

Richard B. Russell, Jr. Oral History Project

RBROH-073

Earl Leonard interviewed by Hugh Cates

February 15, 1971

CATES: This is Hugh Cates, February 15th, 1971. I'm in the office of Earl Leonard, who was the press secretary for Senator Russell. Earl, would you mind telling me how you first--I'll rephrase that--would you tell me how you happened to become press secretary to Senator Russell?

LEONARD: Hugh, my acquaintance with the Senator actually began when I was a student at the University of Georgia. In 1957, there was an appreciation day held in Winder--Russell Appreciation Day--and I was a student at Georgia--I think I was at the *Red and Black* at the time. And Bill Jordan, who was Senator Russell's executive secretary, and I became acquainted around that period, and Bill asked me if I would handle some tickets for the barbecue that was to be held in Winder, at noon, in connection with the Appreciation Day, and I said I certainly would; so we went about the process of getting up a rather sizable contingent of Georgia students in Winder for the day, and in the process of course I met Senator Russell and had a conversation with him. And I had kept up my relations with Bill-- I had not been in Washington at all, of course, being on the campus. I got out of Law School in June of '61, and had made no great plans as to what I was going to do. And right before I was to graduate--I was at home, graduation was some several days later--one Saturday morning about eight o'clock the phone rang--I was still in bed--picked it up and no secretary at all on the line, this voice comes on and says, "Earl, this is Dick Russell. How are you today?" Well, I had not talked with Senator Russell since 1957 and I had a friend of mine over in Athens, whenever he called you he would always say he was somebody--Charles de Gaulle, Winston Churchill, and I figured that's exactly who this was. I said, "Well, hello, Senator, how are you this morning? What in the hell are you doing up so early?" And his voice came back on the line, said, "Oh, well, we've got daylight savings time up here in Washington. I guess it's about eight o'clock in Georgia. It's nine o'clock up here." And I had just enough of the voice to know that I had the real, genuine Richard B. Russell on the line, and jumped up and tried to erase this rather foolish beginning as quickly as I could. I said, "Senator, I'm very sorry, I apologize to you, I did not, I certainly did not expect a call from you this morning." And he goes into this statement that he had an opening on his staff of press secretary, and that I had been recommended to him, and that he remembered the activities of 1957, wondered if I would like to come up and talk to him about it. Well I certainly did. The opportunity at age 24 to go to work for a major United States senator, particularly somebody like Senator Russell, was a most attractive proposition. I told him I certainly would like to talk to him about it, went up there the next week, walked into his office, I still was a little bit queasy, a little tremulous about this inauspicious beginning with him, but I told him--once again I apologized--I said, "Senator Russell, I just didn't expect to hear from you on that morning." And he laughed about it, and told me about the job, and I said without hesitation that I would like it very much, and I went to work for him very shortly thereafter as his press secretary, at age 24, which caused me some problems, in that Senator Russell was a patient man, most patient, always extremely generous to me and to

everyone else who worked for him, but he likewise expected you to do your job. In order to be a good staff member, an effective member of a senator's staff you've got to know what's going on, you have got to hopefully be right on top of things; in doing your job effectively you can't sit around and wait for someone to tell you what to do there; so I had to get in there as best I could, as quickly as I could, and learn a tremendous amount. You can't go to a man who's been in the Senate around thirty years and have any background as to his views on the issues of the day, how he wants to say things. Part of my job was to prepare speech drafts and statements and matters of this kind, and I remember--fortunately, I'll say this, fortunately, Senator Russell was very consistent on the issues of the day. Foreign aid comes to mind. He had opposed each annual request for these enormous foreign aid budgets since the conclusion of the Marshall Plan, and he hadn't changed his mind on that. The recurring issues he was consistent--he was either for certain things or he was opposed to certain things--and consistency at least helped me in preparing my own background as to how you want to react to this, that, and the other; but it was a tremendous learning process, being up there with him, for one as young as I was.

CATES: I believed you mentioned the year 1961, and you were up there '61 through what, '63?

LEONARD: '64.

CATES: '64. What were some of the major crises or things that happened on the national scene while you were his press aide?

LEONARD: Well, those were very interesting years. It was virtually the entire time that the Kennedy Administration was in office, and in fact, I left I suppose some three or four months after Kennedy had been assassinated and Johnson took over. And needless to say, the most momentous national issue of that time was the Cuban missile crisis. Senator Russell had a rather considerable involvement in that. The Russians had installed these offensive missiles in Cuba, and I remember as it came out later--I was standing in Senator Russell's office one Saturday, and then Vice-President Johnson called him, and they conversed, I waited until the end of the conversation--I had something I wanted to take up with Senator Russell--and he said, "Well, I can't take this matter up with you right now, Earl." He said, "I've got to go somewhere with the Vice-President." With that, he got up and left his office and rode out to I think somewhere on the Potomac River with the Vice-President. They walked up in the--he told Senator Russell about this Cuban missile crisis. Of course we didn't know anything about it, didn't know this until several months after the incident, and the Senator came back into the office and I went in to conduct that business which I had had before he left, and I said, "Well, did you and the Vice-President have a nice conversation?" And he said, "Yes, he certainly did have something to tell me about this time." And that was all he said, and then just a few days later the whole country learned of the situation, and we entered that very dangerous period of approximately a week, where we didn't know whether war was with us or not. Senator Russell had some very decided views on this situation, all of which has come out in recent years, that he urged very strongly that the President invade Cuba at that time. We had good reason, we had law on our side, to go down there and eliminate from Cuba and from the Western Hemisphere not only the missiles but Castro and communism as well, but the President did not see fit to follow his advice, and I must say that we still have communism and Castro in Cuba, and as far as I'm concerned no one has ever been able to definitively say whether all of those missiles were removed or not. I don't think

Senator Russell was ever satisfied that all of them had in fact been removed, don't think he ever was.

CATES: During this period, did you, did he release anything to the press as to his position, or was that necessary?

LEONARD: No, Senator Russell did not discuss his conversations with the President of the United States publicly. That was as firm or fast a rule as he ever had and as I best recall I think he certainly publicly had a rather good bit to say after it was over, and he said in public speeches just what I've just said to you, but during that particular seven day period I don't recall that he did. Might have, I don't remember.

CATES: How often was he called to the White House during this period?

LEONARD: Very often, much more so with Johnson than with Kennedy, but quite frequently with Kennedy. As you know, Senator Russell had a long-standing personal relationship with all the Johnsons. The girls called him "Uncle Dick," and he was extremely fond of Lady Bird, very fond of her and held a long time admiration and respect for Lyndon Johnson as a, as a person, as a politician, as a businessman, and while in later years they disagreed politically on most of the issues, particularly the domestic issues of the day, Senator Russell and Johnson continued a standing relationship. Johnson relied on him quite a bit, always like to call him down there and test ideas on him. They knew each other very well, and Johnson would test an idea on Senator Russell, even though he knew that Senator Russell would not agree with him. He wanted to see the intensity of his reaction, whether he was very, very much opposed or just mildly opposed. He could, he could use Senator Russell as a weathervane in this regard. Kennedy likewise frequently asked Senator Russell for instance to ride on the "Honey Fitz" and the "Sequoia," the two presidential yachts. The Kennedys were very big, particularly in the spring and summer, of taking afternoon rides on these boats to rest and relax, and Senator Russell was frequently invited to go along. He sometimes would turn an invitation of this kind down, but to my remembrance any time the President called Senator Russell to come to the White House for a conference or consultation, Senator Russell considered this to be a command performance and would go. He had a tremendous respect for the presidency, and the Chief, whoever he was, all of them that he served under, from Hoover forward to Nixon. He felt it his duty to consult the president at such times as the president wished that advice. He was a frequent consultant at the White House under all of these presidents, whether I actually--he was only there a very short while under Hoover--but Roosevelt consulted, Truman, and Eisenhower a great deal, Kennedy, and of course Johnson.

