybe four committees or subcommittees for the senator, because they figured they weren't getting enough out of the staff of the committees

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themselves. And I guess they did need people like that, because there's so many hearings going on--there's just too much. I don't know how they do justice to them. And they complain that the senators don't do anything. They ought to come down here and follow any one of them around for a week. The more you do, the more they expect of you.

For instance, Senator Walter "Dee" Huddleston, was acting chairman of the subcommittee. I never saw anybody work so hard. Of course he was on Agriculture Committee and on Government Operations, but Agriculture was meeting all the time at that point. He was just on the go all the time. And he was a freshman senator. Now Senator Nunn is on Armed Services and that's a full-time job in itself, and he's chairman of a subcommittee. He's on the full committee, and they have many hearings.

I was talking to the staff editor of the full committee the other day, and he said that in July--now there are about six subcommittees of Governmental Affairs--they had one hundred hearings in the month of July, that includes the full committee and all those subcommittees,

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that he has to do the editing for. Stop and think of that, that's just one committee! That's just an example of the volume of work that goes on in committee. Senator Ribicoff has been more active, so far as hearings are concerned, than any other senator since I've been here, in Governmental Affairs, except that he's farmed the hearings out to the chairman of the different subcommittees. Then when it comes back to the full committee, why sometimes he has them chairing them, too. I think he's on Finance too, if I remember rightly. So it's been a more active committee than it has ever been, during the time that he has been chairman, because he has concentrated on that committee. For instance, Senator Ervin had Watergate, so nothing went on while he was chairman of the committee. Someone else might have committee hearings, but we didn't have all that many. Watergate was the Main thing then.

**Ritchie:** There is one story that I have been looking forward to asking you about since we began these interviews. Could you recount your celebrated encounter with the Architect of the Capitol?

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**Watt:** Oh dear, that's a whole story in itself. Let's see, in January 1976 one icy morning, I used to drop my husband off around by the elevator entrance and most of my driving was from there around to our parking place where the gate by the senators' driveway is, where they have outside parking in the old Russell Senate Office building. I park right between the two entrances, because they had

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asked us years ago to take that place because Senator Milton Young wanted the parking place we had--it was a favor to take it, but of course it was the best place in the Senate. The nurse parked next to us, Mrs. Hall. Jonsey the police man used to cover the area and was very protective of us, saw that nobody took our parking place.

Well, this one morning, Jonsey was directing traffic out in the street and I came around the corner and into the parking space and there was ice and the car slid into the iron gate. A piece of the gate, one little piece like this, fell out. Jonsey dashed up and turned the ignition off. I'd gotten out of the car with the ignition on because I was so shocked. Then I called my husband and then they

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sent the accident squad. There was some man who was new, he had been on night duty. He came along and said, "Come on, sit in the car and I'm going to get all of this information." I looked at him, you know it was a cold morning, and I said, "Well, you come down to my office and we'll sit in my office. I'm not going out in your car." I felt like a criminal the way he addressed me. So he took this information down--of course, all the staff were agog, but they're all very good, they never interfere in anybody else's affairs, which I think is unusual in a staff not to be prying into other people's private lives. Then I called the Architect's office and made an appointment to go over and report. There was one fellow over there that Watt knew, and then there were the lawyers. So I told them the story of what had happened; then Attorney Tyler came over and got a statement from me and went back and apparently recommended to the Architect that they drop it; there was no point, there had been ice there and it was not my fault. They hadn't sanded or anything. But the Architect decided no, he was going to follow

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this thing through and I was going to pay. Then Watt got the insurance company to come out. Their man looked it over and he gave a statement that there was no way that they could pay because of the ice.

**Ritchie:** There wasn't any damage to your car, was there?

**Watt:** Just \$1.75 for a little rubber tip on the bumper. Then I got an affidavit from the mechanic, how much he had paid for the rubber to put on it. Then the Architect got estimates from the iron works to replace the gate for something like \$9,000 and they sent me the bill!

**Ritchie:** What did you think when you received that letter?

**Watt:** I couldn't believe it. It was on my birthday and I was sick in bed with the flu! I said, "I can't believe it!" of course I never had anything like this before. I was all at sea, and Watt was furious, but he stayed out of it pretty much and let me handle it. Then one day I was over in Senator McClellan's office and I said, "I need some advice." I've never asked a senator for any help, just advice. I told him about what had gone on, and he was quite perturbed about it. The next day, as I remember he told me about it, there was a

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meeting of the full Appropriations Committee, and while they were waiting for them all to get together, he was discussing the case and telling the Appropriations Committee all about it, and how ridiculous it was for the Architect to act that way. Then Mr. George White the Architect of the Capitol sent the case down to the Justice Department to sue me.

