

Richard B. Russell, Jr. Oral History Project  
RBROH-123  
Wayne Kelly interviewed by Hugh Cates  
March 6, 1971

CATES: This is Hugh Cates, March 6, 1971. I'm in Washington, D.C., at the Capitol about to talk to Wayne Kelley, who is the research director of the *Congressional Quarterly*. Prior to that, from 1967, and 1968, he was the *Atlanta Journal* Washington correspondent. Wayne, would you mind relating your earliest association with Senator Russell?

KELLEY: I think the first time I really recall any intimate coverage of the Senator was as the 90th Congress began in 1967, covering the usual cloture debates and so forth. And the Senator then, as always, was leading the Southern bloc effort to block change in the rules that would limit debate in the Senate. At first he was a little hard to get to see, and it was a matter of sort of haunting the Senate galleries trying to get him off the floor and of checking with his press aide, Powell Moore, over at his office trying to get ahold of him. Indeed, one Georgia newsman told me that his best memory of the Senator was waiting outside his office, but around 1967 and 1968, the Senator had, of course, his problem with his emphysema. As time went on, he began to get more and more accessible. I never experienced the problem of not being able to get to him, except when he was extremely busy and that sort of stuff. After he went into the hospital in 1967, I believe, with emphysema--a pretty bad attack, an infection of the, a lung infection, respiratory infection--he invited, well, we asked. Art Pine, who is a correspondent for the *Atlanta Constitution*, and I asked to see him at the hospital. He, by that time, was so cordial that when we walked into the hospital--the Senator was in his robe and sitting in an isolated room; he had his own suite there--he was sitting in a draft and didn't mention it for several minutes. He finally got up and walked around and we realized what it was and he admitted that he was sitting in a draft. But I found him to be an exceedingly warm person, very congenial, and his reputation for being difficult to get to was probably well-earned, but in the last three or four years of his life, I guess, he was always accessible to the Atlanta press. It was almost as though he was sitting down to have a chat with the folks at home; he knew maybe the time was running out or something and he didn't make himself as difficult to see as he had in the past. During that year, I guess, I saw him on the average of a couple of times a week. Sometimes the discussions would go on for just a few moments, standing in the President's room off, off the Senate floor. Sometimes at his office they would go on for as long as an hour, and Powell would begin to get a little nervous sitting in the back of the room. It was tough to break off conversations with him sometimes. I think that's one reason his staff helped to make him inaccessible a bit, because they realized the Senator couldn't say no and he couldn't say goodbye. His day would be taken up with people if they didn't watch it. I guess that some of the things that really impressed me about him, aside from the obvious integrity and brilliance of the man, were very human things. I can recall that a group of black women came up from Atlanta once and they were all on welfare. They went to see Senator [Herman Eugene] Talmadge and they went to see other people and, finally, they arrived at Senator Russell's office. He took them down to the Armed Services Committee meeting room at a long table, and they began to tell him their stories of difficult life and runaway husbands and so forth. He listened very attentively and then they asked him how he was going to vote on welfare

and some other things, and the Senator started explaining how he felt; and he had obvious sympathy for them, something that's not always true of all Southern congressmen. He didn't agree with them, but you could tell that his heart went out to them and their problems and this sort of stuff. And the woman who was with them, the white woman with them, during the middle of the Senator's discussion of why he was not going to vote to increase welfare funds, said, "Senator, you're talking above the heads of these people. They can't understand you," and she was pretty brisk about it. I was looking at Russell's face. He didn't get mad at all; he just got concerned and then he stopped and he started all over again trying to tell them how a bill went through Congress. He wasn't speaking down to them; he was just trying to make himself understood. He was trying to simplify it so they could understand him and I think this was sort of characteristic of the way he dealt with a lot of things. He was a man of great intelligence, but of great compassion. It's sad that a lot of people felt that he never got a chance to be president because he came from the South, because of civil rights and so forth. Yet, there was no hatred in his soul and he did do things like--he believed in segregation and I think he even once sponsored a bill to help send black people back to Africa [laughs] if they wanted to go. In later years, I don't think he ever had pangs of conscience about this, because these things were born out of, not a feeling of hatred on his part, but a feeling of tradition, of the region, and he didn't feel guilty because he didn't hate the people. During the same year, there were troop buildups in Vietnam and so forth, and Russell was in on a lot of this. He knew it, and he knew it was going on. Sometimes he would talk about it, privately. I think the Pueblo incident occurred in 1967, didn't it?

CATES: I believe that is right.

