

Richard B. Russell, Jr. Oral History Project  
RBROH-002  
Cliff A. Rutledge interviewed by Hugh Cates  
April 14, 1971

CATES: This is Hugh Cates, April 14, 1971. I am in Winder, Georgia, in the office of Mr. Cliff Rutledge. He is the president of the Rutledge Construction Company in Winder. He is also the president of the Winder Chamber of Commerce. He was mayor of Winder from 1961 to 1969 and he is a long-time friend of the late Senator Richard Brevard Russell. Mr. Rutledge, would you mind telling me about your earliest association with Senator Russell?

RUTLEDGE: Well, Senator Russell was a little older than I was. Of course, I remember him when he was in school. Of course, my first good recollection of him was in his early days as a lawyer. He was one of the best lawyers and he was a lawyer who was interesting. You liked to go down to the court and hear him operate. As far as I know I have never knowed of him losing a case. So it was very interesting and he had some tough cases here and he was our most prominent lawyer. Of course, when he run [sic] for governor I had gotten old enough to start following him around and going to his speakings which is very much interesting because of his ability, you know, as a good speaker. We used to have anywhere from three and four to five and six speeches a day. We would follow him around all over the state. And, of course, he went on then to, after governor, to run for Senate and we still followed him around as long as he had opposition. Of course, as you know, in his later years we didn't have to worry with that.

CATES: Mr. Rutledge, you said something about maybe you were in school with him. Was this over in Barnesville or where was this?

RUTLEDGE: No, I remembered him in school. He was older than I was. I remembered him being in school and I knowed him at that time, but I was not in school with him. And, of course, the Senator was about twelve years older.

CATES: Twelve years older than you were?

RUTLEDGE: Than I was and when I followed him was as, you know, a youngster.

CATES: So your really earliest recollection as you have indicated was when he was a lawyer practicing law here in Winder?

RUTLEDGE: Yeah, that's my best recollection of him because of, you know, going to court and hearing him try these murder cases and things of that nature.

CATES: Do you remember or recall any specific cases that impressed you at the time that he might have handled, a famous case about that period of time?

RUTLEDGE: Well, without calling names, the one that I can remember so well-- I had a neighbor who killed a young man through an accident. He thought he was killing another man and it happened at a liquor still and since it was--both families was our neighbors is why I can remember the case so well. And then at the same time my daddy had a man working for him and they had him in jail and he tried one of them one day and one the next when I was, oh, I was about twelve years old and they let me go set and listen at the cases on account being neighbors and that was my first big case that I knowed he handled and he cleared both men.

CATES: He did clear both men?

RUTLEDGE: Yes.

CATES: The man who had mistakenly killed someone else?

RUTLEDGE: Yes. He killed a young boy who was gone to see about his daddy and he was going across the field and he thought it was a man going after a gun to come back and kill him with. So he cleared him anyway. He got him out and he also--the following day he cleared the other man and they let me sit through the two cases because it was neighbors and from then on I was a great admirer of Senator Russell.

CATES: Did he mostly handle criminal type cases or did he handle almost any kind?

RUTLEDGE: Well, he'd handle any kind of a case as far as I can remember. I never, well I know he did. So anybody that was in trouble here they got Dick Russell.

CATES: Did you participate in any way in any of his races for the state legislature? You know he was in the state legislature for about ten years?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I was very young at that time. I can remember him running. I can remember even having parades around here, and of course I had no--I couldn't vote at that time for him but I was--you know, as a kid I was interested in him because my family was for him. I can remember that very well. But as far as voting for him or helping him, I couldn't do it at that age.

CATES: Well, how about the gubernatorial campaign of 1930? Did you say that you did go around with him and help him on that?

RUTLEDGE: Well, see us being neighbors and I worked for a man here who was a personal friend of him and he'd see that we all went to all--we used to form motorcades. And you know back in that day you had the drum and bugle corps here--they were a bunch of little girls--and they went as his bodyguards.

CATES: Do you recall anything else concerning this gubernatorial campaign? Did you actually go around the state or just within the area?

RUTLEDGE: Well, we used to go to places. Oh, I can remember going to Thomson to a big barbecue. We had--they had a big rally down in Fort Valley or Fort County rally. They had rows of hogs, rows of stew and thousands of people.

CATES: They served barbecue, did they?

RUTLEDGE: Oh, yes, at all these--well, we'd go to places like Macon. They had a big rally there for him. People hauled in cotton, you know, back then for donations. And we went to all the close speaking. You know he'd speak in all--at that time in little towns--Jefferson, Commerce, Watkinsville--all them. He'd speak maybe in Watkinsville at eight o'clock in the morning and somewhere else at ten, another one at twelve, and someplace else at two and so we'd just take a day and follow him everywhere, especially when he was close. About as far as we would go would be from around Winder here in a motorcade would be Fort Valley, Thomson, and places like that.

CATES: Did I understand you to say that people would bring political contributions in the form of cotton?

RUTLEDGE: Oh, yeah, they'd--at that time I remember very well they'd give him--well, as I remember, about eighty bales of cotton was brought into Macon and some days later while it was stored there somebody set it afire or it caught afire someway. I can remember that very well.

CATES: You think it was his political opponent?

RUTLEDGE: It could have been.

CATES: That set it afire?

RUTLEDGE: It could have been.

CATES: How would he dispose of this produce, I mean the cotton and the crops and things that were given to him?

