

Oral History Interview

with

RICHARD BOLLING

US Congressman, Fifth District of Missouri, 1949-1983.

Independence, Missouri

October 21, 1988

by Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library

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JOHNSON: I'm going to begin Mr. Bolling by asking you where and when you were born, and what your parents' names were.

BOLLING: I was born in New York City, on the 17th of May 1916. My mother was Florence Easton Bolling; my father was Richard Walker Bolling.

JOHNSON: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

BOLLING: I had one brother, John. He died young; I can't give his exact age, but he was in his thirties. He was seven years younger than I.

JOHNSON: How long did you live in New York City?

BOLLING: My father was the chief surgeon of a great New York hospital, St. Lukes, and he died in his forties. I hated

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New York and I talked my mother into going back to one of the places that we visited regularly, his home, or his birthplace, Huntsville, Alabama. She herself was from Wisconsin. We had had a circle, when my father was alive, of going to Huntsville some, to LaCrosse, Wisconsin some, spending some time in Long Island, and spending some time in New York. I hated New York. I loved Long Island, but I hated New York, so I talked my mother--and this was a very bad thing to have done I'm afraid--I talked my mother into moving back to Huntsville. So I grew up in Huntsville, Alabama, having lived in New York until I was 13 or 14.

JOHNSON: So your education did start in New York City.

BOLLING: That's correct.

JOHNSON: One of the public schools?

BOLLING: No, I did not go to school until I was about 10 or 11, and then I went to a private school, Allan Stevenson.

JOHNSON: You're getting educated at home, by your parents?

BOLLING: By my mother, who was quite a remarkable person. It would be a long story about my mother, but I won't tell it, unless you ask much later on. My mother was educated

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at Vassar, and a leader of virtually everything at Vassar; she was an intellectual, a friend of [Justice Louis] Brandeis as a young woman. She was of that quality. She was very opinionated, a rationalist if there ever was one. She, and the books that were available, educated me. The story that I've always heard is that I was frail, and I spent an awful lot of time at home because of that, and I did an incredible amount of reading. I read, I think you could say, practically everything that would be in an upper income family, from English literature of the 19th century.

I had a grandmother who was a Francophile, who saw to it that I had plenty of French books. My mother knew and maintained her knowledge of at least three and perhaps four languages: English being one, along with German and French. In her widowhood she never remarried; she learned all the rest of the Romance languages, and one or two other languages, just on her own. So I was dealing with--I guess with any prejudice that I would have, I would be accurate in this one to say--a superior intellect and a superior intellectual.

JOHNSON: A prodigy.

BOLLING: She missed New York, and occupied her time as a widow

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in Huntsville, Alabama, by taking over the Board chairmanship of the little hospital where you went to die, and turning it into a tri-county hospital--and so on, and so on.

JOHNSON: Is it correct to say that your father was of an aristocratic southern background?

BOLLING: Well, it was as close as you could get to a political, aristocratic background.

JOHNSON: Is it true that you are a distant cousin of Edith Bolling Wilson?

BOLLING: That's right. I visited her and there's a funny story about that. But my great-great something or other was called Charles William Walker. He presided over the Constitutional Convention of Alabama, and he was the first Senator of Alabama. I don't know much else about him. One of my role models was my great uncle who lived across the street in Huntsville. He lived on what you would call "snob hill," McClung Hill, a very conservative area, but my mother was not a conservative.

He was a Federal Circuit Court of Appeals judge, and a monumental person in a variety of ways. I don't have much idea or a notion of his politics, and I don't really

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remember exactly when he died, but we had enough contact so I remember him as a person that I admired a great deal. Later on, I had the interesting experience of talking about him, at least

somewhat, to a man who had become more than an acquaintance, and less than a close friend, Justice [Hugo] Black. I had figured out finally that my great uncle had to be a political person.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

BOLLING: His name was Richard Wilde Walker, obviously my grandmother's brother. Black and I had sort of a casual conversation about him, during which he grinned a lot, so obviously I was hitting the right notes. But I always had a consciousness of this, and I was influenced not only by the old boy, but by the consciousness of having come from such a background.

More interesting perhaps, or just as interesting, and I have not looked any of this up--I never was very interested in it except that it gave me a certain kind of feel--the Bollings came from Virginia and some Bollings were involved with people like Thomas Jefferson. Now that might turn out to be a myth. One of the things that I think was a myth was that we were in some way related to people who had been involved with Pocahontas; that was a

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big myth, that the Bollings were involved with that. Inevitably, you had a strong feeling of country, of being a part of the country. My reaction to it was always sort of negative; that it didn't do a hell of a lot of good to have ancestors like that, but what mattered was what you did yourself.

JOHNSON: Was that an idea that just came to you from your reading, or where did you get that impression that regardless of having an elitist-type background, that you still had to do it on your own?

BOLLING: I don't know where I got it; I suspect I got it from my mother. My mother always claimed to be apolitical, but she was intensely political. And I think she was probably something very close to a LaFollette progressive, although we never had a discussion on politics as such.

JOHNSON: On your father's side, were there veterans of the Confederate Army, or the Confederacy?

BOLLING: Oh, yes, my grandfather was supposed to have died as the result of being in some Federal prison. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. I know I had a disagreeable, charming grandmother on that side. I got to know her; but she was the kind of person who, when my

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father died, would send a telegram to my mother, asking "would the check continue"--that kind of thing. She was a southern belle of less than great quality. But then I had an equally

remarkable, compared to the judge, maybe more remarkable grandfather on my mother's side, who I knew quite well.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

BOLLING: His last name was Easton; Frederick, I think he was called, but I never called him anything but "grandfather." I guess my grandmother called him Fred; I think that's right. They weren't an old aristocratic family; he was a second generation of a family that was extraordinarily rich. They were the rich people of LaCrosse, and there was a funny ending to that. In the Depression they went broke. This is a very complicated story--you could write a novel about it--fascinating, complicated, and true. I knew quite a lot about this myself. But anyway my grandfather had been chairman of the school board in LaCrosse, Wisconsin for years and years, and had been very influential in the quality of the schools. He didn't go broke, but the trust that he was the beneficiary of went broke because my grandmother didn't handle it very well. That's being nice about it. When he went broke, they

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wanted to keep him involved, so they shifted him. He needed a job, although he was in his 60s. They kept him, really not as the chairman of the board because he was an employee, but they put him in charge of all of the facilities. He never had had an actual job in his life; he was an inventor, and he invented a number of things. I'm told--I never checked it out--that if he had kept the invention in his own hands, he would have gotten rid of it. It was some pumps that were exceptionally complicated. So I had an extraordinary background.

JOHNSON: Yes, both North and South.

BOLLING: My mother being most extraordinary. I then went on to Phillips-Exeter and was a disaster. I didn't like it, and I didn't like being away from the place in Long Island. I had--let's say--four, five, or six bad years.

JOHNSON: Was that when you were living in New York City that they sent you to Exeter?

BOLLING: I started from there. I didn't do a bit of good at Exeter, and I'm not particularly interested in even worrying about it, because I decided a long time ago that there wasn't any point in my going to a psychiatrist unless I was going to spend a lot of time. And no matter

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how screwed up I was, it worked, so I wasn't going to mess with it. But in any event, I had a bad time, and I went to a little place called Sewanee, University of the South, Tennessee. I went there and you could say that I was a good football bum, and chased girls and didn't do much of anything. I got a bad injury; the injury was bad enough so that I was immobilized for four months, and I got back to the books. Then I started to be an intellectual.

JOHNSON: A fateful injury.

BOLLING: I started to be an intellectual again, because that's essentially what I was at I3, with mother. I started back, and I had a couple of jobs that were in the teaching field.

JOHNSON: You did get good grades there?

BOLLING: No, I didn't get good grades until my last year. When I got to my last year, when I had that bum leg and couldn't get around, I had much more...

JOHNSON: No longer the playboy in other words.

BOLLING: That's right. And besides, I decided it was a waste of time. What I did was not very healthy.

JOHNSON: You majored in literature apparently there.

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BOLLING: Both bachelor and masters degrees.

JOHNSON: Masters in literature. How about history; didn't you study history at that time?

BOLLING: That was when I moved from literature, which I thought was reasonable. I went down to Vanderbilt for another year. Then I decided to volunteer under the Selective Service Act, thinking that I couldn't finish up on the Ph.D. It turned out that I could have, because they didn't call me under the Selective Service Act until almost a year later. I surely could have gotten finished. I turned and shifted to a Ph.D. in history. I hadn't written the thesis, but if I had known that I had a year I probably could have gotten through with the work, maybe not. But I never got the Ph.D. except in an honorary fashion.

JOHNSON: And then...

BOLLING: History was what I was interested in.

JOHNSON: Before you entered the service, you apparently worked at Florence State Teachers College in Alabama.

BOLLING: That's right. That's peculiar because I was working with a fellow that came out of Columbia, who had been the

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head of the education department there, and somebody at Florence State Teachers College was smart enough to employ him down there. I was not working for a southerner.

