

REIN J. VANDER ZEE
ASSISTANT TO THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC WHIP
AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE MAJORITY
1961-1964

Oral History Interviews
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RITCHIE: I wanted to start by asking about your roots. You're from Texas originally. Where about?

VANDER ZEE: Near San Antonio. Actually, I was born and lived my first eight years in San Antonio. Then the family home was moved fifty miles away into the Texas Hill Country to the west of the more famous part which is Johnson's home in Johnson City. We're about a hundred miles to the west of there. But it's similar country. It's rural and subsistence agriculture is the only economy. It's a rugged life. But it's beautiful country, and people come there and get to know and like it. It's become quite a retirement area for people that didn't know about it before. I think if there is anything that President [Lyndon] Johnson contributed to Texas it was a knowledge of the Texas Hill Country that more or less became national, where before his time it had been localized thing. So that's been my family base for all my life.

RITCHIE: What did your father do?

VANDER ZEE: He was a career soldier. My father was an immigrant from the Netherlands. He came to this country in the

early part of the century; and after going to farm with a brother in South Dakota and Minnesota, where they had farms in both states, he entered the military in World War I and then remained in the military until he died. One piece of family history I've never been able to uncover is why he went to the military and his brother, who remained on the farm, did not. I'm assuming that they had an exemption situation in those years similar to World War II and that they either agreed or drew lots for the exemption.

But in any event, my father made a military career and died and is buried in the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. He died early in life at age 42, prior to the outbreak of World War II, which might have been fortuitous for him because my mother often said he probably would have died as a result of what happened in the Netherlands and to his family in World War II. But that's the background of his side.

RITCHIE: You grew up on military bases then?

VANDER ZEE: I was born in Fort Sam Houston in 1928. In 1936 the folks built this place in the country, which is the family home, intending to use it for their retirement home when my father left the military. He had over twenty years at the time of his death. After they built the home, he promptly passed away within a year or so. We didn't live on a military base but a very short time in the early years.

RITCHIE: And so you attended public schools around the area there?

VANDER ZEE: I began in public schools in San Antonio for the first and second grades. When we moved to the country in 1936, I was in the third grade. I went to little one-room school. There were about sixteen of us kids. We had one teacher who taught about seven grades. We all got there on our own—no buses. My younger brother, who was in the first grade, and I walked, and some of the other kids rode their horses. There were no paved roads in the area at that time, so you couldn't use bicycles or anything like that. It was either hoof it or horseback. We didn't have horses so we hoofed. But it's a part of my personal life and upbringing that I recall with great pleasure.

We had outhouses, and we had a cistern that caught the rain water when it ran off the roof, and each day somebody in the school had the duty to pull the water from the cistern to put it in the water cooler for the kids to drink. Of course we all brought our lunches. There weren't any school lunch programs in those days. [laughs] I've always thought that the people in today's world who think they are being deprived really aren't. All they really need to do is want to learn.

But anyway, I attended public schools both in San Antonio and Bandera, which is this little town and county. And, finally, in high school I did attend during World War II the Texas Military Institute, which is in San Antonio. It's famous for being the alma

mater of Douglas MacArthur, Class of 1897. During my time we had a personality that later became well known. He was Dan Blocker, who played "Hoss Cartwright" on television's *Bonanza*. We also had an astronaut or two. You know, a smattering of fellows who gained notoriety during their lifetimes. It's an interesting little school. It still turns them out—people like that. That was high school.

RITCHIE: And then you went on to college. Was that in part because of the military support from your father's career?

VANDER ZEE: No, no. As a matter of fact, I probably wouldn't have been able to go to college, except that I was fortunate to get athletic scholarships. I had a little athletic talent in high school. So I took athletic scholarships to a military junior college in Texas called Schreiner Institute, first year. Second year, I went to the University of Arizona at Tucson, where I was on a basketball team with Morris Udall. Morris was a very popular guy out there. He was a senior in the law school at that time. This was the 1947-48 school year. I liked him a lot myself. Of course I knew him later when he came to Washington. In fact, I was working for Hubert Humphrey in 1961 when Mo came to town. His brother Stewart, whom he was replacing, had told me he was going to be coming, and he invited me over to a reception in his office for him, so I took Humphrey along that evening. Everybody had a grand

time. Of course I continued to see him. It's very unfortunate the illness that caused him to have to give up his seat.

Then from Arizona, I went back to Texas where I finished at Trinity University in San Antonio my final two years. Took a BA in Economics at Trinity. I went almost immediately then to the FBI. Came to Washington for the first time in my life on January 3, 1952.

RITCHIE: You just applied to the FBI?

VANDER ZEE: They had a representative come to the University and proselyte young fellows. For reasons I'll never understand, I was the only one chosen around there that year. The fellow that came out was a graduate of that university, and they were actively looking for prospects in those days—the reason being, in my recollection, that the FBI inherited all this responsibility for the Atomic Energy Act. For instance, you had to do a full background investigation on every carpenter, bricklayer and what have you that they employed in those programs. It put a tremendous manpower requirement on the FBI. Subsequently, they got rid of all of that, got it shifted over to the Civil Service Commission. But it was a period of time there in the early 50's where the FBI had to do that.

RITCHIE: So you came to Washington to train with the FBI?

VANDER ZEE: Came to train in the spring of '52. Stayed three years. Did about a year each in Richmond, Virginia, here in the Washington field division and Philadelphia. Senior people in the FBI who befriended me told me that you needed to make a decision about whether or not you wanted a career with the FBI before you reached the five-year mark because, they said, you become dependent on the check. You start raising a family, having kids and financial obligations; and it would be difficult to break away after five years.

So I took their advice to heart and I decided I didn't want to do it for a lifetime profession and I left after three years. Just that simple.

RITCHIE: What were you doing mostly as an FBI agent?

VANDER ZEE: In the Richmond division I had what's called general criminal work in a road territory. My territory was the northern neck of Virginia. I think there were eleven counties out there that were my responsibility. So any leads that came in that had to be handled out there I took care of. I did that for a year. Then back here in Washington it was surveillance of the Soviet Embassy. We kept daily track of everybody—I'm not telling any secrets here, this is all well known stuff. Anyway, the Cold War is supposed to be over now. [laughs]

But I did that exclusively for a year. We memorized the names—not just the names—we memorized the physical appearance of

every employee of the embassy and every member of their families. There is no question that there was a tremendous effort on their part in the espionage area during those years. They were actively seeking a lot of things—a lot of technology, a lot of science from this country. And they acquired a lot. I must say they did.

We had to keep track of them wherever they went. When you started out in the morning you never knew whatever time of day—I usually worked noon to midnight regular shift hours—but when you started out, you never knew where you might wind up. You might wind up in New York, or Philadelphia, or most anywhere.

We had this one occasion where we followed a car driven by a fellow who was supposed to be a cultural attache. He wound up down in southwest Virginia where the famous summer theater is. You may remember the name of the town.

RITCHIE: The Lime Kiln? Or the Barter Theater?

VANDER ZEE: The Barter Theater. You may remember the name of the town?

RITCHIE: Bristol, perhaps.

VANDER ZEE: It's near Bristol. Abingdon, I believe. Anyway, he traveled all the way down there; and he went to the home of this scientist\doctor, who I don't remember if he was still active or retired. The Russian's name was Georgei Pokrovski. I'll never

forget his name because he was a real professional, hard-working spy. But this man he went to see had developed the technique for the indefinite preservation of penicillin in the field in World War II. That's what they were after. They had penicillin, but apparently they didn't know how to preserve it indefinitely for field use, military use. Almost invariably everyone cooperated once the contacts were made and we identified what the Russians were after.

I never agreed with Mr. Hoover about the communist threat—the domestic communist threat. But he was dead right about the Soviet threat. Mr. Hoover was a master administrator. He was a very talented administrator. Had I been the head of the FBI, I would have run it exactly as he did. But as a peon [laughs] in the ranks, I chose not to make it a career.

RITCHIE: Did you ever encounter J. Edgar Hoover?

VANDER ZEE: Oh, yes. Surely. Well, of course, it was a routine that when you go in the FBI and you're just about the graduate from agents' school you'd go by the Director's office and meet him and shake hands. This was [laughs] one of the great tests. They would rehearse you for this—literally. One of the people in the training division would be Mr. Hoover, and they would check you for steadiness of eye contact and firmness of handshake; because Mr. Hoover on occasion had been known to say that somebody looked like a truck driver or something [laughs]. So they'd go

back, sit down and look at this group of men and decide who looked most like truck drivers and send them packing. It was quite an unusual thing. Mr. Hoover was an absolute ruler in his area. So anyway, that was one of the things that you did before you went to the field.

Mr. Hoover would always be standing by the side of his desk. Pictures would not be taken individually. But he would be standing by the side of his desk, and Mr. [Clyde] Tolson would always be seated in the window seat facing Pennsylvania Avenue.

I never met him further when I was in the FBI. But after I worked on the Hill and went downtown to practice law I had my office on DeSales Street. That's a little one-block long street beside the Mayflower. And each day—not every day, but frequently—I'd go over to the Mayflower to the Rib Room to eat a bite at lunch. Mr. Hoover and Mr. Tolson at that time, that was their lunch spot, and you could set your clock on their arrival. They had lunch there every day. So I used to see him and greet him there. And also at the race track out at Laurel. He was a very devoted racing fan.

He was not overly cordial. But he knew me as a former FBI boy, one of the boys who had been there. I liked him, too. As I say, I would have run the FBI exactly as he did. He, though, had unusual power and authority that he had accumulated. But why not? If you can get away with it. That's my response to that. I think maybe our government in many of its areas could do with a little more authoritarianism rather than have everybody so thoroughly

compromised that they can't really be effective. One thing we were in those years: we were effective. In recent times, I think, people would question whether the FBI can cut the mustard in some areas any more like they used to. They seem to be frustrated in a number of areas.

RITCHIE: It must have helped you some respects to have that on your vita in the future as you went along, having been an FBI agent?

VANDER ZEE: Well, I always felt it *should*, because if nothing else it would indicate you had undergone the rigors of your background check and that you couldn't have done too many things wrong in your lifetime or you wouldn't have passed muster. But I think in some areas, later as I passed through life, I think that maybe FBI agents—ex-FBI agents—were lumped in a category, which I strongly disagree with, but nevertheless I think some people looked at them as kind of stormtroopers. I think maybe some people didn't like ex-FBI agents too much [laughs]. I think people were surprised when Hubert Humphrey employed me, because he generally was identified as this liberal who wouldn't have those kind of guys on his staff.

But we got along famously, and there wasn't any of that sort of thing involved in any way in my politics. And I found this in the FBI, too—that you find a very mixed brand of personal politics. Agents don't talk about it with outsiders—didn't in

those years. I don't know whether they do now or not. We had a lot of diverse opinion come up among our people. But, of course, the only person who ever spoke for the FBI in those days—Mr. Hoover. Agents in charge of field divisions seldom made releases on major cases. It was always in his name and it came from Washington. That was part of the means of his central control.

RITCHIE: Were there other ex-FBI agents around up on Capitol Hill in those days? It seems to me in the early years the FBI and the GAO provided some sort of seed staff.

VANDER ZEE: There were a few, and always have been a few over the years. Now, one big user of FBI agents on duty—accounting types in particular was Clarence Cannon, who had a committee on the House side. I forget the committee. I should remember.

RITCHIE: Probably the Appropriations Committee, wasn't it?

VANDER ZEE: I suppose it was. And, basically, what they were doing was, I suppose, quasi-GAO functions—that is, doing accounting procedures on a lot of these program costs. I had a couple of friends who served over there while they were fairly senior agents. They went on to become associate directors of the FBI, both of those fellows. It was a part—I think it was a part when Hoover assigned you over there—of your grooming, so to speak, for bigger things in the Bureau.

But, yes, they were big users. There were individuals . . . there was a fellow on this side. Frequently, some of the committees and subcommittees would use them for

investigators for committee staff work. One I remember was named Frip Flannigan. Frip's been around for ages. He later became a personal rep for the one of the big chemical companies in the country, lobbied for them here on the Hill. I seem to recall it was W.R. Grace & Co.

RITCHIE: He was counsel to the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

VANDER ZEE: Okay. I appreciate you're knowing those things because, while I knew Frip well, I never knew exactly what his position on the Hill had been. Another ex-FBI buddy on Capitol Hill was John Conway, who was Staff Director in those days of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy.

There's a bit of a camaraderie among ex-agents, I must confess. For instance, that's how I know Frip, and he would know me as an ex-agent. Of course we both knew at one time or another we worked on the Hill. There is an ex-agents society which is quite active around the country. For instance, we have a chapter in San Antonio. There's one virtually everywhere where they meet and socialize, have lunch, every month or two. But, unfortunately, my personal business has always kept me from participating in that very much. I'd go to an occasional meeting, but haven't pursued

it. As far as I know, they don't grind any political axes or have any programs they push.

RITCHIE: Then you decided after three years to go to law school? Is that your career plan?

VANDER ZEE: Well, this was the Korean period. I had been deferred during my FBI tenure by my draft board back home at the request of Mr. Hoover. I went into the FBI under the minimum age. I went in at age 23, and you're supposed to be 25. But I think it was this thing I described earlier about the need for manpower that they waived some of those requirements in those days. So I was 26 then at the end of the three years, and my draft board extended my liability to age 35. I didn't want to just spend my life in the FBI merely to avoid military service. I had no problems about military service.

So I left the FBI and went directly into the Navy, Navy intelligence. Spent four years there. And the next four years, that would have been from '55 through '58, I trained at their various schools and had a two-year hitch with the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific at Honolulu. At that time, it was Admiral Felix B. Stump who was running the joint command out there.

The biggest thing we had was keeping track of ChiCom activity, with aerial reconnaissance. That was my specialty. The Chinese Nationalists would overfly the Chinese mainland and do the photography. We would interpret it back in Pearl Harbor and keep

track of the Chinese military buildup, which was quite extensive. They built a lot of airfields and things over there. And so we just monitored that.

Later on I was what was called a special weapons officer. We gave we assigned special weapons or nuclear targets to our aviators. I would meet them in Pearl Harbor when the carriers came out and I would ride out with them to the western Pacific and give briefings and things on the way and fly back to Pearl and do it again. It was an interesting time and gave me an insight, which I have always been grateful for, into the operations of the military, and specifically the air arm of the Navy. I still marvel at how they can make one of those damned aircraft carriers do what it's supposed to do. It's a monstrous coordinated effort and very, very impressive, I think, to anyone that's every witnessed it.

RITCHIE: I was stationed in Pearl Harbor, too, when I was in the Marines. I remember when those aircraft carriers used to come in. They were immense. Even as many times as you saw them, you were impressed when they arrived. They were a floating city.

VANDER ZEE: Were you at Pearl?

RITCHIE: Yes.

VANDER ZEE: Or at Kaneohe?

RITCHIE: We were at Pearl. We were at the Marine barracks at Pearl Harbor.

VANDER ZEE: Well, I was up there on the Hill, you know, at Makalapa. That was the fleet headquarters in those days.

RITCHIE: We actually worked in Pearl City, so I used to drive by there every day.

VANDER ZEE: Been to the old Pearl City Tavern there a time or two? [laughs]

RITCHIE: To the monkey bar, right?

VANDER ZEE: One of the great bars in the world. [laughs] When I was there they featured Miss 44D. I'll never forget her. She was a thing of beauty. They'd bring out entertainers from Stateside for the servicemen, of course. I don't know who owns that thing, but it's a true institution. I asked someone recently if it's still there and going. And they said, Oh, yeah.

RITCHIE: I was there about four years ago and stopped in, and it's still going.

VANDER ZEE: So my time there was split, part of the time we had that photo interpretation center over on Ford Island, so I worked back and forth between Ford Island and the fleet headquarters up on the side of the hill. Admiral Stump ran the joint command and Vice Admiral Curts, as I recall, was

the Seventh Fleet Commander in those days. And, of course, we were rulers of the world in those days. No problems whatever.

I enjoyed it. But again, it's one of those things that didn't appeal to me for a career.

So, to give you the way I got back to town here. I had thought I was in for a two-year hitch and I had made application to Georgetown Law School and been accepted. Suddenly someone pulled out some records and they decided I had a four-year obligation. So I didn't quite know what to do. I had a house guest one evening—an Admiral Kaufman who was commander at that time of Annapolis Naval Academy. He was out there on a trip, and we got to be friends. We were having a couple of snorts down at the Makalapa BOQ [bachelor officers quarters] there. I invited him over to the house to meet the little woman and we were sitting around having some dinner. I told him about my problem and sought his advice. I think he was just getting ready to take the command down at Annapolis, he was still in the Pentagon. So he asked me to give him the particulars, which I did. Not long after I received orders to come to the Intelligence School in Washington and finish out my Navy career as an instructor over there. I'll be forever grateful to Admiral Kaufman because I was able to complete my Navy career and go ahead and get two years of my law school out of the way at the same time.

RITCHIE: That's great.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. You bet. And then immediately following that—well I terminated my service 31 December '58 and by the third or fourth of January '59 I was with this Congressman Steven B. Carter from Iowa.

RITCHIE: How did that come about?

VANDER ZEE: I was actively seeking employment up on the Hill. I just had an abiding interest in the political process and American government. It had slipped up on me over the years. I guess it started in college when I was a student politician elected to the student council in Trinity. And, you know, political awareness arrives at some point in your life and it had sharpened over the years in the FBI—I guess being around Washington a good bit added to that. I'd met a few people on the Hill in some visits with colleagues of mine, some members. So I decided to give it a shot. I put out some resumes. And this gentleman called me.

It appears that my father's cousin who was also a Vander Zee, like many of the Dutch, went to Iowa. He apparently was one whose family had taken him there as an infant. He had become a Rhodes scholar, and an educator, and I think about a thirty-year professor. I believe he headed the political science department at the University of Iowa. In fact, he became the person in Iowa who selected the Rhodes scholars from Iowa. I guess that made him kind

of the secretary of the association for the state. I don't know exactly how that worked.

But in any event, this fellow Carter had been a student of his. Apparently the man also had been a rock-ribbed Democrat in a Republican state and had always taught a liberal line of politics out there. Carter ran and was elected as a Democrat in a district that had been Republican forever. So I guess it was just as simple as that connection. And I knew this man, too. I had known him earlier in my life, this gentleman from Iowa. I had met him in his retirement after he'd moved to New Hampshire, in my efforts to broaden the contacts within our family, people bearing our name in various states. He was a fine gentleman.

Carter, in any event, said he hired me because I was related to that Vander Zee who had taught him in Iowa. He also authored books on Iowa history, among others being *The Dutch in Iowa*, *Dutch Trails in Iowa*, and that sort of thing. They're over in the library, of course. His first name, I believe, was Jacob. [See Jacob Van der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912).]

Carter was the only one who knew it, but he came to office with an untreatable type of cancer. And he died in the early days of November of 1959 [November 4]. So it became my lot, after going to Iowa and taking him home along with his family and after his burial in the little town of Leon, Iowa, where he was from, to attempt to run a campaign for a successor—a college professor from

the college in Grinnell. I can't recall the name of that college. Ought to. It's well known. Been out there forever.

RITCHIE: Grinnell College?

VANDER ZEE: It was Grinnell College. But Ed, trying to remember Ed, he was a political science professor there who got the district convention nomination in a special election arrangement. Herschel Loveless was governor. He called a very quick election, I think, for around mid-December. Gilmore was the name of the nominee, Ed Gilmore.

In the short time of that campaign, we couldn't overcome the Republican advantage. A Democrat could not sustain himself there; so the Republicans returned. They put a fellow in office named John Kyl, who was well known in the area because he was a TV newsreader in Ottumwa, Iowa, which was the largest city in the district at that time. So John came to Congress from that district.

I came back to Washington licking my wounds because I was a youngster and very charged up as most youngsters are about their politics. You don't like to lose—especially when you're trying to vindicate a guy who had lost his life and all that sort of business. I very quickly encountered one of my old friends, one of those acquaintances I spoke of having met—a fellow named Barrie—Bob Barrie, who was putting together a campaign staff for Hubert Humphrey. And I decided to go with Humphrey because he was the

only one going! This is in the very beginning of 1960. [Lyndon] Johnson was talking about it, but Johnson wasn't going to do anything overtly or form any organization, or staff, or go out and be active. [Stuart] Symington was making a few motions. Of course [John] Kennedy. Kennedy started his effort well back—for the four years leading up to '60, after the vice presidential nomination that he lost to [Estes] Kefauver in the previous convention.

But, going back to Carter, just for a moment. I remember one day when Carter got a call and was invited to lunch with Senator Kennedy. He came back and said it was a one-on-one lunch. And Kennedy did this methodically with all of the members of the House during the period leading up to 1960. To be personally acquainted, you know? And it was very effective! Very effective because Carter, while he was a freshman and probably more impressionable than older members, he was nevertheless impressed. Of course, that was the object of the whole thing. So Kennedy was going about it in a very methodical way.

