CATES: This is Hugh Cates, March 25, 1971. I'm in the office of D.W. Brooks, who is chairman of the board of the Gold Kist Company, formerly the Cotton Producers Association and a longtime friend of the late Senator Russell. Mr. Brooks, what do you recall about the University of Georgia student days, you in the school of agriculture and Dick Russell as a senior law student?

BROOKS: When I entered the University of Georgia as a freshman, I soon began to hear of Dick Russell as one of the great students on the campus. As I recall, he had already finished the university and was in law school at that time, and he'd made such an impression among the student body and been such an effective leader that he was already considered the leader on the university campus at that time. He, being in law school and I as a freshman, naturally, (laughs) I did not have too much contact with the leader of the campus. I did meet him and had a chance to visit with him some, but not as a close personal friend at that time. But he was a great leader and all of us looked to him for leadership on the university campus.

CATES: You mentioned the fact several times that he was a leader. Exactly what exemplified his leadership at that time?

BROOKS: Well, as I recall, he was a political leader on the campus as well as a natural leader of people. He apparently had some political ability, even on the university campus. You see, it's been said here in Georgia that lots of the political leaders of this state have gotten their early training on the campus at the University of Georgia, because we always had plenty of politics going on the campus. So, Dick Russell was the political leader at the time that I went to the university as a freshman.

CATES: What was the enrollment about that time, do you recall, at the university?

BROOKS: Well, it was quite small at that time. I don't recall exactly, but six or eight hundred students probably.

CATES: Do you recall any humorous situations that might have involved Senator Russell at that time?

BROOKS: I do not at that time. That was a little early, and unfortunately, it's been a few years ago since this happened.

CATES: Do you recall any personal conversations that you might have had with him, either at the university or maybe later when Russell became involved in the legislature of Georgia, when he became Speaker of the House?
BROOKS: Well, I remember seeing Senator Russell a few times during that period, but I was not particularly interested in politics and I only visited with him as (on) a personal basis, having known him at the university.

So, consequently, I did not have too much contact with him while he was in the House, or even later as governor, except on a personal basis.

CATES: It might be well at this time if you would, Mr. Brooks, to state what you were doing about the time that Russell was in the Georgia legislature. I believe you were teaching at the University of Georgia.

BROOKS: Well, I first was teaching at the university and then, later I left the university and organized Cotton Producers Association in 1933. You see, the depression had come along and we had great suffering particularly in agriculture, where the per capita income of farmers had gone to $72 for a year's work. Senator Russell, of course, was a great political leader even that early, and all of us who were interested in agriculture were trying to find ways and means of helping to create a better situation for farmers. So, during that period, I had a chance to visit with Senator Russell a few times, but not from the viewpoint of doing too much about agriculture, because it was becoming a federal problem instead of a state problem because it was widespread. We were considered the economic problem number one of the nation and there was lots of publicity to that effect because of our extremely low income here in Georgia, particularly, and in some of the other southeastern states.

CATES: What advice did Russell give to you about starting the Cotton Producers Association?

BROOKS: Well, (laughs) he gave me some advice after I started it. I felt that I could do more for farmers by leaving the university and starting Cotton Producers Association than I could do by staying at the university as a professor. I felt that we had had some real scientific breakthroughs in agriculture and that they would not be any good unless they were really made available to farmers and I felt by starting Cotton Producers, I could set up a business institution that could make these scientific breakthroughs actually available to farmers, where they could immediately put them into effect. Unfortunately, every effort that farmers had made prior to that time to put any kind of business institution together had failed, in dismal failure, and instead of helping they had had tremendous losses. Consequently, I knew that, very forcibly, because a great many farmers had told me that with a great deal of feeling, and I realized that we had great problems and difficulties in doing it. After I determined that we were going to try to do it, and I felt that with the know-how that we had at that time in agriculture that we had a chance to succeed, I felt it was urgent that I talk with Senator (Herman Eugene) Talmadge and Senator, I mean Senator Russell and Senator (Walter F.) George about this matter. So, I asked for a meeting with Senator Russell and Senator George, in which I spent some two or three hours explaining what I had in mind. They, of course, both said to me in no uncertain terms that every effort that had ever been tried before had failed; instead of it being helpful to farmers, it had really penalized them, because they had lost whatever funds had gone into the institution. I explained that I felt with the present scientific breakthroughs that we had while I was teaching at the university that I could take those and make a business success and a great financial success
for farmers with such an institution, that I could move farmers ahead much faster economically this way than I could continuing on the faculty at the university. They were both very sympathetic, both Senator George and Senator Russell, and they said they were very hopeful that I could do what I hoped to do. I am sure they had some reservations and they did not express them to me in any violent way, by any means; they just said they hoped that I could do what I was saying that I thought I could do. So, I was really given encouragement by both Senator Russell and Senator George to go ahead, but I think probably they both had their fingers crossed to some extent as to whether it would actually work or not.

CATES: Was Russell on the agriculture committee at that time?

BROOKS: Yes, when Senator Russell went to Washington, he was placed on the agriculture committee and later became chairman of the Appropriations Committee for agriculture. I had, of course, a number of experiences with him. I began to work very closely with him, and in fact, after this first meeting with Senator Russell and Senator George, Senator Russell in effect cemented the early friendship that we had starting back at the university and did everything he could to make me feel like he wanted to be helpful, not just to me personally, but to the things that I was trying to do, that is, to get the farmers off of the economic bottom that we were on. He made me know that he would welcome my working with him; in fact, he immediately began to call me and talk with me about farm problems and about appropriations, and I had some rather unusual experiences with him in that, in the early days, when things were really desperate.

For example, Roosevelt of course was trying to get the economy going and he was probably rather liberal in his viewpoint of moving it. Senator Russell was also very liberal in his viewpoint in the great need that we had to get out of the depression and to stop some of the hunger and nakedness that we had, particularly in this part of the country. It was finally decided to appropriate six hundred million dollars to what we call parity payments in order to adjust the production of many crops and even livestock. The problem was the proper handling of these funds. Well, I at that time felt that I had to check every bill and so I went to Washington, and the bill had already passed through the House, for the six hundred million appropriations. So I went to the Department of Agriculture in order to get the figures to see how we would come out in the southeast. When I did so, I found a closed door. They had some of these very complex formulas like Pi equals Z and Z equals 2, and so forth and so on, and you couldn't read the dollars and cents. I soon realized that it was a deliberate effort to confuse what the payments would be and to what area. Since we were the economic problem number one of the nation, I felt that certainly we were entitled to our fair share, because we had the greatest need, and actually the South had not fully recovered even then from some of the effects of the war. We did not have a (George C.) Marshall Plan to get us back on our feet, and so we'd had a long siege of depressed situations in the South, particularly in agriculture. Well, when I could not get the answers, I went to Senator Russell, who always was the person that I depended on to help me and to help the farmers. And I explained to him what happened. He immediately went to Senator (John Hollis) Bankhead (II), who was chairman of the agriculture committee, and explained this to Senator Bankhead and they decided to hold up the entire appropriation for the Department of Agriculture until this could be determined. You can readily realize when this happened it blew the roof off (laughs) in Washington, because it not only held up this particular appropriation, but it held up the entire appropriation for the Department of Agriculture. Consequently, Secretary (Henry A.) Wallace, who was the Secretary of Agriculture at that time, who later became vice president for one term,
became very much upset. He found out through certain sources that I was involved in this matter, and he called Oscar Johnson, who was president of this large delta pine land farm—which was a tremendous cotton farm owned by British interests, but operated by Oscar Johnson in Mississippi—and asked Oscar to come up there immediately to help him meet this crisis. Well, fortunately, I knew Oscar well, personally, and he knew me and when the Secretary called him, he called me and told me what had happened and that he was flying to Washington and wanted to see me. When he reached Washington he came to my room at the hotel and I explained to him exactly what had happened, that all I was trying to find out was what the facts were and that my guess was that the secretary didn't know any more than I did and that this was one of these shufflings that had gone on among certain groups to continue to penalize the South and pour the money into other areas where it might be more political, palatable. Oscar was very keen, a very brilliant person, and so he immediately went over to see the secretary; and in his very keen way, he told the secretary of our conversation and he said that D.W. is not mad; you're the one who's mad at he (sic) and Senator Russell and Senator Bankhead. They're not mad; they just want some figures. And he said, I'm confident if you will just show the dollars and cents here to me, I can go back and explain it to all three of them without any trouble and we can get the bill passed. And he said that, as I had suspected, the secretary was just as blank as a sheet of paper that he knew absolutely nothing about how the distribution was to be made. Then, Mr. Johnson suggested that he bring the man in and get the figures. Well, when he brought the man in who was supposed to be handling them, he was stalling and said that, of course, he did not have any such figures. Then the secretary became enraged and said, how long would it take to get them? Well, it will probably take several weeks. He said, then I will just stop all the salaries of everybody in the Department of Agriculture for several weeks, until I get these figures. Well, that of course did it and the next day we had the figures. When we got the figures it upset the secretary because we were being cheated out of some sixty or seventy million dollars to which we were entitled here in the cotton South, and he immediately recognized that and was rather apologetic, really, of the fact that he'd been so embittered with what we had done about stopping the appropriation to the Department of Agriculture. So, when that was adjusted I immediately went back to Senator Russell and he to Senator Bankhead—and I talked with Senator Bankhead also several times—and we put the bill through, but it made a tremendous difference. Except for the help of Senator Russell, the farmers of the South would have been cheated out of sixty or seventy million dollars, in that one instance. There are many more through all the years that I can tell you about, but that was in the early days of the Depression, when we were literally starving to death and when we desperately needed every penny we could get at that time.