RUTLEDGE: Well, as far as I know, he'd just have somebody to sell it. I guess they'd give him a receipt just like he was buying it or something. I don't know just how that was handled but I do remember bringing the cotton in. You know at that time, you know, cotton was worth about 5 cents a pound so they didn't care nothing about it. They'd just bring it in and give it away.

CATES: How did the town of Winder feel about its native son being elected governor and especially at such an early age and over such a formidable foe as George Carswell?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I think that everybody was just as proud as they could be of anybody. And we thought it was quite an honor here to furnish a man like him and, as you say, to have him in at that early age. And they just overwhelmed with it. You know, when he was elected governor we had a big rally here for him that night and there was people from all over the state and I guess people from out of the state here and I guess the biggest crowd that has ever been in Winder

because they had--at that time is when the four R's run--Roberts, Russell, Roosevelt, Russell [This is Ed Rivers.] And of course we had--no, I beg your pardon, that's when he run for Senate, not governor. But we did have a big rally though here as governor. I believe the four R's was when he run for Senate.

CATES: Well, do you remember the time when he was governor? Did you visit him in Atlanta or did you recall maybe some of the conversations that you had with him during this time?

RUTLEDGE: Well, at that age I wasn't too much in politics no more than just supporting him and backing him. Course, he was at home a good bit and we'd do most of our visiting with him here. I did go, of course, to see him and I've been to his office several times and been to the mansion while he was governor but not a whole lot because he only served eighteen months,

CATES: How did he help the farmer? I would think that Barrow County was pretty rural, much more so than it is today and during the depression years. How did he help the farmer both in this county and throughout the state as governor?

RUTLEDGE: Well, as you know, the Senator wouldn't pick out this county. When you talked to him about this county, he'd remind you that he was governor of the state or he was senator for the state and which I think was fair and never fell out with him for that even though, you know, we always felt like, well, we got the Senator and maybe we ought to have something but nobody held that against him. And, of course, you know, that he was, after going to the Senate he was the main leader with the REA which I think was the best thing he ever done for the farmer. And then, of course, you know he was the man who led the fight for free lunch for the children in the schools. And that's some of the things that I remember that really helped to--of course, not only did he help Georgia then, he helped everywhere.

CATES: Did you say you live not too far from where he lived here in Winder?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I live now about a mile from where he lived.

CATES: Did you have an opportunity to observe the family relationship there? I am thinking now of Judge Russell, Sr. You know, Chief Justice Russell and Mrs. Russell.

RUTLEDGE: Oh, yeah, I knowed them very well. Of course, I didn't know Judge Russell as well as I knowed the Senator, because he was so much older. But I knowed--I got to know Mrs. Russell better because, you know, she lived longer and you know, we had a big--she was honored here at one time for--

CATES: Mother of the Year, I believe.

RUTLEDGE: Mother of the Year, yeah, and we had a big day for her here. Of course, I visited in the home even while she was living.

CATES: What influence do you think she exerted on the Senator's life?

RUTLEDGE: Well, she was a great woman, a great mother, family woman, and I think anybody would have to give her a lot of credit for the Senator's life.

CATES: Do you think the Senator was more influenced by his mother or his father?

RUTLEDGE: Well, it would be hard to say but he was--there couldn't be anybody think anymore of anybody than he did his mother. I'll put it that way. Of course, he thought a lot of his father, of course, but I think maybe his influence coming up was maybe--I'd give his mother credit for most of it.

CATES: Do you recall much about the senatorial race of 1932 when Senator Russell, actually Dick Russell, ran against Congressman Crisp?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I don't remember that race and didn't follow that particular race as much as I did when he was in other races. Of course, we did follow it and of course, I remember his speeches and things like that but that race didn't get as hot around here for us as some of the ones--

CATES: The 1936 race? When Eugene Talmadge ran against him? Do you recall that?

RUTLEDGE: That was a hot one around here.

CATES: Do you recall anything specifically about that race interesting?

RUTLEDGE: Well, the interesting things was what happened to Winder at that time. Gene Talmadge in speaking said that there was even--all the streets in Russell town was paved and even the pigpaths--the paths to the pea patches was paved and, of course, people around here raised money and set up a big sign offering a reward for any concrete in Russell town. And, of course, that was advertised all over the state and a world of people drove here, especially on weekends, to hunt that pavement to the pea patches. And things like that stirred up a lot of interest. And, of course, as you know, there was quite a scrap between the two.

CATES: I was over in Covington yesterday afternoon talking to Ike Hay and he showed me a paper that was put out by the friends of Senator Russell and he led me to believe that it was maybe here in Winder where the paper was put out called *The Georgia Democrat*. Did you have anything to do with that or do you know anything about it? They put out about maybe half a dozen issues and it was to help Russell primarily and Roosevelt.

RUTLEDGE: No, sir, I didn't have anything to do with that. I don't believe that paper was published in Winder.

CATES: It was not?

RUTLEDGE: I believe if it had been I would have knowed something about it.

CATES: Probably published in Atlanta then.

RUTLEDGE: It could have been. It's possible it was published here and I didn't know it. But I didn't know anything about that.

CATES: What was the most interesting thing that might have occurred between you and Senator Russell, either a hunting trip or a fishing trip or an unusual type situation that might have happened between the two that you would have personal knowledge of?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I don't know of anything, you know, that would be too interesting. We just lived an ordinary life. I traveled around with him a good bit. I hauled him and done a lot of driving with him. I would go places like Jekyll Island or I'd meet him in Jekyll Island and bring him home. I'd been to Washington with him on several occasions. I've been honored to be invited to fly up with him to--well, in one case, where they had a party for him and there was nobody invited, no outsider except me.

