

Richard B. Russell, Jr. Oral History Project
RBROH-165
Erle Cocke, Jr. interviewed by Dr. Dwight Freshley
January 26, 1985

FRESHLEY: We're recording here on January 26, 1985 with Mr. Erle Cocke, Jr. This is for the Russell Library at the University of Georgia and it's also for research and a book on Mr. (Richard Brevard, Jr.) Russell by Professors Cal (Calvin M.) Logue and Dwight (L.) Freshley. First of all, welcome back to Athens, Mr. Cocke, kind of ironical that this should be practically on the two-hundredth anniversary of the university.

COCKE: I thought this was the two-hundredth anniversary.

FRESHLEY: Grueling time for you to do this.

COCKE: Right.

FRESHLEY: Wouldn't it have been great if Mr. Russell could have been here.

COCKE: Yes. He was a great believer of the university. I think it was instilled in the whole Russell family by Judge (Richard Brevard) Russell. I think one of the earliest recollections that I had in 1932 when Governor Russell was putting together the Board of Regents; he had to fire his father as a trustee of the University of Georgia.

DR. FRESHLY: Is that right?

COCKE: And he was the last person that Governor Russell put on the original Board of Regents of the university system and that was after, I'm sure, some pillow talk from his mother (Ina Dillard Russell) about how much his father was chagrined that he had sworn him in as governor and was very proud of his record. But it also meant that he ceased to be a trustee of the University of Georgia and they picked out the other eleven members of the Board of Regents and finally the twelfth member, he put his father on as a member of the Board of Regents. But I repeat, that was after considerable pillow talk from mama.

DR. FRESHLY: Before launching into your own association and memories of Mr. Russell, what is your Georgia background? Where did you--?

COCKE: I was born and raised in Dawson, Georgia--peanut country--and followed my family through Dawson, Macon and Atlanta. I reckon the most important thing of my earlier pre-university life was to have been an Eagle Scout and the Boy Scout of the Year, which got me an invitation to Warm Springs in about 1935. And I went to Warm Springs on the Thanksgiving party--'35, '36, '37, '38 and '39. I had a great relationship all during that period of my life. I came to the University of Georgia in September of 1938 and did everything I expected to be at Georgia while I was here except make Phi Beta Kappa and I didn't make it. But I did enjoy the university

extremely well. I'm obviously identified on account of being manager of the football team and being president of Phi Kappa. But I was active in virtually the politics of the university the whole time I was here. I left early and went to the service and like the classes of '17 and the classes of '42, we didn't look for jobs. We all knew exactly what we were going to do leaving the university. I was about halfway through law school when I left the university. I could pick up the rest of my life. I did the military situation for five years. I went to every school that they would send me to. But I lived because I understood the life of a soldier and how to-- Although trained to fight divisions and in theaters, I ended up fighting a squad and survived. I'm one of the few people in the world ever physically executed. There were eight in the second war. I actually met one of the other people that were executed by a firing squad and lived to tell the tale. Because of my identification with organizations from the earliest times, I immediately went into veterans' activities and was the national commander of the American Legion in '50 and '51 during the Korean War and later went on to Delta Airlines all during its organizational period and ledger period. In the fifties, I ended up being an ambassador to United Nations, a Democrat in the (Dwight David) Eisenhower Administration in '59 and '60. This put me through the Law of the Sea at the U.N., through the treaties at the South Pole in preparation for all of the then needed problems of reworking the Congress of Vienna in 1815 as far as the consular and diplomatic services were concerned. I ended up being a pretty good treaty lawyer before it was over, both from airline bilateral treaties as well as from what was needed in New York at the time.