**Ritchie:** You hadn't paid and said you weren't going to pay?

**Watt:** No, I ignored the letter; I had no intention of it. Well, what the heck, there was ice there, it wasn't my fault. Maybe if I'd been a better driver I wouldn't have gotten on the ice, but I didn't see the ice. Then Senator McClellan told Jim Calloway Chief Counsel of the Appropriations Committee to have me write a memo and discuss the whole thing. In the meantime, the people who had come to repair the gate said the only thing holding the gate together was "rust and dust." Of course, that was in the memo, the whole thing was put in the memo. I had one of the lawyers on the committee write it for me, because I wanted to be sure it was the way it should be.

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Then Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, who was chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee that handled the funds of the Architect of the Capitol, got the memo. I don't know who talked to Mr. White, but Mr. White called Jim Calloway and asked, "Is Senator McClellan serious about pursuing this thing?" Senator McClellan had threatened to go to the floor of the Senate if Mr. White didn't drop it, because he thought it was a crime for one poor little person like me to be sued for \$9,700! All the while I was upset, this was going on into May. Jim called the senator, he was in a meeting somewhere, and said the Architect was on the phone and wanted to know if he was serious about following up on this thing. Senator McClellan used a couple of swear words and said, "You're darn right I am! I've never been more serious in my life."

At that point, the Justice Department came up and interviewed me, and Jonsey, and other people. Senator McClellan had a friend at Justice and he told him, I don't want this thing put in a back drawer. I want you to have somebody come up here and investigate it. I

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don't want any favors, I just want this investigated thoroughly." So that's what they got. A lady lawyer--lovely lady--came up and interviewed me. In the meantime, after that telephone conversation, apparently Mr. White must have called the Justice Department and asked to withdraw the complaint. But if there had been anything on it, once it goes down there they have to pursue it no matter who wants to withdraw the complaint.

Then I got a copy of a three-paragraph letter back that they had decided to take no further action regarding the case. It said they based their decision "upon the high probability of the United States being found contributorily negligent for failure to place salt on the area; the vast difference in the amount requested by

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our claim (\$9,900.00) and the amount of damage to the Watt vehicle (approximately \$2.00), and the request by your office for no further action." So that was over, but every day from January through May something was going on with this thing. It was really an unpleasantness, especially saying they were going to sue me for \$9,900.00 and the Justice Department was going after me. It

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was a really traumatic thing, not having any dealings with the law before!

**Ritchie:** But it was nice to have the chairman of the appropriations Committee on your side.

**Watt:** Yes. One of the things the Justice Department lawyer asked me was how many people knew about this. I said, "Everybody I know, and I know everybody in the United States Senate." Every day people would stop me and say, "What's the latest." I had to give a running report on what was going on with this thing. Even when Senator McClellan was in Walter Reed hospital he would have Jeannine Ragland, his private secretary, report to him every day on the progress of the case. Not everybody has an experience like that! Someone in the Architect's office later told us, "Boy, they tangled with the wrong person when they tangled with Ruth Watt!" But I didn't do anything, I just told everybody what was going on.

I had told Stuart Statler, who was a young smart lawyer with the minority on the Permanent Subcommittee, about it and he wanted to go to Senator Percy so he could go after the case. I said, "No, don't do anything." Because I had already asked Senator McClellan for his

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advice, and if one other person had gotten into it, he would have dropped it. You know, these senators don't want somebody else working on something they're working on. But if Senator McClellan hadn't acted, why I'm sure Senator Percy would have, because Stuart was so incensed at the whole thing.

**WATT:** Senator Percy is so nice. I've heard about how thoughtful he is. Anyone of his staff if they were going away or were sick, he's always concerned. Of course, having lost that daughter I suppose made him that much more sensitive, but I think he is just naturally a kind person. He would have all of his staff out to his house at Christmas and at different times, and was always doing nice things. I was so surprised when I retired, I didn't have any of the senators on the list to be asked to my retirement party and Stuart was quite upset because I hadn't made sure that Senator Percy was asked. Well, I didn't think that they knew me that well. All that they had ever seen me was at hearings. I wasn't even sure that they knew my name. Of course their staffs did, because I had so much contact with them. But Senator Percy called me over to his office

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and told me what a great job I'd done all those years, and had my picture taken with him. He's the one that put that statement and resolution about me in the Record. He was so kind. I was very much impressed with that because as you know I never made a point of walking into senators offices, I never felt I needed to as long as my job wasn't in jeopardy. I did my job and could fight my own battles pretty well, at least until this came along!