JOHNSON: So it was a Dewey style philosophy?

BOLLING: You got it.

JOHNSON: And you apparently had to work with rural schools and teachers.

BOLLING: That's right; we were doing the real thing. We were going out and working in poverty stricken areas.

JOHNSON: You saw poverty at its worst, I suppose.

BOLLING: Absolutely.

JOHNSON: In other words, this could have been an influence on your life.

BOLLING: Well, it was an enormous influence at Sewanee. I had a weird, weird, Bible teacher; that's the way he billed himself, but he was not a radical. He was a far-out liberal. He ran the movie theater among other things. He taught Bible. Well, it was comparative religion; that was what it was. He also ran the movie theater and he had a for-profit sort of cafeteria. One of the experiences that

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I still get chills from is when I was sitting there, I guess still on a crutch, just sitting there drinking a cup of coffee and thinking, when there wasn't much activity, and I saw this guy come in from the road. Tony--who I later roomed with, this professor who I later roomed with in my graduate year--Tony had a rule that whoever came in there got something to eat, whoever came in begging during the Depression. I graduated in '37, '38.

This guy came in and he got, what I found out later by asking, he got the handout which was a couple of donuts, probably second-day or third-day donuts, and a big cup of coffee--with all the things that you'd put in a cup of coffee. I happened to watch this guy, and he drank the coffee down about that far, and then he filled it up with sugar and a little cream. This was a smart guy; he wasn't a dummy about food. That's what he had; he had those two donuts. And that got me to thinking. I'd already seen an awful lot on the train, when we'd come down and go back, there would be dead bodies beside the railroad tracks. My mother was a liberal in a real sense. When they set up a CCC camp down the road on the other side of town, over the hill and down where they had an old man's CCC camp, the snobs and the snots on McClung Hill said they weren't going to be allowed to walk over the hill. They found

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they had a tiger in their midst, and they found that they [the CCC men] also had the support of the judge. He just didn't think it was fair; he didn't have my mother's kind of views, but my mother's egalitarian views prevailed. Little things like that have an effect on you. I had enough of them so I came out...

JOHNSON: Tony is the religion professor?

BOLLING: Tony Griswold.

JOHNSON: The professor you were talking about?

BOLLING: Yes. And then I had two other things that happened to me aside from the gross thing that happened, of getting hurt and starting back with the books. Near Sewanee there was a place called Mount Eagle. And Mount Eagle had sort of a Chataqua-like place; Sewanee was high enough up in the hills, the mountains, so that it was cooler in the summer, substantially cooler than the land down. The people that came up there came up there from Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Nashville, Tennessee, and in Nashville, Tennessee is Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt University at that particular time had a remarkable group of professors, and others, who were involved in something called the "Fugitive Movement"--Robert Penn Warren, Allen

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Little, and the whole bunch of them. Carolyn Gordon was Warren's wife, and she was a writer too. There were a number of other names, of real quality, and they were involved in this thing

called the Fugitive Movement. It was some way of restoring a Jeffersonian culture and the sort of phrase that they used on themselves was "40 acres and a steel mule."

It was about the time that the New Deal, the "red hot" New Deal--I don't mean the communist New Deal or the Stalinist New Deal, the people who were trying to infiltrate--but I'm talking about the real left, intellectual left. They were trying to figure out--and Mrs. Roosevelt helped a lot on this stuff--they were trying to figure out how to compensate for the inadequacy of the land in various ways. The land in the southeast was a disaster in those days. Reconstruction of the land that came from the TVA is probably one of the great national phenomena that everybody has forgotten. These people had a few students who came over and visited with them, drank with them, and some of them were Vanderbilt students. But a very few of them were Sewanee students, and I was one of the ones that got there. Then there was another institution up there, that was probably Communist-dominated, Stalinist-dominated, and of course, I later on

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had a considerable career in dealing with Stalinists in various institutions. ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] was established to give liberals a home that was not connected with the Stalinists, the CPUSA [Communist Party-USA].

Well, for some reason, I've forgotten why, I guess the year between my graduation in '37 and the beginning of my masters, which was in English literature--I got my bachelor's in French literature and my masters in English--I went to a Quaker school, a Quaker camp, at a place called the Highlander Folk School. The Highlander Folk School was famous in those days for being dominated by the Stalinists. But there were also people like the Friends; the camp was a Friends camp at this school. I got exposed to all of that. I had a couple of people that are relatively well-known in Washington, one that was there, and we each remember the other as relatively sympathetic to their anti-Stalinist view. They were the ones that were most interested in the anti-Stalinist view. The guy I'm talking about is Adam Yarmalinsky, an intellectual with considerable potency.

JOHNSON: This Quaker school would be inherently anti-Stalinist, would it not, since they do not believe in dictatorship?

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BOLLING: They didn't believe in it, but they were at the same school.

JOHNSON: They were at the same school--or on the same grounds?

BOLLING: No, they were there as guests of and paying their way at Highlander. In those days there was a large amount of infiltration into liberal groups that didn't know they were infiltrated.

JOHNSON: They were going to try to convert these Quakers in the South, to their cause, I suppose.

BOLLING: Exactly.

JOHNSON: Did you ever meet Reinhold Niebuhr?

BOLLING: Of course, I met him; I was a founder of ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] as well as an organizer.

JOHNSON: So you read his work and was influenced by it?

BOLLING: Oh yes, I was much influenced by it. I missed the earlier part; what came before ADA, but it was a much smaller group that he was heavily involved in. And Niebuhr in effect was one of my bosses. People like Joe Rauh were heavily involved in that. It's a funny story about ADA later on with Mr. Truman, because they were one

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of the groups--and you should remember this, I might forget it--they were one of the groups that wanted to dump Mr. Truman in the '48 convention. And you're going to see as we develop all this, an almost unbelievable set of reasons why I developed as I did, why I got the experience. It's already pretty wild.

JOHNSON: Yes, it sounds like it. Was your mother living on income from her job, or was it coming from other sources?

BOLLING: She was left a considerable amount of insurance by my father. There's a story about that later on, but what she did, she ultimately spent herself into poverty. I figured it out when I was in Congress, and began to take good care of her, but there was a time in there that I ought to be ashamed of, when I did not realize what kind of trouble she was in.

JOHNSON: But there apparently were some aunts and uncles who were landowners, landed gentry, so to speak?

BOLLING: Not really. Not really; the family is sort of gone in Alabama. There's not much Walker left, from that brand; I'm really sort of the end of it, of the Walker line.

JOHNSON: So you joined the service before Pearl Harbor.

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BOLLING: That's right. I worked at Florence State Teachers College, with Morris Mitchell. There were several Mitchells who were famous in that period. He was the teacher, probably a socialist, and surely a pacifist, who had a place in North Carolina, one of those idealistic communities. It worked pretty well as long as he was around and later he turned up at Putney School as the master there, after I was in Congress. So all kinds of things have changed with him. But I had a lot of strange...

JOHNSON: Yes, that raises a question; in view of all these influences, why was it you decided to become a military man, join the military, in early 1941?

BOLLING: Well, Morris Mitchell was the last influence I had after I was committed. I had already volunteered, and I didn't find any conflict between the influences that I had had and the attitudes that I had developed, and the need to defeat Hitler. My mother, who pretended to be apolitical, was extraordinarily opinionated, and she recognized Hitler for what he was, much earlier than most people, because of her background. Those languages she didn't use. She was talented, but she was enormously knowledgeable about Europe.

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JOHNSON: She was anti-isolationist, it seems.

BOLLING: Oh, totally. But she had been talented enough; the myth is--and I can't prove it--that she had training with Monnet, and she stopped painting when he told her that she would be very good but never great.

She had a similar quality as teacher of piano. That's one of the reasons that I was always sort of pleased with Mr. Truman and amused by what I could connect in my head. She played the piano, and had a grand. That was one of the last things that she sold off. So she must be the dominant influence. I don't much give a damn, just so long as I had it, but hers was not an isolationist position.

JOHNSON: She was warning about Hitler and what would happen if something wasn't done to stop him?

BOLLING: I also, on my own, got the same sense; that we had to win that war although we weren't in it. I'm very much of an Anglophile; I was then, and that's obviously from the literature.

JOHNSON: George Bernard Shaw; did you read his stuff?

BOLLING: I read his stuff, among others. I read them all. I

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ended up, not with a Churchillian view; I had a very liberal domestic view before I went into the Army. It wasn't stopped by the Army. Of course, I had a weird job in the Army. I didn't start out with a weird job; I was one of those people that I suppose made the mistake of insisting on going in at the bottom. Most of my friends were going in as Naval ensigns or whatever they the hell called it.

JOHNSON: What month and year was it you went in?