Now, I might comment at this time that Senator Bankhead—in talking with him about this, Senator Bankhead not only said at that time, but many times thereafter, he said that because he was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee that, Senate agriculture committee, that he was given credit in all the newspapers and all the releases for all of the things that was done for agriculture, but actually the person who did all the work and who did the real digging in and getting the facts and doing the job was Senator Russell. He said to me—many times, he said, "You people in agriculture, you people in Georgia do not yet appreciate the most able man that we have on the Senate agriculture committee and he is the person who has the time and the ability and is willing to spend the time to dig in to get all the facts and figures. Consequently, when he gets in the committee, he dominates the committee." He said, "I do not dominate it; he dominates it, because he's the man who has the knowledge and he comes in with it to the
committee and he dominates the committee." "So," he says, "I get all the publicity and all the credit and Senator Russell does all the work and gets the job done, and you need to know that."

CATES: Mr. Brooks, can you think of any other incident, maybe not as spectacular as the one that you just recounted, that happened in the early days, in the early 1930s when he was on the agriculture committee?

BROOKS: Well, each time that the question of a new farm bill came up, Senator Russell was kind enough to ask me to come and visit with him and go over the bills. At that time, we had no general farm organization in Georgia and he felt that he had to rely on my technical knowledge and training in agriculture and he was kind enough to have confidence, not only in my training but also in my honesty, that I would not mislead him, that I would put it on the line as it was. So, every bill—I would have to go back and review—but every bill—For example, in 1938, we had a bill that was really the foundation of the agriculture bill in this country, was passed. Senator Russell was the leader in passing that bill and I could recall as we move along through the years that he was the person who was there and did the work. Now, you see, you have to understand this, that Senator Russell was a real student of government. He was a real student of agriculture, and later as chairman of the Armed Services Committee—He was single and he did not have the responsibility of a family; he did not have to go home at a certain time and what he did was just study. He dug it out. Many congressmen and senators have said to me through the years that the greatest thing that happened to them was to be on a conference committee between the Senate and the House where Senator Russell was the leader from the Senate; and they said the knowledge that he had, that he brought into the hearings always dominated it, because he was by far the most knowledgeable person. He had done the greatest amount of research and work on the bill and consequently, he had the most of it and his judgment was good and he was absolutely honest. In that way, he swayed not only the senators, but in these conference committees between the House and the Senate he had powerful influence on the decision of these committees, joint committees between the House and the Senate. So I think when all the truth is known about his work, it'll be determined that he influenced more people in both houses of Congress than any person we've had in this century.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, how did Russell look upon research in agriculture?

BROOKS: Senator Russell felt that research was the answer to many of our problems and he was intensely interested in research from the beginning, so much so that every time we got into an appropriation problem in agriculture, he realized the necessity of immediate funds at times, but he always looked to the future. And he said, "The way you cure something for the future is to have scientific research." Of course, my background of training was in that field, having been a professor in the university where we were doing tremendous agriculture research. Naturally, I was intensely interested and I was always delighted to see his intense interest in this, because I, too, felt that gave us some answers down the road and that we could not do everything immediately, that we had to cure not only some of the immediate problems but we had to look down the future and cure some of the future problems. So, he was always intensely interested in appropriations for research, and I could always depend on him. If we desperately needed some money for research, then I could go up and plead my case and make my case with him. I was reasonably confident we was going to get the money, because he had the ability to sell the
senators and in the case of the committees--when the House committees and Senate committees--he was able to sell them on doing the job. As you know, he brought tremendous research money to agriculture, and even in Georgia we have a research center down at Dawson (Georgia) on peanuts that he personally brought, and really on his own. Then, the great research center that we have now over at Athens (Georgia)--I went over with him when this was dedicated last year and it was a great experience for all of us in agriculture. Of course, it was a great experience for Senator Russell, as he was able to bring that to this state. So that was one of his really great desires--to see that agriculture was properly funded for research.

CATES: Much has been said about Russell's frugality. Would you mind commenting about this characteristic?

BROOKS: Well, he was in many ways one of the most frugal men that I ever knew. Now he just didn't waste any of his money. He never tried to go out and make a lots of money on the outside; he was too busy, as a United States Senator and he did not take the time to do that. But he believed in saving his own money out of a meager salary and he believed in saving the government's money. Consequently, that's one thing I learned very early in life in working with Senator Russell--that if you wanted any money you sure better prove your case and prove it fully and completely, that he was not going to have any boon-doggling in government funds, and that you had to prove that those funds were going to be effective and they were going to be spent properly. So, he was a very frugal man in every respect. Now, later on maybe we'll comment about some of his political campaigns.

CATES: Well, let's do that as far as his contributions ran.

BROOKS: Well, we might go ahead and do that now. For example, as you well know, everybody who is in politics, they now have to have money in which to run on. Now, Senator Russell had to have some funds to run on at times and at times he thought he was going to have strong opposition that didn't develop thankfully; but funds had to be made available and he had to spend some funds in order to have his campaign--fixed. Well, all of us have had to contribute personally to political campaigns and every person that I've ever known in public life has always been able to spend every dime that you've ever been able to give them for political campaigns, but Senator Russell was a different person. He was so frugal with not only his own money, but with your money, and that's very unusual for a person in public life, because the easiest thing to do is be free with somebody else's money. Consequently, his frugality followed right on through into even his personal political career. For example, I've sent him funds and many of my friends sent him funds. The minute he felt that he had the political situation in hand, he would stop spending that money; and then as soon as the campaign was over, he'd sit down and give you full accounting of every penny that was spent and then whatever was left, he'd mail you a check for it. Now, I'm forty-nine and holding now and been in lots of political campaigns and made contributions to lots of people in public life, whom I've felt were serving the public well and we need to hold them, but never before or since have I ever had one penny returned from any person in public life except Senator Russell. Now that did two things: that shows first how careful he is with expenditures of other people's money; and second, his integrity, that he was just not going to be careless with your money. He was going to use only that which he felt was absolutely
necessary; and to me, that further indicates the kind of morality that he had and the kind of moral life that he lived, which is rather unusual in public life as well as other kinds of life.

CATES: You mentioned his integrity; would you mind commenting about these other personality traits that relate to Russell, sincerity and dedication?

