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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 five 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: Well, 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.

*Richard B. Powell*  
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