RITCHIE: Before we go on, I wanted to ask you, what did you do in Carter's office?

VANDER ZEE: Oh, I was AA [Administrative Assistant]. Yeah, I was hired as the AA. As you know, hope springs eternal, and he didn't want it to be publicly known that he was suffering from cancer. So he refused to announce that. At the same time, he knew that his chances of survival were probably not good. He asked me

to put his son, I believe the boy was Stephen Carter, Jr., I think he was 17. Could have been 18. Anyway, he was a student here, I think, at American U. He told me to put him on the payroll at the highest possible salary. And I did. And within a day or two, Scripps-Howard or somebody was jumping on it. That was one of the big nepotism scandals of the day.

I'll never forget. That's the time that Mark Russell and I first got acquainted in '59. He was working at the Carroll Arms, which was across the street, as you know, on the corner here from the Senate office buildings. He was the pianoman down in the basement over there down at the bar. And Mark, he was doing his shtick even in those days—it hasn't varied much from the beginning. About that time Frankie Laine had a monster hit called "That Lucky Old Sun." So Mark did great things with the lyrics pinned to the nepotism of the Carter son. [laughs] The whole thing was terribly unfortunate, but, you know, the people didn't know. After all, nobody publicly disclosed about the cancer thing. So it was seen strictly as a nepotism deal. Like always, it causes big problems. You're trying to run an office; and, hell, you can't do anything for awhile until it all dies down. But, of course, shortly thereafter Steve began to show the overt signs of his cancer and was taken out to Bethesda. He had to be carried back into the chamber a few times to vote on some stuff. It was a very sad time. I believe he was in his forties. He wasn't that old a man.

But, that was my introduction to politics. I got an early exposure to the Washington press and guys like Clark Mohlenhoff and some of the old fire eaters around here that jumped on everybody. Well, I suppose if you disclose the human side of the thing to some of these newsies, they'd lay off. But I don't know, current evidence seems to indicate they don't much give a hoot. A very impressive statistic, I forget the boy's name, but he used to run the Senate press gallery—and I think prior to that, during World War II—I think there'd been a combined gallery, House and Senate. He told me one time how many people had credentials to the combined gallery during World War II. Now, this is a time we were winning a world war and building a great nation. And it was something substantially less than a hundred. Substantially less than a hundred. Might have been less than fifty. I was impressed by how small a number. Even back then when he told me this story—back in the early 60's—it was up in the hundreds. Now I think it's up in the thousands.

RITCHIE: Thousands

VANDER ZEE: I don't think in my own mind that there's any question that this has become a huge detriment to effective political leadership and effective government in the United States, because every little town out there seems big enough to have a stringer in Washington. They're all running around trying to get something personal on everybody in public life. I think all it

does is two things: it destroys the American people's faith in their institutions and their political leaders. This stuff of dwelling on personal habits, I mean, we didn't used to hear about Dennis Chavez being a drunk. Everybody just laid off, because he was chairman of a committee. He did a hell of a job for his state. People loved him. Unfortunately, the man was an alcoholic. But they didn't write about it.

The most common example given is how they laid off President [Franklin] Roosevelt's being a cripple. Never photographed him that way. Never created any embarrassment. Well, that thing is all gone now, and I don't think our country is any better served for it. In fact, I think it's been a tremendous detriment, as I say. Well, it has gone a great distance toward destroying the American people's faith in their government and their institutions of government. But beyond that, it keeps effective people in my mind from coming to government. They don't want to get into these deals where all these personal situations are ferreted out with all this embarrassment. They just say to hell with it. That's a terrible thing to happen to a country and I think our Fourth Estate is mostly responsible for that.

I have frequently said, and I mean it, that I don't think that all of the efforts of Soviet communism or world communism ever did as much to harm American government as the American press. That's my personal opinion.

RITCHIE: Was that Don Womack, the fellow in the press gallery who told that to you?

VANDER ZEE: I think he was Bill somebody. A little kind of a baldheaded guy.

RITCHIE: Or Roy McGhee?

VANDER ZEE: Hmmm. No. No.

RITCHIE: Joe Willis and Don Womack. There are several people up there, and I was just wondering if I could think of who you meant.

VANDER ZEE: Well, this goes back—the time I was talking about—was '59 to '63. Whoever it was at that time was giving me that statistic, and I was shocked by it. And as I say, the statistic was *then*. That's thirty years ago. And the numbers have just mushroomed since then, I'm told.

RITCHIE: What were your responsibilities as an administrative assistant to a freshman member of the House?

VANDER ZEE: Well, the usual thing, mainly to hire—with his approval, of course—and organize staff, and parcel out the work. It was largely the matter of constituent mail. He had some

programs in the district that were important. One was the construction of the Rathbun reservoir, which was ultimately built. It wasn't built during our time. But to continue to promote that. That was near Ottumwa, as I recall. I forget the river that it harnessed. But, as it turned out, because of his illness and his severe disability, I literally many times had to fill the slot for a member that couldn't be there by—well, just directly representing him.

One incident that I will always remember because of unusual circumstances, was we had a constituent that had known him as a youngster—he had been born and raised out there—who had an airline based in Oakland, California. It was one of these Terry and the Pirates-type of things that fly stuff overseas, special delivery, spray grasshoppers in Egypt—that sort of thing.

RITCHIE: A non-sked they used to call them.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah, right. Bring a load of snakes from wherever. Fly your football team wherever—which ultimately caused the demise of his airline. He lost a football team in a crash. And once you have a crash in a private airline you can't survive. Whether you've done anything wrong or not is beside the point. You can't survive the FAA investigation. They'll *always* find something somewhere in your records of your engine changes or something that puts you out of business.

Anyhow, he had noticed a solicitation for an Air Force contract to fly a cargo around the Far East for the Air Force. And the contract bid was to be submitted at Kadena Air Force Base outside of Tokyo. He had figured out that he could take his fleet—well, I think he wasn't even going to use his existing fleet. He was going to acquire not brand new, but used airplanes. He was going to put big cabin tanks inside the cargo bay so he could fly them across the Pacific, nonstop, and then, execute the contract. So he decided to bid on it. His cab driver told him on the way to Kadena Air Force Base that he was wasting his time to come out there to submit a bid on that contract [laughs].

He did it anyway. And, after the bid opening, some second Louie called him from Kadena and said, "Congratulations, Mr. Springer, you have won the contract." And then he was called back within an hour and told, "Mr. Springer, we made a terrible mistake. You *didn't* win the contract. We have to have new bids." [laughs] Well, to make a long story short: the contract was traditionally the territory of either CAT Air or, the Chinese National Airline—I forget the name of that, which was a CIA front. That's why nobody else could win. But that lieutenant had goofed.

So Mr. Springer came to us, and in our naivete we thought, well, that's a strange way to do business. Here this man was going to go to all these unusual expenses, and he still bids the thing low against somebody that's already out there. So I started to write letters and carry his grievance forward. One day I had a call from a staff member on the Aviation subcommittee on the House

side—Earl somebody. Earl was a former FBI agent, and he asked me if I could visit with him. I did. He kind of told me that that was an unusual situation out there, and he'd been asked to talk to me to see if we wouldn't get off that thing.

I said, "Well, gosh almighty, Earl. It seems to me strange that if that much money is being squandered that the American public has to hold still for this. I'll talk to my superior, but I'll see what he says." And I did ask him, and he said, "Well, help Jim [Springer] in any way that you can." This fellow Springer that was his old friend. So I persisted.

Earl called me again one day after not too long a time. He asked me to come meet a friend of his. We went out on one of those patios alongside the House office building. It was a fellow from the CIA, and he wanted to talk about it. In my youthful zeal, they couldn't convince me. I was just concerned that there was obviously a lot of money slopping off the table out there. And I didn't see why that should be. I'd had some experience. I had some friends over at the CIA during the FBI days. A lot of FBI guys went to the CIA when it was set up. And so I continued to persist.

One day I had a call to come over and meet with Speaker [Sam] Rayburn. I'd never met the Speaker, but I knew John Holton who was his AA. And so I walked in to his office. John had that big outer office where a lot of people entered off the House floor. But Mr. Rayburn's own personal office was long and narrow and not much bigger than yours. John just said, "Well go on in Rein." So

I went in, and Mr. Rayburn was just sitting there kind of cleaning his fingernails. He said, "How ya doin'?" And I said, "Fine, sir. I was told to come see you."

He said, "Yes. I know that your boss is very sick and I know that you are keeping things going in his absence, and I just wanted to be useful." You know, this man I could see—in looking back at that time, he was so nice, even with a flunky like I was around there. He carefully explained, he said, you know sometimes things are a certain way. Maybe they don't seem right, but there are reasons for it. He more or less talked in indirect terms like that. And he kind of explained to me that was one of those things. So, naturally, with that I forgot about it. We couldn't pursue it any more, didn't pursue it any more. Because, in those years he was Mr. Sam, and he was the undisputed leader. He was much respected by everybody on both sides of the aisle, by everybody there. So when he spoke the words, you had to understand that that was the situation. But I can only say that I was impressed by the way he did it. I don't even know if he knew I was from Texas, but he was just saying "I know you're a young fellow and dedicated to your boss, and dedicated to your ideals, but this is one you'd better just let go." So obviously we did.

I subsequently got to visit with him because I became a friend of his AA, the fellow that did his biography.

RITCHIE: Oh, D.B. Hardeman?

VANDER ZEE: D.B., yeah. In fact D.B. and I got together prior to his death, we had a couple of nice lunches down in San Antonio. We used to see each other there,

either by accident or on purpose, and sit down and have lunch. D.B. used to come over when I was working on the Senate side. He'd come over and visit, a very pleasant association.

RITCHIE: It helped that you were from Texas.

VANDER ZEE: Probably, I got to know in those years, during the year on the House side, and then even after I was on the Senate side, I got to know most of the Texas fellows. They were a good bunch. There are two or three of them still over there, Jack Brooks, Jake Pickle, and some of the old timers. I think all of the rest weren't there thirty years ago.

RITCHIE: Speaking of Texas congressmen, I understand that you also had some experiences with Maury Maverick.

VANDER ZEE: That's right. When I was a lad in San Antonio, in approximately 1939, I think that was the year, I had a newspaper route near my home. On the route was this gentleman whom I remember—I never knew his name, or wasn't aware of his name at that time—but anytime I would be by in the evening for collection, he would always invite me in the house to sit me down in his living room. And he'd expound on the affairs of the city of San Antonio.

I didn't consider that particularly peculiar, but the peculiar side was why he would spend the time with me, his paper boy [laughs], on this subject matter. I later learned he was Maury Maverick Sr., who was then the mayor of San Antonio, and had previously been a

congressman from that area in Washington. After I was in Washington and working in politics, I became friends with James H. Rowe, Jr. Jim was a practicing lawyer here at the time I knew him, and a partner with a fellow named Tommy Corcoran. They were pretty well known in Democratic circles because of their service with President Roosevelt during his time in the White House.

Rowe used to tell me these great stories about Maverick. Among others, that the president always called him the most aptly named man in American politics. He said, on one particular occasion that he had gone against the president—voted against him—on a measure that was very vital to Roosevelt. It might have been the Supreme Court bill, I forget just which it was. But Jim, who was apparently privy to some of the conversations in those years at the White House said that the president had him down and asked him, "Maury, how in the world could you do that to *me*." And Maverick's response was, "I didn't do it to you, Mr. President, because you weren't being yourself." [laughs]

Then Rowe also related stories he used to tell about Maverick after his defeat. He was defeated by a man named Paul Kilday. Kilday was a local attorney whose brother was a sheriff and controlled what there was of the organization in those days, and it was largely an Irish-Catholic—well, not just Irish Catholic. It

was Catholic, period, which included a great many of the Latinos in the area. So, Rowe apparently was querying Maverick about his defeat and what happened, and one of his responses was, "All I can tell you, Jim, is that those nuns were lined up there at the polls like a bunch of penguins." [laughs] But it was after that that he became mayor. He was not a man of the power-elite. He was a man of the common people, and, I guess, would be branded a liberal.

But he did things for the City of San Antonio that, literally, are the centerpiece of San Antonio today. For one thing, he got a public works—WPA, Works Progress Administration—project there that was then called the Beautification of the San Antonio River. It was not a river; it was an old, dirty canal. But that has become San Antonio's centerpiece. That alone, along with the Alamo, have made San Antonio the number one tourist destination—not only in Texas but, I understand, much of the country. Ranks as one of the top tourist destinations in the country. And this has to be attributed directly to Maury Maverick's foresight in the 1930s.

But there is an element within San Antonio, the old control group—there's such a group in most cities, the moneyed people, the banks and what have you—to whom his name is still anathema. Maverick's name is anathema still to these people, the second generation, second and third by now.

RITCHIE: Did you have any sense when you were growing up that your family had any political leanings?

VANDER ZEE: No. None whatever. As I said, my father died very early when I was just barely nine years old, the oldest of three boys. My mother was very much apolitical.

RITCHIE: Well, when you started out working for a Democratic congressman, were you applying only to Democrats, or would you have worked for a Republican at that stage? Had you made up your own political mind then?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah, pretty much, because I always did—and still do—identify myself with the working people of this country. I was raised among them. I think they're what makes not only our country but the world go around. I've tried to associate with, and know, and understand people in the elite and the banking and investor class, the upper social classes. But I've never been able to read them. I think this is some of what Mr. [George] Bush is encountering today. I think they forgot about those folks. We don't know yet, but it may very well abbreviate his presidency with the way things are going.

Our Democratic presidents always seem to be acutely aware of the fact that the pocketbook issue is always going to be the first one. If you go back and track the philosophies of the really outstanding leaders on the Democratic side, either in the presidency or in the Congress, they had this policy, spoken or unspoken, that if you let your working man have a decent livelihood so that he could support his family, better his station in life,

educate his children, that the rest of the society would take care of itself. I think that in the last ten or fifteen years that thing has been lost sight of. Oh, it's not *just* that, because we know there is also the Republican political philosophy which seems to pay great homage and worship before the golden calf of the so-called free market. What they may have forgotten is that now the free market is the world market. And you kind of automatically make yourself a Third-World country if you go, if you pursue that to its ultimate end. You penalize your people greatly. I think that's what's been happening, because there's no hindrance. The people that control the economy, the means of production, the capital, they flee to those low-labor areas and we can see the result here. We have just exported so much of our economy to other parts of the world.

So, we're going to see how it comes out pretty soon.

RITCHIE: It's a real watershed, I think.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah, no question.

RITCHIE: Well, let's move up to when you went to work for Hubert Humphrey in the 1960 presidential campaign.

VANDER ZEE: I encountered this friend of mine, Bob Barrie, who was in charge of the campaign. He had already been anointed. Of course, everybody that worked for Humphrey on his regular staff,

Herb Water, his press assistant—no, I guess Herb was his AA at that time—another fellow named Bill Connell who was his legislative assistant, everybody was involved, but it was necessary to develop a specialty campaign staff. Not having anything better to do at the time, I signed on and was promptly dispatched to West Virginia, in January of 1960, to begin to organize matters over there for a May 10th primary. And I proceeded to do that.

I spent the next four months over there. I considered myself a very low-level organizing type. I was out on the hustings going from county to county. I did the advance work when Humphrey actually physically came into the state, and spent the rest of the time on organizational work. And then after the primary was *lost* on May the 10th, I found myself elevated to campaign manager. [laughs] Seemed like nobody else wanted the job! [laughs]

RITCHIE: Campaign manager for West Virginia?

VANDER ZEE: For West Virginia [laughs] at that point. Some of these old pros—I was a neophyte—some of these old pros have a way of switching the titles around when things don't go too well. I've always had a good laugh with them about that.

RITCHIE: That was the campaign where Humphrey claimed that the Kennedys were spending so much money in West Virginia.

VANDER ZEE: Yes. It was. I mean, we had people who had declared with us from early on; and, the last four or five days before the primary I began to call people, sheriffs—people who were our county chairmen—and they were, for the first time during that whole period, they were unavailable. They were busy somewhere. They couldn't be found. So I knew we had serious problems, and I got in the car and started driving, particularly in the southern part where the vote, honest to pete, is controlled. I mean, that was the situation then, everybody knows it that's ever studied the situation. It became apparent—I would go to a courthouse where our posters had been up since day one, and they were down; and Kennedy's were up. And the sheriff was gone. He was up in the hills somewhere. There was a Syd Christie who was the boss in McDowell County. I'll never forget his telephone number. He lived in Keystone, West Virginia, and his telephone number was number three. I never knew who had one and two. But he became a federal judge, appointed as a federal judge by President Kennedy after the election. But he delivered a solid—I think up in the eighty percentile range—county down there. Big population county.

So it was a very intense effort within the last few days. Everyone that claimed to have knowledge that I talked to said it was all greed. People who were astounded by the result—people who had covered the campaign from its beginning—two that I remember in particular were Bill Lawrence, who was then with the *New York Times*, and Alan Otten. Bill's dead, but I think Alan is still

alive. Alan Otten of the *Wall Street Journal*, and I believe if a person went back to the archives and checked their stories filed on the 8th or 9th of May, they were riding the buses, they were tromping around following things rather closely, seeing the parades the turnouts, etc. etc. I believe both of them filed stories saying it was Humphrey by 60-40. And when the result came out virtually opposite, they were astounded.

Otten told me some time after that they had put about six or eight reporters into the field down there to find out what happened. And he said, without mentioning names, he said they had established where it came from, who carried it into the state, and who distributed it. But, he said, we could never establish who got it. And I don't know whether this was just his story to me to tell me they tried or what. I told him at the time, I said, "Alan that's obvious. The last two people never tell. Neither the giver nor the getter. And, so I don't think you'd ever be able to make that connection for the record, and name names."

But anyway, it was a massive, massive influx of money. There were families, I mean they had cash, they had cars, they were hauling people. It was a very well done thing. We simply—there was no way with our resources, I don't think we spent a million in the entire effort. And their expenditure had to be five or six times that, too. I think this has been well studied out. I've had calls over the years. I had a call from an author in West Virginia as recently as within the last two or three years, wanting to talk about this. Somehow he ran me down in Texas, and he'd been on

Kennedy's staff. I forget his name, but he said he was writing a book. He'd been working for Kennedy, so he had it from that side. But he knew a lot had happened that he didn't know about.

RITCHIE: Did you cross paths with the Kennedy organizers while you were working the state for Humphrey?

VANDER ZEE: Not a whole lot. We had meetings when we were organizing the TV debate there in Charleston. I think it was just a statewide hookup. We had a conference with Larry and Ken O'Donnell. Larry . . .

RITCHIE: O'Brien

VANDER ZEE: Larry O'Brien, thank you. You know more of these names than I. I'm not good on names any more. I used to be letter perfect, but I've given up on it. So we had a conference at the press club building there in Charleston that we always frequented. It was the best food in town. We'd eat there, and we'd see one another. But we didn't have a whole lot of contact.

The attorney general in West Virginia was a fellow named Wally Barron, and he was running for governor that year on the Democratic ticket. It was widely believed that he had the best organization in the state. And we were trying to get Wally's organization to give us their full support. We thought we were doing well in that direction. We had a lot of lip service. I think what they were

able to discern late in the game was that this influx—in fact, I feel that maybe they benefitted, their organization benefitted somewhat from that influx of cash. Because I remember one time I had an appointment with Kurt Trent who was Barron's top assistant. Incidentally, all of these people wound up going to the penitentiary later on.

Anyway, I went to see Trent, and he shuttled me down the hall a couple of offices, put me in a room. And in a little bit I heard Larry O'Brien's voice, and—I forget at just what phase the campaign—but I have a hunch there was a lot of crossing and double crossing going on. And it was pretty much who could bring the most money to their game. Ultimately that turned out to be the Kennedys.

Now, I've always been fascinated—I have a hunch that, while Barron's people benefitted from an influx of Kennedy money they also managed to alienate the Kennedys. Later I think Bobby Kennedy went to great pains to put all those guys in the federal penitentiary. So he apparently was unhappy with the effort they made, or the amount it cost, because he put Barron in. He put Trent in. He put Clarence Ellmore in. Clarence Ellmore became the liquor commissioner under Barron. Ellmore and Trent were his two top lieutenants when he was running for governor. And after his election, those fellows as well as some lesser individuals all did time on various charges. Once again, when you can focus the resources of the U.S. Department of Justice on somebody, you're going to get them for something. And they did. I've always

figured it was a personal vendetta brought about by that campaign. Otherwise, why not leave them alone?

RITCHIE: How was Humphrey as a campaigner?

VANDER ZEE: Superb. Superb. As anybody that knew him could tell you, he had the quickest recuperation capabilities I've ever seen in a human being. As I recall, he was in his late forties, second half of his forties, when we made that run. I don't recall his birth date or any exact ages. But he could wear out two or three staffs. He just had that kind of stamina. He had the capability to catnap either on planes, buses, wherever it was. And, while we were doing the campaigning out of a bus, we'd watch him because, as we'd approach a town, nobody would wake him. He'd just pop up, look around, start combing his hair. It was like he had a radar that there were going to be people there, you see.