BROOKS: Well, I've had the privilege of seeing so-called greatness in public life for a long time. I have been advisor, agricultural advisor to four presidents. I have had the privilege of sitting behind closed doors with these presidents and see them operate them as they are, not as the public image sometimes held them. They were great and fine and wonderful people. It was a great privilege to serve with them behind closed doors and also with lots of people whom they had brought in as advisors to them, many of them who were very able and wonderful people; but I can say very frankly that having known them reasonably well and having known Senator Russell that Senator Russell is one of the great men and probably the greatest man of this century that we've had in public life. As many people know in Washington, and I have been told many times by congressmen and senators, if we had had another system of electing the president, Senator Russell would have been president many, many years ago. For example, if the congressmen and senators were allowed to elect the president, he would have been elected president many, many years ago, because he was by far the most dedicated, the most sincere, the hardest working person in Washington. There's no one, president or otherwise, who worked as diligently and with as great a dedication as Senator Russell did for the people of this nation. So, I would say that nobody surpassed him—and as far as I know, and I have had the rather unusual privilege of working, as I said, behind closed doors with four presidents—and no one that I know has had the dedication that he's had to his work. Now, as I said earlier, he had a rather favorable situation in that he was a bachelor; he did not have a family, but I've known lots of bachelors who frittered their lives away. He was sort of like St. Paul; he did the good things and he lived the productive life and he made the personal sacrifice in order to do this, because a person has to give up a lot in life and he has to make a great sacrifice to live the type of life that Senator Russell lived as the greatest senator of this century in Washington.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, you were very close to Senator Russell, obviously; did he ever discuss with you why he never married?

BROOKS: No, (laughs) he never did. I think that his mother, you know, was very close to him, and when he became governor that was a big discussion of who was going to be the First Lady. He always said his mother would work with him, be with him. In all my discussion with him—was that apparently his mother had such a great impact on his life that even though he felt that maybe he had a great loss in not marrying and not having a family, that to some extent the greatness of his mother compensated in his life some for that loss.

CATES: Do you know of any engagements or near engagements as far as he was concerned?

BROOKS: No, I do not. He used to have dates with girls and he would mention it sometimes, and at times I was with him when he had dates, or I would see him at dinners or something of that kind. He never did say to me that he was seriously thinking about marrying that particular girl. So, as far as I know, he did not ever actually plan to marry; but he might have, because very
often we were talking agriculture and other things rather than items of that kind, although at times we did get into some of his personal life.

CATES: Would you mind commenting, Mr. Brooks, about Russell's association with the four presidents that you were advisor to?

BROOKS: The presidents recognized that Senator Russell had the kind of ability that I have been talking about, as well as dedication. Consequently, they realized he was by far the most powerful person in the Congress. Consequently, they depended on him; every president depended on him for advice and help, and he was always constantly called to the White House for conferences. If there was ever any crisis in this nation, you could depend on it that Senator Russell was called to the White House for his opinions and his judgment as to what should be done. So, even the presidents looked up to him and not down to him, and they realized that we had real greatness there and they realized that if he had been born in the Midwest or some Northern state, that he would have been president long before they were president, because he had that kind of ability.

CATES: I would like to throw this out at this time. I have interviewed a person that I hold in high esteem, who knew Senator Russell, and he said in his opinion that he didn't believe Russell would have ever become president regardless of where he was born, because Russell was basically a conservative and that the country would not elect a conservative president. Would you comment on that?

BROOKS: Well, I don't agree with that at all. I think that's in my opinion, a misjudgment of the fact as it is. Senator Russell was not a conservative in many respects. In the early days of his serving in the Senate, he was considered quite a liberal; and I think it was only in later life that he was considered the ultimate conservative and that was primarily due to his stand with reference to civil rights, which very few people ever understood really--his feelings or emotions in that case. He did not feel as the public thought he felt with reference to civil rights. He was a liberal in every other respect and I think that if he had actually run for president from another area that that part of his life would have been properly explained and he would have gotten a lots of votes from the minority groups, because he was not opposed to minority groups at all. He had a great human feeling that he wanted to lift them off of the economic bottom the same as everyone else. If you'll go back and study his record and his voting record, you'll find that his voting record on things that really counted and really mattered was a liberal vote. It was not a conservative vote, and even if it had been conservative all the way through, I think that his ability was such that he still would have been elected president, because he was such an overpowering person personally that people had confidence in him that they would have been willing to risk it. For example, never once in my association with him, in my hundreds of trips to Washington, have I ever heard anyone say a derogatory word about Senator Russell personally, or anything that he did. The only criticism you ever had was that they were in disagreement, but they never questioned Senator Russell's integrity, or anything that he did. Now that was not true of anyone else that I knew in Washington, even the presidents. They were criticized very severely personally, but nobody ever criticized Senator Russell personally for any of his personal conduct or some of the things that he did that they thought were questionable. Now, you don't live that kind of life and not be able to win an election, because they just couldn't have tied
anything to him that would have been degrading, and that's very unusual in a person in public
life. So, I'm confident that if Senator Russell had lived outside of the South, or even as I've said
before, if the Senate and Congress could have voted for the president, he would have been
president early in life, very early in life. Of course, as you know he was nominated for president,
and I was working with him. I was very closely associated with him and I was trying to get
agriculture all over this country to support him, because I knew of his interest in farmers and in
the low income that farmers have had to suffer and I knew about his knowledge of agriculture,
which was terrific. I worked diligently to get as many farm votes as I could for him, but as you
well know, agriculture has been losing political ground for a long time. We do not have the
numbers now, so we did not have the votes in agriculture to nominate him, but it would have
been a great thing for agriculture if we could have. As you noticed, he got a lots of votes—as I
recall three hundred or more—so he had lots of support even though he lived in the wrong place.

CATES: Were you at that convention in 1952?

BROOKS: No, I've frankly never been to a convention. I've been to some extent an independent
all my life, feeling that I was more interested in the individual than I was in the party;
consequently, I've never been a strong, maybe partisanship as you normally would be. A lots of
people—naturally being in the South, we came up as Democrats, that's human and natural, but at
times (there) have been poor Democratic leadership and poor Democratic administration. If the
Republican leadership was stronger, then I always felt it was perfectly in order to switch parties
if that was necessary to bring about an improvement in government. Senator Russell was in the
position that he had to take an oath that he would support the party and he did that. He told me
many times—he said, now when I, as you well know, when I make a commitment I live with it;
but he said, I'll have to admit that sometimes I've had to hold my nose when I voted. Now,
fortunately, I did not have to hold my nose to vote sometimes; consequently, I voted my
convictions. I had made no such commitment. Now, I'm confident that there were times when
Senator Russell would have voted for a Republican president, except for his commitment to the
Democratic party, which he felt that he could not violate.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, do you think he had also an ulterior motive in holding the chairmanships,
holding positions in the Senate; that is, if he stayed a Democrat as opposed to being an
independent voter, or switching his vote to a Republican on occasions, like some office holders
have done?

BROOKS: I doubt that. He was too dedicated and sincere to do that. He was such a powerful
individual that I don't think it was very important whether he was chairman or just a member of
the committee. I think he was going to dominate the committee with his knowledge, his ability
and his dedication and his integrity, regardless of what position he held on the committee. I think
that was true as I said about Senator Bankhead. Bankhead was a great senator, but he told me
many times that he, as chairman, he got the credit, but Senator Russell was the person who
dominated the committee. I think he would have dominated the committee regardless of whether
he was chairman or not.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, do you think that Senator Russell considered himself as a serious
candidate in 1952?
BROOKS: Well, I think he felt that he had a chance to get a reasonable number of votes, and since he was more or less put into the position of a candidate, that he wanted to get as many votes as he could get in order to make a decent showing. I do not think that he felt that he had any real chance of being president because of the circumstances, which he was very realistic about, but since he was pushed into that position, he felt that he wanted to make as good a showing as he could for many reasons. Of course, I was very hopeful that he would get a large vote, and I think all of us were quite pleased when he was able to get three hundred or more votes as I recall.

CATES: The reason I asked the question--some have said that they thought that he just wanted to voice the Southern viewpoint and that he wanted to be the spokesman for this particular group and that he never seriously thought he had a chance maybe of winning the nomination.

BROOKS: Well, I was rather close to him at that time and talked with him many times. As I said, I tried to hound agriculture into the vote for him, and I did lots of calling and writing and talking with many people in agriculture in order to get him as much support as I could from everyone who came out of agriculture as a delegate to the convention. His discussion with me indicated that he was very anxious to make a good showing, because that would then do lots of things that were good. He never said to me that he felt that he could, that he was going to be president. So, that would indicate to me that he was not sure in his mind at all that he had a chance to be president, but I think he felt that a good showing would be helpful to the South, that he would voice--be able, as you said, to voice some opinions that would be very helpful. From that viewpoint, he was anxious to get as much support as he could get.

