

IN THE CLOAKROOM AND ON THE FLOOR

Interview #1

Monday Morning, June 1, 2009

RITCHIE: You came here as a Page in January of 1943.

BAKER: January 1, 1943. I was just barely 14 years old.

RITCHIE: What was your first impression of the U.S. Senate when you came here as a 14-year-old boy?

BAKER: Well, my first impression was when I saw all of the soldiers with their bayonets guarding the Capitol. It scared hell out of me, because I had never been 50 miles beyond Pickens when I came to Washington on a bus with a fellow named George Bowie who had enlisted in the Navy Seabee program. He escorted me on the bus from Greenville to Washington. I had never seen potatoes served for breakfast until I got to Washington. I said to myself, "I'm really in Yankee country." Then I rented a room from a lady named Miss Gordon, who had a place over there on Constitution Avenue where the Dirksen Senate Office Building is now. So you could go to the Capitol from there easily. I'll tell you, for a hillbilly from South Carolina, I could not believe the grandeur of the Capitol and Washington.

RITCHIE: I was thinking that this was wartime and it was hard to get housing. Did they save housing for the Pages in those days?

BAKER: Because Miss Gordon had been renting to Senate and House and Supreme Court Pages, I don't think that there was any shortage of places. You just went wherever you were sent to.

RITCHIE: And there weren't that many Pages, were there?

BAKER: I would be surprised if there were 10 Senate Pages on the Majority—which was the Democratic—side. There were probably five on the Republican side.

RITCHIE: Who did you report to when you got here as a Page?

BAKER: Mr. Leslie Biffle, he was from Arkansas, and he was Secretary for the Majority. And his secretary was named Betty Eiler, who later married the manager of the Senate restaurant, Jack Darling. She was a lovely, lovely lady, and I cherished her friendship. I think she's deceased.

RITCHIE: I think so, yes. So what was Mr. Biffle like?

BAKER: He was a kind, typical gracious Southern man who had the confidence of all Senators irrespective of what their philosophy was. The Senate was basically controlled by the Southern Democrats. Senator [Richard] Russell and Senator [Walter] George were powerful members of the Senate when I first came here. Both of them were very, very kind and supportive of me—since my parents were from Hartwell, Georgia. I was the first grandson. You had to pay 10 cents when you went from the South Carolina side to the Georgia side of the Savannah River on Route 29. The publisher of the *Hartwell Sun* was a Jewish man, and he owned the bridge. They were so poor in Hartwell County, Georgia, at this time, they could not afford to pay the sheriff, so he got to keep his fines. So it was just automatic that any 18-wheeler that came through town had to pay \$100 fine. The Internal Revenue went after him and they found \$2 million in his safety deposit box. He got 20 years.

When I first came to the Senate, Senator Alben Barkley was the Majority Leader, and Senator Wallace White from Maine was the Republican Leader. Senator Barkley was probably the best storyteller in the history of the Senate. One day, the Secretary of the Senate had a luncheon for Bob Hope, and he was seated next to me. He had just come back from the Berlin crisis, where Barkley went with Bob Hope to entertain the troops. Bob Hope told me, he said, "Bobby, I've got 10 writers that I pay a minimum of \$100,000 each, and Senator Barkley is a hell of a lot wittier than any of them." He said, "He's the wittiest man I ever met." When I see people fishing I tell them an old Barkley story about a young boy in Kentucky who had his first date on a Sunday night with a pretty girl. His father loaned him his buggy to go to church. When they got to the river, there was a little Negro boy fishing. When the horse saw the water, it stopped, so he had to get out and pull it. He looked down and said, "Hey, there, sonny, what size fish are you catching?" He said, "Aw, shucks, Mister, about the size of your pecker." He was embarrassed, and his girl was embarrassed. About a mile down the road, he said,

“Sweetheart, that boy’s catching some mighty nice size fish.” But Barkley could tell them all day.

And Senator Wallace White was a very well respected Minority Leader. I think they need people like him, because they’re so bitter now. I’ve never seen it like this. It’s tragic.

RITCHIE: Briefly, Charles McNary was still there.

BAKER: Yes, he was. He became the Minority Leader after Senator White.

RITCHIE: McNary died, and then White became the Minority Leader.

BAKER: Okay. But McNary had a great sense of humor. He was well, well liked. He was from Oregon. He treated the Page boys with great dignity. Since you’re from New York, Senator Robert Wagner was the Senior Senator from New York. He liked to haze new Pages. I’m telling you, I was the dumbest cluck that ever hit the Senate. He snapped his fingers. I went over. “Yes, sir, what can I do for you?” He said, “Upstairs is the Senate Document Room. Go up there and tell them I want a bill stretcher.” So I went up there. I fell into his trap. But he wore spats. He was the only Senator I remember that wore spats every day. Like Senator [Clyde] Hoey used to wear a swallowtail coat. The secretaries used to call me in the cloakroom because back then we always got paid in cash, twice a month. They’d say, “Is that old son of a bitch out there by the water fountain?” Because what he would do, when a pretty girl would come by he’d call her over and then he would try to play with her breasts.

RITCHIE: Was that Hoey?

BAKER: Senator Hoey, yes. He had a real pretty girl called Carolyn Basson work in his office. She married Senator Russell Long. She sure did. She was a pretty girl. Since I was from South Carolina, we were great friends. I think she’s still alive.

RITCHIE: Yes, she is.

BAKER: She lives at the Watergate.

RITCHIE: I get the sense that the Senate was a sleepy place during the war.

BAKER: Well, yes, because basically all you voted on was money for the war, and the fiscal year then, say in 1943, ended on July 1. So come July 1 they would adjourn to the next January. It was a very sleepy place. Nothing was happening. No new bills of any consequence.

RITCHIE: When the Senate would adjourn, would you go back to South Carolina?

BAKER: Yeah, in the summer of '44 I became a lifeguard at Table Rock State Park, and in '45, and then I went back to high school until I had to come back here in January. But it was an interesting experience.

RITCHIE: And you went to Page school while you were here?

BAKER: Yes, see in South Carolina they only had 11 grades. So they gave me a test and bumped me from the eighth grade to the ninth grade. So I graduated June, 15, 1945. The speaker for our graduation was Speaker [Sam] Rayburn. And there was a Senator from Ohio that President [Harry] Truman named to the Supreme Court, named Harold Burton. It was a wonderful experience.

RITCHIE: In those days wasn't the Page school down in the Capitol terraces?

BAKER: Yes. We went to school from about 6:30 to 9:30.

RITCHIE: In the morning.

BAKER: The Senate was in session Monday to Thursday. Since the war was going on, and we got out at 9:30, and they had great stage shows at the Capital Theater, the Palace Theater, and the Warner Theater, and the RKO Theater, so I want to tell you I had a great time during World War II going to all those movies. Everybody was so patriotic, so I guess when I was 15—to get into the Maryland home guard you were supposed to be 16, but I lied. If you wore a military uniform you could get in the Gaiety, the burlesque theater, and you could buy beer, if you had the uniform. We had gas

rationing. One of my classmates in the Page school was a senior. He had an old 1937 Buick Roadmaster convertible. He sold it to me for \$200. But because of the war you could not buy canvas to do the top, so every time it rained we had to pull under a bridge until the rain stopped. But it was a magnificent car. We had a lot of fun.

RITCHIE: I can imagine. The Senate was, as you say, not in session that often, but when it was in session, what did you have to do as a Page?

BAKER: Well, basically, if a Senator wanted a glass of water, you got it for him. You know, Senator Truman was one of the nicest people. He would always say, "Young man, when it is convenient, will you get me a glass of water." Then you had some like Senator [James] Murray from Montana, he wanted his warm. We had an ice box in the cloakroom, but you would get a warm bottle and open it. They had Mountain Valley water and some kind of fizzy water, I've forgotten the name of it, but we Pages used to spray each other with it on occasion.

Because of the war, you did not have a lot of great orators talking. I do remember that Senator Barkley was the Majority Leader and Senator [Kenneth] McKellar from Tennessee disliked Barkley. They sat side by side and never spoke to each other. And [Albert] Happy Chandler, I guess Barkley helped him get elected, but he felt that Barkley was too liberal. But I think before Barkley died they had reinstated their friendship.

RITCHIE: Were you there when Barkley resigned as Leader? There was a big flap when he quit because he was angry at President Franklin Roosevelt?

BAKER: Well, sure I remember that. I think it was over a tax bill. I would say 90 percent of the Democrats on the Senate side were with Barkley, even the most Dixiecrat Senators that we had. Senator George never liked Roosevelt. They fought him rather bitterly.

RITCHIE: After Barkley resigned, the Democrats reelected him right away.

BAKER: Oh, sure, and he became much, much more popular as a consequence.

RITCHIE: Because before that he had been seen as Roosevelt's man in the

Senate?

BAKER: Exactly. I guess the reason that I had the opportunity to be Senator Burnett Maybank's first patronage appointment as a Page boy was because Senator Barkley and Senator [James] Byrnes of South Carolina had really worked hard to pass President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs.¹ Senator Byrnes went to Senator Barkley and said, "Alben as a personal favor, I want you to go see the President and tell him I would like to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court." Now, Jimmy Byrnes was the only man in the history of the Supreme Court that never went to law school. He was a shorthand reporter and he had worked for an appellate judge, and that basically was his legal education. He was very lucky that he had a friend named Donald Russell, who became Governor of South Carolina. He really was the man behind Jimmy Byrnes at the Supreme Court. When Truman became President, he named Jimmy Byrnes as Secretary of State. I think President Truman thought that was the biggest mistake in his life.

Senator Cotton Ed Smith [Ellison D. Smith] from South Carolina was the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and he was the worst race-baiter in the history of the Senate. Senator [Theodore] Bilbo was second. He was so vulgar that at the 1936 Democratic Convention, in Philadelphia, nominating FDR for a second term, President Roosevelt had selected a very distinguished Negro pastor to say the opening prayer. Cotton Ed Smith took the whole South Carolina delegation out and said he's "not going to listen to any nigger son of a bitch." It turned out, after he was defeated, that he was one of the most corrupt Senators in the history of the Senate. All of these agriculture people were just giving him money. You can not believe what a crook he was.

RITCHIE: How about your patron, Senator Maybank, what was he like?

BAKER: Senator Maybank, he had, like [Ernest] Fritz Hollings, a Geechi accent. He was very, very kind. He had a beautiful wife. They had a summer home near my home town of Pickens, South Carolina, but it was in North Carolina. And he bought a house in Spring Valley. He had one weakness. He had to have about a half a tumbler of

¹Burnett Maybank was Governor of South Carolina from 1939 to 1941 until he was elected to fill the vacancy caused by Senator James F. Byrnes' resignation to join the Supreme Court.

Bourbon when he woke up in the morning. He died, I think, when he was about 51. He was terribly young. But he was Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee. Joe McCarthy was on his Committee, and Senator Joe McCarthy was a fun guy back then. I mean, he and Senator Maybank, and Senator [Homer] Capehart, all worked together.

I had never been to Charleston in my life, because Pickens is in the mountains and Charleston is on the Ocean. When they had the official Senate burial of Senator Maybank, they permitted me to go with the Senate delegation. First time in my life I ever saw the family—it was an old Charleston custom that the family throws the dirt on the casket, once they lower it. But South Carolina was well served. He was a decent guy. The first time I met President Roosevelt, it was in March of 1943. Mrs. Roosevelt had invited the Senate, the House, and the Supreme Court Pages to lunch on a Saturday to see a movie. After we finished lunch, she said, “How many of you would like to go and meet the President?” So we were all excited. We went up and the President asked each person where he was from. He said, “Young man, where are you from?” I said, “I’m from Pickens, South Carolina, and my boss is Senator Burnett R. Maybank.” He said, “Let me tell you, that’s the greatest thing that ever happened to the United States Senate,” because he said, “The Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee is not very fond of me, and he has a very vulgar mouth when it comes to talking about me.” He said, “I’m sure delighted to meet you.” He really impressed hell out of me.

As a Page, we always got to go over [to the House Chamber] to hear the President speak, or any person like [Winston] Churchill. The last speech he made, before he died in ’45, was the first time they permitted him to speak from his wheelchair. Because normally, they had braces on his legs. And the press, they were so kind that they never wrote that he was a paralytic. To my shock, when I was in the Allenwood Prison, Carmine DeSapio, former New York Democratic Leader, came there and I used to walk with him. He did not handle jail very well, so he would just walk. He was the first person who ever told me that Eleanor was a Lesbian. Then, I guess, one of the best historical writers in the country is Doris Kearns Goodwin, and she confirmed it. I guess Mrs. Roosevelt had some relation with an A.P. [Associated Press] lady for many, many years. But she was very gracious and kind, and I think she was one of the great women of the world.

RITCHIE: Wasn't that the famous story about the spoons, when you went to the White House?

BAKER: Oh, yeah. [chuckles] We were there for lunch on Saturday. On Monday morning, at 6:30, the Secret Service came to the Capitol Page School and said, "We have a very big dinner coming up tonight and we have no silverware." They said, "You Pages took souvenirs you're not entitled to." My mother would have killed me—I never thought of taking anything! But they let us all out of school and the Secret Service was very happy, they recovered all of their silverware.

RITCHIE: That whole time period of the 1940s is so interesting to me. I wondered if you could talk about the fact that Senator Maybank was actually fairly liberal, wasn't he, by comparison to many of the Southern Senators?

BAKER: Having succeeded Jimmy Byrnes, who was very pro-Roosevelt, Senator Maybank was too—unless it had something to do with Civil Rights, which back then you very seldom heard of it. Civil Rights didn't really become a big issue until Senator Bilbo had been reelected in Mississippi in 1946. Senator Robert Taft, the Republican Leader, in the Republican desire to appeal to Negro voters, filed a motion not to seat Senator Bilbo. He ultimately was not qualified. He was a real bigot, also.

But Senator Taft was one of the ablest Leaders in the history of the Senate. I've got a true story—you know, under the Constitution you have to be 35 to be President, and be native born; to be a Senator you have to be 30; to be a Congressman you have to be 25. When Senator Russell Long was elected before he was 30, I think we had to wait two or three weeks, but he came over to the Democratic cloakroom. Since I was chief Page there, I took him around to show him where the Senate reading room was, and at that time, Senator Taft, the Republican Leader was there. I said, "Mr. Leader, I'd like to introduce you to our newest member of the Senate, who can take the oath in two or three days." Senator Taft was not a very humorous man, but he said, "Senator, I am delighted to meet you." He said, "As you know, my father was President and then he became Chief Justice." He said, "One night at the dinner table he said to all of us, and I shall never forget it, that the ablest plaintiff's lawyer that ever appeared before the Supreme Court was Huey Long, your father." So Russell Long, was very pleased. It's a true story.

Had Senator Taft been better looking for television, General [Dwight] Eisenhower would never have been President, but television just killed Senator Taft.

RITCHIE: He wasn't outgoing.

BAKER: No, he was what I call humorless. But he was a truly dedicated Statesman. I've seen him do things on housing bills and things like that to help the oppressed. So I have a warm, warm feeling about him. My Republican friends need somebody like him now. The way they are shooting themselves in the foot with minorities—[Richard] Nixon to his credit, when Eisenhower was President, they had a New Yorker named Herbert Brownell as the Attorney General, and he really drew up a very strong Civil Rights bill. Nixon was 1,000 percent for it. I would see Nixon entertaining Roy Wilkins and the chief lobbyist for the NAACP, and Vice President Nixon was making great headway with the Negro lobbyist. But then, Senator Russell and his Southern followers filibustered them and they never got anything done.

Then, I guess, the greatest thing Senator Lyndon Johnson did was, I guess it was '58 we passed the first Civil Rights bill since the Civil War. The Senator who became President as a consequence of his vote on the Jury Trial Amendment was Senator John Kennedy. Had he not voted for it, we did not have the votes to pass the bill, because Senator Russell said to me, "Bobby, if there's no Jury Trial Amendment in that bill, there'll be no bill." So Speaker Rayburn, in trying to protect Senator Johnson because of his heart attack, would send many House members to me. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell was Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. He came over and said, "Boss, what can I do?" I said, "Mr. Chairman, the New England delegation wants Senator Kennedy to be President Kennedy. Whichever way he votes, they're going to vote. Without Senator [John] Pastore, and Senator [Theodore Francis] Green, and Senator Kennedy, I don't have the votes to pass the Jury Trial Amendment." I said, "Mrs. Roosevelt, Arthur Schlesinger, all the Leadership of the ADA [Americans for Democratic Action], and Walter Reuther, are all vigorously opposed to the Jury Trial Amendment. They say they'd rather have no bill at all if they have a Jury Trial Amendment." So I was a really close friend to Senator Kennedy. I was a Baptist married to a Catholic, and he kept asking me, "Do you think a Catholic can be elected President?" I said, "It would be hard." But in the end, Congressman Powell was the Pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. He said, "Boss, you tell Senator Kennedy to read about my sermon on

Sunday.” He took on Mrs. Roosevelt—I don’t think he liked her anyway—and Schlesinger, and the ADA, and said, “Even though it’s a small foot in the door, it will get us started. We’ve never passed anything since the Civil War.” He was a courageous man to do what he did, because after his sermon, Senator Kennedy said, “I’m going to vote for the Jury Trial Amendment.” That made him so many friends in the South that he made unbelievable headway toward the nomination in 1960. Senator Russell, all of them, really took a liking to him. I mean, they appreciated his courage in defying the liberals in the Democratic Party.

RITCHIE: It’s interesting about the South. Because of the Civil Rights issue, the South gets a general conservative image, but Southern Senators were very different from each other. There were liberals as well as conservatives.

BAKER: Oh, yeah, you had Lister Hill and Senator John Sparkman from Alabama. Senator Hill was the daddy of the National Institutes of Health. He was on the Appropriations Committee. And Senator Sparkman was one of the abler people who ever served in the Senate. Senator Hill, when he was 25, when Woodrow Wilson ran for the Presidency, he was the Democratic Candidate for the House of Representatives from Alabama. When William Jennings Bryan, who had been defeated for the Presidency, was campaigning, he was impressed with Senator Hill’s youth. He said, “Lister, what can I do to help you?” And this is from Senator Hill telling me. Lister Hill said, “I have a terrible time. When I get up to speak before a crowd I just shake all over.” He said, “Don’t let that bother you. I have the same problem.” And Frank Sinatra, I met him one time at the Fountainbleu Hotel. He’d just put on a big show at the Fountainbleu. He spent three hours with me because he’d been offended by President Kennedy sort of getting away from their friendship. So I told him the Lister Hill story. He said, “I have the same problem. I don’t know whether the words are going to come out when I go out there. But once they start clapping, then you can do it.” It’s interesting that people of that stature have a little of that, but once the adrenalin starts pumping, they do a beautiful job.

RITCHIE: They said that John Kennedy used to shake a lot before he spoke.

BAKER: Senator John Kennedy was probably—I had been the executive director of the Democratic Platform Committee in 1956, and my boss was Congressman John McCormack, the Democratic House Majority Leader. When Senator Kennedy told me he

was going to be a Candidate for the Vice Presidency, Senator Johnson worked for it but Speaker Rayburn thought that Senator Kennedy was a lazy Congressman and was not worthy of being on the ticket, so Senator Johnson had a hell of a hard time convincing Speaker Rayburn to support Senator Kennedy. I guess the reason why the Speaker and most of the Texas Delegation went for Senator Kennedy was because Walter Reuther, who was the most important man at the Democratic Convention, he controlled more Union Delegates, had a pledge from Senator Estes Kefauver that if he, Kefauver, was elected Vice President, he would rule the Senate was not a continuing body, and as a consequence, Rule 22 [on cloture] would no longer be applicable. That's the reason Walter Reuther supported him.

Senator Kennedy was brokenhearted, disappointed, and he fled with a mutual friend that was sort of his leg man with the women, Bill Thompson from Florida, who was a great friend of Senator [George] Smathers. Bill Thompson was at Iwo Jima with Senator Paul Douglas, and Bill Thompson said, "Baker, that son of a bitch is crazy. Those goddamned Japs were killing people all around and he's saying 'Charge!'" He said, "I'm the biggest coward you ever met. I dug the biggest fox hole you could see." But he said, "He is the most courageous man I've ever known." I have very fond memories of Senator Paul Douglas. He selected me to be one of the ten outstanding young men in government for *Esquire* Magazine. He had an administrative assistant, Howard Shuman, who despised me.

Howard peddled a big lie about me where he said I had four or five Senators in the palm of my hand. I never said that in my life, and I resented it. My sister used to work for Senator Douglas, and she liked Howard. I just visited her in Myrtle Beach on Saturday evening, and I said to her, "Do you ever hear from Howard?" And she said, "I think he's got Alzheimer's."

RITCHIE: He was in a nursing home in Virginia. He just died a few months ago.

BAKER: You talking about a nursing home—George Reedy was in a nursing home for about two years before he died. George Reedy loved martinis better than anybody I ever knew, and this [Robert] Caro would go out there, and he interviewed him for nine months. He got an unbelievable amount of spite out of him, because Reedy didn't think he was treated right, so he was trying to get even. But he was brilliant. I think

he was one of the original Quiz Kids. But Caro, he's written unusually good books, but when he called me—I guess Senator Pastore and Senator [Edmund] Muskie said, "The one man you really must interview is Bobby Baker." They said, "He's closer to Lyndon Johnson than Lady Bird is." So he called me. I don't know why I was subscribing to the *Atlantic* magazine, but he had put in a foreword about the four books he was going to do about Senator Johnson and what a crook he was, and the way he handled campaign contributions. When he called me, he said, "Mr. Baker, everybody says I must talk to you." I said, "You're a lyin' son of a bitch." He said, "How can you say that?" I said, "Well, I read where you're going to say that Johnson was the biggest crook that ever handled campaign contributions." I said, "I was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Campaign Committee. I personally handled all of the money, and Senator Johnson was such a coward, when we'd be coming to the Capitol and he'd pick me up with Norman, his chauffeur, and when I started talking about how little money we had and what I recommended to him that we give the cash that we had, he would push the dividing window in the limousine so Norman couldn't hear what we said." The second time he [Caro] called and said, "I've just got to talk to you," I said, "Once again, I have no confidence in anything you do because Mrs. Johnson, Walter Jenkins, and John Connally said they gave you 90 percent good and 10 percent bad and the only thing you wrote was the bad." Then he said, "Well, my publicity agent put that story out about the campaign contributions." I said, "Then I apologize." I've never met the guy, but [Walter] Joe Stewart, who was the smartest guy who ever worked for me, spent a lot of time with him, and he likes him.

RITCHIE: He's very intense. He's come to do research around the Senate at various times, and he wants to know Lyndon Johnson inside out.

BAKER: Oh, yeah, yeah. He's done well. He's a very adept writer. But to spend 30 years writing about one man, he has a loose screw.

RITCHIE: Well, I wanted to go back again to the 1940s. In 1945 you had been here for two years—

BAKER: Well, '45 would be two years and change.

RITCHIE: —Right. And you graduated from Page School in 1945.

BAKER: Yes, see what happened, the head Democratic Page was Charles Russell, who went into the Marine Corps. He's now on the Supreme Court in Virginia. He is a very bright guy. He was old enough in 1944 that he had to go into the service. At 18 you either volunteered or you were drafted, and I think he volunteered, and he had a great record in the service.

RITCHIE: But you were just 16 then.

BAKER: That's right, but that's when I became the Chief Telephone Page. So "Landslide Lyndon" was elected in 1948. Mr. Biffle had taken me to Philadelphia for the Convention for the Truman-Barkley ticket. Poor old President Truman did not get to make his acceptance speech until about 2:30 in the morning. I still remember, somebody released a bunch of white pigeons, or some kind of birds, I don't know. I don't think that 10 percent of the people in that Convention thought that President Truman had a prayer to beat Governor [Thomas E.] Dewey. Back then, the Republican Party was really not significant in Texas, but Lyndon Johnson was too liberal for Texas, and most called him "Landslide Lyndon" because he won by 78 votes. Abe Fortas was able to get the Supreme Court to certify his primary victory. I think ex-Governor [Coke] Stevenson was his primary opponent. But by the brilliance of Abe Fortas, he was certified. After the general election in '48, when he and Senator [Robert] Kerr were elected, I got a call about a week after the election. It was from John Connally. He said, "Mr. Baker, Senator-elect Johnson is still the Congressman from Texas, but he would like to meet you." He said, "Can you be in our office at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning? And number two, do you know where it is?" I said, "I sure do. I walked that way as a Page boy many times."

I was a skinny little boy, I weighed about 120 pounds. He weighed about 280. So when John Connally took me in to introduce me to Senator-elect Johnson, Johnson jumped up and he said, "Mr. Baker, they tell me you're the smartest son of a bitch over there." I said, "Well, whoever told you that lied." I said, "I know all of the staff on our side. I know who the drunks are. And I know whose word is good." He said, "You're the man I want to know." So we became great friends. After Senator [Ernest] McFarland became the Leader and Senator Johnson was the Whip, he talked Senator McFarland into making me assistant Secretary for the Majority.

RITCHIE: I was going to ask you, you became the first Chief Telephone Page when you graduated from high school.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: Why did you decide to stay? You could have gone off to college.

BAKER: Well, you know, I really liked the Senate as an institution. You develop a lot of wonderful friends, and they get to where they depend on you. "Can you hold the vote?" And all these things. I knew how to call for quorums and so forth. The Senate was a very friendly place. And they liked to see a young man get ahead. Because of my youth and my ability to help them, I was very successful.

RITCHIE: What exactly was a Chief Telephone Page?

BAKER: Well, every Senator's administrative assistant or staff will call to ask, "Is my boss on the floor?" "Can he be gone two hours?" And they want to talk to you.

RITCHIE: So you had to know what was going on on the floor all the time?

BAKER: Precisely, and you had to know however much time you had before there would be a vote. So you developed a beautiful friendship with staff members. Then you would party with them, too.

RITCHIE: Would you work mostly out of the cloakroom or on the floor?

BAKER: Basically in the cloakroom, because that's where the Senators get off the floor and they let their hair down. Mr. Charles Watkins was the Senate Parliamentarian and a brilliant man, so when I needed some technical assistance, I'd go see Mr. Watkins. "What is the status?" And he, because of my youth, was very kind and helpful.

RITCHIE: He was also a Southerner.

BAKER: Yes, I think he was from Arkansas also.

RITCHIE: So even the staff was Southern in those days.

BAKER: Yeah, you know, between Senator Russell and the Republicans, they basically controlled the Senate. If you didn't get Senator Russell's approval, you didn't get anything passed.

RITCHIE: Well, you had Scott Lucas as Majority Leader—

BAKER: Yeah, and Senator Scott Lucas was a very able man. When I make talks to young people in colleges, I tell them there are only two wars in the history of this great country that you can justify. The first was the Revolutionary War and the second was against Hitler and the Japanese in World War II. I said, if you'll look at the history of this great country—I'm getting back to Senator Scott Lucas—the Spanish-American War didn't do us any good. The Korean War wrecked Senator Lucas. He would have been reelected but Senator [Everett] Dirksen just ran on President Truman's poor record in Korea. LBJ would be as popular as Abraham Lincoln had it not been for Viet Nam. And President George Bush II [George W. Bush] would have been very popular had it not been for Iraq. Plus, I think Karl Rove misled him terribly, because instead of doing a coalition government once he became President, he just became so partisan that history will not be very kind to him, and he's a nice man. And George Bush (#41) was a nice, nice man. He ranks pretty good with the historians.

RITCHIE: But Senator Lucas lost because of the Korean War?

BAKER: Absolutely. I mean, the war was so unpopular that Senator Dirksen defeated him. But Senator Dirksen and I—his daughter Joy used to date my roommates, Charlie Jones and Ron Pickens. After the war, Senator Maybank was looking for a young man with a car that could drive him from Spring Valley to his Senate office, so he gave Charlie a job as a doorkeeper. When Senator Dirksen became the Leader, Charlie went to a Senatorial party and he met Joy Dirksen. They became great, great friends. As a consequence of Charlie Jones and Joy's love affair, Joy loved me to the day she died. We both had the same doctor, Dr. Joe Bailey at the Washington Clinic, and Dr. Bailey told me that she had an alcohol problem. After Joy's untimely death, her husband [Howard Baker] married the Senator from Kansas [Nancy Kassebaum].

I think of all the Republican Leaders I've known, Senator Howard Baker was absolutely the best. He was good for our country. I just wrote a letter to Senator Harry Reid saying that the biggest problem this country is confronted with for the next 40 to 50 years is having water for Arizona, Nevada, California, and New Mexico. If we are smart enough to pump oil from Alaska, we can pump water from there. They've got a surplus of water. The Mississippi runs over every year, the Red River runs over, the Missouri runs over. The President is talking about wanting to create jobs, you can create millions of jobs if you pump that water out West, because you're helping your country, and we do agriculture work better than anybody in the world. I have a son, Jimmy, that lives in San Francisco. When you fly over all that wasteland, just think of what it would be if it was productive, and all the arid desert needs is water.

RITCHIE: That's what Senator Carl Hayden was doing, pumping water into the desert.

BAKER: Oh, sure. Absolutely. Senator Hayden, I helped him get the votes for that Arizona Project. I think it was over \$1 billion, which was a hell of a lot of money then. Then I helped Senator Kerr get by Congressman Mike Kirwan with a hundred thousand contribution, via the truckers' lobbyist. Senator Kerr gave it to Neil Curry, who was the lobbyist for the American Truckers. So he and Congressman Mike Kirwan were drinking buddies, but Congressman Kirwan did not like Senator Kerr. Senator Kerr wanted to build a canal from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Tulsa, Oklahoma, because he was always getting hell beaten out of him there—Tulsa was a very conservative Republican city. He secured \$2 billion to build a canal from the Mississippi, from Fort Smith to Tulsa. And it's there now. North American [Aviation] got the contract via Senator Kerr. They have about 20,000 employees still there.

President Kennedy didn't know anything about space, so he had called the President of MIT—I've forgotten his name—to be the Chairman of NASA. He said, "Mr. President, I voted for it. I don't know one thing in the world about space. I would be an embarrassment to you and my country." So then President Kennedy said to Vice President Johnson, "Lyndon, you know more about space than anybody. See if you can find me a Leader for NASA." Johnson had hand-picked everybody on his Space Committee and Senator Kerr was the ranking man. So he went to him and said, "Bob, the President wants me to find a new Leader for NASA." Senator Kerr said, "Lyndon I've

got the man.” He said, “Jim Webb was Under Secretary of State when [Dean] Acheson was Secretary of State, and I gave him a job to help Kerr-McGee in international matters. His wife is a New Yorker and she hates Oklahoma City. They don’t have any opera and symphony orchestras in Oklahoma City, and she told him she would divorce him if he didn’t get a job with the Kennedy-Johnson team.” So Senator Kerr asked Vice President Johnson to recommend Jim Webb to President Kennedy.

Now, back then it was about a \$200 million contract. It was the biggest government contract during the entire Kennedy administration. Because of my friendship with Fred Black, the North American lobbyist—who basically was a Republican, he was very close to Congressman Gerry Ford and Congressman Dewey Short, who had been Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee—so he used his influence to secure the contract for the Apollo for North American. It turned out, he was a terrible crook. But the illegal bug they had in Fred Black’s room at the Carleton Hotel, I’ve learned recently that Bobby Kennedy had [J. Edgar] Hoover put the bug there. And he also bugged Eddie Levinson, who had the Fremont Hotel in Las Vegas. Levinson secured the first loan Jimmy Hoffa made in Las Vegas. The government lost all those cases because of the illegal bugs. When Johnson had Thurgood Marshall, who was the Solicitor General, go before the Supreme Court on Fred Black’s case, where he had been found guilty of tax evasion, and say that the FBI had an illegal wiretap in his suite, [Edward Bennett] Ed Williams thought my case was over, but the judge, Oliver Gasch, hated Ed Williams because he had defeated him by bringing Joe Louis into the first Jimmy Hoffa trial here in Washington, D.C. So Judge Gasch paid no attention to it. He based everything on that I was lying about my friend Senator Kerr, that he never dealt in cash. Well, I’m sure you’ve read the Senator [J. Allen] Frear statement in tax court that Senator Kerr gave him \$40,000—and God only knows how many other favors.

RITCHIE: Could you go back a little bit? Back to when you were the Chief Telephone Page. Leslie Biffle had become Secretary of the Senate and Felton “Skeeter” Johnston was the Democratic Secretary.

BAKER: Secretary for the Majority, yes. Skeeter Johnston was the kindest man I have ever known—and Mr. Biffle was the same—but Mr. Johnston urged me to go to law school. He said, “You’re wasting your time if you don’t.” Skeeter had an alcohol problem, but back then, the Senate didn’t go in session until 12 o’clock, so I’d get out of

class say right around 12, and be back to the Senate around 12:20. After then, I was basically in charge of what was happening. Because he loved being in the Secretary of the Senate's office, which was a fabulous bar for Democratic Senators.

RITCHIE: I was wondering what people like Leslie Biffle and Felton Johnston taught you? What did you learn from them?

BAKER: Both of them were true Southerners. They had good manners and they were very accommodating. Leslie Biffle, he became a very successful money raiser for Democratic Senators. For some reason, President Truman got miffed at him before he died. I have never known why. But Truman was his closest friend. In fact, he had a direct White House telephone in the Secretary's office. But something happened which I do not know why.

RITCHIE: Their job was essentially to make the Senate work, to accommodate the Senators.

BAKER: Well, exactly, sure.

RITCHIE: To figure out what people needed, to help them out. Did you learn the ropes by watching what they did?

BAKER: Yes, they were my professors, let me tell you. They taught me how to accommodate Senators and their problems. Senators would tell a young man a lot more than they would tell their colleagues. Say Senator X is miffed about something, and you tried to calm the waters.

RITCHIE: I was wondering, because you had the reputation of being the best vote counter in the Senate.

BAKER: Well, I'll tell you a true story, because one time Senator Dirksen called me down to his office. It was say a Thursday afternoon, and the Senate basically likes to adjourn from Thursday to Monday so they can have a long weekend. He called me down to his office and he had Senator Joseph McCarthy, Senator [Karl] Mundt, Senator [Herman] Welker, Senator [William] Jenner—I called it the right-wing bomb throwers.

Senator Dirksen started off by saying, “Mr. Baker, you are the best vote counter in the history of the Senate. Will you tell my colleagues how many votes you have on this issue?” I said, “Mr. Leader, I have 40 votes on my side and 12 votes on your side.” They said, “Goddamn you! How in the hell can you have 12 on our side?” I said, “Well, my lobbyist friend from the Railway union, Cy Anderson, showed me his sheet. He secured vote pledges from the following: Senator [Ralph] Flanders, Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Senator [Leverett] Saltonstall” I’d go down the list. They said, “Those bastards!” They were really upset. Dirksen said, “Take another drink. Let’s go get a unanimous consent agreement and have a long weekend.” That’s the way he worked.

RITCHIE: How did you go about counting heads?

BAKER: Well, basically I knew a Senator’s position or leanings, whether a Senator was a conservative or a liberal. Basically, they don’t deviate from that. If you have 30 liberals and 20 conservatives, you have it. One of the few times that I did not know how the vote was going to turn out was when President Kennedy was seeking Medicare. I did not learn until later why Senator Jennings Randolph voted against it. Senator Kerr had made a deal with the doctors in Oklahoma to kill Medicare. He was just adamant in his opposition to Medicare. Now, Senator Jennings Randolph was a wonderful Senator. He’d been a Congressman and was very popular. Ninety-nine times out of 100, I knew how he was going to vote. But he would never tell me how he was going to vote on President Kennedy’s Medicare bill. Senator Hayden was up for reelection, and he said, “Bobby, the Republicans have made Medicare a big issue and the doctors are all upset.” He said, “If you have the votes, I will vote with you. But if you don’t have the votes, will you release me?” I said, “Mr. Chairman, I am delighted. When I find out what Senator Jennings Randolph’s going to do, I will let you know.” So Senator Randolph voted with Senator Kerr, and I had to release Senator Hayden. Larry O’Brien and all said I’d sold them out, and so forth. But Marjorie Banner had been personal secretary for Senator Tom Stewart of Tennessee, who was defeated by Senator Albert Gore, Sr. [in 1948]. She came to me—we knew each other socially—and she said, “Bobby, will you help me. I really like Senator Kerr.” Senator Johnson had introduced me to his dear friend, Senator Kerr. Senator Johnson told Senator Kerr that he could depend on me. I said, “Senator, there’s a very bright lady just looking for a job. She knows how to do things better than anybody around the Senate, and she would be a great asset in your office—because you need somebody who knows what to do in the Senate.”

So he made her his personal secretary. She never failed to be grateful to me for her getting that job. But she was the only one that had the key to his safe—each Senator has a personal safe in his office. When Senator Kerr died, he had two million in cash in his safe. He had Neil Curry take \$100,000 of his money and give it to Congressman Kirwan, to let his water bill go through. And he gave Jennings Randolph \$100,000. That is why Jennings cast that vote. So he knew how to buy votes. But I loved him. Let me tell you, if he was not dead, I would never be talking to you.

RITCHIE: When you were counting votes, could you actually ask a Senator how he was going to vote?

BAKER: Yes. Especially when Senator Johnson was Leader I would say, “The Leader really needs your help. Can you help?” A lot of times, like Senator Willis Robertson from Virginia, he was a wonderful man, but because of Senator Harry Byrd being so conservative, a lot of times I would put him on a NATO trip to get rid of his vote, because it would be that tight. But I was very grateful. He was a very able Senator. I don’t know what happened to his son [Pat Robertson]. He turned out to be a bad egg.

RITCHIE: Some Leaders of the Senate seemed to have been very reluctant to ask for votes.

BAKER: That’s the reason that I guess whatever fame I had was, that I knew the Senate about as well as anybody could know it, and also knew the States that each Senator came from, and the makeup, and what you had to do. Just like Senator Frank Church, a very handsome, articulate Senator who got elected from Idaho, a state that was very conservative. When he came to see me about Committee assignments, I said, “Senator, there’s two Committees where you can survive in Idaho. One is Appropriations, the other is Public Works.” “Oh, I want to be on Foreign Relations, because Senator [William] Borah had been there.” And that destroyed him, when he had that CIA investigation, he was ruined. But when I was making recommendations to Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, I always tried to pick people for Committees—like Mike Mansfield of Montana, he was a foreign policy expert and he wanted on Foreign Relations. We had a big contest between Senator Kefauver and Senator Kennedy. Senator Kefauver had the seniority, but I was able to get the votes on the Steering Committee to put Senator Kennedy on Foreign Relations. Senator Kennedy never forgot my assistance

with the Steering Committee. He thought that was the greatest thing that ever happened, because he didn't give a damn about the Senate, he wanted to be President. He made a big speech about Algeria. I don't think many in the Senate knew where Algeria was located.

It was interesting about Senator Johnson. I would get home about midnight and he'd call me about five in the morning. One day, I said, "Mr. Leader, I read in the *Los Angeles Times* that they import more goods through the California ports than we do on the whole East Coast, and it's all coming from Asia." I said, "The Fulbright Scholarship plan has been one of the most successful things this country has ever had. Why don't you try, in view of your position on the Appropriations Committees, to get the funds to start an East-West Center. Put it in Hawaii." He said, "That's a hell of a good idea." So he established the East-West Center. It never turned out to be the educational institution that I had been thinking about, but he would do things like that. Just like when I said, "The only way we're going to beat the Southerners is to have 24-hour sessions, seven days a week." Mrs. Paul Douglas called me and said, "You're killing my husband." She was really upset, because he was getting fragile, I guess. But that's the only way in hell that we were able to pass the Civil Rights bill in '57, we just wore the Southern Senators down.

RITCHIE: You knew about every state, you knew about every Senator. How did you learn that?

BAKER: Well, being a Page you'd hear all the debates. Then you watch all of the Congressional elections, who wins and who loses, and why. So you've got a brain full of stuff about the Democratic Party and what you can do and can't do. I really liked President [Bill] Clinton. I never knew that I had been introduced to him until my daughter Cissy called me and said, "Daddy, you're in President Clinton's book." I read in there that my first trip to Europe was on the *S.S. United States*. Our personal doctor, Dr. Joe Bailey, was the substitute when the regular physician took a vacation. So the captain treated us like we were Dr. Bailey's family. We'd been out to sea about five days, and the ship was loaded with Rhodes Scholars en route to their school in England. The captain said, "Bobby, these kids are really getting unruly. Would you go lecture to them?" Bill Clinton was one of them. I don't think he was very impressed with me, because he didn't like President Johnson because of the Viet Nam War. But had he had the knowledge that

I had of the Senate, he could have passed his medical bill. But you have to know what you can do and can't do. They made a big, big disaster because they were too secretive.

RITCHIE: Clinton was a messenger for the Foreign Relations Committee in the '60s, when he was a student, but he didn't stay here long enough to learn the lay of the land.

BAKER: Yeah, you know, Senator Fulbright was one of the ablest, brightest Senators that we ever had, but he was jealous of Senator Johnson. His wife—I think her name's Betty—she knew his strengths and his weaknesses. She would call me many times and try to soothe the waters and so forth. Had I not had my troubles, I would have advised President Lyndon Johnson to pick Senator Bill Fulbright to be Secretary of State, because that's what he wanted more than anything in the world. He had the liability of being from Arkansas and having to vote against the Civil Rights bills. But President Johnson was strong enough to overcome that, just say that he had to vote the will of his people. Then Dean Rusk, who used to be my neighbor when we lived out in Shirlington [Virginia], was a very bright and able man. He'd been a lot better as Secretary of Defense. The biggest disaster in the history of this country was [Robert] McNamara. Henry Ford was my good friend and he said, "The best thing that ever happened to me was getting rid of that bastard." He almost wrecked Ford back then, and he really wrecked the Defense Department. The Vietnam War—President Johnson did not know how to get out—that was the greatest tragedy of his Presidency.

I would have listened to Senators Mansfield, Fulbright, and Gore. A lot of times, I'd sit down and take drinks with him and say, "Mr. Leader, we need to calm the waters." He'd have been a hell of a lot better, like Senator George Aiken told him—I read in one of the books—"Mr. President, just say we won and come home." I think [Charles] DeGaulle told him, "You should never be in there." I think we'd have been a hell of a lot better off.

RITCHIE: You said you mentioned this over drinks. Is that one way that you found things out? That people would relax privately in the backrooms?

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: Say things they wouldn't say on the floor?

BAKER: Exactly. They let their hair down when they've had a few drinks, tell you their likes and their dislikes, and you file it away. You find out who likes to take trips around the world, and then you try to repay those who voted against their conscience to help you. Senator Johnson was very adept at taking care of Senators and their wishes, and the bills that they wanted.

RITCHIE: You mentioned your first meeting with Congressman Johnson in '48, then he came to the Senate in January 1949, but he wasn't Whip yet, he was just a freshman Senator.

BAKER: He was just the junior Senator from Texas.

RITCHIE: Did he consult with you pretty regularly in that period?

BAKER: Yes, he did. He was always inviting me to have dinner at his house. He was a great entertainer. He really knew that Senator Russell was the most powerful man in the Senate, and he was a lonely bachelor. So Senator Johnson, practically every Sunday night, that Senator Russell was around, would have him for dinner. And he would invite Dorothy and I over. So you develop a great feeling of what you can do and what you can't do.

RITCHIE: Was he trying to learn the same things that you knew?

BAKER: Oh, yeah. He was always fascinated with what you could and couldn't do and why certain people voted certain ways. Generally, I had the answers.

RITCHIE: At that point, in 1950, Senator Francis Myers got defeated for reelection.

BAKER: He was the Whip from Pennsylvania. He was a wonderful, bright Senator from Pennsylvania, but once again the Korean War caused his defeat.

RITCHIE: Both Senators Lucas and Myers were defeated that year.