CATES: When was that and what was the occasion? Do you recall?

RUTLEDGE: The occasion was Lockheed give him this big party and it was Lockheed and the Senator--it was just give for the Senator and of course, they invited Congressmen and their wives and the other Senator, Herman Talmadge and his wife and then it was just Lockheed except me. I was the only outsider.

That was quite an occasion for me.

CATES: And you flew up on a Lockheed plane or was this Air Force?

RUTLEDGE: They carried me and the Senator up, yeah. And the Senator stayed in Washington and I come on back with the Lockheed plane, and of course, I have been honored to be in meetings and sit with him and, you know, with it having him honored in Atlanta. I had quite an experience by getting to go around with him. Here in Winder I was supposed to be his closest friend and did get to travel with him a good bit.

CATES: Did he have any business interests here in Winder or in this county?

RUTLEDGE: No more, except some farms. He got--well, of course, Senator Russell when the Russell land was divided up he got his share of that and he owns two or three small farms here in this county. Of course, he got these farms back in his early days as a lawyer and land was real cheap here then. But no business except his farms.

CATES: I was thinking that someone--and I don't recall now who it was--said something about a fish hatchery business that he was in or had an interest in here in Winder and also a motel. Do you know anything about that?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I understand--now I guess that fish hatchery business come from mine. I'm the one that's in the fish hatchery business.

CATES: Oh, you're the one that's in the fish hatchery?

RUTLEDGE: He was always going around--well, in Washington on this party I was telling you about, he introduced me that night as the "catfish king of the South." But I got a farm over here that's got twenty-three fish ponds on it and I raise channel catfish. So evidently somebody thought maybe he had something to do with that.

CATES: That he had an interest in that, but he didn't?

RUTLEDGE: No, he was very much interested in me raising catfish. He was interested from that standpoint but not with the money, no. Now I understand that his nephew let him have some stock in the motel. We only got one motel and he owned some stock but I don't think it was a great amount in it.

CATES: And his nephew owns the motel?

RUTLEDGE: Well, it was two or three in it, but his nephew had some percentage of it and then he let him have some stock. I don't know why he let him have the stock. I don't know the trade but I have been told that he did own some stock, but not enough--he don't control or anything like that.

CATES: And then someone was telling me that, I forget now exactly who this was, but I think it was a distant relative of his that he bought up a lot of farms. Well, I started to say during the Depression, but maybe not during the Depression but whenever a farm would go up for sale and the owners couldn't buy it back or something, I guess for taxes or something, he had instructed somebody or made the sheriff buy it for him. Do you know anything about that?

RUTLEDGE: Well, he's told me [I used to get out and ride him around afternoons when he was home because I knowed the county and knowed where his little farms was] and we'd go around these farms and he'd tell me about this farm come up for sale and it come to him. I never knowed him to bid one off, as I recall, but he'd--like you said he got this land back in the Depression when he was a young lawyer but I heard him say that he had to scrap around and borrow \$500 to buy or \$300 to buy. He didn't know how in the world he was ever going to pay it back but he scrapped around and finally got it paid for. And he'd tell me the history of these farms as we'd go by them now. He only owns, besides what he got in the Russell estate, as far as I can recall, three small farms.

CATES: Just three small farms?

RUTLEDGE: Yeah. I remember one in the Ben Smith district that joins me and he's got one over on what we call the Tanner's Bridge Road--a small farm--a small farm out here at Pea Hill. And he's never told me about anymore. I don't think he owns anymore besides them.

CATES: He really--would you describe him as being a person who really loved the land?

RUTLEDGE: Yes, sir, more than anybody ever I seen and especially a pine tree.

CATES: A pine tree?

RUTLEDGE: Yes, sir. I used to do his work around the cemetery and we'd have a tree to die out or something another but you was not to skin a pine tree. You didn't cut out a pine tree even though the pine tree was crooked and all this, it was still a pine tree. He loved trees better than any man I've ever seen.

CATES: Did he try to get someone to cultivate these farms that he had or did he have cattle on them or--

RUTLEDGE: Grewed pine trees.

CATES: Just pine trees on them.

RUTLEDGE: No, he had--I don't know of any farming he done. He just grewed pine trees.

CATES: How do you think he felt about being away from Winder? Of course, I know he loved being a senator and he loved living in Washington but how did he feel about being away from Winder?

RUTLEDGE: Well, he always loved Winder and he come to Winder every chance he got. Of course, there was years he didn't get to come very often. But he was always tickled to come to Winder and would want to get out on the street and talk to his friends and he loved to get out here in the country. He used to get me to come by and pick him up in the afternoons and go hunt old cemeteries. He loved to get out and I recall one case where we--he wanted to know if I could remember an old cemetery. It so happened I used to be a road superintendent here and I knowed where all the cemeteries was, you know, they was back in the woods and what have you. And he asked me about this particular cemetery, and I said, "Yes, I know where it's at." He wanted me to carry him to see it. So we did, and his purpose for going--he was, you know, a great man for history. The story goes that he's read more history than any man in the world. And he remembered these two brothers that was killed in Virginia and he went with his daddy to see these graves when they put them--evidently his daddy maybe had something to do with the ceremony when they placed these markers in this cemetery for these two brothers who was buried in Virginia.

CATES: These were Confederate soldiers?