I then went to the World Bank as the United States representative and stayed there through the (John Fitzgerald) Kennedy-(Lyndon Baines) Johnson years. About the only unsuccessful thing I ever had in life was a race for Congress in the Third Congressional District of Georgia and I lost by fifty-four votes out of some 89,000 that were cast. It was a close race. Many times my friends ask me did I have a recount. And I said, "Well, we had an unofficial count; we had an official count; we had an unofficial recount and a official recount. And they told me that if I wanted to count them the fifth time that it would cost me ten thousand dollars to do it." I said, "Number one, I didn't have the ten thousand dollars. Number two, I had the best friends in the world counting for me four times and if they couldn't win for me then, I sure couldn't win the fifth time." So I then gave up the idea of public life and started a consulting business, principally in Washington, D.C., that has been highly successful. Left over from both the World Bank and the U.N., I am now a world-recognized parliamentarian and a world-recognized financial personality. And the biggest contribution I probably make today is that the change in government in a financial minister or in a secretary of the treasurer is generally known to me about two weeks before it's known to the public at large irregardless of what country it is in because they come to me to say, "We're going to make a change." I seldom know who the next man in a given country is going to be in that job. But I can tell you that they're going to make a change in the financial side of a government. And this becomes extremely valuable intelligence information. I have married in the course of events and raised three daughters and can enlarge on those if they're needed. I think from my experiences in prison camp that I appreciate the knowledge of education as much as any single factor. After I had made some escapes and was recaptured, I went to work in a German officers' mess as a T5 cook. This was mainly to have better food and a little less vigorous life and survive. And in about forty-eight hours the grievance committee of Americans who had been captured in Africa came in and said, "You're not a T5 cook." And I admitted to that slowly. They wanted to prove that I was an American and not a plant. So I discussed from the article in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper the 1944 World Series--the so-called "St. Louis Streetcar Series" between the Browns and the Cardinals. Giving them a half

an inning per day stretched it out the whole series. That proved I was an American. I obviously was not a cook. And then they said, "You must be an officer. You are an educated man and we will not turn you in. You shouldn't be here. But if you will lead the next escapes, we will let you stay and not turn you in. But you have to take command and look after the camp." And it wasn't much of a trade on my part. I really didn't have much opportunities, but it was a great experience. I asked these particular sergeants several weeks later how did they know, first, I wasn't a cook, and they said that was obvious. Second, how did they know I was an officer? The answer came back, "You spoke with an affidavit tone." (Freshley laughs.)

I think that Coach (James Wallace) Butts were a great experience in my life. I think that by modern football at the university, quoting Coach Bill (William C., Jr.) Hartman that, "Today there are twenty-five people at the university doing what you did when you were the student manager and the graduate manager of athletics."

FRESHLEY: And interestingly enough some of them are female which would be a bit of a change since that time. You started with the memories of Mr. Russell swearing in his father. What--

COCKE: What were my earliest recollections?

FRESHLEY: What were your earliest recollections of Mr. Russell?

COCKE: My father was state senator elected in 1926 and was in the session '27 and '28 in the legislature at the time that Dick Russell was then beginning to be Speaker in the House of Representatives. I remember him as a tall, then, even thinning baldhead man, but in white clothes. Almost half of the legislature was in white clothes because in those days the legislature met at the hottest part of the summer because we didn't inaugurate until--elected in June, but not inaugurated until June. I mean, elected in November, not inaugurated until June. And then you stayed in session June, July and August at the hottest part of the summer. I reckon one of the real identifications that I had in 1928; the first modern campaigning in Georgia was done by (Eurith Dickinson) Ed Rivers who was running for governor in '28. And he gave everybody autographed pictures and they were put up on most peoples' mantles. And he was the kind of politician that came around to see if you had his picture up on the mantle. And my father supported him in '28. And I remember the '30 race rather vividly for governor. When I looked up to my father and said, "Are we still supporting the man's picture up on the mantle?" And he says, "We supported him vigorously in 1928. But this year, 1930, we're going to be for a legionnaire and a veteran and his name is Dick Russell. He was the Speaker and the man in the white suit that you remember from a couple of years before." And that was my first absolute concrete identification with the Senator. I went on and remember calling on him when he was governor. I remember getting his autograph in an autograph book when I (sic) was governor. I still have that autograph, I might say. Eventually I'll get it to your library. But I'd like to hold it on a little bit longer on that score. I had a great relationship with the Senator all during his time. I remember the '32 race for the Senate extremely well, mainly because they ran against Congressman (Charles Robert) Charlie Crisp who had been our Congressman in Georgia and therefore it was sort of a split time. He would have easily been Speaker had he not run for the Senate. The governor took the position that he'd only been governor for about eighteen months when Senator (William Julius) Harris died and that it was now or never to run for the Senate. He really didn't want to have a short term