BAKER: That's right. So when Senator [Ernest] McFarland became the Majority Leader, Senator Johnson became the Whip, because Senator Russell liked him. He had served on the Armed Services Committee. In talking to Senators about the Whip vacancy, he was easily elected. The worst tragedy of my life was one of the best Senators I've ever known, especially on television, when you look at Johnson and Kennedy, was Senator George Smathers. Senator George Smathers was from Florida. I had talked to him about voting for the Civil Rights bill that passed the Senate in 1957 or '58. But he caught hell because he had beat the most liberal Senator in the history of Florida, Senator Claude Pepper, who was a very able man. He was much more popular than any Senator in the history of Florida. Senator Smathers could have been our Presidential nominee in 1960 had he voted for the Conference Report, which he voted against. Because he was really suited for television. He was on the Finance Committee. And he was handsome. But he had a problem with being like President Kennedy. He didn't have "no" in his vocabulary when it comes to going to bed with a pretty girl, and that destroyed him. He has a son that lives in Jacksonville, that I see on occasion. He really can't believe some of the things his father did with women. He was married to a lovely lady.

RITCHIE: What kind of a Leader was Senator McFarland?

BAKER: Senator McFarland was running for reelection. He was very, very cautious. He was like a fifth-grade school teacher. He had been a school teacher. He had no program other than what President Truman wanted, and the President was unpopular. So Barry Goldwater beat hell out of him. But by Senator Lyndon Johnson being Whip, it was easy for me to get the votes to make him the Senate Democratic Leader. He used to call me in law school to ask, "How many votes do I have?"

RITCHIE: Well, you had about four years after President Truman won reelection, from 1948 to 1952, where he had a lot of trouble getting anything passed.

BAKER: That's correct, because between the Southern Democrats and Republicans in both the House and the Senate, you couldn't get anything done. Because, like Secretary of State Jimmy Byrnes, he didn't think President Truman was smart enough to be President. But history has been very kind to ex-President Truman. When

they rank the 10 best Presidents, he'll be one of the 10, because of what he did in foreign affairs, and in doing away with segregation in the Army. He was a courageous man. And dropping the atomic bomb, that took a lot of guts. I liked him, I want to tell you, I really liked him. But when he left town, he had three friends: his wife, his daughter Margaret, and Dean Acheson. That's how unpopular he was. I mean, it was pathetic.

RITCHIE: He was very successful in getting his foreign policies enacted.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: But he had terrible trouble with getting anything in his domestic program.

BAKER: No doubt about it.

RITCHIE: And the Senate was tied up, as you say, with the conservatives in opposition. At that point you had two Majority Leaders in a row who were defeated.

BAKER: Senator Lucas and Senator McFarland, correct.

RITCHIE: So it was kind of a nervy thing to want to take over as Democratic Leader in 1952. Did Senator Johnson have any trepidation about it?

BAKER: No, no. Senator Johnson thought that he could do a lot more for Texas as Majority Leader than he could as a Senator from Texas. I think he enjoyed being Majority Leader more than anything he had ever done. I was a delegate to the 1960 Convention from South Carolina, and everybody knew that I was sort of the right and left arm of Senator Lyndon Johnson. After Senator Kennedy defeated him on the first ballot, Governor [Bufford] Ellington of Tennessee, John Connally and myself had a thank-you party for all of our delegates and contributors. Bill Moyers was working as the aide that answered the phone in the Johnson suite. I called him about 10 times and I said, "Tell the Leader to come down and thank these people." He never showed up, so I drank too much and I had a terrible hangover but about six o'clock in the morning, Bill Moyers knocked on the door. He said, "Bobby, the Leader wants to see you." I said, "Tell him to go to

hell, he's rude." About five minutes later Bill Moyers said, "It's a crisis, you've got to come." So I went down to Johnson's suite and it was just the Leader and Lady Bird in their bed.

He said, "Your buddy, Senator John Kennedy, called and demanded that he come see me. What do you think he wants?" I said, "Mr. Leader, I've had many talks with my friend Senator Kennedy. He thinks you're the ablest, brightest man that he has ever met. He really likes you, but you're from Texas, and knowing the makeup and the union influence in the Democratic Convention, Senator Kennedy believed you didn't have a chance in hell of being the Democratic nominee. But he knows that Vice President Nixon is running ahead in the polls. Unless he can carry Texas, he can't be President, and you're the only hope in the world for him to do that. My judgment is, as much as he likes you—and he's talked to me, since I'm a Baptist married to a Catholic, 'Can a Catholic be elected?'—he wants you to be Vice President. I think it would be the smartest move you could make. You've had a massive heart attack. You would be a third-rater if he's President and you're the Majority Leader, because he calls the program." I said, "The best job in America is Vice President. You get to go to every fancy funeral in the world. About twice a year you get to cast a tie-breaking vote. But you get to be a human being." Lady Bird said, "Lyndon, that is the best advice you ever got in your life." So he took it.

Tragically, Senator Kennedy had not told Bobby, who had been his Campaign Manager, what he had done. My judgment is old man Joe Kennedy truly liked Lyndon Johnson. He used to write him warm letters and advise him on things. Phil Graham, who owned the *Washington Post*—his wife originally had been Jewish, I don't know whether she died Jewish or not—but Phil Graham and Joe Alsop, who was a very influential political writer—also got involved. Bobby Kennedy came up to the Johnson suite and demanded to see Johnson, and Johnson wouldn't see him. So John Connally, Speaker Rayburn, and myself and several other members of the staff went in when Bobby Kennedy was there, saying that organized labor was very much opposed to Johnson being Vice President, and would Senator Johnson decline his brother's nomination to be Vice President and become Chairman of the Democratic National Committee? Old man Rayburn, he was one of my favorite statesmen, he said, "Shit, sonny, get out of here." So then Phil Graham, old man Joe Kennedy, and Joe Alsop, gave Senator John Kennedy the guts to go through with it. Over the objection of Walter Reuther, President of the UAW,

and quite a few delegates, Senator Johnson became Vice President.

I don't know two people that hated each other more than Senator Lyndon Johnson and Bobby Kennedy. What a tragedy! They were both trying to do the same thing. I think that the only time I heard from President Johnson after my troubles was when Walter Jenkins called me in 1964 and said, "The President would like to know who you recommend that he select as Vice President." I really liked Senator Eugene McCarthy, and I knew that he being a Catholic would help. But when I think about it, the smartest thing that I could have ever done in my life was to have Johnson promise Bobby that he'd be Vice President, and that because he had bad health, Bobby would be the next Presidential Candidate. I think they both would have been a lot better off and the country would have been better off. But that's bygone.

RITCHIE: Could you tell me about Lyndon Johnson in general? What was your impression of him?

BAKER: Of all the Senators I ever knew, he was the hardest working. In fact, his heart attack was caused by over work. He had the greatest capacity to reason with people, to say, "I've got 10 on this side and 10 on the other and I need your vote." There has never been, based on what I've read about the Senate, a Majority Leader more successful than Senator Lyndon Johnson. Even Robert Caro, who does not like him, says that he was the Master of the Senate. But he could not sleep. I'm telling you, he worked 'til 12 o'clock at night and he was up at five in the morning. Senator [Styles] Bridges one time told me, "Tell Lyndon to sleep. He called me and woke my wife up."

RITCHIE: What was it that drove Senator Johnson? What compelled him to work so hard?

BAKER: I think he had, having been elected to Congress in 1937 in a special election, the only person in that Congressional race that supported President Franklin Roosevelt, he really worshiped FDR. Through his friend Tommy Corcoran and other members of President Roosevelt's staff, I think then he had the seed in his brain that some day he would be President. When I would meet with Governors and politicians and telling them to support Senator Johnson for President, he would get me on the Senate

floor and say, “Now goddamn it, I took 10 nitros last night. I’m not able physically to run for President.” He said, “Quit running me.” But when he got to feeling good, he asked my advice about whether he should continue as Majority Leader. I said, “You ought to quit.” Because the Hearst paper owners liked him. Had he been the Democratic Candidate in Wisconsin, with that Milwaukee paper, plus all the publicity that he had, I think that he would have defeated Senator Kennedy. And in West Virginia he would have won. Old man Joe Kennedy, he just bought that primary. Senator [Hubert] Humphrey should have won in West Virginia. Rein Vander Zee, who was a former FBI agent, had been my assistant. He was very close to Senator Humphrey. His job in the Democratic primary in West Virginia in 1960 was to go by and see all the Sheriffs and the District Attorneys and get them to pledge to be for Senator Humphrey. He, I think, told me one time that he had 86 percent of all the Sheriffs in all those counties in West Virginia committed to Senator Humphrey. But on the Thursday before the election, old man Joe sent money into West Virginia like you’ve never seen, and they took the cash and switched to Senator Kennedy. That probably propelled—if a Catholic could win in a non-Catholic state, the national press went wild. As a consequence, he won.

Had Wyoming voted for Senator Johnson—Governor [John] Hickey really liked Senator Johnson—but when it came time to vote, their votes would put Senator Kennedy over, they switched their position. But Governor [David] Lawrence and quite a few other people who had gone through the Al Smith campaign [in 1928], they thought that if there was a second ballot they could switch enough ballots for Senator Johnson. That’s how close it was.

RITCHIE: Senator Johnson had a lot of strengths, obviously, but he also seemed to be a very insecure man in a lot of ways. You mentioned closing the window in the limo, for instance, when he didn’t want to be heard talking about things—

BAKER: Yeah, well the reason that he was so insecure, a middle of the road Democrat in Texas very seldom could be elected. I mean, Texas was very vicious in being a conservative state. One of the Senators, when I was a Page boy, and then Chief Telephone Page, was [W. Lee] Pappy O’Daniel. He beat Congressman Johnson for the Senate because he was conservative. That was the real reason that Senator Johnson was petrified of losing. He was not a good loser. Just like the Convention in 1960. He was the

worst loser I have ever known. But because of the conservative strength in Texas, he would have been much more comfortable had he been from Pennsylvania or someplace like that.

RITCHIE: People also describe him as being a very physical man, the kind of guy who always had his hand on you.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. He'd hug you. He liked real up-close conversations, especially when he was trying to sell you a bill of goods.

RITCHIE: It must have been intense to work with him on a regular basis.

BAKER: Well, since I was not from Texas—you know, he was a screamer at his staff. He was always bitchin' "do this" or "do that." But never once did he scream with me. I think he had such respect—basically, for my friends in the Senate, they didn't like Texas. They didn't like oil and gas. But when I told them I thought he'd be the ablest Leader for our party, they said, "I'll hold my nose and vote for him." That was part of his insecurity. He knew that a lot of the liberals did not like him.

Senator Joe Clark from Pennsylvania was a real ADA liberal. I knew how he was going to vote before he awoke. He was up on the floor one day saying what a bad Leader Senator Johnson was and he was wrecking the Democratic Party. I went from my seat on the Senate floor over by the Leader and I said, "Mr. Leader, there comes a time in your life when you must tell some people to go to hell." I said, "Senator Clark hates you, he hates your wife, your two daughters, and Little Beagle Johnson, your dog." I said, "I cannot change him. I know how he's going to vote, and he's just anti-Johnson and anti-Texas." I said, "When he gets through, you ought to call him down and tell him to go to hell." So after Senator Clark finished his tirade, Senator Johnson snapped for a Page, and the Page went and got Senator Clark. Boy, I was watching them. They were both ashen faced. I thought both of them were going to have heart attacks. After it was over, Senator Johnson motioned for me to come over and I sat down by him. He said, "Mr. Baker, you smart son of a bitch, I told Senator Clark to go to hell and he won't go." He said, "What do I do now?" He knew how to get to you.

RITCHIE: It's interesting that he was very tough on his staff, but he had incredible loyalty from his staff. They stuck with him.

BAKER: Unbelievable how they stayed. He had a secretary named Mary Rather. And he had quite a few others. They were just 1,000 percent loyal. He was very generous if somebody got sick or died. He could use Lady Bird's money pretty good.

RITCHIE: But he also worked them very hard. Shouted at them in public.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. Of all the administrative assistants I ever knew, the ablest was Walter Jenkins. His devotion to look after him was just unbelievable. But, once again, when he got in trouble President Johnson was a coward. After my resignation in October 1963, he acted like he didn't know me. But he really loved me, and I knew it. When Walter called when he knew ex-President Johnson was dying, Walter said, "The President desperately wants to see Dorothy and you." We were very happy to visit the Johnsons. Dorothy and I went and spent the night at the ranch, and he just could not have been happier, but he died with a broken heart.

RITCHIE: Why do you think the staff put up with him like they did?

BAKER: Because you knew that you were working with one of the ablest, brightest people in the world. You were sort of put in left field knowing that if you didn't answer every letter he was going to scream at you. But they loved working for him. I guess John Connally left. He got upset when the Texas billionaire Sid Richardson hired John Connally.

RITCHIE: But he had people like George Reedy, and Bill Moyers, and Walter Jenkins.

BAKER: See, George Reedy was not a Texan. I think George Reedy, intellectually, thought he was far superior to Senator Johnson. But Reedy had good connections with the liberal community. He spent a lot of time selling Senator Johnson to the liberals. But he, I guess when he lost his job as press secretary, he became very bitter. So God only knows what he told Robert Caro.

RITCHIE: When Senator Johnson got to be the Democratic Leader in 1953, one of the things he started doing was putting the freshmen Senators onto important Committees.

BAKER: Yeah, the Johnson Rule was basically that you had to give one good Committee assignment to each new freshman. It's a smart thing to do. It used to be everything went by seniority. He just said you'll get one Committee with your seniority and we're going to put Junior Senators on. It made him very popular with newly elected Senators.

RITCHIE: How did he get that past the senior Senators?

BAKER: Well, the biggest source of his strength was Senator Richard Russell and Senator Carl Hayden. If they approved, it worked. That's the way that happened. When the Senate had the Natural Gas bill up, to free natural gas from the Federal Power Commission, and my fellow South Carolinian, Senator Olin Johnston, was Chairman of the Post Office Committee and he wanted to be on the Steering Committee, I said, "Mr. Chairman, I think I can get you on the Steering Committee if you'll vote for the Natural Gas Bill." His brother was the Mayor of Anderson, South Carolina. In fact, I defeated him to be the Delegate from our Congressional District. But Bill just raised hell with Olin. He said, "You ruined yourself, you'll never get elected again, voting for freeing natural gas." But I got him on the Steering Committee and he would vote basically the suggestions that I made. He was a pretty good politician. He was a real old-time liberal Democrat. He was pro-union, which is unusual for a South Carolinian.

But I guess of all the able Senators from South Carolina, and despite his speech defect, Senator Fritz Hollings was one of the ablest men that's ever served from South Carolina. Had he been able to speak on television without that dialect, he could have easily been elected President.

RITCHIE: We used to have little "squawk" boxes here and could listen to what was going on on the floor. You could always tell when Senator Hollings was up. He had an extremely distinctive speech.

BAKER: Yes, he did. But he knew the budget and the makings of the country—not like Lyndon Johnson—but he worked at being a Senator, and he was very well liked. I think he's still alive.

RITCHIE: Yes, he is. Well, you mentioned the Natural Gas Bill. Some people have said that the alliance in the Senate was between Southern Senators who were trying to keep Civil Rights acts from passing, and Western Senators who were trying to keep oil and gas from being regulated. That was the reason why you had Westerners like Senator Carl Hayden working with the Southern Senators. How much truth is there to that?

BAKER: Well, you know, Senator Hayden was originally Sheriff before Arizona was admitted as a state. Then when Woodrow Wilson ran for President in 1912, he was elected to Congress. Of all the Senators I knew, Senator Hayden was the ablest, wisest, and most influential. Senator Lyndon Johnson and Senator Richard Russell never tangled with Senator Hayden. His wish was their command. He was without a doubt one of the kindest, ablest Senators I ever knew.

One day he stopped by my office. He had been having bad health problems, and he had been listening to Secretary McNamara for six hours. My secretary said, "Chairman Hayden wants to see you." I said, "Mr. Chairman, what the hell are you doing here?" He said, "Bobby, you and President Kennedy are young, and you like each other." He said, "This guy, Secretary of Defense McNamara, is going to wreck us all. Just tell the President to hire a good country lawyer that knows how to hire specialists and he'll be in a lot better shape, because this guy is going to wreck us all." He was so truthful.

RITCHIE: Going back to gas and oil, I've heard that you couldn't get on the Finance Committee unless you were okay on gas and oil

BAKER: I think there's a lot of—you had to be very careful. Like when Speaker Rayburn called me and said, "Bobby, Gene McCarthy is a team player and a decent man. He's been on the House Ways and Means Committee, but he will do you a favor if you need it." So I talked Senator Johnson into putting him on the Finance Committee. It was a hard sell, but he was an able fellow. Senator Kerr cornered me and said, "Do you trust

Senator McCarthy?" I said, "I sure do." He said, "Well, I just gave him \$10,000 to miss this vote." Humphrey was screaming at me, but he went over to the House gym, where he'd been a House member, so I arranged a dead pair for Senator McCarthy.

RITCHIE: What's a dead pair?

BAKER: A dead pair is when two Senators are absent. I write it in my notes for the record, if Senator McCarthy was present he would vote no, and the Senator from New Hampshire would vote yes. That's a dead pair. A live pair, I got in terrible trouble with Senator Dirksen. I had a deal with Senator J. Glenn Beall who was a real moderate Republican from Maryland. He loved to go to the races at Bowie and Laurel. So I had a firm deal, anytime he was going to go to the racetrack and we were going to have a vote, I'd have a live pair to protect him. One day we had a vote, and the pair that he gave me vitiated the thing that Senator Dirksen wanted. Senator Dirksen got furious with me. "Goddamn you," he said, "stay on your side of the aisle. Don't make deals with my colleagues!" [Laughs] But when I asked Senator Beall to give a pair, I think it was to Senator Eugene McCarthy, who was away, he said, "Hey, you're the best friend I've got here. I don't have no in my vocabulary."

RITCHIE: So you would have to make arrangements with the Republicans?

BAKER: Yeah, absolutely. Your word was your bond. I was very fond of Senator Styles Bridges. I was at the Democratic Convention of 1948 in Philadelphia, where Senator Humphrey made a very passionate speech for Civil Rights and the Convention adopted his Civil Rights plank. The Southerners and Republicans despised him because he was so liberal. President Truman had proposed that we make a five billion dollar loan to England because they were broke. Senator Humphrey was up defending the English, and what great friends they had been and what sacrifices they made in World War II, and that we must give the authority to the President to make this loan. Senator Bridges, it was about 5:30 in the afternoon and he'd had a few snorts, leaning on his desk, he said, "Will the j-u-n-i-o-r Senator from Minnesota yield to the s-e-n-i-o-r Senator from New Hampshire?" [drawing out the words] Senator Humphrey in his rapid fire delivery said, "The junior Senator from Minnesota is pleased to yield to the very distinguished senior Senator from New Hampshire." Senator Bridges said, "Will the j-u-n-i-o-r Senator from

Minnesota tell the s-e-n-i-o-r Senator from New Hampshire just what Great Britain has that the United States doesn't?" Without batting an eye, Senator Humphrey said "Westminister Abby." Well, everybody in the gallery clapped. You're not supposed to do that. But from that moment on, he became a member of the Senate club, because they said, "He's bright."

RITCHIE: And that was important, being able to hold your own in debate?

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: Going back to putting Senators on the Committees, it seems to me that's the place where you really had to know the personality of the Senator, the State they were coming from—

BAKER: And who you could depend on, once you put them on a Committee. I mean, the most important Committees in the Senate were Appropriations, Finance, Commerce, Public Works. You had Foreign Relations for people like Senator Kennedy, and Senator Kefauver, Senator Fulbright, they really were truly interested in foreign affairs, but very few Senators from the West and East were. They were looking at how I can do things and get reelected. The Appropriations Committee, look at [Robert C.] Bobby Byrd and how he's done. I never met Senator [Ted] Stevens, but they tell me he was a tough guy, too. He sure took a lot of the Treasury to Alaska!

RITCHIE: Well, when you put somebody on a Committee, you had to put them on a Committee that was good for them.

BAKER: Good for their state, yeah. What I always looked at—like if you're from out West, the Interior Department has vast control of a lot of our nation's acreage. So a Westerner in needing water from public works—the first things I thought of when I had a new Senator was, "Where should we place him?" I don't think out of hundreds of Committee recommendations to Senator Johnson that he ever differed from me. We had such respect for each other. Like putting Senator Stu Symington on the Armed Services Committee. It made a lot of sense, didn't it? Senator Symington did not like Senator Johnson, but he was from Missouri and he really wanted to be Kennedy's Vice President. Scoop Jackson wanted it. And so did Governor [Orville] Freeman from Minnesota. I

think Bobby Kennedy had promised a lot of people that job.

RITCHIE: Did Senator Johnson ever have any trouble with some of the Chairmen of those Committees taking his picks?

BAKER: No, no. He knew the strength and weaknesses of each Chairman and what he could do to help the Chairman. Like you had a housing bill—one time Senator Robertson was the Chairman of the Banking Committee. He was not very strong for what was in his bill but Senator Johnson could talk to him. Now, Senator [Harry] Byrd, he was just opposed to all taxes. If you were going to build a road, you had to pay as you go. But he had real nice manners, and he liked Senator Lyndon Johnson.

I was in charge of the 1960 Vice Presidential train trip through the South, when Senator Johnson was running for Vice President. I knew that we didn't have a chance in hell to carry Virginia, because Senator Byrd was for Vice President Nixon. When we arrived in Culpepper, Johnson screamed out over the microphone, "What in the hell has Richard Nixon ever done for Culpepper?" That was the headline in the *New York Times* the next day. But I was in business with the Governor of North Carolina [Luther Hodges] in a Howard Johnson Motel in Charlotte, N.C. I called him up and I said, "Governor, it's a great part of history for Candidates for the Presidency and the Vice Presidency to come through your state, be they Democrat or Republican or Independent." I said, "You have the authority to permit a school holiday for all the school kids to come out to watch the Candidates make their speeches as they come through your state." I said, "We are going to lose Virginia and we desperately need to carry North Carolina." I said, "We've got a trainload of press who are very impressionistic. If you could have about 40 trombone players—" back then there was a play on Broadway, a musical.

RITCHIE: *The Music Man.*

BAKER: Yeah. I said, "If you could have about 40 high school bands the minute we enter into North Carolina, the press will be writing about that." He said, "I like your idea." So the headline in all the papers the next day was, "Senator Johnson gets tumultuous welcome in North Carolina." It shows you the power of music, and having people associated with you who know what to do. But when we got to New Orleans, I

had asked Neil Curry to get me \$50,000 to put on the first pre-Mardi Gras in the history of New Orleans. The Mayor of New Orleans [DeLesseps Morrison] was Catholic and he loved Senator John Kennedy. He was one of the first Southern Mayors to endorse John Kennedy. Well, Senator Johnson, being a bad loser, was irritated with him to no end. Part of my schedule was he was to go to a reception at the Mayor's office, and Johnson was just *rude*. But Senator Russell Long, I knew if I got a few drinks in him he could really get a crowd riled up. And there was, I think, a Congressman named [James H.] Morrison, he was on the Post Office Committee. Between Senator Russell Long and Congressman Morrison, they had the crowd stomping. I'm telling you, you'd have thought you were at an old Southern revival. They really were going to heaven. But Senator Johnson was the poorest reader of a speech I have ever known. He and John Kennedy, neither one of them could read a speech, but when they talked extemporaneously they were great. But Johnson read about 20 minutes and nobody paid any attention. But you can't believe the publicity we got out of that New Orleans trip.

When we got to Atlanta, Senator Russell said, "Because of Civil Rights, just come through and don't say anything." But the end product was that Betty Talmadge really loved Lady Bird and Lyndon, and she was on the train. Since there was nobody from Georgia to introduce Senator Johnson, and since my parents were from Georgia, I introduced him. I've seen it on TV, sometimes, showing me introducing him.

I learned about the train trip from Pat Brown's press man, who had moved to Washington and knew about politics. He said, "Bobby, all the newspapers generally are against the Democrats, but when you take a train trip and you get the sheriffs, you get a lot of publicity." Senator Johnson thought it was crazy, but his train trip was very, very successful.

RITCHIE: And carried a lot of those states.

BAKER: Yes, absolutely, and the publicity that it got in Texas—because Lady Bird was so gracious. I forget all the ladies we had on board, but they just made the people feel so welcome. And I think in the end Senator Johnson really enjoyed the trip.

RITCHIE: Going back to his appointing new Senators to the Committees, he

must have also let them know that they were on that Committee because he put them there.

BAKER: Oh, yeah.

RITCHIE: That had to help him when he wanted something in return.

BAKER: It made it a lot easier when you needed a vote to refresh their recollection about how they got on that Committee.

RITCHIE: I've read that you were the one who suggested putting freshmen on top Committees. Was that your idea or his idea?

BAKER: I think we were sort of equal partners in that. I just said, "The seniority rule here is destroying the Democratic Party, because the seniors just get greedy." If they were on Finance they wanted a seat on the Appropriations Committee, too. I said, "That not good. It's not good for the country." He, when he first became Leader, I would make a list of the Committee vacancies we had, based upon where they come from, and their States, and what they need. I don't think he ever vetoed two of my suggestions, because I would have them ready for him, and go over the reasons. We had great mutual respect.

RITCHIE: That's still the way things operate now. Freshmen Senators still get appointed to the better Committees.

BAKER: Which is the way it ought to be.

RITCHIE: Yes, it helps their reelections.

BAKER: It helps the country.

RITCHIE: You mentioned the Steering Committee before. Why was the Steering Committee so important that Senator Olin Johnston wanted to be on it so badly?

BAKER: Well, it was the Committee on Committees. The Steering Committee

had to approve the recommendations. I don't know of one time that the Steering Committee did not go along with Senator Johnson's recommendations. That was part of his power.

RITCHIE: It seemed like he had great control over the Party apparatus.

BAKER: There's no doubt about it. He went in for the minutia of detail. Without any doubt, when I think of Senator Kennedy, Vice President Nixon, and Senator Smathers, Senator Lyndon Johnson was the brightest of the crew. He knew what he had to do, and how to do it. And he could get people to do things they didn't want to do.

RITCHIE: And the Policy Committee, the same thing—

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: It was a small Committee, but—

BAKER: Yes, you know, we had a luncheon once a week. But it was just a place to go have a couple of toddies and brag on people about what a good job they're doing. The Policy Committee didn't make a lot of difference. I guess one of the biggest fights that Senator Johnson had was with Paul Butler, who was Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. He did not like Senator Johnson, and was sort of controlled by Walter Reuther and big labor. He was always talking about how Senator Johnson was not the proper Leader for the Democratic Party. Senator Johnson felt the same way about him. Speaker. Rayburn didn't like him, either.

RITCHIE: Inside the Senate you had a division. You did have problems with the liberal Senators who wanted to move ahead.

BAKER: Oh, yeah.

RITCHIE: I noticed that you really didn't like Senator Herbert Lehman at all. Why was that?

BAKER: Well, he—there was only one thing for him. He was wanting to push the Democratic Party way to the left on housing, and on Civil Rights. Any idiot can get 20 votes in the Senate. I'll use Senator Wayne Morse as an example, and Senator Estes Kefauver. It takes a very, very smart man to get 51 votes in the Senate. Senator Lehman, his tenure in the Senate was pathetic. Personally, as a human being, he was a very warm, decent guy. But he had been Governor and his staff had too much influence with him. He was not his own man. I think he had a guy named [Julius] Edelstein, or something like that. He did precisely what Mr. Edelstein told him to do. As a consequence, he could get 20 votes. That was about the maximum of his strength.

RITCHIE: So Senator Johnson really had no use for people who were pure on the issues but couldn't get anything passed?

BAKER: Yes, exactly. He didn't waste his time with "no-gooders," he called them.

RITCHIE: Senator Paul Douglas was a little bit like that.

BAKER: You, know, Senator Paul Douglas did not like Johnson when he was Majority Leader, but some of the things like the Voting Rights Act, he thought he was the greatest President in the history of this country. But Senator Paul Douglas was like Senator Herbert Lehman when it came to getting the Senate to be more liberal. As a consequence, he was not a very effective Senator. Senator Paul Douglas could get 20 votes. But getting 51 for a Douglas amendment was almost impossible. But I liked him for his patriotism. He had that shattered arm, where he got shot at Iwo Jima. He was truly a very, very bright man. I think he had been an economics professor at the University of Chicago before he was elected. But he was very popular with the liberals, ADA, and that crowd.

RITCHIE: The one exception that Senator Johnson seemed to make was for Hubert Humphrey. Senator Humphrey was a liberal who could be persuaded.

BAKER: To seek the middle ground on issues. Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey really enjoyed each other. They could laugh. Humphrey was like Johnson, he

was a terribly bright man. He would help Johnson with the liberals on occasion. They developed a respect. Johnson's picking him for Vice President showed the respect he had for him. But in my humble opinion, Senator Humphrey was not Presidential material, because he was too soft with people wanting things. You have to have "no" in your vocabulary if you're going to be President, and Vice President Humphrey didn't have it. Had he been a woman, he'd have been a whore.

RITCHIE: I did an interview once with a reporter of debates. He said that the first time he went out to report when Senator Humphrey was speaking, he was very nervous. An older reporter took him aside and said, "Let me tell you, son, it's true that he speaks fast, but he always repeats himself."

BAKER: [Laughs] Senator Humphrey had a very able staff. His administrative assistant was a guy named [William] Simms. And Max Kampelman was unusually bright and very helpful. You could talk to Max when you were trying to get Senator Humphrey's vote, because Senator Humphrey would listen to Max.

RITCHIE: Did you spend a lot of time with the administrative assistants?

BAKER: Yes, I sure did, because they would tell me when—like Senator Fulbright's staff, Lee Williams, Fulbright probably had the ablest staff of anybody I knew. They'd say, "We've got a problem, see if you can smooth the waters." But the staffs are terribly important, especially in my job, trying to make certain we get those 51 votes. Because a staff member will say, "My boss can't vote for that." So then you know what you've got to try to do.

RITCHIE: Then you've got to figure out some way to get him around on it.

BAKER: Exactly, or send him on a trip. [Laughs]

RITCHIE: Get him out of town.

BAKER: Yes, or get him some campaign money. When Alaska was admitted as a state, Bob Bartlett had been a delegate over in the House. He was very popular in the

Senate, but Senator Ernest Gruening had been a doctor, and he was more liberal than Senator Herbert Lehman, and he was always bitching, saying we're not doing the right thing. He was very difficult to do business with. But he didn't last but about one term. But Senator Bob Bartlett was well respected 'til his dying day. And Delegate Jack Burns—the Speaker always would send those House members over to me because he didn't want to bother Senator Johnson with it—so when the Speaker sent Jack Burns over to me, he said, “Bobby, this is one of the most decent people.” He was the delegate from Hawaii. He said, “See what you can do to help him make the deal to pass Hawaiian statehood.” So when he came into my office, he said, “Boss, what can I do to pass Hawaiian Statehood?” I said, “Jack, the strongest man in the Senate is Senator Richard Russell. If you want to pass Hawaiian Statehood, you've got to go to him and make a deal that as long as you are the Senator from Hawaii you'll never vote to change Rule 22.” I said, “He'll be so grateful to you for that that he will let me take it up. He won't vote for Hawaiian statehood, but he'll give me permission to take it up.”

See, Senator Johnson was running for reelection, and he said, “Whatever you do, don't embarrass me.” Because Hawaiian statehood was sort of a Civil Rights issue back then, especially in the South. They didn't want Japanese and Filipinos, and Chinamen being elected to the Senate. So I called Senator Russell and said that Speaker Rayburn called me and asked that I try to help Delegate Burns, and could he come see you? He said sure. Senator Russell had good manners. So he went over and told him that as long as he was a Senator from Hawaii, he'd never vote to change Rule 22. Senator Russell called me and said, “You have permission to take up Hawaiian Statehood. I'm not going to vote for it, but you can take it up and pass it.”

When Jack Burns was running for Governor, he said, “Bobby, because of the labor support I have, the election is really close, but the man that could save my election is Senator Lyndon Johnson.” He said, “Will you please tell him to come here for the weekend and make some speeches?” I said, “I'll do my best.” I talked to Senator Johnson and Mrs. Johnson. Out of my Senatorial campaign money, I bought first-class round-trip tickets to Honolulu. Unbeknownst to me, Mrs. Johnson called Speaker Rayburn and said that long trip will kill Lyndon, because he is really taking those heart pills. She said that he just cannot fly that long. So the Speaker told me, “Bobby, you cash those tickets in. He is not going.” Jack Burns lost his first try—it was for a two-year term. He got beat by

around 400 votes. But then he was elected and reelected til the day he died. So since he didn't run for the Senate, he handpicked Dan Inouye to be the Senator, who's still here. I picked Danny Inouye to second Senator Johnson's nomination for the Presidency at the Convention in 1960, and he did a beautiful job.

Senator Gene McCarthy was going to do it, but we wanted to split the California delegation, and Mrs. Roosevelt asked Gene McCarthy to make the speech for [Adlai] Stevenson. He came and asked permission to be relieved, so that's when I picked Dan Inouye. But I think Gene McCarthy made the best speech he ever made for Stevenson. I was trying to screw up the California delegates.

RITCHIE: To split the Kennedy vote there.

BAKER: Yeah, exactly. Because I was working for a second ballot, that's exactly what I was working for.

RITCHIE: Would you like to take a break at this stage?

BAKER: No, I'm all right.

RITCHIE: Would you like some water?

BAKER: Yes, if you've got some water.

RITCHIE: Right next door.

BAKER: I'll follow you.

RITCHIE: We can keep going for a little while and then take a break for lunch. Among other things we have, Dorothea Scott kept a record on the Policy Committee lunches, so we have a list of every tuna fish sandwich you ever had in the 1950s. She had what each Senator at the lunch ordered, and the price of their lunch.

BAKER: Now, is Dorothea still alive?

RITCHIE: No, she passed away about two years ago.

BAKER: She was a lovely lady. So competent.

RITCHIE: She talked about going to the Conventions with you, in '48, '52, '56.

BAKER: Yep.

RITCHIE: Mr. Johnston didn't go in '56, she said, so you took over his responsibilities there.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: She went to your wedding, as well.

BAKER: The Attorney General went to our wedding, Howard McGrath. He had been a Senator from Rhode Island, and we were flattered that he came.

RITCHIE: You've been described as a "child of the Senate." You grew up in the Senate, your friends were here, and you got married while you were here.

BAKER: My wife, who worked for Senator Scott Lucas, was from Lincoln, Illinois. She graduated in 1944 from Springfield high school. She gets angry with me when I tell people that between the two of us we've been alive for 162 and ½ years. She was 82, March 31. She was a staff member of the Democratic Policy Committee when Senator Lucas was the Majority Leader. So we had a real bright lady named Pauline Moore, who was sort of the head of Senator Lucas' staff in the Policy Committee. She called me every day and she said, "I've got a pretty blonde up here you've just got to meet. She is so sweet." So she introduced us. I had a date with her on July 4, and we were married on November 24. She has put up with a lot, but I'll tell you, we are unusually happy for two old people. I was divorced from her for 15 years. But grandchildren do not understand divorces. So one day she called me and said, "For the sake of our grandchildren, why don't we get back together?" Because I would have never done it in a hundred years, but we've been very happy ever since then. I could not be happier.

RITCHIE: There was a real community here of people, the people you went to school with were here—

BAKER: Oh, sure, all of the administrative assistants, every one of them had a girlfriend just like I did. Carole Tyler and I both were mutually stupid. It was a mutual tragedy. She lost her life and I lost my job. But, I'll tell you, all the people who disliked me are dead and I'm still alive. Had I not had trouble, Don, you cannot work seven days a week, 18 hours a day, and drink as much and eat the wrong foods. It saved my life. Now I wait till 5 o'clock to take a drink, take two drinks, and I'm through. I attribute it to my troubles. Had I not had it, I'd have been dead a long time ago.

RITCHIE: After you graduated from Page School, you went to college at night, you went to George Washington University.

BAKER: I did, I went day and night to George Washington. I really liked George Washington. I had been accepted to George Washington University's law school, but they would not let me go to day school. Because of Skeeter Johnston having such a feeling for me, and wanting me to go to law school, I applied to American. I would get out at 12 o'clock. So I went to day law school for three years at AU law school.

RITCHIE: When you got your law degree, did you think, now is the time to go out on my own, to get out of the Senate?

BAKER: No, I really wanted to stay with the Senate, and then when I got to be about 40, I wanted to go back to South Carolina and practice law and run for Governor. I thought that was the only job in South Carolina that had any appeal to me. Having worked in the Senate, I had no desire to come as a Senator from South Carolina.

My best friend, Earl Morris, Jr., from the first grade 'til I left in the eighth grade, was Lieutenant Governor, and then he was the State Comptroller longer than anybody in the history of the country. When he retired, he went back to Pickens and became Chairman of the Board of the Carolina Savings Company. Everybody thought he was the second coming of Jesus. They put their money in there, and some public company bought

their company, and they went bankrupt. The people in Pickens and the local counties lost \$287 million. So he's in jail right now. He was convicted for fraud. People relied on him, he told them their money was safe. It's the biggest scandal in the history of South Carolina politics. And he is evidently in terribly ill health. He's in some jail hospital. Hopefully, he gets out from the hospital soon.

When I was a young boy in Pickens, we had three Republicans: two black taxi drivers, who were very popular, who because of Abraham Lincoln freeing the slaves voted a straight Republican ticket every election; and my best friend's grandfather, who was a conservative feed store owner. The Republican Party was so low that his son who lived in Washington, D.C., named Edgar Morris, he had the Westinghouse distributorship and became President of the Washington, D.C., Board of Trade, for 40 years he was the South Carolina Republican National Committeeman. Because he was the only guy who could afford it! But now my home county is basically 77 percent Republican. I told people to vote Democratic. Thank God we do have some Negroes in South Carolina! They are the backbone of the Democratic Party in South Carolina.

RITCHIE: It's amazing that the politics in the South just completely flipped over in the last generation.

BAKER: Well, it was because of President Johnson. He knew what was going to happen when he passed the Voting Rights Act. When I see my Negro friends, I tell them, "You go say a little prayer for LBJ." Because I said, "The Voting Rights Act made us all equal." The only way in hell that Senator [Barack] Obama ever got elected President was because of the Voting Rights Act. I said, "It's the greatest thing that's happened to our country." Since you're a convicted felon, you can't vote in most states. But the Republican Governor in Florida, named [Charles] Crist, who's going to run for the Senate, and I think will be elected, he pushed through the legislature a bill that said if you served your time you could vote. So this past Presidential election was the first time I've been able to vote since 1963.

RITCHIE: Oh, very good.

BAKER: Yeah, I really like him. He's a Greek. If the Republican Party is going

to be a Majority party, they've got to appeal to more people than the country club crowd. They don't seem to be able to do that. I tell everybody my favorite Republican ticket would be the former Speaker of the House [Newt Gingrich] and Rush Limbaugh. That will bury them forever!

RITCHIE: I was thinking that when you came to the Senate, every single Southern Senator was a Democrat.

BAKER: Yes. There was no such thing as a Republican from the South.

RITCHIE: And the only real elections in the South were the primaries.

BAKER: Correct.

RITCHIE: Once you won the primary, you were as good as elected.

BAKER: Right. Just like Senator Johnson, he was a cinch to win the general election once he won the Democratic nomination.

RITCHIE: To some degree, that began to change when Johnson became Vice President, because John Tower, a Republican, was elected to his seat from Texas. And then the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act changed things dramatically.

BAKER: Yes, hopefully, with Senator Obama, there can be a revitalization of educated Democrats to vote with the blacks, because otherwise it's a hopeless situation. We're 40 miles south of Jacksonville, but unless you're a Republican, you can't get elected dog catcher. It's unreal. It used to be totally different.

RITCHIE: There have been some huge political changes. One of the people we talked about just briefly, but who was a big factor when Senator Johnson became the Minority Leader in '53—that was the year that Senator Joe McCarthy was all over the news, and was sort of the loose cannon in the Senate. You knew him before he got to be famous.

BAKER: I sure did. I dated a pretty girl named Johnson in his office. Her sister

married William Jennings Bryan Dorn, who was the Congressman from the Third District in South Carolina. She, I think, worked for *U.S. News & World Report* for many years. But she introduced me to her sister. I used to go to the race track with Senator McCarthy. Joe was—because of Senator Maybank being Chairman of the Banking Committee—was very nice to me. He was not a real mean Republican. He would do you a favor. But somebody wrote a mean speech when he went to Wheeling, West Virginia, for one of those Lincoln Day dinners, and he received so much publicity, he believed his lies. I think in his speech he said there were 205 card-carrying Communists in the State Department. The House Un-American Activities Committee had been investigating Alger Hiss. There was a headline every day. So the conservative press really thought that Senator Joe McCarthy was the second coming of Jesus Christ. I mean, they just fell in love with him. They would do anything that he wanted.

Tragically, he believed his own bullshit and he destroyed himself. He married a beautiful girl that worked in the Secretary of the Senate's office. I think they had one child, I'm not certain.

RITCHIE: They adopted a child.

BAKER: Oh, they did. And his wife tried to keep him from drinking. I think when they write the real history of the Senate, Senator Lyndon Johnson's selection of the makeup of the investigating Committee of Senator McCarthy—plus his influence with the Republicans—was a brilliant move. There was a very decent, very conservative Republican named Senator Arthur Watkins from Utah, but he was a real leader in the Mormon Church. And Senator John Stennis was from Mississippi, and had been a Judge; even the liberals respected him because of his dignity. So when I wanted to keep the Senate in order I'd put Judge Stennis in the chair. The staff would always say, "Why did you put that son of a bitch up there?" Because he would make them all leave. Having been a Judge, he knew what to do. But you look at the makeup of the Democrats and the Republicans—I think the Democrats were absolutely unanimous in voting to censure Senator McCarthy. I know Senator Watkins voted to censure him. I've forgotten who the other members were, but as a consequence of the real brilliance of Senator Lyndon Johnson, they undid a terrible tragedy in the history of our country, because it was just criminal the hatred that Senator McCarthy had just manipulated. He believed his own

bullshit, which is sad.

RITCHIE: He had a very negative impact on Senators who took him on, like Senators Millard Tydings and William Benton.

BAKER: Oh, sure, he was responsible for quite a few Democrats being defeated. You were either pro-Communist or anti-Communist, so far as he was concerned. And he could raise money, especially from Texas. I mean the Murchisons, the Bass brothers, Sid Richardson—who hired John Connally away from Johnson—they all sent *big* money to McCarthy. He just had an open account.

RITCHIE: So how did Senator Johnson go about taking him on?

BAKER: Well, he had to be very deft in his manipulation, because he never—after Senator McCarthy made that speech, and the damage he was doing, defeating people like Senator Millard Tydings, who had been a good Senator from Maryland—they knew that this guy was such a demagogue that he could easily have been elected President. Fortunately, President Eisenhower didn't like him, and that helped a great deal. Then his drinking, and his stupidity. But the Johnson Resolution—what I call Impeachment Committee—did their job, and then after that Senator McCarthy died a broken man, which was good for the country. He received what he deserved.

RITCHIE: There wasn't anybody on that Committee who Senator McCarthy could accuse of being pro-Communist.

BAKER: That is correct. They did a great service for the country and the world. Because Senator McCarthy reminded me of Hitler. It was his way or the highway. It doesn't work that way.

RITCHIE: It's interesting that so many of the people who knew him back in those days said he was a nice person, when he wasn't on television..

BAKER: Yes, he was. He was just a warm Irishman. But then he made that speech and he never had headlines like that before. Boy, they just took over the country. I

think Fulton Lewis was a radio man, he was sort of like Rush Limbaugh. He had everybody believing he was the only anti-Communist in the world. Poor old President Truman, they just cut him, and Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, they had a house full of Communists.