CATES: Which of the presidents do you think commanded his most respect, of the ones you mentioned?

LEONARD: Well, I think each one of them would have his own niche in the type of respect that Senator Russell had for him. I think Senator Russell--had a very great admiration for President Eisenhower as a man of great good will, but I don't think he had the respect for his political ability as say he had for President Roosevelt or President Johnson. I think each of them commanded his respect in a different way, but he looked up to Roosevelt a great deal. He went up there as an early "New Dealer," young "New Dealer," and--but I would say the one you

always have to come back to and say he was closest to, as a man, as a person---he knew him better--was President Johnson, although he had a great deal of respect for each of these men in different ways. I've heard him criticize all of them and I've heard him say complimentary remarks about each one of them, but that's to be expected.

CATES: You indicated earlier that President Johnson would use him somewhat as a weathervane. Could you give a specific example? Would you have any personal knowledge of a specific example?

LEONARD: Well, of course I was not on hand for any of these conversations, and it was--always some time had elapsed between any conversation that Senator Russell would relate between he and the President. Some of the domestic legislation is what I have more precise reference to, as a weathervane politically. When Johnson would discuss some of his ideas and creations in the poverty program, matters of this kind, these social programs which he knew Senator Russell would oppose, but he wanted to find out the intensity of the Senator's opposition to determine what he could expect from people who thought like Russell did, and in fact, Russell himself, because Senator Russell is, without a shadow of a doubt the most powerful member of the Senate, could hold back the passage of a president's program and have a great deal to say with what got through, how it got through, what type of amendments were attached to it, how it was funded; and so he wanted to know just exactly what he could expect from him, and often times, all of these presidents, particularly from Roosevelt forward, would call Senator Russell and discuss matters of foreign policy and national defense with him, because he quickly established himself as a man greatly interested in national defense and at the time of his death he was an expert exceeding even military men in some areas in this regard. I've always said this about Senator Russell, he possessed the finest mind of any man I ever met. He qualified as an expert in more complex areas than any man I've ever met. For instance, he was an expert in matters of national defense, in matters of weaponry, in very technical discussions of light, heavy medium weapons, tanks, aircraft, matters of this kind. He had a facile knowledge of matters of this kind and was indeed an expert in them and the application of the use of weaponry, of national defense, of manpower requirements, of preparedness. He was an expert in matters of finance, in funding. He'd been on the Appropriations Committee for years and years and years and he knew the financial arrangements of the government, what it took to fund programs. He was an expert in agriculture. He had a tremendous knowledge of agriculture. Research, agricultural research is where he really first started in getting his interest in research. I've always said this: I'd love to have written an article about Senator Russell, and entitled it: "Russell and Research: Two Synonymous Words," because they were synonymous. He had an expert's knowledge of history, and in history, the French Revolution in particular, and the War Between the States, the Civil War and the French Revolution, he knew as much about those two areas of history as any historian that has ever earned his spurs studying those particular areas. And he qualified as an expert in the Senate rules. He undertook a detailed study of procedure and rules of the United States Senate, and that's how he actually got started as a power--the rules--a power in the Senate, The rules of the Senate are very complex; they are very, very difficult, and he undertook to master the rules and did so; and early, very, very early, he was recognized as an expert in the Senate parliamentary procedure, which is a labyrinth of pitfalls, but he knew them; and finally, you can say that Senator Russell was an expert in the science of politics. What

a politician he was! Got elected to the Georgia House when he was say 21 or 22 years of age, Speaker of the Georgia House at 27 or 28. And remember this: when he was elected, when he was made Speaker, this was in a very early era, this was in the late 20's or the early 30's when politics of Georgia were almost the exclusive domain of older men. It was very, very highly rare that the young were involved in elective politics in this state in that day; and--but yet not only was he involved in it but he was highly successful, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Governor of Georgia, still to this day, the youngest elected Governor of Georgia. And he entered the Senate when he was about 36 or 37 years of age, as the youngest member of the United States Senate. I may be off on my precise yearly account, in other words he might have been 38 when I said he was 36, but I'm not far off on that. But he entered the Senate and was opposed in his political career seriously since he's been a senator--went into the Senate in 1933, 1932, 1933--he was opposed once, in the 1936 campaign when he was running for his second term, he was opposed by Governor Eugene Talmadge. He was the first man to beat Gene Talmadge after Gene became powerful and enormously popular. Russell took him in 1936, beat him bad, and was never, subsequent to that time, never ever seriously opposed in a political race, until his death, and that in my judgment qualifies a man as a consummate politician with a record of successes in politics not equaled by anybody within my memory. A funny story of that 1936 campaign comes out. Senator Russell tells this and loved to tell it with great relish. He said that in those days, before widespread air conditioning, and certainly back in the days of stump speeches you'd make four or five on Saturday and many during the week, and he said that these hot Georgia summer campaigns in those days--he said that characteristic of every one of them was that you wore out every shirt you owned, every shirt, because you had to change shirts four and five times a day, and by the end of the campaign you were completely without shirts, and he said every campaign he ever ran he had to replenish his wardrobe of shirts, and he said went down here to Zachary's in Atlanta, and was going in and he said Gene Talmadge was coming out, and he said, "Gene"--that was the first time he had seen him since the campaign--said "You going in to get your shirts?", said he said, "Yes," he said, "I have, Dick I've been in here to get some new shirts," and they talked about the campaign and Gene Talmadge analyzed it, he said, "Well Dick," he said, "I'll tell you how this campaign was." He said, "You and I have too many of the same friends, and they turned out to be better friends of yours than they were of mine." So he was a great politician of, an expert in the science, the uncertain science of politics; so what a remarkable plateau of expertise he possessed, not to mention many little side issues in which he was greatly interested and things that occupied his time that people for years discovering what this man had done and what he meant to the state and to the nation as a whole--there's no doubt about that.

CATES: Earl, would you mind describing a typical day as a press aide to Senator Russell?