as governor. But he had the unique experience in 1930 of having had a runoff with (George Harrold) Carswell. Carswell was then the Speaker of the Senate and then his son was the Judge (George Harrold, Jr.) Carswell that didn't make the Supreme Court in years later. And they had a runoff, which was unusual in those days with our county unit system. And Russell won. But he was then still Speaker of the House. He really did his campaign promises enacted in the law from November of 1930 until June of 1931, where he was governor-elect but still Speaker. So that, although he really was only governor about eighteen months, he really had a proceeding six months ahead of that. That was the thing. I think his most dramatic difference was the fact that the governor was only making seventy-five hundred dollars a year in 1931; the state House officers were making about five thousand at that time. And they set up the Board of Regents and they paid the chancellor fifty-five hundred and they paid the secretary and treasurer of the Board of Regents fifty-five hundred and that was my father. My father was the original executive. They took Chancellor (Charles Mercer) Snelling from the university and never really moved to Atlanta. He still lived in Athens and would come over to Atlanta normally about two or three days a week at the most and spend the night in Atlanta and then come back. That's the way the Board of Regents started. And the most dramatic situation in 1932 legislature was the fact that the entire university system--Governor Russell asked for one million dollar appropriation and this was phenomenal in terms of the impact on all education--that in the height of the Depression the state of Georgia would grant one million dollars for education. And that had to cover everything. There's nothing that was not covered in that million dollars. This made Russell an identifiable national figure. He was quite involved in the '32 race for the presidency with (Franklin Delano) Roosevelt and came on to the Senate because he was elected. At the time he actually got to Washington in November--I mean elected in November. But he had an unexpired term coming on and therefore finished out his governor's seat in January. I think the date is the twelfth. It's either eleventh or twelfth of January in 1933. So, he had about ninety days in the (Herbert Clark) Hoover Administration and immediately became his greatest trump card for the rest of his life on that score. My earliest recollections in Washington were mainly to go see the Senator as I had gone to see the governor. I was very much involved in the '36 campaign for--in fact, I ran the clipping bureau. For anywhere the name Russell appeared in print, I clipped. And this turned out to be volumes of press clippings and the rest--We had lots of identification with the Senator in 1935 at the time of the Roosevelt homecoming which was in Atlanta at Grant Field the day after Thanksgiving of 1935. This was a major move forward in preparation for Russell's race in '36 for the Senate. It...also successful, Roosevelt winning, Russell winning the four-year term because it was an unexpired term. The seat came up--Harris was elected in 1930--didn't serve but about six months of that one before he died. Then Russell came in and had four years unexpired term and then ran for a six-year term beginning in '36. I was enough involved to watch that campaign very closely. I rode with, particularly Judge Russell. This was Robert L. (Lee) Russell, Sr. and he was the speechwriter of both the campaign for governor and the '32 race. And they ran the whole organization basically in two big seven-passenger Cadillacs, called Packards in those days. The Cadillac was not the automobile of the time. The Packard was the automobile of the time. They didn't want to go in a '31 Pierce Arrow which had been used in the governor's race because Pierce Arrow couldn't be fixed in Georgia, in terms of if it broke down, and we had no roads in this era regardless of what other people tell you. They weren't any roads until we got along into the thirties and started building some true ones.

This brought us on into the era that kept us alive. I stayed involved in the '38 campaign for Senator (Walter Franklin) George. I drove Senator George in that campaign about 39,000 miles

in the state of Georgia. I was then of driver's license age and having been through the '36 campaign, the '38 campaign was a natural. And I almost didn't want to come to the university that September of '38 because I didn't want to leave the two senators. Senator George was like my grandfather because I never knew my grandfather. My grandfather gave Senator George his first job as a lawyer way back about 1890 something. And so we had a great relationship there.