RITCHIE: When Senator McCarthy was censured, it was during a special lame duck session of the Senate, after the election, so they waited until votes had been counted.

BAKER: Once again, that shows you the intellectual competence of Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson, because even if a Senator was defeated in the election, he could vote in that special session. That's what happened.

RITCHIE: Every Democrat except for John Kennedy voted for censure, but Senator Kennedy was in the hospital.

BAKER: Yes, they had given him the last rites of the Catholic Church. But I listed him, had he been present, he would have voted for the censure.

RITCHIE: And then about half of the Republicans voted for the censure as well.

BAKER: Yes, I don't know of anything that happened in my tenure in the Senate that was better for the country. He was a demagogue. He was just making people so bitter.

RITCHIE: The censure took the steam out of him so dramatically. He became so ineffectual afterwards.

BAKER: Oh, sure, he couldn't fix a traffic ticket after that.

RITCHIE: Part of it was that the press had to be convinced that he wasn't a story anymore.

BAKER: The press can change sides quickly and they did. Once he was censured, they hardly mentioned his name.

RITCHIE: One of the old reporters said that if you were in the press gallery and they said, “Joe’s up,” everybody would run into the gallery to hear what he was saying. But in the next Congress, after the censure, when they said, “Joe’s up,” everyone would go back to reading the newspaper.

BAKER: That is absolutely true.

RITCHIE: Well, it’s noon, would you like to take break for lunch?

BAKER: Yeah, where do you eat, here in the cafeteria?

RITCHIE: We can eat here, or the Monocle is still around here.

BAKER: Let’s eat here, I eat very light.

RITCHIE: Okay, very good.

End of the First Interview

THE JOHNSON ERA
Interview #2
Monday Afternoon, June 1, 2009

RITCHIE: You just mentioned David Broder. We haven't talked about the reporters in the press gallery and I wanted to know who were the people that you dealt with back in the '50s, when you were on the floor? Who was after you for information?

BAKER: Well, you had Jack Bell from Associated Press. I think there was a fellow named John Steele. I've forgotten who he worked for, but he was very significant. And then there was Jack Anderson who worked for Drew Pearson. The press back then, they really enjoyed writing political stories. Senator Johnson had a love/hate relationship with the press. If you wrote nice things about him, he really paid attention to you. And so those that did not like him or Texas and so forth, he tried to stay away from. But Bob Albright worked for the *Washington Post*, a very able reporter. He could keep a secret, which is hard for press people. The reporters for *Time* magazine were generally top rate.

RITCHIE: Neil MacNeil, I know, was here in those days.

BAKER: Yeah, Neil MacNeil was very, very able and respected. *Newsweek* had some able reporters. I'm old and forgetful, but the head of *Newsweek* that covered the Senate and the House was there for many years. I guess TV was very big, but in the radio gallery, they had the same reporters all the time. Generally, the press was not opinionated like they are now. They were very fair and I think they did a better job than a lot of the people now.

RITCHIE: You had Allen Drury writing for the *New York Times*.

BAKER: Oh yeah, Allen Drury. He was a real professional and a very able writer. His books did well. I think about as well as any reporter that ever worked in the Congress.

RITCHIE: Did they ever provide information for you? They must have picked up a lot of gossip going on as well.

BAKER: Yeah, you know, if they had picked up something that they thought I should know, they would confidentially say, “You can’t use this, but you should know.” I had a very wonderful relationship with all the press, and when all my trouble started, when the papers started saying bad things about me, they asked to be excused. They just said he’s our friend and provided great information and we like him. But they just refused to get in to it. So they would send out-of-towners.

RITCHIE: The relationship between the press and the politicians is always such an interesting one: they need each other but they’re wary of each other.

BAKER: That is absolutely correct. They have got to report the news as they see it and not the way you try to sell it to them, and so they can be very helpful or harmful the way they say their stories about you as a politician. So politicians are wary of them because the least little slip can sink the ship. But those who become real friends with them—I guess Bobby Kennedy had the best press relations of anybody in my lifetime. He always was inviting them to swimming parties, and they like attention. If you had a copy of his guest book, you’d be shocked at how many of the top press in the country were always around his swimming pool. They liked it.

RITCHIE: There was always some resentment among some of the Senators that some politicians got better coverage because they were leaking to them all the time.

BAKER: That is true.

RITCHIE: People used to say with Senator Wayne Morse that if you told him something one day, it would be in Drew Pearson’s column the next.

BAKER: Yep. Wayne and Drew were really great buddies and no doubt that Senator Wayne Morse never kept a secret in his life.

[The interview was interrupted here by the arrival of the photographer.]

Senator [B. Everett] Jordan from North Carolina called me, knowing that I was in

charge of the LBJ Vice Presidential train trip through the South, and he said, “Bobby, I have a brilliant Harvard Law School scholar who’s from Saulsbury, North Carolina. Her name is Elizabeth—” I’ve forgotten her last name, but she married Bob Dole.

RITCHIE: Hanford, I think.

BAKER: Yeah, Elizabeth Hanford. That’s exactly correct. He said, “Is there any way you could give her a job on the train?” And I said, “I will talk to the Leader and tell him that you called.” And he immediately agreed and she was a joy. She is so bright and I was absolutely shocked that she was defeated in the North Carolina election. I thought that she would win, being married to Senator Dole and with all the publicity. And she had been a very able member of the Cabinet, I guess, when Reagan was President. But people can forget you right quick.

RITCHIE: She spent a lot of time campaigning nationally. She was head of the Republican Campaign Committee.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: So she was away from the State for much of the time.

BAKER: I read some of the literature that said she was an absentee Senator.

RITCHIE: And that worked against her when she was running for reelection.

BAKER: Yes. But I was impressed with how bright and interesting and she was a good storyteller. But it was a joy having her on that train. She was very helpful.

RITCHIE: Well, going back to the 1950s, the Democrats in the Senate were in the minority from ’53 to ’54, and then in ’54, you have the election and both parties were even except for Senator Wayne Morse who had left the Republican Party but hadn’t joined the Democratic Party. How did Johnson get Wayne Morse into the Democratic Party at that point?

BAKER: I think that number one, Senator Wayne Morse respected Senator Lyndon Johnson and even though Wayne Morse was what I call a “20-vote maverick,” he and Johnson both liked each other. I am sure that Senator Lyndon Johnson promised to Senator Wayne Morse if he would convert to the Democratic side that he would save his seniority and give him any Committee he wanted. I think that probably was the most significant thing that happened then. Thank God Senator Wayne Morse came over. We became a Majority instead of the Minority party and I think this did more to help Senator Lyndon Johnson be the most successful Majority Leader that the U.S. Senate ever had.

RITCHIE: The Republicans stripped his seniority when he left the Party, which was a mistake.

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: For instance, the Democrats didn’t do that with Senator [Joseph] Lieberman and they kept his loyalty as a result.

BAKER: Which was an absolutely brilliant conclusion, because he’s going to vote with you 90 percent of the time, so you do not accomplish anything being bitter. I thought Senator Lieberman would have been a good Presidential Candidate had he not had difficulty being reelected. I was very fond of Senator [Thomas] Dodd, Sr., and I cannot believe that his son [Christopher Dodd] is in such political difficulty with the election coming up next November. It shows you what the press can do to a sitting Senator because he received a little preferential treatment on a couple of mortgages. And boy, his opponents have had a field day. And he’s lucky to be running at about 38 percent in the polls. I mean, with his position and seniority and knowledge, he ought to be a 78 percenter on the other side. But it shows you what negative publicity can do for you, because the press in Connecticut has really pounced on him. If he came to me for advice, I’d say I would never run for reelection and take my pension and live a long life. Because that’s what he’s confronted with.

RITCHIE: Again back to the early ’50s, a person we haven’t talked about yet was Johnson’s Whip, Senator Earle Clements.

BAKER: Well, I am so happy that you mentioned him. Senator Earle Clements was able to protect Texas and Senator Lyndon Johnson from the liberals because he was unusually liberal for being a Senator from Kentucky. He had great support with the American labor movement, who were very powerful with the liberal Democrats. So any time we had a massive fire, Senator Earle Clements could put that fire out. He committed political suicide when he was Whip. Senator Johnson was very strong for amending the Social Security Act and Senator Clements, knowing he had a tough reelection coming up with Thruston Morton, had made a deal with the medical society in Kentucky that he was going to vote against the Social Security plan. When it came down that his vote was the difference for Senator Lyndon Johnson to be a great success or a loser, he was more loyal to Senator Lyndon Johnson than he was to his commitment in Kentucky. As a consequence, he lost his seat. His daughter is a dear, dear friend of mine, Bess Abell. She's married to Drew Pearson's stepson, Tyler Abell. Anytime I'm in Washington, we visit and renew our ties. But Senator Clements knew the Senate better than any Democrat I've ever known. He knew how to put out the liberal fires and he was more helpful to Senator Lyndon Johnson as Leader than any Senator that I knew.

RITCHIE: What was it about him? What was the quality that he had?

BAKER: Well, you know, he had been the Agriculture Commissioner in Kentucky. Before the 1960 election, Governor [Buford] Ellington of Tennessee didn't know Senator Lyndon Johnson, so he came to my office and said, "Bobby, I want to meet Senator Johnson because as the Governor of Tennessee, I control the total Democratic delegation." And he said, "I would like to vote for him if he will run for President." So I took him up to the Majority Leader's office and said, "Mr. Leader, I have been a good friend of Governor Buford Ellington, who had been Agriculture Commissioner, and he wants to support you for the Presidency." Senator Johnson said, "I'm flattered but I am not running. You better get yourself another Candidate."

But Senator Lyndon Johnson was so appreciative of Governor Ellington, who controlled the Tennessee delegation, coming to him and saying, "Forget Albert Gore and Estes Kevauver, I'm for you, Lyndon Johnson." So after Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson were elected, Governor Ellington called me and said, "You owe me a favor." I

said, “Anything you want, I shall do.” He said, “I need Senator Johnson and Lady Bird to come to the Governor’s mansion and then I want them to go to the” —I think it’s Shelbyville, Tennessee—“they have the Tennessee Walking Horse championship, and I want Vice President Johnson to present the cup.” So we went down and really had a glorious meeting with the Governor and his family. The police escorted us over to Shelbyville, which is about 30 miles beyond Nashville. So when it came time for Vice President Johnson to give the cup to the winner of the National Tennessee Walking Horse contest, here’s a big old man with a Texas hat who was from Kentucky. So when Vice President Johnson, over the loud speaker system, was telling this gentleman how proud he was to present this World Championship cup to him for having the best Tennessee Walking Horse in the world, he said, “My name is Lyndon Johnson and I’m Vice President.” And so the winner said, “Well, I’ve never heard of you.” He said, “The only politician I know is Earle Clements. He was the best Agricultural Commissioner that Kentucky ever had.” We got a lot of laughs out of it. But it’s a true story.

RITCHIE: It’s interesting because Senator Clements doesn’t have that much of a profile, people don’t know much about him politically. He didn’t stand out like some of the others, but he seemed to be extremely able.

BAKER: He was a real professional behind the scenes. I couldn’t recite a Clements bill that ever passed, but he was probably the greatest professional Democrat. He believed in everything that the Democratic Party stood for and he worked at it.

RITCHIE: When he was the Whip, how did you and he divide up the Whip’s responsibilities? Because you were doing a lot of that sort of work too.

BAKER: Oh no, no, no. You know, between Senator Johnson and Senator Clements, we would meet and we’d talk over Committee assignments. I mean, he had good judgement. He would keep you from falling into a trap on occasion.

RITCHIE: I found a wonderful quote. We’ve edited all the Democratic Conference minutes and there was a quote from a Senator from West Virginia, Neely—

BAKER: He used to be Chairman of the Senate District of Columbia Committee,

Matthew Neely.

RITCHIE: Yes, Matthew Neely, he said, “With Lyndon Johnson, Earle Clements, Skeeter Johnston and Bobby Baker running the Senate, the Senate and the government of the United States will continue to stand. If anything can completely rehabilitate the prestige of the Senate, it will be those four men on the job.”

BAKER: Well, he was a very dear friend and dependable. He would get frustrated when Senators would talk too long. He’d say, “Can’t you do something to shut that loud mouth up?” But he was a very, very interesting man and he was really one of the biggest pro-Bobby Baker Senators there. I could do no wrong. And there was a Senator from Kentucky, Senator Virgil Chapman, that was the same way. Senator Chapman had a whiskey problem. He always called me baby. He’d say, “Baby, can I be gone another hour?” He was a very conservative Kentuckian. I think Senator Clements took his seat. I think Virgil died and that’s when Senator Clements came to the Senate.

RITCHIE: Yes, I think there was a traffic accident.

BAKER: I believe that is true.

RITCHIE: Quite a few interesting, colorful characters like that. You mentioned the request: “Can I have a little extra time?” Was that one of the issues, jockeying the schedule around to meet everybody’s needs?

BAKER: Yes, well you know, a lot of the Senators would have out of town people for dinner and we were running late. Then people like Senator Morse or Senator Strom Thurmond would talk eight hours and other Senators would say, “Can’t you get that windbag to shut up?” Senator Johnson was pretty good, when he had a Senator that had a problem, in trying to accommodate him. One time I needed Senator Fulbright for a vote and he had been in Baltimore, making a paid speech. So I called the Mayor and got a police car to bring him. When he came in the cloakroom he grabbed me by the throat and said, “I ought to kill you.” He said, “That guy was going 90 miles an hour and the wheels were going up and down off the road” He said, “You could vote without me.” I said, “I needed you.” One time Senator Humphrey was needed for a vote and he was flying back

from, say, Minneapolis. So I had to call the White House to get permission to let him land quickly. Then I had the Capitol Police out there to rush him in. So those are some of the things that, when you know people, you can get things done. But he arrived there for the vote that he couldn't afford to miss.

RITCHIE: But you had to do a lot of favors for people, obviously, to get—

BAKER: Well sure, sure. Yeah, you don't get something for nothing. You have to be helpful.

RITCHIE: Someone told me once about Senator Frank Lausche, who would always come in and make a statement so that he appeared in the *Record*, and then he would head for Burning Tree for the rest of the afternoon.

BAKER: Yeah, he was not a very effective Senator. He was a loner. I don't know many people who really liked him. It's sad.

RITCHIE: But he was always in the *Record* to show that he was there.

BAKER: Oh yes. He was a big favorite with the press—I'm talking about the Ohio press. But as a Senator, I can't tell you anything he accomplished.

RITCHIE: Does the old saw about Senators being showhorses or workhorses, did that really stand up?

BAKER: Yes, that's true. Absolutely. You know, a lot of them would do anything. Senator John Williams of Delaware is a good illustration. He attacked Donald Dawson, Administrative Assistant to President Truman. And you can't show me anything that John Williams ever passed of any consequence. But he, with Clark Mollenhoff, who was a reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and the *Des Moines Register*, he would write speeches for John Williams and they'd be in the paper before he would make the speech in the afternoon the next day. I mean, some people loved to see their name in the paper and I think Senator John Williams was one of those.

RITCHIE: But then there are people like Senator Carl Hayden who you never saw in the *Congressional Record*, or rarely in the newspaper, but behind the scenes—

BAKER: But he was a workhorse. He was absolutely one of the premier workhorses in the history of the United States Senate. What this man accomplished for Arizona is unequalled, but it was because he was friends with the people who had the power. If they needed something, Senator Carl Hayden would take care of them. If I had to pick one of the best Senators in the history of the U.S. Senate when I worked there, it would be Senator Carl Hayden, without any doubt.

RITCHIE: But you'd never see him on the Sunday morning talk shows.

BAKER: No, no, he did not do that. But Roy Elson was his very talented and able administrative assistant and he was able to keep the Arizona press happy. They didn't give a damn about the rest of the country, because Arizona is what they looked after and nobody had ever done a better job than Senator Carl Hayden. I liked Senator [Barry] Goldwater, but he was not a very effective Senator. But he liked to get his name in the paper. He was a showdog.

RITCHIE: It's a little bit easier sometimes if you're in the minority to do that because you don't have as much influence over what's going on so you can talk to the press instead.

BAKER: Yeah, oh they love the press. You know, they entertain them and tell them how smart they are. The press, like the rest of us, they like flattery.

RITCHIE: Going back to Senator Clements, you mentioned that he sacrificed himself on that Social Security bill.

BAKER: Yeah, Thruston Morton defeated him.

RITCHIE: He was pretty sure that if he voted that way it was going to hurt him?

BAKER: Oh yeah, but he had such belief in the Leadership of Senator Lyndon Johnson that he made the sacrifice. I think he knew that he had committed political

suicide when he did that because he broke his word to the doctors. And boy, they put in the money to back Thruston Morton and he trounced him.

RITCHIE: What about Johnson? Did he realize what he had done?

BAKER: Yes, he did, and he named Senator Clements the Director of the Senatorial Campaign Committee. Took a beautiful office on the third floor of the Capitol and gave it to him. Once Senator Mansfield became Leader, his wife hated Senator Johnson and she demanded that Senator Mansfield have that office. So that's what happened. She was very bitter. She hated Lyndon Johnson.

RITCHIE: Senator George Smathers said that when Clements was defeated that Johnson offered him the Whip's position.

BAKER: Well, I secured the votes for him to be, but then he—I mean, I had 90 percent of the Democratic Senators going to vote for him because he was a likeable and a very articulate Senator. But he called me and said to tell Senator Johnson that the Democratic Party was too liberal and that he would not take the job. So that really wrecked us. I've never forgiven him for that. I mean it was stupid. He had such a bright future, but he caught a lot of hell from the old Ku Kluxers in the South that supported him against Senator Claude Pepper, and he was a political coward to give in to them.

RITCHIE: Do you think that he was afraid that he wouldn't get reelected if he took that Leadership position?

BAKER: That's correct. I think that what happened to Senator Clements, he was afraid would happen to him, if he went with Senator Lyndon Johnson.

RITCHIE: How did Johnson pick Senator Mansfield? Why did he go with him for Whip?

BAKER: Senator Johnson, during the Roosevelt administration—I'm talking about Franklin Roosevelt—knew one of his administrative assistants named James Roe from Montana, and he had worked for Senator Johnson on the Policy Committee as an advisor. He was a law partner with Tommy Corcoran, who had been at the White House

when President Roosevelt was there. He was solely responsible for Senator Johnson picking Senator Mansfield. I think, in hindsight, it was a bad mistake, because Mansfield was rather professorial. You know, he'd just go in his office and smoke his pipe and read foreign affairs papers and he basically let the Senate do its will. He never tried to ask anybody for a vote.

The dumbest thing I ever did was after Johnson became Vice President and I was offered a job for a half a million a year with Martin Marietta to be their Washington representative, I went to my dear friend Senator Kerr and said, "I need to get out of here. I have five kids and I need to get ahead." He said, "You forget that job and stay here." He said, "I will take care of you. Don't worry about it." He tried to do it, but I should never have gone to work for Senator Mansfield. Senator Mansfield told me that he would not take the job as Majority Leader if I did not stay, because he knew that I could find out for him how each Senator was going to vote and he didn't have to ask. But the dumbest thing I ever did in my life was stay. It was hard since Senator Johnson had asked Senator Mansfield to go to Montana to get the Democratic delegation for him for President. When Senator Mansfield bought his ticket to Montana, he went in the hotel room and never did anything or ask anybody to vote for Senator Johnson. So you knew where he stood. Mrs. Mansfield thought that President Kennedy was the second coming of Christ.

But President Kennedy was a typical Irishman—he could dislike. The Democratic Governor [of New Jersey], [Robert] Meyner, I think was his name, ran against him for the Presidential nomination in 1960. There was a wealthy man in the chemical business in New Jersey and he'd been a big financial contributor to Governor Meyner, and he wanted to be the ambassador to South Africa because he was doing a lot of business there. Mansfield did everything in his power to get President Kennedy to nominate the New Jersey rich man. And President Kennedy said over his dead body. He said, "That son of a bitch was for Meyner and he will never get a job." And he never did. The New Jersey billionaire gave Mansfield's daughter a job in London, but he never was appointed to any position.

RITCHIE: Politicians have long memories.

BAKER: Another thing that—when Bill Thompson and Senator Kennedy went to

Annapolis to try to get the Maryland delegation to support Senator Kennedy to be the Democratic nominee for the Presidency, there was a Congressman from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, I think his name was Tom Johnson. When they were meeting with Governor [J. Millard] Tawes, who was from over on the Eastern Shore, like Crisfield, Maryland, not a too well educated fellow, who depended on Tom Johnson to be the spokesperson for his position. So Congressman Tom Johnson made a speech that Senator Kennedy was very well liked and the Catholics liked him, but it would be a mistake for him to run in the Maryland primary. Notwithstanding Tom Johnson's advice, Kennedy ran and won. President Kennedy and Attorney General Bobby Kennedy forced an indictment for Tom Johnson because Kennedy told Bill Thompson, "I'll get that son of a bitch." And they did. I mean, they could hate. Sad, but true.

ITCHIE: Going back to the '50s, you haven't mentioned—we've talked around it—but Senator Johnson's heart attack obviously had a big impact. You weren't with him when that happened, were you?

BAKER: No, I was down on a holiday weekend in Ocean City, Maryland. So the first I knew about his heart attack was a bulletin on the radio that he'd had a massive heart attack. I immediately got my wife and kids and we rushed back to Washington. The doctors did not think he was going to survive. He was in, I think, Bethesda Naval Hospital about six weeks. I went there every day when they would permit me. He had a cute story. He said some Jewish tailor had measured him for two suits. He said, "Whatever you do, make that dark blue suit, because if I die I'll need it."

He used his recovery to invite Senators down to the ranch. I flew down with Senator John Pastore, and I don't think he'd ever been to Texas. But Senator Johnson really poured on the warmth and Senator Pastore never forgot it. So Senator Johnson and Senator Pastore and Senator Green—Eddie Higgins was his administrative assistant (I very seldom ever talked to Senator Green. I'd call Eddie and say, "The Leader needs your help." And he could talk Senator Green into anything Johnson wanted—he did). Senator Green was a very rich, and a very pleasant man. I still remember him at policy meetings. All he would order was a cup of bean soup and a piece of apple pie. Senator John Pastore, when he got elected as the first Italo-American in the history of the U.S. Senate, we were meeting in the Old Supreme Court Chamber because they were redoing the Senate

Chamber. When Senator Pastore was sworn in, very few of us knew anything about him, but every Italo-American in the country tried to come see him sworn in. It was really one of the most beautiful swearing-ins that I ever saw.

RITCHIE: He was something of a bantam rooster.

BAKER: Oh yeah. He wasn't five foot tall, but you could hear his voice all the way to the Lincoln Memorial. I mean, he could really scream for a little fellow. And he was effective.

RITCHIE: I've heard that you didn't want to tangle with him in debate.

BAKER: Correct. I mean he and Senator Bob Kerr were two of the premier speakers. Bob Kerr—when Truman fired General [Douglas] MacArthur, the Republicans were really making a big to-do. But Senator Kerr took on Senator [Homer] Capehart and some of those defending General MacArthur. He really destroyed them with words. He was a Chairman of some Subcommittee on the Public Works Committee and there was a very prominent New Yorker, I think his name was Robert Moses, who was in charge of all the public works deals for New York City. The New York press especially was talking about the big confrontation between Senator Kerr and Mr. Moses. But Senator Kerr just tore him to pieces. You cannot believe his brilliance as a Senate orator.

Bob Novak, before he became ill, told me that the biggest mystery of his life about Senator Kerr was that Senator Kerr, when President Eisenhower was President, had the Secretary of the Treasury, [George] Humphrey, and that Senator Kerr and the Finance Committee had just torn him to pieces. Bob Novak at that time was a writer for the *Wall Street Journal*. All of a sudden, after Senator Kerr had really devastated Secretary Humphrey, he never bothered him again. Bob Novak thinks that Senator Kerr had Internal Revenue problems and that Secretary Humphrey and Senator Kerr made a deal: he never mentioned his name again. Interesting story. I'm going to ask Donald Graham, president of the *Washington Post*, how sick Bob Novak is, because I'd like to get an affidavit from Bob Novak. He evidently is not in pretty good shape because after he had his brain tumor removed, he wrote several columns. But I never see anything from him anymore.

RITCHIE: It's been awhile.

BAKER: Yeah, it's been six months since he's had a column, so you have to assume that he's in pretty bad shape. His wife worked for Senator Lyndon Johnson's brother, Sam Houston. That's where he met her. I think her name was Fitzgerald or something. She was a very pretty young girl and they've had a wonderful marriage. He was originally from Joliet, Illinois, and he was raised by a Jewish family, but he converted to be a Catholic. I have a great friend who used to be a priest and stayed at our house. He became the Cardinal for the Washington area, Theodore McCarrick. I did a eulogy at Blessed Sacrament out there in Chevy Chase and after we were through, we went out and had a couple of toddies together. I had noticed that Pope John Paul had gone to Newark, New Jersey, where he was the Bishop. I said, "Father Ted, if your buddy the Pope ever makes you a Cardinal, I will join your Church." Well, damn if he didn't! And one of the most wonderful 30 days of my life was when he was ordained as cardinal. He was my friend, he is my friend. I wrote to the new Pope and said that in all my political experience, the ablest spokesperson in the history of the Catholic Church is Cardinal McCarrick, and you'll make a terrible mistake if you let him retire. Because he was able to placate the bishops about Senator [John] Kerry being able to take communion and so forth, he softened that. But this new Pope held that against him and he did not appoint him. I never received a reply from my letter to him, but I stand by that letter, because he was a great healer. He was sort of like Senator Earle Clements. He could make a deal with you. And the Church misses him.

I think the Church is in terrible shape. They're going broke on gays. They have a brilliant Church and they've got nuns and priests, but they ought to be normal and get married. I think that the big explosion that we had with Senator Obama being elected President is going to happen to the Catholic Church. Maybe not in my and your lifetime, but in 50 years the younger people will take over, because the only way the Church is growing is basically in Africa. So they think that the next Pope will be black. It's interesting. But I'll tell you, the only job I've seen since I was forced to retire is Pope, because you can go to the best restaurants in the world and you have everybody kissing your ring. I mean, you're an influential man around the world. But nobody's offered me that job.

RITCHIE: [Laughing] Well, to go back to the position of Majority Leader rather than Pope, I mentioned Senator Johnson having that heart attack. How did that affect his Leadership in the Senate?

BAKER: Because he had come so close to death, I would say 80 percent of the Senate really felt sorry for him and wanted to help. I think that did more than any one thing that ever happened to him to make it possible for him to be the most successful Senate Majority Leader in the history of the Senate. Because they did not want to agitate him. They wanted to help him. So I don't think there is anything that ever happened to a politician that helped more than having that massive heart attack. But he really worked. Like he would invite Senators down to the ranch because the doctors had told him that swimming was the best thing that he could do and he had a heated pool. He really worked that. Senator Clements and I almost were killed going down to that ranch because he was having a big barbecue out in the country, and we were in a private plane and we had to land on the grass, but we almost hit some electric lines. If we hit them, we would have been dead.

After President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson had been elected, I had been retained to make a \$5,000-speech to the Savings and Loan people at the Fontainebleau in Miami when Johnson called me and said, "Your friend Kennedy called and invited himself to the ranch." He said, "You've got to be here." So I cancelled my speech and got on a plane and went out there. Senator Johnson truly loved to deer hunt, so the first morning after Senator Kennedy arrived—I guess they awakened about daybreak, about 5:30 in the morning—and he had no desire to go deer hunting. In fact, he told me later that was the dumbest thing he ever did in his life. But you know, with him being President-elect, he had Secret Service protection, so when he and Senator Johnson and Wesley West, who was a very rich Texan who kept a ranch of about 40,000 acres and they had about 5,000 deer, when they spotted a deer, Senator Johnson said, "Fire." Well, Senator Kennedy hit the deer in the leg and he didn't want to shoot again. Finally, the Secret Service killed him. But Senator Kennedy said, "Lyndon Johnson's crazy with all of that deer hunting." He said, "That's the dumbest thing in my life's history that I ever did."

RITCHIE: I've heard that when Senator Johnson was absent for a while after he had his heart attack that he used the schedule to his advantage, stretched it and squeezed it.

BAKER: I think that's a true statement. You know, he was a master manipulator. Being the Majority Leader, and with the sympathy that he had, he was allowed to do a lot more than he should have been.

RITCHIE: It was you and Senator Clements, and I guess Senator Smathers also was on the floor.

BAKER: Yeah, yeah.

RITCHIE: So what did you do while he wasn't there?

BAKER: Well, you know, we sort of tried to keep anything that was contentious from coming up and do everything we could to have as few sessions as possible. We'd go to that Monday-Thursday deal as many times as we could. And so basically, you know, vote on Appropriation bills and things like that while he was gone. But the heart attack really helped him with his Senate prestige, because everybody realized he worked too hard.

Senator Dirksen became a wonderful friend. I mean, had it not been for Senator Dirksen, the Voting Rights Act would have never passed, because between Senator Russell and the Southerners and the Republicans, they had enough votes to kill it. But President Johnson had Senator Dirksen down to the White House—when Senator Dirksen had some kind of a mild stroke or something down in Puerto Rico and the President sent Air Force One to bring him back—so after he recovered, President Johnson would get him in the White House and say, “Now Ev, the greatest Republican in the history of this country was Abraham Lincoln, and he freed the slaves. And if you don't vote with me, you're going to do a great injustice to Abraham Lincoln.” And Senator Dirksen switched enough votes to pass the Voting Rights Act in '65. So I'll tell you, I have great admiration for him. Senator Dirksen did not die broke. He never saw \$100 bill he didn't like.

RITCHIE: What did you think of the Republican Leader between Senators Taft and Dirksen, William Knowland?

BAKER: You know, Senator Knowland, he was in love with President Chiang Kai-shek. He spent all of his time trying to get us into a war over Quemoy and Matsu. He was the owner of the *Oakland Tribune* or something like that, a newspaper. He was not a very warm person, but because he was from California, he was elected the Republican Leader. But he was not a very effective Leader, because he did not have the warmth to be a good Leader, like Senator McNary or Senator Howard Baker or Senator Dirksen. That was Richard Nixon's biggest weakness: he did not know how to be warm and so most of the Senators on both sides sort of dodged him. And he paid a hell of a price once he became President because of his inability to have warm friendships.

RITCHIE: Nixon was a very shy man, in some respects.

BAKER: I think that is accurate. I think he was an introvert. I thought he was brilliant in working with Attorney General [Herbert] Brownell and trying to get Negroes to vote Republican. They were having great success, but he switched, and history will not be very kind to President Richard Nixon, because he did petty things. You hear those White House tapes, I mean, it's sad. And the way he learned about tapes was President Johnson told him. He said, "You know, if you keep the tapes, when you get out of the Presidency you can sell books and make a lot of money." He took President Johnson's advice, but it destroyed him, those damn tapes. Ed Williams was representing President Nixon at the time and I told him, "Ed, you better tell him to burn those tapes because he's dead." But he wouldn't do it.

RITCHIE: Whereas President Johnson looks better on the tapes.

BAKER: Yes he does.

RITCHIE: When he gave public speeches he always took on that very serious, slow demeanor.

BAKER: He was pathetic in his public speaking. He did not look good on television. He did not speak well on television. He'd have been much better off to stay the hell off television.

RITCHIE: But he's fun to listen to on those telephone conversations.

BAKER: Oh God, he can tell stories better than anybody I have ever known.

RITCHIE: The old-time staff always referred to him as a "riverboat gambler" and that's what I think comes across on those tapes.

BAKER: Oh yeah, sure.

RITCHIE: Quick-witted and fast, barking out orders.

BAKER: But he was a real coward when a friend had a problem. Like when he and Lady Bird were on a trip to Viet Nam or something when I resigned. Lady Bird called me. He was laying right there in the bed with her, but he didn't have the guts to talk to me. The press knew how close we were and I could have been of invaluable help to them about this guy Don Reynolds because I was the one that introduced him to Senator Johnson. Senator Johnson couldn't get insurance after his heart attack, so he was lamenting to me what a tragedy it would be for Lady Bird had he died because Texas is a community property state. At that time she had about \$10 million net worth and I think anything over a million was taxed about 90 percent. She said, "She would have been ruined." It's interesting, before Lady Bird died, she had given an interview to—I saw it in the *Wall Street Journal*—that she sure hoped that they kept that estate tax like it is. I think that President Bush changed it, but it's going to change in—2010?

RITCHIE: Yes.

BAKER: Because she didn't want to give all her money to the government. I've been reading this Lady [Brooke] Astor son's case in the *New York Post* and one of the writers said that one thing you can say about Mrs. Astor, she hated the inheritance tax and she did everything she could to avoid it. She set up like a Rockefeller trust and then she

would take interest from the trust. Let's say she set up a \$100 million trust—but she had a corrupt son. I think that he probably will get sentenced in the next week or so, but he's about 85 years old. He stole over \$100 million. Now Barbara Walters was interviewed by the court case and she said that Mrs. Astor's memory was so bad that she didn't know who Barbara Walters was. She had Alzheimer's disease. Her son forged her name to a will. I mean, it's just unreal.

RITCHIE: Yes. Another thing I wanted to ask you about Johnson as Leader was how he used unanimous consent agreements. The Senate today does about 80 percent of its work by unanimous consent agreements and everybody says that Lyndon Johnson started the practice.

BAKER: I think that is true. It really works when Senators want a long weekend and unless you get a unanimous consent agreement to vote, they have to work on Friday and cancel all their go home plans and what not. He became a genius at working out with the Republican Leader and with the unanimous consent agreement. Just like when Senator Dirksen had me down to his office to talk to his Republican Senators who thought they had the votes to defeat what was before the Senate. The end product was when I told them that we have 40 Democrats and 12 Republicans. Senator Dirksen said, "Let me go to Lyndon and work out a unanimous consent agreement." And that happened. That's the best way to run the Senate. One guy can object and the rest of them would really be angry, because you know, it messes up their plans. They've got plane reservations or train reservations and one of their colleagues messed up the whole deal. So the unanimous consent agreement is a great help to the United States Senate because you can get things done.

RITCHIE: How did Johnson figure this out? Up until then it had just been used for little housekeeping things like, "I want my speech to be in the *Record* as if I had read the whole thing"?

BAKER: Well, what really helped Senator Lyndon Johnson more than anything he'd ever done was giving each freshman Senator a major Committee assignment, so it was hard for a man that had been given a great gift to object. I think that is precisely the reason that he was so successful is that he would take care of them when they first arrived

there and they did not want to be known as a traitor. So he worked very closely with Mr. Watkins, Charles Watkins, who was the Senate Parliamentarian, and I guess Senator Lyndon Johnson knew the rules of the Senate almost equal to Senator Russell, who was the champion. But he really worked tirelessly with Mr. Watkins about what he could do or couldn't do.

RITCHIE: Do you think the fact that he had been in the House meant that he brought some of that with him? In the House, they have a Rules Committee that issues a rule and that determines how long you're going to speak and what amendments can be offered. I wondered if—

BAKER: Oh yeah, I'm sure that had an influence on what he was doing. His great mentor was Speaker Rayburn. President Roosevelt did not like Speaker Rayburn. He was very disappointed that he was made Speaker. But he really liked Congressman Johnson because Lyndon Johnson was the only liberal Democrat who won a Congressional race in 1937. I always remember a cute story about Gussy Busch, who was the very wealthy owner of Budweiser. He invited Congressman Johnson to St. Louis and they had finished dinner and began drinking beer. So Lyndon Johnson's story was, "Don't ever play poker with a drunk rich man." He said he was ahead about \$8,000, but he said Mr. Busch, the drunker he became the wilder he played and he finally doubled up, and Congressman Johnson lost all of his winnings. So he said the moral of the story was, "Don't ever play with a rich drunk man, because he'll beat you every time."

RITCHIE: You mentioned on a number of occasions that Speaker Rayburn would call you—

BAKER: Well the reason that—this only happened after Senator Johnson had his severe heart attack. Speaker Rayburn would say that one of his members had a bill and see if I could talk to Senator Johnson to sort of schedule it and help. Speaker Rayburn treated me like I was one of his sons. You know, he never was married. I was the only youngster ever permitted [in the Board of Education]. Senator Johnson would take me over to Speaker Rayburn's office in the first floor of the Capitol on the House side. After the House had adjourned, the Speaker's favorites would come down there. The day President Roosevelt died, the doctor at the White House called the Speaker and told him that President Roosevelt had passed away and I think Mr. Rayburn told Vice President

Truman that he was the next President. As young as I was, Johnson took me with him practically every time he was going over to the Speaker's boardroom. So the Speaker really felt that warmth toward me because any time he called me about a House member to help, I did. And House Majority Leader John McCormack became my wonderful friend. Anytime he had a bill for the Catholic Church, he was the best spokesperson they ever had. He said, "Now Bob, I need your help." When I had the votes, I'd tell Senator Johnson that Congressman McCormack wants this bill and he would schedule the bill.

RITCHIE: So there was good working relations, in other words?

BAKER: It's very important, you know, Congressmen sort of resent Senators being called the Upper Body. It was Congressman Albert Thomas who was Chairman of the House independent offices Subcommittee. The way Senator Johnson secured all of that money for Houston was he was on the Senate Appropriations Committee and Albert Thomas was on the House Committee. They made Houston one of the big cities in the world due to the space program. And Senator Johnson was able to repay his original benefactors Brown & Root with multi-billion contracts. George and Herman Brown were his faithful contributors—I mean they gave big money. And God only knows how many billions they made out of the Vietnam War, since they had the biggest contracts over there.

RITCHIE: And also from the Houston Space Center, right?

BAKER: Yeah, between Senator Lyndon Johnson and Congressman Albert Thomas, they were about as bad as Senator Robert Byrd and Senator Stevens in getting Federal money.

RITCHIE: Senator Smathers said that Lyndon Johnson stole half the space program away from Florida.

BAKER: I think it's true. Because Congressman Albert Thomas—I mean, you've got to have an agreement between the House and the Senate to pass your Conference Report and he was a tough cookie. He did not retreat very often.

RITCHIE: One other thing about unanimous consent agreements is that they have to be negotiated.

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: Did you as Majority Secretary get involved in that kind of thing?

BAKER: Oh sure, anything the Leader wanted, he would say, "Bobby, go see Senator Jackson or Senator Lehman or Senator Douglas and see if they can agree to this," because you had to really sweet talk them. I'd say 95 percent of the time it worked, because Senators liked to be consulted. They liked to be a part of the team, because they always received something they wanted, I can tell you that.

RITCHIE: Well, the Unanimous Consent Agreement is such a brilliant move, because it gives flexibility to the Leader, but also gives power to every single Senator because anyone can object.

BAKER: They sure can and I've seen recently where they hold up a nominee to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce or something because one Senator puts an objection in. They need to change that rule. I mean, it's pathetic.

RITCHIE: It's gotten abused over time.

BAKER: That's right. No doubt about it.

RITCHIE: But without it, it would be very hard to get anything done here.

BAKER: That's right, you'd just be at a standstill. The Senate is probably the greatest deliberative body in the world, but you have to have a little common sense to be able to make it work.

RITCHIE: One of the biggest bills of the 1950s, and you've alluded to this a couple of time now, was that Civil Rights Act of 1957.

BAKER: Without any doubt.

RITCHIE: It was the first time since the Civil War that the Senate passed a Civil Rights bill. With the Democratic Party so divided on that issue, what was Johnson's strategy?

BAKER: Well, Senator Johnson was well aware of Attorney General Brownell and Vice President Richard Nixon and the success they were having with the NAACP and other Negro organizations. He knew that if we did not do something for the Negro community that we were going to be a minority party. So Senator Johnson, in holding those all night sessions, just wore the Southerners down. I mean, they were happy when we finally passed it because they were tired of talking. But I think the thing that made Senator Lyndon Johnson into a historic statesman was how he maneuvered the passage of the tiny Civil Rights bill. He got the foot in the door and as a consequence of that, with Senator Dirksen and President Johnson, when they passed the Voting Rights Act in 1965, he made us all equal. So there's no bitching by the black community that they're being interfered with. The only problem is that the better education they have, the better off they're going to be. And what a tragedy in this great country that we have so few people in engineering and physics classes. Our schools are pathetic. Most of the—in the better schools, like MIT and Harvard—in the sciences courses most students are foreigners. And the progress that we've made with computers in Silicon Valley is caused mostly by foreigners. We'd better wake up and do something about making it mandatory to learn more about engineering and the sciences. But our school systems are in bad, bad shape.

RITCHIE: Going back to the '57 Civil Rights Act, a lot of the things I've read say the real clincher was when Senator Johnson got the Westerners to come on board in return for the Hells Canyon Dam.

BAKER: I think there's a lot of truth to that. Like Senator Frank Church and people like that, Senator Scoop Jackson, Senator [Warren] Magnuson—he was really a very effective Senator, and he had been in the House when Senator Johnson was over there—but once you secured those Western Senators' votes, like Senator [James] Murray from Montana, that was a great conquering by Senator Lyndon Johnson when he had them to join in.

RITCHIE: Senator Murray, by that stage, was not in good health.

BAKER: No, no.

RITCHIE: His son was—

BAKER: Yeah, Charlie Murray. Charlie was the Senator. Anytime I needed a vote, I'd call Charlie and say, "Charlie, the Leader sure needs your daddy. Would you help me?" "Yes, I will." He never turned me down. It broke my heart when he was caught in a homosexual situation. I had, I think he was a cousin of Charlie, named Eddie Horrigan, who worked for me. He was a bright young man. I was very close to Charlie Murray. He was really the Senator, because Senator Murray was so old. I think he had the beginnings of Alzheimer's.

RITCHIE: There were a number of them that just stayed too long.

BAKER: Yes, yes.

RITCHIE: Senators Green and Murray.

BAKER: Oh, no doubt about it. I think that a limitation of four six-year terms and limiting House members to 12 terms, this would be better for the country. Because once you're there that long, you get too powerful and you look after your own interests instead of the public interest. Today I saw all those young people when we went to lunch and the fact is most of them are going to live to be 100. So if you had, say, 24 years to be a House member and 24 years to be a Senator, you'd have better government. I strongly think that this country would be much better off with term limitations, 24 years for both chambers. Like Supreme Court justices, 75 is a reasonable age to retire. I want to tell you, I'm 80 and ½, and I know my physical limitations—and my mental limitations too. If I was President, I'd name somebody about 35 to be on the Supreme Court, you know, until they're 75. But we're living in a totally different time. As I told you at lunch, in 1935, the average person had to be 65 before they received their Social Security benefits. Ninety-nine percent were dead by the time they were 65. It was a hell of a deal for the

government. They were making money like you've never seen. But now it's a disaster.

Senator Kerr told me, "Bobby Baker, Medicare will make more doctors and more insurance companies crooks, and they will bankrupt the country." I think he was the wisest man I ever knew, because that has happened right now. When you look at our obligations on Social Security and Medicare, there's no way you can pay for them. We survived as a great country before both Social Security and Medicare, and my fellow Democrats would kill me if they heard that I said you better do away with both of them and pay your bill.

RITCHIE: Well, they've both become more costly than the government can afford right now.

BAKER: That's right. In 2050, you will have three billion Indians, you have two billion Chinese, and with all of the dollars that China has, they will be the Leader of the world. They are hard-working, industrious people, and our only chance to survive is to provide food. We can do it if we get water out west to our arid States.

RITCHIE: Going back again, in the 1950s there was another major event that happened in 1959 and that was when the Senate defeated Admiral Lewis Strauss to be the Secretary of Commerce.