KELLEY: There was an air lift to the Congo of troops, and the Senator on that occasion took the State Department and the Defense Department to task. They sent some troops into the Congo, airlifted them there without notifying the Senate leadership, and Russell took the [Senate] floor to protest this, and the planes were flown out and their crews the next day I believe. It was an example of how much power Russell could wield. [James William] Fulbright could talk for months, but if Russell truly became upset, more was likely to happen. Of course, he was head of the Appropriations Committee later on, second man at that time. He was head of the Armed Services Committee and he could throw considerable weight into a debate or something of that nature. I think during that first year those are the impressions I got--that he was a warm person, that he was inaccessible to a degree because of the great demands on his time and so forth, yet for a few people he was easier to see. He sort of carried on, I think, his conversations with Georgia through the Atlanta press, and the Atlanta press could always get to him, whereas other members of the press couldn't. As a matter of fact, when he called a press conference--was it in 1968 or early 1969--to announce that he had a lung tumor, I guess it was early in 1969; I know it was among my last month's here. He called a press conference to-- no one knew exactly what the nature was, but he had a malignant tumor in his lung and he didn't call a general press conference. He called in only the Atlanta press and his staff and made the announcement, and it was obvious that, you know, he was upset, but he had almost complete composure. A couple of the reporters tossed him pretty, pretty tough questions about whether he was going to resign, whether it was operable, whether he felt the cobalt treatments he was going to undergo would work, and whether he felt that he would be incapable of continuing his job; and the tougher the questions got, the better he liked it. After the press conference was over, Powell was telling a

couple of us that the Senator didn't want sympathy. He wanted an adversary situation. He wanted to fight the tumor and he didn't want to, I guess, do it from a feeling of weakness. He was a very tough man in a lot of ways.

CATES: Wayne, I was interviewing [Kenneth H.] Ken Turner; of course, you probably know Ken, do you not?

KELLEY: Yes.

CATES: And I think he said that when he was a reporter for the *Atlanta Journal* and was the Washington correspondent that he could re--he found that he could reach Russell easier, he was more accessible, by coming over here to the Senate. Did you find that to be true?

KELLEY: Yeah, at first that was the only way I could get ahold of him. When I was up here just a few weeks, I tried to interview him on the phone and I didn't know at the time that he just hated the phone. He didn't want to talk to reporters on the phone. I don't believe he ever did, except two or three times; at least he only did to me two or three times, and I doubt that anybody else had better luck. I finally got him on the phone one day after insisting--I don't know how I got him at his office--and he told me what I wanted to know, but he was very brusque. So I started coming over to get him off the Senate floor and usually he would come. Sometimes he sent a note out to say that he was busy, or if he were involved in a bill--he was very dedicated; if he were floor managing a bill, you might as well forget it until after the Senate adjourned. But I think around 1968 he began to become more accessible in his office. His health was beginning to fail and he didn't get over to the floor quite as much. There were times when he was in the hospital for weeks at a stretch. He must have gone into the hospital three or four times during the two and a half years I covered him. So he became more accessible in his office. Powell would arrange to get us in, either individually, Art Pine or myself together or else individually. We saw him fairly frequently in his office, a couple times a month anyhow. On one occasion I wanted to do a magazine piece for *Atlanta Magazine* on the Senator and his feelings about the war and his recollections of generals and so forth. So I asked to have the interview and spent an entire hour at his office one busy day interviewing him. I'd just started learning how to use the tape recorder--it's the same kind you've got there--and when I came out of the office, Powell said, "That's the best interview I've ever heard on the subject with him. Let's play it back." And I pushed the button to play it back and nothing came out. (laughs) One hour of his time. So Powell went back into the office and told him what had happened. He came out and I thought that he would be enraged, and he wasn't. He was just petulant. He said, "There goes one hour down the river in a busy life." Well, he didn't have too much confidence to begin with in tape recorders and things of that sort. I don't think he ever dictated on an electronic device or anything. I believe his secretaries always took dictation directly. When I got the interview with him, I told him something like--Senator, modern science has provided us with, you know, the latest stuff here; (laughs) let's use it. And he laughed. He wasn't laughing after he found out that I didn't know how to work the tape recorder. So it took me about, gee, three months to get him to agree to another interview, but he did. I had to go down to Winder. I met him in his office at the Post Office down there, and I had the same tape recorder and he gave it a rather funny look. So I told him that I had done penance and I now knew how to work the tape recorder and I turned it on and turned it off so he could see that (laughs) I knew what to do with it. I'd brought him a little

gift. I was trying to find a fifth of Jack Daniels; I knew he loved Jack Daniels and I couldn't find a fifth in the store that I stopped in in Atlanta, so I brought him a pint. He flipped open the bag and looked at it and said, well, that penance was done, and that as a matter of fact he hadn't been sipping any whiskey recently and maybe if he had he wouldn't have been in the hospital just a few weeks back. But we went through the entire interview again. He was very gracious about it.