LEONARD: Serving as Senator Russell's press secretary was an unusual experience. It was different to be press secretary to Russell than it was to be press secretary say to a member of the Senate who had ambitions to higher office; because by the time I arrived in Washington, Senator Russell was certainly not seeking any, any additional office. He'd run for President in 1952, and that wound up any ambitions for higher office that he might have had. He wouldn't like me to say that because he didn't think there was any higher office you could have than United States Senator another office, I think I will say. But the primary function of the press secretary's office in the Russell set-up was to transmit home, transmit to Georgia, primarily to Georgia--Georgia radio, radio-television, newspapers, Georgia magazines--just exactly what the Senator was doing

and his accomplishments there, to--you know in this day and age you've got to compete with mighty, great number of other people in public life and other instances and other occasions for any attention at all, even someone like Senator Russell, you've got to put out a press release when he makes a speech. The days when reporters you know would hover and caver every sentence when you are making a speech somewhere is over--there's too much other going on-- so you have to help them out a little bit with a release or at least a synopsis of what's going to be said if you expect any attention in the press at all. So the role of press secretary in his office was a little different than it is say with someone who was looking beyond his horizon, and I was a pretty young fellow, and had a lot of young ideas and progressive plans and programs which I would present to Senator Russell, and he would sniff a little bit and say well he would think about that. Some of the things we did and some of them we didn't, but basically what we would do, he would get, he would come over--you know Senator Russell was a bachelor--he would get to the Capitol around 8:00 or 8:15 and have his breakfast over there, and he would get in his office around 9:00. Inevitably, there would be some members of the press who had contacted me the morning, during the morning, and say they would like to see Senator Russell. Now most of those older press people who had been in Washington and had covered for the wire services and others, William S. White, columnist Jack Bell, John Goldsmith, they knew him well, they knew where to catch him, they didn't try to get in his office too much, sometimes they did, but they'd try to get him off the Floor, and many times he would have a conference with the press over on the Floor, riding in the subway somewhere, in an elevator. I wouldn't even know he had seen the--any member of the press, and the story would move over the wires and I'd start getting calls about it and have no earthly idea of what they were talking about and soon figure what it was--go find out what he had said and then try to answer any inquiries with what I had right then and there. He would see sometimes a member of the press, particularly the Georgia representatives, the Washington correspondents for both of the Atlanta newspapers, and then some of the people with the news bureaus and others that serviced Georgia papers, would visit with them before a committee meeting or sometimes thereafter, but Senator Russell usually wasn't in his office from around 10:00 when he'd go to committee, until around 3:30 or 4:00 o'clock when he'd come back from the Senate Floor, and but he stayed in there until around 7:30 or 8:00 at night, sometimes later than that, signing mail and talking to people and visiting with delegations that would come by the office and so a good time to see him was either before he went into committee, early in the morning, or late in the afternoon; but of course, a reporter who was on deadline would have a great deal of difficulty if he wanted to get a statement from the Senator on this and that so what we'd have to do is, if an issue came up and they wanted a statement from the Senator sometimes I'd draft one and go over there and say that so and so what you think about this, that or ay nine times out of ten, "Oh, well, so that would do it. Well, later from such and such paper wants to know the other, here's a statement. He'd say I don't want to comment on that." And that same reporter might get him in the hall, and he might comment since they had him, which would cause me some grief, but you learned your man and you learned how your man operated and you operated as best you could around it. But he had an interesting rapport with the press, it was a sparring rapport. He always admired any press member who could go out and find out things and he would wonder how in the world that reporter had located this information. He had a great deal of respect for that. It was sort of a game with him, in other words, "I know something you don't know--let's see if you are smart enough to find out about it," and those who were smart enough to find out about it earned the man's begrudging respect, somehow, and oh, he'd play like he was irritated, half the time, sometimes he was irritated, but he did not fail to admire a reporter who

did his job well, and consequently, he also had an interesting philosophy in dealing with the press, which runs counter to much popular thinking. You know some people feel that in order to get good press relations you ought to have a formal press conference, maybe at 10:00 on every Tuesday or every Thursday, but Senator Russell didn't feel this way. He very rarely--I doubt seriously during the time that I was there, we had more than four or five formal press conferences, so to speak, where you sat around his big table in his office, invited in members of the press who cared to come and ask him question. I doubt seriously we had many of those, well we didn't have why, not one or two a year, if that many, if that many. But his philosophy of the press was "if you don't seek them, they will, in turn, seek you." And that, I'm not talking about when he was addressing a combined civic club affair or something like that. We did--we put out a press release, and a copy of the speech on occasions of this kind. I'm speaking of day by day activities that he felt that over-exposure tended to reduce your own effectiveness with the press. Now I think he had a very good idea because a reporter that had to work to see Senator Russell had to dig to find him, to locate him just when he could in the corridors, would buy and large use and make rather considerable and substantial use of the information he had obtained. It's something he had to work for and dig for, and he never had any trouble in getting his views across to members of the press, never did, because they were always anxious to get anything Russell had to say, was given priority treatment in Washington as it was most generally here in Georgia, but he felt oftentimes frustrated by the press. I don't suppose there's any politician in the world who doesn't, but because--for instance he would strive very vigorously to get say an appropriation to continue the research into the navigability of the Chattahoochee River. This was something of great interest to him, and he would get additional funds to do this or money for an agricultural program or the funding of a laboratory. Well, this took work on his part. Few people realize how very hard Senator Russell has worked on river and harbor projects, on any research project of any kind. These various laboratories around the state, he's directly and totally responsible for having them there, having them funded. And we put out a release on the subject. Well, the matter of hog cholera doesn't have just a great deal of sex appeal, and we'd issue a release and this was a substantial amount of money that Senator Russell had procured for further research in the eradication of the dread disease of hog cholera, something of very tremendous interest to Georgia pork producers; but you couldn't get maybe but two or three paragraphs on that and that used to frustrate him whereas if he was going to make a statement maybe in a cloture battle or something, he'd make some statement and the papers might misconstrue it and make a great to do about nothing and that would cause him great anguish. It's just, a sidelight, I remember the first press release I ever wrote for him he told me we'd gotten some great sum of money for this eradication of hog cholera and would I kindly put out a release on it. Well I was ready to say that I was not very familiar with hog cholera, and had to call up the Library of Congress to find out just exactly what it was, and what I did, I was able to do a little better with that press release; but these type things would frustrate the Senator.

Here's an illustration of just how much the Russell name--to have him on a national program--meant. I would say that he was asked to be on *Meet the Press* fifty times during the time that I was in Washington; he was on it once. He had a standing and open invitation; any time he wanted to go on *Meet the Press* Larry Spivak had given him an invitation, "You just call me and I'll schedule you on *Meet the Press* as quickly as I can." Very few other people in Washington have such an open invitation. And this woman Ruth Hagy used to produce a program called "Youth Wants to Know" and she called me one time, said, "I would like to have Senator Russell on my program, *Youth Wants to Know*." She said, "He's been on it once before,

several years ago, and we would like to have him again." So I took up the matter with him and he was reluctant; Senator Russell did not particularly enjoy these national TV programs. Once again he felt that if you got on them too much you would overexpose yourself; therefore, your value to the press would go down, and so he was very selective about it, and he said, "No, I don't want it," but then he changed his mind, he says, "I tell you what, you find out if that crowd wants to go down to Georgia and let the Georgia students be on there," he said, "I'll go, I'll do it." He said, "It never seems that these programs that bring college students on there that, always do them at Harvard, Yale, the University of Michigan or something; they never seem to get any of the Southern schools," he said, "I doubt if they'll go down there, but if they will, if they want to, I'll certainly agree to do the program." Well, I called up Ruth Hagy in New York and asked about it. I said, "Senator Russell would agree to go on *Youth Wants to Know* with a great deal of appreciation--he appreciates you asking--but he does say that he would like for you to consider coming to the University of Georgia, and you have a cordial invitation to come down there; as you know, we've got a rather fine television studio there, Channel 8, and complete facilities." And she said, "yes, she knew about that, but she didn't know, she would have to take this up with her producer. She called me back that afternoon, she said, "Senator Russell, we'll go anywhere." So we set up an appointment and all was arranged in Athens, and "Youth Wants to Know" was presented from the studios of WGTV of the University of Georgia campus. [December 6, 1961]