BOLLING: I went in April 1941. I don't know how much detail you want--I can be quick--they couldn't figure out what to do with me and I spent a month and a half, two months, learning about real poverty in the South by looking at the people who were recruited with me. There were two people with some college in the group that I went in with, 200 from the draft, and the other guy was a drunk already. Later on in my career I had some problems with alcohol, but he started out that way. And mine never interfered with any part of my career, although it interfered with my life. They didn't know what to do with me, and they put me in a chemical warfare company. To make a very long story short, I ended up on the high seas seven days out of Pearl Harbor on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day. We were on

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the wrong side of Pearl Harbor, and we ended up in Australia. Again, to make it a very short story, I got a job running the first Post Office in that theatre. I did that.

JOHNSON: What outfit were you with at this point?

BOLLING: Chemical warfare; I don't even remember the number. I think it was the 66th. It was a separate chemical warfare company.

JOHNSON: You were attached to MacArthur's headquarters?

BOLLING: It wasn't attached to anything, not at that stage. We were a filler convoy sent to the Philippines; there were about 6,000 troops of all kinds, all little pieces.

JOHNSON: Well, apparently they decided at this point that they weren't going to reinforce the Philippines. They diverted you down to Australia.

BOLLING: We had one vessel to protect us; it wasn't a destroyer, it was another notch up, a cruiser. And we were met by an Australian cruiser wherever the hell we were, seven days out of Pearl. We were taken first into the Fiji Islands, and were kept there for a day, and then we were taken into Brisbane, Australia. I spent some time

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there, and in the process I moved from the Post Office to the BASE Section Command. I became the Sergeant Major of the BASE Section.

JOHNSON: In Brisbane?

BOLLING: In Brisbane, which is a big jump, a big job, an enormous responsibility, because I had relatively inadequate officers. I never did get my last stripe because I was on special duty from that chemical warfare company, and I was always a Tech Sergeant. I never got to be a Master Sergeant. But all of a sudden, I got to be a Warrant Officer and I was offered a commission, which was withdrawn quickly when they realized, within a day, that they were going to have an OCS [Officer Candidate School]. I went to a six weeks OCS in Brisbane, the start-up of a regular OCS that worked with--I guess he was just a colonel, not a general.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

BOLLING: Donaldson. His family asked me, when he died suddenly after World War II, when I was in Congress, to write his obituary. He was a hell of a good guy; I'm not sure how good a general in terms of going all the way to the top, but I think he went to Major General maybe. He

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was a good man, a very decent person, and he wouldn't let me go anywhere else. So I came back and the place where I had sat when I was sergeant major was right here, and the place where I sat when I was assistant adjutant general was right there. Theoretically, I should have had a lot less power when I moved. But having come from there, I didn't have less power. And this is where I began to learn about power--I mean consciously.

JOHNSON: What rank were you at this point?

BOLLING: Second John, second lieutenant. I had had "a much higher rank" before; the sergeant major had a hell of a lot more responsibility directly upon him. The difference was that when I got there, when I signed something, that made it official. The sergeant major didn't sign a goddamn thing; he just got people to sign things. There's no point in going into that. I could spend a couple of days on the philosophy of the military, and so on, most of it pleasant, but not all of it.

This guy Donaldson was the best they had, and they picked him to be in charge of the advance echelon of the Services of Supply; the BASE Section was of the Services of Supply. He took me as his aide and assistant adjutant general; and I don't know how long I spent with him. But

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you know, I was an alter ego. Not in the personal sense; it was very professional. I was not the kind of person that was interested in a personal relationship. I wanted to get on with it. It's a strange attitude, and I haven't found many people like that. I didn't want to get on with it because I wanted to get promoted; I wanted to get on with it because I wanted to get it done. And that's when I first realized that what really moved me, and interested me, was to get something done that I really believed to be important and in the public interest. I really had gotten, at that point, into a hard commitment to public service of some kind.

JOHNSON: So in a sense, this kind of initiated your interest in politics, in a larger sense?

BOLLING: I missed the fact that I had been president of the student body at Sewanee when I was a graduate student. The guy that caused that to happen is still alive; he was a classmate of mine who decided that they needed me for another year as he left Sewanee to go on to law school. He arranged it so that I got to do that.

JOHNSON: So you had experience in student government.

BOLLING: Yes, and I was a radical in student government. I

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tried to get rid of hazing, and succeeded in that by one vote. I tried to get rid of the fraternities, and lost that.

JOHNSON: This was at the University of the South at Sewanee?

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: Well, then somewhere along the line you met General MacArthur.

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: What was your immediate impression of him?

BOLLING: Well, I didn't have any meeting; I didn't meet him for years. I didn't try to meet him. I didn't even try to look at him. But he did depend on my boss, his adjutant general, who was in a very peculiar job because it was different from any other adjutant general that I ever heard of. We handled all the incoming and outgoing messages of all kind, including the highest level of secrecy, which means combat operations. That came through that adjutant general, and although I didn't know it, that was the job I was hired for. The reputation I had from my work in BASE Section 3 and the advance section of SOS in New Guinea was such that they picked me out to take a look at. They brought me back to Brisbane and took a look

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at me and offered me the job. I was told later that they looked at twenty guys, but they picked me out, and they gave me this job. That was not the job that was at the highest level of secrecy, but it was the one that led into it, and relatively quickly. I had gone through the preliminaries and they had finished all kinds of investigations. The FBI turned me down one time, but Donaldson overruled them. That was when I moved from being an enlisted man to being an officer. At least that's what I heard. I never bothered to get those files. You know, it'd just clutter up what I am really interested in. But in the headquarters, Fitch had three assistants, three top assistants.

JOHNSON: Fitch?

BOLLING: B.M. Fitch was the Adjutant General. I became ultimately the third assistant; the other two were Regular Army enlisted men who outranked me. But in that job I was given more and more responsibility, and more and more rank. I came out finally, at the end, a legitimate Major. But he gave me the last push up, you know, when I left, and I came out a lieutenant colonel. I had two decorations and a bunch of other stuff.

JOHNSON: So you were in on some of these major operations...

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BOLLING: I was in on all of them after I joined the Headquarters. I was on the advanced echelon of GHQ and MacArthur always had an advance echelon which he led.

JOHNSON: Even though you weren't seeking to meet him, you had to somehow make contact with him.

BOLLING: Oh, of course. When I got to Leyte--when we invaded Leyte on October 20, 1944, as I remember it--I went in a few hours after he did. I was told where to set up his office. It was set up here on a road, and mine was here just across the street. I still didn't see him much, except casually. I didn't have many associations, but I worked with him very closely. He'd say what kind of order he wanted or what kind of message he wanted to send, sometimes to me, through his...

JOHNSON: You didn't have any input into the strategy?

BOLLING: Oh no. I observed it with fascination. No, no, I didn't have that kind of operation.

JOHNSON: Then, after Leyte there was the Okinawa campaign. Did you go into Okinawa?

BOLLING: I went through Okinawa. I spent 40 months in the

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Pacific before I came back the first time.

JOHNSON: Did you miss Iwo Jima?

BOLLING: No, I went to all those places, but I wasn't in on the fight. You see, MacArthur didn't go in on those fights either. Okinawa and Iwo Jima were Navy; that came out of the other part of the Pacific. I came to Hollandia, Leyte, the Philippines generally. I was back from the U.S. to the Philippines in time for the surrender and on into Japan.

JOHNSON: I understand there were some who referred to MacArthur as "Dugout Doug," apparently questioning his bravery.

BOLLING: Yes, that was Navy propaganda. I'm not a great fan of MacArthur as a politician nor as the one in charge in Japan, but I'm a great fan of his as a general. He was a nut; he was so fearless. I went in a couple of hours later than he did into Leyte, and I was scared to death and had a right to be scared to death because they were still shooting at us. He believed that God's

hand was on his shoulder. He was a kook. My wife and her brother do a great job of kidding me about MacArthur; every time they can find a funny picture they bring it back. When Truman fired him, by then I was far enough along so that radio people wanted to talk to me. One of them asked what I

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thought about it, and I said, the President made a terrible mistake; he waited too long.

JOHNSON: Well, we're going to get to that, of course. On August 6, the atomic bomb was first used. Did you know anything at all about this project, before the dropping?

BOLLING: No, sir, I didn't know anything at all about it, but I saw the guy come in with a briefcase that was handcuffed to him. He was the guy that brought the news to MacArthur. But I didn't know that then.

JOHNSON: Brought the news?

BOLLING: It came through a messenger. I think the guy was a general.

JOHNSON: What was your reaction to that, the use of the atomic bomb?

BOLLING: Well, I knew what wave I was going to be in, on the invasion of Japan, and I was very sympathetic. I was going to be in the eighth wave and my chances of getting through that were relatively limited. I was going to go in with MacArthur, and you know, I didn't believe a hell of a lot in what MacArthur believed. I didn't think I was being

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taken care of by the Lord. So I was glad not to have to do that. I did the paperwork on the first examination by whatever the committee it was, on Hiroshima, and I got quite a lesson out of that.

JOHNSON: Getting ready for the surrender ceremonies in Tokyo harbor, you apparently had something to do with the arrangements for that ceremony?

BOLLING: I worked as about the third man, working on the arrangements.

JOHNSON: How about the writing of the treaty itself? You had nothing to do with it?