The George family and the Russell family had been against each other until the '36 race when (Eugene) Talmadge entered the picture on the '36 race. And then of course, Talmadge was again in the picture on the '38 race. And Roosevelt speaking here in Athens on the eleventh day of August 1938 which was packing the Supreme Court and the Barnesville-Lamar Electric Cooperative was dedicated. That was a very dividing day in Georgia politics under those conditions. George won in '38. We came on into the war years with no identification. As I got back from the war, I ended up in Walter Reed, in Washington, in the hospital and just started working right away for both senators, either office, which was virtually interchangeable, whoever needed something done. I'm talking about '46, '47 right along in there--spare time, internship and the rest, and then the Russell race of '48 came up, and the main thing there was to get rid of nuisance opposition, former Congressman from the old Eleventh District. I think his name was Langford (sic). Langford announced against the senator for the '48 campaign and with people like Dr. Philip Weltner, Hughes Spalding, Sr., Charles J. Bloch, in Macon, my father and myself with Heard George as sort of the referee, Judge Russell, of course, without the senator met. I was absolutely the driver and that's all. I'm not trying to say I was in the decision situation. But they then decided, well, we'll raise enough money to buy the man out and that will be the cheapest way to have the race. And much to everyone's surprise, he virtually got out with no effort at all--paid some bills for him and cleaned it all up and the senator got by without opposition. We went to Philadelphia in '48 for the campaign against Russell. The biggest problem was that it was all done too fast trying to run against (Harry S.) Truman in the '48 campaign. The senator wouldn't go. He stayed in Winder. I reckon my job there was to keep the telephone line open and we would get in a telephone booth and just never let the connection be broken. One, if we did, somebody would get the Winder line open or somebody would get the telephone line in the convention hall open, see. And, of course, this was before television, so that it was all done on radio. The senator looked extremely good at that time. We started immediately to try to work on the '52 campaign in '48, but the senator was a reluctant candidate.

FRESHLEY: Let's go back before we leave the '48. Was that a tense time with the potential defection of the southern with (James) Strom Thurmond?

COCKE: Oh, yes. I think the Strom Thurmond situation did not blossom until a little later. Strom Thurmond was governor in South Carolina at the time and he ended up with the so-called "Dixiecrat" party. And it carried five states, got thirty-nine electoral votes with Governor (Fielding Lewis) Wright of Mississippi on it. I think the most interesting thing that most historians miss in the 1948 walking out of Philadelphia was started by Alabama. Jim (James Elisha) Folsom was governor and he wanted to run for Vice President to be perfectly honest with you. And he thought if he brought the group out, he could run for Vice President. And so he started to run it out. Senators (Joseph Lister) Hill and (John Jackson) Sparkman both said very frankly, "We are not leaving the party. We are not walking out." And they picked a fine young veteran who was sitting in the back that says, "I'm going to stay with my two senators." And that young man was George (Corley) Wallace. And George Wallace stayed there and kept the

Alabama standard physically because he had been a golden gloves boxer as a young man--I mean a high school student, a college student--so that the three people that stayed in the Alabama delegation were Hill, Sparkman and, of all people, George Wallace. They were extremely loyal to Dick Russell as you might expect. The Russell organization in '48 became the nucleus of the Russell organization in '52--side bar quickly in '52. When the decision for (Adlai Ewing III) Stevenson winning had been made on the fourth ballot--end of the third ballot--the senator called me in and says very simply, "I'm not going to run for Vice President. I've told you that for years." He says, "Go to the meeting and tell them I'm not a candidate for Vice President. Will not accept!" I said, "Senator, they're still going to offer it to you." (He said,) "That's what I'm trying to tell you. Don't let them offer it to me." I said, "All right, sir. But the best that we can do in defense of you is to have a candidate. Who is your candidate?" (Senator Russell asked,) "Which senator has helped us the most?" I came back saying, "Well, there's no doubt that John Sparkman who's been out here in Chicago with me for three weeks now was the first one to come, has been here the longest, and his organization of John (E.) Home, who's just recently passed away, and Edd Hyde have been working our Russell delegate inside cause. They are the best prepared."

END SIDE 1

COCKE: --indefinitely. Are we on now?

FRESHLEY: Yes, we are continuing after a tape breakdown and you were talking about the Washington primary and some of the difficulties that you had having Mr. Russell--

COCKE: Well first I think that--Let me summarize my memory that might make a little tighter package here. He'd been talking to the United States Senate for almost twenty years and the biggest problem was to get him back in a campaign atmosphere. We found that the best way to do that was to let him talk off-the-cuff at one location, let us formulize it, and use it in the next speech. We sort of leapfrogged his speeches and brought him up to date. We had a problem of getting him to tell stories that he was happy with. He even used some jokes that he had used back in the '30 campaign for governor and the--

(Telephone interruption)

COCKE: Okay. Forty-eight campaign and even the '36 campaign for the Senate. He told those stories again. He was comfortable telling them and (they) helped him an awful lot. I had mentioned that we had a little problem with the denture situation, like most all politicians. He had an automobile wreck and the automobile wreck was in his teeth as a permanent injury. And he watched S's particularly and I even got him drilled one time on: "She sells sea shells by the shining seashore. So he beats his fist against a post and still insists he sees a ghost." Well, we got him into that kind of thinking and protection of him. He was a perfectionist in speaking. He would spend many hours changing "shall" to "will" and trying to make the most minor changes. When we would laugh at him because we had already put it in the press and they've already been using it on the radio for twelve hours, but he'd still be polishing a speech, which we got over to him. That's the thing. Smoothing the language was mainly an expression that we used, not to insult him, but to let him know that it would just sound a little bit better if he said it this way with more phonics and pronunciation than anything else. And he hated to read a speech.

