

## PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS

### Interview #2

December 6, 2006

**LANE:** On the [General Douglas] MacArthur hearings—those hearings were very important because he was becoming a full-fledged candidate for president and was being backed by much of the right wing of the Republican party, and various influential newspapers. Newspapers in those days were so much more important in politics than they are today.

I forgot to tell you that when McMahon used to travel around Connecticut, getting ready to campaign ahead of time, when we would go into a city he would always call on and chat with the political leaders. He would also visit the local newspaper and talk to the editor. Then he would do his thing at whatever the public gathering was, and then leave and go to the next town. But it was a regular practice that he would always call on the editor or publisher of the newspaper. As a result, he received a very good press, and most of the press was Republican in Connecticut, every one of the major papers was, except for the *Hartford Times*.

**RITCHIE:** But they took him seriously.

**LANE:** Yes, they took him seriously because he talked about serious matters.

**RITCHIE:** His issues weren't necessarily partisan. Nuclear policy wasn't a partisan issues, and foreign policy at that point was bipartisan.

**LANE:** To some extent. But Robert Taft was the Republican leader on foreign policy. He supported Herbert Hoover's "Fortress America" and opposed most of the Truman program, including NATO. Hickenlooper was charging the AEC with "incredible mismanagement" and they were looking for spies in the program. And the Foreign Relations Committee had the problem of McCarthy and the State Department. So on balance it was not any easy time.

There was a different atmosphere. McMahon was very fond of [Arthur]

Vandenberg. They worked well together. But back in the MacArthur hearings, which I did have something to do with, I was trying to get him some help on the committee from other senators. If you look at the transcripts of the first few days of the hearings, no one was willing to take him on. There were just some platitudes. They were afraid of him. I remember Frank Nash, I mentioned him earlier, he was an assistant secretary of defense. He had been a professor of mine in law school, and was a good friend. He said, “John, you’ve got to get some of these other senators to pitch in and follow up on some of these things.” I said okay, so I asked McMahon to call a few of them, late in the evening. I would listen in on the phone calls. On important calls, I would listen in. I mean, it was just accepted. I didn’t say anything, but I used to listen and take notes, and remind him of things. I listened in one time when I got him to call Lyndon Johnson, because Johnson was on the committee. I remember Johnson saying, “Brien, you’re the lawyer, you’re the prosecutor. We’re relying on you.” He wouldn’t give him any help at all. “We’re looking to you to carry the ball.” Thanks but no thanks. He then called someone else, I’ve forgotten who it was, trying to get some help to no avail.

**RITCHIE:** MacArthur’s presidential boom didn’t last for very long.

**LANE:** No, well, it was deflated right there.

**RITCHIE:** We talked the last time a little about Senator McMahon’s thinking about running for president, and he was a serious candidate in 1952. When did you start to get into planning that campaign?

**LANE:** He had it in mind ever since I went to work for him. First he had to control his own party in Connecticut. When he ran for reelection in 1950, Chester Bowles was the governor. Chester had grandiose plans also to run for president. The trouble was he didn’t stay long enough in Hartford. He had all kinds of major government reorganization plans for Connecticut. He made the mistake of referring to Connecticut’s towns—there’s like 169 towns in Connecticut, each one of them have their own town government. Counties don’t have anything much to do in Connecticut, except maintain a jail and a courthouse, but the towns have the power. The towns elect people to the legislature. He made the mistake of calling these beautiful little towns in Connecticut “rotten boroughs,” like it was in Brooklyn or someplace. He really turned off a lot of people, and the Bowles campaign was in deep trouble. His friends kept saying to

McMahon during the campaign he should help Bowles, as if he wasn't trying. He supported Bowles and the whole ticket but he couldn't run their campaign. John Bailey, who McMahon had installed as state chairman after the 1946 election debacle, had hitched his wagon to Bowles. He and his friends kept complaining, "McMahon's running his own campaign." As if he wasn't supporting them. McMahon would say, "Well, I'm the only one running for the Senate." [laughs]

In the legislature, they lost the House but they kept the Senate by a close margin. They lost the governor, the lieutenant governor, the treasurer, the attorney general, every office. McMahon blamed it partially on the voting machine that they used. They had a party lever. In other words, a voter came in and at the top of the ticket was Chester Bowles, running for governor. A lot of people would vote against Bowles and just pull the party lever of his opponent, and it would vote all the other offices. McMahon tried to get the legislature to change the rules so that each individual office had to be voted, you just can't block vote. And they wouldn't do that. He said, "If they had only adopted what I said, we would have won everything in the state except the governor." [laughs]

Every newspaper reporter from outside the state that was traveling to Connecticut to cover the campaign would always go to Hartford and they'd talk to Bailey, and they would get this report: "McMahon is running his own campaign." That irritated him. To follow up, after Hartford they would come to Norwalk to talk to McMahon, so he knew what they were saying.

After the election, Bailey came to Washington to see McMahon. McMahon calls me into his office, with Bailey sitting there, and he turned to me and said, "John, what do you think I should do with him? Fire him?" He just pulled it on me, out of the blue, right in front of Bailey. I said, "Well, there's a lot of work to be done to repair the party and I think he's probably the best one to help do it. And I think we can all work together." He left him alone, mainly because he didn't have anyone qualified to replace him. The whole episode was McMahon's way of punishing Bailey by embarrassing him in front of me. He also knew that Bailey worked hard at the job.

The next day after Truman announced at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner that he wasn't going to run, I called Bailey, without McMahon's knowledge. I said, "You better get yourself down here, because we're going to go." He did. He appeared that

afternoon. I didn't tell McMahon that I had called him, but I wanted to pull them together. He became chairman of McMahon's presidential campaign, but I was the one doing much of the work behind the scenes.

**RITCHIE:** What kind of campaign did you plan? Were you going to run him in the primaries?

**LANE:** We entered him in the primary in Illinois, against Estes Kefauver. McMahon had friends in Illinois because of the time when he tried the notorious gangster cases in Chicago for the government. A number of his friends were by then important political people. The U.S. attorney in Southern Illinois was a great friend of his. He got the mayor of Alton, Illinois, to head up a committee in Illinois. We were going to go all out. We had reserved the grand ballroom at the Hilton to be our headquarters.

McMahon went down to Puerto Rico for a vacation at Christmastime in 1951. He came back in January of '52. We were in New Haven and he was making a speech to a labor organization or a veterans group, I forget which, and his back was bothering him. It hurt him to sit, so he stood up for a while, up on the dias, and made his speech. I said to him, "What's wrong?" "I don't know, something's wrong with my back, I've got a back pain." We were in New Haven maybe a week after that and I remember he was in the Hotel Taft and he was in considerable pain. One of his friends there got the trainer for the Yale football team to come over and give him a massage, and that seemed to help. Then they had a big dinner in New York and they invited all the candidates. I remember it was Bob Kerr, and McMahon, and I forget who else.<sup>1</sup> But there were four or five candidates and they were all invited to speak for 10 minutes, at the Waldorf. We were there and he was in agony. I had a friend that was a lawyer in New York, who had a brother that was a prominent doctor. I asked him, "Do you think you could talk him into seeing him?" At the dinner, he performed very badly. He couldn't deliver his prepared speech very well. It was a poor performance.