CATES: During that particular campaign, if he could not have gotten the nomination, and of course he did not, who was his choice? Did he ever discuss that with you?

BROOKS: No, he did not.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, did Russell ever discuss with you the possibility of your becoming Secretary of Agriculture?

BROOKS: Yes, he did on numerous occasions. He was very kind to me personally. In view of the fact that, fortunately, Cotton Producers Association became a very successful business institution for farmers, and he felt that it raised the income level of farmers rather substantially in the areas in which we operated and with the technical training that I had in agriculture, he felt that I ought to be considered as Secretary of Agriculture. In fact, he talked with me about it a number of times and I rather discouraged him, because I always felt that the worse thing a person could do would be to go to Washington, in particular as Secretary of Agriculture, because that has been a very difficult and a thankless job and one where you always wonder how effective you can be as Secretary of Agriculture, but he made some very strong efforts to try to make me Secretary of Agriculture. He had been helpful--finally, and I don't know whether you will raise that question or not, but with reference to Senator (John Fitzgerald) Kennedy and Senator (Lyndon Baines) Johnson's campaign when they ran for president and vice-president, he had finally at the end been rather effective. I think then Senator Kennedy felt under great obligation
to Senator Russell and he felt that he ought to do what he could to be kind to Senator Russell. I don't know whether this was brought out or not, but I was up there with Senator Russell right after Kennedy was elected president. Kennedy called Senator Russell in his office and told him he wanted to come down and visit with him. Senator Russell, being very gracious as he always was, and since Senator Kennedy had been elected president, he said to Senator Kennedy, "No, you stay in your office and I will come to see you," and that is what happened. Now, a little while after that, Senator Russell called me and stated to me that he was with Senator Kennedy and that the question was the appointment of a Secretary of Agriculture and he had said to Senator Kennedy that he thought that I had the ability to do it and that he was very anxious that I be appointed Secretary of Agriculture. He said that Senator Kennedy told him that in several of his speeches in the Midwest he had made a statement to the effect that if he were elected president, that he would nominate a Secretary of Agriculture from the Midwest and he did not feel that he could violate those campaign commitments, but that if I would take the place as Under Secretary of Agriculture, he would like very much for me to visit with him and see if we could work it out. Senator Russell said that he was sitting there with Senator Kennedy and that they wanted my answer, and I said to him if they had to have the answer then, the answer would be no. He said, then, would I be willing to consider it; and I said, "Yes, I'll be willing to consider it until this afternoon"--that was in the morning--and which I did. Of course, I felt deeply grateful to Senator Russell for his confidence and, naturally, I did not want to just abruptly say no, but when he asked me I had to say my conviction. I met with our staff here at Cotton Producers at that time at lunch, and we felt that it would be a mistake for me to leave. We were in a great growth period and we had many things that we thought were being developed which would greatly raise the income of farmers in the years ahead; and the feeling was that it would be bad and wrong for me to leave, that if I did the job here as I should that I ought to be just as effective in the long pull for agriculture as I could be as Secretary of Agriculture. That afternoon, I called Senator Russell back and explained this to him and told him that I could not accept such an appointment. Somehow, he always felt that because all the other efforts of farmers for putting such an institution together had failed, that somehow I had developed some kind of miracle touch to make it work and so he felt that if I could become Secretary of Agriculture, maybe I could perform some of these so-called miracles for agriculture as a whole. Of course, he was far overestimating my capacity and my ability and my performance, but nevertheless, it: as very kind of him, and I was deeply appreciative of the fact that he did feel that I had the ability to perform such a responsible job.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, did he, when (James Philander) Phil Campbell (Jr.) was appointed Under Secretary of Agriculture, discuss this matter with you?

BROOKS: I discussed it and he was, of course, interested in getting someone from Georgia naturally in a strong position in the Department of Agriculture, and we've had other people there. You see, Harry Brown at one time was Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, John Duncan was Assistant Secretary of Agriculture; so, really, Phil Campbell was the third person that we've had in one of the top places in the Department of Agriculture. He (Russell) was instrumental and helpful in getting all of these people appointed. As you well know, in Washington, nobody's appointed unless they first talk with their senators, and I'm confident that nobody in this area has ever been appointed to anything of importance unless the president or whoever was involved
talked with Senator Russell, because he was such a powerful person and dedicated person that they just didn't go by him. They always wanted to talk with him first.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, before we began taping, you mentioned to me something about a little controversy with Senator Russell about Ezra (Taft) Benson; would you mind relating that again?

BROOKS: Well, when Ezra became the Secretary of Agriculture, of course, people had mixed emotions, but a great many people did not know Ezra and did not know too much about him. Personally, I had known him for many years; in fact, I had been president of the National Council of Farmer Cooperators and Ezra had been secretary of the Council, so I had had a very close working relationship with Ezra for a period of many years. Now, right or wrong, Ezra had some very definite opinions of what ought to be done in agriculture, which within themselves were good but taken in the overall look of government were bad. For example, his religious philosophy, being a Mormon, was that nobody should have anything from the government. For example, the Mormon church never permitted a member of their church to go on WPA (Works Progress Administration) back during the depression. They said that it was the responsibility of the church to carry these people, and so consequently, they set up warehouses of food and clothing and things that were necessary for survival of their members--the church did, the members of the church--and they would never permit a member to go on WPA. It was my understanding if a person ever went on WPA, they would have been turned out of the Mormon church. Now, that is maybe a very tough philosophy, and it went even beyond that in that they wouldn't give anything to anyone unless they were sick and desperate and could not work; but anybody who was physically able to work, they would give them food and clothing provided they came and worked maybe ten or twelve hours a day. They believed in hard work and you paying you way, and so, it was a very tough economic philosophy, one that maybe had some merit and one that possibly would have been helpful if you could have gotten that philosophy all the way across all of the economy in this country. That would have meant, of course, that we would have had to do away with many programs that we have in government, including many relief programs that we have. Well, Ezra was constantly trying to apply that philosophy solely to agriculture and no one else wanted to abide by it or agree to it. Consequently, Ezra was putting agriculture at times in great disadvantage in relation to the rest of the economy in the opinion of Senator Russell and the opinion of many other people, even his closest advisors. Now, I could go into some intimate, personal details on that, in which even President (Dwight David) Eisenhower was greatly concerned. I was advisor to President Eisenhower in agriculture, and we used every means that could be known to use to try to loosen Ezra up on some of his philosophy, because we said it's fine and good, but it's not applicable because it won't fit into the overall pattern. Well, Senator Russell, of course, became threadbare with that finally. So, he got him a bill and got enough people to vote for it; he got them committed, which you generally do ahead of time in effect, to take lots of the power out of Ezra's hands in agriculture. It put us in a very difficult position, because I was in sympathy with what Senator Russell wanted to do, but I felt that in justice to any Secretary of Agriculture, not just Ezra, that you couldn't operate that way, that if you were going to put a man in charge and hold him responsible that you could not at the same time take the power away from him to do anything about it, and as bad as it was, I felt that sooner or later Ezra would break his neck, one way or another, and he would get put out or he would have to bend enough to let you survive.
So, I went over and sat down with Senator Russell and went over this with him, and I said, "Administratively, it won't work, it's bad. Factually, of course, I'm in sympathy with what you're trying to do, but administratively, it's impossible. Therefore, I think that you need to lose this bill," and he looked at me rather funny (laughs) and he said, "D.W., I never have lost a bill since I've been in the Senate. Any bill that I ever drew up I never have lost one, and you're asking me now to lose one." And I said, "Yes, unfortunately Senator, that's what I am asking you to do, because I think it's a mistake overall." And he sat there a long while and thought about it, and he said, "Well, as you know, we've never been crossed on anything in agriculture. I've always relied on your judgment, and if that's your final judgment, I imagine I'll have to lose this one." And I said, "Well, it hurts me to say it because we just never have been crossed up on anything before, but I just feel that this is a case where it's wrong, it's a mistake, and you ought to lose it." And he said, "Well, if that's it, I'll lose it." Well, it was sort of a, you can realize, a very touching kind of situation and a very difficult one for me, and for him, because we had worked so close together on everything in agriculture, but that was a rather touchy one.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, do you think he was vindictive to draw up the bill to begin with, as far as Ezra Benson was concerned? What prompted him to do this?