CATES: Do you still have the tape?

KELLEY: Yes, I do.

CATES: You might, if you don't mind, let us borrow the tape or in some way arrange to have that so we could put it as part of the oral history--

KELLEY: There ought to be some way to copy it--

CATES: Sure. Right, right.

KELLEY:--in case that-- Yeah, it starts off--I think there's, I had it turned off at the beginning of our conversation, but I think there's still one word of caution at the beginning as we start out about learning to use the tape recorder. (laughs)

CATES: And was this an hour interview or did it last longer than an hour, and how would you compare it with the first interview, quality-wise, depth-wise?

KELLEY: It was not quite as good. The Senator had been a little ill and weak, and this is another reason that it was a disaster that, you know, to take an hour of his time and energy at that point. It was nearly as good. He hit some different things than the first time, but there were a few holes where I thought I'd gotten better comments on people like [Douglas A.] MacArthur and things of that sort. He was very gracious after the interview. It was about a 45-minute interview. He asked me if I wanted to go to lunch at his house. I'd never been to his home, so I didn't know whether to politely refuse in order not to cause him any trouble or to accept; but my interest in the Senator and regard for him and so forth overcame any reticence I had and I said, "Yeah, I'd like to go to lunch." So he called up his maid and said, "Put a little more water in the soup; I have somebody else coming home." So I went home and had lunch with him and walked around the property with Procter Jones, who was down there with him at the time. He was just like that. He was pretty mad at me for a few weeks about that tape, and I had to coax him, but eventually he went to the trouble of going through the whole thing again. He was just very--and I think that maybe the WSB[-TV]--I never did see the WSB things on the Senator; I was out of town when they were shown up here. I think that maybe his making himself accessible for--did he do several hours with them?

CATES: Actually, it was a three-hour TV documentary and someone said it was something like forty hours, maybe, to get the three hours.

KELLEY: It must have been a long time. Well, I think this was typical of him in his last few years, that he was reaching out to the people of Georgia through the media. A lot of people said

that--well, he never had a press secretary until he'd been up here for about twenty-five years or something like that I believe--that he didn't know how to use the press, but I think he did. I think he talked to the people of Georgia a lot and towards the end he made himself more and more accessible for things like that.

CATES: Looking at some of the things that we discussed before the interview, would you comment about the argument that he had with President [Lyndon Baines] Johnson over the appointment of Alex Johnson as a federal judge?

KELLEY: [Alexander A.] Alex Lawrence.

CATES: I meant Alex Lawrence. I beg your pardon, yes.

KELLEY: Yes. Lawrence was a longtime friend of the Senator's and he appointed him--gee, when was it? Was it 1968 that he appointed him--

CATES: It was 1968, yes.

KELLEY: --or he nominated him; he suggested him for the nomination and the president nominated him and it went to the--let me see, I guess the president didn't nominate him. The president did not send the nomination right away to the Senate. He was holding up on it and one of the things that happened was that Judge Lawrence had a record, as did many Southerners I guess, of saying some derogatory things about integration a few years before and this was documented, as it should have been, by some reporters--[John Howard] Jack Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times*, Reece Cleghorn of the *Atlanta Journal*, and so forth. In the normal course of things, this would come out before the Judiciary Committee. It was not necessarily a problem that would sway Senator James Eastland. So had the nomination gone to the committee, it would have been routinely passed on to the Senate and it would have been no problem, but there would have been testimony in the committee. I believe that Reverend [Ralph David] Abernathy and some others wanted to come testify. So, this was during the time of Resurrection City, and the president held up on the nomination and the Senator and the president got rather bitter about it. Russell used to be invited down to the White House quite frequently for dinner and President Johnson--I don't know whether he wasn't asked, or whether he turned down the invitations, but he didn't show up much during those days. It was about that time that I was trying to write a piece for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution Magazine* on the relationship between the president and Senator Russell and [Wyatt Thomas] Tom Johnson [Jr.], the Assistant Press Secretary at the White House who's from Macon, Georgia, got me in to see the president in a private interview. I'd no sooner sat down than I got the typical Johnson treatment. I'd never been alone with him before, and because I guess I'd read so much, it didn't bother me, but he leaned forward and started bellowing, "What's all this stuff about Alex Lawrence in your papers," and "What are you guys up to? He's a fine man and Senator Russell's a fine man, and why are we having all this trouble with a nomination," and so forth. So I asked the president if he was going to send it on up. And he said, well, he didn't know whether he was or he wasn't. He said that Ramsey Clark had advised him that since Resurrection City was still down near the Lincoln Memorial and that the demonstrations were going on daily, that this would be a terrible time to send the nomination up. I think Ramsey Clark opposed the nomination. I believe he was using this as an arguing