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<sup>1</sup> On April 17, 1953, six Democratic presidential aspirants addressed a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York City. The speakers were Senators Brien McMahon, Estes Kefauver, and Robert S. Kerr, Governor Adlai Stevenson, Vice President Alben Barkley, and Ambassador W. Averill Harriman.

Later that night, I took him over to New York Hospital. He remained there for several weeks. Eventually, they discovered he had a tumor in the bone in the hip. It was inoperable, at that time, anyway. He was keeping it from us, and we were keeping it from him. As a matter of fact, I didn't know the truth for a while, because they kept saying it was his sacroiliac. I was covering up because we had a campaign going. He still wanted to make a formal announcement, and we thought it would be good for him. At the Ambassador Hotel—it's not there anymore—in New York, we had a large room and brought the Connecticut delegation down to visit him, and urge him to enter the race, and he agreed to do it. He made a little speech and the press was all there. In those days, newsreels covered things like that. But after that, he kept getting worse. I remember, we had to get him back to Washington somehow and there was no way he could ride in a commercial airplane. So I called the secretary of the Navy and asked to talk to his aide and said, "I've got a problem. I want to get the senator back here, but I don't want to have any publicity. Can we get an airplane?" One of those little Beechcraft ambulance planes that had a cot in them to transport patients. We used to use them in the Marines. He said, "I'll call you back." He called me back in half an hour and said, "When do you want to set it up?" So I sent George Carroll, because I didn't feel like flying up there, to Floyd Bennett Field. We hired a car to drive him out to Floyd Bennett Field, and then fly him back home to Anacostia Naval Air Station. Then they put him in Georgetown Hospital, and he died in July, right when the convention ended.

**RITCHIE:** Didn't you even have a headquarters for him at the convention?

**LANE:** Yes, I gave up the grand ballroom at the Hilton to Alben Barkley and moved to a smaller room. I put a direct telephone line from his bed at Georgetown Hospital to under the floor of the convention, near the Connecticut delegates, and I had them build a booth there. That was my phone booth, to be able to communicate with him. It got to the point where he was trying to watch it on television and it was very hard for him to even talk. It was kind of sad. He was keeping it from us, we were keeping it from him. We were doing it for him, to keep his spirits up. But he did see himself being put in nomination. Before Chicago, I had gone to Hartford, because he couldn't make it for the state convention where they elected the delegates. We got the delegates bound to vote for McMahan until released by him. Before I left for Chicago, I visited old Homer Cummings, the former attorney general, at his house. He and I drafted a nice letter from McMahan to John Bailey. McMahan was the chairman of the Connecticut delegation,

Bailey was the vice chairman, but McMahon not being there, Bailey was the acting chairman. So we wrote a nice letter and said that “my doctors have advised me that it would be unfair to go forward with this because I will not be able to campaign, and therefore I release my delegates.” But I had that in my pocket. All the other people were saying, “Who’s got the delegation, Bailey or Lane?” I had it, and I didn’t release it until I had an agreement with the Stevenson people, and the delegation went for Stevenson.

**RITCHIE:** What kind of an agreement?

**LANE:** Well, we’d be good friends. [laughs] After that they invited me to go out to Springfield, Illinois, to be on the campaign staff. I went out there for a short period of time and then left. I came to the conclusion that there was no way you could run a successful presidential campaign from Springfield, Illinois. They didn’t have the phone lines. They didn’t have the postal facilities. They didn’t have airline service. They had like two planes a day that went between Chicago and Springfield. It was just impossible. There was no place for the media. I said, “I’m out of here,” and I went back and ran [Abraham] Ribicoff’s campaign against Daddy Bush, Prescott Bush.

**RITCHIE:** Before we get to that, I was curious. If McMahon hadn’t become ill, what do you think his chances were that year? That was a wide-open convention.

**LANE:** Yes, it was.

**RITCHIE:** It took three ballots to nominate Stevenson.

**LANE:** Back in January, Averill Harriman came to his home and begged him to run. He said, “Gosh, Harriman came over to the house and he was just pushing me to throw my hat in the ring.” I think maybe Harriman figured he would be a favorite son from Connecticut and hold the delegation for him. And then secondly, one night Stevenson came by McMahon’s house. I think that Stevenson would have taken him as vice president. I have reason to believe he would have and was looking for him. You know, Stevenson was a “reluctant candidate who hadn’t made up his mind,” but he was running, despite his public posture. They would have made a pretty good ticket. Stevenson had been divorced, McMahon was a Catholic. You’ve got the McCarthy problem, McMahon could take that on. It might have worked.

McMahon and [Dwight] Eisenhower were good friends. Both of them loved to play golf and they used to play out at Burning Tree. Their wives were long-time friends, and the four used to play bridge together. I remember McMahon saying to me one day when we were walking down the Capitol steps, “If this guy Eisenhower wins, you and I will be okay.” [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** Even if he had gotten the nomination, any Democrat was up against Eisenhower.

**LANE:** Oh, yes, and would have gotten snowed. But if he had run, and handled himself well, he would have been in position for the next time around.

**RITCHIE:** Yes, because he was still only 48-years-old—

**LANE:** When he died, yes.

**RITCHIE:** So he could have even waited eight years.

**LANE:** He had a lot of talent, a lot of ability. Nobody’s perfect, but I was very fortunate that I was able to come here and work with him, because I can see other people that I sure wouldn’t want to work for, and that wouldn’t be a lot of fun. He gave me all kinds of authority and trusted me. One of his weaknesses was I think he trusted people too much.

**RITCHIE:** Well, in your case he got strong loyalty.

**LANE:** I gave him his money’s worth, yes. I used to sign checks with his name. I signed all his mail. He hardly signed any of his mail, unless it was something very important and it would be taken in to him, but I handled all the correspondence. We didn’t have the robo-pens in those days. I had to sign everything.

**RITCHIE:** How was it you went to Ribicoff’s campaign at that stage? Did you have any connections with Ribicoff before?

**LANE:** Oh, yes, I knew him when he was a congressman. He represented the first district in Hartford. He wanted desperately to get that nomination for the Senate. A couple of years earlier, one of the first attacks that McCarthy made was against Raymond Baldwin, Senator Baldwin from Connecticut. He was a former governor, a very well liked, moderate Republican, and a nice man. It was over the investigation of the assassination of Polish—was it Polish troops?