BAKER: Yes, you know I'm happy that you brought that up. Senator Kerr had really started branching out Kerr-McGee and he knew that uranium was going to be a big money maker. So Admiral Lewis Strauss, I think, had a lot of cattle, and Senator Kerr did, and they became good friends. If you look at the *Record*, Senator Kerr voted for his confirmation because of their business relationship. He sure did. But I think the Senate made a terrible mistake not confirming him. He was very able, bright, and a gentleman. But Drew Pearson, who was Johnson's friend, hated him, and Senator Johnson was trying to keep Drew off of him and he really overused his power to block him. Senator Clinton Anderson also hated Admiral Strauss. Senator Clinton Anderson was a big disappointment. He was full of hate. I had a little Mexican American kid as a Page boy and he told me, he said, "Senator Anderson is the meanest son of a bitch I have ever met." He said, "He just treats you like you're a dog." And he was also sort of a sex

maniac. He had a lovely girl named Ms. [Luna] Diamond as his executive assistant. She kept things calm, but she was one of the most brilliant administrative assistants I knew. When I needed to get something from Senator Anderson, I'd call her.

RITCHIE: Senator Anderson played a big role in the '57 Civil Rights bill, too. Wasn't he the one who suggested the compromise to get out of the jury trial issue?

BAKER: Yes, he was a very bright Senator, but he was, I would say, selfish. It was his way or the highway. And he thought he knew more about agriculture than anybody else.

RITCHIE: Well, you had a lot of big egos to deal with.

BAKER: Oh, sure. Tell me about it.

RITCHIE: [Laughing] I always thought that the Lewis Strauss incident was great for Allen Drury, because that was just when his novel *Advise and Consent* came out, that year, when a big nomination fight was actually happening—although it didn't bear any relationship to the one in his novel.

BAKER: Right.

RITCHIE: But it was much rarer in those days than it is today for a nominee to be rejected by the Senate.

BAKER: Terribly unusual.

RITCHIE: Part of that was that the 1958 election had gone way in favor of the Democrats.

BAKER: Yeah, we just had unbelievable success in '58. A lot of Senators out West were elected, which was just unexpected. We did well.

RITCHIE: I wondered if maybe a little of the Lewis Strauss nomination was a little flexing of the muscles after that.

BAKER: I think that's true. I agree with that.

RITCHIE: Establish themselves. Senator Johnson made a few tactical changes after that election, I know. We've edited the Conference minutes and he used to hold one conference a session—

BAKER: At the beginning.

RITCHIE: And that was it. They would never meet any other time. And after 1958, they started holding periodic Conferences. Was that to sort of quiet the complaints within the liberal ranks?

BAKER: I think so. He would convene the Conference to let them blow off steam. Senator Albert Gore, Sr., was always raising hell. You know, Senator Albert Gore was one of the ablest people ever elected to the Senate, but he wore out his welcome. Because he and Senator Mike Monroney from Oklahoma sort of teamed together and sometimes you overstay your turn. When Senator Albert Gore, Sr., left the Senate, he was not very popular, just because if you voted against him, you were a crook. And they didn't like that.

RITCHIE: The Senate always has mavericks. They always have people who don't want to go along. They're probably useful in sort of churning things up, but they must get under people's skin after awhile.

BAKER: Well, to be a great legislator and a statesman, you have to convince 51 Senators that your position is correct. There's a huge majority of minority people that never learn. They want to get in the newspaper and receive 20 votes. And you're not a very effective legislator if all you secure is 20 votes. You get your name in the paper back home, but that's it.

RITCHIE: You don't get the law passed.

BAKER: You got that right.

RITCHIE: How about the other Senator from Tennessee, Estes Kefauver?

BAKER: Senator Estes Kefauver was much more liberal than Tennessee. He was always broke. And he was like Senator George Smathers and President Kennedy, he'd never seen a girl he didn't want to go to bed with. You know, he had a Senate investigation of child pornography, many of the young ladies would come in and he'd try to date them. I was very close to one of his secretaries, I've forgotten her name, but she would tell me how broke he was. When Clint Murchison was trying to secure the NFL franchise for the Dallas Cowboys, Senator Kefauver had been publicly stating that, "Over his dead body would he permit Dallas to get it over Memphis." So when she told me he was desperate for money, I asked Murchison to have Tommy Webb give him \$25,000 and he quieted down. And I had the Murchisons hire Congressman Manny Celler, who was Chairman of the [House] Judiciary Committee. He was saying that the NFL was a monopoly and they were wrecking the country, and so the Murchisons paid his law firm \$50,000. The Murchisons had some company—I think Centex or some company like that had nothing to do with anything political. So he eased his criticism. That's the way Dallas received their franchise.

RITCHIE: I get the sense that a lot of the Democratic politicians didn't trust Senator Kefauver very much.

BAKER: Well one, the Southerners, because he had sponsored a FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Commission] bill, which oh my God, you want to get a Southerner crazy, you talk about passing an equal rights bill for Negroes, you could get them wild. And Senator Kefauver was very disliked by Senator Russell and practically every Southern Senator I knew. He was a loner. Senator Kefauver belonged to the "20 vote club." He could get 20 votes and that was it.

RITCHIE: Yes, but he had Presidential ambitions.

BAKER: Yes he did, and he ran against President Truman. I personally liked him. Senator Kefauver had a drinking problem, he smelled like booze all the time, but he

was not a mean man. His staff loved him, but a couple of them jumped on me because in my book, I talked about how the Murchinsons bought him for \$25,000 in cash. They thought I was unfair. But his staff was pretty loyal to him.

RITCHIE: Well in '56, you were at the Convention and—

BAKER: Yeah, I was the Executive Director of the Platform Committee and so when my dear friend, Senator Kennedy, announced that he wanted to be Vice President, I was working with Senator Johnson and Majority Leader John McCormack and we did everything we could do with the delegates to help Senator Kennedy. Senator Johnson was trying to convince Speaker Rayburn that Senator Kennedy would be a great asset to the ticket. But a lot of the Catholic politicians were petrified because of what they went through with Al Smith [in 1928]. I mean, Governor David Lawrence of Pennsylvania and Congressman [William] Green from Philadelphia were scared. While they were elected by Catholics, they were afraid that if you really had a Catholic running in Pennsylvania, you were in trouble. But Senator Kefauver was absolutely no help to Governor Stevenson. And Governor Stevenson made a terrible mistake not going for Senator Kennedy.

RITCHIE: Why do you think Stevenson couldn't make up his mind on that?

BAKER: Governor Stevenson reminds me of a Senator that can get 20 votes, and I think that was his weakness. He made beautiful speeches, but he didn't follow through. I mean, you have to pay attention to the troops. And he was a loner. You know, he loved foreign relations and that's a different set of people than basically live in America. They don't read the *New York Times* like you and I.

RITCHIE: I read someplace that you recommended to John Kennedy after he lost the nomination [in 1956] that he still needed to participate in that campaign.

BAKER: Senator Kennedy was so bitter about losing that he took Bill Thompson, just the two of them, and they went to the Riviera in France. He had an administrative assistant, I think his name was Ted Reardon. I called Ted and I said, "Ted, we have some very strong Democratic Candidates for the Senate in the West, and if

you'll let me schedule Senator Kennedy in those places in the West, he will do more to help himself for the Presidency four years hence." So Ted Reardon gave me the phone number and I called him and Bill Thompson answered the phone. Bill and I were really buddies and I said, "Bill, forget about Governor Stevenson. General Eisenhower's going to beat the hell out of Governor Stevenson, but Senator Kennedy can help himself in this Presidential bid in 1960 if he'll come and campaign, especially for these Westerners." So Kennedy got on the phone and said that he would come and for me to list the people. I gave him Alan Bible, Gale McGee, Ted Moss in Utah, you know, and he helped. I want to tell you this, he could draw a crowd because he had run such a close race for the Vice Presidency. And I think he did a fantastic job in improving his speeches. He was pathetic when he first started. I'll tell you, he was as bad as Lyndon Johnson reading a speech. He had that little old New England twang. He was like Senator Fritz Hollings, I mean, he was off key. But he really, with Ted Sorenson, he became a polished speaker. He was the best public speaker, when he died, that I knew. He could really make a crowd like him.

RITCHIE: He was elected in '52, and between '52 and '56, he really didn't do a lot in the Senate.

BAKER: No, no, he was sick, you know, so from '52 to about '55, I mean, he was in and out of the hospital. And I don't think he really like the Senate. I mean, he was such a joy. He and I'd talk about women and so forth and about different Senators. I really enjoyed him. When he was married, he invited Dorothy and I up there, but she was about eight and a half months pregnant so we could not go. And Jackie interviewed me. She was an inquiring photographer for the *Washington Times Herald*. And she was a lovely lady. But there was a newspaper man from Tennessee that thought that Senator Kennedy, if he was going to be elected President, had to get married. And I've forgotten his name, but he worked for the Chattanooga paper, I think, or Nashville, and he introduced the two. It was just unreal the pluses that Jackie brought to him. She stole the show in France, you know, because she had been to school in France and spoke French fluently. So they really loved Jackie and President Kennedy.

RITCHIE: What was it about him that attracted you to him? He wasn't one of the workhorses.

BAKER: No, no, but he was appreciative. I was able to convince Senator Johnson and the Steering Committee to forget Senator Kefauver's seniority and give Foreign Relations to Senator Kennedy because we were such good friends. That was one of the major coups of my office, being able to help a bright young man who had a great future ahead of him. And he never forgot that. He was very grateful and he'd send you a case of Scotch, the one his father had the monopoly on, every Christmas. When I helped his brother-in-law become the head of the Peace Corps, I think it was—

RITCHIE: Sargent Shriver.

BAKER: Yeah, Sargent Shriver. I had a luncheon for Sarg and you know, urged the Senators that, even though he was President Kennedy's brother-in-law, that he was a talented man. He had run the Merchandise Mart, I think, out in Chicago. So once we were so successful, he sent me about a dozen lobsters. I mean, he was a tasteful man. Somebody says that he's terribly ill with Alzheimer's. But their daughter [Maria Shriver] who is married to the Governor of California, handles herself very well. She was a great help to President Obama in the California campaign. I don't know whether she did him any favors with all the problems he has.

RITCHIE: John Kennedy seems to be someone who really grew after he got into the Senate. You mentioned that Speaker Rayburn really didn't think much of him as a House member.

BAKER: He just said, you know, that he was never around when you had a key vote. He just said that basically he's a lazy Congressman. Because it's very easy if you're from the East Coast to work Wednesday and Thursday and be gone. He was very seldom on the House floor and the Speaker was very astute about the work dogs and the show dogs. He thought Congressman Kennedy was a show dog.

RITCHIE: Did he get more of the hang of the Senate the longer he was there? Or was he essentially running for President most of the time?

BAKER: I think his whole venture was, "What can I do to be President?"—the

whole time—because “this was a boring job,” being a Senator and keeping up with all of things that didn’t have any appeal to him. He was more show dog than work dog.

RITCHIE: I know Senator Fulbright had trouble getting him to the Committee meetings to establish a quorum.

BAKER: That’s true.

RITCHIE: So after he got on the Committee, he wasn’t there all that much.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Now you got along so well with him but you really didn’t get along with his brother Bobby very much.

BAKER: Well you know, Bobby was like a fellow in the bleachers. I mean, he was nothing. Do you know the way Bobby got his job?

RITCHIE: No.

BAKER: Old man Joe Kennedy liked Senator John McClellan and he knew that he was a senior Senator with power in the Senate. So when Bobby was a senior at the University of Virginia Law School, old man Joe Kennedy retained Senator John McClellan’s law firm in Little Rock, Arkansas, for \$50,000 a year, which was a hell of a lot in those days. It’s like a half a million now. Senator McClellan was married to a beautiful lady from Greenville, South Carolina. They owned the Poinsett Hotel there. And because I was from Pickens, 20 miles away from Greenville, we became very close friends. I became close to his son who died, and his staff. I was in Senator McClellan’s office frequently. After all my troubles, he called me one day and he said, “The dumbest thing President Lyndon Johnson ever did was send your investigation to Senator Jordan because he doesn’t know how to run a Committee.” He said, “Had you come to me, I’d have slapped you around a little bit, but you’d have come out whole.” But the only reason Bobby Kennedy ever got the job on the—

RITCHIE: Government Ops.

BAKER: Government Ops, was that money his father had given to the law firm. Bobby was really of no consequence, and then when he took on [Jimmy] Hoffa, and very effectively, he became a national figure. He was very seldom on the Senate floor. I personally never had any dealings with him whatsoever, because I either dealt with Ted Reardon or Ted Sorenson on his staff. And Evelyn Lincoln. Evelyn Lincoln and I were good friends, because if I needed the Senator for a vote, she knew where he was. But Bobby—I think that in '60, Bobby, being the campaign manager and working his ass off, that he was courting Senator Scoop Jackson, Senator Symington, and Governor Orville Freeman to be the Vice President. I think he just said, “You’re my man.” So when his brother went out without talking to him and gave it to Senator Lyndon Johnson, he was full of hate, I’m telling you, and he showed it when the President nominated him to be Attorney General. President-elect Kennedy sent Clark Clifford to New York City to see his father, because President Kennedy did not want to name him. But his father demanded it and he’d given so much money that he had to agree to naming Bobby Kennedy to be Attorney General.

Once Bobby became Attorney General I had to really pour the whiskey in Senator Richard Russell because he had the votes to kill it. Vice President Johnson called and said, “Bobby, this will be the most humiliating defeat I, as Vice President, could suffer if I don’t have enough influence in the Senate to confirm the President’s nominee, even though it’s his brother.” So I took Senator Russell over to the Secretary of the Senate’s office and I really poured heavy drinks in him. I said, “Your best friend and my best friend is pleading with me to talk to you to see if you’ll let us have a voice vote.” Between my persuasion and the booze, he agreed. That’s the only way he was confirmed. He would have been defeated if there had been a roll-call vote. The Republicans and Southern Democrats had enough votes to defeat Bobby Kennedy to be Attorney General.

And yet he was so full of hate that his brother had picked Johnson. He thought Senator Johnson was as bad as Strom Thurmond. And he did not know what you had to do to get 51 votes. Bobby was a “20 percenter.” Then he had a massive fight. Roy Cohn, I think, who was Senator McCarthy’s lead attorney. He and Bobby hated each other. But as far as him being anybody, other than the Hoffa hearings, nobody paid any attention to who the hell Bobby was.

RITCHIE: His experiences were all on the investigative side. They really weren't on the legislative side.

BAKER: Correct. And when he first started as Attorney General, he used to shake bad when he was trying to testify. He was really nervous.

RITCHIE: So after the 1956 Convention, for the next four years it seemed as if half of the U.S. Senate was getting ready to run for President.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: That had to complicate trying to get legislation done, if everybody was calculating how it was going to affect their Presidential campaign.

BAKER: You had to be very sensitive at that time of what you would ask Senators to do. Because, they thought that they were smarter than Senator Kennedy, that they would work harder than Senator Kennedy and could do a better job for the Democratic Party and the country. So each one; Senator Symington, Senator Jackson, they all had their little personal egos.

RITCHIE: Why do you think Johnson held back? Why didn't he get more active as a Presidential Candidate?

BAKER: I think if he was going to be a successful Candidate, he had to resign as Majority Leader, and he was not about to make that sacrifice. Number two, he was still petrified about having another heart attack, whether he could go out there and campaign like you would have to do. I think those two things caused him to wait too long. I mean, had he resigned as Majority Leader and ran in the primaries and say won Wisconsin and West Virginia, he would have been the nominee, because the South was crazy about him and he was pretty popular out West. We had an excellent Senator from California named Clair Engle and he told me it would be easy for Senator Johnson to carry California because he was from Texas and they had so many equal interests.

RITCHIE: A lot of Southern Californians were from Texas.

BAKER: Yeah, no doubt about that. You hit it on the head.

RITCHIE: Did you have any discussions with him at this time trying to convince him to do otherwise?

BAKER: I was constantly bringing in people who would say, “You’re my Candidate for the Presidency.” And he liked that. He was flattered. But he lacked the guts to make the big decision to resign as Majority Leader and run. I think the only thing that kept him from doing that was knowing that he could have another heart attack and die. And he was petrified of dying. He’d come so close. I guess it scares the hell out of you.

RITCHIE: Well, the Leadership is a hard position to run for any other office from.

BAKER: Oh sure it is. How few Senators ever get elected President.

RITCHIE: Howard Baker stepped aside and let Ted Stevens run the Senate while he was running in 1980 and he didn’t get the nomination. And then Bob Dole resigned in ’96 and that didn’t get him elected either. It’s no guarantee.

BAKER: Yeah, no doubt. But with all of the favorable publicity about how Senator Johnson had been running the Senate as Majority Leader and the professional politicians were afraid of what a Catholic could do in their state, he would have had one hell of a shot against Kennedy. Because here you’ve got a wise, mature man versus a young boy who don’t have much to show for what he’s done. And the American people are pretty fair people. But I’m so happy that President Kennedy did win finally. He was my friend before the Convention and after the Convention. He was very complimentary of me when he came before the South Carolina delegation. He said he was so pleased to be there with the 101st Senator, which pleased me to no end. We never lost our friendship.

RITCHIE: You said that he called you in when Johnson was Vice President because he was concerned that Johnson was unhappy on the job?

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: How did that take place?

BAKER: Well, you know, after the Bay of Pigs, because of Bobby's interference in foreign affairs and everything, Vice President Johnson would remain mute in those conferences and President Kennedy didn't understand why. I think he was afraid that the liberals on President Kennedy's staff would say what a dummy he was. President Kennedy genuinely liked Lyndon Johnson. And Jackie, she used to write the most warm, beautiful letters, thanking him for coming to a luncheon or something she had. I've never seen warmer letters. And I knew President Kennedy had told me had Senator Johnson been from any other place but Texas, he would be the nominee, but because of labor's powerful influence in the Democratic Convention, Senator Johnson didn't have any chance of ever being the nominee.

RITCHIE: What was your suggestion to President Kennedy about getting Johnson more acclimated as Vice President?

BAKER: Well, I just said, "Mr. President, he doesn't know how he fits in with your administration, and I think that if you give him some major task and put him out front, he'd be very grateful." But that never happened. And there was a conflict between Senator Yarborough and Vice President Johnson about who was going to be appointed Judges and U.S. Attorneys in Texas, and the President did not like being caught in the middle of this Texas brawl. One of the reasons that he went to Texas where he was killed, President Kennedy was trying to placate both Vice President Johnson and Senator Yarborough, but that did not work.

RITCHIE: When Johnson was elected Vice President, the question became what was his role going to be with the Senate? There's that famous Democratic Conference in January '61 where Senator Mansfield proposes that Johnson preside over the Conference.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: And there's an explosion in the—

BAKER: Oh, Senator Gore and Senator Anderson went berserk! Almost over their dead body. He was not a member of the Senate! He's in the executive department. And so I told Vice President Johnson, "You better withdraw quickly." And he did.

RITCHIE: How did that happen? For somebody who knew the Senate so well, how did he manage to step into that?

BAKER: He had a tremendous ego and he thought that if he could be the President of the Senate and be the head of the Conference, that he could really help the President. A lot of them were happy that he was gone because he got all the publicity and they received little. But Senator Albert Gore and Senator Clinton Anderson, they had a lot of support. Some of them were happy that he was out of the Senate.

RITCHIE: Was Johnson pretty shocked by all of that?

BAKER: Yes, he was hurt. Really hurt. He could not believe that the people that he had helped so much would be so cruel.

RITCHIE: Did that, do you think, affect the way he operated as Vice President?

BAKER: I think so. I think that he sort of withdrew and did not show any great strength as Vice President.

RITCHIE: It's an odd position being Vice President. You're only what the Senate will allow you to be or what the President will allow you to be.

BAKER: You hit it right on the head.

RITCHIE: He was sort of caught between the two, not knowing what either one of them wanted him to be, I suppose. That also raises the question about Senator Mansfield succeeding him as Leader. Was there any alternative to him?

BAKER: No, there was not. He was very popular with the fellow Senators because he was never asking for them to get involved in anything of any consequence. He'd go up there in his office and smoke his pipe and read his papers and ask me what was coming up. The press loved Senator Mike Mansfield. He got the best press of any Majority Leader because he was always doing what they wanted. But he was not a very effective Leader.

RITCHIE: He was sort of the un-Johnson, just the opposite of Lyndon Johnson.

BAKER: That's exactly right. You hit it, yeah. And I think that the Senate loved Mike Mansfield because they didn't have to put up with Senator Johnson putting an arm around them and trying to get them to help. So they felt that Senator Mansfield was the second coming of Jesus. It was a much calmer place.

RITCHIE: Well, when Kennedy was elected President and Johnson was elected Vice President, did you think that there might be a role for you in the administration? In many ways, it seems to me, you would have been the logical person to handle Congressional liaison.

BAKER: I don't think there's any doubt, but President Kennedy, he had obligations to Larry O'Brien. The Kennedy Irish Mafia were very petty. We had a guy who really raised a lot of money for the Senatorial Campaign Committee named Keith Linden. He represented a rich family in California that had an aluminum company. He had been the most effective Secretary Treasurer of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee we had. But because he had sort of owned a lot of California delegates and had them vote for Stevenson, trying to break Kennedy's lead, they couldn't wait to get him fired, which they did. The Irish people are brutal when they don't like you. But Senator Mansfield, he never turned a finger to help him. He showed a great sign of weakness. He should have said, "Go to hell. This is the Senate. You don't have anything to do with it."

RITCHIE: Well, I wondered if it was partly also because you were so closely identified with Johnson and Kennedy wanted somebody from his camp in that position.

BAKER: Yeah, I think that's true. I totally agree.

RITCHIE: Otherwise Johnson might be too much in charge of what the policy was on the Hill.

BAKER: I think that had Lyndon Johnson not been Vice President, they would have grabbed me in a minute to be head of their liaison office, because I had good relations with both House and Senate. But once Vice President Johnson was there, they had enough of his associates.

RITCHIE: One thing about O'Brien is the people up here knew who he was because he'd worked here, but he was another person who worked on the investigation side rather than on legislation. He was on the McClellan Committee staff along with most of Robert Kennedy's people.

BAKER: Yeah, I was not very much impressed with him as a Congressional liaison, because he was carrying out hatchet jobs. I mean, he was weak.

RITCHIE: You watched the White House from the Truman and the Eisenhower and the Kennedy years. Truman had a couple of low-level staff people who were legislative liaison up here, and then Eisenhower had General Persons and Bryce Harlow.

BAKER: Yes. Bryce Harlow was one of the ablest men that ever served under the chief executive. And General Persons, you know, he could listen to a problem and try to solve it, just like the Jimmy Stewart/Senator Margaret Chase Smith deal. I mean, he was a practical man. While he was trained in the military, he was a very, very politically wise man.

RITCHIE: Both he and Harlow were Democrats. Persons' brother was the Governor of Alabama, a Democrat.

BAKER: I did not know that—you're refreshing my recollection.

RITCHIE: And Bryce Harlow used to work for Carl Vinson in the House.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: So for a Republican administration—

BAKER: But they had Washington expertise and both were a great credit to the President and the country.

RITCHIE: And then you get Larry O'Brien's shop and they had a terrible time under Kennedy in getting anything done.

BAKER: But you know, they had those they liked. If you were for me before the Convention, the sky is the limit, but otherwise they wanted to get even. And that doesn't work.

RITCHIE: It's odd that Kennedy, given that he had big Democratic majorities in both the House and the Senate, really had a very poor track record of getting anything passed.

BAKER: Pathetic, just like President Jimmy Carter. I mean, he just paid no attention to the Congress. The Speaker of the House wanted to help him but he was disdainful, and he paid a hell of a price. He probably, of all the Presidents I've known, is the most unpopular. He's more unpopular than President Nixon.

RITCHIE: Kennedy?

BAKER: No, Carter.

RITCHIE: Oh, Carter.

BAKER: I mean he is sad, because he did not know how to get along with Congress.

RITCHIE: Well he had never had any experience with it.

BAKER: Yep.

RITCHIE: But Kennedy was someone who had spent 16 years in Congress, but had a very unsuccessful legislative record, at least at the beginning of his administration.

BAKER: And the reason was he had only one ambition and that was to be President of the United States and fortunately he was successful. He thought the House of Representatives was a bore. He thought it was a waste of his time. And the same with the Senate. I think he enjoyed being a [newspaper] reporter, like when he covered the United Nations when it was organized in San Francisco. He enjoyed being with bright people and you'd make your deadline and then you were through. He was able to do a lot of social tinkering when he was a reporter, so he loved that. He was a fantastic playboy.

RITCHIE: Did you get the sense that Johnson was frustrated that legislative wheels were spinning and nothing was happening during that period, that he wanted to play more of a role in it?

BAKER: Well, since he felt that he was not in the inner circle of the Kennedy administration—because of Bobby Kennedy disliking him and some of the people on the President's staff—that he became a loner. He would not express—and the President called me and he said, “You know, Lyndon never says anything. You never know what he's thinking.” My judgement is that Vice President Johnson felt that if he said something they'd leak it to the *New York Times* or somebody and try to make him look like he didn't know what he was talking about, to be disdainful.

RITCHIE: And Senator Mansfield, did he ever get a grip on Leadership? At least while you were there, did you get a sense that he was figuring out what to do with the Senate?

BAKER: I don't think he did. If a bill was reported, he'd leave it to the Chairman to see if he could pass it. Senator Mansfield did not have any great interest in what legislation was being considered. I mean, he was a loner. He'd go up there and read and smoke his pipe.

RITCHIE: Well he said that was up to the chairmen to do their job.

BAKER: That is correct. And he was very popular with the chairmen, because he did not interfere with them. But when it comes to really being a successful Leader of the Senate, he was weak.

RITCHIE: To some degree, he redefined the position.

BAKER: Yeah, he was a champion of doing nothing.

RITCHIE: But as Whip he had not been an aggressive Leader of the Senate, so the Senate knew that that was the kind of Leadership that they were going to get.

BAKER: Yeah. The Senators really liked him being Leader after Senator Johnson had been there and would work them all night. I mean you earned your pay when Senator Johnson was Leader.

RITCHIE: There was one peculiar month after the Convention in 1960 when Johnson was the Vice-Presidential Candidate, Kennedy was the Presidential Candidate, Nixon was the Republican Candidate, and the Senate came back into session for that month of August in 1960, and nothing got done.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: What was that all about?

BAKER: Well one-third of the Senate was up for reelection. Ninety percent of them had a favorite Presidential Candidate. And the quicker you could adjourn, the better they would like it. That's basically what we did, nothing. It was a total waste of time.

RITCHIE: Some people thought that if Johnson had gotten the nomination, he would have come back and tried to use that period to show his prowess as the Leader to get something to happen.

BAKER: I don't think that's believable.

RITCHIE: Largely because there wouldn't have been anything in it for the Republicans to give him anything.

BAKER: That's right. Exactly. You're looking for a fight that, basically, you have to lose. So the best thing to do is just let time go by and start your new administration on January 20 with all your new bills. I think President Obama, with his health care bill and the energy bill, will win all that he wants. He's smart to get it out on the table. You're either going to pass it or fail, but there will be other issues in 2012.

RITCHIE: You've got to get it going before there's another election, in other words.

BAKER: You hit it right on the head. If you don't do it this year, you're out of the game because they'll be playing such petty politics that nothing will get done next year.

RITCHIE: Well we haven't really talked about the whole election cycle issue. You know, the Senate is every two years—a third of the Senate.

BAKER: Correct, and the members of the House is every two years.

RITCHIE: As you're working the floor as Majority Secretary, what's the clock in terms of those elections? How much does that affect the business that goes on in the Senate?

BAKER: Well, let's say the election is in November and you have, say, 15 Senators on your side up for reelection. The wisest thing you can do is adjourn as quickly as you can and keep them from being confronted with things that half of their people are for and half against. So you defer to the beginning of the next session of Congress as much as you can. That's the wisest thing that you can do. Trying to pass anything after July in an election year is almost impossible. I'm talking about something of National significance. You run a great risk of tearing a big hole in your trousers when you try to get something, because if you lose, you're really in trouble. A wise thing for a prudent

politician is that if you can't get it done by July 1, before the election in November, forget it.

RITCHIE: I'm sure you got a lot of feedback from the Senators who were up for election.

BAKER: Oh yeah.

RITCHIE: About what situations they were facing.

BAKER: And once you had their confidence, they would just say, "Bobby, this will really harm me if I have to vote on this. Please, please help me." I would convey it to the Leader, either Senator Johnson or Senator Mansfield, that you know.

RITCHIE: Would you help them get bills up that would help them in terms of their reelection?

BAKER: Yeah sure, we worked with them. By knowing all of the Committee staff and knowing who were doers and so forth, you could really help a Senator who was up for reelection by nudging the Committee staff to get that bill out of that Committee. Because you can't do anything unless it's reported out of the Committee. And then you worked like hell to get it passed on the floor. But you've got to be a smart politician to get 51 votes. Very few know how to do it.

RITCHIE: And Johnson didn't like to lose.

BAKER: Oh, he's the worst. I'm telling you, I've never met a man in my life that hated to lose more. I mean, he would grieve over losing. He really could get depressed and low because somebody didn't keep their word.

RITCHIE: Well, an interesting point is that if you did your head count and people told you they were going to vote one way and then they ended up not voting that way, did Senator Johnson hold you responsible?

BAKER: No, no, no. We both had such an affection and admiration for each

other that never happened.

RITCHIE: But he knew who doubled back?

BAKER: Oh yeah, and he had a long memory. You know, in a lot of ways, once you're Majority Leader and you're on the Appropriations Committee and Armed Services Committee and Commerce Committee, you can do a lot of hurting.

RITCHIE: Clearly there were Senators who offended him along the way. There's a famous story about Senator William Proxmire giving his speech about the time of George Washington's farewell address and they said, "Well, there were two farewell addresses today, Washington's and Proxmire's."

BAKER: Yeah, yeah, Senator Proxmire was probably the worst tragedy for the Democratic Party because he was not a 20 percenter, he was a 10 percenter. He was a very able fellow, very likeable, but he loved to get his name in the papers. Forget passing anything in the Senate, as long as he could get his name in the headlines in the newspapers, he would be ecstatic. He probably got more ink than any Senator I've ever known, and he did so little.

RITCHIE: And Ed Muskie got off on the wrong foot, at least, with Johnson when he first came into the Senate.

BAKER: Yes he did. Senator Muskie, he was sort of a loner. He was a good Senator. A very able man, but he's like the Irish. He had a lot of peeves and he never forgot them. He never learned how to be like Cardinal Sheen, who said "To err is human, to forgive is divine." But Senator Muskie, he took too many things personally. He was hard to get to vote for the Majority position. It was either his way or forget it.

RITCHIE: What was your ideal Senator? What qualities really made a good Senator?

BAKER: Well, I think Senator Warren Magnuson. I liked Senator Scoop Jackson. He was a very smart, reasonable man. Senators Earle Clements and John

Pastore—you could reason with Senator Pastore. But those who were not in a big mood to be helpful, like Senators Symington, Gore, and Mike Monroney. Mike Monroney was a very able guy, but he was way too liberal for Oklahoma and he was defeated because of that. When Senator Kerr died, I tried to talk the President of Kerr-McGee, Mr. McGee, into offering the Governor of Oklahoma \$100,000 a year for 10 years if he would name Senator Kerr's son to the Senate. But he didn't understand about politics and that never happened. But Governor [Howard] Edmondson was later elected to the Senate and I told him about what I tried to do. He said, "I'd have taken it in a New York minute."

RITCHIE: Well, we haven't really talked about him—I mean, we've talked about him on the side—but Robert Kerr was obviously the giant at this period.

BAKER: After Vice President Johnson left the Senate, he was by far—with Senator Mansfield being Leader—he was the most successful person in the Senate. President Kennedy, the number one thing that he wanted at the beginning of his Presidency was to pass a tax bill that had the investment tax credit, because we were in a recession and he was trying to get business motivated to enlarge and make new product. But Senator Kerr, he had the votes on the Finance Committee to bottle up President Kennedy's tax bill. Congressman Wilbur Mills loved President Kennedy. He hated Vice President Lyndon Johnson. When the President called me down to the White House and said, "Bobby," he said, "everybody knows that Senator Kerr is your dearest friend." And he said, "God, I will be a one-term if I can't pass the tax bill." He said, "Will you please see if you can get him to support me and help me?" So I went to Senator Kerr and I said, "Mr. Chairman, the President called me down to the White House and wants me to see if I can convince you to report out his tax bill." He said, "That tax bill is dead as Kelsey's nuts unless he has that ignorant brother of his, the Attorney General, send down my nomination to the U.S. District Court in Oklahoma."

So I called Evelyn Lincoln, President Kennedy's secretary, and I said, "Evelyn, I talked to Senator Kerr and the President wants to hear from me." So she said, "Hold a minute," and she put him on the phone. I think the district judge was an attorney named Ross Bohannon—I think that's correct. The President had never heard anything about it. He said, "But hold on, I'll get the Attorney General and find out what the hell is going on." So he said, "Bobby, Senator Kerr is not going to report my tax bill unless you send

down Ross Bohannon's judicial nomination for Federal District Court in Oklahoma." And I heard Bobby on the talk phone because the President had me listening. He said, "Mr. President, Ross Bohannon, based upon what the American Bar Association says, is the most unqualified man in America to be a judge." And he said, "I am not sending it down." So the President said, "I have just made a deal. Senator Kerr is going to have that nomination and once I sign it, he will report the tax bill. I am the President. You are the Attorney General. Do that." And he did. That's the way that he passed his tax bill.

Then, because of what he did, President Kennedy went to Poteau, Oklahoma, to see Senator Kerr's cattle ranch—he had a Black Angus bull that he invented the deal where you sell the semen. Senator Gore was in this. He and Senator Kerr were great friends because they were in the cattle business. But as a consequence of that, he went to visit Senator Kerr down there and Senator Kerr hated Catholics. God, when I married a Catholic, he didn't talk to me for five years. A lot of times I'll look in the index about Senator Kerr and find out preachers that he gave money to. There was some preacher that raised a lot of money in Oklahoma. Billy Graham, Senator Kerr gave money to those people. I mean, he bought his way around all of the big preachers in Oklahoma. But Senator Kerr was a professional Baptist. He thought everyone who wasn't a Baptist was going to die and go to hell.

RITCHIE: It's odd that he was a rather profane man, from all accounts, but he was also a Sunday school teacher.

BAKER: Yeah, exactly. I guess a man named [Roy] Turner was defeated by Senator Kerr for Governor. Turner hated him. He spread a lot of bad things about him. But Senator Kerr, after Vice President Johnson was no longer in the Senate, he had [as his press secretary] a very bright newspaper woman named Melvina Stephenson and they fell in love. Mrs. Kerr died—she was a Christian Scientist and had cancer and wouldn't let the doctors touch her. So he used to go out to the Kellogg Treatment Center for weight treatment—he was obese. And Melvina would go with him. But they fell in love, and he told her about his likes and dislikes. So after he died, she wrote a sizzling book. It was so sizzling that Bob Kerr, Jr., paid her such a sum of money that the book's never been published. I'm going to talk to Williams and Connolly about suing Bob Kerr, Jr., for committing perjury before the jury, and then sue the Melvina Stephenson estate and see if

I can get a copy of the book—I will have a little fun with that. I really liked her.

I never had a better friend in my life than Senator Kerr. Everything he did was to try and help me, but he also used me to help him. It was a mutual admiration society. If he were alive today, there would have never been a Bobby Baker trial, I can tell you that. He had that much influence that nothing would have happened.

RITCHIE: What was the source of his power in the Senate? Was it his intellect, or his money?

BAKER: It was both, I would say, money and intellect. They were coequal partners. Because he had access to cash like you've never seen. He and Bud Adams, who was the President of Phillips 66, they had a joint venture to drill for oil wells in either Oklahoma or Texas, and they found a massive gusher. So Senator Kerr talked Bud Adams into joining him in bequeathing the gushers to Congressman Wilbur Mills' two daughters. So when the tax bill came up and the savings and loan people were really upset—it was going to cost them \$43 million in the Kennedy tax bill that Congressman Wilbur Mills passed in the House. When it got to the Senate, Senator Kerr was a banker, and he said, "Fuck 'em." He said, "They don't pay the taxes they ought to." But he began to get pressure from people like Senator Hayden and the California Senators and Senators from Ohio, where they had big stock Savings and Loans Associations.

Finally he said, "Do you trust the lobbyist for the Savings and Loan Associations?" Glenn Troop was the ablest lobbyist I knew. I said, "He's like family. Our kids and his kids, we go to the beach together. And he's never done anything but try and help." So when Senator Kerr told me the only way I can help them is I need \$400,000 cash. Senator Monroney was running for reelection and he was basically financing it. And I never thought in the world about a bribe, I mean, because being the secretary director of the Democratic Campaign Committee, everything I did was campaign contributions. This was the first time in my whole Senate career a Senator demanded cash for passing a bill. When I told Glenn Troop what he wanted, Howard Ahmanson, who had been the Republican Committee man when Governor [Goodwin] Knight was Governor of California, he had the biggest stock savings and loan in the world. It was called Ahmanson Savings and Loan. After he died, they sold to Washington Mutual that

just went bankrupt. All those big moguls came to Washington and met Glenn Troop and me. They said, “Bobby, as rich as we are, there ain’t no way in hell we can get \$400,000 cash. But we can guarantee you \$100,000 in ’62 and \$100,000 in ’64.” So they told me to see what I could do with Senator Kerr. I called him out of the Senate Finance Committee one day and I said, “Senator, these guys say they’re not going to rob one of their banks to get the cash, but they can get you \$100,000 in ’62 and \$100,000 in ’64.” At first he said, “I told you that ain’t no fuckin’ good.” But later in the day, he called me and he said, “You got a deal.” So they arranged to, over a period of weeks, to either have me fly to California or they would fly to Washington and meet me in Fred Black’s suite. And they did deliver the \$100,000.

When my partner [Alfred Novak] committed suicide, I went to Vice President Johnson, who was my friend, and I said, “I’m going to have to declare bankruptcy because my partner committed suicide.” He got Senator Kerr on the phone and said, “My boy, Bobby, needs help.” I’m telling you, he was the kindest man. So he said, “How much money do you need?” I said, “Senator, I need \$50,000, because my payments are \$15,000 a month, and my partner’s dead, and it’s in the dead of winter, and there’s no money coming in.” So he loaned me \$50,000 in cash. When my partner’s wife would come by my office when the payments were due, I’d give her cash. She did a hell of a lot of harm to me saying she’d never seen so much cash in her life. But I saved her ass.

Senator Kerr had a safety deposit box at National Savings and Trust and so in my testimony in the criminal trial, I said that I delivered the money on two dates. After I testified, the President of the bank called my attorney, Ed Williams, and said, “Well, you just won your case.” He said, “When the Director of the D.C. Will Department opened Senator Kerr’s safety deposit box, he had exactly the amount of money that Bobby said that he delivered to him.” But Bobby Kennedy and Bill Bittman wanted to get rid of Vice President Johnson for ’64. Bobby had promised the Governor of North Carolina that he would be Kennedy’s running mate in 1964 and that he was going to get rid of Johnson. Bobby did not hate me. He knew that his brother, John, really liked me, and he called me the day I resigned and said that, you know, that he had nothing but good feelings toward me and they had nothing in their file. But he hired the most unforgiving prosecutor.

And Judge [Oliver] Gasch was the presiding judge when Ed Williams was

representing Jimmy Hoffa. Jimmy Hoffa was guilty as hell, but the Las Vegas people had hired Joe Louis to be a greeter. Ed Williams called one of the casino owners and said it would really help if Joe Lewis would come and hug Hoffa in front of the jury, which he did. Judge Gasch, that was the first big trial he ever had, and he thought it was absolutely unprofessional, because most of the jurors were black and they liked Joe Louis. Hoffa was acquitted. But to Ed Williams' credit, the brilliant lawyer that he was, he tried, when most of the Judges knew me and they had to disqualify themselves because they liked me, so the junior Judge on the Circuit was Oliver Gasch that President Lyndon Johnson had named because Tommy Corcoran had recommended him. But he was so bitter and hated Ed so that Ed Williams said, "Bobby, it'd be a miscarriage of justice for me to represent you." I said, "This is a tax case. Two and two is four." I said, "Boris Kostelanetz assures me that I have no problem."

Senator Kerr had called me on Christmas day and said, "Bobby, Jesus, Lyndon Johnson, and you are the three best friends I ever had." He said, "The money I loaned you, I want you to have a nice Christmas and forget it." I said, "Don't talk to me anymore." I said, "You get well." Then he died January 1, '63. So I had a former Internal Revenue agent that Don Reynolds had introduced me to, that wanted a higher civil service job—he was working for Internal Revenue and because of a lack of education he was as high as he could go with the IRS. So when [H.W.] Bill Brawley became the Assistant Postmaster General, Bill Brawley arranged to up him one grade or something. So he used to do my taxes every year. I had no tax liability because the investment tax credit with the equipment we bought for the Carousel and everything. So I just told him, I just said, "Put down 'legal fee.'" I didn't tell him who it was from. But this guy, Don Reynolds, had bribed him so that when he went before the Rules Committee to testify, he said that I had illegally put his name on my tax return. He lived in Silver Spring, so after he had done all my taxes, and then Ernie Tucker had prepared the corporate return, I called him and said, "The tax record on the company showed that I have no tax." I said, "Instead of you coming here, can I sign your name?" He said, "Certainly." But then it became true that Reynolds told the Internal Revenue he bribed me for \$430,000.

Once Lady Bird wrote him a thank you letter for the stereo—Reynolds had told me that since he was the only guy who could get term life insurance on Senator Johnson, that after he paid the taxes from the partnership, he would give the money back. Because

you've got about a 10 percent commission. But when I would call him, I'd say, "This is embarrassing, you told him." I said, "Senator Johnson's a penny pincher and he keeps asking me when are you going to keep your word." So Don Reynolds, he got together with Walter Jenkins and arranged for some pot and pan man to buy advertising on Mrs. Johnson's TV station in Austin, Texas. Poor old Walter, had President Kennedy not been killed, he either would have had to take the Fifth Amendment and quit or tell the truth and Vice President Johnson would have definitely been off the ticket in 1964, had it shown that he had really been the party in the back of this. But I can't believe when you read what the former Internal Revenue agent, he just—he got cash from Don Reynolds. Senator [Hugh] Scott just had a field day. "You mean this is not your signature? That he signed your name illegally?"

When I was in jail, there was only one Chinaman, and he stole \$250 million in cash from Chiang Kai-shek. He knew that I had been a politician and he desperately wanted to talk to me about how to get a pardon. I said that you have a Republican Administration. I said, "The smartest man that I know is Senator Dirksen." I said, "He is very close to the Republican National Committee man from Washington." And I said, "He is a real high-class lawyer." I said, "If you want to get a parole, the only way in hell you're going to get it is to pay big money." So he called his attorney and they made a deal and he received a parole. But he told me that Chiang Kai-shek had about \$1 billion when he fled from mainland China to Taiwan, and that he had great confidence in Senator Bridges, Senator Knowland, and I think that he liked Senator Pat McCarran. So President Chiang Kai-shek probably sent more cash to Senators than anybody in history, coming out of the country. It's just unbelievable.

Like when Johnson was Vice President, he invited me to go with him to Senator Styles Bridges funeral. Vice President Johnson was having to go overseas for a funeral, so we went one day prior to the funeral. Dolores Bridges was very fond of Vice President Johnson. She said, "Lyndon, I need some advice." She said, "Styles has got \$2 million cash in here and I don't know how to handle it." Vice President Johnson, being the true coward, he said, "Talk to Bobby." So I told her, "The banks are the government. If you put it in the bank, you are dead meat. Whatever you do, do not put that money in the bank." I don't know what the hell she did with it.

RITCHIE: The whole money issue brings up the fact that you, in addition to being the Majority Secretary, were the Treasurer of the Democratic—

BAKER: Senatorial Campaign Committee. Yeah, that's right.