Now Senator Jackson was so busy with other things, you just couldn't get that close to him. I could go anywhere and get him to sign a subpoena, he was always available, if I could find him, for an emergency. He was, of course, always in a hurry because he had so many things going, he was so backed up with everything. But anytime I wanted to get to him I could, and I did when it was necessary, especially getting a letter or a subpoena signed, or putting people on the payroll. Now Senator Nunn was not chairman long enough for me to judge. He became chairman in January and I left the end of May, and in the meantime I was just a retired annuitant. To me he is very much like Senator McClellan in his approach to investigations.

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I will say one thing for Civil Service, I told the committee I would stay on for a thousand dollars a month plus my retirement, I retired the end of February and went off the payroll the end of May. So I was getting retirement money for March and I got my check the 16th of April--and I've known people that waited six months before they got their first check. How I got through that fast I don't know. I couldn't believe it. But it's a pretty darned good retirement. Except for hospitalization it's all gravy now, but wait till April of next year then I'm going to have a bite out of it for taxes! Watt and I were paying forty-seven percent taxes when I retired.

**Ritchie:** Well, all together you worked for the Senate for thirty-two years.

**Watt:** In the same office, 101 Russell S.O.B.

**Ritchie:** The Senate must have changed a lot over the years you were there. Looking back, what were the most noticeable changes?

**Watt:** It got so much bigger. Every year it would get bigger. They would make changes to economize

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but it would get bigger. When they started out with the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, Public Law 601, they set up just certain committees, I think there were fifteen of them. I came in February of 1947, right after that reorganization. That was to economize and get it streamlined. Well, then they started setting up subcommittees of the standing committees. There was one committee, a small surplus subcommittee of Expenditures in Executive Departments, which was the name of the Committee which is now Governmental Affairs, that merged with us. We had their authority plus the malfeasance, etc., from the War Investigating Committee, and that was all the authority we had back then. There was a Surplus Property Subcommittee that was set up in 1947,

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Senator Ferguson was chairman, and in January and February of 1948 they set up the Investigating Subcommittee and merged the Surplus Property and the funds, which was about \$5,000, and the staff, a small staff. Salaries then were so small. And we had that one authority.

The Senate as a whole was all housed in one building. No offices off somewhere, just

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the present Russell Building. Everything was in there. There were some little offices over in the Capitol, but they were small and not that many. We had one carry-out kitchen and a dining room on the second floor where the Commerce Committee is, just below the Republican Policy Committee. That was the cafeteria then and we used to gather there in the morning. Everybody knew everyone in the building. We would go up there and have a coffee klatch in the morning. It was like a social club, at ten o'clock in the morning for a half an hour or so. We still got all our work done.

There weren't as many people, so less people did the same work they are doing now. The highest ceiling on salaries for staff was \$10,000--and they're now making \$50,000. The chief counsel was making \$10,000. When Bob Kennedy came aboard it was just a little over \$10,000, he was making that himself. I remember that on the full committee there was only one person who could get that salary. Our staff director on the full committee, Walter Reynolds, was very upset because Bob got it and he didn't. But only one person could

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have it. They weren't doing much on the full committee because Senator McClellan was chairman of both and his concentration was on the subcommittee. I started off at \$3,600 and I felt like a millionaire. When I left, with the extra annuitant money, my salary was listed as \$36,000. I was making \$32,000 or \$33,000 when I retired but the difference as a retired annuitant raised the gross I was supposed to get. So that shows you the inflation. I had very few raises over those years, it was mostly the legislative increases. I had some raises but not that much. But that shows you how much the cost of living went up.

When Senator McClellan first took over, or maybe when Senator McCarthy was chairman, our gross appropriations for the full year was \$86,000. Now the monthly payroll is that. And that originally covered everything, including salaries, travel, witnesses, stationary, everything. And we always turned money back. The increase from 1947 to now has been unbelievable. I can remember when cab fares were 20 cents no matter how many people were in the car. Gas must have been 5 cents a gallon!

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**Ritchie:** You mention the growth of the size of the Senate, do you think that the growth has made the Senate more productive, or has it gotten in the way of productivity?

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**Watt:** I think it's gotten too top heavy. Some of these committees I think could be consolidated, or at least the subcommittees. Now the thing is to let every majority senator have a subcommittee chairmanship, because he gets publicity and prestige that way. There are a lot of them that could be consolidated. Of course, you have to realize that the population explosion has contributed to this a lot. You've got so many more people that have turned of age. The whole government has gotten top heavy, it's not just up here. I don't think we've really been able to keep up with the times, they've gone so fast. But I'm just philosophizing from my own observations.