**RITCHIE:** Wasn't that the Malmady Massacre, it was in Belgium I think.

**LANE:** Belgium yes, involving the Germans, and McCarthy had a big German population in Wisconsin, with Nazi influence in it, and he didn't like the report that blamed it on the Nazis. He personally attacked Baldwin on the floor of the Senate, and McMahan went to his aid in the debates. But I think it soured Baldwin on the Senate, and Bowles appointed Baldwin to the supreme court in Connecticut. This created a vacancy and Bill Benton came in. Bowles appointed his old partner. But McMahan wanted that. Benton was a wealthy man, and McMahan wanted somebody that could fund their own campaign and wouldn't be draining money that he needed for his campaign. Bailey was a candidate, but Bowles said to McMahan, "It's going to be your choice." I think Bowles didn't want to alienate Bailey, so he put the onus or the burden on McMahan to tell Bailey that it wouldn't work. At that time, Ribicoff also wanted the appointment and he was very unhappy.

**RITCHIE:** Benton was a feisty senator, but he didn't last for very long.

**LANE:** No, well, he had to run twice in two years. He was appointed I think in January and he had to run that year, in 1950. He was elected by around 1,000 votes, in a very close race. He beat Prescott Bush.

**RITCHIE:** And Benton had taken on McCarthy as well.

**LANE:** Yes, I remember him coming over to McMahan's office. He said, "Brien, I want you to read this. I am thinking about making this speech against McCarthy, and I want your advice." McMahan said, "I don't want to read it." He said, "Yeah, but I want your advice." He said, "Bill, I know you well enough that you've already made up your



mind that you're going to do it. My advice won't make any difference." They both laughed.

Bill Benton made his fortune in the then relatively new advertising business in New York after graduation from college. He and his partner, Chester Bowles, started Benton and Bowles, which became one of the leading firms on Madison Avenue. They both sold out and decided to try public service at a relatively young age. Bowles became head of OPA during World War II, and Benton went to the University of Chicago as vice president and bought the Encyclopedia Britannica. He then served in the State Department in the early days of the Truman administration as assistant secretary for our foreign educational activities such as the Voice of America.

While in the department he developed the idea of a government-sponsored scholarship program for talented students to study abroad and in the process further America's interest in promoting peace and understanding. He had trouble trying to get support in the administration for such a new program. He also lacked a sponsor on the Hill. Finally, he persuaded William Fulbright, himself a Rhodes Scholar, to introduce Benton's bill. That's how they became "Fulbright Scholarships."

**RITCHIE:** That's interesting. You mentioned Abe Ribicoff. What kind of a candidate was he in '52?

**LANE:** Abe was a good-looking guy. He was studious, but it was night and day compared to McMahan. McMahan used to drive his own car—we called him "Barney Oldfield." Ribicoff's wife used to drive him around. I lived with them for awhile and got to really know them. With McMahan, he could go on television and talk. Ribicoff couldn't. I found that out because I made a deal with the New Haven TV station to take five minutes or ten minutes, I forget, every night, right after the news, we bought the time for him. I thought he could just go on, a good-looking guy, but he couldn't do it. He was never relaxed. He got scared, he got frightened by it. So okay, the next best thing would be to try to film it. Nobody up in Connecticut could do film, but we had prepared all these pieces for him. He came down here—we had a guy by the name of Bob Cord in the television gallery that had a movie camera and a studio, I guess he did it for some senators. He did those films, I don't know if they were kinescopes or what they were. So when we put them on television in New Haven, they looked terrible. The quality was

atrocious. He was just stiff as a board. We had to cancel that. It wasn't easy, and he was very nervous. He had money, but he was always very pessimistic. Maybe he had reason to be, because Eisenhower swept the election. But Ribicoff ran so far ahead of Stevenson that it set him up for the future.

He had never been in many of the towns of Connecticut. I took him around by the hand, introduced him to the people that I knew. In effect, he was riding on McMahon's coattails. He told me, "When I get elected, I want you to come with me and be my right arm." I said, "I've already decided I'm not going to work in politics or the Senate anymore. I want to get out." Then he offered me a job in his law firm in Hartford, which was a compliment. I didn't want that either.

**RITCHIE:** Why didn't you want to come back to Washington after your experience with McMahon?

**LANE:** Well, I did, and I did for a while. It took me forever to clean out his office. When a senator died in those days, you were off the payroll in 30 days. So I had no income. I had the office, and I spent my time getting jobs for everybody that worked in the office. I wind up as the only one with no job! That's when I went out with Stevenson for a while. I went out to Connecticut and brought my family up there when I ran Ribicoff's campaign, but after the campaign I came right back here. Then I decided to open an office, both here and in Connecticut. I started my office with no law books and nothing but a phone book. Then I joined forces with another lawyer that I was renting space from, we formed a firm, and before you know it I was flying all over the world and all over the country on some wonderful cases that I enjoyed.

**RITCHIE:** What kinds of cases did you handle?

**LANE:** I had two distinct practices. One in Connecticut was a local practice. I would do real estate closings. I would do wills. I would counsel people. I'd have office hours on Saturday and my waiting room would be full of people waiting. They worked all week and the only time they could come would be Saturday. And I enjoyed it. Then I had a federal practice here. I had a client that hired me to do work that brought me before the Federal Power Commission, gas pipeline litigation. Then I was counsel for the railroad. I met a guy who wanted to run a proxy fight to get control of the New York,

New Haven, Hartford railroad—the so-called New Haven line. He was looking for a lawyer to take it on the come. I had plenty of time, so I did it. And we won. He wanted to make me general counsel of the railroad and I said, “No, I don’t want to sit up in New Haven, Connecticut. I’ll be your lawyer and handle all your stuff in Washington.” He put me on a nice retainer, and I had the same thing with the pipeline company, and Bridgeport Brass was a major industry in Connecticut, they hired me for some work. I began adding clients, and building a firm, and hiring people to work for me.

**RITCHIE:** Did you keep the dual firms for a while?

**LANE:** I kept them for a while. Actually, I lived in Connecticut. I moved my family up there, bought a home and lived there for a couple of years. The business had me in Washington. My wife, who was a Washington girl, was up in Connecticut with her one child. I said, “I can’t do that.” I bought a house down here and moved the family back.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned that Ribicoff ran against Prescott Bush, the grandfather of the current president. Did you have much dealings with Prescott Bush at that point?

**LANE:** Not at the time, because he was on the other side of the fence. And I’ll tell you a little story about McMahon. Bush wanted to run against McMahon in 1950. McMahon had some very unfavorable press in the Hearst newspapers. The Hearsts were after him. They had a financial writer who kept writing negative stories about McMahon. His name was Leslie Gould. I used to have to go over to Union Station and get the *New York Journal-American* everyday to read what charges he had against him.

When McMahon was in private practice, he had represented an immigrant by the name of Serge Rubinstein, who was a stock-swindler. It was on an immigration case where they wanted to deport him. He had a Portugese passport he had procured somehow. McMahon argued the case and won it on a point of law that the government couldn’t look behind his passport. As long as it was a valid passport, they had to treat him as Portugese rather than Russian or whatever the hell he was. Also, this guy was a draft dodger. So they had McMahon representing a Communist and a draft dodger. Oh,

they ran a series of articles with a picture where he looked like a gangster. It just drove him crazy.