BOLLING: Nothing.

JOHNSON: You landed in Japan, what, two days before the signing?

BOLLING: That's correct.

JOHNSON: And it was a secure area?

BOLLING: Well, it was supposed to be secure; MacArthur felt it was secure. I don't think the rest of us thought it was secure.

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JOHNSON: What kind of reaction did you get when you landed in Japan?

BOLLING: It scared the hell out of us. When we got into buses that the Japanese ran, and we came in from the airport, which ever one it was, we went down roads that were still fields, and every Japanese turned their back on us. And when they took us into places to eat or live, I was scared all the time, and most of the rest of us were. There were a few war correspondents who were so nutty by then that they weren't scared. It went the way MacArthur said it would.

JOHNSON: So you arranged for the U.S.S. *Missouri* to be where it was with other ships around it.

BOLLING: Yes, I was just, you know, a flunky. I had to interview some of the generals and make sure they got where they were supposed to go, and get it all lined up. I just had a flunky's job at that point.

JOHNSON: The Secret Service wouldn't be involved at all.

BOLLING: Oh, I knew all the secrets. I didn't know about the atomic bomb but I had every secret there was except maybe a few sort of "double eyes only" to MacArthur.

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JOHNSON: In other words, almost all messages that came to MacArthur came through you during the war?

BOLLING: Yes. The great bulk of them. Now there must have been some operational ones I didn't see, but I saw them in that advance echelon.

JOHNSON: I guess there was a little rivalry between Nimitz and MacArthur, or did you notice any.

BOLLING: I knew it was there and I was very concerned about the coordination. I knew enough to know that there was constant friction.

JOHNSON: And everything went off as planned for this ceremony, the signing of the surrender?

BOLLING: To my knowledge it did. To my knowledge there wasn't any problem.

JOHNSON: Where were you when the ceremony itself took place?

BOLLING: I was so mad at the brass at that stage that I didn't go. One of my rewards was supposed to be to have a place to hide on the *Missouri*. But I didn't go; I was furious.

JOHNSON: You were on shore then when this was happening.

BOLLING: That's right. Yes. Oh, all I worked with was plans

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and people. I didn't work on the ship. Somebody else decided where the ship would be.

JOHNSON: You weren't on the U.S.S. *Missouri*; you never got on board?

BOLLING: I never tried to. I refused to go as a matter of fact. I was in a position where I could refuse to go.

Of course, it was obviously silly, but I was furious. I had worked in several privileged positions with very, very tough people who were very insistent on being treated as generals and so on. I, for example, would go to a cocktail party in Leyte, and I'd go and I'd be the only person who respected the President. It was insane for me to be there, but I was the only one that was pro-Roosevelt, when they were talking politics.

JOHNSON: Is that right? And these were MacArthur's generals?

BOLLING: Yes, that's right. They were damn near traitors in that conversation.

JOHNSON: They hated Roosevelt?

BOLLING: Oh, hell, yes. Just like MacArthur. Now, I never heard MacArthur say anything; but I heard his staff talk in ways that I found intolerable.

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JOHNSON: What did they dislike about Roosevelt so much?

BOLLING: Oh, I don't know. I guess because he had more power than MacArthur. Some of these were good generals; you'll never hear me say a sour word about a couple of them.

JOHNSON: They were political reactionaries?

BOLLING: Yes, at least. Some of them were awful. One of them became sort of famous, a man whose last name was Feller. I can't remember his first name; he was a reactionary, a devious guy, who later had a political role in the United States. A dreadful person.

JOHNSON: So this made you feel uncomfortable around these people?

BOLLING: That's right, but we didn't talk politics. Joe Rauh and I became friends; you know who Joe Rauh is?

JOHNSON: I believe he's represented a lot of ACLU people.

BOLLING: That's fair. He was much involved with ADA--Americans for Democratic Action. He and I are still friends. I had lunch with him the other day. There's a funny story about Joe Rauh and the whole ADA board and Mr. Truman that you ought to catch me on later.

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JOHNSON: Was he in the military?

BOLLING: Yes, he worked with the deputy chief of staff and became the head of what we called the PICAU, the Philippine Civil Affairs Unit. They were the military government in the Philippines. I did him a favor and he needed to get some orders for his people; he couldn't get anything done. he came in to see me and said that he'd heard that I knew how to get things done and could I work it out. I said, "Yes, I could." I told him just to wait a couple of days and we'd get it all worked out. By that time I knew what I could do, and what I couldn't do. I had it worked out so he had the orders, never any fuss.

JOHNSON: You did learn how to accommodate to the military system. What was it that really enraged you, though, so you wouldn't...

BOLLING: Well, you can't use polite language on what was happening. In war, and when there is a war, they'd put up with almost anything as long as you obeyed orders, and were efficient and got the job done, and helped them look good. I'm not being negative about that; I'm just saying the limits. As soon as they got out of the necessity to perform and produce, it turned into chicken shit. They

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were fighting over who should stand next to whom, and the head...

JOHNSON: Protocol?

BOLLING: All of that stuff. And I was so enraged by my experience with these guys that had been, if not heroes to me, people that I admired. I recognized their weaknesses; I recognized their competitiveness--I recognized all of that. I saw that before that in the battle of Leyte Gulf, for example; I heard about that, because I was there. It was a pretty sloppy problem that we had with [Admiral William F.] Halsey off somewhere, God knows where, and all the rest of us sitting down there wondering when the Japs were coming. We also had things like intelligence information that said the Japanese were going to dive in on us; you know, they were going to crash planes and send in parachutes, the works. We had kamikazes all around. But as soon as we got the surrender, all of these guys turned into--I don't know how to cite it.

JOHNSON: Martinets?

BOLLING: No, they weren't so much martinets; it was just all the chicken shit came back into the military.

JOHNSON: As if there was no war to worry about anymore.

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BOLLING: That's right, and it just absolutely enraged me. I thought we just got the beginning of the job done.

JOHNSON: So rank and status, and privilege, became the order of the day.

BOLLING: That's exactly right.

JOHNSON: Well, then after the surrender ceremonies, how long did you stay?

BOLLING: Well I thought I might be able to do some good as a civilian working in the government section. There was a fellow there that I didn't like. I thought that doing the same thing I had done before, I might be able to be useful in the democratization of Japan, which was really a pretty remarkable opportunity. Theoretically, at least, according to the best information I had, the State Department was going to manage that. I had had some experience with State Department people at MacArthur's headquarters because I was just about the only officer that would talk to them.

There were only two guys there that were quite remarkable people; one was George Atcheson, no relationship with the later Secretary of State. He was also a friend, and another fellow named John Stewart Service, who was famous. Both of them told me exactly the same thing about

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China. George Atcheson was a conservative Republican. Jack Service was not that; he was a liberal Democrat, not a Communist. I listened to them talk over a drink or two in MacArthur's headquarters, and it sounded to me like they were going to have a role in what happened in the democratization of Japan, and people like them were going to have a role. There would be conservatives and liberals, but people who had sane views, not views like MacArthur's seemed to be, because of his staff. I didn't hear anything from MacArthur, and MacArthur got along with [John] Curtin, who was the Prime Minister of Australia; I knew that, and he was a Labor guy, so I didn't really know anything about MacArthur for sure.

JOHNSON: At least you thought there would be a "New Deal" for Japan?

BOLLING: Yes, that's what I really thought. So I signed a piece of paper that said I'd come back and be discharged from the Army, and become a civilian. I got another leave; my other leave was the first leave I had had after 40 months, and I got another quickie.

JOHNSON: By the way, you had been at Ft. Leavenworth too.

BOLLING: That's right, I'd been at Command and General Staff

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School.

JOHNSON: That was during '44.

BOLLING: '44 or '45, I guess. I went back in '45. I got Christmas leave in '45, after the surrender. I came back, and between the time I left and the time I got back, MacArthur had been given the job of being Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. I wasn't about to become a civilian with Courtney Whitney the head of the government section. He was one of MacArthur's closest pals, one of the top Intelligence leaders, and I just couldn't see that. I was pretty sure I knew what he was, and that he was very close to a Fascist. I didn't think that was going to be much fun. I had thought I'd stay a civilian under the State Department and I'd probably be able to do some very useful things with those people in charge. I didn't have those views of Whitney's, and I had some experience with the Communists there, the Stalinists there-- Lieutenant General Gerevyanko, I think was the name of the man. He was getting more and more arrogant as we were losing power, military power. Our divisions were disintegrating; everything was just going "whoosh"--on the "bring-the-boys-home" business. I didn't like that either, because I knew what was going to go on was going to be tough, without

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regard to what the Communists did. It was just tough because we had all of these different problems.

So when I got back I decided that I had to get away from my agreement to be a civilian. I've always been terribly lucky. Luck came along and presented me with an offer from MacArthur's closest people, the people that ran his office and ran his door, a man named Bunker, Lawrence Bunker. He asked me to be his assistant. In my job then, I began to see MacArthur pretty regularly. But then I stayed military; I didn't become a civilian.