**Ritchie:** What about the senators, how have they changed? How would you compare the senators today to the senators when you first came here?

**Watt:** To me they were older then, because I'm older now and they seem like babies today! Thirty two years ago my chairman was sixty years old, Senator Brewster, and I was thirty-seven. He

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was old as far as I was concerned. Now looking back I'm almost seventy and I'm looking at these senators who are thirtysix, I'm in a different position! My gosh, Senator Brewster would be way up in his nineties if he were still living. But I'm not so sure that they've changed all that much. The moral fiber of the senators and the people around them I can't tell you, because I don't know-what goes on now. I know what went on then, behind the scenes. But I'm not sure that there's that much difference. I think human nature is the same no matter what era you are in. Of course, I thought the senators were great, they had a great deal of stature. The first few years I worked here a freshman senator was seen and not heard. Now they start off the day they come, making the splash.

The first year I was here we had Kenneth McKellar, who was really up in years. He had to have help going around the corridors, he held onto somebody's arm. We had Senator Vandenberg who was quite a famous person as chairman of Foreign Relations. I had a great deal of admiration for Senator Ferguson. I'm

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trying to remember who was chairman of the Labor Committee. I rarely went to hearing--I think I went to four hearings that weren't my own committee's during the thirty-two years I was there. One of them was John L. Lewis' testimony before the Labor Committee in the Caucus Room.

**Ritchie:** Was Senator Robert Taft the chairman?

**Watt:** I don't remember. I remember that Senator Tobey was there, because he was always spouting the Scriptures, and Senator Bricker was there, I remember him because he was on our committee. I remember that John L. Lewis made those senators look like jackasses. He had all the information right at his fingertips. They were going after him and really weren't prepared. My mouth was just wide open, I couldn't believe that anyone could do that to a senator. But he really was a powerful man.

I went when Frank Costello testified before Senator Kefauver's Crime Committee, that was an evening hearing, the first live television coverage they ever had. Then I went to Bob Kennedy's hearing before the Judiciary Committee for Attorney General. Maybe there was a fourth but I don't know what it was.

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Those were the only times I ever went to a hearing that wasn't ours. Even the Watergate hearings, some people tried to get me to go to those, but I said, "Uh-uh, that's like taking a busman's holiday to go to another hearing." I wasn't that interested in somebody else's hearing, you could see it on television at night.

**Ritchie:** Were the senators more formal in the past than they are now?

**Watt:** I think they were more formal. I know that Senator Brewster was a very dignified man, and Senator Ferguson was. We had people like Senator Carl Hatch who later became a judge, who was in his cups some of the time. And Senator Tom Connally from Texas who was six foot four, I remember him on the Senate floor staggering down the aisle.

I remember Senators Millard Tydings and Burnet Maybank and some of those people had their own little bar up on the fourth floor. We were having an executive session one time and they were in the back room--we had borrowed Tyding's office when Senator O'Connor was on the committee--and we could hear the tinkling of glasses in the room next to us, when Maybank

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and Tydings and those people were back there. That made quite an impression on me!

Speaking of drinks, one time when Senator George Bender of Ohio was on the committee, he was an unusual person, let's put it that way. He came over from the House and he was well know, you always heard about the Bender Committee. Well, one day when we were having hearings in 357 Senator Bender called his secretary and she came in with a tray of glasses with ice and bourbon in every one of those glasses to the hearing. He was going to serve the committee! Of course, none of them would drink it--Bender might--but they had desks with drawers in them, so every senator put his glass in the drawer, and the place smelled like a brewery! So after the hearings were over, Watt and I had to go around and clean all those glasses of booze out. That was the first time I had ever seen that, but Bender didn't care what he did. His secretary works on the House side now, she said, "I admire him, he does what he feels like doing. He doesn't follow the rules the way all the other senators do."

**Ritchie:** How much effect would you say that television has had on the Senate?

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**Watt:** I would say in some cases a great deal, especially when they are running for office and need that exposure. They're going to come to the hearings because they know they're going to get that free exposure. It can't help but effect them.

**Ritchie:** When did television really begin to cover those committee hearings?

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**Watt:** There were some about 1955, because I can remember Bob Kennedy calling some of the senators saying, "We're going to have television today." Sometimes we had trouble getting a quorum, and that would help. But before that even--of course, McCarthy never had any trouble getting publicity, until after he was censured.

**Ritchie:** You say that it was easier to get a quorum when the hearings were televised. Did you notice the senators playing to the cameras and did that change the nature of the hearings in any way?