BROOKS: Well, what prompted him was that Ezra was blocking lots of the constructive legislation for agriculture because of his philosophy. Now, Ezra didn't intend to be that way, but he had come up in the Mormon Church; his father was a Mormon, and he became one of the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church. He was so steeped in that philosophy that he could not bend.

Many times, I would talk with Ezra about something that was very urgent in agriculture, but cut across Mormon philosophy. And I would do it in the afternoon. And Ezra would say to me--we were very close, personally--"I believe I can go along with that; I can do that. "But by the next morning, the Mormon philosophy had taken over during the night and he just couldn't do it; although it made economic sense and it was the right thing to do, it would cut across Mormon philosophy. I told him it reminded me one time in trying to explain it to a foreign group, I told him it was like an incident that happened down here in the South back during the War Between the States. General (Robert) Toombs raised an army, and his punchline out in the country where he was raising the army was that we could whip the damn Yankees with cornstalks. Well, after the war was over some of the people, rather unkind, asked Senator Toombs, said, "We understood you to say we could whip the damn Yankees with cornstalks"; and Senator Toombs' immediate reply was, "We could have, if they'd fought with cornstalks!" (laughter) Now, Ezra's philosophy was probably all right if everybody else would have abided by it, but unfortunately, nobody else wanted to abide by that philosophy. You couldn't just pull agriculture out as one segment of the total economy and make it operate that way and survive and everybody else to go the other way, and that was what Ezra was trying to do. So, I don't think Senator Russell was vindictive. I think it was a great concern, what was happening to agriculture under Secretary Benson's direction.

CATES: I know before the taping, you indicated that on occasions Senator Russell would send a bill down to you to have it checked over, and you would change it quite a bit, or suggest changes which he would usually follow. Would you comment about this? (Begin side 3, cassette #179.)
BROOKS: Well, of course, he followed that as a pattern. He felt that I ought to check the bills and that if I checked them that I would maybe make some comments that would be helpful; but once or twice it was rather amusing that he had had all of the staff of the Senate agricultural committee check a bill that he was working out to propose, then he would send it to the Department of Agriculture and have all their technicians to check it and approve it, and then he would send it down and I would punch some holes in it that were just glaring holes that it was hard to understand how they would go through those groups, and he would be quite startled and quite upset. He called me up and said he just didn't understand how I could punch a hole in something by just taking it and reading it one time. And I said, "Well, the difference is, Senator, that the people on the staff up there and even the people in the Department of Agriculture, they're working from theory, they're working from papers, whereas I'm working here from day-to-day in the actuality of agriculture, what it actually is." Consequently, when I sit down and read a bill, I immediately interpret it in terms of what it actually does on the farm, and consequently, it's rather easy for me to pick up some of these blunders or mistakes where it's very difficult for them to do it, because they're not in the day-to-day operations of agriculture, and that's the difference.

CATES: What were his comments to you concerning trade with countries behind the iron curtain, considering the fact, for example, that at one time Cotton Producers Association sold 400,000 bushels of Southern corn in Poland?

BROOKS: Well, his attitude was quite liberal in the viewpoint of trade. It always was. Now, I think this--that he felt that we needed to take a harder line with Russia, for example, on many things; that we were not taking as tough a line as we ought to take; that we would come out better if we were tougher. He said that Russians understood toughness, they lived that kind of life and they understood it, and sometimes we were not quite as tough as we ought to be. He was anxious that you trade with these countries that had a chance to get loose from Russia, and that's what we've been doing. Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia--these countries that you hopefully will eventually wean away from Russia. At least, if you can pull them away economically, you have a chance to pull them away otherwise in time. Consequently, he fully understood that.

CATES: Gold Kist does business, I understand, in thirty countries despite rising tariffs. What did Russell say to you about such tariffs?

BROOKS: Well, he was always intensely interested in world trade and world problems; because he realized that we could not live unto ourselves that we had to be global in our viewpoint. Consequently, I think he was always very much pleased when he realized that we were taking farm products from this area and distributing them to people all over the world, that that was one effective way of raising the income level of farmers in this part of the world. You see, in that way you not only raised incomes here, but also you feed hungry people, and he was always interested in feeding hungry people. He had a great sympathy or low-income people everywhere.

CATES: You are noted for your "do-teaching" as opposed to "talk-teaching"; did Russell share this philosophy, both in agricultural and non-agricultural matters?
BROOKS: Oh yes, he never did like to talk theory, and that was one thing about when you got down to talk with him about money, appropriations, he wanted to know just how this worked out. He wanted you to put it on the line to where you could show some real returns and some productivity out of it. He was very practical in his approach; he was hard-headed and very tough and he wanted you to prove your case. He didn't want you to just come up there and say, we need $100 million dollars for something that was theoretical. He wanted to be certain that any federal monies that were appropriated would actually bring high returns to the people of this nation and that included farmers.

CAFES: This is somewhat along the same line: Gold Kist is noted for its independence when it comes to federal help and control; did Russell give you any encouragement in this area?

BROOKS: Well, as a whole, yes. He felt that self-help was the ultimate answer to all of these situations. For example, one of our real problems in agriculture in the early days in the southeast was the failure to have high productivity. And so, one of the philosophies that we were trying to tell our farmers in this area--that the only way you're really ever going to have a high scale of living is to produce it--you can't dream it or hope it or even expect the government to put it in your pocket--that the way everybody has a high scale of living, you got to produce more per person; otherwise, you can't enjoy all these good things of life. Our weakness in this area was our productivity; it was just terribly low, unbelievably low and that was one of our causes of poverty. So, our philosophy was that the quicker you as a farmer understand that and realize that the only way you can have a high scale of living and the only way you produce a high scale of living is high productivity per person, and then we can pull you out of this. Then, we set up the ways to help him do that and then we said, we'll take these products and market them for you not only in this country but throughout the world in order to get you the highest dollar that can be obtained for the product. Senator Russell fully understood that philosophy and he was very much for it; in other words, he didn't want any government help if there's any way to do it any other way, but he was sympathetic with the low-income and he wanted to do what he could to help move farmers along out of this extreme poverty on into these programs where they could do these jobs for themselves.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, everyone knows about your personal efforts to help famine-threatened nations learn to feed themselves; you made the statement: "Starvation anywhere is everyone's greatest enemy." Did you discuss this with Senator Russell?