At one point, Bush made a political speech up in Connecticut, and he talked about the Rubinstein case. This case had happened before McMahon was in the Senate. McMahon wrote him a letter—I helped him draft it—in which he sent it to him “return receipt requested,” a registered letter. He said, “This is to put you on notice that if you ever make these irresponsible charges again, I’m going to prosecute you to the full extent of both the civil and criminal laws of Connecticut. Very truly yours.” And we never heard another word about it. This was before the *Sullivan* case, where public officials became fair game. In Connecticut it was particularly bad because you could attach before judgment. In other words, when you filed a law suit against someone for libel, you could put an attachment on their home or their bank account and tie them up. Imagine that! And that’s what he was threatening him with.

**RITCHIE:** And it worked.

**LANE:** Yes, it was the end of that. We never heard another word. He also—oh, God, this is another great story. Have you got another few minutes?

**RITCHIE:** Mmmhmm.

**LANE:** The Hearsts were campaigning against McMahon. They were trying to kill him politically. They had a following in the New York area, which included Connecticut, among Irish Catholics. McMahon wrote a letter to William Randolph Hearst, Jr. Hearst came to visit him. McMahon had a memorandum in which he disclosed everything he knew about Rubenstein and the whole history of the case. He gave it to him and said “This is grossly unfair.”

It didn’t do any good. They kept it up. Eddie Roddan was still there then. He said, “You know, they keep talking about draft dodgers, but these Hearst boys have some problems themselves. I think you ought to get hold of their draft records, the files, they’re in the government storage out in St. Louis, in a warehouse, all of the records of the Selective Service. Get the files on William Randolph Hearst, Jr., George Hearst, etc.” I said, “How the hell am I going to get them? They’re privileged.” Eddie Roddan pulled

out the book and he said, “Look, Harry Vaughn, the president’s military aide, is a member of the Selective Service board.” So McMahon goes down to see Truman, and Truman hated the Hearsts too, because they were after him with awful vicious stuff. In those days they were potent. They had the big paper in San Francisco, San Diego, in Seattle. They had a paper in Los Angeles, too. And Baltimore, New York—

**RITCHIE:** Chicago.

**LANE:** Chicago, yes, the *Chicago American*. And they were a problem. So Truman picks up the phone and calls Harry Vaughn and says, “Brien wants to get these things, get them over here in the White House, in your office.” So I’m told to go down and see Harry Vaughn. I go down, I drove my car and parked it there in the driveway like you used to be able to, went in and Harry Vaughn has all these boxes of files in his office. He said, “I don’t want them.” I said, “Yeah, but can I take them out of here?” “Oh, sure.” So he got somebody to help me load them in my car and I brought them up to the Senate. I had a couple of friends of mine who were FBI—this is a terrible thing to tell, but I think the statute of limitations has probably run now—they were FBI agents and good friends. In those days, you didn’t have xerox machines. They had to use cameras, one of those big cameras that the agents had, and they set it up on a tripod so they could take a picture of the documents.

Well, we got the darnedest stuff, every one of them had deferments and excuses. One of them had to support his mother—they were all multimillionaires. And William Randolph Hearst, Jr., he was a war correspondent, but he always got sent to nice places, but I looked in his medical records—he’s long dead so I can say this—here’s his medical records and he had a social disease. I’m in the office, in the Capitol on the first floor, my two buddies are going through the records and laughing. They were getting these documents and blowing them up, and in order to develop the films, they couldn’t take it to the FBI lab, they took it to a guy they knew down on Ninth Street, right next to the Gaiety Theater. [laughs] We got all these films and we bring them back, we’re laughing and looking through it on a Saturday morning.

McMahon comes in his office—and we’re working in *his* office in the Capitol. I said, “Boy, wait until you see this!” I had one blown up. McMahon said, “Oh, my God, this is something!” So we prepared a speech he gave on the Senate floor, in which he

demands an investigation of the Hearsts and their draft records (which he already had). Oh, it was a tough speech. You can find it in the *Record*, about how they almost destroyed this country with their vilification, their yellow journalism. He traced the whole history of old man Hearst and the Spanish-American War, and demanded a Senate investigation, and that was the end of the Hearsts. The Hearsts never did anything after that. It didn't go anywhere.

**RITCHIE:** But it was a shot across the bow, in other words?

**LANE:** Right. I remember him saying the Senate would be shocked if they saw some of these records. He was demanding to see them. [laughs] I remember Senator [George] Malone of Nevada, we called him "Heavy-headed Malone," he got up and tried to defend Hearst on the floor. They had a very nice guy who was their correspondent, Bill Tice, do you remember that name? He was up in the press gallery covering the event.

**RITCHIE:** Yes.

**LANE:** He was a decent guy, but he knew. I felt that he didn't like them either.

**RITCHIE:** So the advantage of having those records was you never had to release them, you just let them know you had them?

**LANE:** Right. There's another little story that's kind of cute. During the campaign of 1950, he ran against Joe Talbot, who had been a congressman, a very decent guy. McMahon didn't engage in running down his opponent. He just talked about himself and his plans, and his program for peace. But the Senate Republican Campaign Committee sent a guy up there who was working with the McCarthy group. He was living in Waterbury, Connecticut, which is an important city. Some of our operatives reported back to me and I got his name, and I sent it to my friends who had connections. They went through the files and they found out he had a criminal record, a long one. [laughs] They said, "Oh, this is going to be great!" I got it blown up on a big board: Look what they're sending into Connecticut to try to defeat Brien McMahon! We had the guy's mug shot and all of his arrests. I had it all ready to go. When he went on television that night in New Haven, we were going to blow this. It was going to be a great story. McMahon said no, he didn't want to do that. And actually, the guy's wife worked in the

secretary of the Senate's office. McMahon said, "No, the guy's got a family. I'll deal with guys who sent him here." He put his hand on my shoulder and said to me, "We're going to win anyway, we don't need this." I was all ready to expose the people working for his opponent, but I was shot down. [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** So this guy had a McCarthy connection, did you say?

**LANE:** Oh, yes. He was connected to Styles Bridges.

**RITCHIE:** I know McCarthy sent someone up to Maine to run against Margaret Chase Smith.

**LANE:** McCarthy came three times to Connecticut. We used Tom Dodd, who was out of favor with the party. The great story about Dodd—McMahon wanted to make him governor, but Tom had never been in the service. He got his friend Bob Jackson to appoint him to the trial staff at Nuremberg so he could come back and talk about the Nazi atrocities and get the Jewish vote in Connecticut. I mean, it was that crass. It would be a substitute for not being in the service.

