

# Jerry T. Verkler

Staff Director

Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, 1963-1974

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## **Preface**

by Donald A. Ritchie

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The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 created the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs out of what had been the Committees on Public Lands, Indian Affairs, and Territories, Mines, and Irrigation and Reclamation. The new Interior committee gained jurisdiction over legislation dealing with America's vast public lands and territories, national parks, battlefields, forest reserves, irrigation and reclamation, water supply, interstate compacts, and mineral resources. During the 1950s and '60s the committee concentrated on the planning and management of public lands and resources in the West. Increasingly during the 1960s and '70s the committee handled national environmental and energy issues, so much so that in 1977 it was renamed the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

[James Murray](#) (D-Montana) chaired the Interior Committee from 1955 to 1961, but his failing health passed real leadership onto Senators [Clinton Anderson](#) (D-New Mexico) and [Henry M. Jackson](#) (D-Washington). Anderson formally chaired the committee from 1961 to 1963, and Jackson from 1963 to 1981. Spanning the service of both chairmen, Jerry T. Verkler joined the committee's staff in 1961 under Anderson and became staff director two years later under Jackson.

Born in Black Rock, Arkansas in 1932, Jerry Verkler moved with his family in 1938 to Detroit, Michigan, and in 1948 to Albuquerque, New Mexico. He graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1954, served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1954 to 1956, and received his law degree from George Washington University in 1960. Verkler joined Senator Anderson's staff in 1956 as a legislative assistant, specializing in tax legislation. In 1961 Anderson appointed him assistant chief clerk of the Interior Committee. When Anderson left to chair of the Aeronautics and Space Committee, Henry Jackson asked Verkler to remain with the Interior Committee as staff director. He held that position until 1974, when he became a lobbyist for the Interstate Natural Gas Association.

When Jerry Verkler retired from the Senate staff, Senator Jackson offered this tribute:

Jerry's service as staff director has spanned a period of enormous growth and change for the Interior Committee. During those years, the committee has moved from preoccupation with western resources issues to a role of national leadership on critical energy and environmental problems.

Jerry's leadership was instrumental in the committee's adjustment to its new role. His knowledge of the Senate and its procedures, his ability to work effectively with members of the committee and its staff has made it possible for the committee to fulfill its growing responsibilities.

As an ardent conservationist, Jerry had the opportunity during his years with the committee to help enact landmark legislation in the conservation field. He played an important role in securing the enactment of the Wilderness Act of 1964, which created the National Wilderness System, and the act establishing the Land and Water Conservation Fund. . . .

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There is no doubt that the role played by senior staff members is increasingly significant as the Senate considers a growing number of complex issues. The dedication and hard work of people like Jerry Verkler goes unheralded but the Senate could not function without it. [Congressional Record, 94th Congress, 1st session, April 8, 1975.]

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About the Interviewer: Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. His publications include "Oral History in the Federal Government," which appeared in the *Journal of American History*; *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard Press, 1980); *The U.S. Constitution* (Chelsea House, 1989); *History of a Free Nation* (Glencoe, 1991); and *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard, 1991). He also edits the *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (Historical Series) (Government Printing Office). A former president of both the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), he received OHMAR's Forrest C. Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.

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## Interview #1

### Coming to the Senate

(Thursday, January 30, 1992)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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**RITCHIE:** I noticed that you were born in Arkansas. Is your family from Arkansas originally?

**VERKLER:** They were. My great-grandfather came down from Illinois. In fact his great-grandfather came from Germany and moved to Illinois and had several sons, two of whom went to the state of Arkansas to go into the timber business. There, my father's father, my grandfather, was born. My dad was born in Lawrence County, which is the foothills of the Ozarks and grew up along the Black River in a town called Black Rock, where I was born in 1932. My mother was from a place called Black Oak, which is over in Craighead County south of Jonesboro, the largest city in northeast Arkansas.

In fact, there is a rock group that came out of the area called "Black Oak Arkansas." Some of her relatives were actually part of that. She was a Thomas. My name is Jerry Thomas Verkler. We were in Arkansas up until the time I was six years old. Near the end of the depression we went to Detroit, Michigan, which is where a lot of Arkansawyers went. I guess it is appropriate now to say Arkansans. When I was growing up, we never wanted to say that. It was always Arkansawyers. But we went up to Detroit

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in late 1938. My dad found work, and we lived there for ten years during the war.

**RITCHIE:** Was he in the war industry?

**VERKLER:** He was. He helped set up industrial plants--I want to say a mechanical-handling type person--millwright. That was the job that he had. After the war began, like most of the nation, with the defense spending the way it was, he did pretty well for coming out of Arkansas, where he had washed out of the timber business. He had a varied type career. He even taught school. In those days, of course, if they found out that you could count to a hundred, as Bob Burns said, they made you a school teacher. But he went to college a couple of years. Taught school on and off. Tried to farm. Tried to sawmill. The timber business is a major part of my background in the sense that my dad always wanted to be in the timber business for himself.

He worked hard all of his life. He's still alive at age 85 and a half. But he was never a real good manager in that sense of being a business manager. Under capitalized, and so on. But he was a hard worker, and I learned that early, too, doing physical work in sawmills. But, in any event, he went to Michigan and did

pretty well. As soon as the war was over, he wanted to go back into business for himself in the sawmill, wood business up around the Detroit area. He bought some land for his sawmill in an area

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that was way out, and now it's the center of a shopping mall. We were too early! But because of sinus problems and other health considerations, we went to the arid state of New Mexico in 1948. I was a junior in high school when we made that transfer. We had lived in Royal Oak the last several years we'd lived in Michigan, which is a suburb of Detroit, and went to Albuquerque, New Mexico. My dad was going to start over building houses and doing carpenter work. He was a jack of all trades.

But that didn't last very long before he got wind of a sawmill out in the mountains west of New Mexico near Grants, Mount Taylor and started sawmilling again. I was going to high school at Albuquerque High School my junior year. I was an usher in a movie theater, at night, and made the grand sum of about eleven dollars and a half a week, which helped buy pinto beans in New Mexico in the fall of 1948.

Actually, ever since I can remember, even as a youngster, in Detroit, I was very thrilled to see the headlines and hear the talk that President [Franklin] Roosevelt had been reelected to an unprecedented third term. And then a fourth term. I was always interested in politics as a kid. I didn't know why, but it has always been one of my major interests.

When I moved to New Mexico, there was Harry Truman--the great underdog who was sure to be beaten by, Thomas Dewey. Of course, you know the history of that election. And this gets around to a fellow I started with later in the United States Senate, Clinton

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Anderson, who had been elected to the House in 1940, back when New Mexico only had one congressman.

He had gone to New Mexico about 1917 or '18. He was a young student at Ann Arbor. I think he was actually getting ready to go to law school or he was in law school, and I guess had a physical to go to war, the First World War. They discovered tuberculosis, so he went out to New Mexico, in effect, in those days to die, to live in a sanitarium. Well, he finally did it! About sixty years later after a great colorful career. But in those early days he started in the newspaper business. He was a journalist and jack of all trades. He got into politics and helped elect a governor. I think it was A. T. Hannett from New Mexico. The governor told him, after the successful campaign, that he could give him a state job, if that's what he wanted, but he would strongly recommend he not do it, that he go into business for himself and seek to find his fortune that way, which is what Senator Anderson did. He went into the insurance business and built a very successful one.

During the thirties, during the height of the Depression when the elected state treasurer defaulted or left office or couldn't be bonded out there, Mr. Anderson was appointed treasurer. Because, one of the reasons, he was one in New Mexico who could pass muster with the lending institutions. He was appointed state treasurer during the Roosevelt administration. By the way, in 1932 he was among a group of New Mexico politicians that were urging the nomination of Governor Roosevelt of New York for President against

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former governor Al Smith. I guess Al Smith was the leading contender, even in '32.

In any event, he became heavily involved behind the scenes in the financing of political campaigns, in an appointed position. And with the successful election of President Roosevelt, he became head of New Mexico's NYA, National Youth Administration for the state. Same time that Lyndon B. Johnson was in Texas, and he became friends early on with Lyndon Johnson. Then in 1940, the one House seat opened up, and there were about seven candidates from New Mexico Democratic politics. In those days it was heavily Democratic. They were vying for the nomination, and he won, I think, with 21 percent, and got the nomination and, of course, the office.

That was the beginning of his elected career, when he came to Congress. By the way, there was a young man, 28 years old at that time, who also got elected named Henry Jackson. He got elected that same year, 1940, to the House. They became fast friends from the earliest days. Another one was Hale Boggs of Louisiana. The Boggses and the Andersons were close, personal friends throughout their lives and careers.

But Senator Anderson came to the House and progressed. He was a shrewd man, a poker player. He got acquainted with a senator from Missouri. They became part of the same poker club. And the senator from Missouri got the nomination for vice president in 1944--Vice President Harry Truman. Then when he became president upon Mr. Roosevelt's death in 1945, shortly thereafter he appointed

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Senator Anderson to be Secretary of Agriculture. He was Congressman Anderson then, of course.

I guess I was leading up to that election in 1948 when Mr. Truman was heavily the underdog all over the country. Senator Anderson and several others, former governor [Robert] Kerr of Oklahoma, Congressman Johnson of Texas, they were part of that '48 class. He stepped out of the cabinet to run for the Senate. Now, his version was--and I think there is a lot of truth to it--that they thought that this strong class could help in the various states, help Mr. Truman. And I guess statistically you could show that. I'm not sure how much they led the ticket, but they were indeed strong senators and strong candidates.

On the other hand you could say--at least in his case--that he might be deserting the ship that was sure to go down. But anyway, that was a great, stunning upset. I

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was sixteen years old in Albuquerque, and a lot of my Republican friends had been telling me about the great victory of Governor Dewey this time. We had a lot of rousing debates when I was young. I was thrilled by that election, and Senator Anderson's election. Of course, I did not know him at all then. I didn't meet him--and didn't hear him speak until six years later when he was running for reelection.

But, I went to Albuquerque High School my junior year. During my senior year in 1949 they opened a brand, new high school in the east part of Albuquerque called Highland High School. Now they have I think a dozen public high schools. In those days there were only two. Highland was brand new, and as a senior, I had the

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option of going there, Since I didn't know that many people down at Albuquerque High, I went to Highland High School. In fact, this past summer, August of '91, we went out for a reunion of our class. The first four graduating classes had a big reunion celebration.

A friend of mine, Pete Domenici, who took Senator Anderson's Senate seat, although he went to St. Mary's, a Catholic high school, he married a student from Highland High School, Nancy Domenici. He was at our big celebration last summer.

After I finished my senior year, graduated from high school in 1950, I entered the University of New Mexico. In those days, thank goodness, you only needed one pair of levis because that's what most of us wore. And, if you were in my circumstances, which were pretty modest, you could get by. Then still having an interest in public affairs, politics, I entered with the idea of majoring in history and becoming a teacher and coaching baseball. I had always been athletic and played a lot of baseball.

About the second year in college, I decided I wanted to go to law school, perhaps, and switch into political science--government as a major. There was a professor there, he wasn't real young then, by the name of Howard McMurray from Wisconsin. He had been a political science professor at Wisconsin, and had been elected to the House of Representatives also in 1940. But he had greater ambitions. It might have been '42 that he was elected, because in 1944 he took on Alexander Wiley, a Republican senator from Wisconsin, and was defeated. In those days, the La Follette family had been running that state--I mean, they were the leading

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political figures with their mixture of progressives and what we'd call the liberal side of the Republican party. But Mr. McMurray lost to Senator Wiley in 1944. In 1946 he was going to run again as a Democrat and that was when La Follette was also up for election. And I'm not sure exactly--I'm a little hazy on what happened, except there was a young veteran named Joe McCarthy who did get the Republican nomination.



**RITCHIE:** He beat La Follette in the primary.

**VERKLER:** Yeah. Because I think La Follette had to run as a Republican. Then McCarthy won the race, of course, and I guess McMurray must have had the Democratic nomination again. If he hadn't run, I think La Follette might have run as an independent in November. But shortly thereafter Mr. McMurray went out to New Mexico. First he went to California. He went to southern California, and got tied up with his old friend, Helen Gahagen Douglas, who had served with him in the House and was being challenged by a congressman named Richard Nixon, who had been elected to the House in southern California. They were opposing each other for the United States Senate in the race of 1950. Howard was out there. He came to New Mexico after that race; but she was his friend, and he helped her in her losing cause. I think he taught a year or two out there. But he came to New Mexico to head up the government department, political science, and he never sought political office after that. His lectures were more like

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speeches; and, of course, to a young, liberal student in those days who was an old New Deal-Fair Deal Democrat and not entirely sure why, he was a very inspirational guy. I'd never been to Washington, D. C., but he fed my desire to participate somehow in the process.

And I did. I majored in government. Along about my junior year I knew that it was going to be very tough. I didn't know quite how to get to Washington. There were some people who were in public life, who as young students had gone to Washington. I can think of state senator Tibo Chavez, who had been lieutenant governor of New Mexico, whom I consulted with. I just dropped by to see him, because I had read about several of them coming to Washington, working in patronage jobs for their congressmen or whomever, and going to school at night, and so on. I had in the back of my mind I wanted to do something like that. But in 1953 during my junior year, and while the Korean war was still going on, I signed up with a Marine Corps program--platoon leaders class. If you went to training for a total of twelve weeks, and you could do it six weeks one summer and six weeks the next summer, you would then go into basic school as a young second lieutenant. I had no job, and I wanted to do that. I wanted to go on to graduate school somewhere, somehow. I'd played baseball in college, or I tried to. I never lettered because the first two years there were people ahead of me who were pretty good. My junior year it was just about the same when I decided I'd better give it up and work. Then the second baseman got hurt, but it was too late. I was a second

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baseman, and I might have gone on to letter. But I knew financially I had to work. So I worked for the Borden cheese people there every day while I was going to school delivering cheese to retail stores. That summer of 1953 I signed up for the Marine Corps. I came back to Quantico, Virginia for the six week's training and platoon leaders class. They called it the PLC program. I went back to New Mexico

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after the end of that program and finished my senior year; and following graduation, came back for the second six weeks and entered basic school in Quantico as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps in the fall of 1954. I served on active duty for two years and came to the point of my active duty discharge and still hadn't nailed anything down as to Washington, D.C. But in the spring of 1956, I thought I would just take a flyer at it. I wrote a letter, a copy of which I still have in my files, to Clinton P. Anderson. I was going to start with the one I wanted to work for most, and then go down the list. There were only four then. Of course, there are only five now! During this period I had visited with Tibo Chavez as I mentioned. My parents at this time had moved from Albuquerque to Socorro which is seventy-five miles south of Albuquerque on the Rio Grande Valley where my dad had a little sawmill in that area.

I'd met Senator Anderson--I mean, shook his hand--when he came to speak at a meeting of Young Democrats my senior year. I was vice president of the University of New Mexico Young Democrats. He was campaigning that year, and I met him. And knowing of his

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background in the cabinet and the House, he was the kind of guy I really wanted to become acquainted with or associated with. But that was beyond my wildest dreams.

But when I was a first lieutenant by this time down in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, I wrote him a letter and told him I wanted to come to Washington and go to school, and wanted to be considered for anything. I was thinking of elevator operator or whatever in those days. I was going to New York for a wedding of a friend of mine who was in the service with me, and I guess I told him I would like to stop by. And so he wrote me a letter and said, "Come on by when you're here." I went right through cloud nine on that. Later, knowing how things worked, I realize how lucky and how opportune that was. He was looking for someone--getting ready to--and there I came along, without any political contacts at home, so he didn't owe anybody for me. No father had been a political contributor, participant, etc. It was strictly between us. He could have gotten rid of me without any political repercussions if he'd wanted to.

Anyway, I came by and interviewed with him in May or early June after the wedding up in Long Island. And we made a deal. He offered me a position to come to work in his office when I was discharged. Boy, I was on cloud nine at that point! I entered George Washington University law school in the night program, which was not uncommon for people in those days and may still be done. I know some youngsters still go to school at night. But I started working for him when I got discharged. I left Camp Lejeune on

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August first and started in the office on August third. I had a room in Georgetown. There were some friends of mine I had known, but we only stayed there about a week, or I did, until I got together with a couple of others, and we rented an

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apartment on P Street between 16th and 17th northwest. One of those old row houses. We had the second floor.

It was kind of an elegant old place. At one time it was quite a residence in this city. Now it's been torn down, and the Trucking Association built a building there. Now they're in Alexandria, their main headquarters. I'm not quite sure what's there now. It may have been torn down again for all I know.

But I started in working for Senator Anderson on his personal staff. My first job, as I say, I started August 3, 1956. Congress had just adjourned sine die for the '56 campaign, President Eisenhower's reelection campaign. A few days earlier, maybe August 1, or something like that, Senator Anderson had already gone to New Mexico. In those days he drove back and forth twice a year.

My first job during the recess was microfilming files. They were getting ready to start saving files and microfilming. I was removing staples from letters, etc. That was my first job in his office, doing that kind of work. I kept attempting to get more and more assignments from the administrative assistant, Claude Wood. Gradually, I was allowed to write letters and do some constituent case work and tasks of that nature.

**RITCHIE::** Good time to start. Things were pretty quiet I bet.

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**VERKLER:** It was quiet. Of course Senator Anderson was asked by the Democratic Committee and others to be helpful during the campaign which, of course, he was. He was fond of Governor Stevenson. I always thought--this is maybe jumping ahead--Adlai Stevenson made a serious mistake in not leaving the country about the beginning of '56 or a little thereafter and going on a sabbatical somewhere and staying out of it because in 1960 he may have had a better shot at coming back and getting the nomination. But I guess those folks that run for president feel that this is the time. It's always this is the time, even though history would have shown that, unless you're in pretty difficult times, a sitting president gets reelected with regularity. In this century we can count them on three fingers, I think. [William Howard] Taft got defeated for reelection because Teddy Roosevelt got into the race as a Third Party, Bull Mooser. And President [Herbert] Hoover, we know what happened to him. Those first-termers who sought reelection. Then, unfortunately for him, Jerry Ford was not elected. He was appointed, and he just barely lost when he ran. And Jimmy Carter because of the "malaise" that was going on was defeated.

But those are the only times a sitting president has been defeated in the 20th century. I think Adlai Stevenson might have fared better than the young senator from Massachusetts in 1960, and the majority leader even if he had come back strong and sat 1956 out somehow.

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But he didn't, and Senator Anderson was asked to help, especially in agriculture and conservation issues and put together some position papers, which he did. I wasn't too heavily involved in that, but there was a guy down at the campaign

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headquarters responsible for that, by the name of Ben Stong, who was on loan to the campaign that fall. Subsequently I worked very closely with Ben in the old Senate Interior Committee on some very great, I think, great programs that we put together in the early '60s and mid-60's.

That was my first job. Then when the senator returned the 19th of January in '57, I did more substantive work, case work. That is when I started doing that heavily. The biggest personal break for me in a real sense came at the end of that first full year from August '56 through the end of the session in 1957. Senator Anderson invited me to stay out in New Mexico that fall with him in his Albuquerque office. That meant dropping out of law school--and also [chuckles] at the same time--they had started this military reserve unit up here on the Hill.

I was a member of a composite Navy-Marine Corps unit. They'd just begun that summer, and the first two weeks of active duty was going to be on a cruise for us. We were going to go by ship that year to NATO in Europe. I had never been to Europe and had always wanted to go. This would mean giving that up. The senator learned about it, and said, "You don't have to do it." I very wisely chose to say, "That's okay, I can go to Europe some other time." Because, as you know, if you're young and ambitious, this was a

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chance to really work personally with him. That fall I spent out in New Mexico until Congress began in '58, and I worked for him. I drove him around. Worked on cases, people coming into the office. It was a great personal opportunity for me to be around this gentleman whom I considered--and he was a great man--even at that time. He was about 64, maybe. I think he was 62 when I started working for him, maybe 63. Well, he was born in 1894 so I guess we can figure that out.

I worked in Albuquerque. My folks still lived in Socorro, so I roomed near the university with a lady who had a rooming house that I lived with the last two years I was in college. I got very established with Senator Anderson.

When we came back in February of '58, he divided up his staff assignments. I became the staffer who worked on his Finance Committee, tax legislation, primarily. Claude Wood, his administrative assistant, looked after the bread-and-butter, Interior and Insular Affairs, because in New Mexico, land and water resources were extremely important. The other fellow in the office, the one who was his press assistant at that time, Doyle Kline, his responsibility was Atomic Energy issues. The Senator chaired the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. He had a three-pronged division of labor there. My job was Finance, to look after that. That was challenging and interesting. It gave me some real insight into how important it is to the economy and to business. Also as we approached '58-'59, his good friend, Senator Lyndon Johnson, the majority leader, had ambitions

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for the White House. Senator Kerr and Senator Anderson were trying to help him. And as you will recall, during that period, although President Truman had

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called for it earlier, one of the big thorny problems--as it is today--was addressing health issues, particularly for the elderly. There was no program, really, to help them as far as their health expenses were concerned. People of modest means had to depend on family, and at least, there was Social Security as a floor--a small floor. But they decided to try to come up with a program to meet the health needs of the elderly.

Now Senator Anderson and Senator Kerr, who were close personal friends also, served on the Finance Committee together. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, Senator Anderson may have supported Senator Kerr in one of his ambitions. He had presidential ambitions for a little while.

**RITCHIE:** Yes '52.

**VERKLER:** Yeah. And so did Richard Russell from Georgia. Clint, I guess he was kind of committed to Kerr, if I remember correctly. But he was also very fond of Russell, and thought Russell, because of his individual capacity, intellectual capacity, would be a good president, even though out of the South. That was almost unheard of at that time.

Subsequently, Lyndon Johnson moved Texas from the South into the Southwest! [laughs] He became a Westerner. Anyway, they were assigned the task of coming up with a solution for this problem of

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health care for the elderly. But they took divergent views. Senator Anderson took the view that it should be tied into the social security system so that it would not be based on need but on an insurance concept of entitlement.

And Kerr took what became known as the "Kerr-Mills" approach to be administered by the states in kind of a--my memory may be a little hazy here--but it was more discretionary, welfare-oriented as opposed to what we thought was the dignity of an insurance program tied to social security.

As you know, that is what eventually passed--the Medicare program as we know it today. It was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. It did not help him in the campaign for the nomination in the campaign of 1960. I mean, he lost to Kennedy, but Senator Anderson had started down that road of leadership toward providing health care for the elderly.

**RITCHIE:** But Johnson was the one who really pushed him in that direction?

**VERKLER:** That's right. It was becoming, in the late 50's, a real social issue. Even though it's been abused, perhaps, and highly expensive and so on as a public expenditure. In those days there was nothing! It was a real problem for folks who were retired or past sixty-five. If I remember correctly, the initial kickoff was age 67, or at least that was in the program when we started the benefits.

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In those early days, I was involved in it. I was very lucky to be involved. I remember the first, real backroom conference with Wilbur Cohen, a professor from the University of Michigan, who became Kennedy's secretary of HEW. But

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Wilbur was an expert. He had been, I guess in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, a key player in Social Security and all of these health and social programs. And then during the Eisenhower years he was a professor at Michigan, I guess. Then there were a couple of people from the Library of Congress, Fred Arner and Helen Livingston, I believe that was her last name. They were the numbers people who could come up with figures and tell you how much it would cost to do what, to furnish what benefits. And a guy from AFL-CIO, if I'm not mistaken, whose name kind of escapes me right now.

**RITCHIE:** Was it Biemiller?

**VERKLER:** No. It wasn't Andy Biemiller. It was one of the professional staff, as I would describe him, who was their expert. Anyway, Andy, of course, was the premier labor lobbyist in those days. But, anyway, we grabbed it there in the back room of Senator Anderson's office and put together the basic concept. It grew and developed. Cecil King of California had the House version. It was in the Senate, though, that summer of 1960 after the determination of the candidate--Senator Kennedy--instead of the Anderson proposal, it became the Kennedy-Anderson proposal. Subsequently, when he went to the White House it became King-

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Anderson. He kept pushing it forward until, as you recall, I guess in '64 or '65 after the president's death, President Johnson took the bill that had been passed and signed it in Harry Truman's presence out there in Missouri. He flew out there to sign Medicare.

**RITCHIE:** In '62 you took the big fall on it, though. That was when Anderson lost. When Kennedy proposed it, and Kerr got the votes to defeat.