point. The president said that if it were sent up, the hearing would probably be full of demonstrators and so forth. Later in private conversation with Russell, I told him what the president had told me, and the Senator said that he just couldn't understand Johnson anymore, that he'd had an argument with him not too long before this. Russell said that he'd asked Johnson why he didn't see that Hubert Gerold Rap Brown was indicted, federal indictment, after some of the things he'd done; and the president said that he couldn't, that Ramsey Clark opposed it, and that he wanted to leave it to the local people. Well, Russell knew that Clark was down on the Lawrence appointment and he knew some other things I suppose that didn't make him too friendly towards Clark; and Russell raged at the president, said, "Who is president? Are you president or is Ramsey Clark president?" And the Senator said that the president replied that he couldn't get rid of Ramsey Clark because of his, the president's, close relationship with the senior Clark, who had been a Supreme Court Justice--that it made it very difficult for him. Russell was in no mood to understand these sorts of things. He felt that Clark was running the president and that the president was holding up on an appointment that should have gone through, that Lawrence was well-qualified. So there was a real coolness at that time; of course, it had been building for years. The president's civil rights program never made Russell very happy. I don't know whether at the end, when the Senator died, whether or not the relationship had mellowed some or not. People like Powell Moore and [Charles E.] Charlie Campbell can probably tell you more, I know that at one time someone who was writing a book about Johnson came through and asked for an interview with Russell and Russell turned him down. It may just be that he didn't want to see the guy, or it may be that there was still some coolness in the relationship.

CATES: How did you find out about this, Wayne?

KELLEY: Uh, Powell.

CATES: Powell told you?

KELLEY: Powell Moore, yeah. Powell would be the best source on anything like that.

CATES: Did you happen to tape this interview with Johnson, or would he permit you to tape that interview?

KELLEY: No, no, and I never wrote about it either because, except for background purposes, because an interview with the president is on a deep background basis and not only can't you tape them, usually you can't even take notes. On this occasion, I did take a couple of notes, but I thought the president was going to leap down my throat a couple of times and I was not too alert to what I was jotting down. When I got through, I didn't have anything that meant anything. I think I wrote a few things that--the president said some very nice things about Russell. He said that Russell was one of the people who was most responsible for him being president, and so forth. I was able to lift some of these things on a background basis and say that the president had always felt that Russell was, you know, the one that had been the chief, his chief patron in the Senate, maybe the man most responsible for him becoming president and in that way--but no direct quotes.

CATES: I'm especially interested in what you're saying now, because there's a distinct possibility that I might be interviewing President Johnson. We have sent him a letter as you have received, and we have not heard from him yet. The letter just went out recently, though. Could you give me any tips as to how to conduct the interview and how to get the most from Johnson about Russell since you have been in a similar situation, although yours was a specific assignment concerning a specific appointment? Do you have any suggestions?

KELLEY: The appointment was actually just a peripheral thing.

CATES: Oh.

KELLEY: I actually went to talk to him about Russell.

CATES: I see.

KELLEY: The president, no sooner than I'd sat down, jumped on me. I had a half hour with him and the first fifteen minutes he raked me over the coals about our editorials about Lawrence. Uh, well, let me see. I think that the best person to work through is Tom Johnson, if you're not in touch with him. He has charge of the president's staff now.

CATES: Oh, he does?

KELLEY: I think Tom is the person most likely to interest the president in doing such an interview, if the president can be convinced. I would start out by getting--before any interview with the president; I would talk to Tom Johnson about the president's relationship with Russell. Tom sat in on almost every--for the last three years of President Johnson's administration, I think Tom sat in on almost every meeting from Security Council through even little press things like mine. He must have been present a lot when Russell was over at the White House. So I would think that Tom would be able to give you a very good rundown on what the president knows. Then you can just, you know, put it in specific questions.