When he came back he wanted to run for governor [in 1948]. McMahon said, "Okay, you've got to talk to"—I think it was about five people, leaders in the various sections—"you've got to go and make your deal with them, and we'll support you." Well, he never went to see the people. In the meantime, Bowles had gone to see these key people, and when Dodd came into the convention, Bowles had the delegates. Dodd got mad at everybody, "You're giving me a screwing here," and he left in a huff. But before he left in a huff, they got him in the backroom and they said, "Okay, you run for lieutenant governor." He agreed, and then Tom went out with some of his friends and they said, "Oh, no, Tom, don't let them do that to you." So he leaves. When the convention started and they started with the lesser offices and they get down to lieutenant governor, I remember Bailey was up there saying, "Get Dodd!" So they could nominate them. They went down to the hotel and found out he checked out, he had gone. So they pulled a guy out of the audience and said, "Do you want to be lieutenant governor?" He was a bank teller in one of the small towns up there, Bill Carroll of Torrington, and it was like he had a heart attack! He turned white, but he agreed. So they made him lieutenant governor, and he won.

So in a few months after Dodd struck out on being lieutenant governor, and Ray Baldwin quits. There's a vacancy in the Senate. If Dodd had gone along and been a good soldier and supported the ticket, he would have been in a favorable position to be appointed to the Senate. Then he realized what a mistake he had made and was very bitter about it. But when the campaign started and McCarthy came into the state, McMahan called Dodd in and said, "I want you to help me on this." He agreed.

We put him on television. He was very good on television. We gave him a very good speech about: "Who is this man who's coming in here from Wisconsin telling the good people of Connecticut how to vote. Let me tell you about him." And he went on. And it worked. It did the job. Then after that, Tom wanted a federal appointment. McMahan took him down to Truman and said he helped him in the campaign. He wanted to be appointed to one of the regulatory commissions, and they promised him a job. Because Dodd had been close to McMahan, he began to get some good law business. But then he lost interest when he got some good clients and was making more money.

**RITCHIE:** Yes, he got his Senate seat eventually. You were going to mention something about Prescott Bush, did you ever have any dealings with him?

**LANE:** Yes. I mentioned earlier that I was counsel for the New Haven Railroad, and the New Haven Railroad got into financial difficulty and hard times because it was darned near wiped out by the hurricane in—

**RITCHIE:** '38?

**LANE:** No. Well, 1938 they went through bankruptcy on that and they rebuilt it, but this was in 1955. The hurricane washed away a lot of the railroad and they were out of money, they needed government loans. I remember, Bush was very critical of them, and the management—and the management made some mistakes. I went to see him and he was very nice to me. I kind of pulled him off of the attack, and it worked. And then I was invited to his house one night. We had mutual friends, and he and his wife had us for cocktails out on their front porch in Greenwich, Connecticut. So I had a cordial relationship with him.



**RITCHIE:** He had a civil reputation.

**LANE:** Yes, he was a pretty nice gentleman.

**RITCHIE:** And he wound up voting to censure McCarthy, too.

**LANE:** Yes, thank God.

**RITCHIE:** You had a pretty active career with your law firm in the 1950s, but you were appointed then to a special commission when Kennedy became president.

**LANE:** That was in 1961.

**RITCHIE:** Had you been involved in the '60 campaign at all?

**LANE:** Yes, and I had been involved a little bit in the two Stevenson campaigns, as an advance man, just to keep my finger in. I got to meet some wonderful people who down through the years became very important. Some of them became senators, others became important lawyers and judges. I'd advise any young man to get in politics, it's fun. And also you meet some people that you'll see again in life, in high places. I worked with Newton Minnow in the Stevenson campaign.

**RITCHIE:** What kinds of clients did you have in communications practice?

**LANE:** I had one of the major broadcasters, Westinghouse Group W. I had Motorola, which was developing all kinds of other uses for the radio spectrum, which was very tight, working with them in getting spectrum for all their engineering devices, like the cell phone, which came later. I worked on that case. I represented President Carter in a major case that I won at the Supreme Court. When he wanted to announce his candidacy for reelection, he wanted to buy a half an hour of time. He went to each of the three networks and they all denied him. There was a provision in the act, which had never been tested in the courts, which said a federal candidate has a right to reasonable access. We won a split decision before the commission because of politics. I forget how many commissioners we had in those days, but it was like three to two, something like that. The networks appealed to the United States Court of Appeals, and I won it in the

United States Court of Appeals on a split vote. It went to the Supreme Court, and of course being an FCC decision, the solicitor general takes over, but I worked with him on the brief and sat with him during the oral argument, and we won it in the Supreme Court. It was a major decision.

**RITCHIE:** How political was the Federal Communications Commission in those days?

**LANE:** It's always been political, as most commissions are. It's unfortunate. It doesn't have to be. They are supposed to be independent. They're carrying out Congress' work, using powers given to Congress under the Constitution. They create these agencies because they don't have time to do that work. I tried to talk to the Republicans to get behind this case, because it would help them, too. But they didn't want Carter to have any time. It was kind of stupid. I talked to their lawyers. I said, "Gee, you should be right here with me on this case." Because these networks were saying we'll tell you when you can start your campaign. The networks said that it was too early to campaign, and yet they were running promos for their news, talking about their election coverage on the same network that says it's too early.

**RITCHIE:** In those days there really were only three networks, you didn't have all the cable networks, so if they said no there was no alternative.

**LANE:** Yes, you couldn't reach the national audience, and that's why I won. Also I had a major case—I made my living fighting the television networks, because they had such a powerful hold on the local stations. Westinghouse had stations affiliated with all three networks, CBS in Pittsburgh and San Francisco, NBC in Boston and Philadelphia, and ABC in Baltimore. They were also in the program business and in the news business. They had a lot of things going. They had a young man, Donald McGannon, who was my client who was running the show. They had a lot of interesting cases. But we brought a proceeding before the FCC which charged the networks with unduly restricting and restraining the local television stations, which led to an investigation of the networks, which led to rules adopted by the commission to open up prime time—what we call the "prime-time access rule." I have been called the father of the prime-time access rule because I argued that case and I won that in the courts, too, against Lloyd Cutler. We became good friends, but we were always on the opposite side.

He was always representing CBS. There were a number of wonderful cases that I worked hard on, and had some measure of success. Eventually, I became president of the Federal Communications bar.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned that you were involved in the 1960s campaign. What did you do then?

**LANE:** I knew Jack Kennedy quite well, and I knew Robert, but not as well. Robert was running the campaign. Their campaign quarters were right above my office at 1001 Connecticut Avenue. Steve Smith had been one of my students when I was up at Georgetown, he was Kennedy's brother-in-law. I can tell you an interesting story about Kennedy that most people don't know. He was elected in '60 and was assassinated in '63. I wasn't working on any official job, but I used to talk to them from time to time. I tried to convince them—I talked to Steve Smith, who ran the political operation from outside the White House. He had an office down in the Esso Building, which is gone now, where the Labor Department is. I said, "You should pick your opponent, force the Republicans to nominate somebody [in 1964] who we decide can be most easily defeated." This was my strategy. They said, "How do you do it?" I said, "Well, you get your guys to begin to attack him, every time he says something, take him up, get him in the limelight, make him a spokesman for the other side." I said, "This is what Charley Michelson [publicist for the Democratic National Committee] did for [Franklin] Roosevelt in 1936. He picked Alf Landon, the governor of Kansas, and they got the secretary of agriculture to attack him. They got the Home Loan Bank Board, everybody, and they built him up, and then he'd have to respond. They had him in the newspapers." I said, "You do the same thing." They said, "Who do you think?" I said, "[Barry] Goldwater." "Goldwater!" I remember one of them saying, "I'd be afraid of him." I said, "Listen, he would be perfect. Start it." So they did. I remember Steve called me up and asked me if somebody could work in the backroom in my office, the place for files, where he could do research. It was a guy named Milt Gwirtzman, who worked for Teddy Kennedy, and said it was not appropriate for him to do this work in the Senate. I said, "Sure, I'll give you a room in the back, where nobody can see him. He can come and go as he wants." He was doing the Goldwater research. They agreed, they were running with it. About four or five days after the assassination, that was folded up and gone. But it was already underway, and it worked for Johnson. It was no contest.