**Watt:** I think they asked more questions. Of course, the committee staff always has prepared questions for everybody and they can divide them up. They did the footwork. Now we have so many minority staff that the minority works up their own questions, but they each compare

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them so there won't be any duplication of questions. If a senator goes in cold to a hearing he has the questions all prepared in front of him; sometimes you could tell if they were prepared and the questions they asked were their own.

People like Senator John Kennedy, and Senator Allen, and Senator Muskie, they were seasoned senators and knew what they were doing. But the younger ones are not always--I remember one hearing we had last year with a couple of new ones who asked questions that were not pertinent and pretty innocuous. The press is pretty with it too because they will concentrate on a senator if he's brilliant and has some substance, whereas if you get one who is doing this just to ask questions they won't even bother to photograph him. They turn their cameras off. Most of the time it's newsreels anyway and they have to cut it way down. They take a lot of footage but then they use maybe a minute or two deperiding on how interesting he is. Of course, the Mafia people, they got coverage because they were colorful and made good news. Sometimes the important things don't get in there because they are not that newsworthy. You go through a

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paper and look at the headlines, if it sounds interesting you read it, and the rest of it you don't bother with, because you can't read it all. Especially the *New York Times* on Sunday!

But I think as a whole they haven't changed that much, it's just that to me they're younger. But some of them are more knowledgeable than the older ones were. And things have expanded so, we didn't have all this electronic world then. They had the first subcommittee on aviation when I came on the Hill, because I took the minutes of it, they hadn't gotten a staff yet. Senator Brewster was going to be chairing it as a subcommittee of the Commerce Committee. That was the first aviation subcommittee in the Senate and that was 1947. So you see how much the Senate has enlarged, and that's one reason why it has become so top-heavy, because you have all these different areas that you didn't have then.

We had very little television back in 1947. I think I had my first set in 1950, it was black and white. I saw the first television when it was just local at Mark Lansburg's. He was on the staff at Children's Hospital. We

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went to his house for a meeting and I took the minutes., and he had a little television, which picked up just local stations, it never went beyond Washington because the system wasn't expanded that much. Just a little picture screen-I couldn't believe you could get pictures over the air. I can also remember the first radios they were making in 1920, so in my lifespan there has been the greatest progress in everything that you could ever imagine. The splitting of the atom and all the atomic stuff, everything has just come along so fast.

**Ritchie:** You talk about all the changes in the Senate in general, what about specifically the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee; how different is it from the committee you first joined in 1948?

**Watt:** The subject matter is entirely different, Then we were investigating just government agencies, that's all we had the authority for. Then the next thing was labor rackets, and that was a separate select committee. I don't know if I told you how the subcommittee got that authority. It was very interesting, the way things operate up here behind the scenes. Senator McClellan had made up a resolution

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to continue the Rackets Committee or to have it incorporated in the authority of the subcommittee. Well, there were seven senators on the subcommittee and they voted it down, 4-3. I think Senator Jackson was the deciding vote, he didn't want it continued by the subcommittee. Senator Goldwater was running for president and there was another whole group in the Labor Committee, and I think they decided that the committee had had enough.

Senator McClellan thought it ought to be pursued because of Jimmy Hoffa and other matters that were still up in the air. Senator Hubert Humphrey had a subcommittee of Government Operations, and I'm not sure if it was the one that Senator Ribicoff later got on government reorganization, but there was some controversy about it. Back then each subcommittee resolution was passed on its own, not as part of the full committee's resolution the way it is now. They had held up on Senator Humphrey's subcommittee, so Senator McClellan went to Senator Carl Hayden who was Chairman of the Rules Committee and they put a rider on Senator Humphrey's subcommittee resolution, Section 5, and incorporated all the labor authority and

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indicated it should come back to the subcommittee. In order for Humphrey to get his they had to pass that, too. So he got his labor racket authority and I had to make up two payrolls every month and had two different funds. Senator Humphrey didn't know what had happened to him, it was already put in, but he



wanted his subcommittee. I suppose a lot of things like that do happen. You can't outfox these senators who have been around a long time.

**Ritchie:** One final question I'd like to ask is when you look back over your thirty-two years with the Senate, who would you say was the most outstanding person that you dealt with, a senator or any other?

**Watt:** Senator McClellan was chairman for so many years that I forgot we ever had another chairman, he was chairman for eighteen years. He would be my choice for the outstanding senator, and he was, really. The most outstanding person on the staff that I ever worked with was Bob Kennedy. He stands out in my mind because of his personality and the way he worked. They would be the two.

[End of Interview #5]

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