**VERKLER:** Kerr never wanted it to go as part of Social Security. And, of course, Wilbur Mills was a very, very powerful chairman of Ways and Means at that time. And the Kerr-Mills approach was the one that they went forth with at that time.

**RITCHIE:** Everyone was shocked when Jennings Randolph voted with Kerr on that one.

**VERKLER:** Right. Yes, I'm not quite sure what all went on; but I used to say in those days that Kerr ran three committees. When Johnson assumed the vice presidency, he officially took over as Space Committee Chairman. But he was a major domo, and had been for years, on Public Works. Dennis Chavez of New Mexico was the chairman, but he was in his declining years. In fact he died, I think, right after the election in '62. I had been on the airplane flying back with him and Mrs. Chavez.

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I had worked in that campaign out in New Mexico in 1962. I had taken vacation to go out there and work in my home area which, at that time, was Socorro. I flew back to Washington with Senator Dennis Chavez and his wife in November, and then less than a month later he was dead.

But Kerr ran that committee. As I always said, if he had lived just a couple of years longer, Oklahoma City would have been a major, thriving seaport! [laughs] They do have lots of water and canals, much of it due to his efforts on Public Works. Anyway, Senator Kerr also ran the Finance Committee. He was a major domo of influence there because Senator [Harry] Byrd of Virginia was also declining. You know, he's another one who had been governor of Virginia in 1932 and wanted to support his conservative friend, the governor of New York, Franklin Roosevelt. You remember that later he became disillusioned with the New Deal, I guess.

But Senator Kerr was one of the most powerful senators in office during the late fifties and early sixties. I always thought that the troubles they had back in '62-- Bobby Baker and his troubles--would never have happened if Kerr would have lived longer. Bobby Baker, you know, had worked directly for Lyndon Johnson. When Johnson became vice president, that's when Bobby's troubles really began, because I don't think he had much to do!

Mike Mansfield, although he wanted Bobby to stay--and I remember hearing or reading about how he'd take the Majority Leader job only if Bobby Baker stays as secretary to the majority. He never did become Secretary of the Senate, as you know. Skeeter

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Johnston was in those days. But Mike made that statement. After LBJ left was when Bobby had more time to go around and get into some of his personal business and got into some difficulty. Rumor has it Johnson told him, well, "go see Kerr."

He went to see Kerr. Unfortunately, just about a month after--less than a month after Senator Chavez died--on New Year's eve, Senator Bob Kerr died. He'd been in the hospital with some heart trouble, and he'd had heart attack and died. That was New Year's eve, December 31, 1962.

I remember during the fall of '62, during that congressional period, we were in late in the year. I think I said earlier, when I started on August 3, 1956, they had just adjourned. And that was the longest they had been in session for years and years.

Senator Anderson had a health problem. It was kind of one a year there for awhile. As you know, he was an arrested tubercular with a heart condition, and he had his gall bladder removed in the fall, I think, of '62. He left Washington early to go down to Albuquerque for that operation. He had his gall bladder removed, and he was thinking or talking, "Well should I come back?," because they were still in session after his surgery. He was thinking about doing that. On the old Senate subway, that little old rail car over there in the Dirksen Building where it goes in toward the Capitol, I remember Senator Kerr wagging his finger in my face and saying: "You tell him I said not to come back here! To take care of

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himself because he shouldn't come out here and jeopardize his health. We're going to be gone soon enough," etc.

I passed that word along, I mean, I'm sure Senator Anderson knew what he was going to do anyway. But he might have felt pretty good to hear Bob Kerr was saying that. Ironically, three months later, Bob Kerr was dead, and Clinton Anderson lived until 1975. I think he died in December of '75.

Anyway, Senator Kerr was a very powerful United States Senator, and he had a different view of how to treat this [Medicare]. So did Wilbur Mills, and they were close. Senator Byrd in those days could not even talk too clearly. He was the chairman. It was another instance of the old chairman, the old senators staying with all their seniority probably a term or two too long!

In Senator Anderson's case, when 1966 came around he also ran again and should not have done so. Meanwhile, going back to Kerr's death, that changed my own personal life to a considerable extent. Because during Senator Anderson's illnesses of '61 and then again in '62, he had two years in a row, I became very close with the ranking member who was Henry Jackson of Washington state. Senator Jackson was a bachelor until he was 49. In 1960 Senator Anderson hired the daughter of one of his oldest and closest friends and political allies out in New Mexico, Mage Hardin. His daughter, Helen, whom I had known briefly, was a year behind me in high school at Highland. I knew who she was more than knowing her very well because she was in a slightly different

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social strata than I was. But she was a very attractive and a very nice person. He hired her. I think she had had an unhappy first marriage and had come to Washington to work for Senator Anderson as our receptionist. Senator Anderson played cupid with his old buddy, Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington. Two or three times a week, at the end of the day, Scoop would come over for tea in Senator Anderson's office and met Helen, and the social-personal affair developed which, at the end of one year, ended up in a marriage proposal. I'll never forget, because as I said, I worked pretty closely with Scoop during that period because Senator Anderson, the chairman, was out with illnesses. We needed the ranking member to carry on. I was doing the administrative work. He hired Helen at the beginning of '61, getting ahead of myself a little bit here, but in the beginning when Senator Anderson was reelected in 1960 at that time with the largest majority or percentage in New Mexico's history--and Kennedy barely won the state. That was an instance where an important senator's help carried the state--I'm convinced--because I think Kennedy won New Mexico by 3,000 votes. Senator Anderson won by 80,000, which was unheard of in those days.

But he became chairman of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. Old Senator [James] Murray of Montana did not seek reelection. He'd been propped up for years by his son and a few others. With the election of President Kennedy and Senator Anderson becoming chairman of that committee, he moved me from his



personal office, from one of his legislative assistants, to the committee staff. I started at the beginning as assistant chief clerk, because he did not remove the current chief clerk. He made a tremendous cut in staff at that time, I think we ended up with thirteen or fourteen professional staff. Because with our administration going in, there was no need to have a lot of people watching the other party's administration. At least that was one of the reasons given for cutting out a lot of the staff. He thought, and I think the word was out, that the Senator from Montana had used the committee posts as real patronage spots. As a matter of fact, the Senator's son got into difficulties some time later in the old Chinese, ship-jumping era, when people would be putting in bills to keep illegal immigrants in this country. That happened, and he was associated with that. Anyway, I went on the staff of the committee on Interior and Insular Affairs because Senator Anderson became chairman. That's when I got to work with Senator Jackson, and got to know him very well. I got married myself in 1960. In 1961 when Helen came to work--Helen Hardin--she met Scoop, and they had a romance and got married. My wife and I, and our two-month-old baby who was squalling her head off, drove Helen to the Baltimore airport to fly to Albuquerque where she was going to meet Scoop for the wedding. They got married in that late fall or winter out in Albuquerque. I remember we drove Helen to the airport. Then in '62, when the Senator had his gall bladder attack and had that removed, I worked again closely with Scoop. When Senator

Kerr died on New Year's eve, 1963, January 1, '63, Senator Anderson had to make a choice. As a senior member and a former chairman of the Interior Committee, there wouldn't be anything on Interior that he wanted that he could not get! Subsequent events proved this, as we led the battle for the Wilderness Bill and other things. He was still the ranking very high member; he really never became ranking on Finance, at least during his good years.

**RITCHIE:** Russell Long was always there.

**VERKLER:** Russell was the youngster in between Kerr and Anderson, who incidentally had served on the Interior Committee when he was first elected. He was also in the class of '48. But when they were fighting the Tidelands battle, he came on the Interior Committee which had jurisdiction. Then when that was over, he got off. Anyway, he was always in between Kerr and Anderson on Finance, because he had gotten appointed to Finance before Senator Anderson did.

Then when Kerr died, he became the ranking member. I think Clint was behind him, so I guess for a little while he was the ranking member of Finance. But he decided to chair the Space Committee to try to help New Mexico. To try to bring more of whatever opportunities there might be to the state because, as I say, he could get everything that he really wanted from Interior.

When he first came to the Senate, he served on Agriculture for awhile, having been Secretary of Agriculture. Of course he sort

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of split with his successor on the [Charles] Brannan plan. He was always kind of a maverick, or at least he felt he was! He wrote this book which, incidentally, I was supposed to play a larger role in than I ended up doing, *Outsider in the Senate*. I was to help on that and do a lot of writing for him when I came back in 1958 from New Mexico. He offered me the opportunity to really participate in that, but I really wanted to go back to law school. Working full time and going to school five nights a week, I didn't get into that book that much. Eventually he had this outside writer who helped him on that.

I had ghosted an article in another book. There was a book put together on Indians and Indian battles which he authored a chapter called "The Canyon De Chelly" which is a great Navajo battle. That was my research that helped him on that. So he thought, I guess, that I could do this other. But I really did not get involved in that. He flirted with that idea of writing that book for a long time. Then there was some professional writer, whose name escapes me now, but it was on the jacket because he helped him. He collaborated with him on that. When he wrote his book he, I think, many times thought of himself, or wanted to think of himself as an outsider in the Senate. To me, he was a consummate insider, really, because of his relationship with the majority leader and his contacts and relationships with the national party and with other key Senate members. I think he was responsible for denying the Secretary of Commerce job to [Lewis] Strauss during the latter part of the

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Eisenhower Administration. He wasn't on the Commerce Committee, but Strauss, who had been chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, was a guy that Senator Anderson did not get along with too well. I think Strauss made the big, big mistake in public life of never being able to say, "Well, you know, I might have been wrong about that, and, if so, or if I offended you or if I did something wrong, I'm really sorry about that." He was a guy that was maybe often in error but never in doubt, as they said about the court one time.

But, anyway, in 1963 I moved over to the committee as his man on the committee.

**RITCHIE::** Which committee?

**VERKLER:** Interior and Insular Affairs. I became assistant chief clerk. The fellow who was the chief clerk in those days was chief of staff. Under the Legislative Reorganization Act, you didn't find the word staff director. He was the clerk. Actually, I don't even think he was chief clerk! I'm not sure. It was clerk and assistant clerk. [laughs] But that gentleman went down to the Kennedy Administration. Dick . . .

**RITCHIE::** Callahan?

**VERKLER:** Callahan. In fact, have you ever done an oral history with him?

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**RITCHIE:** No.

**VERKLER:** He might be a good one. Anyway, Dick was a fine guy. Went down to work in the Space Administration. I believe he was NASA's first congressional liaison guy during the Kennedy Administration.

I had the option of going with Senator Anderson to the Space Committee, because I was from New Mexico. Senator Jackson asked me to stay at Interior. [chuckles] This may not be something I would want to release right away--but Senator Anderson had two sides to him. One was the great, the brilliant, the intellectual side. But he could also be mean. In the words of Bill Clinton, "a mean son-of-a-bitch." I'll never forget what I was asked by some of my fellow workers when he went down to have his gall bladder removed. They said, "Would you please tell the doctors, while they've got him down, to cut that mean streak out of him!" [laughs] He could be mean!

There was a lot of tension in his personal office, as is the case most everywhere; and I'm sure there is a lot of it going on now. He seemed to be a guy--like a dog trainer who holds up treats for his dogs as they leap up. He seemed to delight in that a lot! That was another side of him--not the distinguished side. But he was a *great* man. And he was a *brilliant* man, when he was in his prime and even into his sixties, until his final illness that overtook him.

There were some personal tensions in his office. Not just with me, as I was no longer right in his office. I had the best relationship with him that anyone could have when I moved over to the committee. It was only getting better for me, personally, because I did not have to contend with some of the personal rivalries and relationships in his office.

*But!* As time for a decision came closer, I did have a couple of blow-ups. Senator Jackson had offered me the chance to stay on. I told him this one, particular fateful day, I said, "Well, Senator Anderson wants me to go with him, and I think that I will do that."

I got into a *whale* of a conflict that day with the senator's personal office over something fairly insignificant--maybe relating to getting to him for an answer on something. As a result I said to myself, "Boy, do I really want to put up with this any more?" And I called Scoop Jackson personally, and I said, "Is that offer still open?" He said, "Yes!" So then I made the decision to make that break, to go to work for Scoop as his staff director. [laughs] Scoop, like other senior members, were entitled to have appointees on the committee to look after his subcommittee. At that time it was territories. He had a great interest in territories. Of course, Alaska, was important, and he was a leader in the statehood fight and had been a friend of Alaska because of Washington state's relationship. So he brought in these youngsters--young attorneys--or whoever, and they were his appointees on the committee. He brought one in in 1962 to replace one who had been there and left. This

young man told him, "You know this title 'clerk' is for the birds! That doesn't designate what the person really does. He's really staff director." And Scoop changed the title immediately. I was "staff director." I always felt I owed that person a favor, because two years later, then in the famous Goldwater year, he went back out to his state to run successfully for Congress. He's now the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tom Foley, who's an old friend and a great man, in my judgment. He's another one who is very brilliant. I mean, Tom is a very smart person.

Anyway, I became Scoop's staff director on the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.

**RITCHIE:** How did Senator Anderson react when you went with Jackson?

**VERKLER:** Well, it was okay with him, because, actually, to be perfectly fair, I had offered to go with him even though he wanted to bring to Washington Frank Deluzio who was a technological expert. Going into the Space committee he needed somebody like that. And I said, "That was fine with me." There was only one top salary which I was now getting at Interior and Insular Affairs. I said, "I would be willing to step down a notch salary-wise to do it." Because, you know, the Senator, as I said, as a boss he could lift you to the highest horizons, and you could be very inspired. By the same token, on a personal side sometimes, you could really

be dashed--not just by him but some in his operation--people he had in his office.

**RITCHIE:** Sounds a little like Lyndon Johnson in those days.

**VERKLER:** Well, [chuckles] yes. In a way they were a lot alike--based on what I know about Johnson, whom I really admired and about whom, I think, Robert Caro went beyond fairness, no matter how he protests. I read the first book and I have the second one, which I've not read yet. I'm still sort of burning over the first one! I mean, I think that was unfair. I guess I can get into that later.

But getting back to Senators Jackson and Anderson, I had even offered to step down from the standpoint of salary to make him feel better. He felt good about that, and that's the way it was going to be. But at the last minute we got into one of those, kind of a tangle, and I felt it was completely unnecessary. As I said, he could be, in his office operation, very difficult at times, demeaning a staffer, in a real sense.

So when I called Scoop back, I had a great sense of relief. Scoop was a regular guy in every sense. You could walk in, converse with him, talk to him about anything, everything, about any time! Until later! [chuckles] And then I'll talk about that! That's when he wanted to become president of the United States. That kind of ambition changes some things.

But, I had a great sense of relief. I really think the only communication I had on that issue of staying was that Senator Jackson offered me a chance to remain as head of the staff of Interior, and I've decided to take it. Having said that, during the year of '63 and '64, Clint Anderson was still virtually running the committee. This was because of one other event that happened relating to Senator Jackson's reelection and the Boeing Company--the development of the SST.

Scoop was just so tied up on that issue, and as you may recall, historically--

**RITCHIE:** The TFX scandal was going on then, wasn't it?

**VERKLER:** Yes. That's what they called it at that time. Well, to the extent it was or was not a scandal I don't know, but they had given the contract, I guess, to General Dynamics, wasn't it? And Scoop and others on his Investigations subcommittee wouldn't let it drop, obviously, because of their constituency. He spent lots of time on that. So the first two years that he was chairman, and he was running for reelection in '64, were spent on that issue in Investigations. Clint Anderson continued to be the major domo and chaired most of the meetings and markups.

[laughs] One of the amusing things, I was putting together a record on some issue that was before the committee between them. I'll never forget writing a letter from Scoop to Clint Anderson on the issue, answering it back to Scoop, and signing both letters!

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[laughs] In those days, you know, I could do that. I'm not sure what they do today, but, they were fairly busy. I had an understanding with Senator Jackson that all mail, except from Washington state, I would go ahead and sign his name to it because it was official committee correspondence. I was very humbled by the confidence to let a young fellow do that!

Of course, I had been signing Clint's mail on committee business already for years unless it was some specific policy matter relating to something. I knew when to pass along the right ones. But otherwise, it was kind of a routine thing. I always got a kick out of that---that I wrote both letters and signed both names. And then we had a good file on it! That included vouchers in those days to pay staff expenses for travel and so on.

I was fairly young then. I was a staff director under the age of 30 when I first started there on the committee. In my very late twenties. So it was heady stuff for a young guy from New Mexico. I considered myself a New Mexican then, although I'd only really lived in New Mexico full time six years before I went off into the world, into the Marine Corps. I have spent most of my life running around this Chesapeake Bay area of Washington. So that was very heady stuff, and I'd had a chance to participate in some major issues during this time on the Interior Committee.

**RITCHIE:** Let's go back just a little bit to when you were in Anderson's personal office. What was the office like? What was the functioning of a senator's office in the 1950's?

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**VERKLER:** It was very informal. Because New Mexico is the fourth largest state in area--maybe fifth with Alaska, Texas, California, and Montana ahead of it. When I first went there it was fourth, because it was before Alaska statehood. It was a very small state population-wise, so I think that helped us to be much more informal. I think much more informal than it is today, because of the expansion of staff members.

I'm not sure what, for instance, Senator Domenici or Senator [Jeff] Bingaman have in the way of staff members, numbers-wise, but Senator Anderson had twelve to sixteen. As I mentioned to you earlier, when he decided to organize his legislative program along the committees he served on, there were just three of us. One of them, the administrative assistant, was Claude Wood. The press assistant was Doyle Kline. And I think my title then was legislative assistant. I may have been the only one who was listed as a legislative assistant. But it was very informal. He was a hands-on guy as far as the operation, salaries, decision-making. The administrative assistant, who is a very fine gentleman who is still living, Claude Wood, he had the title, but the senator ran the show, with a lot of help from his personal secretary, primarily.

**RITCHIE::** Eloise De La O.

**VERKLER:** Yes. Right. That was the story as far as that goes, but we had a good staff. I don't want to give you a

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wrong impression because they were very good people there. Representing a small state population-wise, he knew an awful, awful lot of the political people personally from his long years behind the scenes and then "in the scenes" as the member of the House and then a member of the Senate.

He enjoyed a very fine reputation as a legislator and as a speaker. He was very funny, and in today's market with the slick thirty-second spot-type campaigning that you do, I don't know if a Clint Anderson could make it or not. I don't think Harry Truman could get elected to the Senate from Missouri today. I don't know for sure. I said recently that some of the current scandal-plagued problems of some of the candidates for the presidential nomination otherwise might bring back the opportunity for the good, old, tough, ugly politicians to make a comeback.

But, in any event, it was a very informal, hard-working staff, because he was a hard-working guy, even with his physical problems and ailments. He was full of energy and ideas, and he was a great guy in that sense. Just a brilliant man.

**RITCHIE::** As a legislative aide, what was your relationship with the staff of the Finance Committee?

**VERKLER:** There was a chief clerk of the Finance Committee.

**RITCHIE::** Was it Springer?

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**VERKLER:** Springer. Elizabeth Springer, and her husband Jim. Never had children. She used to call me her son because I was the young bushy-tailed guy that was always running down there for this or that or working on Senator Anderson's projects. We helped put in the small business corporation in those days to let people organize corporations to have the business advantages of that but to be taxed as if they were partners. That was the innovation in the late fifties. And that was one of the issues I worked on, and all the work on medicare before I went over to the Interior Committee. I was still going to handle that for awhile, but it got to be too much. Then Howard Bray, a very keen, smart fellow who worked for Senator Anderson took over. He'd been a journalist, an intern assigned here. He took over that spot and did probably a much better job than I could ever have done in finally bringing it about.

I like to think my relationship with that committee was very good. Elizabeth Springer came back here with Walter George of Georgia who was the chairman of the Finance Committee. She, too, made the transition. It was somewhat unusual to make the transition from one chairman to another. Most of them obviously want their own people. But, on the other hand, in those days there were smaller staffs. It was not too unusual, in that case, because the Finance Committee did not have a large professional staff. Elizabeth handled the everyday and even the legislative scheduling, but they relied on the staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation and on the Treasury staff when they got into the actual markups.

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In those days, of course, markups were behind closed doors. The "executive" sessions meant just that. In fact [laughs], it may be too early to talk about it now, but I think that that was one of the changes that made the Senate less efficient, in my judgment, than it was back then, as far as the ability to process legislation. In any event, my relationship with Elizabeth Springer and her staff I felt was always very good. I still correspond with her. She's a widow now down in Florida. I very much regret that the times I've been down there I've completely forgotten to look her up. She doesn't live far from Miami, and I'm supposed to go down there again in the spring. I'm going to do that. We still get a Christmas card from her and send them to her. As I said, she used to refer to me as her son. She never had a son, you know; and I was happy about our relationship. Not that she gave me any special consideration. In this business, personal relationships are very helpful as you try to accomplish something. So we got along famously, I felt, and I think she did, too.

As the committee changed, when Senator Byrd passed on or went on and Senator Long actually took over, he started building the staff. Now, there was a good friend of mine, whom Elizabeth brought over even while Senator Byrd was still there. Tom Vail--I don't know if that name rings any bell with you. He was on the Joint Committee staff under the old staff director, Colin Stamm, who was an old fellow who knew every bit of the tax code. Probably helped write most of it. Went around with his shirttail out and so on. But if you wanted to talk about what happened and why it

happened in the code, there were very few people who were as expert as Colin Stamm. And the Finance Committee called on them for technical help. One of the fellows over there was a young fellow named Tom Vail, whom I had met when we were both going to night school. So she brought Tom over to give her some on-site professional help. Of course, he eventually became staff director when Russell became chairman and Elizabeth retired. Whether or not she was urged to go on or not, I'm not real sure. And then a terrible thing happened. Tom developed a tumor--a brain tumor--and died while he was still a young man and still in his early forties, or late thirties. His father had been a professional staffer, I think, in the Congress, maybe on the House side, I never knew him. But we all felt that loss keenly when Tom died as a young man. As you know, one thing led to another; and the staff grew and grew to where it is today. But in those days they got the work done, did a lot of important things. But they just relied on Joint Committee staff to do most of their work and the Treasury, as I say in the actual markups and so on.

**RITCHIE:** When Finance had markups, it was just for the senators?

**VERKLER:** Just for the senators and those staff people that were involved in it from the committees. But personal staffs, no. I used to go out in the hall and bring things down to the senator.

But I don't remember, except to go in and give him something, ever sitting in on a markup in the Senate Finance Committee, even on issues that I was most involved with.

New Mexico had a couple of key issues. For some of the senator's old friends, the cabaret tax we were always trying to have modified for these people who ran restaurants, Dubs, and so on. There were other issues involving code changes and so on. But in those days, it was really executive. Except they did let in--and some of us kind of resented it--the assistant Treasury secretary for tax policy, and his staff, taxwriters. Then, of course, the Joint Committee staff would come over and help them provide the technical expertise. They were technical staff.

Even in my own committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, this is what I referred to awhile ago I consider a change for the worse--as we moved into the "sunshine" or participatory democracy, I think we lost a lot of efficiency. In the Interior Committee, which is now Energy and Natural Resources, we used to move from the hearing room where all of the public came and we heard the testimony and discussed legislation and issues, etc., we moved into what is their library--was our library, too--around the large table that the whole committee could get around. And there senators could take off their suit coats. I don't want to oversimplify it, but they could say to each other, even across the aisle--because there were not that many partisan issues then, they were mostly philosophical and regional. Like, regardless of whether you are a Democrat or Republican, if you're trying to get a natural resource

development for your state, a water project, a wilderness area, or whatever, you were on the same side regardless of party. There were an awful lot of regional issues that developed in those days. Northwest versus Southwest when we're talking about water transfers. In fact, I think--to bring us up to date thirty years-- is what helped Tom Foley and others recently defeat the term limitation proposal out in the state of Washington. The fear was of that large monster, California, taking over their water, because they would so far out-number the Northwest members of the House.

But in those days, we marked up our bills in executive session. Today, they mark them up in public before God, the press, and lobbyists like I am and others.

Unfortunately, they don't have the time to go into these private sessions as often as they should to do some of the things we used to do, and make their deals or their understandings, because you are out there in front of everybody. Well, obviously, the great posturing that goes on causes the delay on big issues that are important to a broad range of interests as opposed to, you know, a small park bill in state "A." They can get that done in a hurry.