JOHNSON: You were a lieutenant colonel?

BOLLING: I was a major.

JOHNSON: You're still a major.

BOLLING: I get to be a lieutenant colonel when I leave, as I leave.

JOHNSON: A parting gift?

BOLLING: That's right. They did it to practically everybody. And Bunker wanted me to come along and I thought well, sort of cynically at that stage, that that would be an interesting wind-up. When the time came I could just tell them that there was just no way that I could be kept in the

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Service, because I had about twice as many points as you needed to have to be discharged. Although we had violated the law on those points on occasion, particularly when we sent a division into Korea that would have been without NCOs and second lieutenants if we hadn't, I'd be out.

JOHNSON: You were married by this time.

BOLLING: Yes. So that's about what happened. And I got out.

JOHNSON: What month and year?

BOLLING: Well, it was '46 and I think it was August that I finished my leave. In that period I made the transition, some kind of transition, to being a civilian.

JOHNSON: As soon as you left the military then, did you move here to Kansas City?

BOLLING: My wife had a house. Houses were in short supply in 1946.

JOHNSON: In other words, your connection with Kansas City started with Ft. Leavenworth, I suppose.

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: In other words, if you hadn't gone to Ft. Leavenworth you wouldn't have been a Kansas Citian.

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BOLLING: I think that's right. Although when I was running the first time or two, I kept pointing out that I liked Kansas City as I went through it on the way to Houston.

JOHNSON: It isn't too easy to get elected around here, maybe, unless you have some background with the old families.

BOLLING: I was a freak. I was a freak, an absolute freak.

JOHNSON: So you were coming back in '46, you say, and you start with the University of Kansas City?

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: In their what, veterans affairs?

BOLLING: Let's see, I was Director of Student Activities and Veterans Affairs, and for all practical purposes I had a job that was sort of a multiple extra Dean. I did all kinds of things.

JOHNSON: You counselled veterans who enrolled there. Did you teach any courses at that time?

BOLLING: No. My job, theoretically, was just to counsel veterans, but what I did was work with the president, work with the Dean, work with everybody. All kinds of different things; I had to deal with

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housing, and I had to deal with every kind of problem a veteran could have.

JOHNSON: How did you get that job?

BOLLING: I just went up and applied for it. It was the only job I could find because even though I had a bachelors and a masters, and an extra year on a Ph.D., I wasn't qualified, they said, to be in public education. I was not the least bit interested in going into business. I had sort of a snobbish attitude toward business, I guess, is the right way to put it.

JOHNSON: Where were you living at the time?

BOLLING: At 524 Pierce Street.

JOHNSON: And that was the Fifth District, Congressional District?

BOLLING: Yes, that was the Fifth District. I didn't get in there planning to become a Congressman. I got in there planning to have a job and make a transition. I had a fascinating job and a fascinating time. I stayed on that job ten or eleven months; then I helped found ADA [Americans for Democratic Action] and they decided they would like me as a Midwest organizer.

JOHNSON: This is in Washington, D.C. where the ADA was

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headquartered?

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: And who got you into the ADA?

BOLLING: I think there was a woman, Vi Magrath, who persuaded Rauh and the rest of them who knew me slightly. I think she persuaded them that I was the kind of person they needed because she watched me chair a meeting out here at the University of Kansas City. It was a very, very rough political meeting. She knew what side I was on, and it wasn't a very big meeting, but when that side won by one vote after about three hours' fight...

JOHNSON: Was this university politics?

BOLLING: No.

JOHNSON: You're talking about city politics?

BOLLING: No, it was separate-group politics, groups like ADA. There was an organization in Kansas City which I helped affiliate with a national organization, which I later found had been taken over by the Stalinists, and I was helping reaffiliate that organization with the non-Stalinist and anti-Stalinist ADA. She was enough impressed by what went on to persuade them, I guess; and there may have been some

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other things.

JOHNSON: This was a local chapter of ADA that you had helped?

BOLLING: What I did was I created the local chapter of ADA out of this other outfit. I and others, you know, did this; there's too much "I" in this, but you can't do much about it.

JOHNSON: What did they call that group?

BOLLING: The Independent Voters League of Kansas City.

JOHNSON: It was a Stalinist-oriented group?

BOLLING: No, it was entirely local but the national group it was affiliated with was. It was called the Independent Citizens Political Action Committee, I believe.

JOHNSON: It disappeared a couple or three years later, I suppose.

BOLLING: Yes, it did. We had the Wallace movement, and it was very heavily involved in the Wallace movement and doing its usual purpose. I got us out of it well before the Wallace movement.

JOHNSON: Fortunately.

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BOLLING: Fortunately for everybody in it, including me.

JOHNSON: So this starts your involvement in activist politics?

BOLLING: Correct, in a national politics sense.

JOHNSON: Can we use the term "liberal" to describe your position?

BOLLING: Yes. I can give you a time when I got involved in local politics. I'm going to be a little rough on the time. One of the set of times I can be sure of, I actively worked as a ward leader for a man named Jerome Walsh who ran for Congress in a primary--which included Roger Slaughter who was the sitting Congressman--and Enos Axtell. I was wrong as hell to be on Walsh's side, but didn't know it; he was a liberal. Axtell was not the liberal; he had been chosen in essence by Truman's friends. I worked effectively in one of the wards in the Fifth District of Missouri Congressional District.

JOHNSON: That was in '46 wasn't it?

BOLLING: That's right. That was in '46 just as I got out, almost. It probably was illegal one time, wearing the uniform, but I didn't know it. But in any event, Walsh got creamed and that didn't turn me off. I just thought it had

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been handled wrong. Axtell finally got beat; he beat Roger Slaughter in the primary, and Axtell got beat by Albert L. Reeves, Jr. a Republican, in the general election. I got interested in politics at that time, but I didn't think of running for Congress, strangely enough. I was really more thinking about running for something else, like [City] Council.

JOHNSON: But you had been canvassing for Walsh?

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: So you had that precinct-type of experience?

BOLLING: That's right. Late--and we are overlapping in a kind of way--but late when I was still working at the University of Kansas City, the Kansas City *Star* conducted a vote fraud investigation, the vote frauds of 1946. The frauds were concentrated on the prosecutor, and the Presiding Judge. There was a lot of corruption, and it was obvious corruption; and I didn't like it very much, so I helped the Kansas City *Star*--which was Republican as hell in those days--I helped them recruit student veterans, veterans who needed an extra few bucks. Most of them were married. They were recruited to help with the investigation. I was the guy who went with the top *Star* reporters--there were a

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couple of them--to interview the people who probably were guilty of fraud. It wasn't an accident that I went. This all sounds like a bad novel; it wasn't an accident that I went in my old trench coat, and I sat there with them and they all got to know me, and hate my guts. They...

JOHNSON: You went to interview with two...

BOLLING: Two of us would go, one of those reporters and I.

JOHNSON: Who did you interview?

BOLLING: We interviewed all kinds of people, and I can't tell you all of them, but I think Henry McKissick was one of them. Everybody was about to go to the pokey on that. I believe I've got it right--I believe that's when they blew up the safe and took a lot of material out of it. In any event, I had this rather bad reputation with some of the Democratic faction leaders. They identified me, and kept thinking about me.

JOHNSON: They thought you were a Roy Roberts man?

BOLLING: That's the kind of thing; Jack Swift was one of those guys. Ira McCarty was the other.

JOHNSON: Two reporters, investigative reporters?

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BOLLING: Yes. Really good ones. I was involved, but only as a flunky, really. Then we got out of the overlap when we get ADA, and the ADA organizer job was superseded by my becoming the national vice-chairman of the American Veterans Committee, which was an organization of veterans which was very liberal.

JOHNSON: Was this in '47, now?

BOLLING: Yes, we're heading into '47.

JOHNSON: Did you know Frank Kelly?

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: He was with the American Veterans Committee. He worked out here for the *Star* in the '30s and went east and became a writer.

BOLLING: Well, I had to know him because I was the head of the various AVC chapters here, until I left as Vice-Chairman of the national American Veterans Committee.

JOHNSON: The American Veterans Committee, was that an alternative to the VFW and the American Legion, or just how did it fit in with that?

BOLLING: It was a liberal veterans organization; it wasn't an

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old-line veterans organization. It was liberal in the same sense that ADA was. It had essentially the same kind of attitude.

JOHNSON: In other words, they didn't believe that the American Legion was standing for the right thing?

BOLLING: That's correct. The American Legion was the kind of veterans organization that was self-serving and very conservative. They wanted the veterans to have special privileges, and while we weren't against the veterans being taken care of, particularly if they had been wounded, we were for a broad-gauge social program, more like the New Deal.

JOHNSON: Of course, your meeting with Tom Evans was a fateful one and it has been written up in an interview that we have here, about how this came about, how you met at UKC [University of Kansas City].

BOLLING: He probably remembers it better than I do.

JOHNSON: He was apparently trying to get the pharmacy college, you know, funded and integrated with the university. He had been working on that and somehow he got acquainted with you.