BROOKS: Oh yes, many times and in many ways. I was intensely interested, for example, in the point-four program that was started during (Harry S.) Truman's period. Dr. (Henry Garland) Bennett, who was president of Oklahoma A & M (Agricultural and Mechanical) College, was a very close personal friend of mine and he had a philosophy that we could take agricultural science as we developed it in this country, if we could transmit it to the peoples of the world effectively, we could do it with a nominal amount of money; and yet, we could lick this problem of famine. Now, coming up in an agricultural situation in an agricultural institution, I had a number of students from all over the world that were students of mine when I was a professor and I also had boys who were classmates of mine from other countries. When we started trying to lick poverty here and low income, I began to work with some of them over the world. For example, on Formosa, we brought about the greatest revolution that's ever taken place almost,
agriculturally. The boy that's been chairman of that was a classmate of mine at the university, a Chinese boy who was in charge of all research on the mainland but was run off the mainland with Chiang Kai-Shek. Then, he, in effect, took over the agricultural development on Formosa. It's a fantastic story; they have the highest productivity now on a twelve-months period of any place on earth, in a very poor area, by using scientific agriculture. Now, Senator Russell realized that we had to have this kind of development over the world. He was intensely interested in it. I coined a phrase in the early days, that my experience overseas, running over the world many times—that the strongest communism I found anywhere in the world was stomach communism. By that, I mean hunger. If a man is hungry and naked, it doesn't take much to move him over to the communist side, because he doesn't figure he has much to lose. Consequently, the communists always played that wherever they had hunger and nakedness and disaster, then they moved in with great power. Senator Russell understood this power play in the world, that you, from a humanitarian standpoint, you did not want to sit here and let anybody starve, and that if you could bring food and clothing and decent living to the people to the world, the communists were out, they were out of business, because that's what they lived on, that's what they tried to jump in on all the time—by promising things that they couldn't do. Now, as a matter of fact, the communist agriculture has been horrible and they've been hanging by threads. They've come so close a few times that it looked like the communist world was going, because they were out of food. Of course, the western world has furnished them with a considerable amount of food, but even so, they had extreme plight. In 1962— I'm overseas a great deal of the time, as you know, and in 1962, we thought China was going, 1959, 1960 and 1961, the crops kept going down. That was during this "great leap forward" thing, where they tried to put all of the farmers in the communes and march them to the fields together and march them to the places to eat together. Farmers just don't farm that way, and they didn't produce anything. By the spring of 1962, they were out of food; in fact, there was a great deal of feeling there— I was advisor to the president, agricultural advisor, and when I was over there in that area, there was a good deal of feeling among intelligence that I ought to insist the president put ships of grain all along China, because they felt definitely that China would go in 1962, but they made some changes which saved them. They began to let the farmers have back an acre of land for their own and they let them have some livestock or poultry, and weather conditions turned better, and they got a turn, at least temporarily. Except for that, if they'd had one more bad year in 1962 and they had not changed their system of agriculture, I'm confident there would be no communist China today; it would be gone. So, the communist world has never done well in agriculture. They've done very poorly. I've had meetings with the Minister of Agriculture of Russia, in which we've had violent discussions, but when I got out of the building where he could talk freely, he would say to me, "I'll have to agree with you." I was saying to him that he was going to have to go back to the capitalistic system of farming, where the farmer got some payment for what he produced; otherwise, the farmers were not going to produce; it was human nature, whether it was in Russia or the United States, and their system would not work in agriculture. So, they've never made the communist system work. Now, Senator Russell understood all of these things. I've talked with him many times about all of these problems in agriculture, not only at home but throughout the world. He was intensely interested in hunger throughout the world, realizing that if you do not cure this, you got a continuous trouble. You've got troubles coming on all the time somewhere. It's a source of lots of your troubles of the world.
CATES: Mr. Brooks, I want to ask you a little something about the program that you have to bring foreigners over here to study our ways; but before I forget it, did you happen to talk, or did you happen to meet Madame Chiang Kai-Shek and talk to her about her friendship with Senator Russell?

BROOKS: I talked with Senator Russell about it. I was invited to go and visit with Madame Chiang when I went to Formosa, working over there. She and the Generalissimo invited--my wife was with me--invited us to their home, but they were down at their summer home, down the island, which is called Moon, Sun Moon Lake. Beautiful place down there, but I had commitments moving on to other countries where I had set up with our agents, which I felt that I could not break. Consequently, I had to turn down the invitation, so I did not go and visit with them. They had asked me to come down for two or three days and visit with them, but I didn't do it.

Now, Senator Russell has told me about his experience (laughs) with Madame Chiang, and he said that he tried to be sort of, I guess, joking with Chiang Kai-Shek once, in which he said that the only person that ever really tempted him to matrimony was Madame Chiang, that she was such a delightful and such a dynamic person--and he met her young in life--that he felt that she was the, maybe, one person that he would like to marry. Well, he said that the Generalissimo didn't take it too well. (laughs) So, he didn't get quite the amusing part over that he intended to transmit, because I do not think that he was really serious about it. He was sort of teasing the Generalissimo that he really was enamored with Madame Chiang.

CATES: Did this take place over in Formosa?

BROOKS: Yes, I understand so.

CATES: Did Russell--

BROOKS: The way Senator Russell told me about it, yes.

CATES: --did he ever talk to you about his trips around the world, or his visits and compare them maybe with your own?

BROOKS: Well, to some extent, but no long conversations on it. He would, of course, ask me sometimes my impressions and give me his impressions, but later on in life, of course, lots of his trips was connected with the military. Although I have a general interest in the military, I did not have an intense interest.

CATES: Getting back to this other question that I had asked you: Would you comment about this program that you have something to do with, in bringing foreigners over here to study agricultural methods, and whether or not you ever discussed that with Russell?

BROOKS: Well, I discussed it with him, but not in detail. Of course, we felt that with the technical know-how that we've developed in this country, which is far beyond that of any agriculture in the world, that one way to meet this hunger problem was to bring these boys over here and that's what we've done--brought the boys over from--There's hardly a week here,
sometimes even a day, that we don't have groups of people coming through this office here from somewhere in the world wanting to go and see your methods and your plants and how you operate and things of that kind. So, we have a delegation just constantly coming through this office. Of course, some of these boys we bring over here and keep them for a period of time—a year, two years, some of them several months—and train them. Of course, we have some operations overseas, and we bring them over here to train them for those. Only in a general way, I think, have I discussed them with Senator Russell, not in any great depth or detail, but he knew about some of our interests in it and some of our world operations.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, I know you object to federal tampering with all our production, and how did Russell feel about this?

BROOKS: Well, Senator Russell was realistic in that—we feel that it's best for farmers to do these jobs for themselves, but at times, regardless of how you feel, to be practical you've got a problem of certain surpluses which have to be handled. Now, Senator Russell was practical, as we have tried to be—that we're not going to take a philosophy that was as tough as Ezra Benson's that you're not even realistic of what the facts are. Senator Russell had that same kind of philosophy—that if we had an impossible situation, regardless of your emotions or feelings, you had to meet that situation as it was, not as you wanted it, as you'd like to have it, but you had to meet it. I would say that he was very realistic person. He was intensely interested in farmers getting on their own and doing their own job in handling agriculture. In the meantime, if crises came in, he was not averse to trying to help meet that crisis, as we have been, and we've said very frankly that sometimes you get into crises that have to be met. At times, we've been interested in laws, which will permit farmers themselves to do it, although we have been anxious at farmers themselves, but to give you one illustration—Senator Russell was heavily involved in this.

As you know, we have a tremendous broiler industry here in North Georgia. Well, we thought that with this cotton acreage going down to three to give acres to these small farmers in North Georgia, for example, that if we got them a dollar a pound for cotton—which we couldn't do—they'd still starve to death, because they weren't producing anything. Their productivity was too low. So, we started getting our growers into broilers. We never asked the government for any help; we didn't get any subsidy; we didn't get anything. Suddenly, after we'd developed a big market in the common market, particularly in Germany, one day we were suddenly cut off with sixteen cents a pound tariff on broilers. Well, I immediately went to see Senator Russell about this and he was greatly concerned and, in fact, helped to set up a luncheon where we had some senators and congressmen in where I could explain what was happening to us. Then, they suggested that I plead my case over at the State department, and they would help me do that. So, I had an appointment with Secretary (George W.) Ball, who was Undersecretary, and went over the matter in detail with him, and he finally said to me—I didn't know him intimately but I knew him quite well—that he'd done everything that he could do about it. I said to him, well, then that means that I've got to go to the president, and he said, well, he didn't exactly say that, but in effect he said, that's your only alternative, he couldn't do anything more. So, I immediately asked for an appointment with the president, got Senator Russell and Senator (Herman Eugene) Talmadge and the others to help set up the appointment, and we had an hour and a half or two hours with the president, in which we finally got a commitment from him.
Without going into great detail, he made every effort to try to straighten it out, but without success in the end. Finally, General (Charles) de Gaulle bought the deal in the final deal, but everybody got involved--Dean Rusk, who was sent to Germany by the president; it was a rather amusing thing to hear his discussion of what, (laughs) how he came out in the deal. But we went all out to try to correct it. Senator Russell was always available and ready to help whenever we had a crisis. My plea, of course, to the president was that we had never asked the president or this government for anything. We took a group of low-income people, who were on the bottom of the economic ladder, and had developed them into the greatest scientific producers of broilers the world had ever known and producers at the lowest price that the world had ever known. All that we asked them to do was keep the doors open, and he had this Kennedy round of trade negotiating when we were going to open the doors, but here was a case of the doors were being closed. So, he was sympathetic, and without going into great detail, it became quite a deal (laughs) before we got through with it.

CATES: I hope to interview Dean Rusk, so you'd suggest that I might ask about this trip?