And he thrived on it. He *loved* to appear before people. And as a youngster, I enjoyed being associated with him. He was an activist. It was total immersion. And when you're young, you're ready for that. That's what you want in a candidate. Nobody could outwork him. And he was a very decent human being. He was a lot of fun to be with. I think that Humphrey's personal magnetism, ebullience, all the rest of it is best demonstrated—I was amazed by this when I saw it just within the last three or four years—it was whenever Barry Goldwater retired. Goldwater did one of those last interviews with Barbara Walters on the occasion of his

departure from the Senate. And I think it was her last question of that interview. She said, Senator Goldwater, after your years in public service, what politician did you like the best. And he didn't hesitate or wink an eye. He said, "Hubert Humphrey." And I thought that was rather remarkable given the polarity of their personal politics.

So, he was just that kind of a guy. To know him was pretty much to like him. He just didn't have a mean bone in him. I think had he *had* some meanness, he would have been more effective; because he never—people who knew him better than I, agree—he would never exact that retribution or that pound of flesh after somebody had double-crossed him. And I think for the effective politician, it's the fear of things he can do to you. You've got to have some of that going. Terrible to say that. I'm sure that part of Humphrey's esteem, and love, and the regard in which he was held by people was because he wasn't that way. And what a lot of people maybe don't remember is that he thrived in a Republican state as a Democrat. I think a great deal of it was just that personal thing people had for him. A lot of Republicans had to be voting for him all the time out there.

I saw a newspaper story just before the Super Bowl [in Minneapolis], that someone was wondering who the athlete was that the [Hubert H. Humphrey] Metrodome was named after. It shows you how soon they forget. That's why you historians are so important, I guess, to keep the great unwashed knowledgeable about things, or at least to preserve the truth.

RITCHIE: Well, after the West Virginia primary, Humphrey's campaign was pretty well over, in many ways.

VANDER ZEE: Oh, yeah. In fact, that night, May the tenth, down in our old store-front headquarters there in downtown Charleston, he made his withdrawal statement.

RITCHIE: Where did that leave you?

VANDER ZEE: Unemployed. I came back to town. I'd had a friend over on the House side named Charlie Brown. Charlie Brown was a congressman from the state of Missouri, and he had been a staff man to [Harry] Truman when Truman was a senator. Subsequently he had gone back home and been elected to Congress. He was a great public servant, Charlie was. I think he had worked with the Ralston Purina people. Charlie had a great public flair as a promoter and that type of thing. I think he worked with some of the country music people from Nashville over the years. But in any event he had himself elected congressman from the Springfield area. Springfield is the biggest city in that district, southwest Missouri that would be.

Charlie had taken on the responsibility for Stuart Symington's campaign. So he got in touch with me and asked me if I could come over there and hook up with him, and I was *delighted* because he gave me something to do. And I spent the time from May, just a couple or three months, I think we had a July convention in Los

Angeles that year. I spent that time with the Symington campaign. I went out West for them. Through Jim Rowe, and people like that, I had Montana contacts. I know I was in Montana working that state convention just before I went to Los Angeles. And I guess I was in some other areas, too. And that was a very pleasant experience because Symington was a fine man.

RITCHIE: How would you compare Symington as a candidate with Humphrey as a candidate?

VANDER ZEE: Well, there really was no comparison as far as their desire to get out there and get among them, you know. Symington was more taciturn. A great gentleman, but he just didn't—you know, everybody has his own way of going about it. And Symington's was more through the organization, the old friends that he had within the party from his days as Air Force secretary and senator, friend of Mr. Truman's and all of that. His family was active. He had two boys, Tim and Jim. I don't remember if there were other active family members in the Symington family or not. I saw Jim down the street the other day. He's in a law firm that a friend of mine heads, guy named Pat O'Connor. He's an old Minnesotan. Pat and I first got acquainted back in 1960 in that Humphrey campaign.

But, I grew to have an even greater respect for Senator Symington after I came up and worked on the Hill. He always had an

ear. He'd listen to staff guys. Not necessarily his own, just anybody he knew.

RITCHIE: When you were out in the West, Ted Kennedy was handling a lot of that territory for the Kennedy campaign.

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmmm.

RITCHIE: Did you come in contact with him at that point?

VANDER ZEE: Not directly. He was in Montana. We thought we had Montana pretty well under control for Symington. And we had a group out there. We took a plane and four or five of us, a half a dozen people, and I think practically everyone else was from Missouri. They were politicians, guys from the Missouri Farmers Alliance, MFA people. We went out there and worked it pretty thoroughly for quite awhile and thought we were in good shape. They were electing their delegates by state convention. We overlooked the strength of a little group of Irishmen from down in the copper town.

RITCHIE: Butte? Or Billings?

VANDER ZEE: No, it was in the southwest corner, where the Anaconda mine is. It's Butte's sister city, Anaconda as a matter of fact. In any event, they came into town, and they started

hammering pretty hard in the day or two just prior to the convention of the delegate selection. There was a state chairman, whom I should remember. But I watched the lights. They had him up in their hotel. The lights never went out the night before the convention. And he died of a heart attack the next morning, on the start of the convention. They got a majority of the delegates out of Montana, as I recall. I may be wrong about that. We had some, but we didn't do as well as we expected. They pulled that old power play, and they hammered the hell out of those people.

You know, you get a tough Irishman, you've got a guy who is not going to quit. They had several of those that they used. Effective? Yes. How many friends it wins you in the long run? I don't know. I don't know.

RITCHIE: It was quite a juggernaut.

VANDER ZEE: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: And you came up against it all over the country.

VANDER ZEE: Oh, sure. Sure. It was a well financed and... They weren't the darlings of the media as individuals that they'd become in subsequent years. But they still had it going. And everybody knew that Poppa Joe was feeding the thing. But I think what everybody overlooked—I certainly did—for instance, in West Virginia he had some kind of ties into the very top of those coal

companies and made life just miserable for them because the people just got all kind of pressure put on them from their bosses, you know, their employers. Tough deal. Tough deal. And this was directly through, you know, this was a kind of an umbrella over politics, but it was there, and it was effective. There was no question about it. And those contacts came from years and years of that Wall Street stuff, because all that coal was owned by somebody else. Hell, nobody in West Virginia owned any of it. So, yeah, it was a hell of a coordinated effort.

The theory is that the ones the candidate or his brothers couldn't reach their dad apparently had a way to get to. But we scared the hell out of them in West Virginia. We really did. They knew that Jack's effort rode on whether or not he could prevail in a relatively non-catholic area, as West Virginia was advertised as being. I guess it is, I really don't know. But because they knew that, and because through the course of the campaign, just as Otten and Lawrence read it, it looked like Humphrey was going to win it pretty handily. They knew that they had to do something drastic, and they did it! And it worked.

RITCHIE: Did you go on to Los Angeles for the convention?

VANDER ZEE: Oh, yeah, sure. I was with the Symington people out there. Nobody knew if Stevenson was going to have any steam left. He wasn't making a particular effort. So, you couldn't read that. And Johnson had taken the tactic of just sitting on the

sidelines. As you may recall, he was just going to tend to business and run the Senate. And did, by and large.

People like Jim Rowe, who was an old friend of Johnson's had come over and was working with us for Humphrey because he said, "Hell, I've got to have a candidate! And Johnson won't run; and, therefore, I'm going to get with the guy that's going." That was the idea of a lot of us.

So in Los Angeles, Symington's strategy was that, if Johnson—or anybody else—I guess Johnson was the logical one, I don't think anybody really figured Stevenson would come back into it—although he did get a hell of a rousing hand and all that. There was a good bit of excitement when his name was put in nomination. I think Gene McCarthy made the speech.

It was basically the strategy of Symington that if Kennedy and Johnson somehow managed to deadlock one another that maybe he would be a compromise choice. Didn't work and really never got off the ground. But that was the whole thing. We had a conference—I say, "we"—Charlie Brown and I talked with Humphrey about swinging any support he might have over to Symington. And he did have some Wisconsin delegates. He had some in West Virginia. He had delegates from other areas that could have been pushed anywhere he wanted to go. But Symington never ever really got a big enough head of steam going to make it work. We talked about it as late as the night before the vote at the convention.

RITCHIE: There was a lot of talk that Symington might be the vice presidential candidate.

VANDER ZEE: I don't recall that. I'm sure you're right. I don't recall it myself. I just don't have any feel for that.

RITCHIE: Were you surprised when Johnson took second place on that ticket?

VANDER ZEE: A bit. My acquaintance with Mr. Johnson just went back to when I worked here. I guess I met him in '60. But, I'll tell you a story involving him and all the others. They all came over to West Virginia a few nights before the primary—I mean the candidates that year, that would have been Senator Johnson, Senator Kennedy, Senator Symington, and Senator Humphrey. The occasion was a political gathering in Clarksburg, West Virginia, a few days before the West Virginia primary. I remember the primary was on the 10th May, and this date could be established exactly because it was the day that Francis Gary Powers was shot down in a U-2 over the Soviet Union. [On May 5 the Soviet Union announced that it had shot the plane down on May 1.] I was waiting up in the hotel up in Clarksburg, where we were staying, and when Humphrey came in he said, "I was just downstairs and Johnson's down there having a press conference and talking about the possibility of beginning World War III. It's something about one of our planes

being shot down over Russia." He said, "I don't know what it's about and I'm wondering what I should say."

It just happened to be one of those situations where because of my intelligence time in the Navy, and also my contacts with some CIA people whom I had known from my FBI times, I was aware of the existence of that aircraft. Furthermore, I had had occasion to fly on a navy plane to Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, with a navy friend, and one of my specialties in the intelligence school was teaching the identification of the world's military aircraft. So when I saw these aircraft on the ground in Del Rio, I knew that they weren't a part of my curriculum. When I inquired about the aircraft there at Del Rio, I was told that it was simply a classified aircraft. Subsequently, that evening, the navy aviator with whom I was flying turned out to be a friend of the base commander, and after we had gone to the BOQ and changed clothes and gone over to the Officers' Club to use our complimentary drink chits, we met the commander of the base, and since they had been old friends from joint maneuvers somewhere, they readily told us—once they found out what his assignment was—that they were staging out of Del Rio with the U-2, and that they went to Turkey principally, and other locations, and flew missions over the Soviet Union. So with that information, I advised Senator Humphrey that I didn't think it would be appropriate for him to comment, simply let that be President Eisenhower's airplane, and if there was any explaining to do about it, let him explain it. [laughs] And it was one of those times when strangely enough Senator Humphrey did just

that, instead of getting involved. I thought it was an opportune situation where we just happened to have the knowledge at the time that perhaps kept him from getting involved. There is not much more significance about that, except that the purpose of the meeting that night was to give the candidates a chance to air their candidacy before the people of West Virginia, even though only two of the four were formally entered in the West Virginia primary.

An earlier story relating to Johnson involved my next-door neighbor in Texas at this little country home where my family lived. It was a summer home for this neighbor, whose name was Wright Morrow. He was the national committeeman and Texas Democratic chairman. He and his family lived in Houston, and they'd come out frequently, about two-hundred and fifty miles to the hills, where he had this summer place out by a pretty little river there. And his kids kind of grew up with us. We hung out together during summers. He had a couple of daughters. I knew he was a big shot. When I was a kid, I knew he was a big shot in Texas state politics and national politics. National committeeman. But, we never talked about it. I just wasn't into that zone at that time.

When I graduated from college I was there working on my mother's place one day. He came over, and he said, "Rein, what are you going to do now that you got out of college?" I said, "Well, I'm waiting to see if I'll be picked up by the FBI, Mr. Morrow." I said, "I made an application and I still have a little time before graduation actually takes place." And he said, "Well, if

you'd like for me to, Howard McGrath is a good friend of mine, and I'll give him a call for you." I said, "Oh, gosh, Mr. Morrow, I've been *specifically* warned that anything like that would be inadvisable because of the way Mr. Hoover is about any influence or politics."

But he said, "Okay, but let me know if I can help you." So that was the end of that. Then, after I was in the FBI, I was married some nine months into the FBI. I married my college sweetheart, and we had gone back to Texas on annual leave. And, again, we were visiting my mother's home. They were there, Morrow and his wife. And it was a winter, I remember that. Anyway, they invited my wife and me down for drinks. By this time, it's either late '52 or '53. He and I went out in the kitchen to stir up a drink and he starts talking about "this no good SOB, that damn Johnson," see. I said, "Gosh, Mr. Morrow, I know you've been chairman of the party and all, and I didn't know you were so bitter about that fella."

And he said, "Well, he just has a way of forgettin' who put him where he is." And this struck me—because this was a very good and decent man. I mean, he was good to little kids, big kids, old women, he was just that kind of guy. Widely loved, and well thought of. A Houston attorney. He'd gotten rich, even though he's a lawyer, by doing acquisitions in the early days of the east Texas oil fields. You can read in books how he got there. He was a friend of Jessie Jones, George Brown, those people. In fact, he told me that night, he said, "Jessie Jones and George Brown and I

made it possible for this man to be sitting in the United States Senate today. It was *us* who paid for the helicopter." You know, that kind of stuff.

He was very put out with Johnson because Johnson had chosen—now Morrow had gone with the Shivercrats, and the Dixiecrats, you see, in that '52 campaign, and Johnson had gone the other way. There may have been something more personal, but his message was, the moral of his story was that Johnson will drop you like a bad habit the minute that you no longer serve his interest.

When I came to work over on the Senate side, one day I was sitting around chewing the fat with [Bobby] Baker, and I told him that story. And he knew who Wright Morrow was. Some time later, after Baker departed the Hill and Johnson made the "Bobby who?" television appearance, Baker said "You remember that story about your friend in Texas? He damn sure was right." [laughs]

Just one aside on it. Baker subsequently was invited down to the ranch many years later [in 1972]. In fact Baker and his wife came and stayed at my house. Walter Jenkins called me from Austin and asked me to come over there and pick them up, that he was going to be a guest there, and they had requested that I meet them. So I got a car, went over Austin, picked them up, and gave them a car. And they went on and stayed with Johnson. And then they came and stayed at our house.

I always ribbed Baker. I said, "Well, did he want to make amends? Or did he just want to find out how many chapters you're going to do on him in your book?" Bobby said, "Well, Rein, the

guy's dying." And he did die just ninety days or 120 days later. I think it was in November, and didn't Johnson die along in February or March?

RITCHIE: Right. That was November, '72, I think that Baker went down to the ranch. Johnson died the next winter.

VANDER ZEE: Just a very short time after. Well, I'm losing the chain of thought. In any event, this fellow Morrow had told me about his source of dissatisfaction with Johnson. So, while Wright Morrow to me was a very wonderful man, he had opted to go with the Shivercrats, which was a wing of the Dixiecrats in that '52 year. And I was unable, and still would be unable, to fault Johnson as a national office holder to have caved into that pressure. I think Johnson in the interest not only of his own political career but the national party simply couldn't. And they failed to understand that. They thought he ought to do what they told him. So he took a hike on them, or at least Morrow felt he'd taken a hike. I don't know if they ever did get the hatchet buried. I doubt it. Too bitter. Real bitter.

Bitterness was not a part of this man, you see; but he was still bitter about that.

RITCHIE: What was your impression of Lyndon Johnson as a person at that time?

VANDER ZEE: At that time I didn't know him. See, at the time of this conversation I was telling you about was '53; and I didn't get to know him for seven or

eight years later. My first real contact with him was in 1960. After the convention, I came back to town. Most of us that were out of work went on the Inaugural Committee.

Oh, wait a minute. I've got to back up. The campaign came after the convention. And in the campaign, Rowe (who had been appointed Kennedy-Johnson liaison) was responsible for having me appointed—out of his experience with me, he took a liking to me in the Humphrey campaign—he had me appointed director of scheduling for Johnson. So I was down working out of the national committee, and handling Johnson's schedule. That was the year [Richard] Nixon pledged to appear personally in every one of the fifty states. We realized, or we felt that that was not a thing for our presidential candidate to do, that we would divide it between the two of them, and let Johnson handle some of the little low-vote states early on. One of the things we laid on very early after a conference up in—now when Kennedy was nominated, Johnson as Majority Leader was in what we called P-38 in those days. I don't know if it is still P-38, but it's that suite of rooms off the Senate Reception Room.

RITCHIE: Yes. [S-211]

VANDER ZEE: It was just referred to in those days P-38. Anyway, right across where Joe Stewart is now was Joe Duke's

office. Joe Duke was Sergeant at Arms. It was that end of the principal floor that was occupied by Johnson and Joe Duke. Well, after the nomination, Joe Duke was a pretty capable politician, he said, "Senator Kennedy, I want you to take my office over and use it for your office." So Kennedy did. And Rowe and I went up there. Rowe and I and Dick McGuire were there. I think we were the only ones. After we had formulated a rough schedule, we went up to the office where Joe Stewart is now, and we sat down with Senators Kennedy and Johnson and we talked about this schedule. We had set it up for Johnson to go out to Hawaii very early on, because Hawaii was a three-vote state, and you would lose a day getting out there and back.

Johnson started demurring, and we couldn't understand why. And he'd already agreed to this through Rowe. Rowe had been passing the stuff to me. In turn, we had a vice president—Smith had given us some guy who was a vice president of American Airlines.

RITCHIE: C. R. Smith, right?

VANDER ZEE: Right. And they had to take a plane out of the fleet. They had to put beds in it and work it all over. In other words, it would be a plane lost to them as a revenue producer to be this campaign plane to go out to Hawaii to do all that stuff. We had committed to that on this basis, and the guy at the time told me, "Now, this has gotta be." He said, "Are you sure this is for

real?" Because, he said, "my ass is mud if for some reason this doesn't come off."

And I said, "Well, I just have it on the authority of Jim Rowe; and he got it from Johnson that it's a go." Well, when we got in that little scheduling deal, Johnson started demurring. We didn't know why, but it didn't take long to find out. The Senate was in session. He called this Senator Long in from off the floor, Senator Long from Hawaii. I forget his first name.

RITCHIE: Oren.

VANDER ZEE: You got it! Hot damn, you're good. He said, Senator, Oren, whatever, he said "tell these fellas what you been telling me about the advisability of going out there to Hawaii in the beginning of the campaign." Naturally, any senator is going to do this to you. He said, "Well, hell, it's too early." He said, "you're not going to get any crowds." And this killed Johnson, you know, no crowds. And he gave him all these reasons why it'd be a lousy deal. And all of them self-serving, because everybody wants to have the candidate as everybody knows in the last damn week!

But you just couldn't afford the time and all of that to do that. So, after we went ahead and did the rest of the schedule Johnson asked us to come into P-38. When we got in there, Walter Jenkins, I guess, was there. Rowe was adamant. He said, "Senator you committed to the Hawaii trip." He says, "You put a lot of

people in a very, very difficult position if you won't live up to it."

Johnson said [in a higher pitched voice], "I didn't agree to that." He said, "Walter, what did you understand about me going?" And Walter did what Walter had to do, he hedged. And Rowe said, "Well, Vander Zee, how about you?" I said, "Well, of course, I made the commitment to American Airlines based on what you conveyed to me that there was a 'go' deal." From that day forward through that campaign when we left there that night, I was replaced as director of scheduling. Johnson never spoke to Rowe. They didn't speak for years. It was several years! And Johnson was back at the White House before he called Rowe back. Over that. He didn't go! And nobody went, and we carried Hawaii anyway.

So, that was just an example of the way he is. But Oren Long had convinced him he just wouldn't even be noticed out there. And that killed that deal. But, oh, I liked him anyway. I think he was a very vain guy in many ways, but overall, I would approve him, because I knew where he came from. After all, he came out of the Roosevelt mold, out of that New Deal. He tried to do all that. He wanted to be another Lincoln. He did his damndest with his Great Society, civil rights, and all the rest of that stuff. And, as we all know, with his knowledge of the Congress and the individuals in the wake of the Kennedy assassination, it was a rare combination of events there when you could have passed anything.

Kennedy, on the other hand, was unable to get anything. I don't believe any Kennedy measures would have gone through the

Congress at all the way things were going during his time. You could just see it. The members weren't going to cooperate with him, even though he was out of their own party. You could just feel it around the floor. I wasn't privy to the real inside conversations, but I was back in the cloakroom a lot, and I could hear the members talking and I'd get feedback from Baker and others. And you could just see it during Kennedy's time. It was just going to bog down and get to be a tough go. Suddenly, because of his death and because Johnson had the opposite kind of a thing—he was the professional guy out of the Senate. Kennedy, you know, was always considered an absentee kind of guy. Not too dedicated to his work.

Well, it turned around. And here he had this beautiful opportunity to pass any damn thing he pleased. And he did. Now we all have to debate whether or not it was for the benefit of the country.