RITCHIE: How did that happen?

BAKER: Well Senator Johnson, he trusted me one million percent and he knew that I would never talk. He'd had a bad experience with a Congressman in Texas, from his District. That was when President Roosevelt was President, that this Congressman had been pretty liberal and close to the labor unions and he got some illegal cash and they were trying to put him in jail. That's the reason that Johnson was petrified anytime there was cash for politicians. So he knew that I was one million percent loyal to him and that I would never embarrass him. If somebody had to bite the dust, I would do it. That's the reason. It is a terrible mistake for an elected officer of the Senate to be connected to the Campaign Committee. But he personally selected me. And I met a lot of rich people.

We had Albert Greenfield, who was a very wealthy real estate man in Philadelphia, and Matt McCloskey was his friend, and he called me and said that his accountant made a mistake. Instead of giving 95 percent to charity, he gave 92 percent, and it's going to cost him about \$25 million. He said, "Can you get Senator Kerr and see if you can help him?" Because of my friendship with Senator Kerr—and I told him that Matt McCloskey was my friend—to make a long story short, they amended the internal revenue code whereby he did not have to pay that penalty. And he was the most appreciative man of all the people I dealt with. When it came time for delegates to the Democratic Convention from Pennsylvania, Matt McCloskey called me and said, "Bobby, Albert Greenfield is going to vote for Senator Lyndon Johnson. He's going to really screw us up!" But he did. He voted for Senator Lyndon Johnson because of what Senator Kerr and he did, you know, I was able to help him because of my relationship with Senators Kerr and Johnson.

Congressman John McMillan from South Carolina was Chairman of the House District Committee. The old Griffith Stadium where the Redskins used to play was just too old and was not very efficient, so the local politicians had proposed that the taxpayers

build a new D.C. stadium out at the end of East Capitol Street. It was very popular because everybody in the Senate and the House liked the Redskins and they liked the baseball team. But Congressman John McMillan controlled the District of Columbia Committee, of which he was Chairman, and he would not report it. So he and Don Reynolds came to see me and said unless Don Reynolds received the insurance contract on the D.C. stadium, there would be no bill. I called Matt McCloskey and I said, "It's blackmail, but if you want that job—" Normally, Matt McCloskey used his son-in-law for all the insurance for McCloskey Company—probably \$100 million a year. So most reluctantly, the McCloskeys paid the fee to Don Reynolds. Then Don Reynolds, when my stuff started, he fed it to Senator John Williams, claiming that McCloskey was a crook. He was a decent man. The President named him Ambassador to Ireland. The only thing he did was he believed I would not lead him down a forbidden road, and I was embarrassed. He was a very good man and a great credit to the Democratic Party. But you know, had I not been on the Senatorial Campaign Committee as Treasurer, this would have never happened.

RITCHIE: Who would have done it if you hadn't done it? Was this usually somebody outside of the Senate or was it somebody inside the Senate?

BAKER: You know, there's some people that can get things done and some can't, so you have to find a way. Like Governor Orville Freeman one time wanted to go to a Redskin football game and he said, "Bobby, I've tried everybody. Can you help me?" So I called the Chairman of the DC Board for the D.C. Stadium and I said, "the Secretary of Agriculture needs four tickets." He said, "He can take mine."

RITCHIE: You have to know who to call.

BAKER: Exactly.

RITCHIE: But then the question comes in, you're raising this money, but then who does it go to? Who makes the decisions who gets the money?

BAKER: Let's take during President Eisenhower's administration. The Treasury Secretary, George Humphrey, and the whole Eisenhower administration was just very

vociferously opposed to a three percent down payment to buy an FHA house. So the home builders—we were going through a little home building depression—they desperately needed it. Most of them were Republicans, but they would come see me and say, “Bobby, what can we do to pass the bill?” I kept telling Senator Johnson, “There are a lot of Republicans that want this bill. It will create jobs and help the country.” So they were very generous in campaign contributions. When I would get their money, I would be in the back of the limousine with Senator Johnson and I’d say, you know, we have half a million dollars. We have 20 candidates that could all use it.” [Interrupted here by a phone call].

RITCHIE: So you have the half a million dollars and you have 20 Candidates—

BAKER: Yeah, so you have to figure out who is close to being defeated. Because my best judgement was why do you give money to Senator Paul Douglas who’s going to win, you know, by 10 points? My rule was if you’re five percentage points ahead, I cut the money off. But if you are tied or something, I tried to get all the money I could for that particular Senator. That was one of the reasons that Senator Lyndon Johnson was so successful is that those people who you had a chance to elect, you would get money to, and as a consequence they were very grateful. But once again, you are selling your office.

RITCHIE: So when you came back to them the next Congress and asked them for their vote, they remembered you as the fellow who had helped them when they were running last time?

BAKER: Yes, precisely. It made my job much easier because a man that you have helped when he’s running for his life, and he’s run out of money, and you send him \$50 thousand, boy he is grateful.

RITCHIE: What kind of accounting was necessary in those days? I know the campaign laws were really loose.

BAKER: Yeah, we had no rules. Senator Ernest Gruening, he just chewed me out because I wouldn’t send him any money. Because he was going to win, you know? What the hell? So he just thought I was anti-liberal.

RITCHIE: Well, were there any situations in which there were some candidates you would rather see win than others?

BAKER: No, no.

RITCHIE: Basically it was just the numbers?

BAKER: We basically tried to help those who were there or had a chance to be reelected. We were very prudent. You know, we were always outspent ten to one. But it's changed. I cannot believe how successful President Obama was in 2008. I mean, boy, these new ways to solicit money on the computer is just unreal. I mean, it's changed the whole damn society.

RITCHIE: Now you mentioned the other side. Your counterpart as Secretary of the Minority was Mark Trice, through much of that period, right?

BAKER: Yeah, Mark Trice was a very able man, but he never had the confidence of his Republican Leader like I did with Senator Johnson. He was some professional staff member. But in view of the absolute faith like Senator Lyndon Johnson had in me, and mine in him, we were very successful in raising funds and helping fellow Senators.

RITCHIE: And could Johnson tap into the Texas money then as well, for the other Democrats?

BAKER: Oh sure. You know, like George and Herman Brown, they were very conservative, but Senator Johnson could tap them because he'd been very good to them in military contracts and so forth. So if he wished for something, they came through. The Murchisons did not like Johnson until Clint and I became great friends, and then they sort of softened up.

RITCHIE: Was that part of the story about the Redskins song?

BAKER: Yeah, I bought it. Barnee Breeskin was a very popular orchestra Leader

at the Sheraton, but he was broke. He had been the creator of the song “Hail to the Redskins.” And he knew that I was very close with Clint Murchison and so he originally wanted \$5,000, but Clint said it’s not worth the paper it’s written on, so I got him \$2,500, and he was a happy man. George Preston Marshall, who owned the Redskins, was very, very anti-Negro. Bobby Mitchell was the first black person to ever have signed a contract with the Redskins. But he, from the time I first arrived in Washington until Dallas became a football team, George Marshall had every radio station in the South with the Redskins. So he sure as hell didn’t want Dallas to come into the NFL. Because of his anti-Negro position, it helped Clint Murchison get the majority vote to get Dallas into the NFL. The Dallas Cowboys are now one of the most successful NFL franchises.

RITCHIE: What was the role of the song? How did that play in?

BAKER: Well, it was just one of the things that was used to soften up George Preston Marshall’s opposition to Dallas, Texas, coming into the NFL. He thought Texas was far enough away that he could keep his Southern stations, but that has changed. You have a team in Charlotte, North Carolina. You have one in Jacksonville, Florida. And so the Hunt family had the first professional football team, the American Football League in Dallas, but when Clint secured the license for Dallas in the NFL, the Hunts couldn’t compete with them, so they fled to Kansas City.

RITCHIE: In the 1950s, you had the politics of the Senate, and all the activities around Johnson, and then you had all the fund-raising for the campaigns. And then you went into business as well.

BAKER: Yep.

RITCHIE: How did you have time for all that?

BAKER: Well you know, once you know before they vote basically how 99 percent of them are going to vote, you’ve done your job. I was ambitious. I was working around people—Senator Lyndon Johnson and Senator Bob Kerr—who were multi-millionaires. And so I wanted to be like them. I never neglected my Senate duties, but I had all this time when the Senate wasn’t in session. The way I went into the hotel business was my wife had hay fever and she breathed much better when we’d go to

Ocean City. So my partner, Al Novak, was a homebuilder in Montgomery County, and very successful. We became friends and we went over there to Ocean City, Maryland. We were going to build a duplex—one for him and one for us. But when I received the price of the lot and the price of the unit, I said, “There’s no way I can afford it.” The end product was we bought two ocean blocks. I think we had \$300,000 in the two blocks. If I never bought another thing and just kept the blocks, today they’d be worth \$30 million. That was a big mistake. And then his houses were not selling and he became depressed and put a hose in the exhaust of his car and killed himself.

Then his brother, who’s still my partner, said to hell with it and he moved out near Traverse City, Michigan. He’s made about \$20 million with a recreation park. You know, people have got these recreation vehicles and they pull them into licensed parks. He’s about 85, but we still own 40 acres out on New Hampshire Avenue. We have it on the market for \$5 million, but nobody is buying in this market. So I told the real estate agent, I said, “The only thing to do is get a hold of Mr. [Douglas] Duncan, who used to be the [Montgomery] county executive—he’s a professor at the University of Maryland—and have him find some rich people to make a charitable contribution, because it’s right adjacent to a county park that’s owned by Montgomery County.” And I said, “With his influence, they can build the nicest park in the whole state of Maryland.” So that’s what he’s working on right now. But real estate is a terrible mess and I don’t see it getting better for five years.

RITCHIE: At the same time you were going into business, there were a lot of Senators who were still conducting business, too, weren’t there?

BAKER: Oh, sure.

RITCHIE: In those days—

BAKER: I mean Senator Taft, his family had a very profitable TV business. And you know, traveling with Senator Johnson to New York and talking to the President of NBC, ABC, CBS. I mean, they knew who had the power. He would always say, “You’re not doing enough advertising” and this and that. For many years, he basically had a monopoly, the only TV station in Austin. Then, I guess when he became President, they merged the Johnson Company with the Chandler family in L.A. They had a big public

company. I would think Lady Bird Johnson received \$50 million in stock. But Lady Bird was the nicest lady I ever met in my life, I want to tell you. And she loved me. I mean, I spent three months looking at houses in D.C. [for Johnson when he became Vice President] and I finally talked her into buying Perle Mesta's house in Spring Valley. I tell all ladies who are thinking about getting a divorce, I say, "If anybody needed a divorce it was Lady Bird." But she is one of the most revered ladies in the history of our country. We were driving up and my wife said, "Look at that," and I said, "Lady Bird placed those pretty flowers out there." She is revered by the American people and especially by me.

Like when Walter Jenkins had his problem, President Johnson acted like he had nothing to do with him. Mrs. Johnson put him on the payroll of the TV company. And he was there, you know, before ex-President Johnson died. He was using him every day. Walter's children really love and respect me. Any time I go to Texas, they go out of their way to come say hello.

RITCHIE: I'm just thinking, the world is so different now. There's so many restrictions on what you can do. But there really were no restrictions, were there, on what a Senator could do on the outside?

BAKER: No, no. You know, former Secretary of the Senate Joe Stewart, he said, "You go to jail if you take someone out to lunch." I mean, he said, "You cannot believe the limitations that they have now on lobbyists." He told me he was going to retire about a year ago, but they've given him so much money, I don't think he can afford to retire.

RITCHIE: Were there other Senate staff who were involved in business at the same time?

BAKER: I'm sure they were, but I don't have that good a memory as to who had what. But I probably was the biggest wheeler-dealer around—and I enjoyed it, I'll tell you. Ocean City was nothing until we built the Carousel and now it's one of the great cities in America. When you go by there, I thank God that we had the wisdom to build there. If you want to buy a two bedroom, two bath apartment on the ocean, it will cost you \$1 million. I cannot believe the prices they are getting!

RITCHIE: Well, a lot of people around here remember the opening of the Carousel.

BAKER: Oh, sure.

RITCHIE: That was a big event.

BAKER: Now, the PR man for the Carousel was the one who told me, “You ought to have a big event.” We received a lot of publicity over there. But that and a dime will get you a cup of coffee. It used to—not anymore. A cup of coffee at McDonalds, my wife likes those sweet things, it’s almost \$3. And they’re beating the hell out of Starbucks, because I think it’s \$5 for Starbucks coffee.

RITCHIE: Now, the other place that everybody always talks about is the Quorum Club. How—

BAKER: The Quorum Club, of all the things I was ever involved in, it is the most insignificant thing. It was located in the Carroll Arms hotel. When they first put it together, they asked me to get attorney Ernie Tucker to draw up the papers, which he did. The Quorum Club was a place where a guy wanted to get away from, you know, being at the bar downstairs at the Carroll Arms, where there were too many reporters or too many gawkers. It was an easy place for a lobbyist to get together with a Senator, or a Senator’s girlfriend—but it was not a whore house. It was a very social club. I enjoyed being a member from the beginning. But the way they write in the papers, it was a whore house. You know, they get carried away.

RITCHIE: Inspector [Leonard] Ballard of the police force said that when that place closed, there were a lot of people who were left homeless.

BAKER: [Laughs] But, you know, I was very close to all the administrative assistants and legislative assistants. I would say 90 percent were like me. All had girlfriends. And the Quorum Club was a place that you could be met there and nobody would know about it.

RITCHIE: Now, you had to join the Quorum Club, right?

BAKER: Oh yeah, you had to pay an annual fee or something. It was minimal.

RITCHIE: But Senators and Congressmen were automatically members, is that the way it worked?

BAKER: No, no.

RITCHIE: Oh, they joined too?

BAKER: Yeah, [Senator Harrison] Pete Williams, I know he joined there. And quite a few Congressmen. I think Bill Ayres, a Republican Congressman from Ohio was a member. He had fun, you know, because there comes a time when you're in public life, it sure is nice to have a little privacy. And that's exactly what it was.

RITCHIE: But what was your role in it?

BAKER: I was originally the Treasurer of it, but it grew so big I did not have time to do that. But the owner of the Carroll Arms was our friend. We used the Quorum Club to get away from the press.

RITCHIE: I hear lots of stories from old-timers and they remember the Quorum Club very fondly.

BAKER: Yeah, it was a social club. One time I was in there and Ellen Romesch was at my table. She was as pretty as Elizabeth Taylor. She was married to a Sergeant in the German Army, but stationed at their embassy in Washington. She was sort of like me. She was ambitious. She'd come from Germany broke. She really loved oral sex. So any time—90 percent of the people who give you money want to know if you can get them a date. I don't give a damn who they are. They're away from mama and their wives and they have a tremendous desire to party. One of my friends on the board of directors of the Dallas Cowboys gave her \$5,000. So any time, I'd have Carol call her and say we've got a person in town. She was very anti-Jewish, because Fred Black had her take on Eddie Levinson in his suite, and she called me the next day and said, "That's the most repulsive

Jew I ever met in my life.”

But Bobby Kennedy kidnaped two people and nothing was ever said about it. He kidnaped Ellen and her son and took a member of the staff of the investigating Committee to escort her [out of the country]. And the escort sort of fell for her. Her husband divorced her and was trying to get custody of the kid. I wrote her a letter about ten years ago and she wrote me back and said that she was very happy to see that I was back with my wife. She had been offered about \$10 million to tell about the money she received from the Kennedys and she never did. They really bribed her. And then Bobby Kennedy, as the U.S. Attorney General, kidnaped Carlos Marcello in Louisiana and took him to Guatemala. But if an Attorney General kidnaped somebody now, they would impeach him. I mean, it was just a terrible abuse of power.

RITCHIE: So he essentially deported her at that time?

BAKER: Well sure. Because Bill Thompson at the Quorum Club said, “Baker, where did you get that good looking woman?” I said, “Bill, she is one of the sweetest hookers I have ever seen or known.” I said, “Everybody that has had a date with her has called me up and said it’s the best deal they ever had.” So he said, “You think if I invited her to come to my apartment she’ll go to the White House and see President Kennedy?” I said, “She would jump at the chance.” So she went to the White House several times. And President Kennedy called me and said it’s the best head job he’d ever had and he thanked me. When, I guess Senator [Carl] Curtis was demanding that she be called as a witness, Bobby Kennedy knew that if she testified before the Senate Rules Committee, President Kennedy would be destroyed. So he kidnaped her. But the guy who worked with him on the investigating Committee fell in love with her and they exchanged torrid love letters. And the Greek that I hired, Georgia Liakakis, she had letters from Ellen to this guy, how much she loved him and how much they’d enjoyed oral sex. So Georgia tried, through my attorney, to sell them to me. And I refused to do it, but we became friends. But Georgia got lucky. After I hired her and she went broke, she married a rich doctor who died and left her \$50 million. So she’s living good.

RITCHIE: The other business that you got involved in at that stage was the Serve-U Corporation.

BAKER: Yeah, that's right. That's the one. After I was successful in helping Fred Black and Senator Kerr do the Apollo contract for North American, Fred Black asked Senator Kerr, without my knowing, what he could do for Senator Kerr. Senator Kerr said, "The only man that I want to help is Bobby Baker." He said, "I had promised to buy two thousand head of Black Angus cattle and set up a ranch in Hutchinson, Kansas, and he would be my partner with no money in it. And I'm obligated. I would like to make him rich and I think that you're smart enough that you and North American can do that." Fred Black was obligated to—he was a gambling addict. I didn't know this, but he owed quite a bit of money to the casinos in Las Vegas. So he sold stock to Eddie Levinson and Eddie Levinson's partner, Ben Seiglebaun. And they were secretly partners with Meyer Lansky.

[J. Edgar] Hoover and Bobby Kennedy had an illegal bug in the counting room at the Fairmont Hotel in Las Vegas. Eddie Levinson was being harassed by Internal Revenue and he called Ed Williams to represent him. So Ed Williams said, "Bobby, he's offering me \$250,000 to be his counsel. I would like to take it, but if you have a conflict, I'll turn it down." I said, "I hardly know the man. I've been in his office at the Fairmont maybe four times in my life. And he's made reservations for Carole Tyler and me to go see Judy Garland or somebody like that. But other than that, I hardly know the man." So he took the fee. Then Ed Williams sued the FBI and the Internal Revenue and the telephone company. So the Justice Department had to withdraw their claims because of their illegal bug. But after they entered into the deal, as smart as Ed Williams was, he did not protect Eddie Levinson civilly. He died broke because the civil arm of Internal Revenue came and confiscated everything he had. But Senator Kerr had told Fred, "I want to take care of my boy, Bobby." So when Fred Black called me and said he wanted \$2,500 for me to be equal partner in a vending company, Senator Kerr had his bank loan the vending company to buy the machines from Canteen. Fidelity Bank of Oklahoma made a loan to Serve-U for \$500,000. Senator Kerr was really trying to help me. That's the reason I loved him so.

RITCHIE: Did it ever strike you that if any of that came out it would put you in a difficult position?

BAKER: No, I was not that smart. I knew that I could count votes better than anybody there. I was not doing anything to harm any of them. I had seen the way Senator Johnson operated and so forth. He was my mentor and I didn't think I was doing anything. But it was, I guess, some arrogance that I am ashamed of now. I should not have done it.

RITCHIE: Well, it's interesting in retrospect, a lot of your business was actually pretty public. I mean the fact that Senators went to the opening of the Carousel, and that everybody knew you were associated with the Quorum Club.

BAKER: Yeah, exactly.

RITCHIE: No one raised any questions about it?

BAKER: That's exactly right. But when Don Reynolds had a little bit of information, like the Matt McCloskey deal, and he took the kind letter from Lady Bird thanking him for the stereo that he'd given them at Christmas time. Walter Jenkins called me one time and he said, "Bobby, this Don Reynolds is a nut." He said, "There's a lady standing on Connecticut Avenue to take the bus and he pulled out this letter and almost tries to rape her." Don Reynolds, I think, had been discharged—he'd gone to the military academy, the U.S. Army Military Academy—but I think he was kicked out of there. And then, after World War II, he had done something crooked in the State Department and he got kicked out of there. He was a mental case. But he was a brilliant guy with insurance. The President of one of the insurance companies in Baltimore had been a contributor to our Campaign Committee and he said, "Bobby, this guy Don Reynolds from South Carolina made the highest grade on our test of anybody ever." He said, "Get the hell out of politics and get into insurance. Montgomery County is rich and you'll make a fortune in insurance." That's the reason I was connected with Reynolds. I never made any money. But he really did, you know, with his feeding a little bit of information to Senator John Williams, he had a field day. But I like my position a hell of a lot better than Senator John Williams today, in view of the tax court decision saying that Don Reynolds is a lying, thieving son of a bitch.

But the good thing that happened was Don Reynolds' wife had been a school

teacher in Montgomery County. She took out all her retirement and fled to be with her mother and daddy out in California. While she was there, I guess, she got a teacher job, she met a lieutenant in the Navy, and because she had signed Don Reynold's income taxes, the IRS had gotten a judgement against her and her new husband. He went to the attorney for the Navy and he petitioned the Tax Court that this Lieutenant in the Navy had absolutely nothing to do with Don Reynolds' tax returns. So the Tax Court dismissed her. She had never had a child. She has a girl that's about 20 years old now. A lovely lady. But Don Reynolds was a genius nut, I guess. You know, he had loose screws in his head.

RITCHIE: The only trouble is it put you in a vulnerable spot because you were dealing with people like that.

BAKER: Yeah, you know, like Senator Johnson couldn't get insurance from anybody. So here, I bring Don Reynolds and he gets him the first \$50,000 term policy. He wound up buying \$250,000 worth of insurance through Don Reynolds. But you never know what people are going to do. You can't be too prudent or too careful.

RITCHIE: Roy Elson told me about how his brother, who was the FBI agent, advised him not to be involved in any business.

BAKER: Yeah. Roy, he was my friend and I'm his friend. I'm so happy he's still alive. But I was not smart enough. You know, I had so many bills and so forth. The vending company was very close to making a half a million dollars a month. So that looked a lot better than being a Secretary for the Majority in the Senate, especially with Senator Mansfield as Majority Leader.

RITCHIE: At that point, as you were going along, were you thinking about ending your time with the Senate?

BAKER: Oh yeah. And I should never—had it not been for Senator Kerr telling me that if I stayed, he would make me a wealthy man. I really wanted the job with Martin Marietta—you know, half a million a year. I'd never heard of a man getting that kind of pay. I could have been very successful for them. So my most stupid mistake was when President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson took office, not to resign and let Senator

Mansfield pick whoever he wanted. He picked some guy—Valeo—to replace me.

RITCHIE: Frank Valeo.

BAKER: Yeah. And he was rather pathetic. The Secretary of the Senate was a Colonel in the U.S. Army that Senator Mansfield picked, and he was a very able fellow.

RITCHIE: Stan Kimmitt.

BAKER: Yeah, I think I see him on TV frequently. He's a retired Colonel or something.

RITCHIE: Yes, he was. After he left the Senate, he went to work for Hughes Aircraft.

BAKER: Yeah, but he is much more able than Senator Mansfield.

RITCHIE: They were both the Democratic Secretary for the Majority, first Valeo and then Kimmitt. And both became Secretary of the Senate also.

BAKER: Yes, right. But other than Valeo, some Supreme Court decision about campaign contributions—

RITCHIE: *Buckley v. Valeo.*

BAKER: I've never seen—is he still alive?

RITCHIE: No, he died a few years ago.

BAKER: He did. You know, Senator Mansfield really loved Valeo because he worked in the Library of Congress and any book he wanted, Valeo would hand deliver it. But I don't think many, like Joe Stewart and other people that I know, were very impressed with him.

RITCHIE: He wasn't a very political person.

BAKER: Yeah, but from what I have heard from people, Stan Kimmitt was a very able professional.

RITCHIE: After you left the Senate, did you follow the Senate politics?

BAKER: Oh, sure. Once you've been here as long as I was. I watch every election. You know who's running and what they're doing. I am fascinated. That's the reason I listen to Fox and MSNBC. All they do is talk politics. So I go to bed at eight o'clock at night and listen until 11.

RITCHIE: Well, what's been your impression of the Leadership in recent years?

BAKER: Well I am very fond of Senator [Harry] Reid, but television is not very kind to him. Senator [Mitch] McConnell is an able man, but he has a bunch of bad Indians to try to manage. And so trying to please Rush Limbaugh and the former Speaker [Newt Gingrich] and enlarge his party is a toughie. He had a hell of a time in his reelection in Kentucky this last time just because of how negative the GOP has been—the only thing Republicans seem to know is no. And I think it will destroy you. And it's going to take those people like Governor [Charles] Crist and the former Governor [Tom] Ridge in Pennsylvania, and former Governor Jeb Bush to revitalize the GOP. Those are the kind of people that you can appeal to a majority of the American people.

RITCHIE: The center has shrunk, in some respects, in the Senate.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: In both parties. And things have become a lot more partisan. Right now, almost every vote in the Senate is a party-line vote.

BAKER: I know, exactly. And it shouldn't be. Just going back to the Senator McCarthy censure—that was the Senate at its greatest. You had Democrats and Republicans not hating, but working together. And the love and friendship of Senator Ev Dirksen and President Lyndon Johnson, from different political parties, but working together to pass the Voting Rights Act. The last time I saw President Johnson was when

he knew he was dying. He said, “Bobby, the most tragic thing in my life was the Vietnam War.” He said that, “Every day at the end of my administration, there would be 200 kids out there hollering, ‘Hey hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?’” And he said, “It hurts. And you can’t get over it.” Had it not been for Viet Nam, President Johnson would be as popular as President Abraham Lincoln.

RITCHIE: I was thinking again that when you were counting heads it was always Republicans voting with Democrats on both sides of the issue along the way.

BAKER: Yeah, and come five o’clock in the evening, 90 percent of Democrats and Republicans could have a drink together and their families liked each other. But you don’t see that now. It’s sad. It’s really degenerated. This country has massive problems. They’re solvable, but you have to work together.

RITCHIE: It seems like there used to be a period in which Senators socialized more than they do today.

BAKER: Correct.

RITCHIE: And they got to know each other a little bit more.

BAKER: Yeah, but now either with Rush Limbaugh and his crowd or not. But we don’t have anybody that had the cash—like Walter Reuther. He was a very bright man and he could get cash from the UAW from Canada that he didn’t have to report to anybody. So as a consequence, he bought more United States Senate seats than anybody in my life. I’m telling you, it was unreal for Senator Ted Moss or Senator Gale McGee, coming from basically Republican country, to get elected. Because Reuther gave money. But boy, when I needed to get them to help on a vote, if Walter Reuther called them, I could never change them.

RITCHIE: So you knew which Senators blew with the wind, in which direction?

BAKER: Yep, I knew exactly which way. I knew who you were obligated to.

RITCHIE: And presumably Senator Johnson knew as well?

BAKER: Well sure, sure.

RITCHIE: The Senate is an unusual institution—

BAKER: Oh, it, historically, has been one of *the* great legislative bodies in the world. But I don't see any of them coming up with a solution to our economic problem worldwide. It's not confined to America. It's worldwide.

RITCHIE: It's an institution of individuals as much as it is of party and you do have to know each individual.

BAKER: Yes. The Democratic and Republican parties are not well organized anymore. It used to be that, like, in Pickens, South Carolina, the Democratic Committee man or the Democratic Congressman selected everybody that was going to be postmaster. I mean, they had a little local authority. They don't have it any anymore.

RITCHIE: Yes, the patronage system in the Senate is pretty well ended as well, although Senators have their own staffs. But so much of what was done in the Senate before was by the Senators' patronage.

BAKER: I'm amazed at what you were telling me that a third of their staff are back in their respective states doing the homework.

RITCHIE: Well, there's a much larger percentage of the staff now back in the home states and they use teleconferencing to connect the Washington staff with the home staff. They've moved a lot of the constituent mail process out to the home states now.

BAKER: Yeah, so they get a lot quicker answers locally?

RITCHIE: They don't crowd their offices up here quite as much and constituents can drop in to see staff without coming to Washington.

BAKER: Very interesting. But I'll tell you, you shocked the hell out of me with all of those young people when we went to the cafeteria. I could not believe how many. I've never seen that many young people living at the beach.

RITCHIE: Yes, they're fresh out of college in many ways and very bright and very energetic.

BAKER: Oh, it's unreal how bright they are.

RITCHIE: Well, I've had you here for a long time. And I think you need a break.

BAKER: Okay. I'm going to be here for three or four days. Do you want me to give you a number and you can call me if you want me?

RITCHIE: Okay, that would be great.

BAKER: I have enjoyed meeting you, and I'm available.

RITCHIE: Very good, and I will look forward to a sequel, maybe to talk more about the individual Senators.

BAKER: I'll try to answer your questions.

RITCHIE: You sent me a long list of Senators' names and it would be interesting to go down the list and do an accounting of them.

BAKER: What I've been doing is taking my book and going through the index. It refreshes my memory, so I'll finish that.

RITCHIE: Okay, there's a lot of people I'd like to talk about.

BAKER: You let me know, and I'm available.

End of the Second Interview

FIFTY-ONE VOTE SENATORS

Interview #3

Friday, June 5, 2009

BAKER: Before we get started, is it possible to put in my thing the deposition with Senator Allen Frear with U.S. Tax Court, and the Tax Court finding on Don Reynolds?

RITCHIE: Sure, we can include anything as an appendix to the package, and I thought we could talk a little bit about that today. We do that with the interviews. Eventually, we deposit the interviews in the Library of Congress and the National Archives, but recently we've put 20 or 30 of the interviews on the Senate website, and they're getting a very good response. Lots of students use them.

BAKER: So when you finish with me, can I pick up all those old papers that I left with you initially?

RITCHIE: Sure, sure, if you'd like them. We can provide them for you. Whatever you want to do. We can ship them to you.

BAKER: Okay, that seems best. I'd like that.

RITCHIE: We make copies of the interview like this. This is the one with Senator George Smathers. We'll send you some copies, and we'll put others in the libraries.

BAKER: You mentioned about Senator George Smathers. He was made for television. Next time, I'll tell you how he blew the deal, because I had the votes for him to be Whip, and he turned it down. I talked him into voting for the first minimum Civil Rights bill, but then he voted against the Conference Report because of all those old rednecks in Florida, and because he beat the most liberal man in the history of Florida, Claude Pepper. Senator Claude Pepper was one of the few Senators who spoke in complete sentences. The reporters [of debate] said, he was by far the best Senator they ever took dictation by. He was a real nice man, but he was just too liberal for Florida.

And Senator George Smathers started to be too conservative. He was much abler—as far as TV and talking. He was better than Nixon, Kennedy, and Johnson, and he could have been President had he become Whip with Senator Johnson, because the Democratic Senators all liked him.

RITCHIE: Do you think he was afraid that if he became Whip that it would hurt him politically back in Florida?

BAKER: Yes, he thought he would be betraying all those old doctors and right-wingers, the Ku-Kluxers. That's what elected him.

RITCHIE: It was a problem for a lot of Southern Senators, that, if you wind up in a leadership position, you end up supporting things that wouldn't help you back home.

BAKER: Senator Bill Fulbright was one of the ablest people that ever served in the Senate, but being from Arkansas he had no choice but to vote against any Civil Rights bill. President Johnson really wanted to name him Secretary of State, but then the NAACP said "over their dead bodies." Thank God, we've outlived that.

RITCHIE: Lister Hill was Whip for a while, and he stepped down because it wasn't going to help him in Alabama.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. Senator Lister Hill was one of my 10 all-time favorites, just a decent human being. What he did by sponsoring legislation creating the National Institute for Health, no one was ever able to equal that.

RITCHIE: And health legislation was as far away from Civil Rights as anything could be.

BAKER: That is correct. He could be out in front on that, and he was the most appreciated man in the health field that ever served in the history of the Senate. When I walked by the Dirksen Building, coming into your office—he really deserves more credit than he gets, because had he not been Senator Lyndon Johnson's friend and supported the '64 Civil Rights Act, he could have killed it. Johnson said, "God damn it, Abraham

Lincoln come from there. Are you going to betray him?" And he got him a whiskey, and he gave his word and kept it. So, anytime I make a speech to young people, I say, "You owe a great debt of gratitude to Senator Everett Dirksen."

RITCHIE: The other person you've talked a lot about is Richard Russell. Did he ever consider becoming Majority Leader of the Senate?

BAKER: No, no, because, once again, being from Georgia and being much more conservative than the Democratic Party, there was no chance that he would take any position. Had he conceded that the South lost the Civil War, and after the *Brown v. Board of Education* had he stated that our customs in the South are totally different, but if you'll go with me, we will start in kindergarten and we'll integrate, he would have been President. He could actually have been President, and he wanted to be President. But Civil Rights killed him, and that's all he knew, Rule 22.

RITCHIE: We didn't talk at all about the Southern caucus, and that's an interesting phenomenon in that period.

BAKER: Well, number one, I never attended one of those, so what you read in the newspapers would be the depth of my information.

RITCHIE: What exactly was it, from what you know about it?

BAKER: Basically, you had nothing in the Southern caucus but Southern Democrats. Senator Russell was Chairman of the board. Anytime we had a Civil Rights bill or a change in the rules or a new term beginning after an election, he'd call in the new members from the South and try to get them to support his position. Ninety-nine percent of them did.

RITCHIE: And most of them got to be Chairmen of the Committees.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. Senator Russell was very wise in his advice to his fellow Southerners. What Committee could they serve on and not get into trouble on Civil Rights plus be able to help their constituency. Had it not been for a total inability to

concede that the South lost the Civil War, which is the greatest thing that ever happened to this country, he was really truly one of the great patriots of this country. He knew defense probably better than anyone who ever served on Armed Services. It was the Military Affairs Committee during World War II, and at the end of the war they named it the Armed Services Committee.

RITCHIE: The South wound up getting a lot of military bases.

BAKER: Oh, sure, that was the whole backbone of the Southern economy, military bases. Look at South Carolina. Congressman Mendel Rivers was from Charleston. He was Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, I believe, and he made Charleston into one of the big Naval ports in the world. Senator Maybank was on Armed Services and he got money for Fort Jackson. They were always in there when it came to getting money. Senator Strom Thurmond was a champion. No one in the history of South Carolina got more military money for South Carolina than Strom did. Strom saw me on a plane one time after all my troubles, and he said, "I'll always love you and Senator Lyndon Johnson because you came to the funeral for my first wife. I thought that was the most decent thing. We really miss you, because you knew how to count votes," which I thought was a nice compliment.

RITCHIE: Why was it that Johnson didn't join the Southern caucus?

BAKER: Because it would have destroyed him with the liberal Democrats who he was always trying to placate. He really didn't believe in what the Southern caucus sponsored. He was on the periphery, but he never became a member.

RITCHIE: And Senator Russell gave him a pass?

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: Understanding that his position was a delicate one.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: Looking back at the Senate of those days, there was a book by journalist William S. White called *Citadel*, back in 1956. He talked about the inner club and the outer fringes.

BAKER: Is this the book that Bill White did?

RITCHIE: Yes.

BAKER: Bill White was very popular with the Southerners. He was Senator Lyndon Johnson's favorite, and he was in his office every day, because they were both Texans. When I look back at the reporters who had great influence, there was Bill White. Old man [Joseph] Kennedy bribed Arthur Krock, who was the premiere international writer for the *New York Times* during World War II. I think he was one that secured the Pulitzer for John F. Kennedy for *While England Slept*. And then when Senator Kennedy did *Profiles in Courage*, he got it again, because Arthur Krock had that tremendous influence. I don't know how much money it was, but Arthur Krock did not die poor.

RITCHIE: They were very close.

BAKER: Oh, yes, he was always over in London when old man Joe was Ambassador. He was his premiere advisor.

RITCHIE: We still refer back to William White's book *Citadel* for its depiction of what the Senate was like in the 1950s.

BAKER: I don't think a better book has been written about that particular time, cause Bill White had access to both sides. He was so well respected, plus the *New York Times* was basically always the favorite except for Senator Bilbo and Senator Strom Thurmond and people like that, the extremists.

RITCHIE: It was White who coined that phrase, "the inner club."

BAKER: Which was absolutely true. Senator Johnson was a master in the inner club. He was a great storyteller. He was even better when he had a few drinks. Very few

Senators did not like to take a drink after 5:00.

RITCHIE: Of course, you weren't on TV the way you are today, so you could unwind a bit more.

BAKER: That is correct. It is a totally new world with TV and radio reporters around you all the time. You have to be so careful, and you can't step out of bounds.

RITCHIE: I can still remember when I first came here in the 1970s, when they had a late-night session, you'd sometimes see Senators in bedroom slippers on the floor of the Senate.

BAKER: Oh, sure. You know, when I talked Senate Leader Lyndon Johnson into having 24-hour sessions, seven days a week, I said, "I'm a fellow Southerner, and I'm telling you they hate these all-night sessions," because they had to give these long speeches and so forth. I said, "There's no way in hell we're going to pass this Civil Rights bill unless we just wear them out." I think I told you the other day, the worst tongue-lashing I received during the first Civil Rights bill was from Mrs. Paul Douglas because her husband was not in good physical condition. She said, "You're killing my husband." I said, "Thank you very much." But she was a lovely lady.

RITCHIE: We haven't had a big, long filibuster in a long time.

BAKER: I know, they threaten it. If they've got 40 votes, it's not worth it.

RITCHIE: One of the reasons for that is that it wears the Majority down as much as the Minority.

BAKER: Well, sure, and they like those long weekends. Like we were talking recently, about the unanimous consent, if you don't work it out with the opposite Leader to get his consent, then you're facing the threat of the filibuster. I believe in Majority rule, I want to tell you. This damn filibuster rule is ridiculous.

RITCHIE: The irony was that when they reformed the rule to move it to two-thirds from three-fifths, we now have more filibusters.

BAKER: I think that's true, exactly true.

RITCHIE: The Senate is always going to be able to obstruct in some way.

BAKER: The founding fathers thought the Senate was like a hot cup of coffee. You pour it into the saucer to cool off legislation that comes from the House. It has been a remarkable institution when you look at our country's history. The Senate has played a great role. I do wish, though, that they would get to where a reasonable Majority—having to have 60 votes is unreasonable. I think if I was a Senator, I could vote for 55.

RITCHIE: In 1975, when they were talking about reducing it, the reformers—Senators like Walter Mondale—wanted to bring it down to 51, but Senator Mansfield resisted and said they needed to have more. That's when they settled on 60.

BAKER: Sixty is just too tough. Fifty-five would be very reasonable. I think it would be a great credit to the Senate if they adopted that. They probably will. The way the last election went, and if my Republican friends continue to become like Rush Limbaugh and Speaker Gingrich, I think they're going to lose more seats. I don't think there's any way out of it. I always admired President Nixon's knowledge of the American electorate, and he knew that the Republican Party could not grow if it did not attract minorities. I think President George Bush, the President who just left office on January 20th, realized that he had been very successful in Texas and in his first Presidential races with the Latino vote. He's smart enough to know that you can't win with white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

My son who lives in San Francisco—he calls me “Poppa Bear”—he said, “Poppa Bear, do you realize that I am part of a minority? We have more Latinos, more Chinese, more Negroes than we do white people in California,” which is sort of startling but true. You are going to see in 100 years, that will be true for the whole country. They reproduce more rapidly than the white, Anglo-Saxons do. If you look at Europe and Japan, they have a serious problem—they have too many old people. We don't have too many old

people now. We will by 2050.

RITCHIE: One person we've talked about at a distance, but who keeps popping up, is Richard Nixon. You saw him all during that period as a Vice President.

BAKER: I knew him when he was first elected to the Senate. He had a lovely wife and two pretty daughters. My wife went on his payroll, because he had a surplus of cash from his California campaign. The Senate Sergeant at Arms kept a list of people who knew the Hill, and he recommended my wife to Senator Nixon's secretary, Rose Wood. She worked there until I was in law school and needed more money, and Senator [Pat] McCarran's administrative assistant, Eva Adams, gave my wife a fat raise, and she resigned from Senator Nixon's staff.

Especially at the beginning of the Eisenhower administration, I would see Mr. [Roy] Wilkins and all of the lobbyists for the NAACP in and out of Vice President Nixon's little old office right off the Senate floor. He was really courting them. And they were ready to make a deal, because he was much, much more liberal on the Negro question than the Democrats were. For the life of me, I do not understand how he wound up with such hate, dislike—he didn't like Jews, he didn't like anybody. Henry Kissinger, I guess when you talk about all the negatives of President Nixon, probably the most sensational act of his Presidency was when he and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger changed our whole attitude toward China. I think the world is better as a consequence. So, hopefully, China doesn't take us over with all our treasury bonds.

Joe Stewart was telling me last night that China is going to have a monumental water problem. I was telling him that we have to do something sensational to get water to California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado. He said, "China has a bigger problem than we do." I didn't know that. You know, they've got three billion people—that's a lot of water needed. But history will not be kind to President Richard Nixon. He was always trying to get information from me about Larry O'Brien. Because of Senator Smathers, Bebe Rebozo became a real, warm friend of mine. He was always calling me, when Nixon was President, to see if I could furnish him anything about Larry O'Brien. But other than being associated with him during the Kennedy administration I didn't know much about his background.

RITCHIE: It's interesting that they were so fixated on him.

BAKER: Oh, just insane.

RITCHIE: Well, in these days, the Vice President rarely comes around, and you see him only for ceremonial occasions. But when Nixon was Vice President, he was here pretty regularly, wasn't he?

BAKER: Yes, he was. I don't think President Eisenhower really liked Vice President Nixon, socially, and as a consequence Nixon presided a lot. It's hard to get a presiding officer, they always have an excuse. But Nixon would stay there more than any Vice President. Barkley didn't preside. He'd call me and said, "Bobby, get somebody up here." Vice President Nixon had very few Senatorial friends, which is interesting. He had been a poker player when he was in the Navy, but he was kind of a loner. I guess he and Senator Joe McCarthy were about the two closest friends in the Senate. I don't think Senator Dirksen liked him.

RITCHIE: Did the Eisenhower administration use him as sort of a legislative liaison?

BAKER: I think they relied on their Congressional Liaison, General Persons. I don't ever remember Vice President Nixon being out seeking votes. General Persons was pretty good. He had friends on my side and on his side. Speaker Rayburn and Senator Lyndon Johnson had great admiration for President Eisenhower—you know, like the Interstate Highway System, which is probably the greatest thing that President Eisenhower did, plus he stopped the Korean War. He was a popular man, and they genuinely liked him. He was a personable man. Neither Speaker Rayburn nor Senator Johnson had any hesitation to call him, and say, "Mr. President, we can't go that far," or, "We will help you." It was probably the best time in my Senate career between the Congress and the President. It wasn't that personal dislike and partisanship that you have now, which is sad.

RITCHIE: The irony is that he had more trouble from Senators like William

Knowland than he did from people like Lyndon Johnson.

BAKER: Hey, no doubt about it. Senator Knowland was hell-bent because of his relationship with former President of China, Chang Kai Shek, that he was demanding that we go to war over Quemoy. I think he made three speeches a week about how we gotta stop the Chinese Reds. He was insane.

RITCHIE: And Eisenhower was pretty frustrated with him.

BAKER: Oh, sure he was. He was very incapable of compromise. It was his way or the highway. As a consequence, he was probably about the most ineffective Republican Leader in my tenure in the Senate of 20-something years.

RITCHIE: There was a very funny exchange between him and Johnson in 1954, when a number of Republicans had died and Democrats had been appointed, and there was a period when there were more Democrats in the minority than Republicans in the Majority. Senator Knowland said, "Mr. President, it's very difficult being a Majority Leader without a majority." And Senator Johnson immediately stood up and said, "Oh, Mr. President, it is much harder to be a Minority Leader with a majority."