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BOLLING: He probably got acquainted with me through a little political organization which I can't remember. It's the same one that Harry Morris was involved in.

JOHNSON: Well, were you aware that if Emmett Scanlon had not doublecrossed Tom Evans at a state Democratic convention, it probably would have been him, rather than you, who would have had Tom Evans' support in 1948?

BOLLING: That is correct. I think Emmett actually was doublecrossing an organization that Tom was for. I never did try to get that straightened out because it wasn't in my interest to have a discussion with Evans at that stage about why we didn't like Scanlon, but he sure as hell was for me.

JOHNSON: Evans says he was looking for a good candidate, and I quote him, "...a group of young lawyers and young merchants told me about a fellow by the name of Dick Bolling." Do you have any idea what this group of young lawyers and young merchants was?

BOLLING: It was a group headed by Harry Morris, but I cannot remember its name.

JOHNSON: This was an organized group then?

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BOLLING: Oh, sure, it was a group that Harry Morris, who was Enos Axtell's campaign manager, organized. It had a name and I just have forgotten the name.

JOHNSON: You mentioned being acquainted with Roger Slaughter and Axtell in the '46 campaign, and perhaps it was fortunate for your interests that they were defeated in '46, and so by '48 you kind of had to start out from square one again, and that opened up the opportunity for you in '48.

BOLLING: Emmett Scanlon filed, and I filed the last night.

JOHNSON: Of the last day that you could file, is that right?

BOLLING: Yes. Then I found that Evans was actually for me. He may have encouraged me before that.

JOHNSON: Didn't Evans talk you into that...

BOLLING: He may have; I don't remember.

JOHNSON: And, of course, your experience in winning in '48 may have paralleled Truman's in that if he didn't have a Congress to eat up on, a Republican Congress, you might not have won that election in '48.

BOLLING: Oh, he needed the Republican Congress to beat up on,

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and one of the more unique beating-up jobs, because he beat them up very carefully on domestic policy, when he knew perfectly well, and I know he knew, that he had gotten out of that Republican Congress a remarkable amount of very useful things, including the Marshall Plan.

JOHNSON: Foreign policy.

BOLLING: And domestic policy; that's why I wanted those copies of that plan, the plan of the Truman campaign in '48, because I wanted to show that to a bunch of students. ["A Strategy for the 1948 Campaign," *Whistlestop*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1988. The article includes a memorandum prepared under the direction of Clark Clifford in 1947. This memorandum provided a guide for Truman's successful campaign strategy in 1948.] If you read that, and I don't know whether you've read that or not, but if you read that it sounds just like today. It's insanely the same.

JOHNSON: Yes.

BOLLING: That doesn't mean that it's going to turn out that way but...

JOHNSON: Do the students nowadays think that somehow you can run campaigns without interest groups? Would you say that

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we couldn't have a government that didn't operate through pressure groups?

BOLLING: Well, that's been true, as you know, for decades and decades and decades. But it is even probable that a lot of Congressmen don't understand that, right now.

JOHNSON: Tom Evans says that he was quite "enthused" with you and your ideas.

BOLLING: He was.

JOHNSON: You were promoting liberal ideas, and Tom Evans, this businessman, we enthusiastic about that?

BOLLING: Tom Evans, a close friend of Harry Truman, was on the Truman line. By the time I filed in 1948, as close as he was to Truman, he must have known something about the plans. He couldn't have missed it. I don't know when they claimed that that plan went into effect, that they had in *Whistle Stop*. But Evans from my point of view was one of the most remarkable people that ever lived. If anybody ever had a better friend than Tom Evans, I don't think Truman had a better friend; there may be somebody that claimed it, but I was around for a long, long time and never saw any signs of it.

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JOHNSON: Did you meet him for the first time down there at the university?

BOLLING: I had to meet him at the university, or in that group that he was talking about, because I was a member of that group, and I was looking for help. When I talked to Tom Evans, whenever that was, he was extraordinarily encouraging, and he implied that he was going to try to help me at the right place. He never said; he never in his life would pretend to be able to commit Truman to anything. He never, in my judgment, took advantage of Mr. Truman.

JOHNSON: Well, Emmett Scanlon had already been endorsed apparently by Truman, so Truman says he could not change that.

BOLLING: That's correct; Emmett Scanlon was running for the Goats, and it was a funny combination. That was a very funny combination, supporting Emmett Scanlon. I didn't know enough to know all the mutations of that, but he had good strong support.

JOHNSON: How about Jim Pendergast? Was he involved too?

BOLLING: I think he was involved.

JOHNSON: Was he backing Scanlon?

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BOLLING: I think so; I think he [Scanlon] came from [James] Aylward and was adopted by Pendergast.

JOHNSON: Well, now Tom Evans must have been much more impressed with you than with Scanlon because he certainly would have been under some kind of pressure, wouldn't he, to support Scanlon?

BOLLING: The thing I'd like to tell you about Evans and Truman and me--and obviously I know the difference between who was important and who wasn't--Truman of course is infinitely more important, but we were all very much alike in one respect. We had very strong opinions and we were just as independent as hogs on ice. And Evans, sure he'd have a commitment; he wouldn't support me except as an individual, as long as Truman was against me. He didn't do anything overt for me in 1948. He didn't do anything to hurt me.

JOHNSON: He didn't organize your campaign?

BOLLING: No, he didn't.

JOHNSON: Or collect money for your campaign?

BOLLING: No, he didn't, not the first one. But what happened was that when Truman, and I can give you a lengthy story on this, when Truman decided to be for me, I was in desperate

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shape in my first term. There wasn't really much chance that I was going to get renominated--the reason being that the hoods, the [Charles] Binaggio faction, who had supported me without any demands, had disappeared, because Binaggio had been murdered. And Jim Pendergast had come back in as a power. Well, Jim Pendergast wasn't going to be for me, because he had been against me in 1948, and there was only one way I was going to get Jim Pendergast, and that was for Truman to be for me. The guy that was working on Truman steadily and constantly was Evans.

You know, we all forget the time and we all are given to making the story a little bit better--I know you're an expert on this from having done all of these--but I just think he pulled the two together. He supported me but he couldn't support me out loud in the first primary. He helped me, he cheered me on, he kept it quiet, and I honored that. I never said he was for me.

JOHNSON: Well, Truman a few months after the election in 1948 wrote to Evans, "You have sent me the finest Congressman that we have in Congress. Dick Bolling is a wonderful fellow and in my opinion has the greatest opportunity of anybody in politics that I know, if you can do one thing, if you can keep him from getting Potomac fever."

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BOLLING: Well, now, let me tell you the story that I have. I think I can document it if I needed to, but I don't expect to have to, because I don't think Evans said anything that isn't true. What happened was that when I got to Washington, I couldn't get into the White House. By then I knew enough about the keepers of the gate to suspect that it wasn't all Truman, because I did know that Evans was trying to convince Truman that I was the right person to have, that I was a good person to have elected, and I would be a good Congressman. I couldn't get in; I couldn't get in to see him. And I've always felt that was Matt Connelly more than Truman, because in Connelly you had the gate. I was in a sweat; I couldn't figure how to deal with it, because you can't survive from Jackson County if you've got a sitting President who still doesn't like you, or put up with you. Truman was not very verbal in the campaign of '48 about me. I wasn't worth the trouble. He didn't say anything out loud after he committed to Scanlon.

JOHNSON: Do you think the fact that Binaggio had supported you bothered Truman?

BOLLING: Well, I would assume so, and I would assume the fact that the Pendergast people said I was a Communist bothered him.

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JOHNSON: Andrew Biemiller; you know Andrew Biemiller, I suppose.

BOLLING: Of course.

JOHNSON: In his oral history interview he said that you won the primary on a "fluke," and then he mentioned Binaggio had backed you and implied that your win, by a small margin, was largely attributable to Binaggio's support.

BOLLING: I think it was largely attributable to Binaggio; there wasn't any question about that.

JOHNSON: Wasn't that the northeast Italian wards?

BOLLING: Oh, absolutely.

JOHNSON: And that was part of the Fifth Congressional District?

BOLLING: Absolutely. There wasn't any question but what I won with their votes. No question about that. I got suspicion on that from Bobby Kennedy, much later. Go on.

JOHNSON: The only one I've interviewed in the Northeast ward was Sam Anch.

So the Italian vote in that ward was really important to you in '48?

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BOLLING: Absolutely.

JOHNSON: Was it important to you in every election after that?

BOLLING: Yes, it was critical. It was critical in the one where all the Democrats tried to beat me in '64, and Mr. Truman, or Evans either, didn't think I could win in 1964, in that primary. But that's a long way down the track. There wasn't any question I was elected by thug votes, gangster votes.

JOHNSON: I recall seeing the newspaper article on Binaggio's murder, the murder scene, with Truman's portrait hanging up on the wall.

BOLLING: Well, let me tell you my story about getting to see Mr. Truman.

JOHNSON: Back to the White House.