But we used to be able to go in there and take action. I mentioned earlier Senator Jackson's ambition for the White House. He made two runs for the nomination, as you know--in '72 and '76. Seventy-two was the most serious. We boasted and prided ourselves and had the photographer come in and take a picture as the first, major standing committee to have an open markup. Sunshine was in the air then, so to speak. Openness. And, by golly, let it all out

and so forth, which, as you know, has a part in our democracy. It also, in my judgment, lowers the efficiency as a legislative body.

I think the history of the Senate, particularly, which I'm most familiar with is one of being able to accomplish great things. We know it's the world's most deliberative body, at least from the standpoint of debates on the floor and filibusters, which Senator Anderson, by the way, had a great role in lowering the number required for cloture. When I came here it took 67 senators to cut off debate. Finally got it down to 60. That had to do with the civil rights movement in the 50's.

I'm kind of bouncing back again, but he did develop a pretty good relationship with Richard Nixon, the vice president who was to rule, if it came to that, in favor of cloture, lowering the requirement to 60 percent from 67. On several occasions they made an effort to change Rule 22 of the Senate. Anyway, that was one of my early assignments on his personal staff. We helped do that. We helped work on that issue.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned earlier that he admired Richard Russell. But, of course, Richard Russell was the leader on the other side.

**VERKLER:** Exactly. The old South. Absolutely.

**RITCHIE:** How did Anderson wind up in the lead on that issue?

**VERKLER:** Well, that's another thing about whether he considered himself being *outside*. My guess is, because he had actually made a shot at that before I joined him and gotten into it: Senator Anderson was very unique politically. Having been a businessman, there was no question that he understood meeting a payroll, and what it took to launch and run a successful business, or at least initiate it. When he entered political life he wasn't actively managing his business. But he was also, as a good Democrat, a leader of labor-supported efforts like Medicare and others. He could walk on both sides of a lot of philosophical issues, and groups, too. He was the leader on the Wilderness bill. The effort to preserve wilderness. By the same token, he had an understanding of the needs of the oil and gas industry which is important in his state and the nation. But, still, he got into the forefront of those kinds of battles on his committee and elsewhere. This was before I came, but one of the great, significant battles in natural resources in our history, I think, was the Tidelands battle that occurred. I mentioned that Senator Long had gotten on Interior and others had for that battle. The great battle was whether the state from the mean, low tide out would own everything. President Truman vetoed a bill that had passed to give them title to that. The final compromise was three miles out except off Texas where they got ten leagues--about nine miles, I think. Or nine leagues. [laughs] Ten miles, whatever, and off the west coast of Florida, where now they won't let us look for

anything. This is another issue that bothers me from a national standpoint. Senator Anderson was in the forefront of protecting the interior states. Of course, New Mexico was not a coastal state! But Washington was. Scoop Jackson was on his side on that issue. I don't know how he would have taken it if there had been a lot of oil found there, if they ever looked. I'm not sure. Now we don't have much of a chance to look in those areas, and, as we become more and more dependent on foreign sources for our petroleum.

He was also the author--the primary author--of the Wilderness bill. He got sick, whether the gall bladder or some other illness and Frank Church had to do the floor battle for him. Actually, it was after Scoop Jackson became chairman during that big surge of '64 and '65 when we passed an awful lot. That's why my admiration, frankly, for Lyndon Johnson is very high. Kennedy and the Camelot crowd, I admired, that is one of the great tragedies in our history, what happened to him. They had some good ideas which were given to them by the people supporting more conservation--expansion of our national parks, wilderness, etc. Just like Medicare and other issues. But they never got them through. They never really did! And if there is one thing that's true about Lyndon Johnson, it was that he could legislate; and he could get the job done [chuckles] And did!

I never knew Senator Johnson on a real personal basis. I've got several pictures of his autographed to me when we passed bills. He used to do that. He used to have a lot of bill-signings.

Having been a staffer himself before he was elected to Congress, I think he realized the importance of the congressional staff in getting things done. But there are a couple of things I would like to mention there.

I never really knew the majority leader as such. One of my proud moments in my life--and I kid about it now. I say, "He used to ask my advice." Well, that may not be really accurate. One time he came up to me on the floor when I was standing near Senator Anderson's desk and said, "Where's Clint?" That's the only advice that he ever asked me for! And I was thrilled to death that he associated me with Clint Anderson! Obviously being a staffer in those days, you're on the floor and off the floor. He recognized that I was part of Anderson's entourage there. I was very pleased that he had asked me for that advice. And I think I gave it to him! [laughs] He was out in the cloakroom somewhere.

I remember also saying after I became staff director of the Interior Committee and had been in Washington a total of about eight years, I said, "Well, I've been down to the White House three times in the last ten days. And three times in the last eight years." The same three times! Because we had signed several bills--or Johnson had had a big barbecue out there and had invited staffers and all that sort of thing. I know that history is going to record him because he didn't want to be the first president to maybe lose a war as he carried on the policy of preventing the "domino theory" from working in Southeast Asia. That was a losing proposition. I know we all regret how it did turn out. No one

seems to really regret the fact that we prevented Korea from going under the communist bloc which they probably would have if President Truman didn't take the lead under the United Nations to stop it! We had a limited objective there of not letting them cross that line as opposed to victory over them which would have triggered--and did trigger--the Chinese coming in when we did go above the Yalu river.

But in those days, Americans were not happy over limited objectives, apparently. Even though the British had done it for a century in preserving their empire. This recent Desert Storm and Desert Shield exercise proved that we are able to go out--and, luckily for all of us, just like Grenada, and Panama, and achieve limited objectives. But they went over and proved that we could do it and win even though people now are saying, "Wait a minute. What did we win?" He's still in power, and we're in a lot of difficulty, but we did kick them out of Kuwait. In any event, Johnson will be forever remembered for Vietnam escalation. In my judgment, he ought to be remembered as one of the great presidents for preserving our resources, signing into law the Wilderness bill and the Water Conservation Fund, the greatest expansion in the history of the national park system as well as Medicare and other programs designed to help our society, especially those less fortunate from a social standpoint than the majority.

Mr. Caro and others have painted this critical picture of him. Lord knows, he was a tough master. He might be guilty of a lot of character defects that a lot of people would be shocked at. But

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they're not many people, in my judgment, that could come out of the rural hill country of Texas like he did and accomplish what all he did without all that driving and talented ability to get things done and mobilize. Sure, if you want to dwell on the dark side of his character, everybody knew about that! I venture to say that you could probably find that on almost anybody who had accomplished what he did, to get where he did. But he was a person who was a master of the legislative process as we pushed those programs through. He put his mark on them, and was able to do it!

Kennedy was glamour. Sure, it was kind of an exciting new era. More and more we became enamored with him and hung on Jackie's every word. And that was great! A new beginning and so on. But when you get right down to measuring what was really done, it hadn't worked. As you know, Barry Goldwater had really started campaigning hard for the presidency and was the conservatives' choice in '64. There was no doubt in my mind that President Kennedy would have been reelected overwhelming also. I mean, there is always a little lingering doubt, and no one was real certain that he would because of his close, close election in 1960 over Nixon. But having proved that a Catholic could win and being personally popular, like he was growing every day--and glamour--the press loved him because of his charm, I think he would have been reelected.

But, of course, with his assassination and Lyndon Johnson carrying every state except Arizona. Oh, no.

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**RITCHIE:** The deep South states.

**VERKLER:** Five of them, wasn't it?

**RITCHIE:** Yeah. Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia.

**VERKLER:** Did he carry Arizona?

**RITCHIE:** Goldwater carried Arizona.

**VERKLER:** Yeah. He did carry his home state. That was right.

**RITCHIE:** That was the only state outside of the deep South.

**VERKLER:** And there were just four or five. And that was back in the days when civil rights was in vogue, and the deep South was gasping and struggling to prevent what has finally transpired with the march of history.

Anyway, I think Kennedy would have won. But it might have been much, much closer than we think. But Johnson won and accomplished a great deal. As part of the staff in those days, we participated in a lot of these efforts. I worked very closely with Stewart Udall and his people when he was Secretary of the Interior during the whole period of the Kennedy-Johnson years. All eight years. In fact, near the end of his term, with a couple of years to go, he offered me an opportunity to take his top assistant's

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place. Orren Beatty left. Orren subsequently tried to run for Congress himself from the old district, or out in the state. It wasn't the old district, because Mo Udall had Stewart's district. He offered me that chance. But I thought better of it and decided not to go down there and stay where I was.

We did a lot, and accomplished a lot in the resource field. And Senator Anderson was a leader in those battles. But how he got into the leadership role? I think he was asked to be by the ones who were fighting that most, the pro-civil rights types. Labor and others. He took that cudgel upon himself and led the battle.

**RITCHIE:** What's unusual is that some of the southwestern senators wouldn't vote for cloture. People like Carl Hayden. They said it protected small states. And they seemed to have a sort of a quid pro quo with some of the southern senators that: we'll vote for you on civil rights if you vote with us on oil and gas. But Anderson broke out of that mold and fought the battle on cloture.

**VERKLER:** Yes he did. And I remember another book which Senator Anderson wrote, or had a chapter in it, called *New Mexico, Almost Arizona*. Because Carl Hayden told him something that happened about back when Carl was sheriff of Maricopa County. You know, he was a real joy that Carl Hayden, as it was for me, for a young man to be with him. As an aside here about that library where we held our mark-ups. You know, when Barry Goldwater ran for president and left the Senate, why Carl came over to the committee.

Here he was the most senior member of the Senate, but he came over to help get the Central Arizona Project authorized since Barry had left the committee. And they worked very closely together.

He came over on the committee as a new member. [chuckles] But we treated him with a lot more deference than an ordinary new member of the committee. But I remember in that library we had some pictures of former members of the committee from about the turn of the century and the early teens and twenties. I don't even know if the committee still has them. They were from various and sundry states of the West because it was primarily a western committee. I was showing him that one day, and here he was almost ninety at the time. Very late eighties. [dramatizes his voice] "Oh I remember that old fella." [laughs]

I used to kid about him because in those days we worked on Saturday mornings. We were lucky if we got off on Saturday mornings. We used to kid about it that on Saturday I'd be sitting in my office, there, and I would get a call personally from Senator Carl Hayden asking about some issue. What he probably was doing was coming in and fouling up his staff by meddling in the mail and stuff, and he was getting letters from outside Arizona. And he'd call me. And then we used to see him take a couple of the young ladies from his office to lunch on Saturday. And we'd say, "There is Senator Hayden taking those young girls to lunch. But he can't remember what for!" [laughs]

He was a remarkable guy! And he's a guy who taught me one day during a hearing by saying--and I've used it ever since, borrowed

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from him--in the context of somebody testifying for trying to get a project, trying to get something. He said, "Gratitude in a political sense was a lively anticipation of favors yet to come." That's the first time I'd ever heard that, and I don't remember having heard it since except when I've used it. But in the political process, that is how you define gratitude.

**RITCHIE::** How was New Mexico "almost Arizona?"

**VERKLER:** Okay. Yes. I'm sorry. I'll get back to that. Senator Anderson came to me during one of the debates on Rule 22, and he said, "Carl Hayden said something to me about if it hadn't been for the ability to filibuster, New Mexico would be part of Arizona today." I had to look this up, and I had forgotten exactly--frankly it's been quite a while, but as you recall, I believe it was in 1906 when Oklahoma and the Indian Territory came in as one state, Oklahoma. And then part of the deal was that New Mexico and Arizona would come in as one state. Those two territories would come in as one state. [chuckles] There was some jockeying going on. I think New Mexico was pushing this. This was in 1906. They would be called Arizona, but the capital would be in Santa Fe. People in Arizona weren't too trustful of their politically-oriented neighbors from New Mexico, and they fought it like heck. Apparently, the threat of a filibuster kept that from happening! And then, of course, it took another six years before both states came in separately.

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I'm not a historian. I'd like to know more about it. I've got that article somewhere. When I say article--I may have just done a memo on that issue, and that's been over thirty years ago. But Senator Hayden told him not to be too anxious to do that because it had an impact on his state. And we looked that up, and I do have a copy of that memo somewhere in my files that I've saved. I'll have to dig that out.

**RITCHIE::** Hayden made a point of never voting for cloture. Even at the very end of the '64 civil rights bill, he sort of hung back in the cloakroom. He would vote for cloture if they needed it. But not otherwise.

**VERKLER:** Right. Well, it was a matter of principle. And, again, getting back to Richard Russell and all of those strong, deep South votes. It was a battle that they fought that was left over from previous days.

**RITCHIE::** But Anderson's leading that fight didn't disrupt his relationship with Russell? Senator Russell?

**VERKLER:** Well, I don't think it disrupted his personal relationship, because, you know, they were all friends. [chuckles] And I never forget a story told to me by Tommy Kuchel--Thomas Kuchel of California, who took Earl Warren's seat. Oh, I'm sorry. Earl Warren appointed him to this seat in California.

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**RITCHIE::** Took Richard Nixon's seat.

**VERKLER:** Took Nixon's seat. And then was subsequently elected in his own right two or three times. But Kuchel was a remarkable guy whom I was very fond of. He was, what I would call, out of the Hiram Johnson, progressive California politics. He was a Republican, but you will recall, when he was finally defeated, he lost the nomination because some Republicans wanted to scold him or teach him a little lesson! It turned out that they lost their seat there. California was a funny state during the period of the fifties and sixties because during that period it passed New York as the heaviest populated state. And yet they were throwing their senators out before they really had a chance.

Clair Engle was chairman of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. He worked his way up. He gave that up to successfully run for the Senate and start over again. and then he died after a term or so in the Senate. I don't know how long he would have lasted. But Tom Kuchel was the other senator from California. Eventually he became the ranking member of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, and then they defeated him in his own primary.

I started to make a point that Kuchel told me something. Forgot now where I was on that! [laughs] That's the danger of rambling sometimes.

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**RITCHIE::** We were talking about cloture and about the relation to that and Anderson's personal relations to Russell.

**VERKLER:** Right. Something slipped there in my memory. I was getting ready to make a point about Tom or something he'd said. Can't quite bring it up in the computer right now.

**RITCHIE::** Also, going back to the '50s when you were still in Anderson's office, what was Anderson's relationship with Dennis Chavez, the other senator from New Mexico.

**VERKLER:** Chavez only lived for six years after I came to the Senate, as I mentioned before. Their relationship was always frosty. There was a lack of personal amity. I don't want to say respect. Maybe lack respect is too strong. But Chavez very zealously guarded his title as the senior senator and kind of resented Clint Anderson. You know, he was a fellow who had been around politically for a long time. He was from Los Chavez which is between Albuquerque and Belen, New Mexico--south of Albuquerque--and worked his way up politically. But he was always fighting with what I might say was the mainstream of the Democratic Party of New Mexico. I guess they were always fighting with him, too, or wanted to defeat him. I know he had a blood feud with a lot of those people, and they found a way to get rid of him back when we had only one congressman, the seat to which he was elected. They got him to run for the Senate in 1934 against Bronson Cutting who

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was a maverick-type Republican in the La Follette tradition. In fact, I think he was from New York, if I'm not mistaken. But he was a friend of the La Follettes, and he was in that category.

Cutting defeated him, as you know as a historian, in 1934. Then before he was sworn in for another term he died in an airplane crash out there. So they had persuaded Dennis Chavez to take him on, and I think a lot of people thought they were finally going to get rid of him. But then Chavez put the pressure on the new governor, Clyde Tingley, who also had a long history out there in New Mexico and was the governor and former mayor of Albuquerque. So he did appoint Dennis, and Dennis had a tough race most every time afterwards except one. The big one was with Patrick Hurley where there was a large dispute over the vote count. That's where a handful of Republicans in the Senate did support Dennis. One of them was the newly appointed senator, Thomas Kuchel, helping Dennis Chavez. Chavez never forgot it, and I'm sure that most of that large Spanish population in Southern California never forgot it! Kuchel never gave them a chance to forget it. But Clint Anderson went to bat for him. Of course, Hurley was also his first opponent in '48. Clint defeated him. Then in '52 when Chavez sought reelection, it drug on and on--the Senate finally had to settle it. In '58, I think, Senator Chavez was reelected very easily. But he had tough races all the way through--kind of close races. He and Clint would usually end up fighting over who would be the governor. One of the bright young guys who was elected governor, a Clinton Anderson protege more or less, or

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out of his wing, was John Simms. Why the Chavez people just fought him tooth and nail because they saw him as running for the Senate when his governor's term was up! They in fact defeated him in his reelection bid by helping elect the first Republican governor out there in years and years, Ed Meacham.

I think that was back in 1950, because I think Sims--oh, wait a minute. Maybe Simms was elected in '54 and defeated in '56, and Chavez was going to be up in '58. Whatever it was, it was decided to get rid of him so he wouldn't be a challenge to the Senator. My dates may be a little off.

Senator Anderson helped Senator Chavez. That was the thing to do. You know, your colleague, same party. You're going to help him in all those debates. I don't think Senator Anderson was at fault for a lot of the friction although he was a very proud guy and sensitive. He had his ego that was a mile high, too! And the Chavez folks had theirs' in that sense, such little petty things as who controlled the state society in Washington. You know, when you have a small populated state like New Mexico these things become bigger and more prestigious.

But Senator Anderson served his time as the junior senator. That kind of galled him, and Senator Chavez had--it's a matter of fact--a big, big problem with alcohol. Also his son, Dennis Jr., did. But, yet, the people kept electing him. Except maybe that one time [chuckles], but they counted him in anyway. They settled it, as I started to mention, a handful of senators voted to seat

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Dennis. And one of them was Senator Kuchel of California. I think Margaret Chase Smith voted for him then, too.

They did not get along smoothly. Most of the time I would call it very frosty, but an armed truce.

**RITCHIE:** I've often heard that the most difficult relationship is between two senators from the same party from the same state.

**VERKLER:** That's right. I think historically that's true when they are trying to get a one upmanship on being able to announce some project or take a little credit. If one is stronger than the other politically, has more support, it becomes a problem for the lesser one who is struggling. They generally lend each other support, though; because, no matter how you disagree--or I found it in those days, or even today--I'm sure, you've got people with diverse regional interests of one party. Like Bennett Johnston chairing the Senate Energy Committee today. When I was there he was a freshman his first two years--my last two years. Yet, a majority of his party was against this energy bill that's now pending. For different reasons. I strongly supported Senator Johnston's view, obviously being in the energy business feeling that we needed a policy. Sometimes you don't want legislation to pass. But in this time, having sent 500,000 young people to the Middle East and energy was the underlying reason we were there. As well as Kuwait's independence, we had to keep Saddam Hussein from

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controlling the gulf oil in the Middle East. If he had succeeded in taking over Kuwait, even if he didn't physically move into Saudi Arabia, he would have controlled the outcome. So I think Johnston was correct, bouncing all the way up here in 1991 and '92, but a majority of his party was against it.

And yet, they band together for control both for each other and for organizational purposes. There is a strong tie that binds. Back in the old days--I say the old days--generally, the southerners voted with the conservative view of the Republicans most of the time on most issues. That changes somewhat. Depends on who they are. You have a very conservative senator from Florida, and you have Senator Graham, a Democrat from Florida. Well, back in the early days, Spessard Holland was very conservative. Of course, I was going to use that as an example, but then George Smathers was kind of conservative. He defeated a liberal, Senator [Claude] Pepper who later became "Congressman" Pepper for years and years. Pepper was a New Dealer and from Florida which--is it southern? Is it urban? I mean, it's more urban than it is southern. Even though they did elect Connie Mack, a very conservative guy, I don't think you'd call Senator Graham real conservative on most issues. But, generally, they band together on issues that are popular in their state.

But in those days, the South was pretty united. The "Solid South" of history.

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**RITCHIE::** Speaking of the South, reminds me of the ceremony for Senator Chavez's centennial. Senator Stennis spoke in front of Chavez's statue, and recalled how Chavez invited him to New Mexico to campaign for his reelection. After they had traveled together for a few days, Chavez said, "You can go home now, John." Stennis said, "Why don't you need me any more?" Chavez replied, "Because we are leaving the "Little Dixie" part of New Mexico."

**VERKLER:** That's right. Eastern New Mexico and southeastern New Mexico was an extension of west Texas, and they called that Little Dixie. It is a diverse state. You'll notice New Mexico--the eastern boundary comes down to a square and then cuts across over to the middle of the state. And there's El Paso, Texas. Those Texans jimmied us out of about a third of the state because that line should have gone all the way down to the river and old Mexico at that point. But it didn't. I was in El Paso last week on some business. All of the news and most of the coverage relates to things going on in New Mexico. Las Cruces is just above El Paso. There is as much New Mexico news coverage as there is from the rest of Texas, it seems to me.

Yes, and then when you get up the Rio grande Valley, why it's more of the Spanish influence. Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, has developed into the major population center. They have--used to at least--have a third of the population in the state right there.

[End of Interview #1]

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# Jerry T. Verkler

Staff Director

Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, 1963-1974

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## Interview #2

### Scoop Jackson and the Interior Committee

(Thursday, January 30, 1992)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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**RITCHIE:** We have been talking about the 1950s and early 1960s, and that was a period when you continued in the USMC reserve here. I wanted to ask how the reserve units worked up here on Capitol Hill?

**VERKLER:** It was between the Korean War and Vietnam War, and there were a lot of veterans in the House and Senate, both members and staff. I'm particularly familiar with my unit which was a combination unit--composite unit, we called it--of Marine and Navy officers who were employed by and served in the Congress. I remember being told about the formation of this unit in the summer, or early spring, of 1957. I told one of my friends who had been in the Marine Corps with me who had gotten into the Richard Russell operation. He was down at Quantico, extended his active duty, and so he came up and I introduced him to the Senate. He was from Georgia. He couldn't *believe* what I told him what the Marine liaison officer told me about these units. I mean, this one unit, but the other services were going to have them, too.

We would do two weeks of active duty to fulfill our reserve obligation. It gave many of us a chance to continue in the reserves, which I was able to do, even after our unit was disestablished. We would meet twice a month all year long. We

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would have a morning meeting where somebody from the Pentagon or headquarters would come over and brief us. Then during the two-week period, during a recess, we would take various and sundry trips--tours--active duty for training, to visit various places, including NATO. I remember the year Kennedy was elected--1960--the Illinois results were a little uncertain, and I guess the election hinged on that. We were flying between Panama and Peru when we got the word that Kennedy, indeed, had won.

We made these trips to the embassies or military establishments, like NATO, and would get briefings. You could say one thing, they certainly were not junkets. They were not junkets in the sense of any kind of comfort. Flying from one place to another. To me it was a great opportunity because I'd never been to these places. And we would get updated by the embassy and military personnel on what was going on in each country--or hemisphere--and what our defense posture was at the height of the Cold War. It was an exciting time. Again, from a personal standpoint, it was a great opportunity. I really kind of joke when the thing closed down in '64. Right after that, things went to hell in the Far East, so I always give a

little credit to our unit for keeping stability in the world until they closed our unit down. [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** They closed down in large part because of General Goldwater, didn't it?

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**VERKLER:** I think so. That had a lot to do with it, because it was easily an attention getter. And Drew Pearson and his colleague, Jack Anderson, wrote about it. They went first-class. And by first class, I mean a jet airplane.

**RITCHIE:** The Air Force Reserve?

**VERKLER:** Yeah. And the Navy and Marines, we went around across that old ocean in a four-engine propeller plane. Of course a lot of us played cards from the moment we got on the plane until the next stop. Others were sensible and slept and rested.

I'll never forget, one of our first trips--I guess going to London--you always went to Argentina, Newfoundland. We got there about two o'clock in the morning. And the chief of the Navy congressional liaison was Admiral John McCain, whose son now sits in the United States Senate from Arizona. We joked for years--even when Admiral McCain went out to head up that Pacific Fleet later on--about his two o'clock, 2 a.m. lecture to us on seapower! A bunch of congressmen and aides got in there. We had a nice dinner, but he gave us that great seapower lecture for which he was noted.

It was an interesting, great time for us. I'm a believer that members of Congress should not be afraid of the charge of junketeering to broaden their knowledge first hand--hands on--about what's going on in the people's business. This was an added plus for us. Great advantage, obviously, because we were participating as reservists.

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**RITCHIE:** It was a big plus for the branch of the service, too, to have members of Congress and the staff.

**VERKLER:** They were not unaware of that. And, obviously, they utilized it fully. Senator Jackson, when I started working for him was a senior member of the Armed Services Committee. Since I worked for him directly, I used to be called upon occasionally by the Marine Corps to bring something to his attention. Then when I left the Senate [laughs], suddenly I could see my popularity sort of easing off a little bit. But it was a great advantage.