**RITCHIE:** So you give the other person free publicity by attacking them—

**LANE:** Right.

**RITCHIE:** And making them in the eyes of the press look like a contender.

**LANE:** In the eyes of their own party. “He’s a stand-up guy,” you know. Eddie Roddan was the one who talked to me about that because he worked for Charley Michelson. He told me how they did it, and I tried to do the same thing for Kennedy. I was just copying what Roddan had told me. I can’t claim that I caused all this, but I know that I planted the seed, and I know that it was being nurtured.

**RITCHIE:** Well, that’s an interesting strategy, I wonder if it’s been used other times. Can you tell me about the White House commission you were appointed to?

**LANE:** Yes, I read in the paper one morning in 1961 about how Kennedy was going to appoint this special commission, by executive order, that would look into the problems of the independent agencies of the government. A mutual friend came into my office that morning and I showed him that. He was heading to the White House. He said, “Would you like to be on that?” I said, “Gee, I’d love to be on that.” Because I was handling all these cases before the Federal Power Commission and having a terrible time with the deficiencies in the whole process. He said, “I’m going over there, I’ll ask them.” So he had a meeting with the president and he said, “You know John Lane.”

Kennedy said, “If John wants it, he can have it.” So he called [James M.] Landis in, and Landis said, “We’ve already picked all of them and we’ve already told them.” He said, “Well, take one of them off. If John wants it, give it to him.” [laughs] So I got a call from Jim Landis. Ted Reardon also phoned from the White House. He was in the meeting with Kennedy.

**RITCHIE:** So the panel was supposed to reexamine the regulatory commissions?

**LANE:** Yes, and they were talking mainly about procedures. We worked hard for about a year and issued a report, which nobody paid much attention to, but there were some reforms that we got them to do internally, on their own. We had law professors that

were reporters for committees that we formed. They would examine certain things in the agencies and then come up with a report, and then the agencies would adopt them. None of them were monumental, but they were all helpful.

**RITCHIE:** Well, Kennedy certainly reinvigorated a lot of those commissions. That was more of an active time for them, Newton Minnow and others.

**LANE:** Yes, but Jim Landis was behind all of that. Of course, Kennedy wanted him to do it. Because the agencies were in bad shape under the Eisenhower administration. There were scandals and outright corruption.

**RITCHIE:** They seemed to become more active in terms of trying to promote reform in their fields.

**LANE:** Yes, and that was work. We used to meet on Saturdays. Meet all day. Barrett Prettyman, Judge Prettyman, was the chairman, and he worked us. But it was great for me, because I was sort of the junior and these were all the experts, except me. I was just a lawyer.

**RITCHIE:** It must have put you good standing when you were going to deal with these commissions later on.

**LANE:** You would hope so, but I don't know. They probably didn't like us for it.

**RITCHIE:** In the '60s you continued your work in communications. Did you have anything to do with the Johnson administration?

**LANE:** No. I knew Lyndon Johnson well. As a matter of fact, I represented him when he bought his house from Pearl Mesta. Well, actually, I represented Pearl Mesta, because when Phil Graham of the *Washington Post* told Johnson that he needed a better house—he was living up off of Connecticut Avenue, back on I think it was 30<sup>th</sup> Street, in a small house. He told him he was vice president of the United States and he needed to have a much nicer place to live and entertain. So Johnson told him to go find him a place, and Phil Graham got Pearl Mesta to sell her house, Les Armes, which they changed to The Elms, up on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, which happened to be just around the corner from where I

lived. Pearl had a certain figure that she wanted, net, net, net. She didn't want to pay any costs or anything else, so Johnson had to get her a lawyer, so they called and asked me to do it. Bobby Baker called me. I said, "Sure, I'll do it." What the heck. Covington & Burling who represented the *Post* were representing Johnson. I assume neither of us was paid.

I used to see him from time to time. He called me "Johnny." I took him to Hartford, the first time he had ever been in New England. This was when he was the Senate majority leader. He agreed to go up there to talk to a Democratic dinner when Ribicoff was governor. I got a plane from Westinghouse and we flew up. It was the first time he had ever been in New England. So I knew him well. I knew Bobby Baker very well.

**RITCHIE:** What type of a person was Bobby Baker?

**LANE:** Bobby was a very sharp guy, very reliable. McMahon used to say, "If I want to find out what's going on on the floor of the Senate, I ask him, because he pays attention." He was a very valuable employee, and I found him very straightforward. He always gave you a straight answer. Very reliable. I think he got a very bad deal. It was because of Senator Kerr, and a bad judge.

**RITCHIE:** In what way?

**LANE:** He was enamored with Kerr because Kerr had a lot of money. Kerr used his money to help himself with other people, other senators who didn't have money and so forth, he would give them money, in cash. And Bobby Baker became the guy who used to hold the little tin box that they had. They called it the "leadership fund." He started going into business with some people that he shouldn't have, and he was building a hotel in Ocean City. A big hurricane came and severely damaged the project. He was in trouble financially. Kerr gave him money to put him back on his feet. It was cash money, there was no paper trail, but Kerr died and Baker lost the only witness to the deal. He was accused of taking the money and not paying income tax on it, and he went to jail, which was a real tragedy. I liked the guy a lot. I found out later that the judge in the case had a very strong dislike for Baker's lawyer, Ed Williams, which I feel hurt Baker's case.

**RITCHIE:** But yours was just a friendship with Johnson, you didn't have any particular dealings with his administration?

**LANE:** No, I was practicing law at that time. I never asked him for anything. I knew his administrative assistant, who also came to a tragic end, Walter Jenkins, a very nice guy. I used to work with him when I was up here. I also knew Hubert Humphrey very well. I worked as an advance man for him when he was vice president, running for president. That was during the Vietnam War. They wanted me to help them, and I said, "Okay, I'll handle it when he has to go to a military base." I went to Key West, Florida, to the Naval Air Station, where he inaugurated some water desalination plant, and then I did the Coast Guard Academy, where he spoke to their graduation, in New London, where I could have protection. Because everywhere else you'd get killed by the protesters.