BAKER: [Laughs] No better truth was ever told. Once you get to be the Majority, you can't believe the demands made from the right and the left. There are always people like Lister Hill, they don't push. But you get people like Senator Wayne Morse, he could really frustrate you. He could get up there and talk eight hours and not bother him one bit.

RITCHIE: That brings up Senator Morse. You mentioned Richard Neuberger as being a favorite Senator. Neuberger and Morse voted the same way on pretty much everything and they had one of the biggest feuds!

BAKER: Yes, it was unreal that two civilized liberals could despise each other. Senator Neuberger really liked Senator Lyndon Johnson, and he worked with him. When the liberals were raising hell with him and his Leadership, Senator Neuberger would stand up for him. But Senator Morse was petty, but he was the only Senator who got up after I was forced to resign and said I was a good man, so I have a warm spot in my heart for Senator Wayne Morse.

RITCHIE: What caused them to be such enemies?

BAKER: I think it goes back to Oregon politics. I think Senator Neuberger probably defeated one of Senator Morse's picks to be his junior Senator. I think it has to be that.

RITCHIE: They say that some of the best friendships in the Senate are between members of opposite parties from the same state, and some of the worst relations are between members of the same party in a state.

BAKER: You know, that's probably true.

RITCHIE: One of the things about being from the opposite party of the state is that you'll never be competing for the same money and same support.

BAKER: Like Senator Truman, before he became Vice President and President, was a real close friend of Senator [Harold] Burton of Ohio. When I graduated from high school, Senator McKellar was the principal speaker, but Senator Burton was there and Speaker Rayburn. And then, President Truman shocked everybody when we had a vacancy on the Supreme Court and he named Senator Burton to the Supreme Court.

RITCHIE: I think the last time that any Senator was named to the Supreme Court was when Truman was President.

BAKER: Well, President Roosevelt named Senator Jimmy Byrnes, and then President Truman named Senator Burton, a Republican from Ohio.

RITCHIE: They've talked about Senators since then, but none of them have been named.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: Well, I wondered if we could just talk about some of the Senators.

Some of those we haven't talked about, particularly among the Southern Senators, is Russell's colleague from Georgia, Senator Herman Tallmadge.

BAKER: Senator Tallmadge was an extremely conservative Democrat from Georgia who had a monumental alcohol problem. He liked Senator Lyndon Johnson. He would hold his nose and vote for some things that Senator Johnson was proposing, but it turned out that he was basically for hire. He was a crook, a bad crook. In 1978, when I was doing the television tour across the country for my book, *Wheeling and Dealing*, and it just came out in the paper, the local stations always tried to be favorable to their local Senators because they have a lot of power. When the interviewer said, "Mr. Baker, what do you think about Senator Tallmadge?" I said, "He probably is the biggest crook that ever served while I was in the Senate." Well, I got a standing ovation from the crew, because that was the first time that anybody had done that. He had a bitter divorce. I think she leaked the story that he had \$100 bills in his top coat, or something like that. He died with a broken heart.

RITCHIE: It was a big surprise when he was defeated in 1980, even with all the publicity against him. He seemed so solid in that state.

BAKER: When I was in charge of Senator Lyndon Johnson's Vice Presidential trip through the South, he was too drunk to show up. Senator Russell said, "Don't even mention Civil Rights in Atlanta, just come in and hold your nose and hope that you carry Georgia." But Senator Tallmadge had volunteered to help, but then he got drunk and Betty said he can't do it. That's when I was drafted, since my parents were from Georgia, to introduce Senator Johnson. I've seen Walter Cronkite show that many times.

RITCHIE: Two other Southern Senators, you talked a little bit about Russell Long, but what about his colleague Allen Ellender.

BAKER: Senator Ellender was a real Southern Senator, and he was a powerful Southern Senator, and he was absolutely opposed to any foreign aid. He caused us more trouble! You know, the President had made commitments. With all the genius of Senator Lyndon Johnson, he had great difficulty overcoming Senator Allen Ellender. Senator Ellender had a very competent staff, and one of them was my classmate who he named a

Federal Judge, I think his name was George Arsenaut. His staff—when he was so mean—could soften him. When I really needed to get him out of town or something on a scheduled vote, they would tell me when it would be a good time to have a vote, because he might be in New Orleans.

Now, one of the ten favorite Senators of my life was Senator Russell Long. He was unusually bright. He was one of the ablest members of the Senate Finance Committee. He knew oil and gas, 'cause it's a big business. He married a girl from Senator Hoey's office, Carolyn Bason, and I think she still lives at the Watergate. When I was a Page boy, because I was from South Carolina, she really took a liking to me. When Senator Long got a divorce, she had been dating him for years, and she said, "Either you're going to marry me, or our friendship is over." His father had a reputation that every time LSU played a football game, he'd be on the bench. So, Senator Long invited me to go to Houston to see Rice and LSU and he was the most exciting football fan I've ever been around. I love football, but damn I never get that excited. He was screaming every time they made a first down. He could drink too much sometimes, but he was one of the most decent, reasonable United States Senators I've ever known, and was unusually bright. He had a sister that was insane. Very few people heard about her. She was in some institution. His uncle, remember, was Governor.

RITCHIE: Uncle Earl.

BAKER: Uncle Earl, yeah. Russell could imitate Uncle Earl better than anybody. He was a great entertainer in the Democratic cloakroom, talking about Uncle Earl.

RITCHIE: There was a period, after you left, when he was moving into the Leadership. He was briefly the Whip, but he lost that to Ted Kennedy.

BAKER: You know, Senator Ted Kennedy was very likeable. When Senator Russell Long got beat, the Southern Senators were in decline because a lot of them had become Republicans. As a consequence, Senator Kennedy defeated him, and by a large vote. You could see the strength of Senator Kennedy: he was well liked and a damn able Senator. He was elected in 1962, took office in '63, and I resigned on October 7, 1963, but the President was my real friend all those years. He was very kind to me.

RITCHIE: He got off on the right foot by going around to some of the senior Senators, like Senator Eastland and others, and being deferential, despite the fact that he had a brother in the White House.

BAKER: You know, Senator Eastland, what a tragedy that he was from Mississippi. He was a brilliant trial lawyer. Because he was from Mississippi and all the segregation there, he took extreme positions. While I really, truly respected him, he was used by J. Edgar Hoover, who is one of my bad guys. I want to tell you, this monster completely manipulated the press. In my opinion, he caused this country a lot of harm. You know, 75 years for any federal official is old enough, and that made it a hell of a lot easier to get rid of J. Edgar Hoover. President Kennedy wanted to get rid of him, but he blackmailed him because of the wiretaps he had of Kennedy with his mistress, Judith Exner. There was a Congressman from Brooklyn named John Rooney. Hoover knew who to butter up. John Rooney was the Subcommittee Chairman of Justice Department appropriations. Anytime he went out of town, there was an FBI agent with a limousine to take him anywhere he wanted to go. He did the same thing with anybody, like Senator Jim Eastland.

My friends the Murchesons and Sid Richardson, gave J. Edgar Hoover a paid-for free vacation every August at Del Mar Race Track in California. J. Edgar loved the horses. So, he and Clyde Tolson would go there. While I don't like what he did to my country, I have great love for J. Edgar Hoover's assistant Clyde Tolson, who, when he had his massive stroke, the 12 o'clock to 8 o'clock in the morning night nurse, who had retired from the obstetrician who delivered all five of our children, she was telling Mr. Tolson what a raw deal I had received and how much she loved and adored us. He was the one that told her that Georgia Liakakis, my former secretary, was a paid government informer, because her son was caught selling marijuana. So, while I'm in jail, she still had a key to my house. We had a big bomb shelter and I had some files from a securities guy that I knew was basically a crook named Sy Pollock. When he went to jail, he asked if he could store his files at our house. He had given Georgia a job on my recommendation. The Internal Revenue and the FBI gave her \$2,000 in \$20 bills to raid my files. So, when Pollock had a trial in New Jersey, my lawyers demanded any wiretaps. When the judge saw them, he went bonkers. The former Mayor of New York,

Rudolph Giuliani, was about number three in the Justice Department, and he was demanding that they go in to find out what happened, but because my name was involved, they hushed it and nothing ever happened. But the papers that I have are very interesting. So I have a very warm spot for Mayor Giuliani. I think he's one of the great Republicans in my lifetime.

RITCHIE: Right now that the Justice Department has reversed itself on the big Alaska scandal involving Senator Ted Stevens.

BAKER: Which is precisely what they should have done [in my case], because the illegal wiretap in Fred Black's suite—President Lyndon Johnson never told me this, but I am absolutely certain that he thought that Thurgood Marshall, who was the Solicitor General advising the Supreme Court the FBI had an illegal bug in Fred Black's suite, he thought if they threw that out, they'd throw my case out, but that didn't happen.

RITCHIE: Why do you think they bugged Fred Black's suite to start with?

BAKER: I think Attorney General Bobby Kennedy knew that I was very close to Fred Black. Congressman Gerry Ford had a key to Fred Black's suite. Ellen Romesch really was my friend, because anytime I had a rich guy in town, my secretary called her to see if she could go out. She told me that, of all the people she had met with Fred Black and me, the nicest one was Congressman Gerry Ford. J. Edgar Hoover could not find out the happenings when the Warren Commission was investigating the killer of President Kennedy, and I don't think there has ever been a more distinguished group than Chief Justice [Earl] Warren and people like Senator John Sherman Cooper, and Congressman Gerry Ford, Senator Richard Russell (who didn't want to go on it, but President Johnson just made him go)—J. Edgar Hoover could not find out what they were doing. So, he had this tape where Gerry Ford was having oral sex with Ellen Romesch, you know his wife had a serious drug problem back then, so on those Saturdays when he was in town, Fred would tell me don't go down because Congressman Ford is going to be using the suite. J. Edgar Hoover blackmailed Congressman Gerry Ford to tell him what they were doing. That's the reason I don't like him. It's just a misuse of authority.

RITCHIE: Did you have any suspicion at all that the FBI was wiretapping

around Washington?

BAKER: I had no clue. I am going to find out—Ed Williams won a big settlement against the Nevada telephone company for Eddie Levinson and his partner—so I’m now convinced that after I resigned that [William] Bittman had my phone bugged in Ernie Tucker’s law office. It will be interesting to see if we file any lawsuit against them.

RITCHIE: I’ve talked to various people from the 1950s who are always a little suspicious that somebody was tapping their phone or whatever. Roy Elson always had a suspicion, I think.

BAKER: Roy Elson, bless his soul, he said, “I shouldn’t tell you this, but my brother is a real, straight arrow. He indicated that you’re being bugged.” But I was too arrogant, and I didn’t pay attention to his wisdom.

RITCHIE: Roy also said that a lot of the people he would talk to over the phone would always have their secretaries on the line. He was sure they were writing down everything they heard. So, he would always say something really inappropriate to embarrass them and get their secretaries off the line.

BAKER: I don’t want to divulge it until after she dies, but one of the great, great love affairs in the history of the Senate was Senator Lyndon Johnson and Mary Margaret Valenti, his personal secretary. She is still one of my great friends. Joe Stewart was on a foreign trip with Senator Johnson, and he bought a very expensive mink coat and Lady Bird went white with anger. I am very proud that she did not divorce him. She had every reason in the world. They say President Kennedy was a great lady’s man, but President Johnson! I think he had an affair with a California Congress lady, Helen Gahagan Douglas, or I always heard that he had. Then, his best friend who succeeded him in Congress, Homer Thornberry, he had a very pretty wife and I heard that Senator Johnson took her out. President Kennedy had to have a new one everyday, but Senator Johnson was so in love with Mary Margaret. John Connally screamed at him one day, he said, “You’re insane!” Mary Margaret had her desk in the Majority Leader’s office, and he did not hide it. Lady Bird knew about it, and she would not let Mary Margaret come to the

funeral. I took Mary Margaret to the 116 Club and escorted her to the Capitol, when they had those Capitol services for ex-President Johnson.

RITCHIE: What was it that allowed prominent politicians, ambitious men, to risk it by having extramarital affairs?

BAKER: You see, most of the press was dependent upon insiders to feed them, to make them look good with their papers. Consequently, the biggest-kept secret in the history of America was that President Franklin Roosevelt was a polio victim. With the exception of the last speech he made in a joint session of Congress, the press always showed him standing. The photographers never deviated from that.

RITCHIE: It is so different today where anything that a politician does is fair game.

BAKER: Oh, it's unreal. It's a totally different world. These scandal sheets, and you've got 24-hour TV, they go for any scandal. They think that increases the number of people that watch their show.

RITCHIE: I can't think of any politician in the 1950s who got into trouble in the press over their affairs.

BAKER: Well, you know, they had sort of a mutually-dependent relationship. When you could get inside information, you sure didn't try to hurt that. Like most of the Washington press, when they started tapping me, they just said, "Hey, he has been a great insider, a great help." But then they sent people from New York and so forth, and they tear hell out of you, and make headlines in the *New York Post* everyday.

RITCHIE: Going back to some of the Senators that you knew, there was one Southern state that actually had two Republican Senators. That was Kentucky after Thruston Morton was elected and you had John Sherman Cooper.

BAKER: Senator John Sherman Cooper was one of the outstanding Republicans in my tenure. He was a moderate Republican, and I think he forced Senator Thruston

Morton to be a little more moderate than he would really like to be. He was well liked on both sides. He was truly capable of getting 51 votes when he had a proposal, which is very unusual. I tell everybody that it's easy to get 20 votes, it's hell to get 51.

RITCHIE: Especially if you're in the Minority Party.

BAKER: That's correct. Every Committee he served on, I don't remember one of the Democratic Senators saying anything ugly about Senator John Sherman Cooper.

RITCHIE: I know he was friends with John Kennedy.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. They had a lot in common, especially in foreign affairs and so forth. He was a very talented United States Senator and a great credit to Kentucky.

RITCHIE: My wife is from Kentucky, and she would come to receptions up here when Senator Cooper would come back. He would always have her sit next to him. He was a very Southern gentleman right to the very end.

BAKER: And I never heard one iota of cynicism about him chasing girls. He was really a decent man.

RITCHIE: Very polite, courtly.

BAKER: Oh, yes, and he was the same with his colleagues. He never got petty. As a consequence, he was one of the few Senators who could get 51 votes when he had a proposal.

RITCHIE: The Senators that we haven't talked about also include the West Virginia Senators, like Kentucky, on the border of the south. You start out with Senator [Matthew] Neely, and then you had [W. Chapman] Revercomb, and then [Robert] Byrd and [Jennings] Randolph.

BAKER: Well, Senator Revercomb was what I call a "20 percenter." He was against anything that President Truman was for, and I think Senator Joe McCarthy was

one of his buddies. But Senator Randolph and Senator Bobby Byrd voted basically the same on every issue. Senator Randolph I think at one time was Chairman of the Senate District of Columbia Committee, and he was popular in the Washington community because he was always trying to help the District. But when Senator Byrd came to me and told me that he desperately wanted a seat on the Appropriations Committee, I told Senator Johnson, "First time we have a vacancy, this guy will vote with you when you need him." Senator Byrd was not pro-Civil Rights. We had a hard time convincing him to vote for the Civil Rights act in '59. I think at one time when he was young, he was a Ku Kluxer. But he really used his expertise on Appropriations Committee to make West Virginia the recipient of more federal money than they ever had in their history. I think half the state is named the "Robert Byrd Memorial."

Senator Jennings Randolph was a real friendly, kind Senator, and it was easy for me to say, "Senator, the Leader would like you to help him on this," and he would do so. He had been in the House. But the biggest shocker was when Senator [Robert] Kerr got him to vote against President Kennedy's Medicare bill. Had he voted with me, I think I could have won the vote, but the Kennedy White House thought I talked to him, but I did not. Senator Jennings Randolph just sold out to Senator Kerr. So Marjorie Banner, who was Senator Kerr's personal secretary, told me that Senator Kerr gave him \$100,000 in cash. So, that's all I know.

ITCHIE: Senator Byrd, in many ways, emulated Lyndon Johnson when he became Leader. He tried to carry on a lot of that. He was obviously very influenced by Johnson as Leader.

BAKER: Senator Byrd was blessed that he selected my former employee, Joe Stewart, who was much more able than I was. He was such a credit to Senator Byrd. I mean, Joe was very soft-spoken and easy to negotiate with. Whatever success Senator Byrd had as Leader, I give a lot of credit to Joe. Under Senator Byrd, he became Secretary of the Senate. Some of the things that Joe did for former Senate employees who needed six months or something on the payroll to get a pension, was very, very kind. When you interview him, try to get him to tell you how many people he helped, because he was telling me some stories last night that really made me feel warm that he was so decent, and he knew how to manipulate to help a person. Like Rein Vander Zee, who had

been my assistant, he lacked about three or four months and Joe put him on the payroll. So, he had a pension until he died, and he was grateful because he was sick. Joe was by far, of all the Secretaries of the Senate that I have known, was the ablest, brightest. He was a doer.

RITCHIE: He and Senator Byrd got along very well.

BAKER: Oh, yeah, yeah. In reading the Rules Committee votes, evidently Senator Byrd didn't like me, because he voted against me on several occasions. When they were trying to wrap up the Baker investigation, on three or four occasions he voted with the Republicans.

RITCHIE: Even today, he will sometimes vote with the Republicans. He is not an automatic Democratic vote.

BAKER: That is correct. When Senator Lyndon Johnson was there, he was automatic. If the Leader wanted it, he would vote with him. Senator Johnson was very good to him, when he gave him the Appropriations Committee vacancy. I've forgotten what Committees he served on.

RITCHIE: The other thing is that he supported Johnson in '60 for President.

BAKER: Oh, yeah, he was strong for him. He did not like Senator Kennedy.

RITCHIE: If Johnson had run in the primary, he would have been an ally in West Virginia.

BAKER: Oh, sure. Had Senator Johnson resigned as Majority Leader, with the support of the Milwaukee paper, and with all the publicity he had out there, he could have defeated Senator Kennedy in West Virginia—it would have been a walk—but he didn't want to give up that Leadership post. I guess it was the worst mistake he ever made, but he always said, with his heart he wasn't strong enough.

RITCHIE: Since we're talking about Johnson, his Texas colleague was Ralph

Yarborough. That's another situation where you had two Democrats who voted alike, but didn't like each other, and didn't get along very well.

BAKER: You hit that right on the head. Senator Yarborough was an extreme liberal, by Texas standards. He had the support of all the labor unions. The *Texas Observer*, or something like that, they were always giving Senator Johnson hell. But Senator Yarborough really disliked Johnson. He thought he was too conservative. He tried to torpedo any U.S. attorney or judgeship sponsored by Johnson, I mean it was a constant war. And Governor John Connally despised Senator Ralph Yarborough. I bet John Connally never voted for him when he received the Democratic nomination. President Kennedy went to Texas to try to see if he couldn't soothe the troubled waters, and then he was killed. Senator Yarborough was very friendly with Attorney General Bobby Kennedy. The President was caught trying to look after his friend, Vice President Johnson, versus Bobby and Senator Ralph Yarborough, and it was a tragedy. They both voted about the same way, but when it comes to those little Senatorial privileges, like Judgeships and U.S. Attorneys, they could never agree. It was always a war.

RITCHIE: There's got to be a certain amount of jealousy between two Senators from the same party and the same state.

BAKER: You know, we were talking about Senator Jennings Randolph and Senator Byrd, there was no jealousy there. You take Senator Richard Russell and Senator Walter George, absolutely nothing but respect and admiration. But then you get a situation like Ralph Yarborough and Vice President Lyndon Johnson, they both were petty.

RITCHIE: Especially when you mention nominations. That's a big part of what a Senator does.

BAKER: Well, sure, this is where you look after your home base, the people who are the TV owners, the newspaper owners, and the radio people, they have tremendous influence on Senators. You generally got to say, "Who do you like?" That's what they do.

RITCHIE: I asked Senator Smathers what he thought was the best part about

being a Senator, and he said it was getting to name a lot of people to positions, and having them come to you looking for positions.

BAKER: Yes, he liked that. What a terrible, terrible tragedy with Senator George Smathers, who was not a bigot when it came to racial matters. He was very decent. But for him to turn down being Whip, he turned down the Presidency, because he was so good on TV that he would have been a cinch. Senator Kennedy was terrible on TV when he first started. I mean, he had that New England twang. Luckily, Ted Sorensen taught him self-deprecation, and he was the best speaker before he died, of any President in my lifetime. He was brilliant. And he was smart—he only talked 12 minutes. I listened to President Obama’s speech in Cairo, and he talked too long. It was a brilliant speech, but I kept saying, “Get off that stage.” About 20 minutes is long enough. He’s getting pretty good praise about the speech, but we’re going to have a hell of a hard time with the Jews because they are very strong politically in the Democratic party. Instead of securing about 80 percent of the Jewish vote, he’ll be lucky if he gets 50 percent in view of that speech that he made yesterday. I think he’s absolutely right that we’d be better off in the world if Israel was recognized by the rest of the Arab world, but this new President of Israel is a tough right-winger and he doesn’t give a damn about what’s happening.

RITCHIE: We talked a little bit about the South here, maybe we could switch and talk about the Northeast and some of the people that you were dealing with there. You mentioned a couple of times, but we haven’t talked too much about it, about Maine with Margaret Chase Smith and Ed Muskie.

BAKER: Yeah. Maine had two very bright Senators. I don’t think Senator Margaret Chase Smith liked Senator Muskie, but she loved Lyndon Johnson, because she was on the Armed Services Committee as he was. Senator Muskie was probably more liberal than Maine. He did not have a great feeling for Texas, you know the oil and gas and so forth. Senator Muskie was very ambitious. He would have loved to have been Majority Leader instead of Johnson. I would not have been surprised to see him try to be elected Leader. But Senator Margaret Chase Smith was like Senator John Sherman Cooper. She knew how to get 51 votes, and Senator Muskie was lucky if he received 20. That’s the biggest difference between the two. I liked Senator Muskie, and he was very gracious to me, but he was way to the left of Maine. He had Presidential ambitions, too.

RITCHIE: And he and Johnson didn't get along that well.

BAKER: No, because he was always taking the ADA position against Senator Johnson and his Leadership, so it was not a close bond. Now John Pastore from Rhode Island and Senator [Theodore] Green, they were really buddy-buddies. Both Senator Green, as old as he was—really, the Senator from Rhode Island was really Senator Green's administrative assistant, Eddie Higgins. Anytime we had something coming up, and I needed Senator Green to be there, I'd say, "Eddie, the Leader really needs Senator Green," and he'd say, "You got it." And Senator Green would do that, because he had such faith in Eddie Higgins. He was probably the ablest administrative assistant, when it came to being able to deliver his boss. Charlie Murray could do it with his father [James E. Murray] also, because you know Senator Murray had been very close to organized labor. Senator Murray was Chairman of the Labor Committee. Sometimes, when he had a vote that labor didn't like, Charlie Murray could deliver his Daddy, which helped. It's sad that Senator Margaret Chase Smith and Senator Muskie did not work together as a team.

RITCHIE: You mentioned Theodore Green. I've heard from various people about how Johnson gracefully tried to get Green to step aside as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in 1958 — they made him Chairman Emeritus—to get Fulbright into that position.

BAKER: I think that's probably true. Senator Johnson was always trying to get along with Senator Fulbright. Senator Fulbright was a real intellectual, who thought Senator Johnson was corny, but Mrs. Fulbright really liked Lady Bird and Lyndon. Senator Bill Fulbright probably had the premiere staff on the Foreign Relations Committee and in his office. I think you said that at one time Bill Clinton worked for him, when he was in college. That's the kind of people that Senator Fulbright picked. And the world owes him a great debt of gratitude because of his sponsorship of the Fulbright scholarship program. That has done more to help America than any piece of legislation that I'm aware of.

RITCHIE: It's ironic that some of the people that Johnson did a lot to help in the '50s, like Wayne Morse and Bill Fulbright, became such thorns in his side when he

became President.

BAKER: Well, you know, Senator Albert Gore should have been a big Johnson man, but he was not. He would do anything, tell him that “I’m smarter than you,” and so forth. Senator Albert Gore, with all his protestations about how honorable he was, when he left the Senate he really sold out to the guy—there’s was an old Jewish crook that had a big oil company, Occidental I think was the name of it—

RITCHIE: Armand Hammer?

BAKER: Armand Hammer. He named former Senator Albert Gore President of Peabody Coal, or something like that, when he left. All of these things he was talking about—special interests—he was always talking about the oil and gas people, well he sold out big. Senator Albert Gore died a very rich man. I got to meet Mrs. Gore one time. I had been invited by a newspaperwoman to a place in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and she had invited Mrs. Gore. She was a lovely, smart lady. I really enjoyed talking with her. We spent the night talking about everything. She was much, much warmer than Albert Senior was.

RITCHIE: That raises a question about political wives at that time. How influential were they as a group, in Washington at the time, the wives of the Senators?

BAKER: Well, you would think of all the straight arrows in the Senate in its history was Senator John Stennis from Mississippi. His wife, like if we’d be going to a funeral, she’d say, “Bobby, get me some bourbon and a coke.” She was basically an alcoholic, and how he put up with her all those years? But Betty Fulbright and Lady Bird were outstanding people. I think Senator Muskie was very, very close to his wife. I never heard much from Senator Pastore about his wife. Senator Robert Byrd from West Virginia was very, very close with his late wife. Vice President Barkley, his second wife was on the Board of Directors of American University, and he really adored her. I don’t know of any Senators that I knew who had a better relationship than President Harry Truman with his wife, Bess. He depended upon her a great deal. As you know, Senator Russell was a bachelor. I think Senator Symington had a pretty good relationship with his wife. Senator Jackson didn’t get married until he had been in the Senate for quite some time, so I don’t know about Scoop Jackson. Senator Tallmadge’s relationship blew up in

his face. Senator Smathers had a beautiful, wonderful wife. He blew that marriage, not her. She was very influential with other Senators' wives, because she was so gracious. Senator Neuberger and his wife were very close. Senator Happy Chandler, I do not remember his relationship. Senator Kerr, his wife Grace was a Christian Scientist, but they were very, very close. I remember one time when I was at Senator Johnson's ranch, and Senator Kerry come to visit. Senator Johnson said, "Bob, how is Grace?" He said, "She is doing fantastic. She can spend money faster than I can make it." But Mrs. Kerr did not like Washington, so she bought a restaurant in Poto, Oklahoma, and served fried chicken. She loved being away from politics and being in that restaurant.

RITCHIE: Yes, there seems to be two groups, one that just didn't like it and didn't come to Washington and stayed away, and the others who wanted to be a political partner.

BAKER: Right. Very true. Mrs. Fulbright, they were at every social party. Senator John Sherman Cooper and his wife were always well received and received very favorable publicity. They were very dedicated.

RITCHIE: I thought it was probably an asset to a Senator, because they could socialize, if their families were in Washington.

BAKER: It is absolutely essential, if you're going to be a power in Washington, that you have a wife that other Senators' wives like. They are so important. I think Bill Clinton is the luckiest man in the world to have been married to his wife, because the Senate wives liked her and felt sorry for her for the abuse she had taken. She is like Lady Bird, she is a stayer, she stayed with the trouble.

RITCHIE: Going down my list here of people we haven't talked about, for a while the Republican Whip was Leverett Saltonstall, Kennedy's partner from Massachusetts.

BAKER: Yes. And Senator Saltonstall and Senator Kennedy were very good friends. Senator Saltonstall was one of the more progressive Republicans. I think he was much more well liked than Senator [Henry Cabot] Lodge [Jr.] Senator Lodge was sort of

a loner, you know. Senator Saltonstall was what I call one of my “51 percenters” and Senator Lodge could get 20. That was a big difference between the two. There has never been a Republican Senator that was better liked than Senator Leverett Saltonstall, because he was a real, kind, decent Republican.

RITCHIE: He was Whip. Was he able to do well as a Republican Whip in those days?

BAKER: I would say that he was one of the better ones. I was always very fond of Senator Tommy Kuchel. He was a fun guy. Being from California, and being part of the Earl Warren team, he was a very successful Senator from California. You see, the difference between he and Senator Richard Nixon was that Senator Nixon could get 20 votes and Senator Tommy Kuchel could get 51. Senator Clare Engel was another Californian who had served in the House, but both Republicans and Democrats liked him. What a tragedy that he died so young. He was another 51 percenter.

RITCHIE: Senator Kuchel had the Republican Whip’s office, which was a little, tiny office next to the Old Senate Chamber, and Roger Mudd told me that when the Democrats had their conferences in the Old Senate Chamber, Kuchel would let him come into his office and listen against the wall. He could hear pretty well between the two rooms.

BAKER: Senator Kuchel was having a relationship with his secretary, so he’d come over to me and ask me if I could send a Page to buy him some rubbers—true story!

RITCHIE: People seemed to like Kuchel a lot.

BAKER: And he did well in California. I think he was elected until he died.

RITCHIE: A more moderate Republican.

BAKER: Oh, yes, he was the kind of Republican that knew that the party had to have a big tent. He was very anti-Ku Klux Klan. He was very pro-Civil Rights.

RITCHIE: The Republican Party was divided between its sort of Eisenhower Wing and the Goldwater Wing, or Taft Wing, at that time. It is quite remarkable how even they were for much of that period. New York was a state we haven't talked about, where you had [Jacob] Javits and [Kenneth] Keating in the '60s.

BAKER: Senator Javits was a publicity hound. He was a very, very bright man, but he was another one—like Senator Jack Kennedy—he was a sex maniac. One of the postmen went in and caught him on his couch having a sexual affair with a Negro lady. He couldn't wait to come and tell me. He said, "Can you believe that son of a bitch?"

But Senator Keating was another 51 percenter, and he almost beat Bobby Kennedy in the election for the Senate, because he was a decent, honorable man. Had it not been for President Johnson's landslide, he would have won. He was good for New York, and he was well respected. We were fearful of him, because he had so much respect on our side and his side. Anytime he proposed an amendment, you better watch out. He was truly a 51 percenter, and he served the Senate well.

RITCHIE: Even though today the parties are very different, there are those occasions when a Senator on one side, say Ted Kennedy, can make an alliance with a Senator completely on the other side, like Orrin Hatch, and they can get an amendment through.

BAKER: Senator Orrin Hatch is one of my favorite Republicans, because while he is a dedicated Mormon, he has a little give and decency about him, and he respects Senator Kennedy's liberal position and Senator Kennedy has confidence in his conservatism. They can work together to get 51 votes, so there's not a better team than Senator Ted Kennedy and Senator Orrin Hatch as far as the Senate that I've been watching the last few years.

RITCHIE: There's always been a lot coalition building—

BAKER: Yes, if you're going to be a successful Senator, you've got to have it. When we were putting freshmen Senators on a Committee, I said, "Make it your business to work with your Republican counterparts, because they need you and you need them,

and if you're going to be successful on the Appropriations Committee you better have friends on the other side or you're dead." And they pretty well followed my recommendation.

RITCHIE: Well, Senator Inouye testified for Senator Stevens.

BAKER: Sure he did. That's the reason he has been successful. Talk about military appropriations—what he's done for Hawaii is unbelievable, when you look at the billions that he has gotten for Hawaii. He's like Senator Stevens and what he got for Alaska, and they worked together as a team. I was proud of him that he went down and testified for him.

RITCHIE: The press pays more attention to what happens on the floor than what happens in the Committees.

BAKER: Yeah, that's right, you see it's very boring to sit there and listen to all this expert testimony. For a press person, covering a Committee is boring.

RITCHIE: But the Committees tend to be more bipartisan than what you see on the floor.

BAKER: That is true.

RITCHIE: So we lose some of that aspect of it.

BAKER: You talk about Senator Kennedy and Senator Hatch, they are both on Judiciary Committee and they work together, which is good for the country. It is sad that when you get to the floor, they get so bitter.

RITCHIE: Especially when you have a Committee like, say, Agriculture. Everyone who is on the Committee comes from an agricultural state, and they all have an interest in making sure the agricultural bill gets through. In the last Congress, President Bush vetoed the agricultural bill and they overrode his veto, because the Republicans wanted that bill as much as the Democrats. So, it seems to be that the Committees really

are the heart of what is happening here.

BAKER: You take Foreign Relations, Judiciary, Agriculture, Appropriations, Public Works, that's where you make your deals, because you have to, and it has to be bipartisan.

RITCHIE: When you were the Majority Secretary, how closely did you work with the chiefs of staff of different Committees?

BAKER: Oh, I knew every staff member and director, and they were unbelievably helpful to me, in giving me intelligence about what the Chairman would do, when to schedule a bill. As a consequence of my relationship with all these staff members—like Senator Fulbright's staff, he had John Yingling on the Banking Committee, and he was a brilliant man. I think he's a lobbyist for the bankers now, or something like that—I used to socialize a great deal with the staff members. Old man Cyrus Eaton was a very wealthy Canadian, and he was one of the few people who said we were stupid not to do business with China. He would give me permission to invite 100 top staff members from the Senate and House once a year to go for a free trip to the Greenbriar on his C&O train. We really got to socialize and work with each other, and some of my fondest memories was being with Senate professional staff, administrative assistants. I was limited to two per office that I could take. Even they would get too much whiskey sometimes and abuse their privilege. Old man Eaton, he was really a star. He knew how to lobby.

RITCHIE: And there was an active staff club in the 1950s. Were you involved in that at all?

BAKER: One time I went with them to Puerto Rico. I remember Dorothye Scott—they asked me to be master of ceremonies—she said, "I'm so proud of you that you really were a pro." I guess I had enough whiskey that I wasn't nervous. We had a great trip. I always tried to get Senator Johnson to go to any staff parties. LBJ had been a secretary for a rich Texan Congressman when he first came to Washington—

RITCHIE: [Representative Richard M.] Kleberg, right.

BAKER: Yeah, he really enjoyed being around the staff, so anytime they called and said, “We’re going to have a cocktail party and can you bring the Leader,” I’d say, “I sure as hell can.” And he really enjoyed it.

RITCHIE: At that time, the staff was a lot smaller. There were probably about 1,000 people who worked for the Senate in every possible job level. There’s six times that many now.

BAKER: It’s unreal. When you and I had a cup of soup the other day, I told my wife, I said, “You can’t believe it, I didn’t see anybody over 22 years old.”

RITCHIE: But at that time you had a better chance of socializing.

BAKER: When I was Secretary for the Majority, you had the administrative assistant, a legislative assistant, and on each Committee I’d be surprised if you had more than four professional staff members, so you knew every one of them. You know, whoever was the expert, you could talk to.

RITCHIE: And the professional staff worked for both parties.

BAKER: Yes, absolutely. They sure did.

RITCHIE: They didn’t have Majority and Minority staff at that time. I have heard a lot about how important it was that everybody ate in the same cafeteria, and everyone saw each other on a regular basis, and they knew people in different offices. Now the staff is so large that it’s very rare to know people in other offices.

BAKER: Which is sad, because you can accomplish so much more for your boss if you know what other staff members are doing. If you get too big, it’s impossible.

RITCHIE: The other day, you mentioned that people were paid in cash. They used to line up at the Disbursing Office to get cash.

BAKER: Every two weeks, yes. I don’t know when that stopped.

RITCHIE: It stopped in the late '60s. When the Senate gave that up, we were the last federal agency to be paid in cash.

BAKER: The head of the Disbursing Office, Bob Brenkworth, was very popular. When you had travel vouchers, he had to sign on and so forth. He was a very popular Senate employee.

RITCHIE: I've heard stories that just standing in line waiting for your payment was a good time to talk to people around you.

BAKER: Yes. You know, you have to go from a Senate office building to the Capitol, or to the Disbursing Office, and you develop friendships, which are very significant.

RITCHIE: I think people find ways of doing that today, but it's less intimate than it was at that time. Looking at some of the other Senators, let's talk about New Jersey and Harrison Williams.

BAKER: Senator Harrison Williams was very, very popular. He was a decent man. I think everybody was really sad when he had troubles. I've forgotten what his trouble was, but he had some kind of trouble. His wife, I think, had been a Senate employee. The Senate wives liked her. New Jersey can go either way. I think Senator Case—was that his name?

RITCHIE: Clifford Case, yes.

BAKER: He never learned how to get 51 votes, but Senator Harrison Williams could. Senator Case was really appealing to the *New York Times*. Every move he made—Civil Rights or foreign affairs—but he was too liberal for most Republicans, and therefore he was what I call a “20 percenter.” He was like Richard Nixon, they didn't like him.

RITCHIE: But Senator Williams could cut the deal.

BAKER: Yes, and he was a very warm, kind, friendly man, and personality has a lot to do with it. He was easy for me to work with, when I'd go to him. He'd be in from New Jersey, and you'd say, "Can you miss this vote," and he would do it. He'd find a speech, or I'd get somebody to pay him for a speech to get him out of there. Just like Senator Willis Robertson of Virginia. Senator Harry Byrd was very popular in the Senate, because he was always for "pay as you go," and he had a reputation for being "Mr. Conservative." Senator Willis Robertson would have been a moderate Democrat, if it was not for Senator Byrd. I knew how Senator Byrd was going to vote before he ever woke up in the morning. If I had a real close vote, I would arrange a trip to Paris for Senator Robertson for something that helped him back home. He was really one of my heroes, because being from a conservative state he tried to help. I'm indebted to Senator A. Willis Robertson. He was a good looking man. He liked to go fishing, so any time I could get the Senate to adjourn from Thursday to Monday, he liked that.

RITCHIE: Another state that I wanted to talk about was Connecticut, with Prescott Bush and Thomas Dodd.

BAKER: Senator Prescott Bush was well respected. He was sort of a moderate Republican. I would put him more in the 51 percent deal than Senator Tom Dodd, although I personally had a great relationship with Senator Dodd. I think he was very close to his wife. I think I've heard Lady Bird talk about what a nice lady she was. I don't think Senator Dodd liked Senator Kennedy. Had he been free, I think he would have liked Senator Johnson to be the Presidential nominee in '60. He and Senator Ribicoff—I had a great relationship with Senator Abe Ribicoff. He was very smart. A lot of time, Senator Dodd I think had an alcohol problem, and he was absent a lot. I'm so sad to see that his son is in such bad shape. As Chairman of the Banking Committee, he ought to be a 90-percenter, but he was at 38 percent in the latest poll in Connecticut. If the President is still popular, he might be able to win by 500 votes or something like that, but it's going to be tough.

RITCHIE: Just before you encountered your troubles, in the fall of 1963, Tom Dodd made an attack on Mansfield's Leadership that stunned the Senate, saying that he was ineffective and that the Senate wasn't getting anywhere, and that we needed a Lyndon Johnson type of Leadership again.

BAKER: Well, he was very pro-Senator Lyndon Johnson. Senator Mansfield, when he was Majority Leader, would just smoke his pipe and read his books. He was very popular with the press. While Senator Mansfield was Leader and I was still there, I had to cut the deal. You know, when a bill was reported out, the Chairman would come to me and say “Help me,” and I would try to, but Senator Mansfield, that was beneath his dignity to ask a Senator to vote for something.

RITCHIE: Dodd wanted a tougher Leadership.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: We mentioned a little about Maryland. You had J. Glenn Beall and John Marshall Butler was the other Senator for a while.

BAKER: Senator Butler was totally indebted to Senator McCarthy’s attack on Senator Millard Tydings, so if I ever knew a 20-percenter, it was Senator Butler. He and I were friends, but I knew before he ever awakened in the morning how he was going to vote. Senator J. Glenn Beall, oh what a decent human being. I think he had polio when he was young or some sort of crippling disease. When he gave you his word, he kept it. He loved to go to Laurel and to Bowie race tracks, and anytime he was away I always got a live pair for him. The one time when I needed him, and he gave me a live pair—I think with Senator Eugene McCarthy—Senator Dirksen really was angry because he lost by one vote, by that pair I had. In a loud voice, he said, “Mr. Baker, stay your ass off of my side, you have enough problems on your side.” He was really upset, but he calmed down. We were dear friends.

RITCHIE: Did you know Dan Brewster, who took Butler’s seat?

BAKER: Oh, yes. You know, I think he had been on the House side, and Senator Brewster had a good staff. I think the House Majority Leader was on his staff when he was in the Senate. What’s the House Leader’s name, from Maryland?

RITCHIE: Oh, Steny Hoyer.

BAKER: Yes, I think his first job was on the staff of Senator Danny Brewster. Senator Brewster used to invite us to his horse farm in northern Maryland. He was very fond of Senator Lyndon Johnson, and he was easy for me to work with. He got involved in some kind of scandal, I've forgotten. I think he's still alive. He's got to be a little bit older than me, if that's possible. Senator Brewster was on the Post Office Committee. He and Senator Olin Johnston used to work together. Bill Brawley was the staff director who became, I guess, Assistant Postmaster General when John Kennedy was President. Senator Brewster was what I call a 51 percenter. He could get things done. And Senator Lyndon Johnson really liked him and appreciated his support.

You mention Senator Brewster; the other Brewster [Ralph Owen Brewster] was probably the meanest son of a bitch. He was from Maine. When he and Senator [Homer] Ferguson from Michigan, in their investigation of Pearl Harbor, said that President Roosevelt knew the code that the Japanese were coming and he didn't tell the people. He turned out to really be a rotten crook. Pan American, I guess, just bought him. When he left the Senate, he really left in disgrace. Senator Ferguson was a pretty effective Senator, but he was so partisan that instead of being a 51 percenter he became a 20 percenter, because he and Senator Brewster went too far in the investigation of World War II.

RITCHIE: Senator Barkley spoke up for Roosevelt at that point, on that Committee, during that big investigation. He really defended Roosevelt in the Pearl Harbor investigation.

BAKER: Oh, sure. Senator Alben Barkley had a great command of mind and tongue. What a wonderful sense of humor he had. When I see guys fishing, I tell them that he told me about a young man who had his first date on a Sunday night, and his father loaned him his buggy. When they arrived at the bridge going over the river, he saw a young black man fishing, with a string of fish, and he said, "Hey there, sonny, what size fish are you catching?" And he said, "They're about the size of your pecker." The young man didn't say a word for the next mile, but then he punched his girlfriend and said, "You know, that young man is catching some mighty nice-size fish." Senator Barkley could tell stories like that all day. He just had old Kentucky backwood stories. He was really a delight to be around. After he had been Vice President and came back as Senator

from Kentucky, he had another cute story. He said, “You know, our founding fathers were full of wisdom. They said to be in the House of Representatives, you had to be 25. To be a Senator, you had to be 30. As a consequence of the youth of the Congressmen, they established a House Foreign Affairs Committee. So when they got to the Senate, they knew you’d be a lot older, so they started the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.” He could tell it with such eloquence.

He was so much different than Senator Lyndon Johnson as a Leader. He was not very effective, because when Senator Barkley was Leader—especially during the war—there weren’t many social issues. He almost thought it was beneath his Senatorial dignity to ask a Senator to vote with him. As a consequence, he was not a real successful Majority Leader. His colleagues like Senator Happy Chandler did not like him. Senator Barkley was very liberal for a Kentuckian. He was always voting the labor union vote, and Senator Chandler was very anti-union, so they hardly spoke.

RITCHIE: Senator Chandler left then to become Baseball Commissioner.

BAKER: Yes, he sure did. When President Kennedy was President, there was an Internal Revenue investigation of I guess then former Senator Earle Clements, for converting campaign contributions for his personal money. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy was ready to indict Senator Clements, and Happy Chandler—who had been a very strong John Kennedy supporter for the Presidency in 1960—he went to Bobby and said, “You’ll never carry Kentucky again, if you indict Earle Clements. You make a civil settlement.” And I think they did.

End of the Third Interview

A TOUR OF THE CAPITOL

Interview #4

Friday, June 5, 2009

[This interview was recorded while walking through the U.S. Capitol.]