CATES: Actually he would be a good person to interview, too--Tom Johnson.

KELLEY: Oh yes, yes, definitely.

CATES: Someone had suggested that what I might do is to get someone up here to do a little research and maybe--I certainly don't want to put you on the spot, but you say you're the research director for *Congressional Quarterly*. Whoever made this suggestion said that if someone could do a research and show the bills over the years that Johnson and Russell worked on together, going way back and up to the time he became vice-president of the Senate, vice-president of the United States but chief presiding officer of the Senate, and then get Johnson to talk about these bills that they worked on together. That would be one aspect of an interview with Johnson, what do you think of that?

KELLEY: Hmmm.

CATES: Because they worked very closely together, I understand, especially in the earlier years in the Senate. For example, you know, well know that Russell was the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and Johnson was the subcommittee chairman on preparedness of the armed forces.

KELLEY: Yeah, there may be some bills along those lines that would be of interest, but I'm afraid that the weight of anything like that would be once Johnson became Majority Leader, he began to get more of a national image. Gee, when did he become Majority Leader?

CATES: It was in the fifties I think.

KELLEY: 1955, something like that. Well, in the latter fifties Johnson was--you'd probably find that Johnson and Russell would be adversaries on a lot of points of view and certainly in the sixties they were so.

CATES: Well, I was thinking of the days before that, you know.

KELLEY: There might be something there. I'll take a look and see if-- I'll take a few samples and see if there's anything worth, you know, exploring.

CATES: Okay, good. Good. You might, if you will, Wayne, talk about the decision of LBJ not to run and Russell's reaction to that, or any observations you might want to make concerning Russell and this decision by the president.

KELLEY: The night of the telecast when the president announced that he wasn't going to run, it came as a big surprise, of course, although some Washington correspondents who felt they were most appreciative predicted that he wouldn't. I think Jim Pearson always predicted that, said he predicted that he wouldn't run again. But I got ahold of Tom Johnson either late that night or early the next morning--it may have been late that night- and talked to him a little bit about the announcement. Tom said, I believe, at that time that he didn't know that the president was going to say that, that it was not inserted in the speech, that only Lady Bird [Claudia Alta Taylor Johnson] and the president knew, and maybe even Lady Bird didn't know until he said it, that he was going to deliver it, although he had a few lines prepared. I don't think that until just before the speech that Tom or some of the other staff aides knew it. The next day I got ahold of Russell as early in the morning as I could I came over here and I believe this was an occasion on which he was having breakfast not too far from where I was sitting down in the Senate, Senators' dining room, and he was sitting alone. I'd never tried to get him; a couple of times during emergency situations I would try to get him; I was almost always successful. It surprised me. But in this case, he was sitting alone, having his breakfast, and I walked up and expected to be turned away with angry words, but he said, "Sit down." So I sat down and we talked about it a little bit. As I recall, the Senator didn't have any advance word that this was going to happen and I think he was surprised, but he didn't seem to be upset. Maybe some of the Alex Lawrence and civil rights things had taken, would take the edge off the disappointment, but he indicated that he had not known about it. I'd have to go back and read what I, the slips on what I wrote at that time, but I think that's about the substance of it. It didn't make a very good story here because Russell wasn't warned in advance. He wasn't--he was very laudatory about the president. I'm sure they had a



warm relationship even though they argued a lot. It cooled from time to time. But I don't think that--I don't recall that there was too much said at that point.

CATES: You mentioned just then that you were surprised with the ease with which you could see the Senator in an emergency situation. Could you recall some of the other emergencies in which you were able to see the Senator?