One further illustration: Roger Mudd of CBS came to see me and said, "We are putting together a new program called "Portraits," which is going to be a sort of research program delving into a little more than just the contemporary issues of the day but a behind scenes look at people who make news and wanting to get some of their background information and sort of an in-depth probe of the newsmakers and prominent people of the day. We want Senator Russell to appear on this program. We're going to have Pierre Salinger, and we're going to have Secretary Connally, and we're going to have Secretary Rusk, and we'd like to have Senator Russell." So I went in there to talk to him about that, and he was interested in that, and I suggested to him, based upon the experience with Ruth Hagy on "Youth Wants to Know," I said, "Senator Russell, how about letting me see if Roger and that crowd will come down to Winder and let's do it in Winder?" He said, Oh, they won't do that." I said, "Well, I didn't think and you didn't think that Ruth Hagy would come to Athens." And he said, "Well, you just go see," he said, "If they will do that, yes, we'll do the program." So Roger took it up with his people and came back and said, "Yes, they'll do that." And so they did. Roger Mudd didn't do the program; Harry Reasoner did. That entire crowd from New York--I've never seen as many people in my life--it was like a television--I mean a Hollywood spectacular. They had to bring all sorts of equipment, mobile generators, laboratories, film processing units, from as far away as Tampa, Florida, up there, and put them all in the back of the Senator's house and cranked them up and spent one whole day--we did this on July 5, 1962 or 3, I forget what year it was, '62 or '63--filmed this thing in his dining room and the living room of the house, and then went back to the cemetery, where he is now buried, and filmed a portion of it with him sitting on a little bench that they have back there, did this program. Well, I don't know what it cost CBS Television Network to do that program, but you can just figure for yourself, all that equipment and all that personnel, the vast amount of expenditure that must have been expended in the production of this program alone. So they would go wherever he was.

And he had--I remember this one time--Aubrey Morris of WSB was very interested in getting the Senator's view on a question, and this once again points up Senator Russell's begrudging admiration for an industrious member of the news media. Senator Russell happened

to be in Birmingham making a speech in behalf of Senator Lister Hill. Lister Hill was in a tough reelection race, and Senator Hill had asked Senator Russell to come over there and help him out. Russell had a great following in Alabama, as he did in quite a few--well all--of the Southern states and several other states around the country. So he was in Birmingham making a speech for Senator Hill, and Aubrey calls up over there, tells them that he wants to talk to Senator Russell and had to talk to him at once, said it was a member of his family calling, and the Senator heard that, and he went to the phone, and it was Aubrey, and Aubrey wanted a statement on some civil rights bill or nuclear test ban treaty or something or other that was up in the Senate about that time. It made Senator Russell as mad as he could be, said, "Aubrey," he said, "You called me under false pretenses," he said, "I don't appreciate that." And Aubrey shot back, he said, "Well, Senator, he said, "I told them I was a member of your family," he said, "I feel so close to you I feel like I'm almost a member of your family." Senator Russell said, "You know that's the most ingenious escape I've ever heard in my life," and he and old Aubrey had quite a relationship and a great deal of admiration and respect for each other.

CATES: Did Aubrey get the statement?

LEONARD: Oh yes, of course he did. Certainly, Aubrey never misses.

CATES: Earl, can you tell me how Senator Russell reacted to the assassination of President Kennedy? I believe you were up there at the time, were you not?

LEONARD: Yes. Senator Russell was over on the Floor. What day was President Kennedy assassinated on? Seems to me--

CATES: November--

LEONARD: November 22nd. Now what day of the week was that? Wasn't it on Saturday?

CATES: No, it was a work day, because I remember I was downtown when the news came.

LEONARD: I was trying to think, well anyway--

CATES: Probably on a Friday, a Thursday or a Friday.

LEONARD: Might have been. Might have been on Friday. Senator Russell was on the Floor, and I was sitting in my office looking through some Georgia papers, I think, and a call came in and said, "Can you locate Senator Russell at once and advise him that the President has been--that there's been a--an incident in Dallas, and the President has been wounded." And I said, "I certainly will locate him," and I ran in his office and got his portable radio--he had a little portable radio in there--and he always wanted a portable television--we--he had one at the time of his death--but those of us on the staff had conspired to keep him from finding out that you could watch television in there because we figured that once he found that out he'd sit in there and watch the news and all of those television shows that he liked to watch, documentaries and so forth, we never would get out of there at night because he stayed there until around 8:30 or 9:00 anyway. But I got this portable radio and heard it, and the President was not then--it was not

known then whether he was dead or not--and I called the Floor, and they said, yes, that Senator Russell was there and he was aware of this. So I didn't live far from the Senate Office Building, and I did want to see this on television, so I got my own portable TV set and came back; and just as I was walking in the corridor there, the Senator came back down the corridor from the Floor and he was pale and he was obviously stunned as I think every living American at that time was, and he said, "Quite ashocking, tremendously shocking thing," so we turned on that television and looked it for quite some time. And the Senator left. I don't know where he went, whether he went home or just exactly what he did, but I remember the first comment that he said on the new President, Lyndon Johnson, he said, "Well, Lyndon Johnson has all of the talents, the abilities, and the equipment to make a very good president of this country, a very good president. He's got the talent. We'll just be--remain to be seen." He said, "And of course old Lyndon is going to enjoy being President, he'll enjoy every minute of it, every hour of it." And several years later, knowing that Senator Russell had been rather acutely disappointed in much of the domestic aspects of the Johnson Administration, I asked him--I reminded him of that statement--I said, "Senator," I said, "Do you remember when President Kennedy was killed, we were in your office and you said Johnson had the background, the talent, and the abilities to become a very great president of the United States," I said, "What happened? Did he get bad advice?" He looked at me and said, "Well," he said, "I wouldn't say he got bad advice," said, "He advised with me, many times," said, "I'm not going to characterize my advice as bad." He said, "I just think he listened to the wrong advice. He got good advice, but he listened to the wrong advice, in many of these instances." He said, "Johnson, his problems were with the press, largely with the people," and said, "He just ran helter-skelter, got some people around him that he listened to that perhaps he shouldn't have." But Senator Russell I think had a great deal of regard for President Kennedy. He didn't care for Bobby Kennedy, I don't think. He admired President Kennedy's charm, and his great way with the people. He was not at all enamored of the Kennedy program, and you will recall that much of the Johnson domestic program for the first year or so was Johnson passing all of the Kennedy programs. Well, Kennedy proposed it, but with Johnson that was a whole different ball game, and Senator Russell said publicly he could have defeated or certainly watered down the 1964 bill on civil rights if it had continued to be the Kennedy bill, which it was, but with Johnson in there, Johnson was able to pass it, and he said it was a whole new ball game when Johnson came in.

CATES: Did Senator Russell offer his personal condolences to the Kennedy family? Did you witness any of that?