His memory was extremely good. He had photo static ability to quote figures and that type of thing. Sometimes he would quote more than you wanted him to quote. We found that lots of things told to him at the Armed Services Committee would be in classified information and when he'd get cross-examined by a rather vindictive press, they would start pressing him and he would sometimes sort of forget, well, how classified is this now. You may have told me six weeks ago and I would have not disclosed it under any circumstances, but now this has already appeared in this magazine or this other speech. Then all of a sudden he would have little doubts in his own mind whether to go ahead and answer a question. Yet we'd come back real quickly pointing out that he wasn't leaking any information. He hated to quote anybody. He wanted everything to be original himself. We did at one time or another get him to use Thomas Jefferson as a person that we could quote and he would quote. But that was a hard arrangement. To get him into the mood of a candidate versus addressing the United States Senate is hard to put in words, but that's the best way to say it.

FRESHLEY: But you had indicated also that when he gave a speech in the Senate, you would prepare a speech for him. And he did not want to use that.

COCKE: That's right.

FRESHLEY: Then what did you do?

COCKE: He never really wanted you to write a true speech for him.

FRESHLEY: How did you deal with that?

COCKE: He considered that plagiarism as such. "I'm using your material, not my material, your material. I don't want to do that." Well, the way we did that more than anything else, would sit down and talk to him. We would talk the speech out with him. "Senator, why don't you try this approach?" You'd sort of spiel off what would be the greater part of about four or five points on an outline, and then, "Isn't this a good place to talk about this? Isn't it a good place to talk about that?" And then we researched what he had said on any number of issues and would say, "Now, on agriculture you've got a beautiful position on this. Now, you're a little weak on this one. But play this up and play that down." We tried to fit the Western delegations that had already elected uncommitted delegates to as good a pattern as we possibly could. The main thing was going and sit with them. We didn't try to make a lot of speeches. In the West, we tried to campaign on delegates. And the big issue was to come to Chicago with 300 votes on the first ballot and we had 298.

FRESHLEY: Who were the other people that were helping in that '52 campaign? You had mentioned (Samuel Ernest) Vandiver.

COCKE: Well, (Samuel) Ernest Vandiver (Jr.) was then the adjutant general and traveled with us a great deal. The family was handled by, later judge; Robert L. (Lee) Russell, Jr. Bobby Russell was certainly the favorite nephew in identification and in politics with the senator and handled him extremely well. We had a number of outstanding men that we borrowed from other senators who were supporting Russell very strongly. From Senator Lyndon (Baines) Johnson, we

got John (Bowden) Connally. From Willis Smith, the senator from North Carolina, we got Jesse Helms. We also got Terry Sanford, later governor of North Carolina and president of Duke. We got (Cecil) Farris Bryant who was the Speaker of the House in Florida and made him actually the Florida campaign manager in '52. He later was governor. He always referred to his trip through Florida as, not Russell campaign for President, but the first Farris Bryant campaign for governor. We had tremendous response from a number of young people that went on to be governors and senators in their own states.

FRESHLEY: You did have a problem deciding about California. I think that was a fascinating story.

COCKE: California became of major importance because we had already decided fairly early not to get into a three-man race between Truman, (Carey Estes) Kefauver and Russell because the best we could do were come out third. It was best not to have been in the primary if you know ahead of time you are going to come out third. President Truman announced on March 31, 1952 that he would not be candidate for President at a (Andrew) Jackson Day-Jefferson Day dinner in Washington at the Armory. In about a two or three-minute discussion with Senator Russell at twelve o'clock Washington time, it meant that Kefauver was either going to have California by default or we had to take the Truman slate and move them up.