KELLEY: Well, once just before the 1968 election. Charles, Charlie Pou, who is political editor of the Atlanta Journal, called me and said that he'd just gotten a tip. He had talked to--I think it was [Howard Hollis] Bo Callaway in Georgia, and the substance of the background that he got was that [Richard Milhous] Nixon would probably get a kind word from Russell at a speech or an interview, that it would come out in some way--this was just, I believe, a couple weeks before the election, very close--and that Russell, who was then at Winder, in Georgia, was going to say something that would indicate that he would be happy if Nixon won, although he wouldn't vote the party. So Charlie was checking different sources. He had excellent sources in Georgia and he was checking various people and, at one point, felt that he was getting enough solid information to maybe even write a speculative piece saying that Russell could be expected, or some people expected Russell would do this. Of course, Charlie wanted to get ahold of Russell. So I called from Washington to Winder and I was told what the number was--it's a listed number down there, anyhow--and his sister came on the phone. As I'd said earlier, the Senator very seldom answered the phone or liked to talk on it, particularly with newsmen; I don't know how he was with other people. She said he wasn't available and I said, well, if he's there, would you tell him that there's a story, a possible story coming that he may endorse Nixon. There was a little pause and in a couple of seconds the Senator came on and he said, "That's ridiculous, Kelley!" (laughs) And I said, "Well, I know it may be, but it may get printed." And he said, "Well, I don't even want to dignify that with an answer." So I said, "Well, then it's untrue." And he said, "Well, of course, it's untrue, but I don't even want to discuss it! It's so outrageous!" After a little cajoling and so forth I finally got him to agree that I could say "according to reliable sources." He was so mad that he wouldn't allow a direct quote, but finally, it was all right if I said that a source close to the Senator had flatly denied that it would happen. So I phoned that back to Charlie, and of course, that changed the entire thing. Russell was not a man who was devious in those ways. If he was going to do it and didn't want us to know, he wouldn't say anything about it, but when he said flat out and out it was not going to happen, that killed it for us. So I was able to phone Charlie back and whatever prospects there might have been for that story getting in the paper were killed then. That was one of those situations where I felt, as Washington correspondent, if I didn't get ahold of the Senator the *Atlanta Journal* could maybe put out either a great story saying he's going to do it or else be in error. It was one of those fortunate occasions when I was able to get ahold of him. Another one was right after the *Pueblo* was captured. I was standing in my office down at the National Press Building and the story was coming over the ticker. It listed crewmen and one of them was a Georgia boy. So I knew right away that--first of all Russell was head of the Armed Services Committee and it was a Georgian on the ship, and this was something that my editors would be down my back for if I didn't get to him. So I called Powell Moore and told him that I needed to talk to the Senator and he said, "Well, he's about to leave the office. He'll be here for just thirty minutes." This was another occasion when I was able to catch him at his office. So he said, "If you get down here, I'll do my best to get you in." As it turned out, the Senator was waiting in his office, didn't leave right away. I left the National Press

Building, which is, gee, I guess at least a mile from here, a good twenty-minute walk, and couldn't get a cab. You know how that is; it was about 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon. So I started a dogtrot down Pennsylvania Avenue. I jogged; I was in terrible shape (laughs) and I jogged the entire way. It took me about twelve minutes, I suppose, and I ran breathless into the Senator's office. So Powell said, "He'll see you," and opened the door. And the Senator said, "Pine has just been here and I told him everything I know," in a sort of a testy voice. Russell had good reason to be grumpy. He had a lot of demands on his time and here, you know, he could have told us the same thing at the same time and here I come in just after he's given the other interview. But with a little wheedling he settled back in his office and started answering my questions. I told him that maybe I had a couple questions that weren't asked by the other reporter. So it ended up I think we spent about half an hour there, and Powell, as usual, was beginning to get nervous cause the Senator just wouldn't stop once he got started. We talked about the capture and Russell said that he felt there were good prospects for getting the ship back. He didn't say why. He went off the record and we talked for a little while about the stupidity of the situation, which made him pretty livid, and he said that at first it was supposed to be--what was it, a weather ship, or just a, I don't know, something like that. He said that it wasn't, that there was a lot of equipment on there that the Koreans now had and he was pretty damn mad about that. So there was another occasion when I was able to get to him in a time when things were-- One other time was arranged for me by Powell; and it was like getting to the Senator, but it wasn't. Dwight David Eisenhower was in the hospital and Eisenhower was obviously getting worse and worse. I needed a comment from the Senator, who had, of course, been one of the close advisors to Eisenhower on military affairs during the time Eisenhower was president, and so forth. So I asked Powell if he could get me a little advanced, a little advance comment. I could use it from wherever I was in town; I could just phone it into the paper. Powell swore me to secrecy and finally got it and gave it to me, and I had to--I never told anyone about it because, well, for several reasons. First of all, I wouldn't want to get my relationship with Powell fouled up, and also because the Senator had a real thing about situations like this where--I think that an impending death made him feel very sad and he just didn't want to even consider the possibility; he didn't want to think about it. When he was actually running the Appropriations Committee and the then-chairman, gee, his name escapes - my mind for the moment, the oldest senator around from Arizona--

CATES: Carl Hayden?

KELLEY: Hayden, yeah. Hayden just looked like he was walking death. He had to be brought in. I guess Senator Hayden's still alive though.

CATES: I hope to interview him, too.