**RITCHIE:** Senator Smathers told me that all the time he was in active service he could never get promoted. He said, "As soon as I got elected to the Senate, they made me a major."

**VERKLER:** That's right. Yes, in fact, members have easier times than staffers in getting ahead, which is pretty easy to explain.

**RITCHIE:** It must have been an interesting experience to have a group that was made up both of staffers and members. Did you get to know some members of Congress better that way?

**VERKLER:** Well, I did! Some very senior members now. One of the members of our unit, Jack Brooks of Texas, who is the dean of

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the Texas delegation was an old Marine. So Jack and I have been--I'd like to think we've been friends for thirty-five years. I met him when he was a junior congressman. He'd been in about two or three terms when they started the units, and I was a staffer.

So it helped in my Senate work later, helped him, too, because if he'd have a problem before the Senate--my committee--and we knew each other. Yes, that helped us meet these fellows. There were more House members than senators who participated on a regular basis. One was a young House member from Maryland, Dan Brewster, who subsequently was elected to the Senate. One of my first commanding officers of our unit--I'm not sure he was the CO at the time--was named Hugh Scott, House member from Pennsylvania. Hugh Scott, you know, was sixty or so when he came to the Senate from the House. He stayed on to become the minority leader. But he was a member of our unit. He used to attend the meetings primarily when he was still in the Senate.

Of course, James Van Zandt, congressman from Pennsylvania, was the commanding officer of our unit for the longest, single period of time. Ray Roberts, the guy who succeeded Sam Rayburn in that district in Texas, was a member of our unit. I think he did, too, become CO at one time.

All in all, it just lasted about seven years. And, frankly, from the standpoint of the military stopping it was a mistake. I know they regretted shutting it down. I don't think it was their idea. Maybe some of [Robert] McNamara's staff and someone--maybe the Bureau of the Budget, some of the political advisers thought it

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was becoming kind of a liability. But I think it was kind of a tactical mistake. Now, maybe the only ones they really hurt were the staff because the members, if they wanted to go somewhere--if they were on the Armed Services Committee, particularly--then they could usually go see the areas that they wanted to see. It was a good time. I enjoyed those days very much. Obviously, who wouldn't? You know, you had a good trip every year, somewhere. I went to Europe three times. Went to the Far East once, Japan, South America. Went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba a few times, once before, and then after Castro took over.

**RITCHIE:** My sense is there was more socializing in general in the 50's and early 60's. Senators were here all the time, and you were more likely to see them. It wasn't quite as divided, perhaps, as it is today.

**VERKLER:** You mean between the staff and the Senate?

**RITCHIE:** Yes.

**VERKLER:** Well, that's a good point. You know, I've always believed up here you had to take what you do very seriously, but you can't take yourself all that serious. So I've devised the "Verkler theory" on what happened to the Senate to

make it a slightly less desirable place to be. And that is three things: The development of the jet airplane, central air-conditioning, and

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John F. Kennedy.

When the system first started their sessions were just in the decent weather in Washington. But once air-conditioning became commonplace centrally, they could stay through the hottest part of the summer. As their business expanded, they stayed longer and longer. But, if they wanted to go somewhere, they'd get on a jet airplane, go across the country, and come back. Go to their district, or their state, and come back without having to really spend a lot of time and agony doing it. Then John F. Kennedy became the first sitting U.S. senator since Warren Harding in forty years to get the nomination for president. I contend that that precedent has made every senator--the light go on--that he's over-qualified to be president. And they spend an awful lot of time maneuvering for that. [laughs] As a result, it makes it tougher on the staff and on the institution and increases posturing. Now, you know, I'm joking, but I'm not joking in another sense. Because it is a legislative body, and the greatest deliberative body. I loved the institution then, and I love it now. But I've seen these developments.

One of the things I've mentioned earlier was about having open mark-ups of legislation. Nobody guaranteed that the democratic forum was going to be efficient. But we've taken away the ability to really make some tough decisions that they could join together and defend by now debating in public in front of all the interest groups and everybody. With the development of the electronic media

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and so forth it is tough, I think, to get things done. Tougher than it used to be. Now, I want to be completely fair and objective in that. Like I said at the very beginning, when I was twenty-five years old, I thought there were a lot of giants in the land. And maybe to a twenty-five-year old there may very well be, today. But I'm not absolutely sure that there are those very gifted and able people. I strongly believe that anybody who succeeds in getting elected to the Senate, to me, has the best political job in America in our system. You get a six-year-term, and you can, hopefully, for three or four or five of those years--at least you used to be able to really try to settle down and do the people's business.

Now, you know, campaign financing is so tough because of the resources it takes to put on a campaign. They have to spend so much time raising money. The ones who are successful are able to raise a lot of money to keep off challenges both within the party and defeat the other side. But to me it has made the burden of being in public office--or in the Senate--I would think less fun than it used to be. It's just a personal opinion.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned as one of the "Verkler rules" the transcontinental jet. Wasn't Senator Jackson a regular commuter back and forth?

**VERKLER:** He did. He did his homework. Maybe not as much as Senator [William] Proxmire. You remember Proxmire, of course, he

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ran for governor. He ran for governor a couple of times. Was unsuccessful. And then had that special election to succeed McCarthy in the Spring of '57. Lyndon Johnson as majority leader was doing everything that he could to try to support this guy who had just finished running unsuccessfully for governor. And then he won. He won that seat. Then he used to go home every weekend. Later on, even when other people were having to spend lots of money, he prided himself on just paying the filing fee. But they tell me, and I believe it's true, that he went home all the time, shaking hands constantly at the factory gates and doing whatever where it did not cost him an awful lot of money.

But getting back to his election and before I get back to Scoop's weekend, which he did a lot of trips. He was a very popular politician and was successful in Washington state. He did an awful lot of cross-country flying.

Proxmire, when he was first elected that spring, as I say with the help of the majority leader and others; and then pretty soon, he wasn't here very long before he started going to the floor and throwing arrows at the majority leader. Do you remember that? And I know Clint Anderson kept saying, "You know, this is a case of David flinging his pebbles at Goliath and missing." [laughs] Didn't do him much good. But he chose to start attacking the system very early in his career.

And, as you know, he had the reputation all of his career of being *the maverick* who knew a little bit more than others about what was good for them.

But Senator Jackson did indeed fly back and forth to Washington state, and that's why he was elected every time. He was first elected to the Senate in the Eisenhower landslide. He moved over from the House and defeated a sitting senator and was elected by large margins ever since, did a lot of campaigning. He was a bachelor in those days, too. Even after he got married and had a couple of children he still did a lot of campaigning. I remember his telling me about when he and his administrative assistant, who was his boyhood friend, first came here. They arrived by train over here at Union Station, two blocks away, and had to ask someone, "Where is the Capitol? Where's the House Office Building?" They found it, and he found it thereafter for many, many years.

His death in 1983 was really a personal blow, because I was very fond of him. I'm sorry that that happened because I think he still had a lot to contribute. It's ironic, because he was known by those of us who worked with him as--I won't say a health nut--but besides Fritz Hollings, I think Scoop Jackson was probably one other senator that I knew about who could be convicted of practicing medicine without a license. You know, he was very conscious of what was the latest in medicine and medical technology. He took good care of himself. When he was in Washington he swam every day and all that business. Took care of himself. Never abused or overate, as far as I could tell. But, when it was his time, he went.

**RITCHIE:** He was a man who had worked very hard, though. All that traveling back and forth didn't, must have worn down.

**VERKLER:** Well, actually, it was subsequent to that when he did start national campaigning, trying to get the Democratic Presidential nomination. He did an awful lot of traveling in those days.

**RITCHIE:** All those red-eye shuttles.

**VERKLER:** Right. He was a very frugal guy. When he'd go on these campaign trips, he would sit in first-class, but he'd never drink the little miniatures. He would always collect them in his bag and bring them home. In retrospect, he probably did not have a real good shot at getting that nomination. He was the kind of guy you go into a room of forty or fifty people, and he could really impress them with his genuine knowledge of most issues and what was going on. But when he had to give the formal speech, it didn't quite click on the television. And I think that was part of it.

In 1972, as you may recall, the McGovern year for the democrats, Scoop came in second at the convention. But that was because, really, [Hubert] Humphrey and [Edmund] Muskie had dropped out at the end when it was clear that [George] McGovern had the necessary votes at the convention. But it wasn't all the way settled. He had a governor of one of our southern states nominate

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him. The president of the Steelworkers Union seconded his nomination. That governor, of course, was Jimmy Carter of Georgia. He nominated Scoop for president in '72.

I was also involved in that. I remember my first and really only national convention where I was a part of it, working the delegations and working on the floor and visited a few of the state delegations trying to drum up support for Scoop. The dye was cast pretty much, but it was great experience. Great fun. But he came in second, and we thought, and a lot of people thought that, well, by doing that it would help him get a leg up in '76. Again, they were taking on a president. Watergate had just happened. Watergate events transpired during that late spring or early summer of '72. I think it was actually before the conventions, if I'm not mistaken, that it had actually happened.

But Scoop was also instrumental then right after that election of helping the guy who was treasurer of the Democratic National Committee become chairman, Bob Strauss. I think by helping him and having been willing to stay in the race as long as he did, people thought he had more of a chance than it turned out in '76 when this same governor, Jimmy Carter--Jimmy who?--going around this country and staying in people's homes. The first thing you knew, he had the lead in '76 and kept it successfully through the general election for one term.

But those were interesting days doing both working on the committee and dabbling, a little bit, in politics.

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**RITCHIE:** I remember when I first came here Senator Jackson was running for president, and he'd be surrounded by secret service agents, a big circle of them. Then you'd see Frank Church and Birch Bayh in the hall, and they'd be surrounded by secret service agents. Swarms of agents were here that season.

**VERKLER:** That's what I mean by Kennedy, having broken that string of forty years. The first experience of Warren G. Harding turned out to be an unpleasant period in our history. So maybe that's why they went back to the governors and away from Congress for a nominee. But once Kennedy got it, all these other senators thought they were over-qualified to be president. They have a great platform ready built to get publicity over here on the floor. They can command some attention.

**RITCHIE:** Were you and Senator Anderson involved in the 1960 presidential election?

**VERKLER:** Senator Anderson was running himself. I think that his huge success in New Mexico kind of made it possible for Kennedy to barely carry New Mexico. He was active. I wasn't all that directly involved at that time. That was even before I went on the committee staff. I was still on his personal staff. But I was in Washington during most of that time. I don't know if I was out in the state hardly at all that year, because I had only been here as his legislative assistant. I wasn't really needed that much that

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year because he was still at the height of his ability and popularity.

**RITCHIE:** Did senators usually have a separate staff for campaigns, or did they use their Senate staff?

**VERKLER:** Well, generally speaking, and under the rules even when I was here, if I were going out to the state--working in a campaign--I was on leave.

Obviously, it was so small and informal, the administrative assistant, much as it is today, I think a lot of these guys still rely on their chief of staff. There are only two people, I think, in a senator's office that can deal with campaign funds, if I'm not mistaken. And, generally speaking, the chief of staff was the guy he relied on heavily.

From a state like New Mexico where the senator had so many personal, hands-on contacts and old cronies who had been with him from the very beginning, well he had only one treasurer in all of his campaigns. A guy from Silver City, John Bingaman, uncle of Jeff Bingaman, who is now the senator from New Mexico. I mentioned before that Helen Hardin's father was one of his early supporters when he ran for the nomination in 1940 to the House. As I understand it, he used to drive him around all those communities. And that was quite a feat in those days when the best highway was a two-lane highway and sometimes paved or not paved.

When I first went to New Mexico in 1948, we came in on old Route 66. It was just a two-lane highway coming out of Oklahoma

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and the Texas panhandle across New Mexico on the way to California. Being a large state like it was, getting around was a little bit of a challenge.

**RITCHIE:** That certainly made western senators in favor of highway development and other programs.

**VERKLER:** Yes, I think so. The Highway Act of the 50's created the interstate system. One of the real public works measures that helped a lot of the country and promote transportation across our country. That highway grid is largely in need of refurbishing, I'm sure, in many, many places. I think that is central to part of the program now to help us get out of the current recession is to try to spend those dollars. I know our bridges and dams are in need of refurbishing in many, many places.

**RITCHIE:** I always thought it was ironic at the time of the "Sagebrush Rebellion" in the western states that part of the country that benefitted the most from Federal funds in terms of highways and water projects was now saying that they wanted to get the Federal government off their backs!

**VERKLER:** Well, I think that's a refrain that you hear from most every interest group from the oil industry to agriculture. I know, as we've all heard over the years, all of the resolutions from the local chambers of commerce would come in saying, "cut out

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this government waste, cut out this spending and all that excess." Then at the end, oh, yes, please try to help us finish our local project here. [laughs] I think that's the nature of our system. You just have to understand that. They're all motivated, every interest group.

The petroleum industry--I'm in the natural gas business now. [chuckles] The "good, old days," if I can use that term, were back when we were most regulated by the federal government. The problems we've got now we're moving toward competition and open transportation by pipelines unheard of fifteen years ago in our industry. Now, the price of natural gas, for instance, in real terms, is less than it was in the fifties, or just about. I'm not saying that in the long run it won't be better for the consumers if we get a market-based system in operation fairly and openly.

But we've seen all of that. The oil people would complain, when I got here in '56, about cheap, foreign oil imports, and they're still doing it.

**RITCHIE:** Could you tell me about the Interior Committee in the early 60's when you joined it? I noted looking at the list, it's all western senators, and the issues tended to be western-senator issues.

**VERKLER:** Right. The jurisdiction of the committee was primarily related to public lands and water problems out West. We had the national forest created from the public domain as opposed

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to the eastern forests which were acquired or bought under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee. So we were, indeed, a western committee. It was only as

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the environmental movement developed that the committee, and Senator Jackson as part of his national strategy, too, became more environmentally conscious, because the whole country was!

You could make a case that Rachel Carson started this revolution that we now find ourselves probably passed, in many respects, the rational point. But she indeed may have had more than anyone else to do with launching the consciousness of the environmental values that we are all subscribers to. But, you know, again, maybe the pendulum has swung too far. A case in point is the spotted owl controversy out in the northwest. We found a few spotted owls staked to a tree here or there. People found their mortgages and their kids' educations were being jeopardized because we have to stop cutting timber because of the impact on this bird, the spotted owl. You know, something may seem to be a little out of balance. But in any event, in those days, we started to get more eastern members as we developed kind of a national impact.

One of Senator Jackson's contributions, which he felt has gone beyond what we had in mind was the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969. We passed it. The purpose of it was to make sure that any major federal action that was about to be taken somewhere you knew what the environmental impacts were going to be so you could take a look at it, and decide if you still

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wanted to go ahead with it. What that has developed through the courts and through practice is maybe far beyond the worthy goal we had in mind in making the agencies aware of the environmental consequences of the projects and what actions they were going to take.

I know we made some mistakes. And once you pass a bill like that, or other acts related to water programs or whatever, it is hard to change it. That's why I became a great believer in the sunset provisions where something would come to an end. Then you'd have to reauthorize it, because it's very hard to go back and modify or slow down and say, "Wait, you've gone too far." And then all the interests groups would be jumping down your throat as being an anti-environmentalist, or something.

We did make some mistakes, probably in not limiting the size of those environmental impact statements and putting in time frames. Instead of looking at the alternatives and then going ahead and doing what seemed to be in the public interest, there would be delay after delay after delay. That isn't good for the environment or the economy.

**RITCHIE:** Well, the initial issues weren't so much environmental. They were resources, weren't they?

**VERKLER:** Resource development and conservation. You have to remember that we embarked in the early sixties as a carry over from actually Hubert Humphrey's initial effort on the National

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Wilderness Preservation Act to set aside several million acres of wilderness and to create a generic wilderness system to preserve these areas for future generations.

We equated conservation with the environmental action, and I think that was valid. Today, of course, is a different connotation. I was always a believer in Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot's definition of conservation. It includes the wise utilization of your resources. But now they want to preserve only! It's been a difficult interest group to work with.

Even when I was there, it was starting to change because they had never had strength like they got with Jackson and Church and Clint on wilderness. And then suddenly some of the reasonable guys--the Joe Penfolds of the Izaak Walton League and Dr. [Spencer] Smith who represented one of the larger groups [the Citizens' Committee on Natural Resources]. These were gentlemen you could talk to, and if you didn't give them the whole loaf, you could still work with them. I found near the end of my tenure that, if you didn't give 110 percent each time you were an enemy of the people. That, to me, shows something is out of balance. Then they cease being what they pride themselves in calling themselves "public" interest groups. They're just as much a special interest group as anyone else. Of course the hard job up here in the Congress, in the Senate, is to try to assess all of these special interests and somehow come up with something that's in the public interest.

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You're right in the sense that they were major resource issues. Water development--one of the themes that we used in Senator Anderson's campaigns, whether we used it initially or not, or whether we manufactured it, it was true nonetheless, the reason he decided to run for the Senate was to help develop New Mexico's share of the Colorado River Basin. The Colorado, of course, doesn't hit New Mexico, but some of the tributaries do, and we contribute to it. The long-standing battle was over water which may come back again out West, but that was one of the real tough issues in those days.

I will pride myself on one area involving water resources. Probably not many people know it, but New Mexico did get a share of that Colorado River water--so many thousand acre feet. There was a flood control project, Cochiti reservoir on the Cochiti Indian reservation, between Albuquerque--slightly west of the north-south line between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. But under the rules and agreements with Texas, all that water even if they had big rains and runoff eventually had to go down stream into the Rio Grande. There was a very able and enterprising state water engineer who recently passed away, Steve Reynolds. I was with the group of folks that put together the concept that if Albuquerque, the large city, which is south about forty miles from Cochiti would give up 5,000 acre feet of its water that it was entitled to from the Colorado share, from New Mexico's share of the Colorado Basin, they would be able to keep a permanent pool there for recreation and fishing, etc. So that is now the closest permanent pool, a lake,

and thousands upon thousands of people from central New Mexico no longer would have to go all the way over to Tukumcari or down to Elephant Butte. They have a nice, recreational lake within forty-five minutes to an hour of the major population center.

Santa Fe, I guess, is maybe the third largest center. Maybe second now. Las Cruces used to be second. But, anyway, this has given them a great recreational opportunity; and I did take pride in having a major handle in putting that together.

Resources was the name of our game, trying to develop them. But conservation was also coming along. Alan Bible of Nevada chaired the subcommittee that handled national parks. It was during this period, I think, we had the greatest expansion of the national park system. George Hartzog was director of the National Park Service under Stewart Udall as Secretary of Interior, and we added a lot of parks to the system. In pure terms of acreage, later on, I guess Alaska lands was larger. But in the first part of the Kennedy-Johnson administration we authorized Cape Cod off Massachusetts, Padre Island in the Gulf, and Point Reyes in California. The first really national seashores. In Carolina we already had Cape Hatteras, but we even expanded and enhanced that in the national park system. But those other three were the first three that were added as part of a real planned comprehensive program.

**RITCHIE:** No coincidence, I'm sure that one was in the president's home state; one was in the vice president's home state.

**VERKLER:** And one was in the growing state of the California! Well, that was kind of a happy coincidence. Just like Senator Anderson used to say. He made his money in the insurance business, and was a very influential figure in the state of New Mexico selling insurance bonds to highway contractors, etc. But there was a bridge built--the second bridge across the Rio Grande in the valley south of Albuquerque--and it went right across the river about half a mile from his farm--his spread. I always thought that was a happy coincidence. [chuckles] The opportunities are there, and that was one of them that was taken, I guess.

**RITCHIE:** In terms of home states, I was just looking at the senators who were on that committee, and I would assume that there was a lot of competition among them for projects like this to make sure that Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, California, all got their share of whatever the resources were.

**VERKLER:** That's right. There was competition for authorization and limited dollars in appropriations. Senator Hayden, as you know, chaired the Appropriations Committee there for a number of years. This was something very close to his heart. They were located in the western states, but the farm implements and tractors and so forth were manufactured in Ohio, and Michigan,

and Illinois so there was a benefit to develop when you developed those resources for the whole country. That was part of the rationale. Now whether it's beyond that now, and I know they're reexamining water and land policy. And I'm not as close to it as I was eighteen years ago. But it is true that they were, and a lot of their economies depended upon developing those resources. Public power versus private power is always a great issue.

Some of the beginnings of the conflict over preservation and development is Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona and Hell's Canyon up in the Northwest. That was going on before I became a part of it, but to stop the development on the Snake River even though it would have added power and permanent water, resource development. The preservationists kind of won that battle. They developed Glen Canyon in Arizona which is where Lake Powell is, one of the last dams on the Colorado River. I remember going out there when we were first building it. It had been approved as part of the Upper Colorado River Project.

We went out there in the spring of '61, or '62, and they were constructing it then. We were with Stewart Udall. Flew out to part of the backwater up there, Rainbow Bridge, a monument out there. Rare places at that time in 1961 or so, since it had been discovered in the early part of the century. I think they had a recorded log of only about 9,000 people had been in there to see it. I guess it was inside the boundaries of the Navajo reservation, or right close to it. Rainbow Bridge was a monument because it was a wonder of nature and only 9,000 people had gone in

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there. Preservationists were decrying the development of the dam. Now because of the dam, people could come to that. Well, now they have more visitors than that in a season, every year. Probably many times more because they have access to it through the water. No damage whatsoever, and it has opened up the opportunity for millions of Americans to see and enjoy the resources that only the privileged few who could afford to get a pack train of mules and go back up in there could do.

Now I know that's a great experience, but I always believe the more you can make these resources available for the most people was in the best public interest. That was the philosophy that guided us during those years. You had to balance preserving pure wilderness with a practical approach to making the resources available to all of our people.

**RITCHIE:** You also have to add to the equation the House of Representatives and the House committee. Did the House committee share the same philosophy with the Senate committee?

**VERKLER:** Well, you see, when Clair Engle went over to the Senate in 1958--he was elected in '58--Wayne Aspinall then became chairman of the committee. Wayne Aspinall of Colorado, the old curmudgeon! I remember Lloyd Bentsen telling me one time, when Lloyd Bentsen was a young congressmen from the valley. He came back from the war, was elected to the House of Representatives, and he sat on that committee, along with Scoop Jackson. Of course,

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Scoop got off the committee, and I think was on Appropriations in the House before he went to the Senate. I think he was on it when they set up the Indian Claims Commission. That was going to be a two-year Commission which lasted-- maybe it's out of business now--but it lasted thirty years.

Lloyd Bentsen said to me one time, he was senior to Wayne Aspinall on that committee and was Wayne ever glad to see him go back and return to business in the state of Texas. Wayne became the chairman. I frankly feel that was a better way of doing business then in that sense. I mean, I don't think Clinton Anderson, for instance, had any higher ambition than to be a good senator, a good chairman, look out after his constituency and what he believed in. But I don't think he wanted to be president of the United States. He was already a man in his mid-sixties by then and a little later. Although, I must admit, I drove him down to visit president-elect Kennedy in the fall of 1960, before I took off for South America. Or maybe it was after I got back. That's right. And the Kennedy compound was over in his house in Georgetown, and he might have been flirted with by those folks about the possibility of becoming secretary of the treasury. But nothing came of that. It did not happen.

I remember he had his big old stetson on and kicked himself in the car on the way back because the president had admired it, in this meeting. The president-elect. He said, "Damn! Why didn't I give that to him?" He didn't give him his hat. He regretted the fact that he didn't say, "Here." The Senator reportedly had a lot

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of stetson hats. Which brings up another thing. I'm now really bouncing back to a debate on the Senate floor.

Kerr and Anderson were on the same side, I think, on some issue, but they had a bet. Kerr bet him--maybe they were on opposite sides. But Kerr said, "I'll bet you a suit of clothes that we're going to prevail on this." Clint said, "Well wait a minute! It would only be fair if you bet me a suit of clothes against a suit of underwear because of our relative net worth." [chuckles]

But Senator Anderson was a good senator. And when he became chairman, he said, "I don't want any more of this grumbling, this fighting between the House and Senate." He said, "Let's get with Wayne Aspinall." The senator had a retreat in the Capitol. It was over on the second floor of the Capitol. As you know senior senators had "hideaways," as we call them. Private offices over there. We started with regular meetings, three or four times a session or a year with Chairman Aspinall and his chief of staff. I would go with the senator and we would say, "Well you pass this first; and then we'll pass that. And let's do this and that." We started that off real well, and it seemed to work. He got along pretty well with Wayne. They disagreed pretty strongly on wilderness, for instance. Wayne wanted mining to go on a long time. They finally compromised. I think it was about nineteen years or something when we passed the original act that you could still continue to mine before it was prohibited in these areas.