LEONARD: Yes, he did. He went down to the White House. The--you know they brought the body back to the White House in the middle of the night, and the next morning Senator Russell, as a senior member of Congress, went to the White House and expressed his condolences to Mrs. Kennedy and to other members of the family. And he wrote Mrs. Kennedy a beautiful letter. Senator Russell was a fine writer. He was a superb writer. The--some--one of the best pieces of the writing appears on the shaft of the tombstone that marks the gravesite of his mother and father, under which he is now buried, and the tribute to both the late Chief Justice and Mrs. Russell, his mother and father. He wrote them himself, and they are two of the finest pieces of writing that I've ever read. Senator Russell wrote to Mrs. Kennedy and told her that her performance during the funeral, the arrangements that she had made and carried out, were a great

tribute to her and to the memory of the late President, and it was perfectly obvious that she was "born to the purple," and it was a very, very moving letter that he wrote to Mrs. Kennedy.

CATES: Can you think of any other incidents while you were up there--you mentioned the Cuban crisis and the assassination of President Kennedy, any other such crises of those magnitudes?

LEONARD: No, there were very, very great debates on the Senate Floor of the nuclear test ban treaty, debates, and Russell opposed that in the end. He felt that there were not enough safeguards built into the treaty, that--he said--he certainly had no question about our good faith, but he, to his death, had absolutely had no faith or trust in the Russian word what- ever. He said, "Those Russians will promise you many things and have never yet carried out an agreement they've made." He had no faith, no trust, in the Russians, and in the communist form of government, or the communist leaders at all, and so he opposed rather vigorously that nuclear test ban treaty, because it did not in his judgment have enough safeguards built in it to protect our interests. That was a momentous debate. The debates over cloture, the annual debate over changing the Senate rules that occupied a good bit of his time as did some of his filibusters over the civil rights bills as proposed by both the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. I think those legislatively were the more momentous occasions that I recall.

CATES: Was there a filibuster underway led by Senator Russell during the time you were up there?

LEONARD: Oh, yes, there were several of them. I worked with him on a number of filibusters, these cloture things. See, every new Congress a group of senators try to amend Rule 22 to make it easier to choke off debate. Senator Russell said he could never understand how senators from smaller states could ever possibly be for any such gag rule because that's one of the checks and balances built into our system, that the Senate is a forum for unlimited debate. Senator Russell was a great believer in the formula of taking the heat out of an issue, the emotion out of an issue. You recall that during the MacArthur hearings, when he presided over those MacArthur hearings, at the time that President Truman had relieved General MacArthur's command, the nation was split to the devil about this--people that wanted to impeach the President, people that wanted to lynch him. And a great crisis of government, a potential crisis of government existed, and so Senator Russell's philosophy on how to cool that was simply to have interminable hearings on the matter, and he explored every facet of the MacArthur firing, and he got reams of testimony. People came, and the hearings just dragged on, and before long the people began to turn their attention to other things, began to settle down and life went on, and the walls of Jericho were not about to come down again. So he feels that in the Senate if you have a great issue that affects a large number of people, that is charged and fueled with great emotion of the moment, that given the right of unlimited debate, that you can debate the issue out, wring the emotion out, and give common sense and reason time to work its will. We are right impatient people in this country, and like to get on with things, and I've heard him say that many times the best thing to do, or in many instances what he'd like to be remembered for is what he did to prevent some legislation from becoming law rather than--than, you know--legislation which bore his name, and that there's a lot to be said for a man who saw in his wisdom and the wisdom that God gave him the light to see things, how to see things, that he, he found himself in opposition to measures that

at the moment may have appeared to be satisfactory solutions or satisfactory props to whatever was wrong then, but in the long run would not have been, and would have done harm and damage to the basic fabric, the operation of this government, this philosophy of government; and so he strongly protected the Rule 22 which provided for unlimited debate in the Senate in that this philosophy of his, you could wring out of an issue the emotion, supercharged atmosphere about it, and give common sense an opportunity to work its will. You know common sense is sort of slow developing; reason and facts, rational thought are slow to come about when you are talking about the body politic as a whole, whereas emotion is something that can sweep a great number of people very, very quickly. Television brings this about. Where else in history have you ever been able to literally witness a murder like we saw of the Jack Ruby situation and Oswald--right there on television at the time it was happening, and so the emotion of an issue of that kind can affect millions of people instantly; and so he felt that Rule 22, which was a very ancient rule, has even more value as a stabilizer than--and a check and balance--than it ever did, and he wanted to protect it, and so this was an issue that he went into with great relish at the beginning of every Congress, with those who sought to--these other senators who wanted to change the rules of the Senate would say, "We have a situation there where the majority can work its will, where the people can at least vote on an issue, where the majority once again can work its will." How often did they say that, "where the majority can vote, work its will!" Well, today's majority Can be tomorrow's minority, said Senator Russell, and what the majority favors at one particular time does not necessarily make whatever that issue is right, and that very, very frequently, when all facts are in, when all issues, all the issues are in, and all the emotion is drained from something, then that majority becomes a substantial minority, very, very quickly, but without an opportunity for this to happen, you can get some bad laws on the books very quickly and something to do harm to the country very severely.

CATES: Specifically, how did you help him prepare for these filibusters?

LEONARD: Well, a lot of these issues we've gone through before. Rule 22's been coming up since well, probably before the war, certainly after the war--

CATES: This is the War Between the States?

LEONARD: No, no, World War II. And there was an awful lot of material already in the files. And you would go and you would take say a speech that he had delivered some time before and simply revise it and update it and you had you a speech draft for him. Or, if it was a new issue, a totally brand new issue such as the nuclear test ban treaty you'd have to start from scratch and you put together a speech, a final speech. Now it was very rare that Senator Russell would take a speech that you handed him and deliver it verbatim. He usually changed a great portion of it himself. He would use your paragraph and dictate six of his and use one of your sentences and use two, three more paragraphs of his own, and then he would take flight even from the final prepared text when he was delivering the speech, and when he got on a point that he could tell his audience was receiving well, he'd follow it up, but he liked to have in his hands a speech that would actually start his own thinking going, something that he would have that he could build on, and that was the way he liked--a draft statement, if he was going to make a statement on the, one of the rides in space, he'd like for you to draft one that he'd tell you he'd change something in it, and but he had at least something in his hands on which to work from. And so I would work on

these things and research them and get up the necessary research and hand it to him. Sometimes it was precisely what he wanted and sometimes it wasn't, but you could never be entirely certain. And his correspondence was that way. He was the only member of the Senate that I knew anything about, and one of the last major politicians that saw virtually every piece of mail that came into his office, including the junk mail, you might say, and I mean by that solicitations for encyclopedias, so forth and so on. He saw virtually every letter that was written to him. He signed most of it himself, and dictated about a third of his correspondence, which was substantial, and he was one--that was the last thing he did during the day. He would go--he'd sign his mail, read the incoming letter, read the letter that the staff had drafted for him, and if he didn't like it he'd buzz for his secretary and reeducate his own letter. He'd sign his name to it and many times something would come to mind that--and if he didn't want to call the secretary to reeducate the entire letter--he would in his own handwriting write a paragraph or so on the bottom of a letter. Why I'd say that out of a stack of mail that had two or three hundred letters in there at least forty of them would have something scratched on the bottom of the letter that had come to mind that he would think of. He paid more attention to his mail, gave more importance to his mail than most senators, and I think thereby he kept in closer touch with people, because mail is a pretty good barometer of what Georgia people are thinking on one subject or another.

CATES: I guess lobbying is synonymous with Washington. Did lobbyists try to reach Russell?