RUTLEDGE: Yes, sir. And so I carried him to the cemetery. He got a great kick out of going to all the cemeteries and hunting his old friends. Oh, I can remember he'd get awful upset if he'd remember where somebody was buried and they wasn't a marker there. Thinked a man deserved a marker. Even one cemetery--the last one I helped him find--was over in the park, this Yargo Park. He remembered an old cemetery that was in there and we went in there and found it. I found it for him and then carried him over there. But he could remember everybody that was buried in them, when they was buried. You know he had one of the best memories of anybody, I guess.

CATES: Would he actually put a marker at these graves, unmarked graves, would he have it done?

RUTLEDGE: No, as far as I know, he didn't but he'd think the family should do it. I remember one particular case where he remembered down south of town here where there's a man who was a policeman here when he was a young lawyer and he remembered him and wanted to go hunt his grave and we found it. We found his grave but no marker. And he said as good a man as that was de- served a marker so he could be remembered and people could see his grave, but as far as I know, he didn't know enough of the family and he didn't do it himself.

CATES: I noticed coming into town this comparatively new federal building. Did he have anything to do with that being here in Winder?

RUTLEDGE: I'm pretty sure he did.

CATES: When was this built? What were the circumstances, do you recall?

RUTLEDGE: Well, the circumstances was we'd growed out of the post office we was in and had to have a post office. So he got busy and I was going in as mayor at that time, and I'd been elected and was taking over the fall he got it started. And he went ahead and got the money and decided to build what was called a federal building--well, it is a federal building--and put the post office in it and have room for, you know, the federal people here in Winder. And so, I can't recall the year that that was built unless it must have been '62. It was either '62 or '63 that we built the building and then I bought the old post office building from GSA for city hall. And I put the city hall in it.

CATES: That was while you were mayor?

RUTLEDGE: Right.

CATES: Did you have many dealings in an official capacity with Senator Russell while you were mayor of Winder from '61-'69?

RUTLEDGE: Well, you know, I was with him often. I set down and talked to him a lot about Winder and, of course, the only time I'd use the Senator was when I got in a tight and when I'd get--would get in a tight I'd just pick up the phone and call him or go see him. If he's going to be at home I'd wait till he come home and if it's something pushing--I got some big grants while the Senator was up there. They, of course--the Senator being up there helped me get them. But when I taken over as the mayor here--I don't want to get off on something personal here, but to describe the way he helped me--we was out of water, gas, and I had no, practically no sewerage here, so I had to start begging for money and getting loans and what have you to get the town back on its feet and get it to going. And, of course, I always consulted with Senator Russell and I'd hear of something and I'd get him to tip me off who to see and so forth. I'd try not to use him because he liked to do as much for the other part of the state as he did his own county, but I guess I pushed him a little harder being close to him than some of the rest of them.

CATES: And were you successful in most everything you asked him to help you with?

RUTLEDGE: He never turned me down on nothing, because I tried to--well, I knowed Senator Russell good enough never to lie to him, never to misquote a figure to him and I knowed what he stood for, so I didn't go to him without I knowed I was right and I knowed he could help me. And he'd always at least look into it. He never would turn me down. I don't mean that--maybe we didn't get everything we went after 100% but he'd sure do his part.

CATES: Did he maintain a pretty keen interest in local politics and things happening here in Winder even though he was up in Washington most of the time?

RUTLEDGE: He was very much interested. He'd--we had an election here, he'd call me or some of his family if he couldn't get ahold of me about the politics. He'd find out what was going on. But he never taken any hand as far as coming down here and working politics, no. But he was always interested in state, local, anything we had here in the way of politics. If we had a bond issue here or something, he'd always call that night to find out how it come out. He kept up with us.

CATES: How about the race between Richard Russell, III, and a former aide of his--Mark Denahoo--for the judgeship? Did he participate or get involved in any way in that?

RUTLEDGE: As far as I know he didn't say a word. I didn't know--he'd talk to somebody like me about it. He'd ask me questions about it, what I thought. I remember I had Richard's headquarters--I was for Richard--at my office. Richard didn't work. He never asked a person to vote for him or anything. But we'd have to--I formed this little club and I know he was there that night getting the returns. The Senator come up there and stayed with me while we was getting them in but as far as him taking any active part, no.

CATES: So he didn't really side either way, of course--

RUTLEDGE: No, he, I never knowed him to take sides in any race--governor's or anything.

CATES: I understand that you kind of headed up a special dinner or luncheon in Washington. I'm not really sure of the date. I believe it was Harry Dwoskin that was telling me about that and he and W. B. Thompson were invited. And when was that and what was the occasion?

RUTLEDGE: Well, it was Senator's seventh time to be sworn in for the Senate, which was the last time he was sworn in and so, I hit up on the idea with some other fellows around town here to go to Washington. Well, it started off--I mentioned to another fellow here, and me and him was going to Washington. Well, it got to growing and the first thing you know somebody else wanted to go and somebody else wanted to go so contacted Lockheed and they said they'd furnish the plane to send us up there and contacted Rohr Aircraft and they said they'd pay for the dinner. So we just kept messing around and got it organized and they sent the plane down here and picked up, oh, I think it was about twelve of us. You know, his closest friends, went up and had this dinner for him and give him a color TV set and what have you. We made that up locally

here. That was our part. Rohr taken care of the dinner, and Lockheed furnished transportation. So we had quite a nice affair, something I think he appreciated.