BROOKS: Yeah, you might ask him about his trip to Chancellor (Konrad) Adenauer on chickens.

CATES: Okay, all right.

BROOKS: I bet you it'll be rather amusing, at least, experience.

CATES: Okay, you had indicated before we started taping that you had a little knowledge about the Truman-(Douglas A.) MacArthur hearings as relates to Senator Russell. Would you mind--I believe you said you were on the War Mobilization Board during the Korean conflict?

BROOKS: Yes.

CATES: --so would you comment about this?

BROOKS: Well, it was rather, of course, a very unusual experience and one that could have become a very violent one. President Truman thought that General Eisenhower (MacArthur) was violating instructions and taking things in his own hands, and of course, we knew that on the board, but--this all happened one night. During that day, we met in the Cabinet room of the White House--and the president's office is at the end of the Cabinet room--and so we met all during the morning and the President met with us, but he did not come back after lunch. I had a personal matter, which I wanted to discuss with the president, about someone whom I thought he ought to appoint in agriculture. So, I asked his secretary if he had any free time that afternoon, I would like to go in and talk with the president about this appointment. He told me that he could get me in, because the president was really not busy, that he was in there walking the floor. I asked him what was wrong and he said he was going to fire MacArthur that night. Well, when he said that, that of course upset me and I said, well, if he's going to do that, I don't want to go in for several months. He proceeded to fire him that night, and without going into any secret situations that developed, there was some basis of why he felt that he could fire him. The people, of course, reacted very violently.
Well, Senator Russell realized that this could be an explosion that would be almost impossible to contain. Consequently, he developed a hearing on the matter and gradually diffused the bomb that could have blown the country apart almost. It was almost that violent, because General MacArthur was a great idol in this country and the people, of course, generally did not know what was going on internally with reference to the war or what instructions he'd had and what the president felt he had violated. I think Senator Russell did a great service to this nation when he took this in hand; in effect, it's just like somebody taking a hold of an atomic bomb and holding it to keep it from exploding. I think that's what he did in this case and brought it through in fine shape.

CATES: Would you mind commenting as to how you feel that Russell felt about the two principals, President Truman and General MacArthur--personally, I mean?

BROOKS: Frankly, after the hearing was over, I do not recall ever discussing that with him--after the hearing was over; so, I am not sure what his final feelings were with reference to the information he obtained.

CATES: You had said something to me about a government complex in Chattanooga (Tennessee), which was later leased and thereby saving a lot of money for the government. Would you comment about this?

BROOKS: Well, of course, as manager here I've always looked for opportunities to find ways and means to raise the income level of farmers in this area; and in doing this, I discovered a complex up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, that had been built during the war that was being carried by the government and by the army at tremendous cost. In looking it over, I decided that we might be able to lease these facilities and put some more facilities with them and manufacture fertilizer for farmers and effectuate some savings, but put a large amount of money in the pockets of the government, where they were just dissipating the money as it was--it was sitting there doing nothing. I discussed this with Senator Russell and went over and showed him how much money we could save the government by doing this and it would work out good for farmers. Well, that immediately interested him, because as I said before he was a very frugal fellow with everybody's money, including the government's, and if there was any way to get some money for the government, he was intensely interested in doing it. I then asked him if it would be possible for him to make an appointment with me for the general who had charge of all these plants. He asked me when I wanted to see the general--and this was about nine o'clock in the morning; I told him I'd like to see him about 11:00 if I could. He just picked up the phone and immediately was through to the general and said to the general that he had a man who wanted to discuss a matter that would be profitable to the government, in his opinion, and that he would expect the general in his office at eleven o'clock. And of course, the general was there at 11:00. In other words, there was no further discussion about whether he could come or not come; it was just a case of saying, now, this is when I want you there. It rather illustrated to me just how powerful a person Senator Russell was, but he didn't move at all or show any interest until I could prove my case that I would put a lots of money in the government's pocket. He was interested in that, as well as farmers getting along well.
CATES: You also had related to me before we started taping an amusing incident that took place in your presence between Senator Russell and Senator George, and it was about the time that Herman Talmadge was going to run against Senator George.

BROOKS: Well, that was rather unusual, but it showed the keen sense of humor that Senator Russell had. We were having breakfast together--Senator Russell, Senator George, and I--and we ordered eggs and ham for breakfast. Well, when they were served, just before Senator George started eating his ham, Senator Russell said, "Well now, Senator George, I don't believe you better eat that ham; that's probably Talmadge ham and it'll probably give you indigestion!" (laughs) So Senator George sort of laughed and it was sort of an amusing incident, but of course, it showed that there was a real keen sense of humor, because all of us knew that Senator George was very tense at that time (Begin side 4, cassette #179) about being defeated by Senator Talmadge if Senator Talmadge ran for the Senate, which he had already indicated he was going to do.

CATES: Did Russell ever discuss this almost race between George and Talmadge with you?

BROOKS: No. It developed into an almost race, of course, and I think Senator Talmadge, I mean Senator Russell was dedicated to Senator George in many ways, as one of his associates, but I think equally so that he's been very dedicated to Senator Herman Talmadge. Their working relationship has just been, as far as I've been able to observe, just perfect. They've had a wonderful working relationship. Of course, the way that finally worked out, Senator George moved out of the race and probably relieved lots of people who had both as friends. It would have been a very difficult situation, and I'm sure would have been a very difficult one for Senator Russell, because of his long, close association with Senator George. But he's had great respect for Senator Talmadge as far as I've been able to determine through the years, and he felt that Senator Talmadge has shown real growth in his capacity as a senator.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, we might put under a time seal what we're about to talk about now. You indicated that you had an opportunity to observe the association between Russell and Lyndon Johnson, and you mentioned one thing in particular, which I might just refresh your memory on, and that was the call that Johnson made to Russell after Johnson had received the nomination for the Democratic vice-presidential spot. This was towards the end of the campaign. We might start with that, and then you might just talk and say anything you want to about this relationship, and we can put a time seal on this until after the death of Johnson, if you like.

BROOKS: Well, as you know, Senator Russell and Senator George and Johnson were very close when they senators. In fact, it's common knowledge that Senator Russell made Senator Johnson the Majority Leader; except for his support, he would never have been Majority Leader. Russell would have been the Majority Leader if he'd wanted it, but he did not want it for many reasons. He felt like his vocation was where he was and some of the things that he wanted to do, to hold on to from the viewpoint of Georgia and the South and he couldn't do it as a Majority Leader. He, in effect, stepped out but then, in effect, nominated Senator Johnson. Well, they became very close personal friends. Of course, Senator Russell was out at Senator Johnson's home a great deal, and I think the children felt like Senator Russell was sort of an uncle--very close relationship. From time to time, I was with Senator Russell when he was talking with a
great many people, including several conversations with President Johnson, before he became president and afterwards, too. This particular occasion was after he had been nominated for vice-president; and Senator Johnson called Senator Russell, and I happened to be with him, and he told him that they were in grave difficulty. Now, prior to that time, I was with him when Johnson had called him immediately after the nomination, and Senator Russell had said to him that he thought they would win the race because of Kennedy with his following from the liberal group and also members of the Catholic church, who probably would have a chance to vote for a Catholic for the first time, and with the following that Lyndon Johnson had--that it seemed to him that they ought to win the race. He, I think, had a feeling that he himself personally would not participate in it, and should not participate in it. But this conversation came later when I was with him and Senator Johnson called him and said he was, that they were in great difficulties, that he believed that he was going to lose Texas and that he needed Senator Russell to come and help him. Well, Senator Russell was rather hesitant and indicated he didn't want to do it, on a purely political basis, at which time Senator Johnson said that, now I'm appealing to you personally, as a personal friend to do this. Senator Russell then said, well, on that basis I guess I'll have to do it. So, it was apparently a personal thing that did it. Now, later on he told me that he went to Texas and made the talk and he said, "I'm not sure how much good I did in Texas; I might have done some." They won Texas as I recall. But he said, "I'm confident that I did them great good in South Carolina, because of the fact that a great many of the people in South Carolina had been sitting on the fence, lots of the political leaders over there, until I made the speech in Texas; and when I made the speech, then, that pitched them over on the side. Consequently, they then went to work and carried the state for Johnson and Kennedy." He felt like that he made at least some contribution, but I don't think he intended really to get into that campaign. I think he intended to get out, to stay out of it at first, until President Johnson--who, of course, was not president at that time--put it on a personal basis. Then, he felt that he had to do it.