BOLLING: Something funny happened. There was this Postmaster out here who came from the Shannon faction. His name was "Boss" Graham. He suddenly died. There were three of these people, including Binaggio--it was a triumvirate that ran that faction--and a guy, whose name I don't remember, who was often their spokesman. Oh, yes, it was Binaggio, McKissick, and then there was a third guy, Frank somebody I

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think it was.

JOHNSON: How about Charlie Corollo?

BOLLING: No, no, he wasn't Italian. Frank held a different office, and he later went to jail and ended up a distance from Missouri. He wasn't really a bad guy; he was just a weak guy, and they

used him as a spokesman. He called me up in the middle of the night and he said, "Dick, this is so and so. Boss Graham just died and I want the job." I was sound asleep, and I hadn't been sleeping well; I wasn't very happy, and I didn't like that call. I knew I was really on the spot--I've got a quick mind usually--and I said, "But you know Frank, I'm not going to have a thing to do with that. That's in Mr. Truman's territory, and he's going to make the appointment."

Well, he sure enough did and I didn't try to get to see him before he decided. He appointed a fellow named Alex Sachs who later became one of my better friends, and one of my enthusiastic supporters. He did it quick. I was desperate to get to see him, because I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere otherwise. I knew what I was going to do on this program; I knew what his program was, and I had run because of the program. The reason I ran against Scanlon was that he wasn't going to be for the program. He was

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going to be like all of Truman's buddies out here, who talked nice to him when he was with them, but who weren't for his program. They thought he was crazy. They all told me he was crazy later on, before he got elected.

JOHNSON: And you ran on a ticket of being a purer Trumanite?

BOLLING: Absolutely. After I got nominated, against their will, all those guys said, "You know, you just might win against that Republican, if you just don't mention Harry Truman." And I never even told this to Truman. I never even told him who was telling me this because I didn't want to upset him about them. There wasn't any reason for him to be upset by people who had been his friends forever. They all backed out on him, with virtually no exceptions. And, of course, Evans was a screaming exception. He wouldn't even come out for me because he was going to stay with Truman. I think he had had a big job, maybe the treasurer in his [Trumans] Vice-Presidential campaign. I knew if I could get to see him, I had a chance, because I had Evans pushing for me and I knew that. But I had to get to see him. I wasn't an organization politician at all, but I did know how they thought. And Mr. Truman had been an organization politician, although I think his relationship with Pendergast was much more subtle, and I

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think that's going to come out more and more--that he did some things for Tom Pendergast. That was the way I felt about him all along.

So I figured that his attitude toward what is the common practice, that that might make it possible for him to feel that he ought to talk to me about that Postmaster's appointment, even if he had already made up his mind, and even if I already knew that. So I called up Connelly and said that by God I thought I had a right to talk to the President about that Postmaster's job. He said, "Well, where are you, what are you for?" And I said, "I haven't got anything to say to you about that; I want to talk to Mr. Truman about that appointment." He said, "I'll find out." And

he wasn't very friendly a bit, and he called back and he said, "Mr. Truman will see you at such and such a time." I got to go. I knew Evans had been talking. I didn't call Evans; I didn't do anything to rock the boat.

When I got there, I was almost stuttering; I was so wound up because I knew that this was my first and last shot, if I didn't get somewhere. I thought I had absolutely an argument that simply couldn't be knocked down if he'd just watch. All I had to do was get him to trust me enough to think it was worth watching. I got in there, and he said, "Young man, what do you want to talk to me

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about?" I said, "Mr. President, first of all I want to tell you, those hoods that supported me, the Binaggio people, forgot to get any strings on me. I don't have any strings. I don't know what anybody else has said about me, but they didn't have any strings on me. And the only reason I wanted to run for Congress was that I was for your program. What I'm saying is that it is going to be easy to find out that I'm telling the truth or not because I'm just going to be voting on it." We talked a very little bit more. I never liked to bother a President, so I got out as fast as I could, and just left it there.

Well, you know, I thanked him for being nice enough to let me in, and then it began to progress. In a matter of months, he couldn't have said that I was the best Congressman by then, but within a year he was saying it so publicly that I had to go down and ask him to back off because he was being too nice to me. But in the process, Evans said that he would be my campaign manager if Harry Truman would okay it, and Harry Truman okayed it. That's when Evans became my campaign manager.

JOHNSON: Was it at that first meeting that maybe as a parting comment, Harry Truman said, "Now, you'll go far

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if you don't get this Potomac fever."

BOLLING: Harry Truman talked to me about Potomac fever a number of times, but not that early. You see, I can easily see how Evans would have it that early.

JOHNSON: He keeps repeating this in his correspondence. "I'm reminding you of this, but remember, this is from the Boss," writes Evans. These are instructions from the Boss.

BOLLING: There wasn't any question about Truman's worry that I would get to be that way. The only time that it ever really came out to me directly was just as funny as it could be. I never did get to figure out why he did it. There were times when, you know, I'd give him a suggestion

and he'd follow it, but I don't remember ever having told anybody, including Evans, that I thought I was one of his advisors. But one time Mr. Truman got me aside very quickly, quickly so he'd get back into the crowd; he didn't want to talk to me about it. He said, "You know that you're not my advisor don't you?" and I said, "Hell, yes." I knew exactly what was going on in his mind; he thought I was getting that bad illness. And you know that's a terrible illness. There are people that got to go to the White House once and think

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they advise the President. Evans just speeded it up; that's all.

JOHNSON: If the temperature started rising, Evans was there to dampen it?

BOLLING: Well, Evans did a lot for me. He came the closest thing to behaving like a father that I ever had. We got to know each other so well that when I stayed at his house, and I'd complain about how tough it was, and how crooked people were, he'd say--he always said the same thing; he didn't do it often, but he made it final--"Dick, now I have been in politics longer than you have by far." He never did bother to tell me both at a lower level and at a higher level, but he had. "And I've also been in business. You know I started out with borrowed money and one drug store, and I ended up doing pretty good." By that time he was a multi-millionaire so I knew he did pretty good. And he said, "I just want to assure you that politics is a cleaner game than business." So he was always taking care of me, worrying about my getting Potomac fever.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, a Congressman has to do things for their constituents, and I notice that one of the first things that Evans was concerned about was the change in

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the wage and hour law. He said that he certainly felt it was all right to raise the minimum to 75 cents, but then he said that time and a half for overtime, over 40 hours, would raise his payroll costs by \$400,000 year, which he said was three times the current profit in that drug store business. And you apparently empathized with that.

BOLLING: I don't remember that at all. I don't know that that was the first time or the second time. He talked to me twice on the same subject, and it did have to do with drug store business. One time I said, "No," and the other time I said, "Yes."

JOHNSON: Do you recall if his employees did get the 75 cent minimum.

BOLLING: I have no memory of that. You could be right, if there's a letter on it. But I remember one time I agreed with it, and one time I disagreed with it, on the same subject as I remember.

JOHNSON: He was paying more than 75 cents an hour, but he said because of drug store hours that they would have to work more than 40 hours. He was what you would call a progressive type businessman, I suppose.

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BOLLING: Oh, hell, he was wildly progressive because he generally followed Truman.

JOHNSON: And he had a good reputation with his employees?

BOLLING: As far as I know. He had a great reputation with the labor people. I got to know some of the labor people through him. I can't be specific about that. Larry Bodinson, if he recovers, would know that.

JOHNSON: Well, now in your primary in '48, did you have to go to the labor unions to get voting support and financial support?

BOLLING: I didn't get any financial support. Let me tell you, I raised all the money that was raised in that campaign, and it was less than \$3,000.

JOHNSON: In the '48 primary?

BOLLING: Yes sir.

JOHNSON: How about the general election?

BOLLING: I don't think I had a hell of a lot more. We'd have to look, but I don't think I raised enough money to put in your eye. It was luck.

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JOHNSON: You mentioned that Senator [James P.] Kem was reported to be making some nasty broadcasts. I don't think that Senator Kem was one of Truman's favorites. Do you remember Senator Kem, and what the problem was?

BOLLING: The problem was that Kem, whom he called James "Petroleum" Kem, was a reactionary, and he was one of a number of Congressmen and Senators that made a mistake of personalizing their attacks on the Democrats by making attacks on Truman. They didn't know that even though I was a recent Missourian, that I had some of the characteristics of Missourians. I don't get into vendettas often, but as far as I was concerned, anybody that unfairly attacked Truman was in for trouble. I had a lot of patience. Beyond that, all I can say is that Kem was like a couple of Congressmen; he was a bastard when it came to what he said about Harry Truman and I didn't take kindly to it. I waited to do the best thing I could, which was to beat him.

JOHNSON: You started making radio broadcasts. I believe Tom Evans owned KCMO radio at this time, didn't he?

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: The Crown Drug stores?

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BOLLING: That's right. I think he had bought KCMO, the whole of it. He had half of it when I first knew him, and I think he bought it about then. I think he was unwilling--and this is why I thought he was so remarkable--he was unwilling to proceed in the effort to get the TV license, which is not the right way to say it, until his friend was out of the White House. As far as I know, he didn't seriously attempt to get that until the Eisenhower administration, and when he seriously attempted to get it he got it awful fast. He didn't ask me to do a thing on that, and it may have been for one of two reasons: one is that he probably thought I didn't think it was proper, and he could have accepted that. But it may have been that he didn't think I could do a damn thing.