KELLEY: (laughs) Some of them go on forever and ever; it's too bad Russell didn't. But Hayden--you could expect him to keel over any second the way he looked. He had to be helped into the Senate chambers at times. But when there was speculation that Hayden would retire, Russell would never talk about it. The prospect that a man would no longer be able to be in the Senate, or that he might die, was not one which he cared to contemplate. So it was very difficult for me to get this statement on Eisenhower, but it was the usual laudatory statement and I stuck it in my pocket. The last week that I was with the Atlanta Journal, I was breaking in my replacement who had been there for a couple months and we went to a last lunch, and while I

was at lunch Eisenhower died at 1:15 p.m. So the paper was frantically looking for me and it was not until I got back to the office at 2:00 something that I found out that had happened. It did help me as it turned out, because I just sat down at our teletype and typed out Russell's statement. I guess it got in the last editions. But that was another occasion of him making himself available, in a way, at a time when I needed to get to him. He was very good about that. I found him to be a very, very cooperative person. As I say, the people who covered him earlier I think found him to be less that way. I think in the last years, declining health, maybe not quite as active in some things, the frequent visits to the hospital made it easier to have, sort of a, you know, a fireside relationship with him. I don't mean to say that we were in constant contact, far from that. I would see Russell once or twice a week. Sometimes it would be just five minutes or three minutes to say, "What do you think about such and such," and he would have nothing to say or he wouldn't want to talk about it, and that would be it. I was able to get to him for these longer interviews and it--Pine and I, I guess, having been interested in him during these years, these two and a half years, had come to feel unobjectively fond of him, but both of us were removed from the Atlanta newspapers. Art went to the *Baltimore Sun* and I went to *Congressional Quarterly*, and the year or so after we left we still stayed up with Russell and talked with his staff and so forth. He'd been in the hospital which made us both feel bad, so we had asked Powell to see if we could get together with the Senator on Saturday. He frequently came to the office on Saturday and at lunchtime would go to Hogates or someplace and drink a beer and have lunch. Powell was very close to setting this up for us one day when--he, I think he actually said that a certain weekend would probably be a good one and we'd all agreed, Art and I had and Powell was going to see if the Senator would like to do it that weekend. Then Powell called back and said--normally, he wouldn't say anything about it, but he wanted me to know that we were going to have to cancel, because the Senator had gone in the hospital. The Senator never came out again, so-- I never thought I would see the time when he wouldn't come out again because he went in so many times and we had to chronicle it every time he went in. Of course it was, you know, of great interest to people in Georgia, his health and so forth. So we would have to be very alert about--his office would never announce it. Russell didn't like that. So Powell was under instructions to answer truthfully if asked, but if not asked, generally, he didn't say much of anything. I think in the latter illnesses he began to, but in 1967 or 1968 when the Senator went in, if you didn't see him for a couple days, you'd better check.

CATES: Wayne, a friend of Senator Russell told me this week that on occasion the Senator would go to the hospital at night and spend the night in the hospital and be in his office the next day. Were you aware of that as a reporter?

KELLEY: Uh hum.

CATES: You were aware of that?

KELLEY: Yeah.

CATES: Did you ever report that in your news stories?

KELLEY: I think that it found its way into a couple of paragraphs. He was in once and he came out and told us that he was feeling better but that he was going to be sort of an outpatient. I

believe that in the report about him leaving the hospital that we did say that he would continue to stay there nights, but we never followed it up in any particular way as long as we saw him, you know, in the daytime, and that he seemed to be healthy and so forth. It just seemed normal to us that he would go back to the hospital. It didn't seem like a big news angle in other words. He's, as you know, a bachelor and lived alone in an apartment down at Foggy Bottom. Having no one to take care of him, it seemed sort of logical that since he could go to the hospital that he would, and so that there just didn't seem to be that much news in it.

CATES: Well, you've cited several instances where he gave you off-the- cuff confidential information. Do you recall any other instances?

KELLEY: Hmmm. No, not--there were many conversations involving personalities and people that we would go off the record and talk about how Lester [Maddox] was doing as governor or something like that, but they were just gossip and nothing that really stuck in my mind as being particularly important. The one or two things that do were his comments on Ramsey Clark's hold, apparent hold on the president and his angry comments to the president about Clark running the country instead of the president. Gee, something might come to me over a period of time, but mostly it was general political background, his feelings about people, his feelings about who was doing a good job and who wasn't, a couple of comments on congressmen. I remember there was a Georgia congressman once who had said something that made Russell mad and Russell indicated that the fellow was rather shallow in an off-the-record comment. (laughs) That sort of stuff, but nothing that would, you know--

CATES: We only have a few minutes before the next interview. I am going to be interviewing eventually Lester Maddox. Would you mind, if you could recall what he said about Lester Maddox so we could document that? We can put a time seal on this, if you like.