CATES: To put this in the proper context of time, this was 1960, and it was right at the tail end of the campaign. I believe you said that Russell had been maybe in Spain or out of the country?

BROOKS: Yes. As I recall, he'd been out of the country and came back just before the end of the campaign.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, can you recall any other thing that you might want to relate about this association between Russell and Johnson?

BROOKS: Well--

CATES: I know you have an appointment--

BROOKS: --I have.

CATES: --in ten minutes and I do want to cover two other things with you--

BROOKS: Yeah.
CATES: --and that is, did you visit with Russell in his home in Winder, and also you'd indicated that you knew a little something about the Cuban crisis as affected Russell and John F. Kennedy?

BROOKS: Yes.

CATES: So, we might just get back to the Johnson thing right now if you have any other comments.

BROOKS: Well, of course, I talked with President Johnson several times about Senator Russell; I mean we had such a close personal relationship that once or twice when I was with President Johnson, he was quite down in the mouth about things. One time, I remember a lunch that lasted quite a long while; we got into a discussion of Senator Russell; and one time late in the afternoon when I was at the White House to see him about a matter, he seemed to be so worn out that I deliberately took him over into talking about Senator Russell and some personal things that I thought would break some of the tension, deliberately. He, of course, had great dedication to Senator Russell because he--and immediately, for example, when President Kennedy was killed and he was sworn in as President, the first person he wanted to see and talk to, was Senator Russell. I've forgotten whether he told me that or whether Senator Russell told me that; it was one or the other that told me that. Consequently, he felt the great need of Senator Russell and the great closeness. I think that was a very close relationship, but one that probably was a little more difficult later on while Lyndon Johnson was president.

CATES: Could you relate, or would you relate what went on or what was said during these conversations that you just mentioned? Do you recall, or could you relate, that is, what Johnson said about Russell?

BROOKS: Oh, he had great, great feelings for him; I mean that he felt like he was the great person of the Senate and he appraised him like I did. I'm sure--although I do not recall specifically his saying to me that Russell should be president--I'm confident that he felt the same way, because everything else that was said would indicate that he looked up to Russell as the top man in the Senate.

CATES: How did their differences affect their relationship? Would you comment on that--their political differences--?

BROOKS: Well, I really--

CATES: --specifically in the domestic area?

BROOKS: --yeah, Senator Russell talked with me about this at great length a few times when he wanted to talk personally about it, and he said to me that he thought President Johnson maybe felt great obligations to carry out some of President Kennedy's proposals. But he said the difference is--he said, "Now, President Kennedy didn't have the power over here to get his bills passed," but he said, "President Johnson does." He said, "We're going to have some head-on collisions, because he feels he's got to go one way and I've got to go another"; and he said, "It's too late in life for me to change and he feels a different responsibility as president, whereas I'm
not president and I don't feel the same responsibility. I must hold to that which I think is best for Georgia and is right." He said, "I want to say to you"--this is before some of the bills were passed--"that I think we're going to lose them now, because Johnson has the power to do it and the ability to do it, and he'll pass them, whereas Kennedy could have never passed them." And he said, "I recognize that and I have to understand it. I might not like it, but I have to understand it."

So, he was very realistic of what happened, and as you know, President Johnson put through some very tough, difficult bills for Senator Russell to go along, and which he voted against. But he was realistic in all of his discussions with me; he indicated that he fully understood that Johnson was going to pass the bills, that he had the power to do it and he was going to pass them, and although he didn't like them, personally, that he had to recognize that Johnson maybe felt that responsibility as president. So, there was some breach there, but I didn't feel that it was any impossible breach, although I did get some indication that it widened some later on, see.

CATES: Do you think this had anything to do with Johnson not coming to his funeral?

BROOKS: I don't think so. I think that Johnson is not too healthy and I think the story that his doctor would not permit him to go--he had been in the hospital, as I recall, during that period, right up to that period--and I think that was a fair appraisal of the facts.

CATES: Could you comment a little bit about your visits to Winder with Russell?

BROOKS: Well, I, of course, through the years made a number of visits to Winder to visit him on different things. Of course, I'd go to Washington and I'd go over there. I don't know of anything particularly different. I think in terms of conversations with him at home and (telephone rings) conversations with him in Washington that I did not differentiate really between them, because I had times of long conversations in both places with him.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, I know you have someone waiting on you. I did want to ask you about the Cuban crisis situation, since you'd indicated that you had a little knowledge on that as far as Russell was concerned.

BROOKS: Yes, Senator Russell told me that when they had the Cuban crisis that President Kennedy had asked him to come to the White House to discuss it. He said, "Frankly, I advised President Kennedy to move in and take the Russian missiles out of Cuba." He said, "The reason why I felt that was several reasons. In the first place, we had at long last caught the Russians red-handed in doing a very terrible thing that needed to be corrected." And he said, "I felt that world opinion would be with us, that we were trying to prevent a war, all-out war instead of starting one. The second is," he said, "that I felt that would solve our Cuban problems and that we had a good excuse then to straighten Cuba out and get it out of communist hands and we had the perfect reason for doing it where world opinion would be with us and where we could do it in the right spirit and the right way, and the world would be with us instead of Russia, because that was an offensive move to intimidate the United States with missiles at our back door." And he said, "I felt that we were just in perfect shape to clean that situation out, and so, I said so to President Kennedy. Now," he said, "the third thing was, at that time, we still had great superiority in weaponry and in the atomic field, and I did not feel that Russia would dare move
with the superiority that we had, and which they knew about." He said, "Everything pointed to the fact that that was the appropriate time to move under the right kind of occasion." And so, he said, "My advice to President Kennedy, although he didn't take it, was that we move that way." And he said, "Of course, only history will finally tell who was right as to which way we should have handled the problem."

CATES: Why did Russell feel like Kennedy did not accept his advice?

BROOKS: Well, I do not know that he went into any great explanation; of course, I think it's generally known now that President Kennedy finally decided to appeal directly to (Nikita S.) Khrushchev to take the missiles out--and which he did. It was, of course, an extremely delicate situation. I was talking with some of them and, as I recall, Secretary Rusk saying in some meeting or discussion we were having that somebody was going to bat an eye; it was that tense and that close that nobody was even batting an eye. You can realize it was a very terrible and critical thing. Evidently, President Kennedy decided to make the approach to, direct personal approach to Khrushchev, before he moved. Maybe he felt like he would do that first and maybe what Senator Russell said second, see? Khrushchev, apparently, with his advisors--I presume that the Kremlin probably put pressure on for him to do it and he took them out. The reports that I got there, and I'm sure they're all documented now, was that Kennedy's plea to Khrushchev was that in this way we could prevent any confrontation, this would relieve everybody of a confrontation; but he also said, "They must come out," so I think he, in effect, was saying that we hope you will do it and take them out, but if you don't do it, then his second move was to Senator Russell's proposal.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, one final question: I know you are a devout Christian; you have these devotionals at your place of business here every Wednesday morning; would you comment about Senator Russell's spiritual life?

BROOKS: We'll, I do not have a great deal of knowledge in this field. I was never with him over the weekends, because I needed to be home. I was different from Senator Russell; I had a wife and children and I needed to report back to my wife and children on weekends and I always tried to make it a point that (I) was never away from home on Sunday. So, I was never with him on Sunday. As I recall, one time many years ago he told me that when he was in Winder--I presume as governor, and maybe in the House--that he had a Sunday School class which he taught at that time--and you might check that one out--but as I recall, he told me one time when we were discussing some religious situations, he told me that when he was in Winder that he had this Sunday School class and he was the teacher of the Sunday School class. I'm not in position to give you a whole lot of information, because I was not with him on weekends.

CATES: Mr. Brooks, thank you very much for this interview. You had indicated that you're going through your papers and if you find anything, any letters from Russell, or any correspondence, you'll make copies and send them over to the (Richard B. Russell) Foundation--

BROOKS: Yes.

CATES: --and I thank you again for this interview.
BROOKS: Thank you very much.