CATES: How did you happen to include Harry Dvoskin and W. B. Thompson and Mr. De Marco?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I done that for the Senator. Now me and Mr. Thompson, well, all them fellow was personal friends of mine, but Mr. Thompson's always taken a big interest in this cemetery. This Mr. Dvoskin had always hauled him around and went with him wherever he went. That's why they got in on it. We built a building--and Mr. Thompson is the biggest one in this--back there--what we call the Records House--and built one big room that was--oh, I don't remember the size of it--about a 30 x 30, I guess; it's fireproof to put things that he wanted, you know, to save. And then built on to that, of course, it was, you know, it was built to the building, to have him a little kitchenette, a bedroom, and a little den, you know, in case he wanted to spend some time out there or he could use it for a guest house. And Mr. Thompson was very interested in that cemetery. He's called me many a morning at six o'clock and wanted me to go down there and meet him down there and see something about the cemetery. I was--Mr. Thompson was one of the Senator's closest friends out of Winder and had been friends for years and when Senator's homecoming he had once a year down there, I was the first one outsider that was ever invited to that and then the next year he invited Mr. Thompson and these other two guys down. But they was great friends.

CATES: Was the Senator touched by this gesture, by this dinner in Washington with his closest friends?

RUTLEDGE: He said it was one of the greatest things that happened to him in life.

CATES: Was there any speechmaking at that time?

RUTLEDGE: Not no more than just two or three wanted to get up and make some remarks. We, of course, presented him, had somebody present him with the TV and seemed like we come with something else for him and then, of course, oh, I don't remember---the Rohr president wanted to say a few words and I believe one of the Lockheed men said a few words. It was very short; it was just a get-together for fun and what have you,

CATES: Was he instrumental in getting the Rohr plant down here--Senator Russell?

RUTLEDGE: We--you'd have to say that Senator had a hand in getting most anything we got around here, not that we contacted him to, you know, to put him on the spot about getting anything. He wouldn't do that, I mean he didn't want to do it, but, you know, when an outfit like Rohr knowed it was Senator Russell's hometown, you know, that always had some--

CATES: Bound to have some influence on their decision although no pressure was applied. How did the town feel about Senator Russell in 1952 and the closeness with which he almost obtained the Democratic nomination for President? Did you play any active part in that?

RUTLEDGE: Well, the active part I played in it was--well, for instance, when he traveled over Florida I spent some time down there with him and carried some fellows with me and we followed him around and, of course, I had friends in a lot of towns in Florida. In fact, I had a business in Florida at that time. And so we done everything that we could do here locally. Of course, we would have been a happy town if we had a President.

CATES: Do you think Russell really thought he had a serious chance or do you think maybe he was just being a spokesman for the South and knew that he, right from the start, that he never had a chance?

RUTLEDGE: I believe, well, I don't know hardly how to answer that. I don't think he'd have run if he hadn't thought he had some kind of chance, but him knowing he's from the South, he always said, you know, that there was just no chance that way on account of it. It'd have been a miracle if we had got it and I think everybody realized that. You know all the big politicians say that if he'd been from the North or the West or someplace he'd have been President. Of course, we figured that was a shame that we couldn't have the President when we had the material.

CATES: I know that another time, I believe this was shortly after Senator Talmadge went to Washington, perhaps. Russell became Chairman of the Armed Services Committee and Senator Talmadge gave some kind of dinner or luncheon. Were you invited to that, to honor his being the chairman of the committee or whatever the occasion? I know they had to fly some quail up there for that dinner or luncheon.

RUTLEDGE: No, I was invited to that but I didn't make that. Since you mention it, I recall the quail dinner and for some reason or another I didn't make that trip. I don't remember why, cause that's been several years.

CATES: Yes, about '57, I guess, or '58.

RUTLEDGE: I don't remember why I didn't go but I remember about the quail and. but I just can't recall why I wasn't there.

CATES: Did Senator Russell ever discuss with you the reason why he never married?

RUTLEDGE: Oh, I get him joked about it. I never really questioned him about it. But I heard him joke about it. It's according to who he was talking to or something or other, you know. It was just for a joke. The most reason that I knew is that he got busy and didn't have time. You know Senator started his political, I don't remember this story, I was too young and I've heard a little bit about it but it seems something come up at the University one time and they must have been getting crossed up and he got up on some rock out there or wall or something and made a speech--this is the story that goes around anyway--and he got them all and got everything quieted down, got them seeing his way and what have you and it seemed he started out being a leader from that. So I guess he went around. Of course, like I said, it just been the things that's told. But anyway he said he got busy when he was a young man and just never had time to get married.

CATES: There have been several rumors to the effect that he was almost engaged to several persons. Do you know anything about that, his near engagements to people or involvements with girls to the extent of almost marrying them?

RUTLEDGE: Well, from what I heard him say, it was like I said, setting around. We used to--me and him used to have one trip a year we'd make over to Commerce to a cabin with the Hardens, Willis Harden and Tot Harden and we'd always be the four of us. Most of the time we'd cook a steak and sit around on the porch over the lake and discuss. I heard him discuss there going with a young girl--of course at that time--who later married the ball player.

CATES: Not Ty Cobb?

RUTLEDGE: No, the other guy that made so many homeruns.

CATES: Johnny Myers?

RUTLEDGE: No, the old-timer knocked more homeruns and still got the record.

CATES: Oh, Babe Ruth?

RUTLEDGE: Babe Ruth.

CATES: Oh, yes.

RUTLEDGE: He used to and I--course they was kidding him and this could have been some fun, I don't know, but he said they was kidding him about going with her--and she's originally from Jackson County and then he run up on her when he started the University. She was selling tickets to the theater and they was kidding him about it that night. They run around with him at that time--the Hardens--and he said that was the prettiest woman he ever seen in his life and he said he like to have fell for her, said he had to quit going with her or get married one. So he just dropped her.