I was at that convention in Chicago in 1968. I was actually supposed to monitor the Connecticut delegation, to keep them in Humphrey's camp. That was my job, so I was with the Connecticut delegation out there.

**RITCHIE:** I guess the most famous moment of that convention was when Ribicoff and Mayor Daley faced off against each other.

**LANE:** Wasn't that awful? Disgusting. But Ribicoff loved to have a whipping boy. He did that while he was governor. He had to have somebody to beat up. Then everybody would cheer him. I remember they had a deputy motor vehicle commissioner who was just a political hack from Hartford. He did something in the motor vehicle department, like gave a driver's licence to someone who had it taken away for drunk driving, or something like that, and the press got hold of that. Oh, Ribicoff was so indignant. Fired him publicly, so the public would applaud. He was kind of tough.

**RITCHIE:** He had a sense of theater, at least.

**LANE:** Oh, yes. He was very attuned to the public and particularly the press. One of the editors of the New Britain paper's son was killed in a traffic accident, and the next day Ribicoff proclaimed a crack down on speeding. Anyone that went over the speed limit loses their driver's license. Big war on speeding. But great from the public

standpoint. But if some other kid had gotten killed it would have been nothing. It was because it was the editor of a paper that supported him.

**RITCHIE:** You mentioned that your time with the Senate was relatively short, but it was a good time to be here because there were a lot of people just beginning their careers in that short period who were going to be dominant figures in politics for another generation.

**LANE:** Well, Johnson was one of them. He was new to the Senate.

**RITCHIE:** Johnson, Humphrey, Nixon, they were all in the Senate at that stage.

**LANE:** Yes, I saw them all up close. I got to know Jack Kennedy because McMahon was home ill when Joe Kennedy called him and told him he was going to enter Jack against Cabot [Henry Cabot Lodge] for the Senate. I walked in when he was talking to him on the phone. He hangs up and he says, "Joe is going to enter Jack." I said, "Jack Kennedy for the Senate? Really?" Because I knew Jack, and he was a playboy. A nice guy, riding around in the Cadillac convertible with the top down, living it up in Georgetown, because I lived up there too at the same time. I knew Jackie. She used to come in to Billy Martin's tavern up there, with her camera. I said, "My God!" But he said, "I'd rather have a Kennedy in the Senate than a Lodge."

He told Joe, "Look, they're going to say that the Democrats lost China." He said, "We had these extensive hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Far East and what to do about it." And he said, "If you go through the hearings, we had everybody in, all the experts, the secretary of state and everyone." And he said, "It was almost unanimous, and you can see it in the record, that we agreed there wasn't much you could do in China. We never did have China to lose in the first place. All you can do," he called it "matches and gasoline," a little sabotage here and there, a little CIA operations. "But Cabot Lodge," he said, "is on the record agreeing with this, but the hearings are classified and they're in the Foreign Relations Committee." Joe called him back and said they couldn't get access to them. McMahon said, "I'll get them and have them in my office. Have Jack come and see John Lane, he'll have them." I remember Cy O'Day, who was on the committee staff, got them. We hauled them down to McMahon's office, just down the hall, and I had them back in his office (McMahon was then sick).



So every day Jack Kennedy would come over and read these. I got to know him a little better, because I knew him before that, but got to know him a little better. Then there were a couple of other things best left not mentioned, [laughs] which I helped him on.

**RITCHIE:** When he was running in '52?

**LANE:** No, in 1960, it was another young lady that some of his opponents knew about and were trying to document. I alerted him to it, and he was really grateful.

**RITCHIE:** I know that James Landis worked on that '52 campaign, and he said that was when he began to take Kennedy seriously. That when Kennedy was in the House he hadn't been that impressive.

**LANE:** That was my attitude, yes.

**RITCHIE:** But when he campaigned for the Senate he got more serious about what he was doing, and impressed Landis much more at the point.

**LANE:** Right, he impressed me, too, and after he got in the Senate, but not before. I had the same reaction. I have a picture of the Senate when they were considering the NATO treaty in the Old Senate Chamber. You probably have that.

**RITCHIE:** I've seen pictures taken in there, yes, when they were doing the renovation of the current chamber they moved back in there. That was 1950.

**LANE:** Right. For the whole year we were in there. It was very crowded, but very nice.

**RITCHIE:** Very convenient for your office.

**LANE:** Oh, yes, everything was convenient to my office. They had a Senate law library up off the gallery. Years later I was working on a book about McMahan and I went up there to do some research. I talked to the very nice man who was the librarian at the time, he's now retired, and he told me something which I thought was very interesting. He said, of all the senators, all the time he worked there 25 years or

something, there was no more than a handful—he said you could count on one hand the number of senators that have looked into the library and there was only one that ever used it to any degree, who personally went there and used the library, McMahan. When he was working on his Atomic Energy legislation in 1946. He said, “He used it extensively, and I helped him.” I thought that was very telling. The only senator that ever personally used the library.

**RITCHIE:** Everyone else sent their staff to do that kind of work.

**LANE:** Or the Legislative Reference Service, the staff doesn't even do it.

**RITCHIE:** I did a Google search on your name and I came across a couple of articles about your confrontation with the Reagan administration, when you were on the ABA panel.

**LANE:** Oh, yes, on the standing committee on the federal judiciary, right.

**RITCHIE:** I was curious about that and hoped you would talk a little about that.

**LANE:** Well, I was on that ABA committee for two different terms. It required a lot of work. We would get from the attorney general the name of someone that they wanted us to investigate and evaluate. We had regular procedures for doing this. They would give us a questionnaire filled out which listed all of their important cases, the opposing counsel, the judge that handled it. We would start out by going through that and talking to their peers, and see how they were evaluated. In the beginning of the Reagan administration, when William French Smith was the attorney general, everyone they appointed was a conservative, but they were good lawyers, solid lawyers, so we didn't have any trouble with them, because we weren't supposed to look at their politics. Leave the politics to the president and the Senate, we only looked at their professional qualifications, and how they were regarded by their peers, and by the judges. It took a tremendous amount of work. You have to prepare a detailed report and a report on each interview, and that goes to all members of the committee, when you finally have a recommendation. Then it does not go to the administration. We only gave the attorney general a well-qualified, qualified, or non-qualified rating. They never got our report on the background, those were destroyed afterwards.

I kept track of my time and one year I had over a thousand hours on this. I had the United States District Court, the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, and then the Federal Circuit, I had two circuits. I had a number of Supreme Court nominees. I found it so easy to deal with the members of the Supreme Court. I would just call them on the phone and they would either take the call right away or return it immediately. They were most helpful, if they knew the candidate.

I did [William] Rehnquist, and testified at some length on Rehnquist. I don't know whether you picked that up. My Democratic friends were not happy with my testimony.