RITCHIE: To go back. He dropped you as in charge of his scheduling then?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. A fellow named Jim Blundell who was a top man for Bill Blakely out of Texas, I think. He had been brought in. I think Blakely was a major owner in Braniff Airlines.

RITCHIE: Blakely took Johnson's seat eventually.

VANDER ZEE: He took the appointive seat there until the election when [John] Tower came in. Jim Blundell came in and took the top scheduling job. They didn't fire

me. I was *there*. I just didn't have the top job any more because I had sided with Rowe. [laughs] And you know, I didn't know until some years later because Rowe didn't tell me, the fact that he and Johnson had ceased their communication. And they were good friends. Rowe was the guy that *greeted* Johnson into the White House when Johnson came to Congress in whatever year that was, '37, '38, I guess it was. So their friendship, their acquaintance went way back. It was ultimately restored. Rowe was working with Johnson during Johnson's time in the White House.

RITCHIE: A long time ago I went to interview Tommy Corcoran at their law firm, and I remember I had to wait for an hour in a waiting room that was *filled* with pictures of Lyndon Johnson. There was not a *single* other person on the wall except Lyndon Johnson.

VANDER ZEE: Right. [laughs] Well, I'm sure at various times he relied a lot on those fellows for their help and their knowledge. You know, Rowe was the inside man, Corcoran was the outside man. Their story is that Corcoran was so unpredictable Roosevelt wanted to keep him outside. And he created most of those alphabet soup agencies during that time. Brilliant guy. When I last saw him he was walking down 16th Street with his chesterfield

on, looking up at the trees, whistling. Seemed like a million miles away.

I have some interesting—are you interested in the so-called insider episodes?

RITCHIE: Um-hummm.

VANDER ZEE: Well, after the Bobby Baker thing, I went downtown and started practicing law the next year. I saw that there wasn't going to be any place for me there. Senator Mansfield was pretty much—what is the correct word?—he was shocked by the whole Baker thing, because he relied heavily on just leaving everything as it was. And when that happened, he, well, didn't know what to do for awhile. But I could read the tea leaves rather quickly that my days were limited, and my intentions all along had been to depart. I'd received my law degree from Georgetown and passed the D.C. bar just prior to the end of the year. I planned to depart in early '64 anyway. But because of the Baker thing and because I was assistant secretary, we were all subject to being tarred with the same brush. Reporters were running all over the Hill trying to get the goods on everybody about some kind of wrong doing.

I seldom went to the offices that we had over in the West Front. But I went down one day to a desk that was mine and I had a key to, and the desk had been pried open with some kind of a tool. The lock had been broken. I looked down, and I couldn't see

that anything was missing. I didn't have that much stuff there. But later on a friend of mine came around, Bob Novak, who at that time, I think, was with the *Wall Street Journal*, I forget. But he came around, and he said, "Rein, I think you ought to know—you've been a friend, and you've helped me—and I think you ought to know," he said, "I can't identify them for you, I'm not going to, but somebody's trying to peddle a piece of goods on you. A reporter is trying to do this," and he said "I wouldn't touch it; but others might; and I think you ought to at least be aware of it."

Well, what I subsequently learned was that one of the things that had been taken from my desk was a personal letter from a guy named Joe Reber in Montana. Joe Reber was a party guy out there. He was very successful. He'd been a plumber out of Butte and Anaconda. Anaconda was the name of this little town by Butte. He had come out of that area. Anyway, we were friends, and Joe had become very wealthy for his time and day because he had gotten to be such a good plumber, he was plumbing the holes in Malmstrom Air Force Base missile silos. And this made him a fairly substantial citizen.

One time Joe was in town, and I ran into him, I think it was at the Carroll Arms. And he said, "Rein, do you have any friends in Boeing?" Well, I said, "My gosh, that's something I don't have any contact with." I said, "I don't work on those committees. I think I know one or two guys around town that are identified as being Boeing lobbyists." And he said, "Well, if you ever have

occasion to say a good word for me, I'd sure like to get some more of those subcontracts."

That was the end of it, just a conversation like that. [laughs] Well, he subsequently wrote me a letter—just a handwritten note. Said "good to see you in Washington. How's the folks. La dee da. And, by the way, if you ever run into those people from Boeing, how about putting in a good word for me." [laughs] Well, now, Sarah McClendon. There was an old gal named Grace somebody who was an old timer around here. And she had keys to a lot of the things around the Capitol.

RITCHIE: Oh, Grace Johnson.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Yeah. You got it.

RITCHIE: She worked on the Rules Committee, didn't she?

VANDER ZEE: I don't know what she did, but she was reputed to have been a girl friend of both [Allen] Ellender's and [Carl] Hayden's. And so Joe Duke wouldn't mess with her. He knew she was running around with a bunch of keys to get in a lot of these places. So, apparently, she'd let Sarah in, and they busted some desks, and mine was one of them. So Sarah was the one that had this, and she must have thought: Boy I got this guy, he's fixing *missile* contracts! And that's what she's peddling. I told you I had to stick around a few months past the time I wanted to because

of the Baker investigation. Senator Jordan's AA had me over, and I sat down with Senator Jordan and Bill [Cochrane]. And I said, "Gentlemen, I've been trying to leave the Hill to go downtown to practice law. But nobody will tell me that I'm not going to be called as a witness before the committee because I was Bobby's assistant. And I don't want to send out my announcements opening my law practice and have my first public act to be to come up here and testify before the Committee as if I'm under some cloud of suspicion."

And they said, "Well, you really aren't, Rein, except somebody's trying to say you're fixing missile contracts." [laughs] This how crazy those things get, you know? So Senator Jordan said to me, "Rein, how would you go about fixing a missile contract?" I said, "Well, Senator, you just answered the question. It's ridiculous." By that time I knew about the letter, and I told him what I thought had happened. And that's where it all came from. So it died out. But it gets so crazy around this place when that kind of thing is going on. And somehow, someday, I hope that the people who are sent here by the public will take control of their damned institution and quit letting the newsies and a bunch of other people run it for them. Until that happens, I don't see much hope for the future of the republic from what I've been a witness to or participant in.

So, naturally, when things like that happen, ultimately there's nothing to it. But they get drug around for weeks and months, and it creates a lot of uncertainty, but finally I just

said, "Well, hell, I'm going on downtown and get after it." And did. And that was the end of it.

RITCHIE: They never did call you back to testify?

VANDER ZEE: No, I was never called as a witness.

RITCHIE: Could we still go back. I'm curious about that 1960 campaign after the incident with Johnson. What did you do for the remainder of the campaign?

VANDER ZEE: Well, I continued to work on his scheduling department and then, when I saw that I had been shuffled off to Buffalo, I just went on the road doing advance work for Kennedy.

RITCHIE: Did you do any of that famous southern tour that he did? The whistle-stopping?

VANDER ZEE: No, that was all Bobby's show. That was something laid on early because Bobby promoted the hell out of it, and Johnson went for it. I know at the end of it there was a lot of friction. Johnson made everybody sick on the damn trip. Baker finally told him off, I understand, down at the Roosevelt [Hotel] in New Orleans. Apparently they were having a little gathering, cocktails, what have you, appetizers. Johnson came in, and everybody kind of turned their backs. The story I got is second-

hand story. Bud Lucky, the guy with [George] Smathers, was there. He was working on it. Baker can't drink, he's quit drinking today. He doesn't drink any more. It's impossible for him to. It was impossible for him to then. He shouldn't have been doing it. Some guys can; some guys can't.

But he'd had a couple of shooters, and everybody, you know, in those situations you're always exhausted. So Johnson took him aside and said something like, "Bobby why is everybody treatin' me the way they are?" Bobby was supposed to have said, "Because you're a chicken shit son-of-a-bitch!" [laughs] And I imagine that happened. [laughs] I wasn't there to hear it, but that was reported to me as what took place.

No, I didn't have part in it, but I was part of setting it up. We blocked out the time for it. But we kind of just turned that over to Baker—we assigned the advance guys to work with them. So, anyway, I did advance jobs. I advanced their only joint appearance, I recall, it's peculiar, as I told you, we made this effort to have them always cover everything by part. But Kennedy and Johnson had one joint appearance, and it was Johnson's desire to have it. I advanced his part of it along with one other guy, Bill Lloyd. In Amarillo, Texas of all peculiar places. Of course Amarillo, that's where Republicanism was born in the state of Texas in the modern era. And it was a center, in Johnson's way of thought, for right-wing types. So I advanced that with Bill. And they flew in, each in their own planes and landed there and made this joint appearance. Just an airport appearance.

It was a great embarrassment for me—in fact it was Bill Blakely's airline, I think, that did this to us. Braniff? Anyway, Amarillo had a fairly active airport there. I asked the airport manager there if while the candidates were on the ground—it was just going to be a grandstand, loud speakers, crowd would be on the outside the fence on the apron—if they could just hold off having any landings or takeoffs for a few minutes. He indicated that they could do that.

But these guys out of Dallas, these pilots, when Kennedy and Johnson got there, they went out and got in their goddamn planes and wound their engines up. I mean, did it on purpose! I remember Kennedy saying, "Boy this is the noisiest airport I've ever been in." Those guys were doing just a straight harassment effort. It was a pain in the ass. It kind of ruined the appearance. Which goes to show that when you get in that kind of a situation, no more would I take anybody's word. I'd have to do something to assure that they would be turning them off. But these weren't their people. They were going to do everything they could to embarrass them.

RITCHIE: There's a famous picture, and I wonder whether it was taken at that stop. Kennedy is standing on the steps of the plane, and Johnson is two or three steps below him. Johnson seems to be shouting off in the distance, and Kennedy has his hands on his shoulder and seems to be saying, "Calm down, Lyndon."

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmmm. I have a hunch that I'm right in front of them in the picture because I went aboard the plane to give them a little briefing and tell them what we were going to do. So I probably walked off right ahead. But I know the one you mean. I've seen it. In fact, I think I've got it at home, and I think Johnson when he was veep he signed it for me up on the dais one day there at the Senate. And I think he did it with a damned felt tip, which has just about faded out so you can't see it any more. But anyway.

RITCHIE: That picture seemed to capture the difference in personalities between the two men. In fact, when I was a student in the 1960s I had a copy of that picture pasted up on the wall over my desk.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Yeah, that's the picture. You described it very well. I got a Burr hair cut in those days. Bill Lloyd and I both, the other advance man.

RITCHIE: The election was over. The Democrats had won. You came back and joined the inaugural committee, did you say?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Then I finished out the year working on the inaugural committee. In those days—well, same today—I didn't have two nickels to rub together. I was always looking for a payroll and couldn't do without one. So my gang, more or less, we

all worked on the inaugural committee. Bob Burkhart from New Jersey was running it that year. Well, he was the executive director and there was a lawyer downtown. He was chairman. Again, I can't recall the name at the moment.

The job was get it put together. We did that. Then I again was going to be in limbo for employment for the following year. So, when I saw things in the very beginning of '61 after the—well, the inauguration wasn't until the 20th of January.

RITCHIE: There was a huge snow storm just the day before the inauguration.

VANDER ZEE: Oh, God! So as we were moving toward that the Senate had its early meeting there and it became apparent that Humphrey was going to take the whip slot. He told me so. I mean we were talking fairly regularly. Well, I hit him up for a job. I said "Rather than try to be in the executive branch, I'd like to stay up here on the Hill. And if you're going to take that new job and you haven't got the spot for anybody else to take it, I'd like to have it." And he wound up giving it to me. He said, "I liked what you did for me in West Virginia and I'd like you to continue." He said, "Now we've got a little national political constituency, and I'd like you to handle my national politics." He had me working basically on that and—a strange combination—on agriculture. That was always a thing he had to stay close to. So he had me doing those two things. And taking care of that little

office of keeping in touch with the things right there that involved the whip office.

I did that then for '61, all that year. And I was back in law school at nights. As soon as we finished a day I would whip down there to 7th and E or wherever it was then. Then at the beginning of '62 there was a fellow that was Bobby's assistant. Damn I can't remember. Jay somebody [Jessop McDonnell]. He was assistant secretary. Jay, for whatever reasons, he and Bobby had gotten on the outs. Jay was a pal of [Edmund] Muskie's and this girl's boss, [Gale] McGee, and some others. But, anyway, it wound up they canned him. They had to have somebody for that job, so Humphrey thought it would be appropriate if I worked down there. So I went down to the floor.

For me, I kind of liked it better because I was intent on getting that law degree. This is where I fell short as a Hill guy, and why I wasn't immersed more in policy and things like that. I was going after that degree, and the little job there on the floor went a hell of a lot better with my studies than having an immersion-type job here where you're working late and having to get papers ready and all that. It was pretty much a come-and-go-type job.

We had a couple of good men over there. Joe Stewart was one of them, and Dick Darling who ran our telephones in the cloakroom, were good about covering if you were away. So I was able to make class every evening. There was no paperwork burden, you know, things they do over there. We would record the votes, make sure the

members were informed when they came to the floor about why the bells were ringing and what was going on. Supervise the page boys, all that stuff that orbits around the floor there.

Bobby was very preoccupied. As we came to know later, he was doing a lot of stuff for Senator [Robert] Kerr, and probably others. He had his own problems. He had those outside investments he was working on, and the damn motel washing away in Ocean City—like I guess it nearly did again recently. He had a lot of headaches that were distracting him. So he wasn't at the floor a whole lot. Joe [Stewart] and I kind of rode herd on that thing together during those two or three years.

Mansfield left us alone. Of course, on the policy committee, we had Harry McPherson and his sidekick whoever he was at that time.

RITCHIE: Jerry Siegel, maybe?

VANDER ZEE: No, Jerry had gone already. I think there might have been a Ken Teasdale showed up around that time. I remember his name. And another guy. Charlie somebody

RITCHIE: Charlie Ferris.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah! Charlie was around during that time. But it was basically a very good time. I don't remember anybody having a long knife out. I understand a lot of that type of stuff started

happening around here later on. People liked their bosses. Their bosses liked them. There was a great deal of staff camaraderie, across the aisle as well as with your own side of the aisle. I guess Oliver Dompierre was as good a pal as I ever had on the Hill. And Billy Brownrigg. I knew Mark, but Mark and I didn't spend that much time together.

RITCHIE: Mark Trice?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Mark Trice. Billy and I, and Oliver and I used to go down and have had a shooter with his boss, sometimes in the evening. Everybody liked Senator Dirksen. He was a good guy. Then my two best staff friends—both Skeeter [Felton Johnston] and Joe Duke. Joe Duke, subsequently, after he retired and was in Arizona, he came down to Texas and bought a piece of land from me and built a home, and was my neighbor. He didn't stay but a year, he and his wife. It was his intention when he came, but apparently she developed some allergies or had some arthritic condition that was aggravated down in that part of Texas. So they moved back to Arizona.

But I still call him. I didn't call him this Christmas, but I call Joe at least once a year to see how he's doing. Those kind of friendships, you never lose them. I was a rookie when I showed up around here. Joe took me under his wing and just anything he could do to help me and my boss, it seemed like he was always there to do it. Why? I mean, he didn't have to. And you appreciate

those things. I realize that's a lot of what politics around here runs on. But out of it also grows strong, personal friendships. I still have.

RITCHIE: Well, you started out with Humphrey when he was whip. What types of things would you do for him when he was the whip?

VANDER ZEE: Well, of course, the main thing was just keep track of the floor so he'd know, too; because every day there would be whip notices to generate about something. So he'd been informed and could always talk to people on his side of the aisle, fulfill his responsibilities.

As I recall, that wasn't a big deal because everybody was fairly well aware of what was going on. But you were his eyes and ears around the Hill as it affected his job there. One thing that I recall was when Kennedy nominated—this is a "for instance" where you're asked to perform a service—Kennedy nominated John Connally to be Secretary of the Navy at the behest, of course, of Lyndon Johnson. We have to assume that, I feel it's unquestioned. And it became apparent that the usual guys who were against that "bunch of damned rich Texas oil men and wheeler-dealer politicians" were going to try to create some problems for the nomination. And, of course, mainly those would be Senator [William] Proxmire and [Paul] Douglas and maybe some others.

But we were asked by—well, Humphrey was specifically asked by Johnson to see if he could keep a rein on those folks. We got Humphrey up to the task. I remember sitting down in Bobby's office there with Connally. I don't recall if he provided us with paperwork. But anyway, my job was to make sure Humphrey had everything he needed to hold the fort there on that particular day and that particular nomination. As I recall, it never got to be real tough. I think there was some indication there was going to a fight, and then it kind of all blew over. Proxmire and them decided not to make a big *cause celebre* out of it.

RITCHIE: So you kept Humphrey informed so that he could know what to expect?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Things like that. That was more or less coordination between Baker and I. Baker from Johnson, then back to Humphrey because he was the administration guy. He was assistant leader. He was the liberal, and part of his job was to keep other liberals in the boat.

RITCHIE: What was the relationship between Senator Humphrey as whip and Senator Mansfield as majority leader?

VANDER ZEE: Well, they'd sit there and talk about things. I don't think they had—I could be wrong about this—but I don't recall them having many meetings off the floor or outside the

floor. I don't think they went and huddled in each other's office. I know Mansfield never came in ours, and I don't think Humphrey was in Mansfield's very much.

At this time, now, when Mansfield came in as majority leader, he left P-38 [S2-211] over there with Johnson. Johnson kept it for the veep office. A lot of people fussed about that, and thought he was overstepping. But Mansfield went into that office I told you Kennedy had occupied which had been Joe Duke's. Joe went across on the west side and set up his office. And Humphrey had the little third-floor office above where Stewart is now. That was the whip office.

You had mentioned earlier the inaugural speech and Kennedy and that cold spell. I remember it well because by this time I was signed on with Humphrey, and he told me, he said, "Rein, I told some friends of ours from Minnesota that don't want to brave the cold to come up there." So he gave me the names or told me the names. And there were a handful of them watching up there, which was the best seat in the house, I think. Among them, was a guy named Joe Robbie who at that time was a lawyer in Minneapolis. He's dead now, but he became the owner, you know, of the Miami Dolphins. He built his own football stadium and named it after himself. Joe was in those days just a practicing attorney in Minnesota, but he apparently had been a friend of Humphrey's for a lot of years. I don't remember who all else was there. I just remember Robbie and one or two of his children.

RITCHIE: A lot warmer in there than standing outside.

VANDER ZEE: Oh, wonderful! We just stood around there. Nice windows, you know, so we stood there and watched. Everybody had a good view. It was a bitter cold day.

RITCHIE: The reason I asked about the differences between Humphrey and Mansfield was when Johnson was majority leader he didn't give much slack to Mansfield as his whip at all. Mansfield was probably not cut in on what was going on. And now when Mansfield took over, he was a very different person. I wondered if the whip's job suddenly became more active, took more of a lead under Humphrey than it would have been earlier on.

VANDER ZEE: Well, of course it's been well recorded what you say about Johnson and Mansfield when he was whip. I think I remember Rowe's analysis was that Johnson wanted to have somebody that wouldn't give him trouble, that would go along with everything and would not be an obstacle or source of dissent. You've got to remember at that time the population of Montana wasn't half a million. I don't think it was 500,000. So, you know, he looked around, here's this nice guy and so it worked out well. I'm sure Johnson would be the last person in the world to have been able to tell that Mansfield would later set the longevity record as majority leader. Because it was the kind of a case of having somebody in name only.

But, apparently, the way Mansfield read the Johnson years was that the committee chairmen were rankling somewhat, they didn't particularly like to be steam-rolled. They didn't like to have their staff people bought off or persuaded off—not bought off literally, but you know what I'm saying—to move stuff out of committee when they weren't ready. This is just after the fact, I kind of was led to understand that that was standard tactics. He'd just surround you and make it happen.

Mansfield thought it would be a good idea for him to go back to where the old committee chairmen were almost autonomous in their domain. So he reextended them that type of courtesy—if that's the proper word. And I guess they *loved* it! You had [Richard] Russell in Armed Services. You had I forget what committee Ellender had.

RITCHIE: Agriculture, I think.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah, got that right. You had Dennis Chavez over there on Appropriations.

RITCHIE: [Harry] Byrd was chairman of Finance.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Byrd and subsequently—well when did Kerr take over? Kerr was just on Finance.

RITCHIE: Yes. He was the number two man.

VANDER ZEE: Right. Ranking member. My hindsight would be that there was a completely separate power group. And I recall telling Humphrey this. I said, "Senator, you and Mansfield have the titles in this operation here. But, I said, there is a very separate force going on. It's pretty potent." And it was Kerr. Kerr had huge financial resources, and he didn't mind helping Republican members. He didn't care where the votes came from. Hell, just so he had them! And I think it's pretty well known now that he spread it around, and when some critical issues important to him came up, he managed to most times—if not all times—to get his vote. And he got it off both sides of the aisle. Of course Bobby was providing assistance there.

I think to some extent, I think without question, Senator Dirksen provided a lot of assistance there by probably directing or cooperating or at least having knowledge of where the where-with-all was going sometimes on that side of the aisle.