CATES: So he actually dated the girl who later married Babe Ruth?

RUTLEDGE: That was the tales over there that night so I guess it's so. Of course, around these parties--you know I never talked to him direct about that but I just listened in on the conversation while they was kidding him and talking to him. But that was the most excuse, that he just didn't have time.

CATES: Speaking of baseball, was he not a pretty good friend of Ty Cobb?

RUTLEDGE: He was a good friend. I heard him discuss him that night. He could tell a lot of tales about Ty Cobb and Ty's mother and so forth.

CATES: Do you recall any of these stories that he would tell about his relationship with Ty Cobb or his admiration for him?

RUTLEDGE: Well, not enough maybe to discuss. I remember them talking that night about visiting over there and then I remember a case where they was talking about some man said something about Ty's mother and he just left the ball club and caught the train and come to his hometown over there and sat down on a bench and waited for the man to come down the street on a wagon. He got on the wagon and beat the man up and went right down to the depot and caught his train back to play ball. You know he'd just tell stories like that. They could sit over there and talk about things like that all night; so like I said, he had a good memory. He could remember the dates, the months, every- thing else.

CATES: Did you ever go to any sporting contests with the Senator?

RUTLEDGE: No, I don't believe that me and him ever attended anything together like that. It was usually on business trips when I was with him.

CATES: Did the Senator have very close friends? I mean--you've indicated that you're probably his best friend here in Winder--did he have many close friends? I know he was a friendly man and people seemed to be drawn to him, but did he have any close friends, real close friends?

RUTLEDGE: Well, Senator didn't spend enough time at home and when he did he was a busy man to actually have what you might call close friends. Take Mr. Clair Harris here, he was a very, very close friend of Senator but he was a very busy man. And why I said I guessed I was the closest friend is because I run around with him more and, you know, done things for him--I used to go down and eat with him and drink coffee with him and if he wanted to discuss anything about his house, his cemetery he'd call--is why I say I was closer to him. Now he had a lot of good friends here in town. Of course, everybody was crazy about Senator Russell. Take fellows like Clair Harris, who was a close friend, Harry O. Smith, you know, the editor of the paper. Oh, I could name dozens of them. Of course, a lot of Senator's old friends has gone on, you know, in these last years. And then, of course, in the last years Senator--of course, you know how Congress was, he just didn't spend a lot of time here. He'd get home on his days for his family gathering and that would be once a year. He'd try to get home like the 4th of July, and maybe Labor Day when he'd have a few days off and then, of course, when he was here in the fall, when they did get off, say in November or something--you know his office was in the Federal Building here and he was working. And, of course, he saw a lot of his friends while he was working but he was a man that worked--well, he put in more hours than anybody I ever knowed of--it was nothing for him to stay at the office until seven or eight o'clock at night and keep his help there with him until midnight if it was necessary till he got his mail answered. But as far as I know he never turned away any friend who wanted to come in and chat with him.

CATES: Would you say that he was a lonely man?

RUTLEDGE: I don't know as you could say the Senator was a lonely man because he was too busy. I know he would call me up and tell me to come on down and let's have a cup of coffee and maybe eat a hamburger with him or something on that order. Well, when you get there--well, I just don't think he had time to be lonely--we'd sit down and start talking and the phone would ring and it'd be the President calling him, Senator Stennis or somebody calling him and it just

kept--he was just as busy as he could be and what time somebody wasn't calling him or he didn't have company he was reading. And I just don't think that the Senator ever could be called a lonely man.

CATES: Did he ever talk to you about his relationship with Lyndon Johnson?

RUTLEDGE: Yes, sir, a lot of times. The Senator made Lyndon Johnson. I think everybody knows that. He helped bring him up and he--they was great friends. Senator did not want him to run for Vice-President. He begged him not to and Lyndon promised him he wouldn't. Senator was at home and I was down there when--of course, he was home when the convention was going on and soon as the thing was over--of course, we was getting what we could on TV and all that and we knowed he was going to take it. Well, we knowed he did take it because we was looking at the TV. Senator was very much upset about it because at that time we had a bunch of scrapping going on with eighteen senators against the others and Lyndon was one of them. Well, he knowed then he'd lost him so he--about the time of the end of this thing, well, Lyndon slipped out and went to a pay phone. I can remember that very well. Senator was very upset that he had to go to a pay phone to call him but he called him and told him that he had to accept it, said it was forced on him. Senator told him he was lying, wasn't nothing forced on him. And like I said, when he come back and sit down he was very much upset about it, that he accepted it. Then as you know he didn't have but very little to do with the campaign and, of course, he had a lot of fights, I guess, with him on this business and so they finally squared off enough that I asked the Senator this question one day. I said, "Well, Senator," I said, "I understand that he invites you over two or three nights a week to eat with him and to question him about the war

and so forth and so on." I said, "What do y'all do about this integration business?" "Well," he said, "We just don't talk about it." He said, "We get into a fight everytime it's brought up," and he said, "We got the rest of the world to run besides that." And he said, "I got to get along with him," and he said, "He respects me but on this other matter, " he said, "He's just brainwashed." He said, "He's lost and I ain't never going to be able to do nothing with him." So that's about the way he felt about Lyndon. He respected him, he liked him; but they had their differences.

CATES: Would you say that in later life their friendship cooled somewhat because of their political differences?