I went to a telephone booth in the Armory and called up Attorney General (Edmund Gerald) Pat Brown. This is Edmund Pat Brown, Sr., who was the second man listed with Truman because he was the only Democratic officeholder in California at the time. And I said to Pat Brown, who had been listening to the radio and was sitting in his office, fortunately, in Sacramento. And I said, "It is twelve o'clock here in Washington." And he corrected me. He says, "It's eight minutes after nine o'clock here in Sacramento." And we both hit upon it that at twelve o'clock the entries closed. And he was in the right place at the right time. And he said, "What do I do with Truman withdrawing?" I said to Pat Brown, "You are now a candidate for President." Pat Brown, years later, acknowledged that I was the only person that ever asked him to run for President. But yet we made the decision. We put him on the ticket. Although Kefauver won in California, we did split that delegation with the Brown candidacy. We gave him the Russell organization in California. During the course of time in '52, we worked with everybody. One week we were for them. The next week we were against them. But we kept on to first try to block Senator Kefauver and second, before the Stevenson candidacy matured, and he was the most reluctant candidate in the group, we kept shifting around. Russell was a predominant domination of the entire picture.

FRESHLEY: And then I think on this we didn't get a chance to go back to Washington to tell about their radio speech and your appropriation for him because you had the contacts out there as far as the leaders were concerned.

COCKE: Yes, you see, I had just finished being national commander of the American Legion. I had been in some forty-odd states in '49 campaigning myself, was back as the candidate in '50 and served in '50-51. So I had made this circuit around the country pretty solidly for three years and it was only natural that when Senator Russell started running in '52 that I would be very much involved with him. And honestly, I think that we would have had a great administration with the Russell organization. I pointed out, with the (James Earl, Jr.) Carter organization when they all

showed up as young men in Washington that we would have had a pretty good team in 1953 ourselves.

FRESHLEY: I'll bet, and Mr. Russell's speeches in analyzing the audience in the West, for example. He was certainly in control of so much information about conservation, for example, and industry in the West.

COCKE: Yes, he knew every project that had ever been out there. Fortunately, he hadn't voted for all of them. And we had to be sure - I called Leeman Anderson virtually every night that we were out in the West, back to check up on his record. The Senator would have, say, supported this particular project on five or six procedural votes, but on final passage he had actually been opposed to it because of the total package. Well, in politics they always remember the last vote, not the procedural votes that came up to it. And therefore, we'd have to coach him a little bit to say, "Now don't play that up. You really didn't support this as strongly as you think you did." "Oh, I did vote for it." " Yes, sir, you voted for it, but here's one that we wish you didn't have on the record." So we had to keep his record up to date. He was very conscious of his Senate record after the '52 campaign. Before then, he had been almost too independent in his voting structure. In the Senate, he always even hated to ever talk to whip counters. In other words: "For it, against it. Leaning this way, leaning that way or do you need a pair? Are you going to be out of town? Where are you going to be?" In other words, he was always very reluctant to, first, miss a vote and, second, to tell even his own intimate staff what he was going to do. I'm not talking about a major issue where he'd already been committed, but I'm talking about on somebody else's issue. He was always reluctant, always said, "I'm thinking about it." We had to have a better answer than that.

FRESHLEY: You were discussing one time comparing Mr. Johnson's planning ahead as far as the logistics of putting a speech (inaudible).

COCKE: Well, Lyndon Johnson may not have been the greatest President we ever had, but he will go down in the record as the greatest majority leader we ever had. The perfection in his office and the organization in his office was phenomenal, particularly when John Connally was handling it. An invitation would come in and the Senator has never seen it--Johnson would never have seen it. They will have worked out the logistics--where he was going to be the day before, the day after; would he miss a roll call in Washington? Could he make the speech? If he made the speech there, what would he talk about? When was he in that location last? What needs to be covered there? Who had invited him? Did he have any reason to go back in this or that county or this or that city in Texas particularly, and the file would be all the way up to a draft of what should be said on that occasion, if you are going to accept, about an inch thick before he ever even knew he'd been invited. Then they would make a quick decision and the machinery would all go to effect. And it was an excellent operation. Russell was the other extreme. He would not let us do one thing until he first made up his own mind whether he would accept or decline. He never really kept what I call good books on when did I speak in this place the last time, particularly Georgia cities. Who in Georgia had invited him was a lot more important than who he was talking to. "Now what in the world am I going to tell those people?" was a normal question. "Why do I need to go make them a speech?" We had a lot of negativism on almost any kinds of good appearance, particularly if we were a long ways from a campaign. When he was

elected and had six years to go, you had a hard time moving him. When he had four years to go you had a hard time. He didn't really get interested until the fifth year and then he got interested in terms of campaigning. This is reelection. Therefore, we couldn't do the kind of perfection the other senators did in protecting him. He lived a lonesome life. He lived a bachelor's life and, as such, I think made a greater contribution because he made up his mind very early in life that he was going to literally die with his boots on and he meant to live longer.