RITCHIE: Being a Friday, the Senate is not in session so I thought this would be a good day to take a tour. They've been doing a lot more business this session

BAKER: I think when I was going home last night, I saw the light in the tower. Were they in session last night?

RITCHIE: I think so, yes.

BAKER: I told my wife, "Those bastards are still at work."

RITCHIE: I was hoping that they're not using the LBJ Room, because I wanted to stop in there. [S-211]

BAKER: I have many fond memories of it. That's where we had our wedding reception in '49.

RITCHIE: Yes, it's open. So you remember this room?

BAKER: Yes, sir, I sure do. But it had a much different carpet.

RITCHIE: The one thing they just did recently was to take out the bathroom that Johnson had added in there.

BAKER: Yes, he could vent the loudest farts. It didn't bother him one bit who was in there. Gosh, he was always letting gas off.

RITCHIE: This had been the District of Columbia Committee room?

BAKER: That is correct, and when he became Majority Leader he took it over. The reception room was out there [pointing to S-212]. Then his big room was here, and Mary Margaret Wylie's desk was over here [in the northwest corner] against the wall.

RITCHIE: Where was his desk?

BAKER: Right back here [in front of the central window].

RITCHIE: Against the window?

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: Nowadays this is an all-purpose meeting room. The Democrats used to have their lunches here, but when they got to 60 they had to move down to what's known as the Mansfield Room. But this is still one of the most beautiful rooms.

BAKER: Yes, this chandelier is out of sight. Beautiful. Brings back a lot of memories. I spent a lot of hours in there.

RITCHIE: [Entering the Senate Reception Room] I wanted to show you what they did to the Reception Room. You remember they added the pictures of Clay, Calhoun, Webster, Taft and La Follette.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Then just in the last few years they added two more pictures up on the top level. There's Arthur Vandenberg and Robert Wagner.

BAKER: I'll be darned. Two excellent selections. This used to be where somebody would fill out a card and they'd go get the Senator and bring them out here.

RITCHIE: Yes, they still do that.

BAKER: Do they? And the Vice President's office was over there, right off the

Senate floor.

RITCHIE: They still use that for the Vice President, although he's almost never here. And the Vice President has a staff office over there [S-212].

BAKER: That used to be the entrance way to Senator Johnson's suite, where Billy Moyers and two or three secretaries worked there.

RITCHIE: They've done a lot of nice renovation here.

BAKER: They sure have. I can't believe how well they've done.

RITCHIE: We're passing the Vice Presidential bust collection. There's Dan Quayle and George H.W. Bush. Here's Gerald Ford.

BAKER: I liked President Ford. He was a very decent man when you talked to him. And I thought he did unusually well as President, but President Ford suffered by giving a pardon to President Nixon. Now this used to be the Senate Sergeant at Arms' office [S-208]. Joe Duke, that was his office, and then Senator Mansfield took it over. Former Senator Earle Clements was upstairs [S-309] and Senator Mansfield moved up there because Joe Duke was still here.

RITCHIE: And on the other side was the Secretary's office [S-224], which is now the Democratic Leader's office.

BAKER: Right, you got it. Now this seems new to me. I don't remember all of this down through here.

RITCHIE: Well, this was the addition that was put on in 1960.

BAKER: Okay that was around the time that I was leaving.

RITCHIE: Here's [the bust of] Johnson.

BAKER: He was very disappointed when somebody did a painting he didn't like.

RITCHIE: Oh, the painting by Peter Hurd that President Johnson called "The ugliest thing I've ever seen."

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Here's [the bust of] Barkley.

BAKER: Yep, that looks just like him. Is this the main entrance to the Senate Chamber?

RITCHIE: Yes. They need to be out on Friday. This balcony is connected to the Republican Leader's office. They named it the [Robert] Dole Balcony because he liked to sit out there all the time.

BAKER: Hey, it looks very nice [points out the window]. That was my office right down there in the corner [S-150]. We looked down at the Washington Monument.

RITCHIE: I think the Sergeant at Arms is in there now.

BAKER: I bet he is.

RITCHIE: Here's a picture of Hattie Caraway.

BAKER: Yes, she was a Senator from Arkansas when I was here. She never made a speech or anything. I guess her husband had died and she was appointed, and then I think she was elected for a six-year term.

RITCHIE: Yes, she won two terms. When they decided they needed some women in the art collection, they added Hattie Caraway.

BAKER: She never demanded anything.

RITCHIE: This is the Democratic Leader's office [S-221].

BAKER: Straight ahead used to be a men's room.

RITCHIE: It's now a men's and women's room.

BAKER: Oh?

RITCHIE: After 1992 when there were so many women Senators elected, they had to split the room.

BAKER: When I ran the Democratic cloakroom, it was right inside here.

RITCHIE: I don't know if the cloakroom is open. Yes, it is. Do you want to step inside?

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Hello, I just wanted to bring back the man who used to run the Democratic cloakroom. This is Bobby Baker.

STAFF MEMBER: Hello, sir.

RITCHIE: We're doing an oral history, and I'm taking him around to the places where he used to work.

BAKER: You've gotten fancy. When I was here as the Chief Telephone Page in 1944, I didn't have a machine like you have there. But I knew every staff member on our side.

STAFF MEMBER: Wow. I'd be happy to give you a tour, if you'd like.

BAKER: No, we'll just wander. [Points to the couches] So if a Senator had a hangover or something, they'd come in and take a nap. And you got to hear a lot of great

conversations. I was elected Secretary for the Majority January 3, 1955. I was a senior in law school. A lot of my friends held their nose and voted for Senator Lyndon Johnson because they didn't like Texas and they didn't like oil and gas, but he became probably the most effective Majority Leader in the history of the Senate.

STAFF MEMBER: That's what I've heard.

BAKER: So where do you come from?

STAFF MEMBER: I'm originally from California.

BAKER: My big shot son lives in San Francisco. In fact, we're going out there in about two weeks. He is one of 2,300 lawyers in Jones Day. I tell him, "Hang up, I cannot afford talking to you." Jim Baker bills his clients at \$800 per hour.

STAFF MEMBER: I'm getting poor just typing here.

BAKER: [Laughs] Let me look out here. [Points to a stack of newspapers] We kept all the newspapers out there in the reading room [S-215, also known as the Marble Room]. I introduced Senator Russell Long to Senator Taft from Ohio. See, under the Constitution you have to be at least 30 to be a Senator. Senator Russell Long was within about two weeks of being old enough. I took him around to show him the reading room and Senator Taft was there. I said, "Mr. Leader, I would like for you to meet our new junior Senator from Louisiana." Senator Taft very seldom smiled but he had a big grin. He said, "Senator, I am delighted to meet you. As you know my father had been President and then after he was President he became Chief Justice. One night at dinner, he said the ablest plaintiff's attorney that ever appeared before the Supreme Court when he was Chief Justice was Huey Long," which was Russell's father. Huey Long was killed in 1935, so I never knew him, because I went on the payroll January 1, 1943. I was 14 years old. And I graduated from Capitol Page School June 1945. Long time ago.

RITCHIE: A lot of history.

BAKER: Yeah. We had these sofas and chairs, and there's the [full-length] mirror where Senator George Smathers and Senator Jack Kennedy said, "God, why did you make me so beautiful?"

RITCHIE: [Pointing] These are the kinds of posters that the Senators use now in debate.

BAKER: Yeah, I've seen them on C-SPAN. [Entering the Senate Chamber] I see my old chair down there, and my desk.

RITCHIE: See how much brighter it is now, with the TV lights.

BAKER: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: And the TV cameras are up there in the corners of the galleries. They don't have operators. The operators are down in the basement and can move the cameras electronically. And they built this little railing around the back bench.

BAKER: Now, this they didn't have. When I had trouble with too many staff members back here, I would put Senator Stennis, a former judge, in the chair up there and he would say, "Order, order in the court" They'd say, "Baker, why did you put that son of bitch up there?" It hasn't changed very much. Senators used to write their names in their desks.

RITCHIE: They still do.

BAKER: I'll be damned. [Pointing] Now, is that still the Senators' family gallery?

RITCHIE: Yes, and the staff is over there next to it. And the press up here.

BAKER: They didn't have a place for the staff, that's good and that's still the press gallery?

RITCHIE: Yes.

BAKER: [Pointing to the railing] This would have been a big help as a Page boy, to have this back here, you know, when a Senator snaps his fingers.

RITCHIE: One reason they did this was because when the first TV cameras came in all you could see were knees behind the Senators. So they created this as sort of a modesty fence.

BAKER: Well, you've really made my day, letting me see this. So when Richard Nixon was Vice President, I'd be seated right there in that back chair, and you could slide over close. They evidently built a new, longer desk for the Vice President.

RITCHIE: No, that's the desk they've been using since 1950, when they did the remodeling.

BAKER: You have a new carpet since I was here.

RITCHIE: Yes, they've had several new carpets over the years. They have microphones now on the desks.

BAKER: Oh, they do?

RITCHIE: Yes, see this little box here. They stand up and clip those on their lapels. They put those in in 1971, because some of the Senators couldn't be heard from one side to the other. And the two desks up front that used to be for the reporters, that's where the two party secretaries sit. When the Senators come in for a vote, and there's an amendment up, they have a summary of it on the desk, so all the Senators will cluster around there before casting their votes.

BAKER: Yeah, I've noticed that. So the Sergeant at Arms used to sit in front of me. Now does the Parliamentarian still sit—

RITCHIE: They still sit at the front desk, the Journal Clerk, the Parliamentarian, the Reading Clerk are up at the front desk. The Secretary of the Senate has a seat on that side.

BAKER: On the other side, right.

RITCHIE: And then the party secretaries' roll top desks in the two corners. That used to be the only place where there was a phone in the chamber. I don't know if you had a phone there.

BAKER: I did not.

RITCHIE: Okay, and for a while they had a phone jack at the Vice President's desk. Senator Baker really hated it when the presiding officer was on the phone, so he had the phone and the phone jack taken out so they couldn't use it. But now Senators bring their cell phones in. Oh, and I don't know whether you noticed the phone booths out here in the cloakroom, but Senator Inouye one day noticed that they had named all of the rooms in the building and said there wouldn't be anything left to name for him, so now they name the telephone booths.

BAKER: [Laughs] They got better telephone booths today than we had.

RITCHIE: And when each Senator leaves, they put the old names inside the booth and the new name outside. Here's Scoop Jackson, Jennings Randolph, Ernest Hollings. Here's Inouye's, the first one that was named. [A yellow lei hangs inside].

BAKER: We did not have a refrigerator, but along here we had a sort of an ice box for water, Mountain Valley and so forth.

RITCHIE: They still keep the different types of water for the Senators.

BAKER: Okay, it's very, very impressive.

RITCHIE: [Reading from a sign near the door] “Senate Pages: Live as if you’ll die tomorrow, learn as if you’ll live forever.”

BAKER: Can’t beat that. Ghandi. He was a pretty smart man.

RITCHIE: I don’t know that the President’s Room is open [S-216]. I was going to check and see if it was. No, they’ve got it locked.

BAKER: This is where the press would come to interview the Senators.

RITCHIE: They still use it for that.

BAKER: And that elevator would take you up to the Democratic Policy Committee in the corner.

RITCHIE: It was Senator Byrd who moved the Democratic Leader into this space over here. It had previously been the secretary’s office.

BAKER: He had a great assistant in Joe [Stewart]. He knew where to move high or hill.

RITCHIE: I think Joe was the Secretary of the Senate when they made the swap.

BAKER: Yeah. I think Senator Robert Byrd has been very helpful to Joe in his lobbying business. Joe will not die a broke man.

RITCHIE: I’ll tell you, Senator Byrd has been very helpful to the Historical Office. He’s been a great patron of ours for many years.

BAKER: That’s wonderful.

RITCHIE: But we’ve had good support from both sides, Republicans as well as Democrats.

BAKER: You need it.

RITCHIE: These days the Minority Party becomes the Majority Party pretty quickly.

BAKER: [Outside S-207] This is where Senator Hoey—there used to be a water fountain right there. So the secretaries would call me and say, “Is that old son of a bitch out there by the water fountain?”

RITCHIE: Yes, there was a water fountain there until just recently.

BAKER: This used to be Senator Dirksen’s office [S-230], when he was Minority Leader.

RITCHIE: It’s still the Republican Leader’s office. It’s now called the Howard Baker Rooms. And actually they’ve expanded it so the old Disbursing Office is now the Republican Leader’s office.

BAKER: As I recall correctly, this was the Old Supreme Court Chamber. We met in here for two years.

RITCHIE: In 1950, when they were renovating the Senate Chamber, yes. This room has now been restored to look like it did when it was the Old Senate Chamber. They did this in ’76.

BAKER: It’s a lot more handsome now than it was when we met here.

RITCHIE: But they still use this for Party Conferences.

BAKER: Oh, yeah?

RITCHIE: The Republicans have met here more often because their Leader’s office is just across the hall. The Senate Curator’s Office has been doing a wonderful job in restoring rooms like this.

BAKER: It's unbelievable, the difference from when we met here in 1950.

RITCHIE: [Back in the hall, walking past the small Senate rotunda] Still, it's nice to see that some things don't change.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: [Entering the elevator] We'll go down to one.

BAKER: Dr. [George] Calver's office used to be down from me, is he still here?

RITCHIE: He's not, but the physician's office is. So was this your office suite in here [S-150]?

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: [To secretary] Hi, I'm Don Ritchie from the Historical Office. This is—

BAKER: I'm Bobby Baker, and this used to be my office.

SECRETARY: Hi, it's a pleasure to meet you, sir.

BAKER: It's nice to meet you. I had these three rooms.

SECRETARY: Well, you're welcome to go in. This is the Sergeant at Arms office, but he's not in now, you're welcome to go in.

RITCHIE: Thanks very much. We're doing an oral history.

BAKER: I had a little bathroom here. And my desk was right here, my chair. Look at this view [down the Mall to the Washington Monument]! And the Capitol Page School, which I attended, was down another floor.

RITCHIE: In the terraces.

BAKER: Yeah.

BAKER: Thank you.

RITCHIE: And see, the Physician's office is right here [S-153]. This is the smallest elevator, I think, in existence.

BAKER: Yes, I've been on it many times. They made it fancier. They put this paneling in.

RITCHIE: There used to be grill work in here?

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Some of the people I've interviewed started out as elevator operators.

BAKER: I bought a 1937 Buick Roadmaster from a fellow Page that was drafted. It was the best car I ever owned.

RITCHIE: And he was an elevator operator?

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: [In the Senate attic] This used to be all open space. It was the stacks of the Senate Library. They just walled it all in to create new office space up here. A lot of the Secretary of the Senate's office is now up here. Our office actually started out up here, and the Curator's office is still here. The reporters of debate are also up here.

BAKER: They sure moved them down, because they used to be next to the Senators' toilet.

RITCHIE: Yes, that was too small a space. That's the cupola over the Senate Wing of the Capitol. I was going to introduce you to the Senate Curator, but it's Friday afternoon and they all seem to be out. The Senate Historical Office was over in the corner, over there.

BAKER: So how many years have you been on the payroll?

RITCHIE: Thirty-three years. I came here in 1976, and I started doing oral histories that year. That's the best part of my job, the people I get to meet and talk to.

BAKER: It's hard to believe I've been gone 46 years. Can you believe that? Forty-six. I used to think was an old man! This is a remarkable change.

RITCHIE: Robert, can I introduce you. This is Bobby Baker, he used to be Lyndon Johnson's right-hand man.

ROBERT PAXTON: Oh, Mr. Baker, it's nice to meet you.

BAKER: Nice to meet you. Now, where do you come from?

PAXTON: I'm originally from Kentucky. I worked for Wendell Ford for 12 years, and then for Chuck Schumer.

BAKER: Well, you've been around the Horn. When I started as a Page on January 1, 1943, Senator Alben Barkley was the Majority Leader. And Senator Happy Chandler was his junior colleague, but they didn't speak to each other.

PAXTON: That doesn't surprise me. [Laughs]

BAKER: But when Barkley left the vice Presidency and was elected as a Senator again, he was a joy, let me tell you. He had a great story about the wisdom of the founding fathers, who said you had to be 25 to be a member of the House and 30 to be a Senator. So he said the younger members had the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the older Senators had the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He could tell that story

better than anybody!

PAXTON: That's pretty funny. It's nice to meet you, sir.

RITCHIE: [Walking to the elevator] A lot of the people who used to work downstairs in the Secretary's office are up here now, since space is such an issue.

BAKER: So you told me how many new Senators do not have offices here?

RITCHIE: Only 30. Seventy of them have offices in the Capitol.

BAKER: You can make long-time friends when you find them an office over here. They call it a "hideaway."

RITCHIE: Now that they've opened the Capitol Visitor Center there's more space, so they're slowly moving staff out of here and turning space over to the Senators. There's always a lot of shifting back and forth. The Senators still don't advertise where their hideaways are.

BAKER: Oh, no. A lot of them don't let their staff know where they are.

RITCHIE: There's not even a name on the door.

BAKER: [Entering the Rotunda] Well, I've been through this place a million times. It hasn't changed. They just made the floor shinier.

RITCHIE: They've moved a few statues around. That's the new statue of Ronald Reagan.

BAKER: Yes, they had a nice ceremony, and I thought the President and Mrs. Reagan handled themselves smoothly. Now, the guides used to start their tours here.

RITCHIE: They now start them in the Visitor Center and work their way up. Every once in a while, when they were counting the electoral ballots, they would invite

some of the staff to go over to the House Chamber with the Senators, to fill in because there weren't a lot of Senators who were there for it. I enjoyed the procession that came through the Rotunda.

BAKER: Any time they had a Distinguished Speaker [in the House Chamber], the Senators would go first and the Pages would come after them. I would think that General Douglas MacArthur's speech was probably the most impressive speech that I ever heard. Everybody was in tears. "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." But he turned out to be a fraud.

RITCHIE: He did fade away.

BAKER: Yes, Senator Kerr did a good knifing job on him. He supported President Truman's firing of General MacArthur.

RITCHIE: [Entering Statuary Hall] Here they've fancied the room up a bit, hung some draperies, but essentially it's pretty much the way it was when you were here.

BAKER: Yes. Clark Clifford told Senator Kerr that President Truman was going to sign the bill freeing natural gas from federal power. Then when he vetoed it, Clifford quit and he went to work for Kerr-McGee Oil Company. Then when they had famous Dupont Tax Relief bill, Senator Kerr put it through, because Clark Clifford received several million in legal fees for his assistance for getting the Dupont Tax bill passed via Senator Kerr. I did not know Clark Clifford was such a crook that he turned out to be. He was a powerful man.

RITCHIE: They use this room for tourism, but they have the new President's luncheon in here at the Inauguration, and if there's a big event they'll use it.

BAKER: It's a great room.

RITCHIE: We'll go to the House side to take the elevator down. They're still doing a lot of moving of statues around since the Visitor Center opened.

BAKER: [Pointing to a marble bust outside the House Chamber.] See, Champ Clark was Speaker, but his son became the Senator from Missouri. Old man Joe Cannon, he was a dictator. [Pointing to a door.] That used to be the Democratic cloakroom.

RITCHIE: It still is. [Passing the doorkeepers' empty chairs outside the House chamber.] A typical Friday.

BAKER: Oh, yeah, that's good. You selected a great day to walk around. [Pointing to the door leading to the House steps.] When they had all the Page boys since 1900 out here on the steps, that's where they took our picture. Charlie Russell, who I succeeded as Chief Page, is still on the Virginia Supreme Court. I don't know if he's Chief Justice. But he went into the Marine Corps about 1944. I was talking to Speaker Rayburn's nephew the other day and telling him how I was the youngest man ever admitted into Speaker Rayburn's Board of Directors meeting room. Is that around here someplace?

RITCHIE: It's right down this corridor [H-128]. It was this one here, 128.

BAKER: Yes, Speaker Rayburn was Commander in Chief, I'll tell you. Everybody had such respect for him, and he deserved it. He was one of the premier statesmen of my lifetime. The House had a Chairman of the Rules Committee from Alexandria, Virginia, Howard Smith. He was the meanest son of a bitch that ever lived, but Speaker Rayburn said that if the people elect you to the House, you must respect their wishes. So he let him get away with a lot of things that I wouldn't have. Yes, we used to go right in there, after 5 o'clock. The Board of Directors. I walked this hall many, many times.

RITCHIE: The Hall of Columns they call it. Here's the latest portrait that the House has added. This is Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.

BAKER: Yes, I knew her. She was a very articulate New Yorker, and a credit to our country. You could do business with her.

RITCHIE: She looks pretty tough.

BAKER: She had to be, being one of the first blacks elected from New York. She was very competent. Man, they keep these floors clean!

RITCHIE: They have a wax that they put on that's shiny without being slippery. This is Steny Hoyer's office. It used to be the Clerk of the House's office, but that whole suite is now the House Majority Leader's.

BAKER: I think Congressman Steny Hoyer is a very able fellow.

RITCHIE: Steny Hoyer was saying that his predecessor was Tom DeLay, and he said that it's very good to have a predecessor who is both powerful and acquisitive, because he took over all the space that Steny Hoyer inherited. Now we're in the Crypt. This is where the Visitor Center begins.

BAKER: So it's on the East side of the Capitol?

RITCHIE: It is. You remember EF-100, the room that was right between the Senate and the House? It opened in 1961. It was the only room with two sets of bells, one for the Senate and the other for the House. This is where Senator Carl Hayden and Representative Clarence would hold their Appropriations conferences, without having to go to each other's side of the Capitol. The room was removed to create the opening to the Visitor Center. Here's the escalator down. You can get a sense of where we are—there's the old carriage entrance there. We're going down under the main steps. This is where the groups line up to take the public tours. Everything here is now under the East Front parking lot.

BAKER: Did they do away with the parking on the East Front?

RITCHIE: They have it only for the members, just a very small section on the side. You can see where we are by the skylights.

BAKER: Well, they really did a hell of a deal. So there's the entrance.

RITCHIE: To the Senate side, yes. When we go back, we'll go back that way. They started working on this in 2001 and they just finished it this past December.

BAKER: Typical government contract.

RITCHIE: Well, they kept enlarging it, and every time you enlarge it, it cost more and it took longer.

BAKER: The contractor really liked that.

RITCHIE: It's actually four stories under ground.

BAKER: [Going down the escalator with a group of students] Are you 14 yet?

GIRL: No, I'm only 11.

BAKER: So when I was 14, I came here to be a United States Senate Page boy, and I worked here for 20 years. He's taking me on a little tour. I'm 80 and ½ now.

RITCHIE: There's the Dome, you can see through the skylight. This is what they call Emancipation Hall.

BAKER: Just magnificent. I'm really proud of my country, even though they spent too much money.

RITCHIE: There's a cafeteria here, lots of bathrooms, and this place, especially in the spring and summer, is mobbed. It's not as crowded in the wintertime.

BAKER: Look at all these young kids come to see their Capitol.

RITCHIE: It used to be they would be standing in line outside. What they do is they see an orientation film in the theater and then they go upstairs and take the tour from there. I wanted to show you the exhibit hall. The Historical Office spent most of our time working on the exhibits. They put the [plaster statue of Freedom] statue here because the

man who cast into bronze in 1862 was a slave when he started and he was free by the time he finished.

BAKER: I'll be damned.

RITCHIE: So that made it a nice metaphor for Emancipation Hall. This is the exhibit space.

BAKER: So this is where you and your staff—

RITCHIE: Yes, we were involved in the planning. These are interactive electronic tours, and quizzes, which tend to attract younger people. On the other side are original documents on loan from the National Archives. Then the other side is the history of the Senate, and the House, and the Capitol.

BAKER: [Pointing to a photograph] Now what room is this?

RITCHIE: That's the [Senate] Appropriations Committee.

BAKER: Boy, they've really changed it.

RITCHIE: They have fixed it up a lot. Mark Hatfield, when he was the Chairman, had it restored to look the way it did originally.

BAKER: Senator Mark Hatfield was a 51-percenter. He liked Senator Johnson. I guess when we went to Senator [Richard] Neuberger's funeral, Hatfield was the Governor, and Senator Johnson said he was the most impressive Republican he ever saw.

RITCHIE: He was an effective Chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

BAKER: Yes, he was. The President of Georgia Pacific married a girl from Walhalla, South Carolina, which is about 30 miles west of Pickens. He and I became great friends, but he was the moneyman behind Senator Hatfield.

RITCHIE: I just noticed, there's [a picture of] John Sherman Cooper standing in front of the Foreign Relations Committee. And here's a shot of the Pages back in the past. [A photo of House and Senate Pages having a snowball fight.]

BAKER: They were always having fun.

RITCHIE: And there are the knickers you hated.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. It was my great contribution to the Pages, getting rid of the knickers.

RITCHIE: What the exhibit consists of is a series of six sections of different periods in American history. This is from 1789 to 1815, what the Senate was like, what the House was like, and the Capitol. And each one has a diorama showing what Capitol Hill looked like in that era. As it progresses, the neighborhood grows. These are what they call virtual theaters.

BAKER: Yes, I was just watching one.

RITCHIE: This one is on the Senate, and when the Senate is in session it will appear on a television screen along side the film. They tried to shoot it over people's shoulders, from behind, so that when Senators came and went it wouldn't make the film out of date.

BAKER: Very, very clever.

RITCHIE: This one is during the Civil War.

BAKER: That's the dumbest war in the history of mankind.

RITCHIE: This is the World War II period.

BAKER: I was here, every day.

RITCHIE: That's the gavel that Speaker Sam Rayburn used on the day they declared war in 1941.

BAKER: So that was before I came in '43.

RITCHIE: And here in the end is the Senate and House since 1945.

BAKER: I have really enjoyed this little tour.

RITCHIE: And over here on this wall is a depiction of different people at work and how the Capitol Hill community has changed over time. The old barbershop in the Capitol building, and the old subways.

BAKER: I used to go to a barber on the House side of the Capitol, on the first floor. He used to give you the best rubdown, I'll tell you. I miss him! This was an eye-opener. I'm going to demand that all of my grandkids come here.

RITCHIE: Well, before people used to stand outside for hours, waiting to come in. Now they can come inside, look at the museum, go to the restroom, go to the cafeteria, and then when their ticket is due they can go and take the tour.

BAKER: What do they charge for the tour?

RITCHIE: It's free.

BAKER: Oh, yeah? They used to charge for it.

RITCHIE: Yes, I think they did, a quarter or something like that, and that was how the guides were paid.

BAKER: Now they're on the government payroll. This is a great addition to our country's Capitol.

RITCHIE: Well, they only add onto the Capitol about once a century, so they

needed to make it big. They're going to grow into the space. There are meeting rooms off on both sides, so it's always working space as well as a tourist center. So we'll take the tunnel through to the Senate side. If visitors want to go to the Senate gallery, they get tickets here. This is the Senate Recording Studio, they've got a whole squad of studios back in there for the Senators to record television interviews. They used to be in the old subway tunnel. So here we are, back where we started, and this is the new subway. The only thing is, it doesn't have a driver.

BAKER: Well, that's good.

RITCHIE: When you're running for it—

BAKER: You'd better get in in a hurry.

RITCHIE: These cars are accessible for the disabled, and we've had a few Senators who have been in wheelchairs in recent years, so it makes it easier. We had Senator Max Cleland.

BAKER: He was a total paraplegic.

RITCHIE: He just had one arm, but he got around remarkably well.

BAKER: Did the President nominate him for anything?

RITCHIE: Yes, I heard that he was going to have a job. I think it might be on the Battlefield Commission. He started out on the Senate staff, and then became head of the Veterans Bureau, and Secretary of State in Georgia before he was elected to the Senate. I thought he was a very good Senator.

BAKER: I thought he was too.

RITCHIE: Then he was defeated when he ran for reelection.

BAKER: Yes, the GOP ran a real mean campaign—it was tragic.

RITCHIE: This is the Dirksen Building stop. This used to be the end of the line, and you could walk into the Dirksen Building. Now to get into the Dirksen Building you have to loop around and come back. This will take us right over to the Hart Building. Half of the Senators—50 of them—are in the Hart Building, so they needed to have more subway cars to get them back and forth.

BAKER: Is this where we exit?

RITCHIE: This is it. This has been a little bit like archaeology. A lot of it is different, but at the core there's a lot that's stayed the same. You have get past the modern to see the original. But I'm really glad we got into the cloakroom.

BAKER: Oh, it made my day.

End of the Fourth Interview

DOING BUSINESS
Interview #5
Tuesday Morning, May 4, 2010

RITCHIE: How have you been?

BAKER: Well, I had to get a plate. The worst thing that ever happens to you is to lose teeth. So I've got a plate there and about three quarters of one down here. So every time you eat you have to go wash your mouth and it's a pain in the ass. But at least I'm alive. On March 31, Dorothy was 83. And I'll be 82 November 12, if I make it. So I tell everybody that between the two of us, we're 165.

RITCHIE: Well, you're looking great.

BAKER: Thank you. Looks are deceptive.

RITCHIE: I'm glad you came back. Have you had a chance to read through the transcripts?

BAKER: Yeah, everything. I read it all. If you've got some things and I've got some things that I'll see if you have any interest in including.

RITCHIE: Okay, yes. I'm interested in knowing what you think we should be talking about. I have some questions to ask, but I'd like to know if you've got some things on your mind as well.

BAKER: Yes, I have. But let me handle yours, and then we'll go to my self-serving information.

RITCHIE: All right.

BAKER: My granddaughter just moved down to about 15 miles from us, west of St. Augustine Beach. She has written a book and she wants to write a book with me. So I've come up with, if we can get the title, it will be *Profiles in Tragedy*. I'll give you a list

of people. Tragically, my friend, Senator Kerr has to be there. Senator Frear. J. Edgar Hoover. So I've got a lot of work ahead of me.

RITCHIE: Well, you know you can use any of the material from the oral history.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: You have the right of first use of all of that.

BAKER: Oh, after lunch, would it be possible to have your staff get all those papers I left up here?

RITCHIE: I have them right here.

BAKER: Okay, because I have my car.

RITCHIE: Okay, we can take them down.

BAKER: So what I'll do is pull it out front. That would be very helpful.

RITCHIE: Very good. I've got them in two boxes right here. I've gone through them and used them to form some questions and things like that. We have a little cart here that we can move them down in.

BAKER: Perfect.

RITCHIE: It's interesting now looking back to the 1950s. That was a different era from today in the Senate, in a lot of ways. One of the things that struck me was that Congress regularly used to adjourn in July or August.

BAKER: During World War II, the fiscal year ended June 30th and the new year started July 1st. So as a consequence, basically you didn't pass any social legislation during World War II. All you did was basically appropriate the money for the war.

RITCHIE: And they were still following that schedule in the '50s in a sense that they would be out of session from the end of July until the following January in a lot of cases.

BAKER: Yeah, sure.

RITCHIE: So then what happened to all the staff during these long adjournments, from July until December? What did people do when the Congress wasn't meeting?

BAKER: Well, the senior staff would go back to their home state. I guess they kept their staff in their Washington office—I'm talking about the junior staff members. But the thing is since my last meeting with you and finding out how many staff members that each Senator has in his home state was really startling to me.

RITCHIE: Yes, it's become a huge number by comparison.

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: But what about you? What did you do during the period when—

BAKER: Well, in 1944, I went to a state park that the Civilian Conservation Corps had built. One with a big lake. And so when I was 15, in 1944, and 16 in 1945, I got a job as a lifeguard at the state park. And then in the evening, I used to call square dances to Woody Herman's "Woodchopper's Ball." They had an Air Force base in Greenville, South Carolina, which was about, say, 35 miles from where I was a lifeguard. Well, let me tell you, I had two wonderful summers. Then Mr. Leslie Biffle, who was Secretary of the Senate, he secured a job for me in the Senate Stationary Room. So after '45, I was always here until I resigned in October 1963.

RITCHIE: When the Senate wasn't in session, you could do things like going to school, for instance?

BAKER: Yes, which I did.

RITCHIE: You were a college student and you got a law degree as well.

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: So it helped you, in a sense, that the Senate wasn't here all the time?

BAKER: Oh yeah. The greatest savior of my life was the Secretary of the Senate, while he was Secretary for the Majority, named Felton Johnston. His nickname was "Skeeter." He had an alcohol problem, but he wouldn't take a drink until I would get out of class at 12 o'clock. So by 12:20 p.m., I was there and then he would start drinking. So that's the way, I guess I, in trying to protect him, I learned the do's and the don'ts of the Senate. So I have a very warm spot in my heart for Felton Johnston.

And Leslie Biffle was very kind. He was Secretary of the Senate in 1948, when Truman was nominated to be the presidential candidate. I was a Page boy in Philadelphia and I don't think there was 10 people there that thought that Truman had a chance in hell of defeating Governor Dewey. But it was a very interesting experience. Poor President Truman didn't make his acceptance speech until about 2:30 in the morning. I still remember somebody released a whole covey of white pigeons, and they got more publicity over that than anything else. At that convention, Senator Humphrey—he was a candidate for the Senate, and he made a real fiery speech. As a consequence, the convention adopted his basic Civil Rights proposal. So when he came to the Senate, the Southern Democrats and Republicans really had a dislike of him. I mean, it was putrid how much they disdained him because they thought that he was too liberal.

One day, President Truman had recommended that the Congress approve, I think it was a \$5 billion loan to Great Britain, which was broke like Greece is now. They couldn't pay their bills. Senator Humphrey, in his rapid fire delivery, was talking about how much we owed the British for their help in World War II and our long history of being part of the English speaking people. It was about 5:30 or six o'clock in the evening and Senator Styles Bridges was "Mr. Conservative" on the Republican side. He was either the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee or ranking member on the Republican side. He'd had about four shots and when Humphrey was talking about why we should make this loan to Great Britain, Senator Styles Bridges said, "Would the

distinguished junior Senator from Minnesota yield to the senior Senator from New Hampshire?" Humphrey in his rapid delivery said he was delighted to yield to the very distinguished senior Senator from New Hampshire. So Senator Bridges said, "Would the junior Senator tell the senior Senator just what Great Britain has that the United States doesn't." Without pausing a second, Humphrey said, "Westminster Abbey." Well, the galleries all just stood up and he became a member of the club with that one remark. They said that son of a bitch is smart. [Laughing]

RITCHIE: Gong back to the long periods where the Senate wasn't in session—

BAKER: This sort of ended after the war was over because we had the G.I. Bill and things like that.

RITCHIE: But I was looking through the sessions in the 1950s and I saw the Senate going out in July and August. They were not in session during the fall, most of the time.

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: So I'm trying to figure out—

BAKER: They liked to take these foreign trips. Everybody was wanting to take a NATO trip or you know, any place to get away from home.

RITCHIE: And they went back to their home states and they carried on business in the home states.

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: And their children went to school back in the home states for the fall. Then they would come back to Washington in January?

BAKER: Yeah. I think one of the great tragedies of congressional life is that they're in session so long and they really are so petty and partisan. I cannot believe that

you can't be a gentleman with your colleagues. I mean, I think the public wants to vote all of them out. I'd hate like hell to be a candidate in either party. Because they just think they're not doing their job and they're too petty.

RITCHIE: Well, I was curious about the time when Senator Johnson would go back to Texas and you were here in Washington in the '50s. Did you hear from him regularly?

BAKER: Every day.

RITCHIE: Even when he was not here?

BAKER: Oh yeah. You know, he could not sleep. Many times he called me at five o'clock in the morning. Then he would ask my opinion about who should go on this trip and whatnot. He was always inviting us down to the ranch. I took Senator [John] Pastore down there one time. But he was a real charmer when it came to entertaining his colleagues and I think it helped him a great deal because he had that old personal attention.

RITCHIE: Of course, the fall is also election time.

BAKER: Yes, right.

RITCHIE: When the Senate was gone, would you get involved then in the elections?

BAKER: Yes, I would, because when he was the Majority Leader, I was the Secretary and Treasurer of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, so I was always telling him how little money we had and I would recommend that we give money. In one campaign, Senator Paul Douglas was way ahead. When I had a candidate that was ahead by five percent in a poll, I would just say, "Let's spend our money on a guy that's running even." Johnson agreed with my judgement on that, that we ought to take care of the guys who really need help. But Senator Douglas really got angry. He had nominated me in *Esquire*, I think it was, to be one of the up and coming young men in government,

which I was. But after his blow-up with Johnson about the money, he never was the same. But he was a big supporter of Johnson during the Vietnam War, which is surprising. I mean, he really changed. Now didn't you say Howard Shuman is deceased?

RITCHIE: Yes, he passed away.

BAKER: Okay. Howard was really in the control of Walter Reuther. And when I do my book, *Profiles in Tragedy*, Walter Reuther will be with one of my 10 top people. Because see he had to be very careful with cash money that came to his union in the United States. But he had no such rule in Canada. So as a consequence, Walter Reuther probably, because of his cash contributions, had a minimum of 20 Senators that would vote any way he wanted. And Howard Shuman was one of his big advocates.

RITCHIE: So if it was illegal for unions at that stage to make contributions, they could do it from outside the country?

BAKER: Yeah, so they just give you a satchel full of cash. And so the rules were not as close as they are now about where you get the money and how you spend it.

RITCHIE: People talk a lot about envelopes being passed around as being fairly commonplace at the time. Was that how contributions were made?

BAKER: I think that's true. Former Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, after he retired he had a very prestigious law firm in Washington and he gave cash and envelopes to quite a few people. He was very influential. Very quiet. Stayed out of the newspapers. But President Eisenhower was so prophetic when he said beware of the military industrial contractors. Because you see today, I mean this NASA thing is very interesting to see what's going to happen with that.

RITCHIE: Louis Johnson was a lobbyist for Pan American for a long time and that kept him up on Capitol Hill quite often.

BAKER: Yeah. One of the most effective lobbyists I knew was Neil Curry for the truckers. Any time I needed big money, I'd call Neil. There was a Congressman from

Ohio who was head of the Public Works Committee, or for the appropriations end of it. His name was Mike Kirwan. Senator Kerr was trying to get \$2 billion to build a canal from Fort Smith, Arkansas, from the Mississippi River, to Tulsa, because he had always run very poorly in Tulsa. Tulsa was a very conservative Republican area. One of the reasons that I was able to introduce him to Fred Black, who represented North American. Senator Kerr wanted to know, “How many jobs can you create near Tulsa if I get you the contract?” Because his former vice president of Kerr-McGee was named Webb. When President Kennedy was unable to get the president of MIT to take the space job, he turned to Johnson and Johnson was beholden to Senator Kerr and he asked Bob, who recommended Mr. Webb—James Webb—to be the head of NASA. So this contract for the Apollo was the biggest military contract in the history of this country. We have spent, since 1963, I bet if you added it all up, you have spent \$1 trillion.

President Kennedy did not have any idea what he was getting into. But Jim Webb delivered the contract to Senator Kerr. So Mike Kirwan knew that Kerr was really getting big money to build that canal from Fort Smith to about 20 miles south of Tulsa. He was a tough old Irishman and he told Neil Curry over his dead body. But Neil Curry, I had introduced him to Senator Kerr and they became great friends. Well, I found out that the girl I got Senator Kerr to hire as his personal secretary, Marjorie Banner, she had worked for Senator Tom Stewart, who had been defeated [in a primary] by Estes Kefauver. When Senator Kerr was talking to me, I said, “Senator, Senator Stewart had a real terrific secretary that handled all the money and so forth.” So Marjorie was my dear friend, both a social friend and personal friend. She told me that Senator Kerr had \$2 million cash in his safe when he died and she was the only one that had the key to it. So she told me that to get Kirwan to go along with his canal in Oklahoma, that Senator Kerr gave Neil Curry a \$100,000 in hundred dollar bills, that went to Mike Kirwan, and Mike Kirwan withdrew his objection. And so that’s one of the ways that big money talks. I don’t think it’s changed in my lifetime.

RITCHIE: You must have gotten to meet a lot of big money people at that time.

BAKER: Well sure. When Eisenhower was president, the homebuilders were hurting—interest rates, I think, were high—and the basic Republicans were opposed to a three-percent down payment for a FHA house. As a consequence of the representatives of

the homebuilders, we tapped Republican sources that we had never tapped, because under Johnson and Rayburn, they passed the three-percent down payment. But when I look at the housing bust we've got now, I don't know whether they did a big favor because these are the most god-awful times I've ever seen. We just drove from St. Augustine to Myrtle Beach for a Baker reunion and you can just sense that the economy is getting better. Like when I was on [Interstate] 95. It was almost bumper to bumper and in Myrtle Beach, the restaurants are really doing big business where a year ago they were going bust. So I think that this great country is slowly recovering. But say if homes go up—there's a big talker on CNBC and he thinks there's going to be a housing shortage in 2011, because of all the bargains. He said you'll never find bargains like we have in the market today. But he said those are going to dry up and the homebuilders have not been building, so he thinks just hold on to your real estate because it's going to go up. I hope he's right.

RITCHIE: Well, I guess what I'm interested in is if the Senate was only in session for half of the year, how many people who worked for the Senate engaged in other business than legislative business during the months that Congress wasn't here?

BAKER: Well, the senior staff on the Committees, they were always, you know, getting ready for the next year's budget and so they were busy.

RITCHIE: They were busy.

BAKER: Yes. And it was a great improvement that they—a guy I see on television, [Ben] Stein, his father was the chief of staff of the Senate Banking Committee, and he was a very bright fellow.

RITCHIE: Herbert Stein?

BAKER: Yeah, Herbert Stein. I think Nixon named him head of his economic advisors. But his son is really witty and he's making money. He's on every time I turn the TV on. But he is like the Republicans I knew. He says, "I'm a Republican, but I'm a good Republican." [Laughing]

RITCHIE: We talked before about some of the business projects that you had

gotten involved in.

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: That's why I was curious as to whether what you were doing was unique or were there other people who were engaged in business as well at the time.

BAKER: Oh sure, absolutely. Bill Brawley, who was the head of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee, and the people on the Senate Banking Committee, Finance Committee, they all were. I was not a Lone Ranger.

RITCHIE: There were no rules then against members and staff doing business on the side?

BAKER: No, no. None whatsoever. Just as long as you paid your taxes, you could do what you wanted to. Senator George Smathers, who was my dear friend, he made a lot of people wealthy peddling Winn-Dixie stock. Anytime Winn-Dixie wanted to build a new supermarket, they would tell him and he would go buy the land and build a shopping center and he did not die broke. He has a son that lives in Jacksonville who is very nice.

Senator George Smathers was by far—speaking of handling television—the brightest and ablest guy between Nixon, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. But he had defeated the most liberal Senator from Florida in its history, Claude Pepper. After I had the votes for Smathers, I recognized this guy's got talent. After Senator Clements was defeated, I had the votes [for Smathers to become Whip]. I don't think I had five people that did not want to vote for Senator George Smathers. But he called me up and said he can't take it. He said the Democratic Party was too liberal for him. And my judgement is had he—I talked him into voting for that modest Civil Rights bill that we passed in '59, I think.

RITCHIE: Fifty-seven.

BAKER: Fifty-seven, okay. Then when the conference report, he was catching

hell from some of his Dixiecrats and he would not vote for the conference report. And it killed him. You know, nobody wanted to touch him because he was totally out of the mainstream thinking of the American people. But he was so articulate. He was handsome. He was from New Jersey. His daddy had been a federal judge. And he had access to money from every source you ever heard of. But he blew it and it's sad.

RITCHIE: Years ago, I interviewed Scott Peek who told me that you and he and Senator Smathers had a real estate venture in Orlando.

BAKER: Yeah, we sure did.

RITCHIE: How did that come about?