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We met on a regular basis. The House committee, of course, was twice as large as the Senate or even a little more, and House members, because there are so many of them, served mostly on one major committee. There are some exceptions. But the senators had two or three or four major committees, even then before they had another major reorganization effort. Obviously, in the Senate more of it fell on the staff. Where in the House they did more of it personally as far as their own legislative programs were concerned. At least that was my observation.

But he got along pretty well with Wayne by and large. Wayne was a very crusty guy. I considered myself pretty fortunate because I got along with him. I remember one time when the White House counsel called me up--this was late in my career up there. Well, actually it was during Johnson's administration; so it was '67 or so when Harry. . .

**RITCHIE:** McPherson?

**VERKLER:** Yeah. He called me from the White House. He was the counsel. I lived in Springfield, Virginia. And they wanted me to call Wayne Aspinall to see how he would react to a certain thing. Stewart Udall, I think, was trying to set aside a lot more of the Alaska lands administratively. And they wanted me to get a hold of Wayne Aspinall because I did know him and could talk to him and we got along pretty well during those years.

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I remember that first experience--and, I guess, only experience--I had with a White House operator connecting me with wherever it was Aspinall was. I think he was in Colorado, or somewhere. But in any event, I was the one given the chance to talk to him late at night to see how he'd feel about that particular issue. But Senator Anderson and Wayne did get along pretty well. They were old veterans. I mean, Wayne was not easy to get along with because like so many bright people, you know, he knew all of the answers. And if you had any doubts about that, just ask him! He was known, and he was a taskmaster, like a schoolmaster to his juniors--especially his junior members. He ran the committee, tried to run it with an iron fist. He got taken out himself with the advancement of the environmental conscience, I'd like to say. Because you just didn't run things the old way. Politics were changing, and he got left out.

Those were very good days. Good years. Because we accomplished quite a bit.

**RITCHIE:** In the Senate a state like New Mexico and a state like California are equal. In the House there is no comparison. One has fifty seats and the other might have four or five.

**VERKLER:** Three.

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**RITCHIE:** Okay, three. Does that make a difference in terms of what goes in the committees on the other side, and bills; and how the deals are cut along the way?

**VERKLER:** Obviously, I think it would make a difference if there was a chance for a numbers count in the House on some of these issues. I think California is

such a diverse animal. If I'm not mistaken I'd say there are maybe a few more Democrats than Republicans. That state has Orange County. Then you've got San Francisco and so on. They're so diverse. I alluded earlier that the state of California cut its own throat politically many, many times by having a senator in there for only one term or two. They never kept them long enough to build up seniority, so that proves that even the most populous state can lose a lot of clout. Now having said all that, we know how important they are in the national scheme of things. They keep growing and so forth. But, New Mexico, the way our system was designed to give the states that equality, was able to protect itself. One of the great battles that did develop was the water project--the Central Arizona Project--and that became a big battle. New Mexico was involved because of Clinton Anderson. When we were authorizing those projects of common interest in the upper Colorado including New Mexico's share. But then, when the Central Arizona Project came along, the people that were really in opposition to that were Colorado and California. New Mexico was on the side as an objective but interested bystander. We had a project of our own

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that we wanted to get to help develop some of our resources. Create another lake and dam. Unfortunately, it was in part of the Gila Wilderness. Hooker Dam down there near Silver City, New Mexico. But we did have an entitlement to use. I remember working with Mo Udall who. Incidentally, I went out to see him three or four weeks ago with Orren Beatty, who was Stewart Udall's assistant I referred to, and another guy, Morley Fox, who's been around this town for a long time representing the Salt River Project in Arizona. We went out to see Mo at the veterans' hospital. It was very sad to see that. Almost like a vegetable case. To see a man who had such a great, dynamic personality and wit and intelligence. It's very sad. I don't know how much longer that will last.

Anyway, we worked with Mo on trying to develop the Hooker Dam in New Mexico. In fact I kind of think he snookered us--snookered me--one time when we worked out something. It didn't turn out quite the way I hoped it would. I was sort of involved personally, because of my New Mexico connections. One of the minority counsel guys from California accused me of having one foot in New Mexico, one foot in Washington, and wetting all over California. [laughs] New Mexico was the peacemaker. They finally passed Central Arizona. That's when I developed my great respect and love for old Carl Hayden because he came on the committee to see that that got done. One instance, for example: the last resort in our great strategic planning was to offer Colorado--a couple of those dogs that they had, a couple of projects that probably weren't all that

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great from an economic analysis standpoint. But if worse came to worse, we were going to say, okay. Let's compromise then. We'll get the thrust of the project and let those come in. But that was to be down the road several weeks as perhaps a last resort.

So we went into that back room I was telling you about--which you could never do in an open hearing now, in open markup. The first thing Senator Hayden said [laughs] he put his fist down, and he said, "Do you want those two projects up in Colorado?" Well, Senator Gordon Allott said, "Well, Well, Well." He really hemmed and hawed because the Senator had already brought out our whole card and was throwing it out there. That's just an example of how it was able to work and function. And they got that project authorized.

But New Mexico's role, because of the closeness, I think, of Senator Anderson to Scoop, sort of sided with the northwest on the great northwest-southwest potential battle over water. California had developed their own state water plan for the last two or three decades. Then in the early 60's the great NAWPA, the North American Water Plan, which to Canada's dismay and Alaska, too, probably, had an idea of bringing water down from Canada and Alaska. That included water as it flowed out of the Columbia before it got too salty, I guess, to bring it on down. Well, inter-basin transfers are not very popular items. I think that's how Speaker Foley overcame and made a surprise upset in this recent election in Washington state. They were supposed to win--the term-limitation people--and impose term limitations on congressmen,

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which would probably have led to a court battle over its constitutionality. But they won the election, and that put it to rest by raising the bugaboo again of this great, big state with fifty congressmen taking away "our water and resources." In those days Clint Anderson, and New Mexico, and I, being a New Mexican sided with Scoop. It was well recognized that I was a New Mexican, but I, of course, worked for Senator Jackson. They worked that out peaceably. The other transfers never happened.

**RITCHIE:** You also had some pretty conservative republicans. You mentioned Kuchel, but you had Barry Goldwater on that committee and Paul Fannin, people like that. Was there much division between the Republicans and Democrats on those resources issues and other projects?

**VERKLER:** When it was a kind of a partisan issue, you would have problems. And there was conservative versus liberal philosophies involved. Like Tom Kuchel was a champion of wilderness, a champion of parks, but very jealously guarded his water resources. That why the guy who did not like him very well, he's deceased now, was Gordon Allott of Colorado who was the ring leader of the conservatives. Henry Dworshak was the ranking member when I first went on the committee, ranking minority member. But Gordon was the up-and-coming conservative. Tommy Kuchel was behind Dworshak, between them as the next ranking member.

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Yes, they were conservative. But, by and large, it depends upon the region of your state and your philosophy. Joe O'Mahoney, historic figure in the Senate from Wyoming who had been defeated once and then came back, he and Allott had a

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wilderness bill. But it was not the kind of a wilderness bill that Senator Anderson wanted. The conservative Republicans--Paul Fannin, of course, who was a very decent and honorable guy, he succeeded Barry. As a matter of fact, Roy Elson who was Senator Hayden's administrative assistant ran for the Senate seat. It was the closest, I guess, he came. Fannin, being a former governor, was able to defeat him. You know Roy, of course, has been around a long, long time.

But Senator Fannin became, after Gordon Allott, the ranking member. They were conservative, all right, but it still boiled around the issues affecting their state. Now Idaho, for instance, had Len Jordan and Frank Church on the committee. I guess they also had Henry Dworshak and Frank Church. They were different parties, but they were both on the committee. It was very important to them. For a little while in the sixties, the early sixties, we had Senator Allott and Peter Dominick. Both from Colorado, both Republicans, serving on the committee. But that was kind of short-lived because Dominick did get off. He came back later, but that was stretching it a little bit far, I guess. If they wanted to spread their influence around a little bit for their state, that was kind of overkill. But it was not uncommon, for New Mexico had

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Clint Anderson, and then they had Ed Meachem on the committee who took Chavez's place before he was defeated by Joe Montoya.

I never really considered it a partisan problem, for I had the great luxury in those days--we had sixty-four to thirty-six in the Senate. We really didn't have a problem. We could be very accommodating and nice to the minority staff and the minority side. Because if we needed to win, we could always win, you know, with almost two-thirds the numbers. If it became a partisan-type issue.

**RITCHIE:** How much influence did the chairman of the committee have on who got on that committee. Got appointed to it?

**VERKLER:** That's a good question. I think the short answer to that is it may very well depend on how influential or well liked that chairman is by the majority leader and the so-called steering committee, because I think the majority leader has really the largest say on who serves where. Undoubtedly, the chairman can have his preferences and is on top of who he would like to have. I remember one time when it backfired on us. Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin came on our committee, and was a good member there two or three years, but because it was really western oriented, he got off. And later on, we wanted him back to help us on some environmental-conservation issues. We had a chance to put the plug in and wired early, and he came back. And then he proceeded to vote against us!

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But I think that that's largely a leadership, steering committee situation. I'll give you a case in point. During the election to succeed Senator Anderson, Pete Domenici of New Mexico, who is a personal friend of mine, boyhood friend, baseball chum, was running. And minority leader Hugh Scott came out to campaign, and promised to put him on the Interior and Insular Affairs

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Committee. Hugh Scott's administrative assistant is married to Pete's sister, Rosemary. So there was a closeness there. Gordon Allott was the ranking member of that committee, and I counted the numbers; so I think I was out there trying to help the guy, Jack Daniels--I knew he had some kind of a "spiritual" name! I was trying to help him, being a good Democrat, keeping the chairmanship, keeping the majority. I think I wrote a letter to the editor, or something, saying, how could this be since, number one, there are only so many seats allocated to the republicans. Gordon Allott of Colorado the next-door neighbor here is the ranking member seeking reelection. So on and so forth. Senator Scott can't *possibly* keep that kind of a commitment!

Well, as it turned out, of course, President Nixon visited Albuquerque. Allott didn't need him, he thought. Told him to go elsewhere where he could be useful. Domenici won, and Allott lost! So my great prediction on Allott's victory--everybody, especially him, thought he would be reelected. So when we got back to Washington and they got ready to allocate new seats on the committee there was also a freshman House member who was elected to the Senate from Idaho by the name of Jim McClure. I was in Scoop's

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office and reminded them of that promise, and, of course, people in New Mexico may not like to hear this [chuckles], he picked up the phone and called Congressman McClure. It was in late November, and he still hadn't come over. (He became chairman of that committee later.) Scoop told him, "Look, the minority leader has said that he wants to get Pete on that committee. And you had better get cracking right now because of the northwest-southwest split. He was getting even into the Republican appointees. And Jim got cracking, and Pete never got on the committee at that time. He did join it later. So Hugh Scott wasn't able to deliver on that commitment that, if they elected Pete, he would put him on that committee.

On the other hand, Pete became a member of Public Works. He left that finally and has made a very distinguished record in the Senate. He's one of the ablest guys, I think, around; and I'm personally very fond of him. But that was an example of behind the scenes where the chairman could influence appointments--and even was doing it from the standpoint of northwest versus southwest, because Pete would have been an unknown quantity. There were a lot of folks in New Mexico who were a little bit perplexed by Senator Anderson maybe helping the northwest to the extent that we did. Maybe you could argue that, if California and Arizona would have been helped in those water issues, New Mexico would have gotten some fallout benefits. There was a strong alliance there. Clint stood tough.

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**RITCHIE:** I've heard that Senator Moss tried to get on that committee, but Senator Jackson didn't want him on it.

**VERKLER:** Ted Moss? No, he was on.

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**RITCHIE:** Was he on?

**VERKLER:** Yeah. He was on, but he was a--Frank E. (Ted) Moss, in my opinion, was one of the accidents of western politics. I was told by a friend of mine who served on the Public Land Law Review Commission from Utah that Ted had been the longtime district attorney in Salt Lake. He had been there so long that some of the other Democratic folks wanted to get some new blood moving upwards. So they devised a way to get rid of Ted. They nominated him for the Senate in 1958; and, of course, he would be running against the sitting senator, Arthur Watkins, who was a fixture. But there was one thing that they hadn't counted on. The maverick mayor of Salt Lake, whose name escapes me right now, got into it as a third party candidate or as an independent. I don't know if he tried to take the nomination away from Watkins. Whatever it was, with 37 percent of the Senate vote, Ted Moss was elected to the U.S. Senate.

That was in '58. Well, the next time he was up was in the Goldwater debacle. 1964 when Johnson swept the country except, as we talked about, except for Arizona and a few southern states. The only real race that, I think, that he had was in 1970. And in 1970 it was the mid-term of Nixon's first term, and he had a congressman

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running against him, Larry Burton, who had had some--in those days it was kind of new to have hired guns to come in and run your campaign. Media people from outside the state. And they showed Larry as a cowboy and all this. He also had some personal health problems, I think, that he was rumored to be afflicted with. Anyway, that was the first real test, I think, that Ted had; and, of course, he won that race. Then he was defeated in 1976 when he tried to run again. But Ted was the nicest guy you would ever want to meet personally, I thought. I still do because I saw him not long ago coming from Union Station, and I like to think that we're very friendly.

But I remember several issues on which he felt his state of Utah was getting short-changed. The public lands around the Great Salt Lake was one of them. Some of us were concerned that we thought a lot of those lands belonged to the general public and not the state of Utah. He used to get very upset with Scoop and with a lot of us. But we got along pretty well personally.

No, he was on the committee early and stayed all the way.

**RITCHIE:** What was your job as staff director of that committee?

**VERKLER:** Generally, I would describe it as managing the program. We had during my tenure there a couple of major energy studies. Energy started to rear its head early, like in '61 and '62 we had the first study which was probably a very useful one.

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But we borrowed a representative from the coal, oil, and natural gas industries to work under the auspices of a career energy expert, or bureaucrat from the Department of Interior, who had been lent to us--assigned to us--by John Kelly

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from New Mexico who was assistant secretary of Interior under Stewart Udall and President Kennedy.

John Kelly was an oil man from New Mexico. We did this study under Chairman Anderson's leadership. We put together a pretty credible assessment of what was going on. What needed to be done. Their view point, and Sam--I've forgotten his name right now--but his job was to coordinate this input. Granted, they were from private industry, volunteers. They gave us their time, donated it, and put together a pretty good study.

Ten years later [chuckles] we built up a staff of several dozen before it was over and put together a long volume of hearings and studies and didn't do much better than we did then. I think that was kind of the beginning of the end. I think also it was designed as a political platform, too, on the part of Scoop's campaign that he had in mind, I believe.

But in any event, my job was to administer the committee's operation. My favorite subject was not energy, because I was more interested in the expansion of our national parks and conservation issues. Land and Water Conservation Fund was one of my babies that I worked with the administration on. National wild rivers and trails and helping Senator Bible who was primarily responsible at the subcommittee level. My job was managing the flow of our

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legislative program and looking after the staff problems, and so on. It was heady stuff for a young guy.

We talked about Scoop's going to Washington state. He was always ready to go and needed to go. And when Congress was about to adjourn sine die or one o'clock in the morning some night, he usually had an eight o'clock plane, which, if he missed it, he would have to wait twenty-four hours or whatever. So during those days it was a great, great experience for a young fellow being thrown over there with the power and the ability delegated to say "yes" or "no" or make deals and wheel. I hope I exercised it properly, and I think I did by and large. But I was allowed to do that. I don't think they can do that today. I don't believe, but I'm not sure. I can't say absolutely for sure whether some of my successors would still be able to do the same thing or whether the system is quite the same.

As they say, somebody who's fond of good laws or sausage shouldn't watch them being made. But this--during the rush to adjourn--is when an awful lot gets done. It may have taken months of delay and consideration; and when the skids are pretty well greased [demonstrates] why it goes through in a hurry near the end. If you had the ability to clear or not clear something or to make agreements--and that's when we used to work carefully and communicate a lot with the other body, too. The House Interior people, when it came down to those waning hours and when Scoop was out of town, even if I had a ranking majority member, largely, it fell on me an awful lot. In the mid-60's when we were passing an

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awful lot of bills I would sort of look after that for him. Of course, I couldn't do it unless I'd gotten it cleared with the minority. They still had a handle on clearing things if it was a unanimous consent type operation.

Those were exciting times when you felt like you were really a major player in what was going on. And I'm not quite sure that they do it today. Near the end of my tenure--I left at the end of '74--why it didn't seem to be as much fun as it used to be.

**RITCHIE:** What size staff did you direct?

**VERKLER:** When I started, we cut down, way down. We helped many of them get jobs in the Udall administration down at Interior. But we started out, I think, fourteen to seventeen. When I left, it had grown again, with the coming in of the Nixon Administration and so on, and with the energy study. I think we were back up to a staff of 50 and 60, so it grew in that period. We still operated under the basic Legislative Reorganization Act authorization of ten, wasn't it? At first it was ten and maybe grew to twelve. And then you had to get a resolution every year from the Rules Committee for these so-called temporary employees. Every year we would go over with our budget for temporary employees, year to year. However, now, I guess they do that differently. There is no LRA, Legislative Reorganization Act, base. And they each have a budget which they have to go over to the Rules Committee and get it approved each year.

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**RITCHIE:** At that time was the chairman essentially the person who appointed all the staff?

**VERKLER:** Yes. That's true. If a senator, like a chairman of a subcommittee who had been around awhile would have somebody that he wanted on the payroll from his office, from his operation he would get a staff appointment. As I mentioned, Senator Jackson who, when Clint Anderson became the chairman, Scoop was chairman of the subcommittee on Territories. Because he was interested in that subject. You'd think that water, or power, or something like that would have been his choice. But it wasn't, it was territories. Of course, that had a great economic impact on his state. He had a staffer that, you might say, was his patronage.

So did Senator Bible, and there may have been one or two others. As time went on, more than were able to--with the chairman's concurrence--get someone on our payroll. Clint was pretty tight, though. He was a tight-fisted guy. He didn't throw it around very easily. But, yet, I can remember during one period for a few months Everett McKinley Dirksen came over on our committee, for one reason or another. Whether it was to make room for someone else elsewhere temporarily--he was already, by that time, he was the leader. Hugh Scott, was his assistant, was the whip for a long time. Senator Dirksen was there, and first thing I knew, he had a minority appointee on that staff. That didn't sit too well with the minority who had already been there--like the Allotts and a few others.

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But the chairman, more or less, we ran the show. I think it's a little bit unlike that now. The Senate itself has passed rules that let you appoint certain people to your committee. Quite frankly, I'm not sure how that's evolved. But we did have a very close handle on everything that was done then.

**RITCHIE:** Did the professional staff work for both the majority and the minority, or did you have people who were specifically minority people?

**VERKLER:** We did have. Usually two professionals plus clerical, one or two, for the minority. In those days, we could--they accused me sometimes of being too tough on them. I got along with them fine. Good people. Got along generally with all of them, knowing that you have an overwhelming majority on the committee makes it a little easier to be as kind as you wanted to be at any given time. If it ever came down where we needed to do something, we could always do it. But, staffwise, roomwise, they had one of our limited number of rooms; and there was always the usual squabbles about more space, and more privileges, perks. But they did have their own.

However, the majority staff was *intended* to be professional staff under the Legislative Reorganization Act. It was not intended to be political! They did the bulk of the legislative work, and then the minority's role, generally, was to try to look at one spin from the minority side they needed to make,

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philosophical, state, or regional-wise. It seemed like, the more we were trying to buy parks, add lands, generally, there was a difference, historically, between progressives and ones I would consider not to be so progressive but maybe more conservative to not want to authorize as many new additions.

But that kind of went away. Len Jordon of Idaho was a great gentleman, a former governor, who succeeded Henry Dworshak. He was a great guy to work with. One brief term was served by a guy named Milward Simpson of Wyoming who was a gentleman. His son, that's where I went today, he was the speaker at the luncheon, Senator Alan Simpson. Milward was a real gentleman. I got along with those folks. Cliff Hansen succeeded him. Very conservative, but still, being from the West, they recognized--you know, always the conflict between the local economy that depended on public lands plus the pressure from the national viewpoint of preserving them for all of the people. That's been an historical conflict. Many Democrats generally would get caught in that because they were endorsing the expansion of preservation and conservation areas and, at the same time, they were all vigorous in behalf of their ranchers and farmers and miners to utilize the resources of those lands.

**RITCHIE:** By the time you went to the committee was when Kennedy was coming in as president. He had campaigned in the West that he was going to be more active in federal policy and water.

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**VERKLER:** Yeah. He had actually had a record of being opposed to some of those water projects, you know, in the past. I think he brought his views up to

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date during that 1960 campaign. His record was kind of thrown up against him. But Stewart Udall, being from Arizona, was a major player in developing resource projects. And the president saw the light and the necessity to develop those scarce resources, try to maximize them. I'm talking now about water and making more available. Kennedy, I guess, had voted against the Upper Colorado River Project in the 50's when it was first authorized, as a new senator from Massachusetts. He had to overcome that in that campaign.

**RITCHIE:** And Senator Anderson apparently had a big voice in the choice of Udall as the Interior secretary.

**VERKLER:** Well, I think that that's correct to some extent. I mean, Udall had gotten in early on the Kennedy bandwagon. Clint could have given them a lot of grief had he been adamantly opposed since he had to confirm his nomination. And they got along well. I'm not sure how well they got along when Udall was a young congressman and Clint was a senior member of the committee. That predated my direct involvement to some extent. But I do know when Clint became chairman and Udall did get the nomination because of his early and strong support for John F. Kennedy, because I think [Ernest] McFarland and others were for Johnson out there, and Clint was, certainly. This didn't serve as any bar because we helped

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Stewart, and he was very active in courting the chairman. Because Clint, too, could be tough. We talked about Aspinall. Senator Anderson was one of the few who really could tear a witness apart, if he wanted to, on most any issue. He would pay attention as opposed to rubber-stamping, "get this hearing over with so we can all go." There was a lot of trembling in their boots when witnesses testified in front of him. And if they goofed and made a mistake in an area with which he was familiar--which was most of them--they were a little timid. I mean, most of the bureaucrats were in dealing with him.

He had a couple of royal feuds with the guy who was the commissioner of, well, I want to say irrigation--Floyd Dominy was his name--the Bureau of Reclamation. He had a feud with his own secretary. He was a hold-over from the Eisenhower Administration. Very independent agency head. He and Udall had a lot of conflicts. Dominy had a real "in" with Senator Hayden, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and from Arizona. I wouldn't say he was untouchable. He got "touched" later, but he was an independent cuss and caused Stewart a lot of headaches for several years.

**RITCHIE:** I gather that the Arizonans were a little disappointed that Udall wasn't a little more "pro-Arizona." He had to widen his constituency as secretary of the interior.

**VERKLER:** I guess you could say that, even though, of course, they got the Central Arizona Project through during his

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administration. I never noticed him being anything but solicitous of the state. But his horizon, certainly, was national in scope as far as helping kick off and being a basic part of the conservation movement that we had in those days.

Again, I'm distinguishing between conservation and the environmental movement which I earlier said that Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* may have helped trigger that and push that along, in our consciousness anyway. But Stewart, I think, deserves great credit in history for his role during those eight years at the helm of that resource agency.

**RITCHIE:** He was the constant in that period. The presidents changed. What difference did it make when Johnson came in for western issues. Was Johnson more of an advocate for the types of programs you were?

**VERKLER:** Well, he was. But Udall had been a Kennedy man and one. His legislative counsel was a guy named Max Edwards who was a graduate of Amherst--or Dartmouth. He had settled in and ended up practicing law in New Mexico. He was a roommate of Morris Udall, I think in law school in Arizona. But Max came back to Washington in the late '50s and, somehow, got enmeshed with the Lyndon Johnson troops. Tommy "the Cork" Corcoran was with whom he was associated. You know the history of Tommy "the Cork" and those New Deal whiz kids. They worked for FDR, and young Congressman Lyndon Johnson got associated with them early on.

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But Max Edwards came to Washington and was affiliated with Mr. Corcoran in some law practice or lobbying practice, whatever. He became part of the LBJ entourage. He was advancing the campaign for Johnson, etc. Then when Johnson lost the nomination to Kennedy and became vice president to Kennedy, he worked in the campaign.