LEONARD: Sure they did, sure they did. Sometimes--one thing he resented the most was a lobbyist who would call a friend of his and get the friend to make an appointment with him or bring him up there. Senator Russell didn't like that; it made him as mad as he could be. He didn't see many lobbyists at all--and I'm not saying by that that if a man represented a company in Georgia, like right now I represent the Coca-Cola Company--well if I wanted to see Senator Russell about a matter of interest to the Coca-Cola Company, he would receive me and in perfect harmony with what he did, as he did all Georgia businessmen. Now I'm not talking about that. What I'm speaking of is some high-priced lawyer in Washington, who represents, you know, dozens of interests in clients, and this lawyer will call somebody he knows in Georgia and get that person to make him an appointment with Senator Russell. He--the lawyer did not know the Senator and he goes in there and attempts to lobby him for some issue or that issue or some organization or something like that. Senator Russell did not see these people very frequently, and he didn't appreciate anybody trying to make an appointment with one of them for him, either.

CATES: Would you say that Senator Russell was a religious man?

LEONARD: Yes, I certainly would. Senator Russell didn't go to church every Sunday but some of the most religious people I've ever met never did that, or don't do that. Senator Russell had a deep and abiding faith in God; he got this from his mother. He was--had a personal religion; he was a pragmatist, and he didn't attempt to impose his religious views on anyone else, yet he lived a very strict life code that was greatly inspired and woven through with his belief in Christian principles.

CATES: What would you say was his most outstanding personality trait?

LEONARD: That's a hard thing to answer, when you're talking about someone as varied as Senator Russell was. When I think of him in a lighter vein, or, let's just say "personality trait--serious, personality trait--lighter" I'll work at it this way. I'll go serious first. I think the intensity by which he wanted to protect the strength of this country and his total dedication to the precept that the only way freedom in this world will persevere and the only way this country will last in freedom is that we have got to maintain a military posture, a military position superior to that of any enemy or potential enemy. That was a personality trait that was what he--that was his firmest view, that was his most unalterable view. It's the last thing he told the President, before he died. It was--that issue, and that issue alone was paramount to Senator Russell, above all others, in my opinion.

Now, on the lighter side, I suppose it was the Senator's frugal nature. He spent very little money on himself or anything else. He was generous with his nephews and nieces. He was all the time sending a check for twenty-five dollars to this nephew or a check for fifty dollars to this niece or some of them that were in school. He was always sending them things, but for himself he was very frugal; and he--his only source of recreation that I can recall when I was with him was he enjoyed having dinner with a lady friend of his in Washington every Saturday night. He'd buy two steaks and he'd go over to this lady's home and she'd cook these steaks for him and they'd sit around there and enjoy steak and probably read, watched television, and relaxed, that way. I'd say that's the only way he relaxed, and going to baseball games. He enjoyed doing that, but he didn't go to as many baseball games during his later years as he did earlier--but he was a very frugal man. For instance, Senator Russell enjoyed a drink of Jack Daniel's, and he would like to have a little drink of Jack Daniel's before he left his office in the afternoon. And that was a good time to talk to him, a very good time to talk to him, because he was relaxed and the phone was not ringing. He'd finished his mail, and he'd have a little drink to relax him; but you'd go in there, you'd be standing there talking to him, and he'd enjoy a drink or two of Jack Daniel's but he wouldn't offer you any. That was his, his whiskey. And you'd travel with him sometimes; well, he'd have a drink but he wasn't going to offer you one, because that was his. What was his was his. He came from a big family, and I think that many people who come from big families are possessive of their own personal goods, because they have other brothers and sisters who are constantly wanting something that you may have, and Senator Russell is--what was his was his, and that's the way he looked at it. But when you think about him personally, you always remember how he would rare his head back--he had bifocals--and he'd rare back and look at you with his head thrown back and that great patrician nose that he had, and talk to you, have fun with you, tease you a little bit--he liked to tease people--talk about how much money you had and how poor he was and how your--if you had a new car--of course Senator Russell and his car was always interesting. He drove Chryslers, he'd prefer a Chrysler automobile, but--and he kept them until they would just almost stop. He didn't believe in much maintenance on automobiles and he would drive them until they got to the point that really they would just barely run and he then would trade them. He was not a man whose prestige rode upon wheels, he could care less what he drove, just so it ran, and when it stopped running that meant it was time to get a new car. He had the most dilapidated automobile I've ever seen in my life, and soon after he'd buy a new one, the new one would become dilapidated, too, because he would rarely ever have it washed and rarely ever had it greased, and just didn't take very good care of his automobile. His hats were characteristic. Why I don't think that during the time I worked for him that he bought a new winter hat. He'd buy a new summer hat, a straw hat every now and then, but he actually had a hat that he continued to wear that he wore to Washington with him in 1933, and he called it his

inauguration hat. He wore it to every inauguration, and it was the funniest looking hat I've ever seen in my life, an old black wool hat. You know when you're talking about a "wool hat boy" this was a wool hat in the tradition of a wool hat boy. And he, he enjoyed afternoons--he stopped smoking in 1958, I think, and like most people who have smoked at one time and quit, he liked a little something sweet, to take the place of a cigarette, and he'd get cigars at Christmastime--people would send him cigars--and he'd go down to the drugstore there in Winder and trade the cigars in for boxes of candy. And he'd go up there and he'd have enough candy to last him all year long, and in the afternoon he'd pull out that candy and sit up there and read a book or newspaper and eat candy. It never seemed to make him fat--I don't know why it didn't--but he'd eat that candy, and in the afternoons he loved peanuts. I never saw a man that loved peanuts more, and he had some peanuts--they sent them up here from Georgia--and he'd enjoy those and eat them and relax that way.

CATES: You mentioned the lady friend. Could you tell me the name of this lady?

LEONARD: No, I never met that lady.

CATES: Could you tell me anything about her?

LEONARD: No, I don't know anything about her, except she was a schoolteacher in Washington, I think, and he had several lady friends along his life, I don't think more than one at each time, as I say he'd never been married, I have no idea about Senator Russell's dating or whom he had gone with over the years, but I think he saw very regularly, at least once a week in his later years, this lady who was a schoolteacher up there that he had known over the years, and I think he enjoyed her company, and her conversation. He told me one time that if he had his life to live over that he would get married. I asked him--we were driving to Georgia from Washington one day--and I said, "Senator," I said, "I want to ask you a personal question," I said, "If it's something you don't care to answer, if it's too personal, just tell me so." And he said, "No, what is it?" I said, "Tell me something," I said, "Why did you not ever marry, how in the world did you escape from marrying--attractive young man, Speaker of the House, Governor of the State, Senator. How in the world did you keep the gals away?" And He laughed, he said, "No, that's not a personal question. I've been asked it many times." He said, "It all boils down to the fact that I never had time to get married," he said, "My ambitions were all in my way," said, "When I got in the Legislature I wanted to become Speaker, and when I got to be Speaker I tasted power for the first time," he said, "I wanted to be Governor. I ran for Governor and got elected Governor and as it so happened when I was Governor a U. S. senator died, and I appointed a man to go up there and keep the seat warm, and then I ran for that." He said, "When I got to the Senate I undertook to study the rules very, very vigorously and make my mark as a young senator, and do well. President Roosevelt asked me to undertake some assignments for him. About that time the war came along. After the war I got interested in presidential politics, was nominated in 1948, ran myself in 1952, and by that time it was too late." He said, "I was too busy with my next project in my career to ever seriously undertake any, any courting, and I did myself a grave injustice in that regard." And I remember this, in my own personal life. On the--I had Senator Russell in my car. We were on the way to Marietta to a dinner for Judge Manning, and I was about to announce my engagement myself, and I was going to go see my wife's mother--her father was dead-- I was going to go see my wife's mother to ask for her hand in

marriage, and was a little nervous about that and didn't know exactly what to say about it, to say on such an occasion. I said, "Senator," I said, "I'm going to see Mrs. Brumby to ask for Bebe's hand in marriage." I said, "What do you say in a situation of that kind?" He looked over that way at me and said, "Well, I don't know why you'd asked me a question of that kind. I've never been married, never been through that in my life." He said, "Ask Miss Ina, she can tell you." Talking about Miss Ina Stacy, his sister.