BAKER: Because Scotty and I were very good friends. He was an administrative assistant. In fact, the worst thing that ever happened to me in my life was Scott Peek's secretary, Alice Martin, had been a court of appeals stenographer. I could pay her about \$4,000 more than Peek was paying her. She wanted to take the job, but Peek turned her down. So the former mayor of Jacksonville, Lou Ritter, passed away say six weeks ago—he had been suffering from cancer for a couple of years, and she had been handling his money and debts and so forth. And so because Mary Alice didn't take the job, she said, "Bobby, I've got a real cute girl named Carole Tyler, who works on the House side." And she said, "Will you interview her?" So I tell Mary Alice she caused all my trouble. [Laughing] But she's a lovely lady, let me tell you.

RITCHIE: Well, the Senate was a small community in those days. Everybody seemed to know everybody else.

BAKER: Oh yeah. We worked together and played together. Practically everyone, you know, Lee Williams and Scotty Peek, they all had girlfriends. But it's dangerous to go that road.

RITCHIE: You were in a real estate deal with a Senator. Was that common for staff back then?

BAKER: Yes, I think so. I think, you know, once you have become personal assistant or administrative assistant, and the worker's got kids in college. And being a Senator, you've got access to Wall Street. I never will forget, Bobby Lehman. He became my friend. We were down in Puerto Rico together and he said, "Bobby, I want to tell you," he said, "the biggest thieves, the biggest crooks in the world are on Wall Street." And this Goldman Sachs thing—Mike Mansfield, after he had been Ambassador to Japan, was hired by Goldman Sachs. Now there was some crook that had one of these derivative deals and he basically wrecked Montana Power, which was the biggest employer in Montana. I used to live in Spring Valley and my neighbor across the street, his father had been president of Montana Power. Boy, he hated Mansfield. He just said, "He really screwed the people of Montana." So Senator Mansfield is going to be one of my profiles in tragedy on this. He also had a relationship with a very wealthy man from New Jersey. Mansfield, as close as he was to Kennedy, could not get Kennedy to name him Ambassador to South Africa. I think it was—it will come to me. But Governor [Robert] Meyner had been a [favorite son] candidate [in 1960] and Kennedy didn't like that. This guy gave Meyner a lot of money when he was running. So Kennedy, his Irish rose up and he just flatly said, "The hell with it."

RITCHIE: It still happens today that many ambassadors come from large campaign contributors.

BAKER: Well sure. It's not going to change.

RITCHIE: You had mentioned before that it was because of your dealings as Treasurer for the Campaign Committee that you met people in the insurance business. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

BAKER: Yes, the president of a big insurance company in Baltimore, I got to be real close friends with his son. He told me that a guy from South Carolina named Don Reynolds had made the highest grade on their insurance exam and that he wanted me to meet him. So the man from Baltimore said, "You know, you can make a million a year in the insurance business. You've got a young family and you've been in politics long enough." Reynolds set up an agency out in Silver Spring. He was going to issue me 5 percent of the stock, which he never did. But after Lyndon Johnson had his massive heart

attack in 1955, say it was about 1956, he was sitting in his chair as Majority Leader and he asked me to come over and he said, “Do you understand community property?” I said, “Vaguely, when you’re in law school they tell you little bit about it.” He said, “You know, had I died, Lady Bird would have to pay practically 90 percent of her money because in a community property, she’s liable for me.” He said, “You know, I’ve been using my cousin through the radio and TV station to buy insurance on me, but,” he said, “nobody will issue it.” So I said, “Mr. Leader, I just started a relationship with a South Carolinian named Don Reynolds. His wife is a school teacher in Montgomery County.” And I said, “He’s supposed to know what he’s doing.” To make a long story short, Reynolds said, “He’s your boss and once we pay the partnership taxes, I’ll give you the cash”—because the commission was pretty big. Johnson was real pleased. He was always looking to build construction at \$8 a foot. So when I went to Reynolds after he got the first \$50,000—he wound up getting \$250,000 term life on Johnson. But one day Walter Jenkins, who was administrative assistant for Senator Johnson called me. He said, “After you asked Mrs. Johnson what they would like for Christmas”—Reynolds didn’t want to give money, so he bought a Magnavox stereo worth \$700 or something like that—Mrs. Johnson, being the great lady she was, wrote a real warm, kind letter. Well Don Reynolds one day on Connecticut Avenue stopped and showed the letter to some good looking girl and she got in the car with him and he tried to rape her. So Walter said, “What in the world?”

But he was a nut and the only good thing to come out of Don Reynolds—when I was in jail he said that he had bribed me with \$430,000; that’s part of the court papers I have—his wife, Gerry, took out all of her retirement funds from the teachers union there in Montgomery County and fled and divorced Don. While she was in California, she met a lieutenant in the Navy and they got married and she, I would think, has a 25-year-old daughter now and she’s happy. I mean, that’s the only good thing to come out of Don Reynolds. He was just a crook, that’s the nicest thing I’ll say about him. He’ll be one of my profiles in tragedy. He and Senator John Williams. He was the guy that fed Senator John Williams all the stuff about Johnson and me. He’s totally responsible for the Baker investigation, because he had papers that Senator John Williams took in. But the best thing that ever happened to me was to get in trouble because being almost 82, I’m still alive and they’re all dead.

RITCHIE: The Johnson tapes are now becoming available. You can listen to Johnson's telephone conversations—

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: —and in Johnson's first couple of months as President, he was just obsessed with talking about Don Reynolds and that stereo set. He really was worried about how people were going to perceive that.

BAKER: And on November 22, 1963, after lunch, in the Senate Rules Committee investigating Bobby Baker, Don Reynolds was going to really spill his guts. But when President Kennedy was killed, it basically killed the Baker investigation. You know, President Johnson acted like he did not know me. And Senator Jordan loved me but he got that little old county prosecutor. I forget his name.

RITCHIE: Major McClendon.

BAKER: Yeah. He loved to get his name in the paper. He was the biggest sucker that ever came to Washington. They knew I was going to take the Fifth Amendment. But I would give them the information about Don Reynolds and taxes. I got Bill Brawley, when he became Assistant Postmaster General, to give a job to a friend of Reynolds who had been an Internal Revenue agent, and because I guess he had a high school education, under Civil Service rules they couldn't bump him. So I called Brawley and asked him if he could and he said, "Bobby, the most I can do is jump him one grade." So he took the job. But it had to be Reynolds was bribing him, because when he was testifying when—I think Milton Hautt—when he was testifying, he said that I had used his signature illegally, which is an absolute lie because after he had finished my taxes and I had him include the \$50,000, since Senator Kerr had passed away, the money that he had loaned me, I said just put a legal fee. But Walter Jenkins was scheduled to testify. My judgement is had Walter lied to the Committee, he would have been ruined and President Johnson would have been ruined. It is unbelievable how loyal Walter Jenkins was. What a tragedy that, you know, he got run out of the office. But nothing you can do about it.

RITCHIE: Listening to President Johnson on the tapes, he keeps saying, "I paid thousands of dollars for those premiums."

BAKER: He did.

RITCHIE: Meaning, what's a stereo set, essentially, in return?

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Reynolds presented it as a kickback but President Johnson felt that it was something that was due to him because of all the money he had spent in premiums.

BAKER: Yeah, absolutely. But Reynolds had been kicked out of the Air Force for being a mental reject. These are things that the *Washington Star* had a big strong editorial that the administration was trying to destroy this great American and everything. But I tell you, I think Abe Fortas mishandled that.

RITCHIE: How so?

BAKER: Well, by not calling me and I could have given him the information that would completely deball Reynolds. But they acted like I had leprosy. The interesting thing about Abe Fortas, I did not know until about 10 years ago, but a gay friend of mine, very good friend of mine, told me that Abe and his wife were both gay. Interesting. What the hell, it's sort of popular now. I have a brother that's gay and he's in Manhattan right now going to see, I think it's an all gay play. He flew from Hawaii for the reunion and then he left on Sunday to go to New York. He got bumped off the plane. He had a reservation and they paid him \$350. He picked up the luncheon check and it was about \$400. But he got on another plane at four o'clock. So you never know.

RITCHIE: Do you think that if Kennedy hadn't died on November 22nd, would Reynolds' charges have forced Johnson off the ticket in '64?

BAKER: Yes, I think the Reynolds testimony plus the absolute hatred of Bobby Kennedy of Johnson because his brother had not consulted him in 1960 when Johnson was picked. It was equal hate. President Johnson hated him and as a consequence I think he would not give advice to the President when Bobby was around, and it was tragic. But Bobby had already offered Terry Sanford, who was the governor of North Carolina, to be

Kennedy's running mate in '64. That's how certain he was that what he was going to do would work out. But the best criminal lawyer in America was named Joe Ball, and so when he had been retained by the savings and loan people that had made the \$100,000 contribution, Ed Williams called me and I was in California and said, "This guy is really one of the premier criminal lawyers in the world." He said, "Will you go talk to him?" So when I told him how it all happened, he said, "Well my client's got to take the Fifth Amendment. You cannot make more than a \$5,000 cash contribution." And he said, "They have no chance in hell to survive."

In the meantime, when Bobby Kennedy in his zeal to get rid of Vice President Johnson—Bobby did not hate me, but he thought because of my reputation, that he could totally derail Johnson from the ticket. So he was successful in having the, I think it's five or six savings and loan moguls to fire Joe Ball and retain one of Bobby's attorneys. But I would say four or five years ago, the civil attorney that they hired who told them to say I stole their money, he had cancer and there was two professors from UCLA law school that know my friend Jim Daniel who used to work for me. They said that he had told them that he had entered into a friendly fix, and that he knew he was dying and his conscience was hurting and he wanted to meet me. In the meantime, he turned worse and he died and we never got together. But that's another thing that we'll try, to get to his files and find out what the hell went on. And the fellow who died on his boat was a big savings and loan operator, one of the biggest ones—Howard Ahmanson. But he had the biggest savings and loan in the world and he refused to be subpoenaed. He was a great yachtsman, and he died drunk in Holland. They never got him. But everybody else did what they wanted.

RITCHIE: There were a lot of loose ends that never got tied up with that investigation because of Kennedy's death.

BAKER: Yeah, it came to a conclusion. And back in 1960, Senator Jordan called me and said he had a very bright Harvard graduate that wanted to be on the Johnson Vice Presidential campaign. And so I gave her a job. She later married Senator Dole.

RITCHIE: Elizabeth Hanford.

BAKER: Elizabeth, yeah. She's a brilliant girl. Very bright. I would put her in charge of getting water for the terrible problem they're having in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, just having enough drinking water. So if we are smart enough that we can bring oil from Alaska, we sure as hell can bring water from Alaska and buy water from Canada. You can always get money for war, but in domestic projects it's tough. I'm telling you, you have to do a lot of trading. And the solar power, I read the other day that's somebody's got like a 10,000-square-foot house in San Francisco. He spent \$35,000 on solar panels and his electric bill was \$51. I mean, that is the future of this country with all our debt.

RITCHIE: Well, to go back to that investigating Committee, one of the questions has been whether they were afraid that if they investigated more, there would have been more Senators, like Johnson, who might have been implicated in what was going on at the time.

BAKER: Well, J. Edgar Hoover had this illegal bug in Fred Black's suite at the Carlton [Hotel]. And on that tape it showed that when Congressman Gerry Ford was the Republican Leader, that Ellen Romesch was giving him blow jobs. She told me, "He's the nicest man." Fred Black was very close to Gerry Ford. So if you go back, you'll find—I've got some papers that I'll give to you—that the only person on the Warren Commission who told J. Edgar what their findings were was Gerry Ford, because Hoover blackmailed Ford with those tapes. The biggest meeting during the whole Baker investigation was at Mike Mansfield's house. They had Senator Dirksen, Senator Mansfield, and J. Edgar Hoover. J. Edgar said that you will open a can of worms that you have no idea how bad it's going to smell. Senator [Hugh] Scott was trying to subpoena Ellen Romesch, and Carl Curtis, he was going bonkers over that. So Bobby Kennedy, really, when he found out that Ellen had had sex with the President, he had one of his former assistants on the Senate investigating Committee escort Ellen out of the country. They just kidnaped her and took her and her son back to Germany. I mean, I don't know of any Attorney General that could kidnap people and get away with it, but he did. He kidnaped Carlos Marcello, but Marcello was smart and he bribed his way out of jail in Guatemala or some place like that.

RITCHIE: I get the sense that the Committee was afraid to look too far into the

issue because they didn't know what they were going to find.

BAKER: That is correct. But the one thing—there was a golfer from Texas, Claude Wilde. He had won the PGA as a young one, but he was a lobbyist, and he represented the Gulf Oil Company, which was owned by the Pew family in Pennsylvania. He and Senator Kerr were real close friends. He told Senator Kerr that he picked up \$5,000 cash every Saturday for Senator Scott. So after I was out of jail, we were in Hong Kong and lo and behold who do you see but Senator Hugh Scott. We didn't speak to each other. Internal Revenue knew that he had not paid taxes on a huge amount of money. When he died, he had enough emeralds. See, Chiang Kai-shek, he and Franco, you talk about foreigners buying Americans, they were champs. Franco had a guy named Clark who was an attorney here and he gave the cash envelopes over. So Senator Hugh Scott, he really was pushing on the thing, but I think once I sue Internal Revenue to go after his records, we're going to have a lot of mea culpas. [Laughing] My problem is living. You get as old as I am, you know, every day you live you have to say, "Thank you, Jesus. I made it through the night."

RITCHIE: One other business venture we haven't talked about was your connection with Serve-U, the vending machine company.

BAKER: Well, okay.

RITCHIE: How did you get involved in that?

BAKER: The way I got involved is after I had introduced Fred Black to Senator Kerr, and Senator Kerr had arranged for North American to be the Apollo contractor, Senator Kerr had told me that he was going to buy 2,000 head of Black Angus cows and put them on a ranch out in Hutchinson, Kansas, and that I was going to be his partner. So after he had landed the Apollo contract for the town near Tulsa, he told Fred Black, "There's one person that you got to take care of and that's Bobby Baker, because had it not been for Bobby Baker, you would have never had this contract. Because I believe in him and I owe him big." So when Fred Black called me and said, "Send me \$2,500. You're going to be a partner in Serve-U." That's absolutely the simple truth. Twenty five hundred dollars, and had Bill Bittman and Bobby Kennedy not canceled the contract, we

were probably going to make, oh, \$50 million a year. But then Fred, he was a gambler and a crook. He sold some of his stock to Eddie Levinson and Benny Siegelbaum, but their secret partner was Meyer Lansky. Then Hoover had an illegal bug in their counting room, and as smart as Edward Bennet Williams was as a criminal lawyer, he, on behalf of Levinson, sued the Nevada telephone company, whatever the name of it was, and he also sued the FBI. So the end product was no criminal charges. But as quick as that was dropped, they seized all the wealth that Eddie Levinson had and he died broke. Absolutely. So Ed failed to touch the big base.

RITCHIE: They threw out the evidence because of the wiretap?

BAKER: Yeah, illegal. And that's the interesting thing. God only knows how many illegal taps they had. Paul Harvey recently died and he was talking about what a great man Hoover was and admitting that Hoover slipped him things. Walter Winchell was the same thing. I mean, J. Edgar Hoover, he had absolutely such power that the press were afraid to touch him. There was no criticism of him because they knew their boss would fire them.

RITCHIE: He had a file on everybody.

BAKER: Sure he did, absolutely. I mean, he was tapping President Kennedy's girlfriends, that was really just ridiculous. But he got away with it because President Kennedy was afraid of him. And Johnson, you know, Hoover and Johnson were great friends. They lived right across the street from each other.

RITCHIE: Interesting. Well, what was Serve-U going to do? What were they going to serve?

BAKER: Well, Serve-U was basically a vending company that had, say, over 100,000 employees in North America and anyplace they went they would have coffee, doughnuts, sandwiches business. It was going to be a big, big business. Senator Dirksen's friends, who owned Canteen, had the contract and they went bonkers when Serve-U was awarded the contract. And Dirksen put a lot of heat on to get Canteen back there.

RITCHIE: Do you mean here at the Senate?

BAKER: Yeah.

RITCHIE: Where was Canteen?

BAKER: Canteen was from Chicago.

RITCHIE: Oh.

BAKER: They got the contract to run the Senate restaurants and Senator Dirksen did not die broke, I can tell you that.

RITCHIE: So you were in competition with the company that Senator Dirksen had connections to?

BAKER: Yeah, you got it. Exactly.

RITCHIE: That put you in several awkward positions, didn't it?

BAKER: Yeah, it sure did. Made good reading in the Chicago papers.

RITCHIE: But it is interesting that the Senate cafeterias get caught up in all of this. Did you have any qualms about doing business with the U.S. Senate, essentially?

BAKER: Well, yes. I would not under any circumstances try to, you know, get somebody a contract. The D.C. National Bank wanted to get a charter to build like where the Methodist building is, so they'd have a bank on Capitol Hill. Now I did try to help them.

RITCHIE: And that was Max Kampelman ?

BAKER: Yeah, Max Kampelman was, I think, chairman of the board. And he was a very bright fellow. He's turned a conservative Republican.

RITCHIE: Yes.

BAKER: Shocking.

RITCHIE: But he went to work for Hubert Humphrey, too.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. He was Humphrey's ablest member of his staff. Because he had more influence with him. But he was always there with him on the floor. I had several Senators tell me that they thought that Max was obnoxious-looking and that Humphrey ought not to have that Jew by his side all the time. But Humphrey, I don't think he and Kampelman had a falling out.

RITCHIE: No, I think Kampelman stayed with him right through his career. So he was on the staff, but he was also involved in the bank here in Washington.

BAKER: Well, once Humphrey became Vice President, we went into the banking business.

RITCHIE: Oh, that's when he went into it?

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: Okay. And what was your connection with him on the bank?

BAKER: Well, you know, I think the Controller of the Currency, he was from Georgia and he liked me and he was going to try to see if they could get a charter. The fellow who wound up—I've got some papers I'll give to you to go in my file—he gave money in a illegal cash campaign contribution, Joe Albritton. He bankrupted the Riggs Bank here. But he was one of the savings and loan moguls that never got caught. But at one time, Riggs was the biggest and most influential bank in our area.

RITCHIE: So there were all these cross connections between Senate staff and businesses going on and people making contributions. It's sort of a circle along the way, of people going into business but then also making contributions to candidates.

BAKER: Yeah. Maurice Templeton represented the De Beers diamond people and when President Kennedy became President we had a huge problem of surplus wheat. So Maurice said that he could get \$1 million contribution if I could get the Department of Agriculture to swap wheat for uranium. We worked out about \$3 billion deal. I told Maurice, "I can't take anything." But he gave a six carat diamond for me to give my wife. But [Secretary of Agriculture] Orville Freeman, when he wanted football tickets, he'd call me. You get to, when you know people, there are people who can get things done and people who can't. Just like the original DC stadium. John McMillan—that's another that Don Reynolds basically owned him. John McMillan, who was chairman of the House District of Columbia Committee, said over his dead body would any federal money be granted to build a football stadium. So Reynolds came to me and said, "The only way you're going to get a stadium is that you've got to get me the insurance contract." Matt McCloskey, who had been treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, had the contract to build it, but since John McMillan would not release it, the end product was I got Reynolds, and Matt McCloskey, and his son-in-law who wrote all the insurance, together. Reynolds got all the insurance from the DC stadium. And then I know that he bought a new Cadillac for John McMillan. Now what else he gave him, I do not know.

RITCHIE: So it was a matter of putting people together in the same room and getting them to come up with—

BAKER: Yeah, yeah, precisely. Just like when the North American people came and the Secretary of the Senate, who was my boss, Skeeter Johnston, let us use his luncheon room. When we first got together, I said, "Gentleman, Senator Kerr wants to make Oklahoma bigger than New York. And he wants to know if you get the Apollo contract, how many jobs will you create?" They said, "Senator, we will guarantee you a minimum of 18,000 new people in six months." So everybody shook hands and they went home and when they got together with the North American engineers, they said to the president and chairman of the board that the Apollo is so heavy, the only way it can be transported is via water. They called the next day and said the deal is off. I went to Senator Kerr and I said, "You cannot transport the Apollo by train nor by truck." He said, "Well, God damn it, you helped me get over \$1 billion to build a canal." He said, "Call up and find out how deep they need it." Well, I think the canal is about 20 feet and they

only needed 18 feet, so the deal went through.

RITCHIE: It strikes me that the type of work you were doing in there, putting people together, was very similar to the type of work you were doing in the Senate, which was getting Senators to sit down and carve out a compromise on something.

BAKER: Yeah, and a lot of conservatives, like Senator A. Willis Robertson—you knew how Senator Harry Byrd was going to vote before he ever got up—but Senator Robertson was a very dedicated, old-time Democrat. So if I had a tough vote coming up, I would arrange for a trip for him. He loved to fish, so I'd send him on some business. I'd get the Committee of something or Senator Johnson to name him to some commission so he could be gone and I had the votes. He didn't want to vote against it, but I knew what I had to do to win the vote. The worst tragedy was when Senator Earle Clements, who had been so loyal and so helpful—when the liberals got real hot-headed, he was our go-to man. We had a Social Security vote that Johnson had pledged to get passed and Senator Clements had made a deal with the Kentucky doctors that he would vote against this new Social Security arrangement. But when it got down that his vote made the difference, he voted with Johnson. Johnson got a lot of publicity, but Earle Clements got defeated as a consequence. Now you know his daughter, don't you?

RITCHIE: Bess Abell, yes.

BAKER: She and Tyler were down for the funeral for the former mayor of Jacksonville. In fact, I haven't called them yet, but I told them I would get together.

RITCHIE: Oh, you should.

BAKER: Yeah, well the first job Bess had after she graduated from college was on the Senate subcommittee on Internal Security. I called my wife and said, "Senator Clements is a good friend and his daughter needs a job." So she got her on Internal Security. That's the first job she had on the Hill, because she couldn't go on her daddy's payroll.

RITCHIE: One of the staff described you as the "manager of the Senate," that

you were the person who sort of managed things and just got things done on a day to day basis.

BAKER: I think that is reasonable. Once you know a Senator's likes and dislikes and who's reasonable, then it was my job to see how to get enough votes to pass what we had or to see what kind of amendments they wanted. I really grew very fond of Senator Clair Engle from California. He died young, but he was very reasonable. The one thing that is shocking about Senator Kerr is one day when Kennedy was President, we had a vote on Medicare and Senator Jennings Randolph was a very liberal Senator from West Virginia. And he would never tell me how he was going to vote. But Senator Kerr gave him \$200,000 for that vote. It shows you that money can talk. But Senator Randolph was very popular. You could reason with him. But the one thing was that the legislative staff blamed me, because Kerr was my friend, was not getting Jennings Randolph to vote for Medicare. But I didn't know how he was going to vote. He just would not commit.

RITCHIE: Ryan Vander Zee said there was an audible gasp when Senator Randolph voted that way on the floor.

BAKER: Yeah, yeah.

RITCHIE: That people didn't expect that.

BAKER: And Vander Zee, until his dying day, said that Humphrey would have defeated Kennedy in West Virginia had it not been for that massive cash old man Joe bought the election with. Ryan, being an ex-FBI man, had every sheriff in each of those counties committed to voting for Humphrey. And boy, when election day came, it was total news to him. They changed on Thursday before the Tuesday. Vander Zee said, "They wouldn't even return my call."

RITCHIE: Well, people said that one reason why Johnson was so dependant on you is because he was away a lot, especially after he had his heart attack and he knew you could manage things while he was gone.

BAKER: Well, we had a mutual admiration society. We both liked each other

and I knew what I could get him to do and then I could find out from him what he wanted to do. I talked him into creating a East-West Center. I said, “We do more business with Asia than we do all of Europe.” I said, “The quicker we get smart people from Asia coming here, the better off we’re going to be.” I had him talked into building a big school on the top of Diamond Head there in Honolulu. He and Jack Burns were real good friends.

RITCHIE: So to some degree, you were almost the Whip for Senator Johnson.

BAKER: Well, he had great faith in my judgement as to what we could do and couldn’t do. Then when we’d get in tight, between the two of us, we’d try to get the votes. I think everybody is pretty much to the conclusion that Lyndon Johnson was the ablest Majority Leader. Even Bob Caro, who really—you know, he’s doing another book on Johnson. But he wrote some brilliant things. He’s a brilliant writer.

RITCHIE: What did you think about *Master of the Senate*?

BAKER: I thought it was an excellent book. He got a lot of his stuff from Joe Stewart. Joe likes him. And from George Reedy. He was an old martini drinker that really got bitter because President Johnson let him go as press secretary or something. So he really spewed out a lot of venom. And Caro stayed out there at the nursing home with him for about six months. Joe is my source of that information.

RITCHIE: When Johnson became Vice President, though, did you continue having a relationship with him?

BAKER: Yes. When President Kennedy was forced by his father to name Bobby Kennedy Attorney General (because President-elect Kennedy sent Clark Clifford up to try to tell his Daddy that that was a terrible mistake; but old man Joe Kennedy wouldn’t budge; he just said, “Bobby’s going to be the Attorney General. Get out of here”). So the President had said, “Lyndon, I need your help,” because Senator Russell and the Republicans were solid against Bobby being Attorney General. He had really no legal experience. Johnson said, “Bobby, if the President is defeated by my supporters, it’s a terrible, terrible, can’t-do situation for me.” He said, “See what you can do with our mutual friend Senator Russell, because if you get enough bourbon in him, he gets more

reasonable.” So I took him out to the Secretary of the Senate’s office and I said, “Your best friend loves you and he called me and he needs your help and will you please let me have a voice vote?” And he said most reluctantly, “You can have a voice vote.” And Senator Dirksen, being a decent man, let it go through that way. But had it had a roll-call vote, Bobby Kennedy would have never been Attorney General. He would have been lucky to get 40 votes. That’s how the Senate that I knew thought of him.

RITCHIE: Johnson didn’t really have a lot to do when he was Vice President. That seemed to be one of his problems.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: He had time on his hands, essentially.

BAKER: Well, because Bobby basically had taken over his job, so he was just sort of a—you know, the only thing he could do was listen because if he said something, Bobby would go and do the contrary. So it was a miserable situation.

RITCHIE: Did Johnson call you in to bemoan his troubles during that period?

BAKER: No, he just said that Bobby hated him and anything he tried to do, he tried to squelch. But Johnson was a pouter, too. Evelyn Lincoln wrote a book. She was on Bobby’s side. She didn’t like Johnson.

RITCHIE: There wasn’t a lot of room for Johnson in the Kennedy administration.

BAKER: That is correct.

RITCHIE: At the same time, Senator Mansfield had taken over the Senate Leadership. But as you’ve said earlier, Mansfield really was not a hands-on person on the floor.

BAKER: You know, Senator Mansfield was rather professorial. He liked to go

read books and get in his office. When I'd have a problem, I'd go say, "Mr. Leader, we need you." Johnson stayed on the floor all the time, but Mansfield was very seldom there.

RITCHIE: But did you get busier then when it was Mansfield rather than Johnson in the Leadership?

BAKER: No. With the President being Kennedy, our job was to pass his program. It was my job to try to get some of the Southerners to vote for the Kennedy program. And it was hard, I will tell you, a lot of them did not agree with everything. His tax bill, which was a real brilliant move—the Investment Tax Credit—and historians have been very kind to President Kennedy because of his stance on lowering taxes.

RITCHIE: But he had a hard time with all of that.

BAKER: Sure did. The president called me and he said, "Bobby, everybody in this town knows that your best friend is Senator Kerr." He said, "He's killing me because he's going to vote against my tax bill." He said, "See what you can do with him." That's when Senator Kerr told me that Bobby Kennedy was withholding the judicial nominee that he had selected and said, "Unless my man is selected, they'll be no tax bill." So when I called Evelyn Lincoln, I said, "Evelyn, when the President has time, tell him I've had a meeting with Senator Kerr." Then I told President Kennedy that Senator Kerr will not report your tax bill unless his judicial selection is sent and confirmed. So the President called Bobby and said, "I have made a commitment. You send it down." And Bobby said the American Bar Association says that he is the most ill-qualified man in the history of the American judicial system. But he came down, got confirmed, and when the President signed it, we got the tax bill. But those are things that you have to do.

RITCHIE: That's the way the system worked.

BAKER: Yes sir, yes sir. It is a quid pro quo.

RITCHIE: And part of it was your reminding people what the quid and the quo were?

BAKER: Oh, sure.

RITCHIE: Well listen, it's 20 minutes after 12:00 right now and I need to get over to the Capitol.

BAKER: Okay. You go and I'll go do my thing.

RITCHIE: And then can you come back this afternoon?

BAKER: Sure.

RITCHIE: That would be great.

BAKER: Absolutely. Will do.

End of the Fifth Interview

TIME IS A HEALER
Interview #6
Tuesday Afternoon, May 4, 2010

RITCHIE: Speaking of Senator Kerr, this fall the Oklahoma Department of Libraries had a meeting and they asked me to come out and speak along about oral history. Oklahoma is booming these days. It appears that oil money has been very good to that state.

BAKER: There's no doubt about it. It's going to do even better. I noticed that gas prices are about 60 cents per gallon higher here than they are in Florida. So you're going to have \$5 gas come summer.

RITCHIE: Yes, once the problems in the Gulf of Mexico are felt.

BAKER: Oh sure. God only knows how long that's going to be. I mean, that Valdez thing is still not settled totally and that was what, 10 years ago?

RITCHIE: Yes.

BAKER: Well I'm glad you young people can solve all these problems.
[Laughing]

RITCHIE: It's interesting how a lot of the problems that we talk about today aren't very different from a lot of the problems that people talked about in the 1960s and earlier.

BAKER: I sure hope we can get our boys back home from Iraq and Afghanistan. And I hope that the President and the Congress are very reluctant to get involved in any more wars. But that's the easiest thing to sell. That's sad. You can always buy munitions, but you can't do the things that are really needed.

RITCHIE: And it's always a lot easier to go into a war than to get out of it.

BAKER: Absolutely.

RITCHIE: Well, this morning we talked about a range of issues, and it strikes me that back then there were almost no regulations, nothing in the books that said what you could do or couldn't do.

BAKER: That is absolutely correct. You basically were working with very successful people in life, either as attorneys, business people, doctors, and they really didn't want any rules that limited what they could and could not do. Senator Robert Taft was, in my opinion, one of the great Republican leaders, but his family had a very lucrative TV deal in Ohio. I don't think he ever did anything to influence anybody, but I think that the TV moguls knew who Lyndon Johnson was and Lady Bird was and as a consequence, they created an empire, I would think is worth, you know, before Lady Bird's death, about \$100,000. I think they traded their KTBC stock for Chandler, the L.A. people, and they didn't do badly. Lady Bird had a cute thing in the *Wall Street Journal*, praying that she could live until the end of 2010 because I think the inheritance tax is reduced substantially, but she didn't make it. She truly, of all the people I've known in my life, was a remarkable, talented, bright lady. For her to put up with him, she had to be a miracle worker, because he was tough, demanding. "My way or the highway." But she survived. Every time Dorothy and I ride up and down 95, we were saying yesterday that the beautiful spring flowers made you immediately think of Lady Bird, because she was the one that sold the President on putting the money to plant flowers on the interstate highway system.

RITCHIE: She got him to take down most of the billboards.

BAKER: Yep.

RITCHIE: In retrospect, do you think it would have been easier for you if there had been more rules? In other words, if things were defined as to what was legitimate and what wasn't?

BAKER: I would think so. Every young person [on the Senate staff] who has a family needs a bunch of money to educate them and so you have to be very careful of the

dos and don'ts. Sometimes we pass too many don'ts. Because it's been my experience—and you've been here longer than me—that they're an unusually bright group of young people trying to climb up the ladder of success. Most of them seem to do well. I cannot believe how many young people I see here. It used to be when I worked here, unless you were about 50, you didn't hit a promising job. Now these young people I saw, they look like they got BlackBerries and everything. When I graduated from law school in 1955, they didn't have computers. They didn't have printers. It's absolutely amazing how bright my children and my grandchildren are. There's nothing that they are afraid of. I'm afraid of all of them.

RITCHIE: I've talked to a lot of the staff from the 1950s and '60s and almost all of them say essentially the same thing, which is that people conducted business on the side. There was time enough to do business outside the Senate while you were inside the Senate. In some respects, the difference between them and you was that you were much more public about it. Most of your dealings, your motel and other business was quite public at the time.

BAKER: Yeah, exactly.

RITCHIE: They said that might have been some of your problem, that you became a much better well-known public persona.

BAKER: Well, I think that the press—I had unusually good relations with them, because when I told them what I thought the vote was going to be, they just said, "That's the gospel." Because I knew how, I would say, 98 percent of the Senators were going to vote before an issue came up, because I knew their geographical location, whether they were conservative, liberal, or a middle-of-the-roader. And as a consequence I think that as Bob Caro said, the most successful Majority Leader in the history of the United States Senate was Lyndon Johnson, and I'd agree.

RITCHIE: But you were the face of a lot of activity. You were in the newspapers a lot in terms of other business that was going on at the time.

BAKER: Yeah, but everybody thought that I was Lyndon Johnson's right and left arm and that if I said something was going to happen, they believed it. And generally it did, because I knew how to count votes. That's very important in the Senate, is to know how each Senator is going to vote.

RITCHIE: I wonder if part of the issue isn't that if—with the motel in particular—you got so much publicity for that. Do you think maybe that was a line that you had crossed? That you'd gone too far as a staff person?

BAKER: No, I don't. I think that it gave hope that in the free enterprise system that you could go take a chance. And I took a big chance. Tragically, my partner committed suicide and left me with trying to pay for it, work in the Senate and look after that. So when I went to Vice President Johnson and told him I had a problem, my partner committed suicide and I couldn't pay my bills, he called Senator Kerr. And Senator Kerr, bless his soul, arranged a loan for my company and saved me. And so I will love him until the day I die.

RITCHIE: I wondered if you think that some of your critics, especially some of the Senators who investigated you, didn't suspect that because there was so much publicity about you that there would be more that they would be able to find? That they would get more ammunition against other Senators at that time?

BAKER: Well, I think that they all love all the attention. I've never seen a Senator that didn't like to get his name in the paper. Because I'd been a Senate employee and because I'd taken the Fifth Amendment, they had a field day. You cannot believe the amount of ill press I received for about 10 years. But time is a great healer. So when you walk down the street and meet 100 people and you say, "Do you know who Bobby Baker is?" they don't have a clue.

RITCHIE: In retrospect, do you think that if you had answered the questions rather than taking the Fifth, that it would have been better on you in the long run?

BAKER: No. I think that's the wisest decision I ever made, because they didn't give a damn about anybody but publicity. They thrive on it. That was the tragedy of

Senator Joe McCarthy. Senator McCarthy, when he first came to the Senate, was on the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. He was a moderate Republican. A decent man. Both sides liked him. Then he got too much liquor and went to Wheeling, West Virginia, and said he had information that there were 205 card-carrying Communists in the State Department, which was an absolute falsification. And he destroyed himself. All that publicity that he had, all the rich people giving him money, was not of any help when it came to his censure. If you look at the way Lyndon Johnson—I think his great accomplishment as a Senate Majority Leader was working with Senator Dirksen to get a decent panel, both Democrat and Republican, like Senator John Stennis and Senator [Arthur] Watkins from Utah. Real decent people. They voted to censure McCarthy. And he should have been censured because he was irresponsible, reckless, and he died a bad drunk. That's the kindest thing I can say about him.

RITCHIE: By chance, today the minute that I read at the Democratic Conference luncheon was on Estes Kefauver and the crime investigation. Television made him into a Presidential contender overnight practically.

BAKER: That's right. Senator Kefauver was a tragic figure, but he was way ahead of all of his Southern colleagues because when he first was elected to the Senate, he proposed a FEPC bill which oh, the Southerners, they hated. He was despised among all the Southern Democrats. Not a one of them liked him. But he had a bad alcohol problem and he also had a very bad record with wanting to go to bed with every woman he ever met. He got some of these young kids testifying, you know, before his juvenile Committee or something and then he couldn't wait to go to bed with them.

RITCHIE: But television made him into a national celebrity.

BAKER: I don't think there's any doubt about that. Plus the press liked him because he would give them things that they wanted. He was, you know, unusual. He was not much of a successful Senator because he was a one man show. The same is true for Senator McCarthy.

RITCHIE: There's that old saw about work horses and show horses. Does that really resonate in the Senate?

BAKER: Absolutely. No doubt about it. The show horses, they know who they are pretty quickly. Wayne Morse is a good illustration. He was a nice, nice man, but he could not wait to get on the Senate floor and talk for 10 hours. And everybody would leave. So he was a show horse.

RITCHIE: There are those who are heading for the press conference all the time, I guess.

BAKER: Oh yeah. They've never seen a headline they did not like.

RITCHIE: Well, when you encountered all your problems, I assume you were besieged by the press. Were there any in the press that you felt sort of treated you okay?

BAKER: Most of the—like, *Time* reporters and the people that were here locally that dealt with me—almost not a one of them abandoned me. They just said, “He’s a good guy. His word is good and I’ll have no part of it.” So basically they went to New York and Hollywood to get the big opinion makers working and they did a good job.

RITCHIE: I remember Scott Peek telling me that *Life Magazine* kept trying to take his picture. They wanted a picture of him in the magazine.

BAKER: Oh, yeah. But you mentioned *Time* and *Life*, old man Joe Kennedy and Henry Luce—there’s a new book I have not read that just came out in the last two weeks about Henry Luce—Henry Luce and old man Joe Kennedy and the publisher of the Minneapolis paper and the Des Moines, they were all in business deals. Take Justice [Byron] White from Colorado, he basically was a Republican, but old man Joe Kennedy, because he’d been a great football player and was well respected in Colorado, he hired him. Just like old man Joe Kennedy bribing Senator John McClellan of a \$50,000 fee. That’s like a \$5 million fee now. So that’s the way Bobby got his first job was because old man Joe Kennedy owned Senator John McClellan, absolutely.

RITCHIE: There were fewer restrictions in terms of what outside gifts Senators could accept at that stage.

BAKER: Well you know, you just channel it to their law firm or give them envelopes with cash.

RITCHIE: They could be on retainer—

BAKER: Yes.

RITCHIE: Senators conducted law practice and outside business.

BAKER: Oh sure.

RITCHIE: Because they were home for half of the year or so.

BAKER: When Chang Kai Shek fled China for Taipei, God only knows how much gold he took. But he sure was free with giving cash to politicians. I think my friend Senator Bridges, he took a lot of that.

RITCHIE: Did you have a counterpart on the Republican side? Was there somebody who was doing the same things on the Republican staff the way that you were for the Democrats?

BAKER: Mark Trice was my counterpart. A very able day worker. But he didn't—he just showed up for work, did what was expected of him, and then it was over. He was not a busybody like I was. But he was a nice man.

RITCHIE: Yes, he always insisted he had nothing to do with campaign finances.

BAKER: No. I hope in your lifetime that they will come up with some way that pays so much per voter and limits you to, say, a maximum of 90 days in a Presidential primary or Senatorial primary. And then a 90-day general election. But limit how much money, because we basically have become nothing here in the Senate but a millionaire's club. If someone came to me and said, "Bobby, I would like to be the Senator from Florida," which is a wide open race right now, I would say, "If you don't have \$50 million in the bank, forget it." Because you look at Senator [John D.] Rockefeller and

some of the other people in the Senate, they've been there for years. But they've got the money to keep the job.

RITCHIE: It seems to be a conundrum. They can't come up with a means of controlling campaign financing that clears through the courts as constitutional.

BAKER: Yeah, but it's something that needs to be addressed. The way the public's acting now, they're looking for some action. I think that the best thing that could happen to President Obama is that they Republicans win the Senate and the House. I remember how President Truman went after the do nothing Congress and I think if he has any chance in hell of winning his second term it will be if he gets lucky and the Republicans win the House and the Senate. I think that will make his day because they'll be looking at the opinion-makers and the troubles they had.

RITCHIE: It's one thing to campaign; it's another thing to govern.

BAKER: Yes, yes.

RITCHIE: Well, when we started you said you had some other issues that you'd like to bring up.

BAKER: Yeah. I don't know whether you can include, you know, since you're doing a history of me, but here I have an article in the *Washington Post* about how a former savings and loan mogul, Mr. Joe Albritton, ruined the bank he loved and his very shenanigans. I'll leave it with you and you can make a decision whether you want to include it in my file. And I've got a nice article about me in the *Pickens Sentinel*. I'll leave that with you. Then this is an article about how Senator Kerr did not have a will. It says what every wife wishes her husband knew about that. Here was the most brilliant man I knew, and he didn't have a will.

RITCHIE: He didn't think he was going to die.

BAKER: I guess that's right. And here's the letter from me to Don Graham. And here's a letter from me to Linda and Luci. This is a book that, if you haven't read it, you

ought to read it.

RITCHIE: I've seen that book.

BAKER: Yeah, okay. Here is the thing I told you about Congressman Ford being blackmailed.

RITCHIE: Oh, right.

BAKER: Here's a letter from Tony Summers. He wanted to do a book on Ellen Romesch, but she wouldn't cooperate with him. Here is stuff about my letter to my son Jimmy's former schools and the reply that I got. You look at it and if you want to include it. But it's basically self-serving about my two sons. Do you want to keep it here?

RITCHIE: Yes.

BAKER: Fine. Jimmy was voted one of the 40 top pension lawyers in America. It's in this story you'll read. And Bobby, Jr. was a bartender for 30 years. He flunked the California Bar. He was married to a drug addict and he divorced her and married a girl from Boston, so he moved to Boston. He had three children previously and one by the girl from Boston. He is teaching handicapped children in St. Augustine High. He's the girls and the boys tennis coach and he loves what he's doing. He said, "Daddy, this is the first job I ever had where I get a vacation in the summer, I get health benefits, and I'm working on a pension." He said, "Now leave me alone." But my son Jimmy, he got a \$250,000 bonus to change from Jones Day, the third biggest law firm in the world. He gets \$100,000 a month plus a pension and a bonus at Christmastime. It's a big firm—I think it's called Winston [& Strawn]. But any of it you want—future historians want to know what happened to my kids. It's self-serving, but we're very proud of all of them. My oldest daughter has a master's in music and she has seven children. She is really a joy. My other daughter is an executive with Fedex. [Coughing] I've got allergies or something.

RITCHIE: Would you like some water?

BAKER: No, give me about two minutes while I get this cough drop.

RITCHIE: The spring is very heavy with pollen here in Washington.

BAKER: I've had it in Florida, too. But this seems to work in about two minutes. Old age sucks. So when I leave, I'll call you on my cell phone to send your man down with my papers.

RITCHIE: I can just walk right down with you if you want or we can—

BAKER: I've got to go over to Union Station.

RITCHIE: Okay, you can call us back and we'll come down.

BAKER: Okay, because by the time I walk over there to get the car, it'd be 30 minutes. I really have enjoyed meeting and knowing you. It's really been a pleasure.

RITCHIE: Well, it's been terrific for me. Over the years I've talked to so many people and practically everybody who I talked to, at least those who go back, you know, into the 1960s, they all had some story to tell about you. Some of them went to your wedding. Some of them were associated with you in all different ways. You were the missing piece of the puzzle and I was really glad that you volunteered to do these interviews.

BAKER: I want to tell you I have great fondness and love for the U.S. Senate. It's a great institution. I saw a couple of young clerks on the Finance Committee. Reminded me of Skeeter Johnston talking about his first boss in the Senate was Pat Harrison. I guess he was chairman of the Finance Committee when they were doing away with alcohol. Somebody said, "We'll do away with all these whores and everything." And Senator Harrison said, "You can legislate all you please, but you'll never make fucking unpopular." [Laughing] He was a very wise man.

RITCHIE: Right.

BAKER: I'll go get the car and I'll just be down front. But I'll call from down there. Thank you so much.

RITCHIE: Well, this has been a real pleasure and I hope that you'll keep in touch with us.

BAKER: Oh, sure.

End of the Sixth Interview

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