**RITCHIE:** But you were talking about his professional qualities, not his politics.

**LANE:** Right. I took a position that he had already been confirmed and was a member of the court for life. Some of them were looking at it like here's a new judge. I said, "Look, the guy's already on the court. He's on there for life. The only question is—it's a narrow question—what kind of a *chief* justice would he be." Let's see what are the important qualities for a chief justice: they have to be collegial; they have to have a good administrative capability; they have to be willing to make improvements and changes; but the main thing is they have to be able to get along with their colleagues. I started out talking to everybody up on the court. I got wonderful reviews. The best ones were the liberals. One of them said, "Talk to the little people around here, the people who work around here." And I did, I talked to the clerks, I talked to ex-clerks, I talked to the other justices' clerk, everybody gave him high marks. So I surprised them in the hearing by testifying for him. It's all laid out there.

**RITCHIE:** You said that William French Smith initially sent up very competent lawyers—

**LANE:** Yes, he had respect for the courts and he was a good lawyer himself. He wouldn't put any political hacks on the court. But boy, when [Edwin] Meese got in there, we started getting down to the bottom of the barrel. I had several of them that were clearly not qualified. Some didn't have any trial experience. How are you going to put a guy on a trial bench who never tried a case? That's crazy. It's all right to have a couple of them on the Court of Appeals, you can put some law school professors there, but not

on the trial bench. And we found some of them—there are things that the FBI doesn't pick up because people are afraid to talk to the FBI, they are concerned that under the Freedom of Information Act it may be discovered, so they don't get much. In our system, we're able to give confidentiality and we'll hang by it. I had several candidates that were not only not qualified but they had some problems of a rather serious nature. The chairman of the committee is the only one that deals with the Department of Justice. I would tell the chairman, "This is really a problem," and he would talk to them and say, "Do you want us to continue this, because if we do, it's looks like it's not going to be good." They would have to come back to us and say, "Continue it," if they got their back up, or they'd say, "Thanks a lot," and the guy withdraws. Then there's no publicity, nobody knows, rather than make a fight out of it. It's kind of delicate work, and you're dealing with people's lives and their careers. But there are basic criteria, standards that we tried to maintain. It's tough. Takes a lot of time, a lot of effort.

**RITCHIE:** At some point, they decided that you were against them and tried to get you off the committee.

**LANE:** They did. They got an incoming president of the ABA not to reappoint me. [laughs] The *Wall Street Journal* had a couple of dirty editorials. It wasn't true. It said I leaked information. I never leaked any information. Anyway, the next year I was back on the committee with a new president of the ABA. He felt very badly. I remember we have a dinner at the American Bar Association, I guess it's the midwinter meeting, at which the president of the American Bar is there, and past presidents, the attorney general, the deputy attorney general, and everybody else. Bob Fisk was then chairman and mentioned me. Everybody stood up and I got a standing ovation—and Meese is sitting there! [laughs] It was kind of nice, particularly for my wife, who worries about these things.

**RITCHIE:** It reminds me of when the Senate goes through confirmation hearings. Administrations automatically assume that anybody they send up should be confirmed. If your party is the White House, senators are willing to bend over backwards. But I remember when Jimmy Carter sent Bert Lance's nomination up to head the OMB, Senator Ribicoff was chair of the committee that handled that nomination and they shot him right through. After he got confirmed, then all the bad news started to break about him. Ribicoff later said they didn't do Carter any favors by not scrutinizing

the nomination, and no one was ever going to get a free ride in his committee anymore. It's sort of like the ABA, the worst thing would be to let this nomination go forward and then find out about their record.

**LANE:** Well, it was a great process for the administration, but you know, politics is politics. I was just so glad to get off and do some regular legal work. There was something else I was going to mention: I worked in the White House, too.

**RITCHIE:** When was that?

**LANE:** For Clinton. I was in the White House counsel's office as special counsel, working on judicial appointments for the circuit courts.

**RITCHIE:** What years were that?

**LANE:** It was when he first came in, what year was that?

**RITCHIE:** 1993.

**LANE:** He took office in January of '93 so it was probably the summer of '93, '94, and probably part of '95. Then I just got too busy with other things, and I had some health problems, so I gave it up.

**RITCHIE:** You were vetting nominations?

**LANE:** Yes. They would have maybe two people that they would narrow it down to and then they'd ask me to do my own investigation, and I'd do the same thing I did with the ABA. I'd call people. I had by that time a number of lawyers all over the country that were prominent and knowledgeable. I had good contracts with lawyers and judges to get real good evaluations. Then I would do my little report and that would be it. It was kind of fun.

**RITCHIE:** What's it like working in the White House?

**LANE:** It's kind of chaotic. [laughs] It's a lot of people, a lot of very young people, but most of them of good cheer, and kind of fun. The one thing about being in the White House, when you telephone someone, the secretary says "he's not available" and starts to take your number, as soon as you tell them that you're in the White House Counsel's office and you need to talk to him, they say, "Oh, just a minute, let me see," and boom, bing, you get him on the phone. [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** That's the ultimate clout.

**LANE:** Right, that was kind of fun. Most of my work I did by telephone.

**RITCHIE:** Well, you've seen the government from all sides, legislative branch, judicial, and executive.

**LANE:** Right, and I've enjoyed every bit of it, as you can tell. There's probably a lot of other things that I could talk to you about, but I don't want to take any more of your time.

**RITCHIE:** Well, it's been very interesting to go back and look at that time period. You worked for one of the more interesting people on Capitol Hill. He had a short career, but it was a memorable one.

**LANE:** Yes, it was like a skyrocket. It was really rolling, and then it's gone. But he had a good name, and it lasted. It helped me that I worked for him.

**RITCHIE:** Did you find that your identification was that you had worked for him?

**LANE:** Yes, and that helped me, because I had nothing when I went off the payroll. I'll tell you one thing that disappointed me a little bit. Some of the people around the Senate, particularly the committee staff members, used to be very pleasant and very anxious to help when they thought that McMahan might be the chairman, but when he was dead they hardly knew me. That happened, I noticed that, and even in the management of the place, the secretary of the Senate's office, I remember Les Biffle, who was always solicitous of McMahan. I'd walk down the hall and he'd be coming the other

way. I'd say, "Hi, Les," and he'd hardly even notice me. I was young, but I had a good lesson on human nature. I think you know what I mean.

**RITCHIE:** Right. When you know that a person worked for a particular senator, they often take on the characteristics of that senator.

**LANE:** Oh, they do! Bobby Baker started talking like Lyndon Johnson, like he was from Texas.

**RITCHIE:** But you know that if somebody worked for Senator so-and-so you can trust him, or you have to watch out for them.

**LANE:** Right. I had a number of cases representing people before congressional committees, mostly over on the House side. I represented the president and chairman of Westinghouse in Kefauver's investigation of their antitrust cases. It was kind of a difficult period for them. Kefauver was very tough, but his staff was weak, so we did very well.

**RITCHIE:** That's another thing, senators are known by having good staffs that give them extra status in the Senate. I guess it can also work the other way as well.

**LANE:** Sure. Anyway, I had a good run.

**RITCHIE:** Well, thank you very much.

**LANE:** Than you very much. This was exciting for me.

**End of the Second Interview**