CATES: Well, that's very interesting. Do you think that someone, a former associate, would know the name of this lady, that possibly I could interview her at some future date?

LEONARD: Are you going to talk to Mrs. Stacy?

CATES: Her name is not on the list, but I probably will.

LEONARD: That's his sister. I think, if I'm not mistaken, that lady's name was Mrs. Orr, but I'm not sure about that. I think her name was Mrs. Orr, and I think she lived in North Carolina. Now where, I've no idea. I never met Mrs. Orr, but Mrs. Stacy would know Mrs. Orr because, see Senator Russell lived with Mrs. Stacy during the war, Colonel and Mrs. Stacy, in Washington, and I think that this lady was a friend of Miss Ina's. I think Miss Ina introduced her to Senator Russell, but I'm not sure. Ask Mrs. Stacy. She'll know who I'm talking about.

CATES: Changing the subject a little bit, you said that the Senator did not believe in preventative maintenance as far as his car was concerned. Do you think this carried over into the area of his health? I'm not talking about in his later years, because he was in and out of the hospital quite a bit, but do you think maybe in his younger years he was abusive somewhat of his health?

LEONARD: Well, I can't answer that because I didn't know him then. But I know this much. He told me he smoked two and a half packs of cigarettes a day for thirty years, and he said, "Of course," he said, "I can say that is a contributing cause of this emphysema I have," but he said, "I can't say that is what caused it, because I have heard of people who have emphysema who've never smoked at all, in their life." But I know this about Senator Russell. In early, middle, and late years he worked hard. He worked himself to death, and the man conducted twelve, fourteen, eighteen hours a day, hour days up to two months before he died, and he was a very hard worker and an intense worker. He didn't socialize much. Now he did not get out here on the Washington cocktail circuit, you know, and was not what you'd call a "swinger" but he was a hardworking man. I don't know whether he ever, in his early years, you know, just charged on with the flu or failed to take good care of himself or not. I don't know, I just don't know, but he was a very hard working man, though.

CATES: Was Senator Russell concerned about pollution? To your knowledge? Of course, that came up later.

LEONARD: The temporary issue of pollution is here in the last years or so. Senator Russell had a great deal of interest, as I've said before, in navigable waterways. I think Senator Russell would be very vitally interested in the matter of pollution if he were alive today. He--I don't think--once

again, I think Senator Russell was interested in pollution, and every other issue, from a factual, "What are we going to do reasonably to protect the environment and continue to live and technical progress at the same time?" You know some of these, an issue like pollution has a great deal of emotion in it, once again, and some people fail to realize that if you are going to go down here in Savannah and completely eliminate all pollutants from the Savannah River, well you might as well take your Union Camp Bag Paper Mill and throw it away, and I don't think Senator Russell would reduce us to an agrarian society in order to have a completely clean environment. I think you are going to have to affect a reasonable compromise. Of course we understand that industry and individuals have got to give up some of the conveniences of life in order for us to continue, all of us together, to live; but Senator Russell would be the type of man who would reach for the common sense approach, the common sense compromise to any issue that permits all sides to continue to progress in whatever way they wish to, with reason.

CATES: I guess what really brought that to mind was the comment that you said that he made about smoking and that relationship to emphysema. Some people I guess get emphysema from pollution, for example, the smog--

LEONARD: They may, I--I'm not a doctor so I don't know.

CATES: Let me ask you this. What did he think about the United Nations? You said that he mistrusted the Russians.

LEONARD: Senator Russell said to me this very statement, that the United Nations as a world debating society, as a place where different viewpoints, different ideologies, different countries could come and spread those ideologies out for all to see and to debate and to discuss their differences was a pretty good situation, that it let off steam, that people had a forum where they could let off steam, that, in that context, United Nations served a very useful purpose. But Senator Russell felt that it was a frail reed indeed on which world peace would rest, that it, that if the United Nations as a peace keeping force were to be relied on by this country to keep the peace in the world, he said that would be disastrous, completely disastrous, because the United Nations was not equipped to defend this country against its enemies. He thought, he's used that phrase "frail reed" as an entity that would protect the freedoms of Americans. Senator Russell was a nationalist, there's no doubt about that, he was a nationalist, and proud of it, too. He said that if this world destroyed and we were reduced to Adam and Eve, that he wanted Adam and Eve to be Americans. I certainly agree with that. He was a nationalist, and I think there's great room for nationalists in this country. You've got to have somebody who's looking after America, and Senator Russell did and always did all his life.

CATES: Why did you--

LEONARD: Looked after Georgia, too.

CATES: Why did you leave his employ?

LEONARD: I had an opportunity to go to the Coca-Cola Company. I had been up there--when I went to Washington I went there with a definite goal in mind. I didn't want to stay in Washington

and make a career out of that. There's something very definite about this old "view of Potomac fever." That applies to members of the staff as well as it does to members of Congress as well, members of government. There's something glamorous about Washington as the center of everything almost. You are greatly tempted to stay there, and there's a great reward there. There's a challenging career to be found, and had in Washington, but it just wasn't what I wanted, and I did not enjoy the city of Washington at all; I didn't enjoy living there. It's not a very desirable place to live. I think you--I frankly just didn't want to leave the state of Georgia, the rest of my life. So I went up there with the idea of staying not more than five years, and I--be about two and a half, close to three--and about that time an opportunity for me with the Coca-Cola Company in public affairs--an area that interested me very much--came about, and I was offered the job and I took it. So I went to see the Senator. Told him, I said, "Senator, I've got a job offer in Georgia, and I want to talk to you about it." He said, "Well, I'm not going to make up your mind for you." He said, "When you decide what you are going to do you come in and tell me about it." That worried me, so I went in there and I told him, I said, "Well, I've decided to take this job." And I told him what it was, and he told me that he felt that I'd made the right decision.

CATES: Very interesting. What was your relationship with the Senator after you left his employ?

LEONARD: Very cordial. I maintained very close relations with the man because I wanted always to do that and make sure that they were good and close. I'd go see him every Christmas, and have lunch over there, in Winder. He always came to Winder for Christmas, and I'd go over there and sit around the table and chat with him, and I saw him frequently when I was in Washington, and kept up a right steady correspondence with him, as a matter of fact. When my two children were born, he sent them a little something, and it's been very close personal relationship with me, and with my wife--she's a distant relative of his; my brother-in-law was his first and only page in the Senate, and so it's been sort of a family thing since I married and before. The relationship with the Senator and myself I value very highly; the memory of it will always be with me.

CATES: You have--

LEONARD: I've got an oil portrait of him.

CATES: Do you have any firsthand knowledge as to how he spent his holidays? In Winder?