RUTLEDGE: Oh, yes, they got--like I said, they just dropped that subject and went on with the rest of their business.

CATES: He didn't always follow the Senator's advice on Vietnam either, did he?

RUTLEDGE: Oh, no, he wouldn't do it, but he'd call him in and talk to him. No, he wouldn't go along. Of course, I guess he thought he better listen to the majority instead of one but he still respected Senator Russell. And as I understand it, he always knowed the Senator was right, but I guess politics had to enter into a lot of it.

CATES: I'd like to ask you maybe one or two other questions. I know my time is up because you do have an appointment.

RUTLEDGE: That's all right because we got this started, we'll go along with it.

CATES: About the last senatorial race which really did not develop but it looked at one time like Carl Sanders was going to run against Senator Russell. Would you comment about this? Did Russell talk to you about this?

RUTLEDGE: Well, of course, there has been a lot of controversy about it and he did talk to me about it and I got upset about it. I didn't like it. Me and Carl Sanders was personal friends. I headed his campaign this last time here in Barrow County. Of course, it didn't do any good. But time this was happening--course I was taking a big interest in helping Senator get ready. You know he was a scrapper. He didn't wait until the last minute. He believed in getting after things, so we mailed out--from my office here we mailed out thousands of booklets. I guess you saw the booklet. I mailed them to, oh, I know all--I don't know who all, but anyway, all the barbershops in the state of Georgia I mailed them out to. And we were scrapping that thing, but I kept telling people that Carl wasn't saying it--you know, the newspapers were saying more than Carl was saying. Of course, Carl was doing a little feeling out. We could find out where he was calling some of his closest friends and I talked to Carl about it and he just--he grinned and said, "Well, the newspapers are doing more talking than I am." Well, then, like I said, I like to got mad at Carl because he like to have waited too late to say he wasn't going to run against him. When he did and he come out with the statement he did and the way he praised Senator Russell, I couldn't feel too bad about it. Then I talked to Senator Russell about it. Senator made this statement to me--that he couldn't blame Carl because he was a young man, he was ambitious, and he didn't blame him for staying in, you know, in other words, headlines, so he could stay before the public for something to come up in the future. I guess I felt this way and I think the Senator felt this way--that anybody as young as he was and as ambitious and, you know, he let the papers brag on him and people said he had a chance to run against a man like Senator Russell. I know if the papers had a been bragging on me like that I'd a liked it. So I don't--I honestly don't think that Senator held a grudge.

CATES: How about this last gubernatorial campaign? You indicated that you had helped Carl Sanders and, of course, as you and I both know Jimmy Carter won and there'd been some little controversy about whether or not Senator Russell endorsed Jimmy Carter or just simply endorsed the ticket, the Democratic ticket.

RUTLEDGE: He endorsed the ticket.

CATES: He endorsed the ticket?

RUTLEDGE: He didn't endorse nothing until the--you know it got to be Republican and Democrat and then he endorsed the ticket.

CATES: So he really never endorsed Carter?

RUTLEDGE: No, he didn't endorse nobody. He just wouldn't take a hand. I-- I'd always say that he had his own problems and that he had to look after his own business and he just wouldn't get down here and take--just the same as he wouldn't get down here and--I've known people to try to get him to do something that interfered with state business, you know, with the Governor's business. He'd say, "No, that ain't none of my business. I don't interfere with state business." You know, something the Governor was supposed to handle. So he didn't in politics. He wouldn't in this local--of course, like back when the Judge was running and the doctor you just talked to, when he was running for Representative here, he made the statement, "Now, Cliff, get out here and get the doctor elected." I was down at his house. And I figure he was interested in that, but he didn't get out, you know, with the public and do no campaigning, do no calling, do no writing, or anything like that. I I guess it worked out fine because he never seemed to have any trouble him- self. He didn't make many people mad.

CATES: I meant, he naturally wanted members of his family if they were running to be elected, but he wouldn't actually campaign on their behalf but he might encourage others like yourself.

RUTLEDGE: Talked to me go get out and help him.

CATES: Yes.

RUTLEDGE: But he wouldn't get out, no, not in public himself.

CATES: Did he ever talk to you about his possible successor? I mean, you know, there was a lot of thought given as to who was going to succeed him after he did die. Did he ever talk to you about that?

RUTLEDGE: Never mentioned that. There were things come up about, you know, somebody running against him and things like that. He'd talk about them, but as far as him saying who he thought that would fill the seat or anything, no. Not even Ernest Vandiver--he--I never--you know he'd made a statement public that he--well, I don't know if I can quote that just what he said, but anyway, he wasn't giving up his seat for Ernest Vandiver. You know, he'd--somebody said something about he was going to retire and let Ernest have it and he said he wasn't retiring, wouldn't give up his seat for Ernest Vandiver or nobody else. And so--and I know I talked to Charles Campbell. In fact, Charles and a bunch of them stayed with me for Senator's funeral and the night that Charles left here he told me that he was going into Atlanta the next day and he knowed he'd be asked that question. But he said, "The Senator didn't tell me," and he said, "I think I'm as close to him as anybody in his office," and he said, "I don't know who he wanted to take his place." So I don't-- I don't think that he tried to put anybody on the spot.

CATES: What do you think is going to happen to his homeplace here in Winder, Mr. Rutledge?

RUTLEDGE: I think it will be maintained as the Russell home right on.

CATES: Do you think it will eventually become, maybe a museum?

RUTLEDGE: I think it will. We got a lot of stuff stored back there in this record house I was telling you back of the home. And I think it will be turned into a museum and kept up, looked after and be kept in the condition it was in for years and years.