KELLEY: Yeah. No, I just--frankly, I don't recall; I think that he said that he thought Lester was going to have a big political impact down there. I know that he used to get a laugh out of some of the things that Lester did from time to time, Lester being a great one for stealing headlines with his antics and so forth. I can tell you what [James Philander] Phil Campbell once said about Lester; I remember when Lester held up the Phil Campbell sweetheart bill. I think that his comments--I can't remember any specific ones--were just light ones about-- He never thought Lester was driving the state to rack and ruin or anything of that sort.

CATES: In other words, he thought that he was making a pretty good governor; I mean as far as governing the state. Well, I don't want to put words into your mouth. Would you elaborate on that? You said that he did not believe that he was running the state to rack and ruin.

KELLEY: Yeah, I think that he found Lester a source of humor in some ways, but that he didn't feel that--some people felt Lester would ruin the state. I don't think necessarily that he felt Lester was doing a good job. I think that he may have felt that the state would survive almost any governor and--I really don't know. I think that probably Charlie Campbell and some of those people could tell you, and Proctor probably could tell you more. Are you talking to Charlie and Proctor?

CATES: I've already talked to Proctor Jones and got five hours, I believe, of him on tape, but I don't think we mentioned Lester Maddox, but we're going to get back together again. Before leaving, do you think there's anything else that you need to tell us about your association, or any of the things that maybe you have already mentioned like the *Pueblo* incident, or some of these other things that you would like to briefly elaborate on? If not, anything that you might want to say about Russell?

KELLEY: At the moment, I can't think of anything to elaborate on. I think that in terms of his impact on the U.S. Senate that there's going to be more of a change as a result of Russell's death than most newsmen in Washington, who see things in their daily stories in terms of one quick development, and so forth-- I think that Russell's, the lack of a Russell to lead Southern senators is gradually going to erode that bloc in the Senate. Russell was the kind of person who through force of personality and integrity--he believed in what he said--and his skill in parliamentary debate, and so forth, was a respected person. He husbanded his power well. I don't think he ever abused it against anyone. [William Horace] Bill Darden would be good to talk to on this. Bill was with him on the Armed Services Committee, of course, and he has told me that Russell would get mad sometimes at some of the people that he was calling up for testimony, and so forth, but he would never use his great power against them. Sometimes he might be tempted, but he never did use it that way. I don't think he ever used it against anybody, any other fellow senators, although he had tremendous power. Young senators coming in would--all Democrats would always pay a courtesy call to Russell if they needed his help to get committee assignments. I don't think that Russell was ever petty in dealing with these people. He had their trust and he used his power skillfully. I think that there just isn't another Russell on the horizon. Stennis, of course, is a very honorable and intelligent man, but he just doesn't have the breadth of a Russell I don't think. Of course, you go below that, it's hard to find a real Southern leader in the Senate. As I was talking, I was thinking about one other thing--how hard it was to get to see Russell in my early months up here when I was having more difficulty than I did later on. I once came into his office and they said that he may see you in a couple of minutes, but he's got other people waiting and they've been here for hours. I looked around the corner and there was Arthur Goldberg sitting on a couch, and there was a three-star general sitting on another couch, and I just walked out. I decided that--but that was how Russell's day went, you know. Arthur Goldberg could be cooling his heels for hours out there. I was very appreciative to be able to see as much of him as I did. If I think of anything else, I'll let you know.

CATES: Okay. Wayne, as I previously mentioned, we would certainly appreciate it if we could borrow the tape, or if you didn't want the tape out of your possession, if you could have a tape made of it and send it to me, we would be glad to reimburse you that--

KELLEY: Oh, sure. I'd be glad to do that.

CATES: --for that forty-five minute taped interview down in Winder with the Senator. Then, if you could have your staff to do any research for us, a correlation or showing how Johnson and Russell worked together especially in their earlier days in the Senate because someone indicated that this might be a real starting point if I am able to interview Johnson.

KELLEY: Uh hum.

CATES: Okay, well thank you very much for your time. I appreciate your coming out on a Saturday morning.

KELLEY: Right. Uh huh. It's a pleasure.

*Richard B. Powell*  
Library for Political Research and Studies