But Udall had gone against the Senate majority leader for JFK So I remember them telling me--especially Max--that when the president was killed the Udall group were all kind of quaking in their boots and sent Max over to find out, well, "Are we fired, or are we gonna stay?" Well, he didn't fire anybody! Which may have been part of his problem later on as far as some of the folks who were giving him foreign policy advice and then later turned around. He had to bare the brunt of the responsibility for what happened, or didn't happen.

Johnson understood resources being from a state, of course, that needed flood control, needed electric power, public power. He was a public power person, and he supported these conservation programs, the national parks. He signed all of those into law. So I think the Udall program was enhanced in a real sense not only because of Johnson's ability as a master legislator to get them moving whenever there was a problem. He had a strong commitment and belief in it in the first place as opposed to what was probably the true and original position of the New Englanders, as what they might consider a boondoggle.

Then they understood. As I said earlier, one of the guys, chairman of an appropriation subcommittee from Ohio, Mike. . .

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**RITCHIE:** Kirwan?

**VERKLER:** Kirwan. I understood that he had told some people who were criticizing the water development about the implements that were manufactured in his district in Ohio that were used out West--caterpillar and the other kinds of equipment. It was an investment, a public investment, a public subsidy, if you will, the development of water and agriculture out there. It may have gone too far. Maybe it was an unwise use of resources to do it for agricultural purposes any longer. But certainly not for recreational or industrial purposes. It becomes very viable, in my opinion, to develop water for those purposes.

But it benefitted the whole country, and I think President Kennedy came to understand that pretty well. Famous talk about a rising tide lifts all ships.

[chuckles]

**RITCHIE:** Do you think that the program like the Wilderness Act and some of these others things would have been as successful if Kennedy had remained as president? The Wilderness Act was passed in '64, when Johnson was president.

**VERKLER:** Well, he supported it. But I personally do not think it would have had as much success because a lot of conservatives would find it easier to oppose a Kennedy initiative. Easier than one of the Johnson's. It became Johnson's program even if it had been started earlier.

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Actually, the wilderness bill--the first bill was introduced by Hubert Humphrey in the '50s. Then Senator Anderson adopted it. And expanded it. Scoop Jackson later on and Frank Church actually did the floor work on it, floor-managed the final passage of it.

But I don't think so. I don't think that Kennedy would have been as successful in getting a legislative program through, even though he was personally pretty popular. He was the kind of a guy, like Nixon might be to the Democrats, somebody that Republicans could rally against, philosophically, anyway. And, I think, LBJ--I give him credit--for pulling that program and getting it together because he could jawbone with the best of them.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned Frank Church of times because he floor-managed in the absence of the other senators. What was your assessment of Church as a senator?

**VERKLER:** You remember the stories--the traditional stories. I think he was 36 when he was elected, or 32. Thirty-six, I guess; but he looked like and used to be confused with a page. He was very articulate. He was known as an orator. He was a very knowledgeable guy in his earlier years. I thought he was a very nice guy.

He's another one, though, who got bitten by the presidential bug.

I made reference earlier that LBJ said that urge or desire to run for President is like having a burning in your gut! And those of us who were associated with them had to take the antidotes, the

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Tums and the Roloids because of the burning in their gut! I think Frank Church was a very able, capable guy. Articulate. He was a conservationist. Yet, I think he was one of the first senators--democrats--reelected from Idaho, if I'm not mistaken. He came in on that, was it '56?

**RITCHIE:** Yes.

**VERKLER:** He was elected before the class of '58. He was elected in '56 because there was a real debate on who would control the Senate. There was some question that Frank J. Lausche of Ohio would come in and maybe vote with the Republicans and organize it. If so that would have thrown it into a tie and Vice President Nixon would have cast the deciding vote. But, of course, Lausche didn't do that. I doubt if he ever had any intention of doing it. Even though he was viewed as a very conservative Democrat from Ohio.

Frank came in. He was a ranking member behind Bible, I guess, on the Interior Committee, behind Anderson, Jackson, and Bible. For a long time that committee was very stable. It did not have any changes. In the Class of '58, Lee Metcalf from Montana came over and was the junior member of that committee. And I think ten years later he still was! And yet, there was one period there where when Scoop Jackson came on the committee in '53, ten years later he was chairman! It's the luck of the draw, the changes, the heart attacks or whatever, because he was chairman in ten years.

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And ten years after Lee had been on the committee, he was still at the bottom of the run.

**RITCHIE:** A lot of those that came in the early fifties and were there when the democrats took the majority in '55. Like Magnuson and others. They held those positions for a generation practically.

**VERKLER:** That's right. There was a lot of stability in those days in the sense that, the incumbent's advantage is always there. And it held for a number of years there. Then that huge class of '58 during Ike's last two years--that bunch of Democrats surged to build our majority. Then the next time that class ran again was the Goldwater year and so not only did they get reelected but picked up a couple more. Finally, it began to peter out and ended at the Class of '80 when a lot of those same people like Church and others got defeated.

**RITCHIE:** There is only one member of the class of '58 left in the Senate. Robert C. Byrd is the survivor.

**VERKLER:** I guess Burdick actually came over from the House in a special election.

**RITCHIE:** Sixty.

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**VERKLER:** Sixty. Yeah. Right. He was quite a guy.

**RITCHIE:** He's chairman of Public Works.

**VERKLER:** Public Works. He could have been chairman of Interior. He was senior to those people. He could have been chairman of another one that he got

off of. He used to accommodate the leadership. But he had been around a long time before he ever got to be chairman!

Some of it was his willingness to accommodate the leadership to let somebody get on and so on. He is from North Dakota, and his father preceded him over in the House there. I always liked Quentin Burdick. I hope it's not another case of staying on a term too long. It happens sometimes.

**RITCHIE:** You were talking about accommodating the leadership. At that time the leadership was Mike Mansfield, senator from the northwest. It seems to me that would have worked very well for the Interior Committee to have a Montana senator.

**VERKLER:** Well, of course, Metcalf was on the committee. But, when I say accommodate the committee, when Senator Burdick went on Judiciary and then got off again to help somebody or to give somebody a leg up--I'm not really familiar with it--but I know he'd told me about having done that and felt he had gotten jostled.

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Felt a commitment had been made to him on some membership that never quite happened.

Now he's chairman of a major standing committee--Environment and Public Works--at a time when with his physical condition he's not really able to run the show by any means.

**RITCHIE:** What was the relationship between the Interior Committee and Mansfield as majority leader at that time?

**VERKLER:** He and Scoop, of course, were in the same class of '52. He was elected in '52 also. They had served in the House together so they had a very close, personal relationship. In fact, one of the pictures that Scoop had on his wall was Scoop at bat, John Kennedy being the catcher, and Mansfield as the umpire, at some softball game somewhere.

I remember in the early days when he was majority leader--he had been the whip, under LBJ and had moved up. He used to call me about a certain part of the president's program. I mean, LBJ as vice president had a responsibility to try and get things going and I used to get calls from him that later on, with more experience and more longevity, he ceased making those calls personally. On the status of certain bills, you know. He would call just to get a report.

**RITCHIE:** This was Mansfield?

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**VERKLER:** Mansfield, personally, himself. Not his staff. But generally speaking, as a westerner, he was a team player. I think personally his style of leadership helped to send the Senate into disarray in a real sense by being so accommodating to senators and deferring to their schedules and so on that, I think, helped to make it a harder place to work and get something done. You know, you can carry it both ways. They are all great, independent people, and you want to defer to them. But Mike showed too much deference in

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accommodating their schedules. "We won't vote because so-and-so won't be here," and this and that and the other thing.

I liked him. He was a true gentleman in every sense of the word as far as I could tell. I personally respected him--I respect him today--and admire and am *amazed* by him! He always gave you that impression that he really was that professor of Far Eastern history. [chuckles] I remember when I was a young Marine down in Quantico in basic school, and he'd just been in the Senate a couple of years. He came down to speak, because, he, too, had been in the Marines. I think he'd been in the Navy and the Army, too. I think he did all three of them, if I'm not mistaken. Brief stints before he became a professor out in Montana and got into politics.

But Mike Mansfield and his pipe looked like the perfect professor type. He never used to spend a lot of words on anything. As you know, they'd ask him some question on the newscast, and his answer was usually "yes," "no," and "maybe." [chuckles]

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**RITCHIE:** He gave a lot of leeway to chairmen of committees. He basically let them do their thing. When a bill like the Wilderness came out, was there much coordination with the leadership, or was it pretty much Senator Jackson or whoever was the floor manager?

**VERKLER:** Of course, number one, he would support it. He would support it because, philosophically, he was in favor of it. But when we used to get the bills out, some of those tough ones, it was largely our show. We would obviously coordinate with the leadership on when it would come up. But I think we had a much greater ability to chart our own course than they do today. And probably much greater than they did when LBJ ran the show, because I think he was the one that would say, Get this up here! We gotta do this, or we gotta do that. That was my impression.

Now, he was not the majority leader when I went on the committee. But you knew--there was no doubt--as to who was really running the show when he was majority leader. One of my early memories when I was a legislative assistant and some issue had gotten a little out of hand and seeing LBJ burst through the back swinging doors, pounding his fist [demonstrates], orating very hot and heavy about some issue, as soon as he burst through the doors. He ran it. "Come let us reason together," he quoted Isaiah with regularity--even after he became president. He was a great jaw-boner and persuader. If he needed to grab you by the lapel, he would do that. [laughs]

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But he was also a great tactician. And I think he is going to deserve a lot more credit than he still is getting with what's going on now.

**RITCHIE:** Could you explain to me what your role would be when a bill like the Wilderness bill was coming up and going on to the floor. How would you handle it for whoever was managing it?

**VERKLER:** Of course, it took a long time to get that bill out. We had to fight through the opposition that was developing, primarily led in the Senate committee by Senator Gordon Allott and others who felt the way he did. We had been Ben Stong as our chief resource counsel for this bill. One of the great resources of the Senate in those days was Benton J. Stong, a crusty old Iowan, ex-journalist, who probably learned his environmental credentials, conservation credentials, from Ding Darling and a few of those guys. I'm trying to remember, the guru of the day in those days was some elder statesman whose name escapes me at the moment, who was kind of the "godfather" of the conservation organizations in those days.

Anyway, when we finally got the votes and got the bill ordered reported, Ben and his helpers would put the bill and the report together. Then my job, essentially, became manager in the sense of filing it, getting it reported, and scheduling the time, or working on it. Again, Frank handled that. Scoop was chairman already, but those still were the days when Anderson was running things, but he

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was unable to floor manage it. And Scoop wasn't either. Scoop had become the primary sponsor, if I'm not mistaken, by then, because it was apparent he needed to be more visible as chairman of the committee. But he was not there. Frank did floor manage the bill for them. My job was primarily in the administrative-managerial side of it. Sometimes on some issues I would be sitting next to the floor manager or take my turn doing it. It depends on what the issue was. Some of the conservation issues, and park issues, I would be down with the senator. But I don't want to give the impression of claiming more credit than I deserve. In those days I think I did have a lot of ability to help set the agenda as to what did happen or did not as far as scheduling and working for the chairman and doing what the chairman wanted. I never thought I was a Senator, although I was accused of it a few times by Senator Bible and others--one time he offered to contribute a hundred dollars to my campaign if I wanted to run, but until then, he reminded me, I didn't hold a certificate of election! I got caught with that--especially in the back rooms, of maybe commenting a little more than I should have and as a good staffer been a little quieter. But, that's when he was sort of acting chairman for Scoop or whoever. We got along pretty well. I liked him, and I've got a collection of letters that senators gave me when I left the Senate which is something I'll treasure all of my life. His was a very nice one. So, I guess my role would be that of expeditor, manager, scheduler. I controlled the "red book," which set the agenda and the schedule of the subcommittees.

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I wasn't the boss of it. The U.S. senators were the "boss," and the chairman was the "key boss."

But like so many others, I think, as time went on--maybe I'm like the lady who told you when she came here she was young and all the senators were old, and then later on she was old and all the senators were young. [laughs] It was a little

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tough, perhaps, to take when new folks came along and you'd gone around the circle a couple of times. So when I left, it was time to leave.

**RITCHIE:** At the beginning of a Congress, would you present to the chairman an agenda of issues that might have continued on or should be addressed or that have come up.

**VERKLER:** Yes.

**RITCHIE:** How would you plan for what the committee would do on it?

**VERKLER:** In the earliest days, it was what our previous unfinished agenda was. We had no trouble getting advice from individual members for the kinds of projects that they wanted for their states, whether it would be a reclamation project, or a park or something. On the bigger issues, I mean more national, like wilderness or land-water conservation and trails and rivers, it took us two, three, four years to get some of those things done.

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And it was done in consultation with both the professional staff and the chairman.

Early on, as I mentioned, Senator Anderson used to have meetings with Aspinall. This stopped near the end after he left the chairmanship, even when a different chairman took over from Wayne Aspinall--they would get together in consultation. I don't think that happens much any more. I don't think there is much of that at all. I can't say absolutely. I remember recommending in recent years, after I'd been on the outside, recommending not only to Jim McClure when he was chairman and to others that I think it would be a good idea to go sit down with a John Dingell. We worked very well putting that agenda together. But my job was, yes, to help define what our plan was, what we wanted to try to accomplish with the administration--even when that was a different party--and try to get the job done!

**RITCHIE:** During the Johnson years, did you deal much with the White House liaison people like O'Brien and Manatos?

**VERKLER:** Well, Mike Manatos quite a bit. He was an old friend, having been up in the Senate when I was first there. Larry O'Brien, of course, went into the cabinet as Postmaster General, even before Kennedy's assassination, I think. I'm not absolutely sure. And I never really dealt too much with him, but I did deal with Mike and with Harry McPherson from time to time. DeVere Pearson near the end of the administration.

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But, usually, we went over there to the OMB people, it was the Bureau of the Budget then, on some issues. There was a guy, Sam Hughes, who went over to the General Accounting Office with Elmer Staats. But then he went to the Smithsonian, for awhile. This was after my departure.

We worked with them, but primarily we worked through the agencies with the legislative branch of the secretary's operation.



**RITCHIE:** I was wondering, how much of the push for the legislation was coming from the administration?

**VERKLER:** During the Kennedy-Johnson years, particularly Johnson, quite a bit. We worked hand-in-glove on most of the big issues, and they were very, very anxious to move them because it was their program, too. In fact, many of them were their initiatives. So they were very good soldiers in trying to develop an expanded program for the resource management for the country. And I give high marks to them. I mentioned a couple of them. Stewart Udall himself and George Hartzog who was director of the National Park Service. Those folks deserve high credit for a lot of accomplishments.

**RITCHIE:** The other committee I was wondering about relations with was Appropriations. Whatever you did, they had to pay for it.

**VERKLER:** Put up the money. Right.

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**RITCHIE:** What was the relationship with the subcommittee on Appropriations and Interior Affairs?

**VERKLER:** Well, of course, Senator Bible chaired it during many of those years. I would say it was good. Like Senator [Bennett] Johnston chairs it now, or at least part of it. And [Robert] Byrd chairs part of that subcommittee because of his interest in coal. I would say it was good. We worked well with them. Senator Hayden's people there. Paul Eaton, who had been his long-time administrative assistant, went over to the committee. He handled it for a long, long time. But, it seems to me we weren't as zealous or anxious to get overly involved in that because it was their business. Our job was to authorize it in the beginning. Each individual project would be up to the senator from that state to do his best to try and get it. And the administration, the agency involved to try to get it funded. We didn't really get--or at least I wasn't all that heavily engaged in the actual appropriating of the funds to implement the programs. Maybe it's different today. Of course, again, Chairman Johnston is chairman of the subcommittee, too.

**RITCHIE:** In '62 the Clean Air-Clean Water bills began coming out of Public Works Committee. Did you find any jurisdictional competition in a sense going on there?

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**VERKLER:** It's true, that was the beginning. There was a great water study in those days which Bob Kerr had headed up. Ted Shadd from the Library of Congress was the staffer. They had a big water study for two or three years in the late '50s and very early '60s, which was the forerunner of some of the clean water legislation.

No, we didn't have much of a jurisdictional conflict. You could make the statement that half of a staffer's time was spent protecting his jurisdiction, the other half was spent trying to get somebody else's jurisdiction! In the beginning of RECLA, the Resource Conservation Act, that was going on even while Dennis

Chavez was still chairman, but the young senator from Maine, Ed Muskie, was starting to become the spokesman in that era.

The real battleground was later one when we enacted the Environmental Policy Act because we did some--I would say that was the "stealth bomber" of the environmental program--because we suddenly passed that sucker one day. We had had some hearings and looked into the issue, and then we got it up and passed it before Muskie and his crowd knew much about it. And when they did, they hit the ceiling. And over on the House side John Dingell was then a very, very active member of the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. I think he might have already been a junior member of the Commerce Committee-- Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. But his main claim to fame was chairing a subcommittee in the Merchant Marine and Fisheries. And then that was divided because Wayne Aspinall had a piece of the

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action, and he had a piece of the action. There was another one. Maybe science had a piece of that also. But, then when Muskie and his troops found out about it, they literally found out because we went to the floor and passed a major piece of legislation. Just like coal slurry one time. We passed it in the Senate before the railroads really knew what had happened. Then it languished and has never passed since.

In any event, we had a lot of jurisdictional squabbles from that point onward with the Environment and Public Works. It was Public Works in those days. Muskie got really on his horse and got upset with Scoop and so on. So when it was time for the bill to go to conference, they were part of that. But I will never forget over where the Secretary of the Senate's office used to be, over there on the west side of the Senate floor. Had a little room over there where we used to have conferences and small meetings, it wasn't that big.

And it was my task to go get John Dingell. In those days Dingell used to call me. Now I have to beg and plead. He refers to me as his "old friend." Of course he's a little older than I am, yet. But my job was to go get Dingell to bring him over to the deliberations. We were trying to get something resolved. It was NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act, before we went further on it in conference. I've forgotten exactly what stage we were in.

I brought him in to this room just as Ed Muskie was saying something about Dingell! And, boy, I was pretty hefty in those days, and a lot younger, and an ex-Marine, and I thought I was

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gonna have to step between those two Polish gentleman as their tempers just suddenly flew. You know, Ed Muskie had a terrible temper! Of course he and Scoop, he especially, was an avowed candidate for president early on since he had gotten the nomination as the vice presidential candidate in '68. Scoop was kind of a peace maker. And I thought, boy, what's gonna happen here? It ended peacefully enough. I think Dingell finally stormed out and went back over to the

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House side. Kind of a condescension to come over to the "upper body." Those are my words. Not his. [chuckles] "Other body."

That was an example of working with them. They got very up-tight and upset. It was kind of a jurisdictional squabble. And that's been the history of the place in many respects, especially as the staffs have proliferated and the lines have become muddled. I guess they straightened them out the last time about '76 or seven. Maybe it's about time to do it again.

**RITCHIE:** It doesn't stay straightened out for very long.

**VERKLER:** No, but that was an instance when that happened.

**RITCHIE:** Certainly the environment became a different type of issue as the '60s went on. At the same time your committee was moving from northwestern resources into national energy, so there were national shifts going on happening within the committee

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structure and outside the structure.

**VERKLER:** That's right. And you can run down the list of members now and see. It was our wish to try to make it more national, and representative of all interests. Sometimes, though, when you get down to the bread-and-butter type western issues, that's when western senators wanted to be on it and others didn't. Now that it is "Energy and Natural Resources," of course, the ranking member is from Wyoming--I don't have a list in front of me--but Bennett is from Louisiana and you've got others scattered around. I'm trying to think on the majority side now, but with people like [Tim] Wirth etc., it's still largely western.

**RITCHIE:** Energy-producing states at least, for the most part. Was there significant change in the type of lobbyists that came around at that stage, with different interests beginning to knock on the door in the committee? Or was it pretty consistent through that time?

**VERKLER:** I would say that as we got into the energy field more and more, the oil and gas and coal energy people started coming around more. Early on, the ones I dealt with largely were the conservationists because I was a friend of theirs. I hope! I won an award one year, the American Motors President's Award for Conservation. Maybe they considered me to be the enemy later on, but at least some of them, the Browders and others. But,

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obviously, as we move into the energy area, why, they were following it very closely.

Energy was kind of a mixed bag. In the old days prior to the last reorganization, for example, natural gas was in the jurisdiction of the Commerce Committee. I remember Ted Moss and I scheming to have a hearing on the status of the natural gas reserves in the Gulf and what was going on. I had gotten a call from a friend of mine, former staff director of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, John Conway, whom you might want to get in here some day because he can give you the beginning and the end of the Atomic Energy Committee and other historical

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data on that. But John then had gone to New York with Con Ed, with Chuck Luce who had been Under Secretary of Interior and was trying to save Con Ed, which I think he did. And John was his right hand. He called me because they were having difficulty and natural gas was still controlled on the interstate market. They were having problems with natural gas supply as a distributor. So I said to Ted Moss, who was chairman of our Mineral Subcommittee, "This may be an issue you might want to have a hearing on." And, boy! You should have seen the uproar! Even Scoop, I don't think I had even mentioned the background to him; but he came in very upset being from a nuclear state. The coal people did not like him for years and years. They tried to make peace with him later and so on, but he was a "nuke." There wasn't much love lost between them. That's why Jennings Randolph got nervous in 1970 when we were going to have another energy study

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because the coal folks and other folks were very nervous. And even Scoop thought that, "Ah, those coal people are putting Ted Moss up to this." I was kind of embarrassed because, you know, this town thrives on rumor. I said, "No, the simple fact is that this was our idea--*my* idea! I'd gotten a call on this"--and Conway's a friend of his, too--"and I planted the seed with Ted to do it."

Now he and Ted were crossways half the time, also. Ted was just holding a hearing on the public domain aspects. We had all the OCS jurisdiction, and this was Gulf of Mexico. And a lot of the oil and gas people were saying, "What's he doing this for? What's going on here?" In my blissful ignorance, I must have been striking a raw nerve. I thought that we should take a look at it, find out what the status of production and reserves were. I did it at the instigation and suggestion of my friend who had been here and was up in New York. That caused quite a stir there for a little while, but that was an example of causing the lobbyists to come out of the woodwork wondering what in the world we were doing looking into this subject.

We had to manufacture a lot of our jurisdiction based on the old public domain issues and other kinds of issues. Just like, technically, I suppose under the rules we would have a real hard time claiming jurisdiction of the National Environmental Policy Act because that was a general environmental bill relating to construction and other federal actions. So we had to put the Secretary of Interior into an awful lot of business just to get the bill referred to us on some of these great issues at that time.

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Somehow, we might have wrapped him into it or talked about public lands or done something that invoked our jurisdiction.

**RITCHIE:** As a staff director, did you find the lobbyists helpful; or did you find them a problem?

**VERKLER:** Generally speaking, and I like to think of it today, that if they're honest or if they're straight, they would be helpful like they should be at any time

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in helping the system work. Obviously, you have to remember that they're pushing for their own interests and their own point of view. But mostly they are honest and decent--and no one ever tried to play fast or dirty or crooked with me that I know about. I think they were, generally speaking, helpful. Now, some of them were not happy because of what we were doing or looking at or raising questions. Some of them were disturbed over some bills we were passing from time to time.

We generally were not considered in a favorable light, I guess, by a lot of the energy lobbyists in those days. Scoop wasn't. Then later on I was very disappointed that he took the tack of being in an adversarial relationship with these guys. He used his other committee over in Government Operations, the Investigations Subcommittee. You may remember the "Seven Sisters hearing," where he lost what, in my judgment, was a very solid and deserved reputation as being someone whom, if you didn't agree with him, yet he could talk back and forth with you. And he did have--like Clint--a lot of friends on both sides--business and labor.

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But he really went out of his way to castigate "obscene profits," etc. Of course, I think there is a "love-hate" relationship, or maybe a "hate-hate" relationship in our economy and our society against energy.

Dan Yergin, in Boston, the guru of energy, kind of explains it, energy is something people have to have. They hate you because you've got something they've got to have to run their cars, etc. [laughs] No other industry gets castigated like the energy industry. Just oil and gas alone during the recessionary period of the last several years have lost over 300,000 employees. And that's direct! When you count the indirect fallout of jobs lost in places like Houston and the oil patch, they've been in a severe depression and recession for years! Well, the auto industry hasn't lost nearly that much, and yet, everybody is so concerned--rightly so--about its welfare. But somehow, I've had some of my good, liberal friends talk about the oil industry and how bad it is. And I said, "who do you mean? Do you mean the worker out on the rigs trying to make a living to pay his mortgage and educate his kids? Are you talking about the corporate board rooms? What is it you're referring to when you're so against the "energy" industry?" But, anyway, that's another subject.