LEONARD: In Winder, oh yes. He--when Senator Russell would come to Winder he came there to relax, and he would see his friends when they came by. He didn't like to make formal appointments when he was in Winder, but he would. And he'd sleep sort of late in the morning, and come downstairs, eat a late breakfast, then he'd read--loved to read; he was a vociferous [sic] reader--walk back up to the cemetery in back of the house, tend the flowers and shrubbery that were there if the weather was pretty, come back, eat a little lunch, take a nap, and come down in the afternoon. Modine, his maid, had a dish that was one of his favorites, an onion casserole is what it was, he called it "the specialty of the house." And Modine would just throw it together. Nobody knew what the recipe was. He enjoyed that. Now this was, this atmosphere that I'm talking about is when he would come down for a long weekend, just to get some rest. Of course during

the off-season, now, when Congress was out--it's got to the point now where Congress stays in almost twelve months a year--but when I was with him, oh the Congress would adjourn around October, and we would have two or three months where we operated the Winder office. I'd come down there as a single man on his staff, a secretary and myself, and the Senator, and we'd operate an office in Winder. Senator Russell would go about the state making speeches, he'd try to make ten or twelve speeches during those days, and renew his friends and friendships and acquaintances about Georgia. Now he--when he was working there his office hours were just a little shorter than they were in Washington. He'd come in a little later than he did in Washington and leave, go home earlier, but it was pretty much work as usual; only the locale was different. But--and he would see just about everybody who came by; he wasn't as tied up as he was in Washington with his committees and all the other work. Any Winder citizen was invited to come to see him any time they wanted to; the door was open, just walk in. He was sitting in there. And he'd see most of the people in the state that wanted to come by and visit with him, in his office. But when he would come down for a long weekend, at the old family home over there, the emphasis was on rest and relaxation.

CATES: Earl, would you mind stating your salary while you worked for the Senator?

LEONARD: Yes, I made a great deal less than they're making up there now. They've got those salaries in the Senate in pretty good shape. I think when I was there I made, it was under \$10,000 a year. And--I don't remember exactly, precisely what it was. Think it was around \$9,000 a year when I left, I think that's right.

CATES: Did you have any kind of expense account?

LEONARD: Oh, no. There's no expense account in the Senate. Not then, not now.

CATES: And from what you've said I would judge that you put in about sixty hours a week at a minimum?

LEONARD: Well, it was six days a week, from around, from around 8:00/9:00 in the morning until 7:30 or 8:00 virtually every night. On Saturdays we used to leave around 4:30 or 5:00. Senator Russell said we were leaving in the middle of the day.

CATES: So really you didn't have much time to socialize?

LEONARD: No, you didn't. As a single man up there, by the time you'd, particularly on those dark, snowy, winter nights in Washington, by the time you got out of the office you, you had very little time to go, do any courting and socializing. You did most of your socializing in Washington; at least I did, on Saturday nights, that way. That was the only night you had where you could have a great deal of fun, you know, stay out late or anything like that.

CATES: And your compensation of course was being in the presence and working for such a great man, is that correct?

LEONARD: That's the compensation. Of course it was. The association with him, the time I spent in Washington, I learned more than I did in any formal education. I learned more in those nearly three years than I did in seven years in college, and I think anybody would, from any school, and because of the intensity of it. You had to perform. You either, you did the job or got out. It was a fascinating job. You were dealing with, with the most important people in the world, you were dealing with the issues of the day, it was a fabulous time, and something that is--been a large measure of what I have done since then and will do, whatever that may be, the rest of my life.

CATES: While you were his press secretary did he speak to the National Press Club or any other such organizations?

LEONARD: No, no, no. I'm not certain he ever spoke to the National Press Club--no, that would not have been his forum. See, he was not running for president or was not seeking national attention. He was on the "Today" show one time when I was there, he was on *Meet the Press* once, was on *Face the Nation* once, was the subject of a cover story by *Newsweek* magazine, and he'd been on all the national news--he was on every, every magazine. I'm talking about just the things that happened in my period there--things of this kind.

CATES: As far as you know was the Senator ever misquoted while you were his press secretary?

LEONARD: Oh, certainly.

CATES: If so, how did he react, and--

LEONARD: Certainly, certainly, certainly. There's no politician, no public official, I think, that will be free of misquoting--the press are human, and they hear things, you know, it was an amazing thing to me, you'd have a press conference, and there'd be two dozen members of the press sitting around that table, and a question was asked, and the Senator responded. You'd look around there and the pencils were all writing and the television was going, and cameras, and the tape recorders, well, you would read that story, by UP, you'd read it by AP, you'd see what the correspondents for the Georgia papers had written, and inevitably there would be some variance, and somebody would have a quote that was different from the others. It's just when people's ears hear different things, when they are listening, even though it's the same voice. So, yes, he was misquoted, and they'd make him mad as fire, but he was a tolerant man, he was a very tolerant man. He'd say, "I don't know why they can't get anything right," and then he'd say, "Well, that's the way it's always been, I guess it always will be that way." He was very tolerant of life itself, he truly was.

CATES: Did you ever hear him use profanity?

LEONARD: Not much, not much. He was not earthy, no.

CATES: What do you feel like you received of most value during the time that you worked for him?

LEONARD: The association with the man, the exposure to his mind, the exposure to his thought processes, the--actually watching the way he made a decision, and some of the basic philosophies and the basic disciplines that he went through in order to reach a decision; and the imprint on your own resume that you'd been on his staff. There are not many people--you can count on both fingers the number of staff people that he's had-- and not everybody in life has the opportunity as I did to serve on the staff of a major United States senator, so all of this combined--so much benefit, so many benefits to a young man.

CATES: You know personally of a faux pas that the Senator may have made while you were up there?

LEONARD: A faux pas?

CATES: Yes, a faux pas.

LEONARD: Oh, I can't think of anything outstanding, no. There are many funny stories about the Senator that people like to relate. No, I can't think of any particular faux pas.

CATES: Would you say that he was master of every situation?

LEONARD: Oh, yes, he strived very hard to master every situation, in a conference, to exert his own control over the situation. I think most strong people do that.

CATES: Earl, can you think of any other significant thing that you would want to mention that would be recorded by this tape recorder, that would go over to the archives at the University of Georgia concerning the Senator?

LEONARD: As a former employee, as a friend, I have no hesitation whatever to say that Senator Richard Russell is, if not the most, one of the very most remarkable and truly great men that this state has ever produced, a man of great patriotism, a first rate mind, energy, total dedication to the prospect of representing Georgia in Washington, not Washington in Georgia. He was a man of great common sense; he was not petty. He looked at a situation, and tried to view it totally through the common sense, factual and rational approach. For instance, if he would vote and fight vigorously against some spending project, some big spending scheme that would be proposed by the national administration, he'd fight it very severely in committee, on the Floor, elsewhere, but then after he vigorously opposed it he'd be the first in line, as he said, with his little tin cup to get Georgia's share of the money. Some people would say, "Well, that's hypocrisy." It's not hypocrisy; it's common sense. If you've got something--you may be opposed to it, but if they are pouring out money you might as well go get your share of it. Not to do so is a classic case of cutting off your nose to spite your face. Senator Russell never did that. He was a common sense disciple.

CATES: Thank you, Earl, I appreciate this interview, and if you think of anything else, don't hesitate to call me and I'll be glad to record it.