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Interview #3

Environment and Energy

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Interviewed by Donald A. Ritchie

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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people were concerned that he might come in and attempt to undo a lot of the conservation gains that we had made over the years. Ironically, it turned out that his biggest problems eventually were with the White House when he took an opposite view on Vietnamese war policies and got dismissed from office. But that was a change. We had a good working relationship, I'm confident of that, with his successors down there. I guess Rogers Morton succeeded him, who'd been a member of the House, and his brother was a member of the Senate. Thruston Morton chaired the Republican National Committee the same time Senator Jackson chaired the Democratic National Committee. They got along well. You know, Scoop had been favored by Robert F. Kennedy to get the vice presidential nod when either John Kennedy's father, or John Kennedy, or his political advisers made their decision that, I think, turned out to be right--the Austin-Boston axis which helped carry Texas and helped swing the election. I'm not sure that Scoop would have brought that to the election. But, in any event, we had a good working relationship with Rogers Morton as we began the '70s. In the beginning of 1969 we were really awakened to--even more so--the word "environmental" crept more into the language as opposed to just "conservation," and "natural resources." We began in our committee the National Environmental Policy Act, in 1969. As a matter of fact, it had the opposition of the White House, all the way through until the president signed it New Year's Eve and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VERKLER: That's right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

RITCHIE: Caribou.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VERKLER: That you can actually chair, yes.

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

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

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

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

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

VERKLER: Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VERKLER: That's right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[End of Interview #3]