We got along well with the lobbyists. You know, that's their God-given right under the Constitution to petition their government. I respect it. And now I do it myself.

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**RITCHIE:** One of the journalists I talked to said back in the days when committees held closed hearings, lobbyists were much more important to the press because they always found out first what happened in the closed session, and they would tell the reporters what happened.

**VERKLER:** That may or may not be true. I know that the press and the lobbyists and everybody else would be standing outside the door on a big issue. Usually the chairman, or a senator, or his staffer, or somebody would come out and generally relate to them what happened. What I liked best about those sessions, though, was that a senator could come in and take off his coat and roll up his sleeves, and say, "Now what's this about?" Or "What's going on here?" Whereas, you could never confess to your ignorance in an open markup session. That's why, as I said earlier, there may be some negatives in those open sessions.

One of the young senators--I think he was not too much more than a couple of years into his first term--yes, it was his first term--Senator Mark Hatfield from Oregon. When we first talked about having open markups, we talked about it in executive session in our library. He was, I think, the only one--or maybe two--against the idea. The pressure for sunshine and openness was on, and we wanted to prove that we were right in the middle of it. But Mark Hatfield said, "No, I'm against this," as a junior member. He said, "I know that somewhere these closed sessions are gonna take place, and I won't be a part of it." And he had a point there.

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Except that I'm afraid that those closed sessions do not take place often enough where they will get together and really decide on what course of action to try to take on a bipartisan basis. Or if they can't reach an accommodation, to know it early! But because they're so busy, and the schedules are so full, and they're traveling and speaking, they really don't get a chance a lot of times to sit down until they get into the open session where they will proceed to posture and slow the system down. I think that's unfortunate. It's tough enough to legislate on an important issue that affects people differently, when you were trying to do it as efficiently as possible. But, boy, when you open it up the way we have done, to me, that really slows it down.

I know you could make the argument that the people's business should be done in public. Well, that's what the floor is for, to debate the final versions. But there's nothing that guarantees that we should be inefficient. I don't mean to be super critical, because I always quote when I speak on Washington, and government, and politics, I paraphrase Churchill: "It's the worst possible system, except all others."

**RITCHIE:** I've read a lot of markup sessions in the Foreign Relations Committee, and Carl Marcy always seemed to have to walk them through those bills. The committee members would say, "Now what section are we on now?" Or "What is this?" Or "Where are we?" And he would patiently explain it and go back and take them

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through it. Did you have to do the same types of things in markup sessions?

**VERKLER:** Maybe. To some extent. But you see, lots of times like if we were authorizing a national park or a park addition in Colorado or Indiana, a lot of

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them were cut and dried. That committee processes probably more bills than any other committee. But a lot of them were cats and dogs, kind of technical, public land issues that weren't really controversial. And then, of course, each senator, whose bill it was handled it; and if he wasn't on the committee, why, you had to shepherd it for them, etc.

But when they were big, tough issues--controversial legislation--they were pretty well up on it, where we were, and so forth. Now, Carl in his committee could have been somewhat different. We didn't have much difficulty. They paid attention. Because we had an agenda we were working on. And I instituted the basic program they still have now of sending out the schedule in advance and telling them what was going to be done, and what the items were and when we would act.

In the old days, before I started that, it was very haphazard. They still use those little form cards notifying members of certain meetings formally, but I started doing an advance agenda so they would have an idea of what the schedule was going to be like and what was going to be on the agenda and a brief description of each bill that was on there. I notice the format--I'm on that mailing

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list myself now--is essentially the same as it was when I started that in the early '60s.

[End of Interview #2]

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# Jerry T. Verkler

Staff Director

Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, 1963-1974

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## Interview #3

### Environment and Energy

(Monday, February 3, 1992)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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**RITCHIE:** We talked mostly about the 1960's when Kennedy and Johnson were president and Stewart Udall was Secretary of the Interior. Then in 1968 Richard Nixon won the presidency, and January '69 the administration changed, and Wally Hickel became Secretary of the Interior. Did you notice a big difference as staff director of the Interior Committee when you were working with a Republican administration?

**VERKLER:** There was a difference, a considerable difference. I joined the committee at the end of the Eisenhower administration beginning of the Kennedy administration. So I had only known one of those rare periods in recent years when both Houses of Congress and the administration was in the hands of the same party--the Democratic Party in this case. The last time it had been like that was Ike's first two years, as you recall, in '53 and '54. Then later on Reagan had a Republican Senate for six years, but the House had remained democratic ever since '55.

Yes, I noticed quite a difference, starting with the confirmation hearings of Governor Hickel in 1969. That was the beginning for our committee of a very controversial executive nomination. Senator Allott was the ranking member at that time--

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Tommy Kuchel had just been defeated in the primary out in California, so Gordon Allott moved up.

And I like to think that--if I skip around a little bit and comment, since this is to be a truthful history anyway--that as he was elevated in the responsible chain of command, he became a much more responsible and responsive leader. He was kind of a gadfly when he was two or three down the pecking order. He was the one that had to be sure that the true, conservative philosophy was protected against those usurpers like Tommy Kuchel. He helped Dworshak. Henry Dworshak was not in the greatest physical condition which, of course, proved to be true since he passed away in office.

Once Gordon Allott became ranking minority member, he was very responsible and easier to work with. There were strong differences of opinion on policies still, on many issues. But he became a lot easier to work with. So it took us a month or six weeks to confirm the nomination of Walter Hickel who had been the governor of Alaska. He had gone to Alaska with \$30 in his pocket or something--whatever

the rags-to-riches story was--and had made a lot of money up there. He became very well-to-do, and there were some lingering questions by maybe his enemies, or whoever. That was the first time in my recollection that we really had a very, very careful examination of a nominee's financial holdings. Even other members of the Interior assistant secretaryships, even those gentlemen didn't have that much of a problem. But Walter Hickel had a very strong problem. Some of it also related to his policy views. Some

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people were concerned that he might come in and attempt to undo a lot of the conservation gains that we had made over the years.

Ironically, it turned out that his biggest problems eventually were with the White House when he took an opposite view on Vietnamese war policies and got dismissed from office. But that was a change.

We had a good working relationship, I'm confident of that, with his successors down there. I guess Rogers Morton succeeded him, who'd been a member of the House, and his brother was a member of the Senate. Thruston Morton chaired the Republican National Committee the same time Senator Jackson chaired the Democratic National Committee. They got along well.

You know, Scoop had been favored by Robert F. Kennedy to get the vice presidential nod when either John Kennedy's father, or John Kennedy, or his political advisers made their decision that, I think, turned out to be right--the Austin-Boston axis which helped carry Texas and helped swing the election. I'm not sure that Scoop would have brought that to the election. But, in any event, we had a good working relationship with Rogers Morton as we began the '70s.

In the beginning of 1969 we were really awakened to--even more so--the word "environmental" crept more into the language as opposed to just "conservation," and "natural resources." We began in our committee the National Environmental Policy Act, in 1969. As a matter of fact, it had the opposition of the White House, all the way through until the president signed it New Year's Eve and

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proclaimed the '70s as the "decade of the environment." So they opposed us all the way, and then, happily endorsed it and signed that bill. We went into that before that NEPA, as its commonly referred to, has been carried a lot further than we intended it to be. You can say that about a lot of laws, and that's a common refrain. But in this case I honestly believe that the goal that we sought is still very valid, and that is, to make sure that environmental alternatives were examined before public decisions were made on resources and related-federal actions. And that's very valid. But, unfortunately, I think, by the interest groups involved, it's been carried too far by court interpretation.

But because of Secretary Hickel's initial problem in getting a grasp during that first year of the enormous responsibilities he had, I'm not quite sure that he ever really understood all of that department's responsibilities--the territories, and all of public land resources, and so forth, as well as Indian affairs, and so on. I'm not

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sure that he really had a real good grasp of the enormity of that, and there were some people in his personal entourage who were very suspicious. I think they took the view that maybe the slickers from Washington would try to take him for a ride.

But he turned out to be a pretty hard-working and decent guy. His own problems came a year or a year and a half later, when he ran afoul of the power structure and publicly criticized his boss. Makes me wonder if Secretary [Jack] Kemp is going to survive when he criticizes the current president--his boss' economic views on what should be done about the recession we're in today.

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**RITCHIE:** I remember a Herblock cartoon from 1969 of the Nixon cabinet all stepping out in lockstep except for Hickel who's running behind. He had one leg in his pants and one leg out. He's trying to hobble into them. You're committee was taking a long time to scrutinize his record.

**VERKLER:** That's right. It was, up until that time--and at that time, I'd been on the committee, I guess, just about eight full years, and we had not had that kind of a problem. I alluded to Senator Allott. Allott was there every step of the way, looking at, making sure that the secretary-designate wasn't getting any partisan disfavor. And I don't think he was. We were just looking at the issues and trying to bring out is philosophy in the administration of those great public resources that would come under his new jurisdiction. Gordon Allott cooperated very well. Again, probably nobody was more surprised than Gordon Allott four years later when he was defeated for reelection in 1972. Those were pretty busy years. We had done so much in the '60s as far as accomplishing and passing legislation. I think there was general agreement that we ought to slow down and see what we had done, and see if we could manage what we had done. By and large, I think they did a pretty good job.

There is one other aspect to that, too, as we went further into the Nixon years during his first term. And that is, the ambition of the chairman of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, the late Henry Jackson, whom I regarded as--and still

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do--a close, personal friend of mine. Scoop was a little older--he was twenty years older than I was, but he was also twenty-one years older than his wife who was a year behind me in our high school. She was a pretty blond, and I think it was pretty clear that if a guy could be a busy, busy bachelor for forty-nine years, he must--I should have realized in 1961--he'd seen Kennedy with a pretty wife. He was a close friend of Kennedy's who had been a bachelor for quite awhile also. But I think Scoop had his eye on the White House even then, because he married a Parade-cover wife--a very nice, gentile person. I think, as subsequent events proved true, he had his eye on the White House, because he did try to get that nomination in 1972. He had a picture-book family with a beautiful little girl and a

handsome young son, and a beautiful wife. Everything except the votes [laughs] as he tried to get the nomination.

But he did carry it all the way to the convention in Miami Beach in 1972 and did not give up once it was clear that the McGovern forces were in command. Muskie and Humphrey bowed out, but Scoop stayed in there to prove a point, and I think it was proper that he did. I think also he was aiming for '76. He made a real run at that, but he didn't make that either.

But I think that some of his later actions in the early 70's clouded the Scoop Jackson that we knew in the '60s. I got the feeling from where I was--that there were more and more outside political advisors came in and that what he did was calculated, and was measured against what he could gain from the standpoint of that

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old 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue position. And a lot of it was good. I mean, we did a lot of good. But, at this time also, we embarked on another energy study. I mentioned before the one we did in 1961-62, with just a few resources, we did a very credible job of describing what was going on in the nation's energy picture. I don't think Congress had done a study like that since the '30s. I think there was a look back in those days.

In 1971 we staffed up very heavily. Spent lots of time, lots of money. I'm not sure we produced anything that was really earth-shattering. But, on the other hand, it was a credible effort, and Scoop became an "energy expert." All the while I think this helped lead to a decline in the opinion that the business community held of him. Like Clint Anderson, Scoop Jackson did have a lot of respect from labor--very close, and business also because he understood it. He could read the Wall Street Journal in the morning and give a fairly detailed lecture on the capital markets and what the problems of the economy were. He was a very bright guy. Sometimes he may not have spent as much time and depth because he was trying to do about four things at once most of the time. That's always dangerous for a man in public life [chuckles], I think.

But, in any event, he tried to become president of the United States, and that didn't work. I left at the end of January in 1975. Since he was my friend and had been my benefactor for many years--I actually worked for him longer than anyone else in the Senate--I tried to help him in '76 to the extent I could. I was

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in the private sector, but I tried to help raise a little money and do things that I could.

But after he lost the Pennsylvania, it was just about over. He carried Massachusetts. Ironically, Scoop, contrary to some of the advice of his oldest friends, including that young man that arrived with him on the train from Seattle after the election in 1940 just before they got off at Union Station and asked someone where the Capitol was did not enter the New Hampshire primary. They never understood why he did not go into New Hampshire, in both elections;

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because that's where the action was. Unfortunately, maybe, but that's where the action is! And, if you're unwilling to go there--and I really feel his kind of campaigning, smaller crowds, so on, would have gone over a lot better. He carried Massachusetts in '76, and I guess New York. But the big one was in Pennsylvania, and when he lost out there, why, then it by and large over for him. I remember Jerry Brown got into it, and Frank Church won a few. But it became more or less, [Morris] Udall versus Carter, I think. And then, of course, Carter had it wrapped up by the time of the convention. And that was that story.

**RITCHIE:** When Jackson was chairman in the early '70s, before the '72 and '76 election, did he feel the political pinch between the environment folks on one side and the energy people, the oil companies on the other, looking for an energy policy on one side and the environment on the other? Did his presidential ambitions complicate matters then?

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**VERKLER:** I'm not so sure from the standpoint of the environmental point of view. I think he felt nobody could ever question again his commitment to environmental values because of his passage of NEPA and his support--strong support--of national park expansion which he did all during the '60s and early '70s. And his commitment to the Wilderness Bill. He was also very strong for jobs and for an adequate supply of energy. He was more of a regulator. Actually, with respect to the energy picture, I think he felt that it was a popular thing to do to take on the international oil companies, particularly. Not our committee but his Investigations subcommittee had the major CEOs up there back in the days when someone coined the phrase of their "obscene profits."

Of course, during the Arab embargo of '73 and so on, we had serious problems. People standing in lines for gasoline, and because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Arabs put the embargo into effect. That was one of the reasons I made up my mind that it wasn't as much fun as it used to be because I'm not sure that that was accurate or the proper thing to have done. I've never been in the oil business. I've been in the natural gas business. But I think that we were attempting--he was attempting to take advantage of an unfortunate situation to get his name out as being for the people against the little group of influential people that were trying to dictate the world's oil supply picture. I think subsequent events have proven that the Middle East is so critical but the countries have a mind and the ability and the computers of their own, and there isn't an awful lot that the companies can do.

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Now, I think it is a sad fact that it becomes harder and harder to look for resources in our own areas of the United States and offshore and in Alaska. Many of the major oil companies are putting more of the capital expenditures overseas--in Africa and the Middle East where they can--to look for crude and then bring it into this country and this impacts on the import and the balance of payment problems. That's happening. I think that's sad. I mean, I know you could make an

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argument, about "Well, we'll have ours later, let's use their resources now." But that's not quite the same because jobs are lost, the economy is hurting, and I think it's poor energy policy. Just as the president proved in this recent Middle Eastern conflict, the nation was willing, through his leadership, to act. Even the majority in Congress--the Democrats, after they lost the initial decision, the question wasn't over whether we should send troops and forcibly eject Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. It was a question from the democratic standpoint of when, and they believed--I think wrongly so--to give the sanctions more time. My personal belief is that if we had not acted when we did he would still be there in Kuwait. If we had not gone ahead and thrown him out. I'm sure by this time they would have done that. But he would have had a major influence, if not physically, he would have influenced whatever the Saudis did in their energy-production policy.

In any event, I think Scoop lost a lot of stature among people who felt there may have been a little demagoguery going on with the charges against these companies. Not that they're pure! I'm not

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saying that at all. When I went to the University of New Mexico we had a saying, in the examinations, the university honor system was to "spread them out as far as possible and watch them like hell." You have to do that. You have to watch them. But I think there were forces at work and the poorer shape of the energy industry generally, including many oil companies today, kind of bear that out. And most Americans love to hate the oil people. Daniel Yurgin had an answer to that, or an explanation, they have something that we want and need. We know we need it. We're so dependent. Almost like an analogy of a drug situation. They're the supplier. You need it, but you hate them. And I've gotten into discussions with people about why--especially a lot of my Democratic cohorts and friends: what is it about the energy industry, the oil and gas industry, that they dislike? Surely it can't be the people working on the rigs or in the fields. Is it the corporate board rooms? Are they the ones? Is that why you hate them so much? We may have touched on this theory a bit the other day. I'm not sure, but I know we're doing everything we can to try to help Detroit, the automotive industry. Backing away from maybe tougher CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards in the current energy bill and other things because of the jobs involved. And yet we've lost, I think, over 300,000 jobs out in the oil patch, and some of those may never come back.

**RITCHIE:** Every president since Nixon has promised a major energy program for the United States. And presidents and Congress

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have been having trouble for the last twenty years coming up with the comprehensive package. Why has energy become such a problem, especially from the legislative point of view?

**VERKLER:** That's a very good point. Jimmy Carter came the closest to putting together a package. Unfortunately, I think part of it was based on erroneous assumptions. For instance, natural gas. They felt we were going to be out of gas by this time. They passed legislation to say that you couldn't waste this precious natural resource, cleanest burning fossil fuel there is, under boilers any more to make electricity. After a certain date the cut off was set after which you couldn't build any new ones, and the others were to phase out. The Fuel Use Act, which I think was engineered by a lot of our coal brethren, maybe some of the nuclear industry, to end natural gas use for industrial use. The oil producers, of course, sell a lot of coal and fuel oil, but natural gas is an arm of theirs by and large. But I think it was a comprehensive package. The Natural Gas Policy Act was one of the cornerstones of it. For years since the Phillips decision in the early '50s, the well-head price of natural gas sold in interstate commerce was regulated. Well, we--I say "we" because when I was in the Senate we were consumer-oriented. Most politicians are. There are so many more consumers than there are citizens in the producing community, even including employees involved in production and so forth and their families. And *everybody* is a consumer. So it was felt that, in order to prevent

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this product from costing more and more and more with no effective competition, it would be regulated. Not at the intrastate level--in states. There were never any shortages in the states. But there was in the interstate market. And so the NGPA was designed to raise the price gradually and then take controls off, which is more or less what happened. Except that they--unfortunately--believed their own propaganda and didn't recognize the laws of economics and kept providing for escalators but no de-escalators. Therefore, there were severe shortages in the late '70s that triggered that act, and eventually the price became too high.

A lot of people in the natural gas industry and the pipeline industry who had to cut off hospitals and schools and got criticized for it in the interstate market, swore they'd never let that happen to them again. They went out and offered to producers high-priced contracts to make sure they had supplies. Then when the market started working, they reached the ceiling and prices started down. And there was a collapse of oil in the world markets because of excess production. The gas industry was in a turmoil because the pipelines had a lot of high-priced contracts. The FERC--Federal Energy Regulatory Commission--was part of the Carter package. When they established DOE, they restructured the old FPC and made it an independent agency within DOE with dotted lines within the Department of Energy. They decided to take advantage of some of the cheaper prices in the so-called spot market, and they cut the pipelines. They cut the pipelines' customers loose from them and their obligation to buy this gas that they'd gone out

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and purchased for them. But they did not cut the pipelines loose from their producers!

That was just one example that's taken about decade to unravel, and they're still not finished trying to regularize the market. Of course, natural gas in the localities where they serve your home, that's a utility. So, it's regulated and the public interest, requires that, like electric companies and so on. It would have to be because of the captured market. But the transportation and production ends of it are becoming more competitive and less regulated. Carter and his policy-makers believed we were running out of natural gas, and they took action to prevent its use. It turns out that if the price of oil is depressed now at eighteen to nineteen dollars a barrel, natural gas the BTU equivalent--British Thermal Unit equivalent--is about eight or nine dollars a barrel, or even less now. So, therefore, it's very depressed. The price is depressed. We still are drawing on these tremendous reserves that have been previously found, but there is a reduction in the number of rigs going out to look for more. My prediction is that we're not finished with the problems. We may have a future problem as we search for new markets to build demand. I think it will be there, but you certainly can't expect people to drill it for less than the replacement cost. It's a little gloomy right now, and I think Wall Street recognizes that. That's why at the gas end of it their prices and their stocks are depressed.

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**RITCHIE:** In the early 1970's Alaska was a big item of interest to your committee because of the building of the pipeline across Alaska.

**VERKLER:** That's right.

**RITCHIE:** And you said Senator Jackson had made a special interest in Alaska when it was a territory. What kind of problems did the Alaska pipeline pose for the Interior Committee?

**VERKLER:** It also fell at the same time as our concern grew about environmental questions. We had to make sure that the construction of the pipeline was combatable, to the extent they could with the ecology. It was such a big pipeline, a forty-eight-inch pipeline, from Prudho Bay on the northern slope over to Valdez. It's kind of ironic that the biggest tragedy later in connection with that whole energy development was not the pipeline but a tanker. And that was human error that caused that tragic event that spilled oil up there in the water. That's what's happening in the lower forty-eight. The less we produce of our own, the more tankers will be plodding our waters.

Actually, Alaska became a state in '59. The next thing that helped to save them as a state and as an economy was the earthquake in 1964. When was that? Easter, wasn't it?. Good Friday, if I'm not mistaken. Because it certainly got the national attention. President Johnson asked Senator Anderson to chair a special

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committee, special *task force*--because it included executive branch people even though some people may have questioned it--to help coordinate the relief efforts

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and reconstruction efforts. So a lot of money was poured into Alaska as a result of that havoc and destruction. But they needed it! And it really helped save the state at that time.

Then Prudho Bay was discovered, the tremendous resources that were up there, the reserves. And the effort was on. It took a dozen, or ten years, maybe, before we got the pipeline authorized. It was such that we really had to amend the laws relating to rights of way to make sure that the thing was authorized, that the secretary would take all the safeguards that he had to take--and should take--to protect the environment. It is kind of a fragile area in spots. History has proved, though, that the fears that they had over the impact on the reindeer and, what is the other?

**RITCHIE:** Caribou.

**VERKLER:** Caribou [chuckles], proved, I think, unfounded. They found that it helped the population. Warm pipeline, they'd come close to it, and it favorably affected their mating habits. I know they spent lots of money building crossovers or whatever so that the caribou prospered. I think, you could carry the same thing to the other great unexplored adjacent area which is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge where current debate is going on.

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But the environmental movement as we know it was just really getting started. And of course we had the Alaska native question, to take care of the Eskimos. All of those questions had been left hanging from statehood and the lands involved. Even after I left, they finished the Alaska lands bill. Maybe the claims bill we had finished, but then they had the big Alaska lands bill that followed in the mid to later '70s. It was a very tough row to hoe to get that pipeline authorized. But now over twenty-five percent of our oil comes from there. And it has proved to be compatible. As I say, the only really tragic event was the wreck of the tanker, Exxon Valdez in the Bay, what's the name of the bay? I can't call it right now, but we know where it is when it hit the rock pile through human error, or neglect.

**RITCHIE:** On the oil pipeline, Senator Jackson spoke for the pipeline. Senator Muskie took a lot of the lead in the opposition on the floor, on environmental issues. Do you think that some of their presidential ambitions were combined into that, or was that just their natural tendency?

**VERKLER:** Well, I think Senator Jackson had the responsibility, the committee ordered it reported, felt it was in the national interest to proceed, so he was the proponent of authorization. We felt that we had taken the kinds of safeguards and imposed the proper environmental restrictions on the amount of rights of way and what had to be done. We ordered the studies that

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were required to make sure you could build safely in the delicate area, the tundra would freeze and melt and refreeze.

Senator Muskie was the chief spokesman then for the Environment and Public Works Committee. He wasn't the chairman. Senator Jennings Randolph was

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chairman. But that's been a continuing debate in the Senate between that committee from their environmental standpoint and other committees which have a broader viewpoint, in my judgment. These committees have to be concerned with such things that, once you have made the studies and decided what you think is in the public interest, to go ahead and get the job done. This is contrary to what the environmental organizations have done in opposing all development.

This is great for their fundraising. All of these issues send up red flags, and it causes people who have never seen Prudho Bay or ANWAR to send in their five, ten dollars a month. That keeps the fires burning and the funds rolling in. Not that they don't have every right to do that! That's exactly what they have a right to do. But, in my opinion, then, they become just like the energy industry. They are a very special interest, and I suspect that an awful lot of what they do is related to their ability to draw huge sums of contributions around the country on some of these major battles.