Maybe they knew. Maybe they knew in their heart of hearts that this was the case. But certainly there was an element there of influence in the affairs of the Senate. Whether it existed before—probably it hadn't back in history, but it was sure there then.

The famous vote that made everybody almost drop their false teeth was on the Medicare vote where Jennings Randolph suddenly out of the blue, very contrary to expectations, voted against it. This was something Kerr was against, and Jennings Randolph voted with

him. There was an almost audible gasp. It was one of those hold-back votes until late in the voting from the group assembled.

RITCHIE: Can you describe Kerr to me? He seemed like such a larger-than-life figure.

VANDER ZEE: I can't say I was even remotely an intimate acquaintance of the gentleman, but he used to frequently come by the desk. About all he'd said was "Where's Baker?" If I knew, I'd tell him. In retrospect I have known people who worked for him closely—Bill Reynolds. I know a fella who was an Oklahoman who never worked directly for him but pretty close to him, named Carl Davis, a retired attorney in NASA. I think he was over at NASA and was liaison to the Hill for NASA. He's a fella that commanded fierce loyalty from his people. He obviously took great personal interest in them and with his resources, I'm sure he was able to probably do things for them personally that your average member wouldn't be able to. He was a man that more or less played by his own rules, because that's the way it was. You've got to remember where these fellas came from. I think in my life, your life, that those early influences are just something you don't shake off.:

I have one side of my family that came out of the Indian territory of Oklahoma, and you made do for yourself. If you could make it happen, you made it happen. There weren't any rules. There weren't any rule books about how you did it. I think that this man was no more or less than a product of that time and that

territory. As he used to say on the floor, he'd say, "Every time we get up and have a vote on some of these matters affecting oil and cattle, he said I'm accused of being a big, rich oil man from Oklahoma," and he said "they prove it on me every time." [laughs] In other words, he wasn't an apologist for it. It was just the way it was. And I think that was his whole approach to life. Baker always said he killed himself eating ice cream. He apparently was constantly eating ice cream. We all know now what that will do to your plumbing.

And he was a fellow who knew how to go about getting what he wanted. I'm not sure in the final analysis that that's all bad, any more than I'm sure that the way we used to do in politics, which was you just went out and got money. They've got all these finance laws now and, I mean, it's crazy. And it doesn't seem to improve the situation a hell of a lot. You've got all this record-keeping and reporting and everybody is going to put everybody in jail. It just gets crazy! Why should there be all that?

They did it to themselves. But you can't ever ultimately solve it all with rule making. I'm not too sure that it's not best the way the old system was. Somebody's got a zillion dollars and they want to give a zillion dollars to this guy to go into public office, then, hell, he just got lucky. I'm not too sure that's bad because look what the PACs thing has done. It seems to have diluted the public's interest even further—well, you wonder what happened to the old average guy. Where does the average citizen come off out there in this thing? They're not doin' too well.

As I say, I never knew the senator personally well enough to really comment about him. It was just second-hand stuff from Baker. Baker and I retain a personal friendship, have through the years. He's been in my home in Texas a few times. I see him when I come to Washington as a rule. He's six months younger than I am, but he's pretty thoroughly retired. He has a lot of good stories he could still tell about those years. But I don't know if anybody's interested any more.

RITCHIE: I'd like to interview him some time.

VANDER ZEE: He probably waited too long to write his little book. In fact I had a hand in putting him together with Larry L. King—not the television interviewer but Larry Leo King from Texas—because I could sense that if Bobby was left to his own devices he had too many preoccupations to sit down and write a book. He needed somebody to put the pen to the paper, the keys to the paper. So I got him and King together and they made a deal. I don't think the book was any great success. To me, it emphasized too much, they wanted to do a sensational type-thing and promote sales, so they named it something about the wheeler-dealer.

RITCHIE: *Wheeling and Dealing*

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. And Larry had to always get in on what I call unnecessary profanity and unseemly kind of thing. Well, we

all know it's there; but why the hell emphasize it in a piece of literature. There's more important things. He's still got my typewriter that he took. I've never seen it since. [laughs] Ate all the chili that I had in the place. I was back here for a few months. Had an apartment rented downtown at the time that they got together and did that back in the mid-seventies.

But by the time he finally got it finished—hell, the way the world goes now, just like the mention of what athlete was the Hubert H. Humphrey stadium named after. A few years passed and it was too late. Nobody knows anymore. The public memory of this country is very short, very shallow. Everybody is too damn busy trying to get back and forth to work and to get their groceries to be very enlightened.

RITCHIE: As a historian, I have to agree with you.

End of Interview #1

Interview Two

Tuesday, January 28, 1992

RITCHIE: When we left off this morning, you were working for Hubert Humphrey, and you were assisting him when he was the Democratic Whip. This was just before you went to the office of the secretary of the Democratic majority. I wonder if you could give me some description of the Senate at that stage. What was the pace of life of a person on the Senate floor? You were taking classes at night, but what would be an average day, when you were working for Humphrey?

VANDER ZEE: Well, you mean as a member of the majority leader's staff after I'd left his personal staff as Senate whip in '61 I went down to the floor.

RITCHIE: Well, tell me about being with him as whip and how it would have changed when you went down on the floor.

VANDER ZEE: Right. I did have some more or less administrative and policy responsibilities with respect to Humphrey's personal politics; the Senate whip operation and in this case, as I told you, agriculture, because it was so important to him in his home state. Down on the floor it became more or less just a housekeeping type of thing. I wasn't with policy. The policy committee, that was Harry [McPherson] and Ken Teasdale and

Charlie Ferris. I was under Baker's direct supervision. He was secretary of the majority at that time. Had been since Lyndon Johnson became majority leader, I think. Johnson became minority leader the first go 'round, as I recall, during Eisenhower's first term.

RITCHIE: During 1953-'54.

VANDER ZEE: Uh, huh. And then when they reassumed the majority, then Baker was elevated to majority secretary. He had quite a record as being an effective guy. He told me, "Your assignment is just to assist me. I'd like for you to stay up on the floor as much as possible, work for the majority leader and the whip, supervise the operation up there," which included the page boys, cloakroom basically. I personally, more or less, had the duty to record the votes. Joe and I usually did it together to double-check one another as the roll call was being taken. And, of course, the roll call clerk also took his. But we reported those to the—I guess it was the policy committee staff that kept the permanent voting records of the Democrats? So that is who we did it for. That was our responsibility to take and record an accurate vote, and the members who had to be absent, or for their own reasons had to ask for pairs. We'd keep records of that, record it all and carry it into, I think it was a Mrs. Moore who kept all those records for the majority. These became permanent records.

You know the old "revise and extend" thing that has been often criticized in both houses of Congress by the media and so forth. But, I didn't have any trouble with it. Because in the Senate I never saw anybody abuse it. I didn't think to the extent of it being called abuse. Many of the members would either make an extemporaneous speech; or even if they had a written speech, after the fact, they'd want to come around and look at their copy, and sometimes revise and extend by putting in new copy. I was always amused at a great gentleman, Senator John Stennis from Mississippi. He always seemed so apologetic. He said, "You know, I really hate to ask you to do this, but you know." [laughs] He was a guy you couldn't say no, too, anyway, even if you wanted to. He was such a gent.

So we took care of those kind of matters. Like I say, it was housekeeping. I guess one of the most important functions was when roll calls were called—in the old days, prior to Senator Mansfield taking over, and it kind of carried over. And the I suppose Senator Mansfield's desire was not to have members told of the leadership position unless it was some matter that was extremely important. I guess it had become routine under Johnson that on *every* vote the leadership position was given to the members when they came to the floor. And, of course, they were expected to vote that way.

Whether Baker was just used to doing it that way or what, we did start out with that. But during my time there that kind of eased up. In fact, I think before I left we were instructed *never*

to give the leadership position on a bill unless a member requested it. Maybe there had been some static from members themselves. Well, it continued—there were certain members that not only insisted on it, they didn't want you to take up the time to explain it. All they asked for was a thumb up or a thumb down or a yea or nay as they walked in. They didn't want to know what the issue was. They had sufficient confidence in the staff that the staff would know how they should vote.

These were admittedly what you might call your "automatics." I mean, they were people who almost always did vote with the majority leader on any given issue. That was it more or less it, housekeeping. We had to see to the physical housekeeping, make sure that everything was in order every day. The [page] boys filled the old snuff boxes, and the old inkwells. We just had to keep everything tidy and neat and, of course, make sure that the boys kept themselves shaped up so they run their errands properly and conduct themselves properly in front of the members.

RITCHIE: You spent most of your time in the cloakroom?

VANDER ZEE: In the cloakroom and at the desk in the corner that is reserved—I think, still is—for the assistant secretary on both sides. There is a seating arrangement on the dais, which I frankly don't remember but during ceremonial functions, which were rare, I think during opening day sessions of new Congress was about the only time where the actual staff members would take their seats

on the dais. And during those days, I was the lowest on the totem pole, but there was a seat up there for the secretary and assistant secretary for the majority along with the ones you find, the parliamentarian and all the other Senate officers. And when business was routine or even non-routine nobody ever occupied the dais except the presiding officer and those that necessarily had to be there. The parliamentarian, and his staff, and the roll-call clerk.

RITCHIE: Did you do much head-counting for the majority leader?

VANDER ZEE: I didn't personally. There was some of that, again, early on; but that also started to decline under Senator Mansfield. It wasn't the big thing it had been, to try to predict the outcome of the vote. That had gotten to be a kind of a game, I think, before under Johnson and Baker to be able to predict their head counts. You know they had this reputation of being very good at it, knowing how everything was going to turn out, knowing what the results were going to be. But that fell into disfavor.

RITCHIE: Did Baker sort of give you his assessment of the senators these are the "automatics," these are the uncertain? I get the sense that he really had a peg on everybody who was there. Did he let you in on his observations with that?

VANDER ZEE: We really didn't have that much time. He was a constant-motion guy. And I could tell he depended on me to cover the floor and free him up to get on down to the office or whatever he was doing. As I say, he spent a lot of time with Senator Kerr. Not always in the office. They weren't out of sight. Sometimes they would just go out and sit in the window seats off the floor. But they conferred a lot.

So I saw my duty just to be there, and make sure there were no problems, and to let him know if there were any problems. And, in turn, as I said, Joe Stewart and Dickie Darling, who ran our telephone cloakroom were very generous with me because they knew I was in law school.

I think Joe might have still been at American [University]. And Senator Bob Byrd was down at American. We were all in law school at the same time.

RITCHIE: Senator Byrd got his degree in '63, and I think that's when Joe did, too.

VANDER ZEE: Yep. Well, I got mine in the spring of '63. Took my bar in the summer, and I got the result about October or November '63. That's why I was ready to go on into private life. Then we had the assassination.

Well, first we had the Baker thing. The Baker thing blew up about October. A month later the president was assassinated. Then we had to follow along both of those. Johnson, of course, was

gone, where he had been around all the time. He liked to spend time on the Hill. As I mentioned, he kept P-38, and, I think, really considered it his base.

After Bobby's trouble started—this was still while Johnson was vice president in that interim before the president was killed. Every day, I know he polled me, and I also know it wasn't the only one he was polling. He'd be polling around the staff guys to find out what the members were saying. Just an interesting aside. Along in that period, Harry McPherson was appointed to some job over in the Defense Department. I forget the title that he had. But upon his departure, Senator Russell, who was chairman of the policy committee, got up on the floor to say nice things about Harry. I think others did, too. But Senator Russell being the boss of policy committee where Harry worked would be the principal one paying tribute to Harry and his work.

In the course of that, Johnson motioned me over—he was in the presiding officer's chair—he motioned, he said, "Now Rein I want you to listen to this. Now here's a boy—Harry McPherson, here—from Tyler, Texas." He said, "I brought him up here. I put him on the policy committee." And he went on and on with the identification he had with Harry, and Harry being his boy. "Now here is Senator Russell down there on the floor saying what a great man he is." [laughs] He said, "On the other hand, when I came here Bobby Baker was working here," and I forget the Senator from South Carolina who brought Bobby up. I'd know it if I heard it. But

RITCHIE: Maybank?

VANDER ZEE: It was [Burnet] Maybank. And he went on about the fact that Bobby was in place. All he did was leave him where he was. And he says, "Then he gets in trouble." He says, "Everybody says he's *my* boy. But they don't say anything about Harry McPherson being my boy." [laughs] Typical Johnson stuff. He was just venting his spleen to one guy that day while the speech was going on. And then later he did the "Bobby who?" bit while he was down at the White House and Baker's apparent troubles seemed to grow more complicated and deepened.

Actually, when it was all over, as I said, it wasn't exactly a tempest in a teapot. But it was a hell of a press party. I don't really to this day, I don't know of anybody, maybe even including those who were involved in the investigation and the ultimate trial, who could tell you exactly what Baker's misdeeds were.

It just seems, if I had to characterize it, I'd say he was doing too damn many things beside his government job. And they exacted a price for that, ultimately. Again, harking back to the so-called good old days, I referred earlier to Hoover, maybe we need more of the atmosphere in which people can function freely and make things happen. We seemed to have so constrained everybody that they can't do a damn thing. Everybody is boxed in. That may be a big part of the overall frustration with government that we see today. I don't know that it is. I can't prove any of this,

but I suspect it. We're witnessing now the Governor [Bill] Clinton affair. And these things just keep people away from government. They not only hurt the government, the image of government, its institutions, its people, with the public but then they keep people who might participate out. They never try, and that's sad.

RITCHIE: You talk about frustration in government. At the time you were there, in the majority secretary's office, there was certain frustration in the Democratic party. They were the majority party in the Senate and House. They had elected a president. The president had ambitious program. But he had a lot of trouble getting anything enacted.

VANDER ZEE: Absolutely. Absolutely. And the atmosphere of frustration was growing more. You could just feel it coming down like a cloud every day that passed up until the very moment of the president's death. It was going to be a bad time. No question about that! And the Democratic party was going to take the rap because, isn't that the last—no, under [Jimmy] Carter we had a government that was not divided. But ever since Carter we've had divided government. I think this is a time when we could use the British system and fix that responsibility, because unfixed it just heightens the public frustration with government's non-performance. It gives both sides the copout that "but for" that bunch of clowns, we could do this and that and the other. I don't know when the American public is going to wise up.

I attribute it to the television set, the television era; and the parallel collapse of the old party system where your people came up through the crucible of ward politics. And by the time they bubbled up to the top—let's face it, they were the Harry Trumans, they were tried and tested. If they were foul balls, chances are they would have been eliminated long before they got to that level.

And nowadays with the TV set, they send the foul balls straight into you. They come into the House, the Senate, wherever. I think if we could get back to the old system, it might have been a better one. But, you know, you've got to deal with reality. And the reality is it is a so-called beauty contest.

RITCHIE: You had a lot of very conservative Democratic chairmen during that period, didn't you? A lot of southern Democrats who were chairing the committees.

VANDER ZEE: Gosh, yes. You had Ellender. You had Stennis. You had [James] Eastland. I guess, you had Lister Hill—who wasn't so terribly conservative except on civil rights, he had to be, I guess. Jim Rowe told me one time he thought Lister Hill would have been one of the all-time greats if it hadn't been for that damn civil-rights yoke. Or race yoke—whatever you want to call it.

I would have to look back. My memory doesn't serve. Senator Russell. Warren Magnuson. Well, not highly conservative but

certainly not a wild-eyed liberal. Well, as I said, I'd have to look back.

RITCHIE: But the party was not united.

VANDER ZEE: No, anything but. I wouldn't say that there was open animosity, but there were schisms, sure there were. At this time, I think there was no question but that the southern members who had in the past been unable to go along with the civil rights movement more or less became neutralized. I don't know if President Kennedy's assassination, Johnson's ascendancy, all that thing we discussed earlier, was a big part of it. And they were going to give President Johnson what he wanted. They didn't want to be against him. Those that didn't vote with him, I guess, were just neutralized.

I don't remember actually how those votes were taken. But that was a big shift, and we can see the results that it's wrought all across the South. I don't know if it's completely civil rights. I think that when South came out of the Second World War, there was a lot of new and varied economic activity that also brought about big change down there. I guess from what I read Mississippi has been the most resistant to change. And, of course, in recent times the oil thing has certainly played hell economically with Mississippi, Louisiana. As we know, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma.

I don't personally recall, was it Senator Fulbright? No, he got beat—I think finally the Israeli thing, there was a lot of eastern money that went out there to help defeat Senator Fulbright because he spoke out on what he thought some of the inequities out there in the Mideast.

Am I right about that?

RITCHIE: I think he certainly feels that way.

VANDER ZEE: So I've got to confess, Don, I'm not the thorough-going student. I guess I was so enmeshed in the events—breaking events, and my studies. And, as I say, being involved not so much in a policy job as a functionaries job, that I maybe didn't absorb all I should have at that time. I'm a fair reader, and I've tried to enlighten myself in subsequent years.

RITCHIE: Did you have a sense that Johnson was doing much lobbying for the Kennedy administration? When he was vice president, did he try to promote Kennedy's programs?

VANDER ZEE: I think he was a definite plus, and a definite help around the Senate in particular, I don't know about the House, perhaps there too, insofar as the Kennedy program went. But, breaking his back? Probably not.

I think he was doing all he thought a vice president could and should do. I don't think he was slacking on the task. But I

believe that when Johnson was no longer the majority leader and was the vice president that he simply could not exercise any leverage on those old members that didn't want to go with him. There was during that period, the thing I referred to, where these members were taking back what they considered to be their rightful territory, and their committees, and their authority with respect to those committees and what they did.

The combination of it just added up to not a very bright outlook for the Kennedy program, such as it was. One thing I remember that did go fairly well on and, I think, was regarded as being the proper thing to do and very beneficial for the country; and that was the investment tax credit. And, I guess, Senator Kerr went along with that. As I recall, there may have been many others; but that was one of the real pluses put in place early on in the Kennedy thing to get things buzzing a little bit. And it worked! It did a lot of good.

RITCHIE: It seems that when Kennedy had Kerr on his side, he got things passed. But when Kerr opposed him on something like Medicaid, there were some very embarrassing defeats.

VANDER ZEE: Precisely. That was that Randolph vote I spoke to earlier that knocked that thing down. I think that was the vote that did it.

To sum up, I don't consider my recollection to be that good about the thing beyond what I've told you. It was a time of flux.

A time of change, readjustment. And it was mainly that shift back to Mansfield's type of operation, and the committee chairmen reasserting their influence and authority over their committees and kind of following their own dictates. All of this added up to a very muddled and unproductive period for Kennedy.

RITCHIE: Did Senator Humphrey ever express his frustration over what was going on?

VANDER ZEE: I don't have any specific recollection that he did. So I'd have to answer that no. Very simply, no, not to my knowledge. He was always a perpetual-motion guy, and he always was totally preoccupied. He was a very compassionate man. He had a sister named Fern who had all kind of problems—it wasn't his only sister—but I have seen him in the heat of something have to go to the phone in the whip's office and talk to Fern on the telephone just to be her brother and reassure her and calm her down. He had a very compassionate side to him.

He tried to do it all. And in many ways, he did do it all. I've often wondered if that frenetic, frantic life he lived in some way shortened his life. His family, I'm sure anybody now would look in retrospect would say they suffered mightily. That Mrs. Humphrey did a heroic job of raising her kids and all, but it's a tough go when the guy is never there. And to me that is the great crime of politics. Somehow a national political life and a family life just don't seem to work. It's a very rare family that can

make it work. I can't off the cuff name any great family successes. I hope that there are some. The people that have risen to the top whether they sought the presidency or not, even if they've risen to the upper levels of the Congress.

RITCHIE: Was there much socializing between senators and the staff at that stage?

VANDER ZEE: Yes. Well, yeah, there was. I would put it this way: there were those people like in any group that are naturally attracted one to the other. There always seemed to be some form of camaraderie in the cloakroom born of just the club-type atmosphere, even if people were diametrically opposed politically. There were some occasional conversations back there that were always interesting. Some would get a little heated but never any really ill will.

I remember for the longest time the United States had this sugar import quota from abroad, and there was some move to eliminate that. And I think we ultimately did go on some sort of world market and eliminate in effect what was a subsidized market in the United States by having this quota system. And Senator Fulbright was one person that was interested in it, because I remember he said back in the cloakroom, "Where there's sugar, there's flies, and that's all those lobbyists that are all up here feeding at the trough on this thing." He thought they could wipe out all that stuff having those guys running around the Hill

pushing for their country quotas. Humphrey on the other hand, I remember he said, "Bill, when is the last time you heard a housewife in the United States raising hell about the price of a pound of sugar?" He said, "We have an assured supply. The whole world tries to sell it to us. Our public gets an unlimited supply at a fair price. Nobody's complaining. Why the hell change something that's working?"

So you'd hear that type of thing, and I'm sure their views were always seriously held by both sides. But I think in that question ultimately the world market forces prevailed, and then I think sugar prices skyrocketed. At least in the short term they did. I really forget all that because I'm not a sugar user.

