

# Jerry T. Verkler

Staff Director

Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, 1963-1974

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## Interview #2

### Scoop Jackson and the Interior Committee

(Thursday, January 30, 1992)

Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RITCHIE:** The Air Force Reserve?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RITCHIE:** Yes.

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

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

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John F. Kennedy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RITCHIE:** McPherson?

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

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

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

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

**VERKLER:** Three.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**RITCHIE:** Was he on?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**RITCHIE:** Kirwan?

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

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

[chuckles]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RITCHIE:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RITCHIE:** Sixty.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**RITCHIE:** This was Mansfield?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**VERKLER:** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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structure and outside the structure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[End of Interview #2]

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