I think one of the most amusing ones at the University of Georgia when we were getting ready towards the '72 campaign was that everybody was accusing him of having emphysema and wasn't showing up, had been at Walter Reed too much and shooting him down a little bit. We organized in the summer of '70, a trip where we picked him up in an air-conditioned automobile in Winder and drove him over to Athens, put him on the football field in a golf cart and put his oxygen in the golf cart and brought him out on picture day in August to meet the Georgia football team and photographed at the same time that the players were all being photographed. Why he looked like the greatest picture of health you ever saw in that entire operation and was obviously ready to run for reelection at the drop of a hat. And yet, nobody realized the logistics that we went through to be sure that he looked good on that particular occasion. We worked out an oxygen arrangement in a briefcase that went up his left arm and into his lapel. And any time that he felt short of breath, about all he had to do was drop his head to the left and squeeze the handle of the briefcase which had the oxygen in it and he had a good supply of oxygen that would help him.

FRESHLEY: Did he ever consider getting married?

COCKE: Yes. This was really more before my time. But when he was about forty-one or forty-two and had been in Washington then almost ten years, he did really fall in love with a divorcée and a very fine relationship between them. But she unfortunately not only was a divorcée, which was a real problem in politics in the thirties, but she was a divorced divorcée and was a Catholic. And if there's anything that Dick Russell did listen to was his political advisors any campaign years and Hughes Spalding, a very recognized Catholic leader in Georgia through all of his public life, just told him he couldn't do it. And he then made up his mind not to marry her and I think at the same time made up his mind then not to marry anybody. His race for the presidency in '52--he was fifty-four years old. So he really made a pretty early decision that he would stay a bachelor.

FRESHLEY: I think you said something about he had a comment on, in his twenties and thirties he was--

COCKE: Yes, now he always wanted you to get married. He was always encouraging all of the bachelors that worked for him and there were a good fifteen to eighteen of us that worked for him in a forty-year period. And he encouraged all of us to get married. And he said he was entirely too busy in his twenties; he was entirely too ambitious in his thirties; and he was too active in his forties to get married; by fifty, he considered himself not interested or ever having a change to get married.

FRESHLEY: What is the earliest incident that you recall him sharing with you about his speech training with--

COCKE: The family was basically Presbyterian. The mother was the devout Presbyterian and all the younger daughters and sons were Presbyterian. The Judge was a Methodist and the Senator, the oldest son, and Judge Robert L. Russell, Sr--this is federal judge--were the Methodists. An early Methodist minister, at an impressionable age of, say, even nine, ten or eleven--along in there--twelve, sold him very definitely on the books of the Bible that he reduced to memory, the verses of the Bible that he quoted frequently and very effectively. He had some good Shakespearean quotes that he used occasionally too. His memory was good and he always trained himself to speak all of his life and that's one reason he was so irritated with the plate in his mouth because he had trouble with S's. Particularly, we even drilled him with: "She sells sea shells by the shining seashore. He beats his fists against a post and still insists he sees a ghost." And we would make him say that a couple of times at breakfast. We could almost tell the way he would start at breakfast what kind of mood he was in for the day. When we'd come in if he started off: "Mr. Cocke, what kind of an impossible schedule have you got arranged for me today?" Then he'd gotten up on the wrong side. If he started out: "Erie, had a good day yesterday. I hope today's going to be as well. What can we do today that will get us more votes." Then I knew he got up on the right side. So I could tell by the way he would address me as to how he was reacting on any given occasion.

FRESHLEY: Now you indicated that he wanted to say something different almost to every audience and you really were trying to get a standard speech.