The thing that I do remember is that staffs were very loyal and very friendly with their principals, their members. I remember making a speech to the people in my office that you always have to keep uppermost in your mind when you work around this institution that there is one name out there on that door, and it isn't yours. Nobody cares about you, and your particular programs. You've got to get with the guy whose name is on the door.

We had, as I recall, excellent camaraderie among the staffs, it went back and forth, bipartisan. A gang that would go over and have a few shooters at the Carroll Arms or wherever. It was all very good. Then I trace back to an incident that occurred—it was after I left the Hill, it was post '64, it might have been my final days, where Senator Tom Dodd from Connecticut and his staff—there was a serious breach of privacy, you might say, between the senator

and I think his AA had a girlfriend on the staff. Senator Dodd apparently disciplined to the point of discharge. I can't remember all the details, and I can't remember the names. But I remember that they seized a lot of the senator's records, and I think Jack Anderson got in the act, as he'd be inclined to do.

To me, I traced what I would call the deterioration of that friendly employer-employee trust and dedication, I trace its beginnings back to that. I don't know if I'm right about that, but in my own experience and recollections, that's when it started to come apart. And I only have the word, since I haven't been around the institution after nearly thirty years, I only have the word of my contemporaries who have remained around, that there's a great deal of acrimony and distrust and that sort of thing in the environment here, which is indeed a sad development if it's true.

So to summarize, Don, I would say they were very good days both from the standpoint of staff and members. After all, let's face it, we were still the big dog on the block. I mean being that close to our worldwide victory in World War II. And everybody thought the sky was the limit. Certainly everybody hit the ground running in the beginning of the Kennedy administration. I trace the decline in nation's and Democratic party's fortunes to the Johnson years, where Johnson had about a year and a half and a second term, to two things. Of course, the Vietnam war had already been cussed and discussed over and over, and obviously that was a part of it. But I think also that President Johnson didn't appreciate—being from Texas perhaps, being somewhat of a fellow

who liked to personalize things—perhaps didn't appreciate the importance of the structure of the Democratic Party. The grassroots. The block. The neighborhood. As I remember lamenting during his time in office, he was doing absolutely nothing to promote it.

I don't know whether he could have sustained that type of operation in view of the onslaught of television, which obviously had an effect. But there was nothing done in that area. And so the Democratic party started to fall apart at the seams. At least the party I knew, and I even see television commentators and these press pundits now sitting around lamenting that we can't go back—that we *should* go back to the smoke-filled room. That it was a better deal! As I said, earlier, when these politicians are brought up through the system, and they have years and years of discipline and training and temper, generally when they get to the top they're ready. And that's what we need.

In my opinion, one of our present president's problems is that despite all his years around government, he wasn't ready for the big show. And I think that's going to make itself apparent. I think it already is. When the heat gets on big time—despite the fact that the war went very nicely, the Mideast war—he didn't seem to know where to go or what to do. And that's, of course, something we can't afford. Tonight's [state of the union] speech will be rather interesting. I hope he has more far-reaching proposals than the repeal of luxury tax on yachts, which has been discussed as a great economic revival measure. [laughs]

RITCHIE: The pace of life did seem to be different to some degree at that stage. The fact that the Senate slowed down a bit after Johnson, and Mansfield was trying to regularize things. I get the sense from talking to people that there was certain predictability to things, that you didn't have late-night sessions, and you could get to night class and stuff like that.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. There wasn't the frantic do-it-yesterday type of approach. I believe it's a historical fact—you probably know off the top of your head—that until World War II, whether it was a law—written or unwritten—that the Congress get out by July 4. And during the emergency condition of the war years, they departed from that. Then it just became a habit. We always said that a lot of the members didn't want to go back home to face the music. They would much rather be here getting lobbied, going to cocktail parties, a more pleasant life than being back home. I think that was in fact part of it because I don't believe anyone would argue realistically that the Congress couldn't do its work in less time than they do if they were in session if they set their minds to it. Others have said that the year-around Congress came about as the result of central air-conditioning.

RITCHIE: Well, one place where people did go to relax which I've heard about from various sources, and you've mentioned once or twice already is the Quorum Club. Can you tell me what the Quorum Club was and how it operated in those days?

VANDER ZEE: Well, I think I recall accurately its beginnings. The building and the little hotel called the Carroll Arms were owned by two brothers who had been left the property, I understand, by their father. I believe their names were Pickford. I don't recall those Pickford boys' first names. perhaps Tom and Bill. But they had a manager named Tom Heslop, and Tom managed the hotel. And Tom was a hail-fellow, well met. He liked to take a little shooter or two with his friends. He knew everybody on the Hill, and he always made sure that if Senator Dennis Chavez or anybody else liked a shooter, that they got it. And consequently, quite a few of those folks were accommodated over there.

They had the downstairs in a semi—it wasn't a full basement—but it was a few steps down. It was the principal lounge. And Mark Russell, who's gone on to greater fame, was the in-house entertainer in those years. So at some point Tom, pretty much on his own with the consent of his owners, decided it'd be nice if everything didn't have to be in the public lounge and that they could open up a suite of rooms, and they could have a private membership. Members could come there and have a drink, have a bite and not be out in the full glare. Not that there was anything to hide but some people would just prefer that.

I was reminded at lunch [laughs] over here by one of the boys that somebody remodeled the Democratic Club over there on the other side of the Hill. Used to be the old Rotunda restaurant. I haven't been there in years to verify this, but he said they decided to cut a big picture window in the side of the building

that had been a solid brick wall. And this window opened on to the bar. [laughs] Said the first night they opened it, the place emptied out. Nobody every came back until they put the wall back. [laughs]

It would appear that there was some of that in the motivation to have the Quorum Club. So people were either solicited to sign up or volunteered to sign up. And I guess Baker was one of those. I was a member over there and went over there many times and always enjoyed it. There was never anything even bordering on anything that I ever observed that was lewd or rude conduct. There was a cocktail waitress or two that waited on tables, just like in any other establishment. Very convenient and nice place to go.

And then when the Baker scandal came about, well, suddenly that became a sinister place, because that's where Baker was—who, in fact was seldom there. I don't think he was there twice. But, suddenly, that was a den of iniquity where all of these evil deals were being made and the legislature was being taken over by all these sinister influences through the Quorum Club.

So the politicos—oh, not the politicos—the outsider lobbyists, for the most part, who provided the economic, financial support for the Club by having joined and paid dues, being the big spenders. Let's face it, a guy on Capitol Hill wasn't going to be a big-spender on his Senate pay, or House pay, wherever he's from. But in any event, they were frightened off. They didn't want to take the heat, so the thing just wouldn't sustain itself. It died a natural death.

By this time, now, I'm off the Hill. There were others involved—some eight, ten fellows—who decided that we had liked that place. And since I was, I remember I was one of two people appointed to a scouting expedition. For awhile we just went up—at that time this fellow Paleologos whose been the manager of 116 for many, many years, had a restaurant on the corner one block down from the church by the parking lot. I don't know the street. It's on the corner of D and whatever. The club members were also customers of his a block up the street. As I recall, full meals weren't served. There were snacks, maybe appetizers at the old Quorum Club. So a lot of times, people would migrate up there to his place. He finally wound up setting aside a room where people could sit around, have drinks, and get them out of the public part of the restaurant.

So out of that, we thought that we had enjoyed what we had there. I was one of two or three scouts that were sent out to try and locate a new site to reinstitute the club. And we finally settled on that corner in Shott's Court, and we thought that perhaps the fact that the Quorum Club had been the name of the Club in the old hotel that that implied too much of a connection with the Hill and enabled the press to do these interpretations of what took place there. So we decided to name the new place after the number on the door. And, initially, the facility was not big enough to accommodate really that many members at one time. So we held down the membership to a small number.

RITCHIE: It was a little alley house.

VANDER ZEE: Yes. It was an inverted L. It was called Shott's Alley and had been an alley. But all of the buildings that surrounded it had been torn down to make a parking lot, and it and one apartment house were the sole surviving buildings on that square block. That's this block. Is the National Organization for Women still on the corner?

RITCHIE: The National Women's Party.

VANDER ZEE: So they were on the block, and of course, they survived, somehow, the takeover by the Senate. But, ultimately, our landlord there who was a fine Irishman and a graduate, I think, of Georgetown. He used to have the Dean of Law School over for lunch whose name was Paul Dean, during that time. It was a grand, old time. He was a good landlord. It was a good facility for its time. But we ultimately had to get bigger quarters. So when the Senate took it over for this building, these new quarters were sought at Third and C here. So the 116 today is the successor and the outgrowth. I saw two or three senators over there for lunch today. It's only operated now for lunch. It's not even open in the evening as we originally were for cocktails and sandwiches and things.

It's a very convenient place—especially to the Senate side, but I see House members there, too—to come and meet. There are a

number of rooms that can be reserved on request with the manager. Where you can take a private group and just have a good, old hoedown. You've been there, so I'm sure you are aware of how pleasant it can be for people.

There's one table that I always sit at as a single guy. It's just called a club table where individuals by themselves just all sit down and have their bull session at noon while they're having lunch. It's been very, very well—it's been a great success, and I think provides a very valuable spot on Capitol Hill. And a lot of the members and staff people alike as well as outsiders utilize it.

RITCHIE: I think Scott Peek said he was the first president of the Quorum Club before the 116 Club.

VANDER ZEE: He probably was. Scotty very well may have been. I know at the 116 there's a plaque with the annual presidents' names on there. I was one year back, I think, during the 70's. And a number of people. We had some repeaters. I think Lee Williams took it more than one year. The board has always tended to be made up of—well, I won't say exclusively—of Capitol Hill types, but maybe fellows that were at one time, even if they're not any longer on Capitol Hill. And I think there was a tendency for awhile not to let in new members. So consequently the membership started aging. And this is not healthy. I was told just today they kind of reversed that policy, and they're letting in newer and

younger members which kind of helps the new-blood thing. You've got to have that all the time.

RITCHIE: Apparently the original Quorum Club got its inspiration from the administrative assistants.

VANDER ZEE: I think exclusively. Who really initiated the idea—I don't know if it was Heslop or people on the Hill. But, in any event, it resulted in Heslop and his principals, the Pickford boy, financing and setting aside—and they did a little interior treatment to brighten up those two or three hotel rooms that they used for the facility. It was just on a little walk-up. From where you walked down into the lounge, you walked up half a flight to get up on the level where that was in the old Carroll Arms.

RITCHIE: It was a place where you could conduct business in a more relaxed sense or just socialize.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. You know, the tradition in those days—I think it's kind of faded away now—but the old martini lunch was *de rigueur* in those days, and there was no place on the Hill proper where alcohol was served. So this was right across the street, and gave a semblance of privacy so people having a business meeting could have a drink, have a bite. You know, business will be done some way or another, and this was just something that facilitated that.

RITCHIE: Close by.

VANDER ZEE: Yep.

RITCHIE: You mentioned lobbyists as members of the group. Did you have much dealings with lobbyists when you were working in the majority secretary's office?

VANDER ZEE: Not really, because I wasn't in a position for anybody to lobby. Why, what the hell! Why lobby a kind of a second- or third-rate clerk, shoe clerk, you know, when you can lobby his boss just as well? I can't say that I didn't have a few acquaintances from around the area who occasionally would be company people. I remember a fellow that was a friend of mine, personal friend of mine, he represented Sperry and Hutchison, the green stamp people. His name was Joe Oros. And through Joe I met his principal one time. I think I met him way after I left the Hill.

Of course, as you know, the mainstay of the Sperry and Hutchison Company business was the so-called trading stamps, or green stamps. They'd become a big thing around the country, and someone put in a bill to eliminate trading stamps in the District of Columbia. So, as this is still typical, anytime something like that happened, these people see their national business threatened—especially in the District of Columbia it would be a terrible precedent. It was known widely that Senator Humphrey was a great

supporter of small business and that he himself had been a small-town pharmacist and druggist. And that these trading stamps were a weapon of the huge chains that used these type of devices to drive these small businesses out. So there was great hope that Senator Humphrey would take up the cause of these anti-stamp people and help to carry that bill and in this way eventually erode the business nationally. I talked to him about it at some length, and he had already reached the conclusion that there wasn't a damned thing he, Hubert Humphrey, could do about trading stamps, that they were already here to stay. They had gotten too big, and everybody liked them. Whether they really were free or not was very questionable, but he wasn't going to take a position on it.

So you'd get those kind of contacts. But no big deals. I told you the one earlier about the fellow who had been a subcontractor to Boeing in Montana and wanted to do that some more. But, hell, those kind of decisions don't get made by clerks in the Senate.

RITCHIE: Well, you mentioned that Baker at that stage was getting more and more involved in outside activities and his business arrangements. Was that common, or was he unusual in that?

VANDER ZEE: I really don't know how common. It was not uncommon. My recollection is there were absolutely no rules—written or unwritten—governing that in that period. My reflection would be that he had simply become more high profile and open about

it and it was known. He made no attempt to hide it. He had a partner that had built this motel in Ocean City. Then there was the other thing about the vending machines which, I think, did obviously—maybe Baker wouldn't have been involved in that if he hadn't been in the position he held. But, he could have been. This was something, I think, they put these vending machines as well as in some places in the local area they put them out in a defense contracting plant in California, as I recall.

That was widely interpreted as smacking of a big fix and something improper. I guess as a result of Baker's experience that a lot of that changed. I think now, from what I hear, Senate employees in general, maybe in particular, and government employees in general are literally foreclosed from outside activities. I don't think they're prevented from buying and selling real estate. Maybe they would be speculatively. I don't really know. Or is there some kind of disclosure that has to be filed?

RITCHIE: Oh, yes. It depends on your level on the staff, but there are certain forms you file with the Ethics Committee, this, that, and whatever. There certainly are a lot more rules and regulations than there were before.

VANDER ZEE: Right. Right. And my understanding is that up to that time there was absolutely no guidance on that. So really a person could do what the hell ever he wanted to do, and probably if Baker was guilty of mistakes in judgment there it was that he

didn't make any attempt to conceal it. He was perfectly open about it.

In fact, I was among a couple or three hundred other guests invited to the opening of the motel as was Vice President Johnson and, God, half the Senate. I really don't remember who all was there, but it was a big party. Nobody was complaining then. But, of course, later on it began.

RITCHIE: Did it ever strike you that he was spending more time on his outside activities than on the Senate business?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. I think that two things happened. I think that Senator Mansfield's style of leadership automatically freed him up. And I was there, he trusted me, and we never had any trouble that I'm aware of, and Joe, too, because he and Joe had known each other much longer than I had known either one of them. I don't think they had been fellow pages, but Joe had come up somewhere after Baker.

What the hell! He kind of got freed up. I think he still had the position as treasurer for the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, because part of the money problem was with those S & L contributions that came in during that period. So he was out running. He was either in the office doing things, which were Senate-related or otherwise, or he was out traveling, too.

RITCHIE: I wonder why he didn't leave when Johnson left, to just go into business.

VANDER ZEE: I feel sure that in retrospect he would ask that same thing, or tell you that he should have made that judgment about that same time, and become a private citizen rather than continuing to have the accusation, just or unjust, that he was guilty of these conflicts of interest.

But I think that in the final analysis if you are on a government payroll, I think the public consensus has always been that you settle for that. And that's it, you know. You can do limited, private things; but you can't be out doing major undertakings because it just constitutes a time conflict if no other one. That would be my guess on that.

RITCHIE: Baker was still involved with the Democratic Campaign Committee as you mentioned in fund-raising.

VANDER ZEE: I feel that.

RITCHIE: Did you get involved at all in that end of it?

VANDER ZEE: No. I had no role nor was privy to anything or had any function there.

RITCHIE: That was another thing that was much wider. There weren't as many restrictions. There certainly wasn't as much filing necessary.

VANDER ZEE: Right. This was still before the wrapped themselves in the red tape. Yeah, it was pretty much whatever anybody wanted to contribute. They were there to receive the funds. The more the merrier.

RITCHIE: And it left it to the staff, to their discretion as to what was legitimate and what wasn't, and to the members.

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmmm. Well, whoever—I forget who chaired the campaign committee during those times. It might have been George Smathers.

RITCHIE: Smathers was one of the early on—in the '56 or '58 election was the chairman.

VANDER ZEE: Some time, yeah. So, to the best of my knowledge, during the time Baker held that position he was there at the, I suppose, at the convenience of whoever was chairman of that thing.

RITCHIE: What was your impression of Senator Smathers, by the way?

VANDER ZEE: He was a very personable guy. I knew Scotty Peek much better than I knew Smathers, of course. If they had a little social function over at the office, I'd get invited over. I'd go by and say hi and have a drink. I knew a fellow named Bud Lucky pretty well that worked for George Smathers. Bud was one of our campaigners in '60 as was Scotty. Everybody kind of turned to there in the presidential year. They were a good bunch. Everybody enjoyed them. I last visited with Scotty, maybe we were here in Washington, but I've been to his home in Florida. We're not close friends, but I've been to see him in Florida. And I feel if he came to Texas, he'd give me a call.

RITCHIE: Smathers was secretary of the Democratic Conference.

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmmm.

RITCHIE: Kept his hand in the leadership of the party, I guess much more so than any of the other senators.

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmmm.

RITCHIE: Were there other senators that you sort of relied on or looked to more than others at that time?

VANDER ZEE: In what way?

RITCHIE: Well, with the Democratic majority secretary's office, were there senators who aspired to leadership or that you would deal with more frequently than others?

VANDER ZEE: Well, there was that Class of '58? I suppose that when the Democrats picked up quite a significant number of seats that included Muskie, Gale McGee,

RITCHIE: [Eugene] McCarthy

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. And Gaylord Nelson from Wisconsin. Maybe [Quentin] Burdick, although he followed his father. He might have come in a special election. But there was—I think Senator [Robert C.] Byrd was in it. [Daniel] Inouye didn't come in until '61 or

RITCHIE: '62

VANDER ZEE: Maybe it was because of their relative newness, they wanted to consult more and know what's going on and be told. The old timers, Senator Lister Hill used to. Senator Russell never did. Once in awhile he would walk by back in the cloakroom, he'd say, "What's goin' on?"

But the younger members would come around and actively want you to tell them what was taking place. This, that, and the other. I just want to mention one thing about Senator Russell before I forget it. I was just standing back in the cloakroom with him one

day, and he was a smoker. He was back there having a cigarette. We were looking out the doors to the floor.

He said, "You know, I had somebody on my staff look it up the other day, and since I've been here," now this would have been in the early sixties, "since I've been here over five hundred members have come and gone from this body." That's a five hundred per cent turnover. And I think he might have been in his fourth or fifth term then. I think he did a full term after that. Do you remember when he left?

RITCHIE: He came in '33 and died in '71.

VANDER ZEE: Okay. So he lived another ten years after the time I'm talking about, and he died in office, right? So those little reflections are kind of interesting. Put a perspective on things. Because it's absolutely astounding when you look back, these interim appointments. You know, I think it's still true that no self-appointed member has ever survived the next election.

RITCHIE: Governors who have themselves appointed find it's the kiss of death.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. There was a guy from South Dakota named [Joseph] Bottom that did it during my time. I think Howard Edmondson from Oklahoma. Any number! Nobody has ever survived

that curse. So, we don't see too many self-appointments any more. I doubt that they want to try to buck the curse there.

RITCHIE: Even the senator who was appointed to succeed Richard Russell was defeated in the primary.

VANDER ZEE: Right. And there have been so many of those seat-warmers. There were more of them than we remember because they're here so briefly. You take the guy named Smith who took Kennedy's seat.

RITCHIE: Benjamin Smith.

VANDER ZEE: Ben Smith. Lovely guy. Sweet guy. Some friend of President Kennedy.

RITCHIE: His college roommate.

VANDER ZEE: That they put in for a seat warmer. Problem was he got to liking the place! The guy really took it hard when he left. He shed tears. I remember that. He hated like hell to go. But he was here, what? Barely a year. So you see a lot of that. Those numbers are much greater than we would expect. People that come and go from the Senate as members.

RITCHIE: Were there any senators that gave you any trouble? The independent kind.

VANDER ZEE: Not really. The majority of them were great gentlemen. There was a senator from Ohio named Steve Young that was inclined to be high strung. I always figured maybe he had some kind of—maybe not neuro—but maybe a glandular situation. He one time came into the chamber and something had made him unhappy. I don't even know what it was. I don't know if I knew at the time. But I was, you know, a shoe clerk over there in the corner at the desk and convenient. There was a full chamber that day on some kind of an important vote. And he chose that time to come over and dress me down on behalf of the staff. It was kind of embarrassing because he was being loud and noisy. But he cooled down and went away. I just said, "Yes, sir, senator, we'll try to take care of whatever your problem is, and we'll get at it." You know—the only thing you can do.