Again, that's the name of the game. I think they collect many, many more times the funds than both political parties do to support candidates in elections. I saw the statistics on that once. I don't recall what they are except I was struck by the

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magnitude of those contributions compared to what both parties spend on an election.

**RITCHIE:** How would you compare, from the perspective of the Interior Committee, the lobbying efforts done by the environmental groups as opposed to the lobbying efforts done by the energy companies?

**VERKLER:** I think environmentalists were good lobbyists, because everybody is an "environmentalists." You know we all are for the environment. We want a clean environment. I think the most overrated group of special interests are those energy companies and the energy industry who are doing their bit to exercise their constitutional right to petition their government. Big oil. Because there had been a few bad apples in the history of our republic, and the bad image of the Ewing company--the family in "Dallas," they've had a bad public perception. I know, though, that the environmentalists were very effective. Just like the conservationists were in my day, because we were fighting, I think, a public interest battle. Somehow, some way, it has moved over into the special interest category, in my opinion. When you have other concerns of people, like paying their mortgages and educating their children and finding a job, and that's a very key issue, some of the environmental zeal leaves folks. If they get a pink slip and discover that, because of

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certain restrictions, they no longer are able to provide for their families in the way they'd hoped to.

It's sad, because, again, we all are "environmentalists." But what they have lost sight of, and what I think the Clinton Andersons and Scoop Jacksons had, was a

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balanced approach to the development of our resources. That's why I like to think of myself as a *conservationist* who believes that it involves not only the preservation but the wise utilization of our natural resources with which this nation has been blessed.

**RITCHIE:** Anderson and Jackson both represented western states that were still developing. I have a sense of environmental issues arise more from urban areas or at least areas that are not in the developing stage. Is there a traditional east-west division?

**VERKLER:** The person that I believe influenced Clinton Anderson most in this whole area of wilderness and preservation, and you could say conservation, was Aldo Leopold, the great wilderness writer and proponent. Coming from the West, coming from New Mexico, and coming from Washington state, like Senator Jackson did, you had to have an appreciation of great natural beauty. So, although they were from--in New Mexico's instance--one of the poorer states by most economic measurements, Senator Anderson had a keen appreciation for the need for balance between unlimited use of the resources for economic purposes--mining, lumbering, and even range-land abuse and preservation. Because those arid areas are

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very easy to overgraze and overuse, and suddenly you have some real land problems. He believed very strongly in wilderness, and was the author of the law. Even though Hubert Humphrey began the battle in the Senate, to my knowledge he had the first modern-era preservation bill, it was Senator Anderson who had the strength, and the moxie, and the ability to move it forward. Scoop Jackson and Frank Church finished the fight in the Senate.

They had a very keen appreciation. One of Senator Anderson's strongest friends was Joe Penfold of the Izaak Walton League. He was in league with Laurence Rockefeller. In Eisenhower's last two years, Congress passed the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission because it was time to take a look at the nation's parks. The fact was that we had not been adding to them and preserving as our population grew in the late '50s. Although as a young staffer, maybe I was under the influence of the Park Service people and Forest Service people, I felt that the agencies were there to do this job so it may not be necessary to create even for a limited term a special organization. I was overruled in a hurry, and I presume I was wrong because Laurence Rockefeller with his own personal resources became chairman and they brought a lot to the party and he put a lot of his resources into making a success of the studies and recommendations.

So part of the Kennedy-Johnson program was to implement the report of that commission as far as parks and other units of the national park system were concerned. That was something that Senator Anderson was the primary sponsor of in the Senate. He got

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it through. Senator Murray was chairman at the period, but Senator Anderson fought it through, and served on the commission. So did Senator Jackson, I believe. They were both appointed from the Senate on the democratic side if I'm not mistaken. I think that's right.

A lot of that commission's work ended about the time I came on the committee staff in 1961. Henry Diamond, who has become known in New York circles, was one of Rockefeller's key staff operatives. I think he was executive director of it or became Laurence Rockefeller's right hand. But Senator Anderson was very active in that. And, again, though he recognized the need to utilize the land, he also recognized the need for balance in protecting resources. And it was not incompatible. I guess if you've got enemies on all sides, you must be doing something right! But he had a lot of friends on all sides, too.

**RITCHIE:** As all these issues were developing, the committee was obviously becoming busier. The staff was growing in the '70s. Was that complicating your work as staff director?

**VERKLER:** It wasn't complicated. I've often described Washington and working in the Senate as a place where you have very long days but short years. We worked hard. We worked long. We worked five and a half days and sometimes a little longer, depending on what was happening. Near the end of the sessions, as you know, they're in a long time into the evenings. That's when

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you can do some of your best legislating. As Shakespeare said, "in the stilly watches of the night."

But, yes, we were busy. We weren't any busier in the '70s in a real sense than--or at least any more productive than we were in '64 and '65 when we were enacting landmark legislation. But in the '70s, there was a different twist. We were growing as a staff. My job of managing the schedule and trying to manage the difficulties we threw on ourselves by having the open markups became tough. But I was young and enjoyed it. I really enjoyed every year, every week I was in the Senate. And I left it with sadness. But I had been there eighteen and a half years. I started very young. One time, I remember during the last energy study we had, one of the *Washington Post* reporters--as you get a little older your memory is about the second thing to go. I can't remember the first! He referred to me as the "aging, boy wonder of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee." That caused me to start thinking about it, that I had been around and suddenly, like we talked about before, a lot of new senators had just come to town, and they held the election certificates. So as far as fun is concerned, it didn't seem to be quite as much fun. You throw that into the drive, the ambition of some of the politicians I was working with and for at the time, it became less enjoyable. The fact that I had four youngsters coming along that I had to plan on educating, so all of these factors led me to decide to leave.

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**RITCHIE:** In terms of the growth of the committee, the '70s were a period when the subcommittees really began to take hold. What was Senator Jackson's relationship as chairman to the subcommittees? Did he give them free reign, or did he keep an eye on them? How did that work?

**VERKLER:** I would describe it as still having overall control as things developed in the early '70s. Each of the subcommittee chairmen wanted to go beyond the kind of ironclad control that we exercised in the '60s. And we had a built-in reason for not expanding too much in the 60's because we did control the executive branch. So we did work hand in hand, and we didn't need a lot of staffers to fill the halls and the desks in the offices to keep an eye on our own philosophical kin that were running the executive branch. We got along pretty well, and I think we did a good job.

As the Nixon Administration unfolded, and [Gerald] Ford, we got along and were seeking some of the same things. But we did build a staff--not that there was an absolute, adversarial role--but it became more of a responsibility for oversight and to keep an eye on what was happening. Along with the tremendous study we had started on energy. And that grew. It was a separate part of our operation. But we grew in response, I think, to changing events, and they've grown ever since. They've even changed the way they authorize funding for the committees. When I came on board we were still under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 which provided for ten staffers. They

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were trying in the Monroney-La Follette Act to create a "professional" staff--non-partisan--to do the work of the committee, and, hopefully, to induce through good pay and conditions to become career-oriented. Then for the additional people they needed every year, they would go to the Rules Committee to fund them on a temporary basis. Well, that temporary basis, of course, went on, and on, and on! And then they changed the law.

Now, as I understand what they do up here is that every year you have a committee budget that you have to go justify and pass every year before the Rules Committee and then the whole Senate. The legislative budget and the staffs have grown, they've proliferated. And, I guess, if they're ambitious and energetic, they will try to justify their existence. As we talked about in our first session, every one of the one hundred--Well, maybe eighty out of them--feel that they are over-qualified to be the chief executive and, therefore, a lot of the staffs' time is devoted to issues to enhance the individual member that they serve. And the subcommittees started to become more and more independent. I'm not quite sure how they do it now, but in those days--well even now, Chairman Bennett Johnston has to give his approval. But whether a subcommittee chairman can plunk for his own staffer or not, I'm not sure. They can certainly object when they want somebody else. It's become a matter of comity that they have more and more autonomy at the subcommittee level, even though the '46 Reorganization Act didn't recognize subcommittees. At least they're mentioned now in the Senate rules--well, I'm not sure about

that. I'd better not speak about it, but I don't think you could chair more than one--that's in the House side. You could only chair one subcommittee over there.

**RITCHIE:** There's a limit on the number of subcommittees.

**VERKLER:** That you can actually chair, yes.

**RITCHIE:** With the staff growing and the subcommittee staff, did you have any personality disputes among staff members at that stage?

**VERKLER:** You know, with the passage of time, only the good memories bubble up. I don't think many serious problems. We had a very gifted staff, I believe. We did a lot of good work with the number that we had. The last few years that I was there, there was a young man by the name of Bill Van Ness who was a very gifted young attorney from Washington state. He headed up the legal side and the policy side of a lot of what Senator Jackson did. Early on I mentioned Ben Stong who was a very gifted practitioner of natural resource policy and agriculture policy. Agriculture as such was not our jurisdiction, but Ben came from that background. And we had a lot of good people, and I don't remember a lot of personal disputes.

We got together a lot. We were friends, and friendly, as I remember. We had a lot of social events. So the staff, I think,

pulled together pretty well. I can't speak for today. I'm sure a lot of the same thing happens but maybe not quite as much. But I can't really speak about it. In those days, you had enough trouble trying to keep up and pass and administer programs, so you didn't have an awful lot of time for personal disputes. But any time you have more than one person involved, you may have some kind of inter-personal problems from time to time. But I don't recall anything *real* serious.

**RITCHIE:** You've mentioned a couple of times that Senator Jackson was also the chairman of the Permanent Investigating Subcommittee which was very active in that period.

**VERKLER:** Right.

**RITCHIE:** Did that create problems of just getting his time and attention?

**VERKLER:** Absolutely, yes! I mean, not just that, but he was a ranking member of the Armed Services Committee. He headed up after he took over from [John] McClellan the Investigations Committee--it's still known in many instances in history as the McClellan Committee--the Joe McCarthy, Jimmy Hoffa, Dave Beck, all those investigations. It was the old McClellan Investigating Committee.

Scoop became chairman of that. But he also chaired another subcommittee over in Government Operations which dealt with a lot of international implications and security. Combine that with his Armed Services time, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. He was pulled in lots of different directions. He was very agreeable. If something had to be done, he blessed it, to get a hearing and so on.

It was fairly easy to do that, even if he was only there to begin it. Then we would have the responsibility of finding someone to sit in for him to get the public hearings out of the way, the testimony. But the real trick was to get the mark-up period scheduled so that we could get him there and get the bills reported. It wasn't all that bad.

Scoop had a great knack for coming in and starting off the meeting by announcing in fifteen minutes he had to be somewhere else but Senator so-and-so would take over. Get in a little lecture there, state his piece, and he would be gone. We would have to find someone to take over. But if he did that more than they do now or more than anybody else did then, I think it was only a reflection of the fact that he was a very, very busy guy! He wasn't idle, and he wasn't bored, to the best of my knowledge. He was just busy, and that was the nature of his personality and his activities.

Alan Bible seemed to be a much, much more laid-back type personality who would sort of do one thing at a time. He did it very well. Not that Scoop didn't, but Senator Bible was a little bit more relaxed in his approach to the job. You could also say,

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I guess, he never had any inclination to be President of the United States [chuckles].

**RITCHIE:** If Jackson wasn't available, would you turn to Bible? Or was there someone else that you would go to?

**VERKLER:** Yeah, an awful lot. Bible became the ranking member, and so I used him an awful lot to help mark-up bills and take over the chair. Even when Senator Anderson was still chairman and we were still marking up in the library in executive session, why, occasionally, Bible would have to pitch in and take the gavel. Did I mention to you that he offered me a hundred dollars one time if I wanted to go file and run for the Senate? But until then, he reminded me who had the certificate of election. [laughs] You know, my job was kind of like a conductor. I tried to orchestrate and point to a staffer who was going to explain something, and then another, and then break in. You could do that more in the back room in executive session than you could later on out in public. Now they have a staffer, whoever is responsible for the issue, usually sitting beside the chairman. And we did that to some extent, but we used to have to sit behind them. When we first started the open mark-ups, around the horseshoe, my position usually was standing up between the table where the staff was and the senators in the horseshoe. I was accused then of trying to orchestrate to some extent--I don't want to overstate the role I

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had or the responsibility. But everybody was pretty savvy, and pretty professional, and we got the job done.

I think we could rightfully take pride in probably having passed more substantive legislation than any standing committee of the Senate. Probably Judiciary passed

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more private bills and things of that nature. Claims and whatever. But we had, I would venture to say, more substantive legislation. Not that that's a mark of greatness. Sometimes it's not what you pass, but what you don't pass, that helps the public interest. In any event, we were very busy during all that time. Time went by so quickly! And before long, I had gone around that circle twice and thought I'd better move on.

**RITCHIE:** The last two years that you were there were the years that Nixon got into the Watergate scandal.

**VERKLER:** That's right.

**RITCHIE:** Did all that background affect the way the committee was doing business and things in general in the Senate?

**VERKLER:** Actually, you will recall, before he got into all that trouble, he had to appoint a vice president, because his vice president also got into a little trouble of his own! I remember being at a mark-up over in the old Joint Atomic Energy Committee room in the Capitol. Some of the younger Republican senators were

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there, when the word was out that he had appointed Jerry Ford to be his vice president. Before he'd announced it was Jerry, why, I remember Mark Hatfield and a couple others joking back and forth: "Well, did you get the call? No, did you get the call?"

We were a little bit out of the actual partisan political fray. Ours was a committee that dealt on philosophy and regional issues, resource issues. And if you got a dam project in your state, or a national park that you want to create, it's not necessarily a Republican or Democratic dam or park. Sometimes philosophies may differ on the size and scope, but by and large, we were not involved in those kinds of issues that the president subsequently faced with investigations and special committees. Then the House Judiciary Committee which eventually acted. I guess the answer to your question is that government in large part was sort of paralyzed. Everything he attempted to do would be like Senator [Edward] Kennedy or Governor [Bill] Clinton talking about family morality today. They kind of have to be silent on it. And with everything that was happening, it couldn't help but be bounced back as it kept getting deeper and deeper and more of a problem for the operations of the White House until the president finally had to leave.

I don't think our committee as much as some were affected because we more or less had been around the track enough and knew what we had to do and worked pretty well with the people in the Department of the Interior, our main agency, and the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, because we had jurisdiction over

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all the national forests created for the public domain largely out in the western states. So it really didn't impact us all that much in my recollection.

**RITCHIE:** Made it a little easier to pass some things over Nixon's veto at that stage.

**VERKLER:** Yeah. That's true. I think he became crippled. I presume, he headed off the obvious result if he'd had to go to trial in the Senate. So, therefore, I think the institutions purged themselves; and our system worked fine.

**RITCHIE:** Well, when you began to think about leaving the Senate, did you have in mind what you intended to do? Or how did you see your future?

**VERKLER:** Well, I'll tell you what, I'd had chances to leave earlier in my career. In 1966, Stewart Udall offered me the post as his number one assistant. I had had a couple of feelers, but I was never ready to go. I'll never forget Clinton Anderson telling me soon after I went on the committee from his personal staff in 1961, he said, "Someday, somebody will walk into your office and will offer you a job. That's what happens to young staffers." And I said, "Oh, sure, right, good." But at that time I was still so enamored, brand new job, I was staff director, chief clerk of a

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major standing committee and under the age of thirty. So leaving was the furthest thing from my mind!

But as the years went by, and the children got older, my thoughts of leaving became more frequent. I remember when I told Scoop! I don't think he really accepted it because we were walking over from the Dirksen Building to his office in the Russell Building after I'd told him I was going to leave. He kept talking about, "Now, next year we've got to do this, and we've got to do that." [laughs] But, anyway, it so happened I had two people come into my office about the same time with suggestions. One of them turned out to be much more serious and real-or at least I took it. I accepted it, and left after eighteen and a half years up here. And I have no regrets because it was the greatest period of my life. As far as personal rewards, other than maybe money, it was a wonderful place to be. A busy time. An *exciting* time in our history! Or at least in my humble opinion it was.

**RITCHIE:** You've been lobbying now. How differently does the Congress look when you're on the outside lobbying than when you were on the inside?

**VERKLER:** Oh, I've never seen so many hard-headed, unreasonable people in my life! [laughs] No, I'm a firm believer in our system. When I was working on the inside, I believed in the role of these lobbyists, if they're honest and forthright,

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obviously they're advocates of their point of view. But they have become a critical part of our system, and they have every right. The forefathers may not have intended all the consequences, but when they guaranteed the right to petition their government, to me means a lobbyist representing his interests as well as any other citizen. That is a pretty clear constitutional protection which I think is very



strong, very good, and honest. I'm not talking about the five percent who are rotten apples on both sides.

But it really helps the information gap. It helps a member understand the issue and how it might affect his own constituency. After they're here awhile, of course, they become pretty expert. Probably there are more experts in the House where they have only one major committee assignment that they live with than over here where the senators are spread very thin. Thus, it opens up a greater opportunity for the staff to be in policy-making roles whether its acknowledged or not. Just the fact that people have to come in and feed them the information and they in turn channel it into the boss. But I'm a strong proponent of our system. I like to see it work. Work well, and honest; and I think, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, it's the worst possible system, except all others.

**RITCHIE:** Do you think that the chairmen today have lost influence, lost stature from the days when Anderson and Jackson were chairing committees?

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**VERKLER:** My perception is that they've lost power in the real sense of working their will just about when they want to. A lot of it results from the way the system is now operating because, I guess a chairman now can schedule and cancel a meeting if he chooses to do so, but little else. When you were able to operate the way we did in the "good, old days," of being able to eye-ball somebody and try to plot out your strategy, you were really effective. Now I get the feeling that there's not that much communication except out in the open, almost like an ex parte proceeding.

Now, it may depend on the chairman or his own personality. As you know, the seniority system having taken its lumps, a lot of the chairmen may be unwilling-- I'm not saying they should be arbitrary--to lead. I look at it as requiring strong leadership roles in trying to expedite or do business. They bend over backwards to accommodate every whim or desire or their membership. That happened in the Senate with the ascendancy of Mike Mansfield's brand of leadership of bending over backwards to accommodate all of the one-hundred prima donnas. They certainly would be prima donnas.

Not that they were overbearing or real arbitrary. But the chairman--Clinton Anderson's role as chairman's--was to be that: to be the chairman of that committee. That was the most important thing that he did. His Finance Committee assignment and Medicare were very, very critical, but as far as the committee's business, that was his business. Scoop was pulled in other directions. In

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fact, the first two years of his chairmanship was spent on investigation of what turned out to be the SST. And Senator Anderson continued to look after the committee for him.

But I think the committee chairmen in today's open system has lost some of their power. But I think a lot of it is their own fault in that they don't do what Mark

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Hatfield suggested. They don't have those extra meetings and try to map out some goals and decision-making. A lot of that's conjecture on my part, but I do think that they're all so busy it's hard enough to get them in a regular scheduled markup much less do any pre-planned meeting unless it's something that's very critical or very key at the moment.

**RITCHIE:** The personnel of the Senate has changed a lot since 1974 when you left. Do you find it's difficult dealing with the Senate where so many of the senators are different, so many of the staff are different than they were when you were here? Have you found any change over time?

**VERKLER:** In some respects. Many times it's just different people but the same method of operation. Obviously, they're so many more staff in every office, just about. But generally speaking, I think their mission is to support. Look after the best interests of their member of the Senate from their state. They try to do that. It may be a harder row to get into the system now. I don't know. With the tremendous amount of time they spend in

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fundraising activities and so forth, you do get to see them an awful lot participating there. But, by and large, I would say that the staff generally operates about the same. There's just so many more of them now.

**RITCHIE:** Do you also find when you are working with private groups, like the natural gas people, that you have to explain to them how Congress works? Do they have a realistic or an unrealistic view of the legislative process?

**VERKLER:** I think over the years most members of the business community have kind of accepted it as a necessary evil having to deal with Washington. They should have come to that conclusion years ago. Sometimes they have, and sometimes they haven't. Corporate CEOs are under scrutiny now because of their high salaries and perks that are being scrutinized in this time of economic recession. People, ordinary men and women laboring in the vineyards are losing their jobs. This is coming under review. But I think generally the most progressive and responsible business leaders are the ones who recognize the key role that public policy has in managing our economy over the last several years. That's why you see the proliferation of larger corporations with Washington offices full time trying to keep track of legislation. They deal in information. They try to keep people advised of what's going on. They try, to some extent, to influence what

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happens, but I think it more reportorial than it is real influence sometimes.

**RITCHIE:** Well, looking back at the Senate, since you've had association with it in the mid-'50s, what would you say the biggest change is in the institution?

**VERKLER:** In many respects, the Senate has improved itself by giving itself more tools to work with. For instance, the Congressional Budget Office, Office of Technology Assessment. All that. They have expertise now. We used to call on the Library of Congress and whatever was available over there to help us out. During

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our biggest years of accomplishment as far as volume is concerned, as I say, we had an ally downtown in the executive branch. They were "our executive branch." They worked hand in glove with us. We didn't consider them adversaries. We considered them allies in trying to accomplish big programs, at least what we thought were great.

Now they have gotten in the electronic information mode up here, and they have improved their information, their ability to utilize the technology. I guess that's an improvement. Obviously it helps make decisions. For example, your office is probably much, much greater than it ever was in my day. I think that's a plus because it helps preserve a knowledge of the history of the institution. If we forget our history, I think we do our nation a great disservice.

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I have talked about the growth and maybe the difficulty in making the system work or respond, not necessarily a reason for not accepting these changes. I think the changes can prove to make it an even greater institution. It's the world's greatest deliberative body. And I think--of course I'm prejudiced--I have many, many good friends in the House, and I've grown to respect the House a lot. But I think there's no branch of government quite like the Senate of the United States. I think it's the best political job in America if you're bent on getting elected to something. Because you do get that six-year term, and you have a chance to gain seniority as your colleagues who are already there have to face election before you do. It's a broad place with a great platform. Having made some remarks--not disparaging--about the opportunity it gives those who may seek office in the executive branch, it's still, to me, is the greatest political-legislative body in the world.

**RITCHIE:** How would you measure the current senators against the senators that you worked with?

**VERKLER:** Again, if I were twenty-five, twenty-six years old walking around here, I'm sure that I would feel that there were giants in the land, like I felt as a young man about the Bob Kerrs, and Wayne Morses, Clint Andersons, Lyndon Johnsons. They were truly indeed outstanding individuals in their country, who had paid their dues, had worked their way through their systems. Wayne

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Morse was a rare bird indeed to switch parties, first to an independent, then he became a Democrat. I overheard Lyndon tell him this on the floor when he was getting ready to run one time, tell him he would come out and campaign for him or against him--whichever would do him the most good!

I feel as television has become a part of our political lore that a lot of guys are maybe more handsome or attractive. They've got to be sharp. They're smart. Most all of them are smart. But I do think that maybe a more attractive group because of the 30-second spot. I think it's contributed to the demise of the political parties and party responsibility or discipline because people raise their own money, have their own organizations, put on their own campaigns. And, therefore, parties may

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have--I don't want to tell more than I know --but, I mean, the parties to me seem to be--in the states at least--less of an influential role in who gets to do what. It's kind of a background, get-out-the-vote-type organization. And I guess my natural inclination would be to say that there were more giants then than there are now. But, to be perfectly objective, I think my judgment's probably clouded from my experience when I was here. I'm sure if you go up and down this hall you will find some legislative assistant who may feel that he works for a giant. By and large, the giants that you have on your wall from the last century. How would they fare today?

I saw a picture of John C. Calhoun. He might be arrested if he were working on the street today. On looks alone! [laughs]

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His hair-do might almost be in style! But we have aged gracefully over the years--this body has, I think.

**RITCHIE:** Are there any issues that we haven't touched on that you think we should include?

**VERKLER:** Right now I can't think of any. I know I've kind of rambled, but if you think of any, let me know. I'll be glad to come back if you would like me to. Anything specific. But I think we've gone over the barnyard here pretty well.

**RITCHIE:** Well, thank you very much. We will transcribe these interviews, and then you'll have a chance to make any corrections that you think are necessary on the transcript.

**VERKLER:** And buy an airplane ticket to someplace that does not have an extradition treaty. [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** There's a wonderful movie called *The Senator Was Indiscreet*. The senator's indiscretion was that he kept a diary, and when the diary is accidentally released, the senator heads for Pago Pago because it doesn't have an extradition treaty with the United States.

[End of Interview #3]

# Jerry T. Verkler

Staff Director of the Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee

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