COCKE: We were trying to get a standard speech. We wanted him to give a standard stump speech. We didn't want him to talk about every issue that did not need to be discussed. And as a result, we tried to crystallize and channelize his presentation. We made several major appearances in the Western states, but what I really wanted to do was put him in a circle and have a one-on-one. We couldn't quite do it delegate to delegate. There just wasn't enough time to do that. But many times I would get him in a room with as many as five and six delegates and just let him talk. And there he was phenomenal. He was just the most selling salesman you can imagine. And I kept him off of addressing the United States Senate, we didn't get any delegate votes. But when we sat down with them in a very, very informal session he was just an absolute world beater as far as turning people around. And even those that were pledged to somebody else and had been elected pledged to somebody else, just walked out of the room: "As soon as I'm free, you're my candidate. Soon as I get through the first ballot, I'm going to vote for you. I'll even change my vote after the first ballot and before the roll call is announced." We had the most liberal interpretations of commitment that you can ever imagine.

FRESHLEY: Could he have been elected if he hadn't been a southerner?

COCKE: There's no question in my mind that he could have been elected. Truman, in one of Truman's books, said that "If he had been from Kentucky, Indiana or Missouri," is the exact quote, "he would have been Vice President before I was." If he had been from a border state, there's no question, he would have then still been the southern leader because he was such a natural leader and he was a great historian. I don't think people realize what a historian he was. He was a master of the parliamentary procedure and the rules of the Senate to such an extent that even today he's referred to: "the Russell precedent on sound-so," "the Russell interpretation"

most of which have been recorded and are still used in the Senate although he's been dead since '71.

FRESHLEY: What kind of preparation do you know of did he make for a speech, either in gathering material or in practicing it? Did he ever have a chance to practice it on the timer.

COCKE: We tried to force him to practice more than he would. I remember one time I said, "Senator, we practice everything, but funerals. We practice sports events; we practice weddings; we practice graduations; we practice speaking. Everybody has a dry run. Now, tell me what you're going to tell them today." And that was one of the better ways that we would correlate him was think. Then when he would tell us what he was going to tell us, then we would come and sort of "Well now Senator, make that a little stronger. Make this a little weaker. Fluff this up. Cool that down." So we channelized him after he decided to tell us what he was going to say. Now if we started out saying, "Senator, this is what you ought to say today," boy I got the most negative answer you ever saw from that kind of a situation. I finally found that the best way to approach him was to say, "Now I'm following what you said was to get the local flavor. I now have the local flavor. I've met with the mayor here and the governor here and the state chairman here or whoever it might be. Ernie Vandiver has talked to the adjutant general and his contacts. This is our consensus. Local issues are: one, two, three, four, five." And we'd hand them to him on a three-by-five card. He'd have those in his hand. Then we'd hit him with, "Now what are you going to tell them?" All of a sudden those five points got used. But if we'd have walked in and said, "Use these five point--" The great question of perjury always comes up right away. "I'm taking somebody else's writings. I don't want you to write for me. I going to say it all fresh myself." We kept on saying, "Well, it's all right to say it fresh, but the press is not going to cover you that close. We've still have to get a press release out. We've got to spoon-feed the media that were with us." And we had trouble attracting attention. Don't get the idea that any candidate starts out with a great entourage. In fact, we had to promote to get a busload going around in Florida with us. But it paid off. I made him work the buses. He didn't mind working the buses and this got some of the best publicity we got. Most candidates on a bus take one of the front seats and stays and that becomes the candidate's seat. Well, we didn't have a candidate's seat. I'd move him around. And the reason I'd move him around was, number one, I wanted to control the time. And if they control the time, they stayed too long. The press would stay too long. But I would put them by the windows and then move him to the aisle seat and when I gave him the signal "cut it", he would then cut it and move to another seat. And that worked extremely well, particularly in Florida and to a lesser extent in some of the other primaries that we were involved in.

FRESHLEY: Did you have a formal title or were you just campaign manager?

COCKE: Well, I really ended up--we, of course, had Senator George was chairman and then Senator (Edwin Carl) Ed Johnson of Colorado was a chairman. We had Herman Talmadge as a cochairman and so forth, letterhead type of thing. And then I ended up being first called a coordinator. Then we later moved into becoming candidate coordinator. Then finally that came down to the mechanics of whatever the occasion might need. Many times I was introduced as *the* campaign manager travelling with the Senator, meaning there are other campaign managers, but

(they) are not travelling with the Senator. That helped tremendously in smaller groups particularly.

END OF SIDE 2

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