Some while later that day, after whatever vote was taken Quentin Burdick and, I think, Gaylord Nelson both walked over and said, "Van"—everybody called me Van. They said, "Van, we're sorry that a member would do that. And we just want to apologize." I thought that was kind of unusual.

But he'd get a little goofy. I knew his AA. A boy named Miller. God, the stories he could tell! [laughs] But he was just one of those characters that come along from time to time.

RITCHIE: He was famous for writing insulting letters to his constituents.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Miller told me about some time some guy came in the office, and the Senator didn't want him there. So he had a couple of guards come take the guy away. And after they were on each side of him, Young runs over and belts him in the back! [laughs]

So those are amusing little asides that happen around a place like this. But, by and large, members were all very, very courteous gentlemen. They had bigger things to do. One of the impressions I had—this is more from my page boys than anyone else—is that the great humanitarian members, the great "would-be" humanitarian members, the great civil righters, the great this rights, and that rights, and the other rights—when it came to the treatment of staff people they were absolutely the worst!

[Jacob] Javits. Maybe [Abraham] Ribicoff. Imperious. Treating the little kids like, you know, publicly upbraiding them and all that sort of nonsense. But never the so-called backward people from the South. They were always very genteel. And very kind to everybody. By and large they are a fine group of men.

I only knew a few of them in the context of their home surroundings, of course, because we dealt with them here. One that I did a little bit was Senator Bob Byrd, because when I was in West Virginia in '60 he came over when I was there for Humphrey. He came over and spent a night or two with me in my hotel room in

the Daniel Boone there in Charleston. Senator Byrd's a great one not to run up hotel bills in his home state. He'd stay with people in their houses. As we know, he was very close to his people. He knows how to get with his troops, and his career reflects it.

I haven't spent any great amount of time in West Virginia in recent years, but I feel sure he'd be a shoo-in as long as he can get up there and saw that fiddle—make the effort.

RITCHIE: I think when he gets less than 80 percent people are surprised.

VANDER ZEE: Yes. See Humphrey had been seat-mate with Matt Neeley, one of his predecessors. I don't know whether it was Randolph or Byrd who succeeded Neeley. It might have been [Chapman] Revercomb. There were a couple of other fellows in there briefly from West Virginia.

But Humphrey had great regard for Neeley. Thought he was a fine man. I felt the kinship with the West Virginia people, because they're my working stiff that I told you about earlier. They're a lot like our original Texans. They're close to the earth. Tend to be religious. Tend to be hardworking. Tend to be independent. And tend to be poor. And the West Virginia people were damn sure all of those. They have been in my opinion victimized for many, many years by eastern financial interests, particularly in mining, coal mining, gas, railroads, all of those things. It's improved somewhat. But in the 60's, if you went into

southern West Virginia it looked like a moonscape. The gashes in the hills. The ink in the streams. Terrible. I've never seen a piece of land raped like that place. And, of course, the people had been raped at the same time.

So I admired their spirit that they were able to maintain. And West Virginians had more of their native sons killed in World War II than other state in the Union. I always thought that was an interesting statistic. Here are these so-called backward, ignorant, underprivileged, uneducated hillbillies—as if that's why they lost more of their sons in World War II than other, it wasn't that, it was because of their love for their country. And I always thought that they are a lot like the Tennesseans—the Tennesseans, of course, were largely responsible for the establishment of early Texas. They're given credit for being the guys that put the glue in the gang at the Alamo.

I tell my Tennessee friends, if there hadn't been a back door at the Alamo, there wouldn't be a Tennessee today. [laughs] They're similar-type people, and I appreciate those people. And you'll pardon me as a native of New York, Don, for saying this, but I've never been able to identify with the eastern—who was it, was it no less a personage than Nixon's vice president who talked about the effete..?

RITCHIE: Oh, [Spiro] Agnew.

VANDER ZEE: I forget what the phraseology. I think Pat Buchanan put it together for him.

RITCHIE: "Effete snobs."

VANDER ZEE: That plus.

RITCHIE: "Nattering nabobs of negativism."

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. He stitched together some of that deathless prose. I'm one of those guys who definitely feels that the heart and soul of the Democratic Party—and this is where we fail—should be the lunch-bucket guy. Keep him going. Keep him working. Give him his wherewithal. Let him improve his family life. Let him improve his lot in life. Let him get his kids educated. And if we had kept that up, I don't think we would have been the failure that a lot of people brand our party today. But we didn't.

RITCHIE: You brought up Senator Byrd. I remember when I first came to Washington, I was a student and I used to sit in the galleries and watch what was going on. This was in the mid-sixties, I guess, and I used to see Senator Byrd on the floor all the time. This was before he was whip or party leader or anything like that. Were there some senators who spent more time on the floor and in the cloakroom than others?

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmm. You probably picked the classic example. I think that Senator Byrd, he's a guy that came up from Crab Orchard, West Virginia where people that I knew in West Virginia told me he worked in a butcher shop. People that know him, and know him well. People that claimed to have contributed to his first campaign. People out of Beckley—one being the father of Nickie Joe Rahall here in the House.

This is a guy who aspired to bigger and better things. I think at some point in his life he just willed that by sheer determination and principally education he was going to do it. So I think unlike many, he made a special study, and you recall, he literally set a trap for Ted Kennedy when Kennedy thought he had a walk-in, Byrd took it right away. Snatched it right away—the, assistant leadership, and subsequently the top job. So this is the kind of guy, you want to watch him, when you go up against him. You know the easy, easy bad assumption that Kennedy made was this guy from West Virginia is going to be a pushover. No contest. Well, guys like that are always a contest.

So I assume that all that time he was spending was prepping himself to make that effort. While you were watching, he was probably doing that. He hadn't started that when I worked. But, in the House! He was over there when I was over there, or he had just left. He had a reputation, which was for holding prayer meetings in the office. I remember hearing some guys talking about that. Before they started the day, they had to start out with a prayer meeting.

Well, like I say, this is all part of a pattern. I've seen it in my life, you've probably have, too. These fellows have their beliefs; their agenda. They're willing to make almost any sacrifice and abide almost any amount of time. I'm told by my friends of the senator's who are also friends of mine—West Virginians. In fact, one of them was Matt Neeley's AA, guy named Harold Miller here in Washington. I assume Harold's still kicking around here—that Byrd would, after a full day's work, would go in the office and spend half the night phoning and talking to key people in West Virginia. He did that. Maybe he's still doing it! This is certainly not that thing that Senator Fulbright, among others, I think, got accused of. And that was forgetting how they got here, and not keeping the home fires banked, and keeping in constant touch. They got a little too remote, and then the folks back home, when push came to shove. . . Well, I don't think Byrd would be caught in that situation. That's my estimate, and I would assume when you saw him on the floor all the time that was exactly what he was doing. I forget the year that he went to the whip job.

RITCHIE: It wasn't until '71. He was Democratic Conference Secretary in the sixties. But he seemed to like to be down there on the floor. I guess he was collecting IOUs from the senators for favors he could do for them if he was on the floor all the time.

VANDER ZEE: Probably that, and probably watching the parliamentary stuff. I'm sure he mastered that procedural manual a long time ago.

RITCHIE: Were there some senators who just liked to come and sit on the couches in the cloakroom?

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmm. Yeah. You had senators, they were fine senators, but they were on in years. Pat McNamara from Michigan. He more or less just came to the floor and cast his vote and stayed back in the cloakroom most of the time. I don't recall that there was any group or any individuals who devoted themselves to the floor.

We always had a hell of a time getting these junior members. They were always trying to get out of sitting in the chair. So it was more or less being there when you were presenting something, or when there was floor action or votes. That sort of thing.

RITCHIE: The atmosphere of the cloakroom was one that I don't have a great sense of. I've walked through it, but only when the Senate is not in session. I don't have a great sense of what it's like to be in there on a daily basis.

VANDER ZEE: Well, the main activity there is the boys who answer the phones and tell the senators they have their calls. There used to be, I haven't been there in years myself, but there

used to be booths on both sides of one wing where they could take their phone calls and make their phone calls. The boys handled them for them there. There were the custodians, three or four boys who kept the men's room. They'd replenish the cool boxes with the waters from around the country. Some was from Arkansas. Some was from West Virginia. The spring waters. It was just a place where they could go ahead and keep on with their personal activities because they had access to the telephone and still be there and, of course, as I said, sometimes, there were pretty good bull sessions that went on back there.

The day President Kennedy was shot, when it started coming over the teletype, there was a pretty good-sized group repaired back there—just to sit and monitor the news. We didn't have any television sets in there that I can recall. But there may have been. I don't remember that part.

RITCHIE: Were you in the chamber when the news came in?

VANDER ZEE: Yes. I was at the old duty station there at the corner desk. The way I learned of it, each day—I think I may have told you this early on yesterday—but each day we would have one of the boys assigned, it would be his day to pull the ticker tapes. When it got down to the floor, they would tear them off and hang them on the board so the members could always go in there and look at their news tapes. And the little page that was on duty that day came over to my desk in the corner, and said "Mr. Vander Zee,

there's something on the ticker tape about the President being shot."

Teddy Kennedy was in the presiding officer's chair. So I told him to get Senator Kennedy relief. Go request one of the other junior members to relieve him. And I either told him, I think I went over myself and told Senator Mansfield there was something coming on the tape. And he walked out. I walked with him, I recall, because I remember what he said. As usual, he had his pipe. He took his pipe out of his pocket as we walked out. I don't recall he was smoking on the floor, but he'd smoke out in the lobby. And he read it. And the lead was by a guy named Jack Bell who was in our gallery. He was either AP or UPI. I don't know which.

RITCHIE: AP.

VANDER ZEE: So Jack was in a phone booth down there and with the lead in the deal about the shots from the grassy ridge or bridge. It was all very vague and indefinite. But Mansfield said, "I wonder what's wrong with those people down there?" In Dallas. And, of course, he was alluding to the fact that both Adlai Stevenson and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson had been jostled about and spat upon. I think Lady Bird might have gotten hit with signs by unappreciative groups in that area, in just the few preceding months. So his off-the-cuff reaction was that it was a bunch of crazies in Dallas that had done it again.

And, of course, it was, I guess an hour. Two hours? Anyway, whatever the time factor was before it was known that he was dead. There were tears shed there that day in the cloakroom by members—staff alike. Because that's very jarring—even if you weren't close to the man. To have *known* him, and to know as the president of the country you could be shot dead in a motorcade in Dallas. I don't think I had, even as a young man, had a full appreciation of the impact of that—especially on older men, more aware of their mortality, more aware of, perhaps, the political shock and consequences, like that. I forget, was it our fourth assassination of a president? You had Lincoln, McKinley, Garfield?

RITCHIE: Yes.

VANDER ZEE: Then Kennedy. Well, not in that order. It was, of course, a great tragedy well recognized whether you were a Kennedy fan or not. I don't know. Again, my personal belief is you have to go through all of these procedures the Secret Service goes through to protect the president. But if a determined assassin wants to kill a president, I don't think there was a way ever devised to keep him from it. We just have to hope that not too many are motivated that way.

But crazies are crazies—whatever makes them, wherever they come from. That's who you've got to stop. Irrational people. I don't think that any of our presidents have ever been assassinated

by somebody who would be considered rational in the ordinary sense of the word.

This movie that's out [JFK] now if nothing else, it will sharpen the consciousness of the public, I think. Show them once again that it can happen. As I see it, that's the value. I'm sure it doesn't hurt the Secret Service's assignment a bit or their appropriation [laughs] to have that going on. It's sad in a way.

My understanding is that less than one hundred years ago, Don, that American citizens could come to Washington, walk into the White House, and talk to their president without an appointment! Less than a hundred years ago! It's an amazing thing to realize that in this period of time has developed this remoteness that the president has from the people. And I can't help but think that a lot of that—George Reedy wrote the book. I think he called it the *Imperial Presidency*?

RITCHIE: The Reedy book was the *Twilight of the Presidency*. Arthur Schlesinger wrote the book the *Imperial Presidency*.

VANDER ZEE: Okay. And I read Reedy's. I didn't read Schlesinger's, but wasn't their theme more or less this removal of the president from the people some way, this isolation, which permits them—staff people—to manipulate, ill serve, misinform—whatever you want to call it? These things happen in that kind of an environment where maybe it couldn't otherwise where a man is truly not in touch with common folk.

RITCHIE: Did you notice a change in atmosphere in the Senate after Johnson became president? After the assassination? Was the assassination a real shock? Did it get things moving again?

VANDER ZEE: There was so damn much that was going on there. I don't have too much personal recollection. Let's face it—Johnson was back in the White House the next day, was he not? And then there was the funeral in which again the Capitol was the site of it.

All I remember was everybody kind of wanting to get in the boat then and get on with it. All of this was a great help to Johnson.

RITCHIE: Did you stay through the passage of the civil rights bill in '64? June of '64?

VANDER ZEE: No. No, I departed, at the end of February I had some medical leave and I had to get a light surgery. I think I went and got that and was out of here before the end of March, that's my recollection. So I wasn't around when it actually got passed. But it was apparent even before—I guess, January-February period—that there was going to be a lot more activity—and in all likelihood, productive activity because if it couldn't be done then with that set-up, it wasn't going to be done. And everybody was frustrated to hell with the way it had been up to then in the Kennedy Administration.

I think the common expression was: Kennedy couldn't buy a bill out of Congress.

RITCHIE: How about the White House liaison people?. Did you deal with them very much?

VANDER ZEE: Well, when Larry [O'Brien] had it. Early on. Some in connection with substantive stuff on the floor, but not a hell of a lot. One of the principal things we had that Humphrey and I met with Larry about was we had reason to believe that Larry and Ken O'Donnell were blocking, simply because of personal dislike coming out of the West Virginia campaign, that they were blocking a nomination. I don't think it was a nomination; it was a Schedule C of one of the people who'd been Humphrey loyalist. We talked to Larry, and Humphrey—much to my surprise—kind of gave him an old Dutch uncle talk, and "Larry, you know, you've got to realize if you want to get things done up here we would like for you to do some things for us." Most unlike Humphrey.

And Larry got it done. And the guy got his appointment. I think it was an appointment down at Commerce, and everything worked out all right. But that's about it. I remember during my year with Humphrey there we had nice visits from Dean Rusk, usually in the evening after work. Folks would come by to chat, to talk business. I wasn't always in the room. Sometimes Humphrey would invite me. Sometimes I'd whip up a drink. We had a little fridge up there in one of those deals Joe Duke put in [laughs] so we could offer a

little hospitality. I remember good chat. Joe Clark from Pennsylvania. Any number of folks, you knew would come by and spend a little time in the evening. Have a snort, talk things over. Sometimes administration officials. Sometimes Senate members.

RITCHIE: But the Kennedy problem wasn't a problem of liaison, was it?

VANDER ZEE: Well, I don't think so. As I recall, Larry was well liked. He was the only one that I can remember as having carried that freight. During my time there may have been others, I just don't remember that.

RITCHIE: Mike Manatos also.

VANDER ZEE: Oh Mike was down there. He was working for Larry, wasn't he?

RITCHIE: He spent lot of time in the Senate.

VANDER ZEE: Uh-huh. I knew Mike quite well. He was a grand guy. Yes, he was around saying hi. See your recollection, Don, because of your position—I trust—is quite, a lot more acute than mine. But Mike was well liked. He'd worked for [Joseph] O'Mahoney up here, I believe, and knew the area. And I suppose Mike had been

a Kennedy ally out in Wyoming. That's the reason he was in that job.

But, basically, I would characterize it as a time of cooperation and everybody going in the same direction, or trying to! And I think, as I said, it was the last time it was that way. In the Democratic Party. The conflict and the unsettled nature of things began in that Vietnam period, and it's never been the same.

RITCHIE: What was it that made you decide to leave in '64?

VANDER ZEE: Well, as I said, I had been pursuing that law degree, and it was always my intention, my plan, the aim was to be able to liberate myself from employers and pursue my own goals and objectives. And I did that for twenty-eight years, up to now. The Texas scene has been extremely difficult from an economic standpoint in the last few years. We started having our major problems in '84. We didn't quite know what was happening to us when the oil price collapse came. But in '85 came the collapse in real estate values which followed immediately behind it. Next was the banks and S&Ls. Then it's been one form or another since then of the economic grinder. We're going into our eighth year of depression down there.

So it was strictly that. And I went downtown originally—I mentioned earlier the congressman from Missouri named Charlie Brown. Charlie Brown had lost his reelection bid to a Republican MD from the Springfield area, for the simple reason that what

should have been his own campaign time, he had spent for Stuart Symington. So he lost his seat in either 1960. In any event, we were friends. We kept in touch, and so when I discussed with him that I was going to be leaving the Hill, he told me he would like very for me to join him. He was not an attorney, but he said "I have a great deal of business that I'm turning away. and you could handle that if you want to come into the office with me." I wound up doing that. Charlie made me a guarantee to start with him and an incentive program. We got started that way. Then, after a few years, he decided to leave the Washington area; and I went ahead. I officed with both him and another former House member named Slick Rutherford from Texas who, I think, also lost his seat in 1960.

And with Harold Miller, the gentleman I mentioned to you who'd been Matthew Neeley's AA. We all had our little client list, and we just went about carrying our bucket around town like many of the guys make their living here.

RITCHIE: You did some lobbying here on the Hill?

VANDER ZEE: I did. I also did agency work. Hill work, to some extent. I guess I found my most important and interesting and slightly remunerative effort was in behalf of a national chain of agricultural cooperatives in Spain that wanted to take advantage of some of our PL 480 credit transactions. So at that time I was able to put together the biggest Title IV, which is a private sale for credit, but for cash money—a corn deal into Spain. We put in

about three-quarters of a million tons worth around \$40 or \$50 million guaranteed by the Spanish government. The contract never did go through to full fruition because Spaniards don't know how to handle success. When success is looming on the horizon, they start scrapping among themselves. I think this is typical of some national groups and certainly is of them. And Mr. Franco was still the boss at that time and got tired of the whole damned thing and just canceled the deal. Paid the US government off, and that was that. But I think they drew down some \$10 or \$15 million before that happened.

RITCHIE: What was it like to come back to Capitol Hill as a lobbyist having worked here as a staff person?

VANDER ZEE: I never liked the feeling. I never enjoyed it. I always felt like I was a hat-in-the-hand guy trying to take advantage of personal friendships. Not that my clients' business wasn't meritorious—I always tried to have meritorious things to present.

RITCHIE: Did you have certain senators that you would see more regularly than others, or did it just depend on what the issue was?

VANDER ZEE: Yeah, it would depend more on who you were representing and where the work had to be done. As I recall, I

wound up having as much work on the House side as I did over here. Perhaps you were trying to get a little old piece of language in a bill for people you were working for—something they needed or wanted in a piece of legislation. More than not, I would have to characterize my retainers simply as access. I mean, I was retained because people perceived that I had access, and I recall being retained a time or two by interests who I don't recall ever asked me to do a damned thing, specifically. They simply wanted to have me around, I suppose, in case they thought they needed intercession with a particular member. Somebody, you know, the most obvious being Humphrey because he'd been my most prominent and immediate principal up here.

I'm trying to think back, I remember one time being retained by a firm that had a plant—a big installation—out here in suburban Virginia called Melpar. They were a defense contractor. And I never did lobby anybody in the Defense Department. That's one of the company's I'm speaking of. They used to have a membership in a private club in Pennsylvania called the Rolling Rock Club. I think it was something that the Mellons had started over there years back. Pretty exclusive thing, I'm led to understand.

I'd been over there a time or two, and then on one occasion they asked me if I would invite Vice President Humphrey. You know, to do a little trout fishing or play a little golf. In the winter time they had shooting, they had pheasants. And it was indeed a lovely place.

So he was to come over. But after I got over there, I learned for the first time that no blacks were permitted at the Rolling Rock Club. I conveyed that to the V.P. I had to do that because he had a Secret Service agent on his staff who was a black man. May have been others, but I knew there was one. And, as a consequence, he didn't come over. He didn't want to have that kind of a matter come up, obviously. What the hell, with his background and record. So we had to cancel out that little social engagement. [laughs]

I worked with George Bushman who had been an AA to Homer Capehart from Indiana. George, after he left the Hill, was working downtown. And somehow he got involved in Senator Dirksen's one-man, one-vote effort. And I remember working some on that with George. I don't remember the full nature of that legislation. I guess some people would say it was designed to deprive certain people.

RITCHIE: He wanted to overturn the Supreme Court ruling at that time, basically so that rural districts wouldn't lose so much representation.

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmm. But I remember working in favor of that. I don't remember why, unless George asked me. I don't remember being paid by anybody to do it. And, as I say, I got off into this kind of a specialty area of these public law 480 deals. And after I made at that time the biggest ever made into Spain, I got

several—none of them materialized—but I had a lot of work to do there and try to make other ones happen, too. Aristotle Onassis sent me to Greece to look into the possibility of doing one over there, which didn't work. There were others. Other countries. I represented people in Central America. In fact, one was a displaced Cuban. He'd been run out of Cuba at the time of the Castro takeover, and he'd gone to Guatemala and had a cattle processing operation down there and was exporting what they called boxed red lean meat to the United States. They'd bone it out, ship it frozen in forty-pound boxes, I recall.