CATES: What would you say was Senator Russell's most outstanding personality trait or characteristic?

RUTLEDGE: If I understand the question what you're talking about, it would be his memory that he had. Is that kind of--something along the line of what you're talking about?

CATES: Yes, maybe, well, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but people have seen him in different views, you know, and insights into his personality and character and they might mention perseverance or dedication or you mentioned memory, his memory, just what strikes you most about his human quality or qualities as a person?

RUTLEDGE: Well, like I said, he--well, I go along with that memory business in the first place. He could have met you on the street out here when you were six years old and somebody introduced you to him and he could have come back six years later and called you by your name. I'll give you a little illustration of his memory and why he would hit people so. He had to go up here in the mountains one time to meet a bunch of people that was trying to get him to build a big dam for which has been building--it's under construction--it's been under construction, I think it's completed now. And he wanted me to carry him up there. So we found this place back there and there was an old humpbacked bridge over there and we got there and there's people just lined up on one side and down the other side--there must have been a hundred people out there to meet us. And so, he went down the line shaking hands with everybody and being introduced to them, of course, I did, being with him. And when we got through the rest of the day we stayed with them and had a big barbecue and went down and--we'd meet up with somebody and he'd say, "Cliff, you remember so-and-so." And he'd call that man with a name right there. I guess he could have called everyone of them by name. I remember something happened while we was having a luncheon that day. We--there's a fellow got up that was a representative with the Senator when he was in the House--Senator was Speaker of the House at that time--this fellow said he was elected up there in the mountains because they didn't have nobody else to send, said he didn't have sense enough to go, but he said he got him up a possum bill and he got everybody--nobody paid no attention to him because he was an old country guy and he got this possum bill through so everybody went back home and found out everybody was interested in it and they like to have beat everybody. And he said that happened back in and he give a year and a day. Senator got up and he said, "Sam," he said, "I remember that very well. But," he says, "You're wrong on your dates." He said, "The day that you put that through was in February of a different year, you know." Sam laid his feet up on the desk and he says, "You know, that's right." He says, "I was wrong in my dates, Senator." Well, that impressed the entire three or four hundred people that was there eating, you know, that he could have that kind of memory. And, of course, I've seen other occasions where he's proved his ability to remember names and things and then Senator was just a great man to stand around and talk to. You could talk about anything you wanted to talk about. There wasn't no use arguing a ball game with him, I don't care whether it was the In--the Senators or it was Georgia or--I went with him to--they had him down to Georgia one night to some meeting and the football season was fixing to kick off and he seemed to know more

about all the players than Vince Dooley did. He told me he kidded him about it. He knowed who was sick, who had sprung an ankle, he knowed them by name, and any sport that you wanted to talk about, he knowed about it, he could call them by name. And things like that I think would just strike anybody as--

CATES: Did you ever see him lose his temper?

RUTLEDGE: No, I've heard of him losing it once.

CATES: Would you mind recounting that story?

RUTLEDGE: No, if you don't mind me calling some names. I don't guess it matters, but we won't use the words--you never heard the Senator use any bad words. But he was telling me one time about young Ted Kennedy. He'd got tied up in a committee meeting and was running a little late. The bell had sounded for them to come in and vote but he met Ted coming out the door. And it was a very important bill and he wanted to get in and vote. He didn't say whether he was going to vote yes or not, but anyway, when he opened the door, there was Ted Kennedy. He said, "Ted, have they voted yet?" He said, "No, but you vote yes." And the Senator turned around to him and he said of course, we'll have to spot some words in there], but he said, "I didn't ask you how to vote, I asked you had they voted." And he said, "I think that's the maddest I've ever been in my life, this very young kid trying to tell me how to vote." So that's one time I guess he lost his temper. But as a usual--no, he was very smooth.

CATES: Well, Mr. Rutledge, I certainly appreciate your taking the time to give me this interview. I know you're running a little late for an appointment. I'm always somewhat hesitant to cut off an interview when I'm talking to someone who has known him as long as you knew him. Is there anything else you would like to say to put on this tape at this time?

RUTLEDGE: Well, I would like to mention that Senator was born in the house next to my office here.

CATES: On this street? Is it still standing?

RUTLEDGE: Yes, it's still there. Cates; Would you mind stating the--this is Park Avenue, is it?

RUTLEDGE: Park Avenue, yes.

CATES: Does it have a number? It's to the left of your building here, is that correct? Facing the street.

RUTLEDGE: Yes, it's--it's east, northeast of my office. I don't remember the number of the house but it is on Park Avenue and he was born here and then they later moved and created Russelltown. I could, of course, talk about Senator Russell all day if somebody would just remind me of things that happened and, I mean, you know, questions. I would like to add that he was one of the greatest men that I've ever known and I think the honestest man I ever known and, like I said, I learned years ago there was just one thing Senator didn't put up with--nobody

lying to him and he was just down to earth and he just wasn't--he wasn't no blow-off. He'd talk to me just like he would to the public. He just didn't have nothing to hide. But he was--it's a great loss to me. I think I lost one of the greatest friends I'll ever have when I lost him,

CATES: Mr. Rutledge, again let me thank you for this interview and if in any time in the future that you happen to think about something that you might want to record for the Russell Foundation at the University of Georgia don't hesitate to let me know. You've got my card and I'll be glad to come back down here.

RUTLEDGE: Well, if there's anything you think of, anything, I'll be happy to help you.

CATES: Thank you.