The Central Americans all had a quota, and their desire was to cooperate one with the other and get their quota upped. So I took on that effort for awhile. There were constant things like that which paid the rent. I wound up traveling half the year, meeting with these clients or pursuing their objectives overseas. Very enjoyable at that time in my life. I wound up wearying of the travel and ultimately decided in 1970, after seven years of private practice here, to go back to Texas.

RITCHIE: Before you went back, did you get involved in the '64 campaign; or the '68 campaign?

VANDER ZEE: Now in '64 we had the convention in Atlantic City. I was at that convention. I believe my involvement that year, it wasn't going to be a contest—or we didn't think. Well, certainly not for the nomination! So the convention was just a

formality. And as I recall, Joe Duke put me to work just on helping him on convention security.

Oh, I remember now. He asked me to man the platform, and he said "The problem with the Secret Service is they don't know who the hell the pols are around the country." And he said, "You do, so I want you on that platform and you decide who makes the trip down to the podium." And I did that little chore. There again, another housekeeping chore.

In '68 I was in Chicago. I was active. What are we talking about now? Was that the Chicago convention?

RITCHIE: Yeah.

VANDER ZEE: Where Humphrey was nominated?

RITCHIE: Right.

VANDER ZEE: Well, I was still here in town, so I was active in that. I was back out in the states where I had worked before. West Virginia. Probably in the West. I guess I was back to Montana. I don't off hand recall, there may have been others.

I remember spending most of my time at the convention in Chicago with the Montana folks because we had them in pretty good shape. The job was just to make sure it stayed in good shape. You know, that's typical of a convention deal when you have an

assignment. So I tried to have little receptions, keep them entertained.

You know, it's kind of like a flock of quail. You just make sure they keep going in the right direction and nobody wanders off the range. So I did that. In the actual campaign and election process, I'm sure I was out there as an advance guy. But I don't recall. Yeah, I had to be, because we got the call again. Oh, no. We'd had the call before. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Yeah. Okay. We were back out there as advance guys, but I didn't attend the '72 convention or any convention thereafter. '68 was my last one.

RITCHIE: In '68 you said that before Johnson withdrew from the race, you got a call to give him some assistance. What was the story about that?

VANDER ZEE: Well, Democratic Headquarters, as you know, was in the Watergate building. This fellow who was from Oklahoma, he'd been—why can't I remember his name? My secretary in my private law office had been Howard Edmondson's secretary. She'd been with him as governor and senator; and when he was defeated, I don't know how but I wound up hiring her. Little girl from Weatherford, Oklahoma named Edna Shiff. And Edna turned out to be a wonderful secretary. She just could take care of everything—especially when I had to be out of the country. She could keep the clients happy. Took care of all the mail. You know, a girl who hadn't had her

background wouldn't be able to do that. But she did it beautifully.

RITCHIE: You had gotten a call to come help out while Johnson was still in the race?

VANDER ZEE: Okay. Okay. The fellow that called me was the guy running the national committee for Johnson. God, I ought to remember his name because he had been Howard Edmondson's AA. I just got it: John Criswell.

He said, "Rein, I got a few names here of guys we'd like to go to work." Now, see, I'm in private practice downtown on DeSales Street, as I recall. And he said, "Would you come down here and visit?" So I did, I had a brief meeting with John. He said, "A fellow has come up from Texas to coordinate this effort," a lawyer from Corpus Christi, and an old Johnson friend. I hadn't seen him in the '60 election. Cecil Burney. He said, "I'd like you to go meet Cecil and visit with him." So out of those two conversations came the request to get my rear out to Wisconsin which was coming up after New Hampshire.

I asked for a few days reprieve so I could get my personal affairs where I could take off. During that time the New Hampshire returns came in, and it was all over. I always refer to it as a campaign that never was, because subsequent to that Johnson's public announcement that was he and Lady Bird and decided roughly a year earlier that he wouldn't run again.

I don't know who all was involved. There were probably at least ten, fifteen, maybe twenty guys at that point. Just guys they could count on for that sort of thing. I'm sure my name was put there by Jim Rowe. Jim was always buzzing around there. Getting things organized. He told me when he put me into that job in the '60 campaign, he said, "I did this for Adlai Stevenson" in '52 or '56, whichever one. And he said, "Vander Zee, you're young, you've got the energy. There's only one thing I'll guarantee you. You'll never do it again." [laughs]

And he was basically right. That led up to that story I told you about Johnson pulling out on the Hawaii trip which threw my whole role into limbo anyway other than as an advance man.

RITCHIE: But in '68 you think Johnson pulled out because he didn't want to lose?

VANDER ZEE: That would still be my assessment after these years. He just *hated* the prospect of having a loser. To the point, I think, that rather than go into the prospect of a loser, he didn't even want a close one. He'd had that, on that Texas election with Stevenson—Coke Stevenson. And I think that he just couldn't stomach that possibility. And he thought well, with the war thing, if it's that bad, if Gene McCarthy can get that damn many votes, I better get out. And be recorded, historically, as a guy that just left the office voluntarily.

RITCHIE: Living in Washington and following politics, what was your assessment of Johnson as president. Were you pleased with what he was doing or surprised?

VANDER ZEE: I've got to be honest with you, Don. I didn't have that much contact with the Johnson White House. I was invited down there a time or two. I remember going down there I guess it was the Christmas right after Kennedy was killed. Now, as a Texan I had been known to Johnson as a Texan, though I never worked directly for him. He always invited me to functions out at his house when he was a V.P. I say always—certainly to Texas club events. And one I remember—I guess it had to be '61 or '62—I remember the two honorees that evening were Henry Gonzales and a fellow named Graham Purcell from Wichita Falls who came into the House. There was a reception in that house Johnson had bought from the little steel lady . . .

RITCHIE: Perle Mesta.

VANDER ZEE: Yeah. Mrs. Mesta. So he was always very cordial and kind to me. I saw him on a plane, I went with him—at my request—again, this had to be 1961, when I had been working Humphrey's personal politics. And I asked Walter [Jenkins]—I knew that Johnson was going out as the vice president to address the governors' conference in Honolulu. And I had been in the Navy out there, and I had attended prior governors' conferences at the

Glacier National Park, at places, and knew a good bit of those people and their staffs. This seemed to be a proper function for me in my capacity of looking out for Humphrey's national interest.

So I asked if I could hook a ride out there to that one. Walter didn't get back. Walter always had the yellow pad and always took shorthand. I didn't hear anything. And I was home at my apartment—this is a typical Johnson story I'm going to tell you now. I lived in a little 2x4 apartment out there off Shirley Highway called Fairlington. Anyway, one of those big apartment projects. And my phone rings, and it's the vice president.

He said, "Rein, I understand you'd like to go out to Hawaii with us." I said, "Well, yes sir. You know, I'm working up there for Humphrey. One of my jobs is kind of working with him on his national things since he was a candidate. And, if you have room, I'd sure like to go along."

He said, "Okay, you come out to Andrews such-and-such a time, and you go with us." *That day!* That afternoon. In those days I was always packed. You have to be! And did. It was an enjoyable trip. George Reedy and I sat together. There was a military attache-type who was along, too, that I roomed with. A guy named Bud Vandervort. He used to be liaison here, I think.

When we were on the way out, we were just sitting there, George and I, just shooting the bull, and Johnson comes forward. He was back in the back. We were in Air Force something or other. I guess Two. George had given me the draft of the speech to read that Johnson was going to make. I was on the window-side. George

was on the aisle. Johnson sat on the arm of the chair across, and he said, "George, you got that speech I can look at?" So George just reached over and handed it to him. He said, "George, don't take things out of people's hand like that!" I thought, Jeez.

They didn't talk about it much, but if you were on his payroll, I understand, you really had to take a lot of crap. But he was never that way with me, because I didn't work for them. And he wasn't that way with me in any of that stuff I told you about at the national committee. We just got shunted aside. Both one of his longest time friends, Jim Rowe, and myself, just a little functionary working under Rowe's direction.

On that trip—God, it was kind of interesting. We were going to stop in Los Angeles to dedicate the new airport on the way out to Hawaii. Now, he said, "Rein, when we get out there, I've got this podium that goes up and down." And he said, "We have these people on these programs, and a lot of them are short. If you don't mind, how about being responsible for making that podium go up and down so it will always be right for the speaker." He said, "I think you know them all."

So, sure enough, I had a list of who was going to be on the program. Well, they left off the name of the guy who was going to introduce Johnson. And he was a fellow named Anderson. He was lieutenant governor of California. Pat Brown, I think, was governor. The reason Pat Brown wasn't there was that Pat Brown had already gone to the governors' conference.

They'd left Anderson's name off the damned list! So the next name on the list is Johnson. So I ran the podium all the way up to its full height for Johnson to use. This little guy [laughs] Anderson, I swear to God, the guy wasn't five feet tall. And he had to stand over on the side. It was too late, then to lower it back down, the way things were going.

You become aware of the sensitivity of these things when you're a damned advance man. That's your job, to make sure everything works like clock work. And I took great pride in usually being able to do that. My two embarrassments were that Amarillo thing with the airplanes—my only known embarrassments—were that where I was involved and this thing in California.

But, anyway, the airport was dedicated, and we went on to Hawaii. A fine time was had by all. And the governors' conference was very enjoyable. I remember one of Pat Brown's old guys being on board with us. I understand he lobbies for the Saudis now downtown. Freddy—can't recall his name. But, anyway, at least he rode back from Hawaii with us. I don't recall if he rode out, but he'd been a big *Kennedy* man during the campaign. So Johnson was very kind about that type of thing. Other times, if I wanted to go to Texas; or I was in Texas and wanted to come back, I had the phone numbers over there. And this was after I was off the Hill. I'd call [Bill] Moyers or whoever was handling things and ask to hook a ride, and they'd give me one. I'd meet them over in Austin and catch a ride. And that happened a few times.

While I had a cordial relationship, I told you about the time I went down to the White House for a Christmas reception. That had to be right after Kennedy was killed. I think it was part of inviting the Senate down there. And I remember Johnson passing me to Lady Bird and saying, "Bird, you probably remember Rein. He's Jim Rowe's friend." [laughs] Which was his association over that thing. But, he was always nice to me, and I kind of admit, I liked the guy. He used to, before he went down to the White House, those stories you hear about what might be called his less than—what would you call them? country-boy traits—less than refined gentleman.

I remember being in P-38 with him. He would be talking about something. He'd go over and take a leak in a lavatory he had over there in the corner of the room. He'd just be talking, taking a big old leak, talking to you at the same time! He was a busy guy, you know. [laughs]

But I liked him! I didn't have any beef about him. I was always fascinated, though, by Morrow's feelings as a result of that '52 thing. And I never could discern what the bitterness was about there. But the way I figure it is Morrow, and George Brown, and Jessie Jones did put up the green and then they felt this guy owed more loyalty than perhaps he displayed or that he betrayed them. Or whatever. You know, you really don't know about those things, and I was too young and green to figure that stuff out then.

RITCHIE: How did Johnson treat Humphrey?

VANDER ZEE: Well. I always thought well. I called Humphrey, we talked on the phone within a matter of minutes after the president was shot. He wasn't in the whip office. I was in the whip office. So he may have been out of town or over here in the other office. But, I remember saying, "Senator, if you want to go ahead and pursue this national office thing," I said, "Johnson's going to be the president. He's going to have to have a vice president. And that can be you." And, of course, in the final analysis, despite the games that Johnson played, it couldn't be anybody else. He needed to consolidate the whole damn thing. I don't know how much of a role Jim Rowe played there. Well, Jim acted as liaison in the 60's. He was Kennedy to Johnson liaison, number one, beginning immediately after the nominations.

I think he had a similar role in the Johnson-Humphrey time. I just don't remember. But I remember telling Humphrey that. Of course, he knew it, too, that he would pretty well have to be the choice. And he was. He didn't do much overtly. It just kind of had to come him, as I recall.

Johnson talked about everybody else. In the time, I forget, what was that about, nearly a year. Well, no it was only about seven months—from the time of the assassination until the convention. My estimate would be he came to have a greater respect and admiration and friendship for Humphrey than he started with. Because, you know how Humphrey hit the Senate. And Johnson was minority leader, I suppose, at that time. I forget the timing

there. No, Humphrey got in '48. And Johnson didn't get minority leader position until '52. Right?

RITCHIE: Right.

VANDER ZEE: So, I remember him saying things like, "My, God, if I could just harness that guy's energy." I think he always had great respect—or maybe even envy—of Humphrey's stumpability and a kind of a supercharged nature. I mean, you remember, hell, he didn't walk. He bounced! He'd walk into a damn room arms akimbo [stands up and demonstrates] just going at them. Johnson felt, I think, that there was a great political talent there that was largely being dissipated on irrelevancies in the early part. And I think later on he came to see otherwise.

I wasn't around and privy to much, because I was down making a living, in the '68 thing to know, where there has been a lot of speculation about the degree of Johnson support. Whether or not he could have done more or whether or not he could have done more the last few days of the campaign, and whether or not he was tacitly really hoping that Nixon would be the guy because he'd be more apt to carry out Johnson's war policy. You've heard that speculation.

So, I don't know. I do know that after Baker went to Johnson's ranch and came back to my house, he had told Johnson that he was staying over at my place. And Johnson said, "Well, tell old Rein to come see me," you know, like he'd be expected to do. I

never did go see him. I didn't have that much—I wasn't that close to the man.

RITCHIE: I wondered if when Humphrey became vice president, Johnson didn't look on him as sort of an extended member of his staff rather than as a colleague.

VANDER ZEE: Well, see, I was gone then from the staff, and I don't really know. I used to drop over to the old State Building there where Humphrey's offices were and just see the gang. Maybe talk to a few of them about something, pushing my deals. But, I really wasn't politicking much in those days, and I don't know. I don't know. And Baker never—to my knowledge—his talks with Johnson on that last visit didn't extend to anything like that.

I feel that Humphrey had a healthy respect and liking for Johnson. And I think maybe, in the final analysis, Johnson would have felt they made a good team, that they covered the gamut of the party's interest. I think he would have termed Humphrey a loyalist, and I think Humphrey was a loyalist. And I think Humphrey had compromised a lot of his old positions which cost him support on the left wing of the Democratic party. I don't know if it was enough to cost him that election, but some people might argue that.

I remember talking to Humphrey again on the phone after the election and just saying that I was sorry that he didn't make it. But how many men ever had the chance, ever got the opportunity to

make the run? I think that's the way he felt about it. He didn't seem down. We had, to the extent you can have a friendship with a guy that really doesn't even know his family, we had a real good friendship for a few years there. But you know, at that stage in his political life, everybody is busy as hell! If there was only some way when that is going on that you could stop and savor the moment. But you never can. It's always too fleeting. Things are happening too fast. Nobody slows down. You're at the height of your physical energy and usually your intellectual energy during those years. It's just a damn blur.

That's why something like this, this exercise right here today, can evoke memories that, hell, you'd have to sit around for days to think up on your own. But by doing this, you prompt these things to come back.

RITCHIE: Well, you were here during very dramatic times, and you certainly knew some very dramatic people in that period.

VANDER ZEE: I have nothing but good memories about it. They say that finally all you take to your grave are your memories. You certainly don't take your physical possessions. But, hopefully, memories of your family and loved ones go with you. So that's all you've got. And that period of my life was very personally enriching because I was just a little old kid from Texas that never would have presumed to even have these acquaintances or associations.

If I learned anything from it, it was that no matter the station in life that people arrive at, people are all still pretty much the same. And I would have also to say that the people who were more identified as statesman—what's the definition? A politician is somebody who worries about the next election; and a statesman is a person who worries about the next generation. The statesmen—the Rayburns. The Trumans. I also had the privilege to meet President Truman. I was an invitee to his last birthday party held here in Washington at the Mayflower. About thirty or forty of us were down there that night, and I was introduced to him as a new kid working for Democrats. That man had a great gift. He'd make you feel like he'd known you your whole damned life in a brief meeting like that.

But all I would say is that the great ones are really the kind of humble types that are very easy to approach when you know them. And the stuffed shirts, the real stuffed shirts, they don't make it. They don't make it. I think Johnson in his heart of hearts was a man of the people. Of course, he was very conscious of self, and he wanted a place in the history books, and all of that. But I think ultimately he was motivated by what he thought was in the true best interest of the people at large, and maybe the more modest among our people.

Certainly Humphrey was. I can only say that I am glad I had the experience. There were bad moments along with the good, but on balance, they were all favorable experiences in my lifetime. I've had the opportunity to spend a lot of hours with people who knew

these men, especially Johnson, much better than I. And I think in the final analysis, that he deserved to be president. And he gave it his best shot. And that's where the historians will have to decide what kind of job was truly done.

Who could predict the direction that world events take? Certainly, there is no such person. So *everything* men do ultimately gets interpreted in light of what happens afterward. I'm sure there are already people who say that all this stuff that was attempted in the Great Society—or much of it—was a failure. Some might say that the whole civil rights thing has set the stage for a huge social problem that has to be dealt with some day. The blacks don't seem to be delivered up from poverty. Some people would say things are worse rather than better. All I can say is these men were attempting to do the very best they knew how at the time, and they couldn't do more than that.

RITCHIE: Well, I want to thank you for sharing your perceptions and stories and personal experiences. They're a very valuable addition to our collection.

VANDER ZEE: Um-hmm. My pleasure, Don. I only regret that I wasn't more deeply involved and could give insights that could be original or more substantive than those I've given.

RITCHIE: I think it's going to be a very solid contribution to the collection. I appreciate it.

VANDER ZEE: Okay. Thank you, sir.

RITCHIE: Thank you.

End of Interview #2

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DEED OF GIFT

I, Rein J. Vander Zee, do hereby give to the Senate Historical Office the tape recordings and transcripts of my interviews on January 28, 1992.

I authorize the Senate Historical Office to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their oral history program. I also approve the deposit of the transcripts at the Library of Congress, National Archives, Senate Library, and any other institution which the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

In making this gift, I voluntarily convey ownership of the tapes and transcripts to the public domain.

Rein J. Vander Zee

Accepted on behalf of the
Senate Historical Office by:

Richard A. Baker

Preface

Behind swinging doors in the rear of the Senate chamber, on either side of the central door, are el-shaped cloakrooms for Democratic and Republican senators. Close to the floor, but away from public view, senators can meet informally in the cloakroom to work out legislative compromises, use the phones, or simply rest on the leather couches. The cloakrooms have become synonymous with backstage political dealing, as majority leader Lyndon Johnson once advised Senator Hubert Humphrey:

Now you don't just come right out on the floor and lay important bills right out in front of God and all those voters. That's not the way it's done, and you could lose before you get started, which doesn't look good to the folks back home. You have to take it slow and easy, working your colleagues over like gentlemen--not on the floor but in the cloakrooms--explaining and trading, but always letting them see what's in it for them. Then when you're sure--Ivory soap sure, and you know you have the votes buttoned up in your back pocket--you come out statesmanlike on the Senate floor and, in the spirit of democracy, have a little debate for the people.

Rein Vander Zee served both as assistant to Senator Humphrey when he became Democratic whip and later as assistant secretary of the majority, where he supervised the Democratic cloakroom and

assisted majority leader Mike Mansfield and Democratic secretary Bobby Baker. Having previously worked on the staff of Iowa Representative Steven V. Carter, Vander Zee had joined Hubert Humphrey's presidential campaign during the 1960 primaries, most notably in the decisive West Virginia primary between Humphrey and John F. Kennedy. He then acted as an advance man for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, before joining the Senate staff in 1961. His oral history recounts the personalities and politics of the era, among the senators, the staff, and presidential administrations of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

Born in Texas in 1928, and raised in the Hill Country, Rein Vander Zee attended public schools and the Texas Military Institute, Schreiner Institute, and the University of Arizona. After college he worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and served in naval intelligence. He later received a law degree from Georgetown Law School. After leaving the Senate staff in 1964, he remained in Washington as a lawyer and lobbyist, and worked for Johnson and Humphrey during the 1968 campaign, before returning to Texas in 1970.

About the Interviewer: Donald A. Ritchie is associate historian of the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of C.C.N.Y., he received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maryland. He has published articles on American political history and oral history, including "Oral History in the Federal Government," which appeared in the *Journal of American History*. His books include *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Harvard

Press, 1980), *The U.S. Constitution* (Chelsea House, 1989), *History of a Free Nation* (Glencoe, 1991), and *Press Gallery: Congress and the Washington Correspondents* (Harvard, 1991). He also edits the *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)* (Government Printing Office). A former president of both the Oral History Association and Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region (OHMAR), he received OHMAR's Forrest C. Pogue Award for distinguished contributions to the field of oral history.

Transcribed by Elizabeth J. Strannigan