JOHNSON: Was he the one that encouraged you to start a weekly radio broadcast?

BOLLING: Well, sure he encouraged me.

JOHNSON: So you decided to do that. Well, when did these radio broadcasts start; do you have any idea just when?

BOLLING: I don't know, just as early as I could.

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JOHNSON: In that first term.

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: Probably in early '49.

BOLLING: Yes, I'd think.

JOHNSON: And they apparently had a positive effect. You stayed with that...

BOLLING: Oh, as long as I could get free time, I did radio and TV almost to the very end.

JOHNSON: When did you first start using television?

BOLLING: I don't have any idea.

JOHNSON: It was after KCMO had gotten a TV license?

BOLLING: It had to be that. I don't think I could have gotten in when the [Kansas City] *Star* had the only television station. I don't think I would have gotten any favorable treatment from them.

JOHNSON: On your report to the people of Kansas City, January 1950, among other things, you said you'd voted for adequate appropriations for the HUAC, the House Un-American Activities Committee. Then you emphasized that

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there were other things like getting rid of poverty to help stem the Communist appeal, and so on, the liberal approach. At one point, Truman said the most un-American thing in America was the

House Un-American Activities Committee. Of course, by this time, January 1950, it is about the same time that Joseph McCarthy comes out with the first charges about communism in Government. So the House Un-American Activities Committee still had a good reputation generally, apparently in January 1950? What about its reputation?

BOLLING: Well, that's probably one of the many mistakes I made. Later on, I don't know what year, but it scared me very badly, Mr. Truman vetoed one of those bills that was supposed to take care of the Communists by edict, the McCarran-Walter bill. And I voted for that bill all the way down the track until we got the veto. Hardly anybody voted to sustain the veto, and I was one of the people that did. Harry Truman never spoke to me about it then and only mentioned it to me years later, when I brought it up, when he talked with me about it years later. I just was wrong for a while. Maybe I was scared; I think I probably was. I was scared and wrong on that subject for a while.

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JOHNSON: Did you think to win elections here, you did have to show a strong anti-Communist orientation?

BOLLING: Well, I convinced myself that those bills were right. I got one of the worst shocks that I ever got in my life, when I read the President's veto of the McCarran-Walter Act. I read it in the Committee on Ways and Means room, because that was where the House was meeting-- and we can date it from that. I listened to that debate and I read it one more time before we got to the vote, and I decided that it just wasn't worth staying in Congress if I was going to be as wrong as that statement made it. I knew that it was an honest statement because he didn't lie; Mr. Truman was less of a dissembler than most Presidents. So, I reversed myself and I caught a lot of flak. I had voted for the bill, and I had learned better.

JOHNSON: You were voting to uphold the veto?

BOLLING: I voted to sustain the veto, and I think there were 40 of us in Congress that did. I really got a lot of flak. I can't remember what year it was but I do remember that I did a funny thing. I think it must have been 1950. I had a date up in Chicago, so I came out by train to Chicago, and then I came down here. I didn't

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sleep; I was worrying about this thing, because I thought it was the end of my career, I remember. I thought that was the end of that, that I just wasn't going to be able to stand it because I had twisted. I had gone one way and said I was right then, and then I'd turn completely around and they were going to be able to say that I did it because Truman vetoed it and put the

arm on me. Truman didn't talk to me about it. Nobody from the White house talked to me about it. There wasn't any effort to get that vote sustained because they knew they couldn't sustain it. I just figured, you know, I'd done it, that I'd thrown that career away in a hurry.

JOHNSON: But portions of that law were declared unconstitutional later on weren't they?

BOLLING: Well, that's okay. I felt fine after I did it. What I did was that I'd reversed myself; I took all the heat I got from the reversal and I ran them off the stump with it. That's when I really got ugly on the stump. We had debates and I murdered them.

JOHNSON: But were they trying to brand you as soft on Communism when you voted to sustain the veto?

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BOLLING: That's right. It was pretty funny because I was a member of two specifically anti-Communist organizations, and very active in them, and really totally anti-Stalinist, really fundamentally, so it was all sort of ridiculous.

JOHNSON: Well, history repeats itself in some ways, and I guess with this...

BOLLING: Well, of course, and we're back again. But that has a lot to do with my career because I made a decision that I thought was going to beat me. Then, I implemented the decision in the only way I could, which was being aggressive. I got Thomas Hart Benton, who was the only well-known person around here, who supported me, to interview me for fifteen minutes on radio that I paid for. I got him to ask me all the embarrassing questions; you know, I just came out clear and bloody with it all. I did all this, and I was wrong; I was wrong every time and then I saw this message and it changed my mind, and I voted the other way. The people thought it was wonderful. The conservatives went after me on ADA and ADC, and being liberal. I'd say, "Well, you know you people are just as right as you can be. I'm very, very sorry, but it's true. I was with

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Franklin Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt on all those programs, on Social Security," and I turned it into the right thing. You don't have to worry about what the hell they call you. [Michael] Dukakis ought to have sense enough to understand it. You talk about the issues, and you "peel" them on it.

JOHNSON: Well, I guess that nowadays those who are so anti-liberal certainly aren't anti-Social Security, and they're not anti-FDC or SLDIC, not realizing these are liberal programs.

BOLLING: Well, you know, those same people that are howling so much about the Government, they just gobble up Government funds to take care of the banks, and the savings and loans. I really believe that you can campaign against it effectively. I'm not running anymore but I wouldn't be the least bit frightened of a campaign this year. I think I'd strip their gears.

JOHNSON: Peel off those layers of obfuscation. How about these groups that supported you, the interest groups that supported you? Where did you get most of your support for your campaigns? You went through a lot of campaigns. What groups would you say were the most helpful?

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BOLLING: I had one group that really was key to everything, and it was composed of two people. One of them was named Evans and the other one was named Truman; they were my basic interest group. I was completely for the labor unions, except when they got a little corrupt. I was completely pro-labor, and I was pro-labor philosophically.

JOHNSON: Did most of the local unions give you their endorsement?

BOLLING: No, not to begin with. I had a terrible time getting any support at all from anybody in the beginning, but by the time I had gotten through my first term, I was working the other way down. Biemiller and I were friends before I got to Congress. He was in Congress with me the first two years I was there; then, he was out but working for the AF of L or ADA or something like that. We maintained our friendship. I developed really good working relationships in those days, early days, with the steel workers, the auto workers, up there. I started to develop those relationships in ADA and ADC, because they were all related to us. I had a good, pretty good, strong national support from the labor unions. The bums out

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here were bums. Some of them were crooks and some of them were just conservatives. There were two or three really good ones, and I got them quickly.

JOHNSON: Do you know who they were?

BOLLING: They were Harold Edwards with the steel workers, and there was one guy I've forgotten, from the auto workers. Both of them went to Washington too soon for me, but by that time I had real strength in their rank and file.

The key thing that I did was I started a home office, and nobody had home offices in those days.

JOHNSON: You were the first Congressman from the Fifth District to set up a home office?

BOLLING: Absolutely; a real home office, you know, working day in and day out. As far as I know, I was the first Congressman in the region to do that; as far as I know I was the third Congressman in the United States to do that. You did not have allowances for that. You got a room, but you did not have allowances for any of that. The two guys that had it; they were a funny pair. One was Chet Hollifield, who was a little bit more conservative than I, but a liberal. The other one was

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Vito Marcantonio, who was not a Communist, but he was a guy who went along with Communist line. He was an expedient fellow. They were the only two that as far as I know, had these home offices and got no funds for them.

JOHNSON: The one who manned your office here, what was his name?

BOLLING: Larry Bodinson. He wasn't there the first two years, but he and Evans were very close.

JOHNSON: Well, when did Bodinson enter into your campaign?

BOLLING: My campaign? Well, he was my friend from '46 on. He took my place when I left the local AVC; he took over those chairmanships.

JOHNSON: And he was a friend of Tom Evans.

BOLLING: He was a friend of Tom Evans through me.

JOHNSON: Oh, through you, okay.

BOLLING: But you see, he and Evans worked together on a consistent, regular basis. Evans was not the kind of guy that you had to call up and massage. Once he gave you a commitment, that was the end of that. And by the

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time I got to be a useful Congressman and really was doing something, which was at least the second or third year, he knew I was useful and he wasn't going to bug me, unless he felt it was important. Evans was a jewel. He was what I had that kept me from having to go crazy to raise money; he raised the money.

JOHNSON: After the '48 campaign.

BOLLING: Yes, I didn't get any money in the '48 campaign.

JOHNSON: He was the one who raised the money for all of your subsequent campaigns?

BOLLING: Until he died. As far as I was concerned, he raised all of the money. In '64 I had to do some. It wasn't fair to ask him to jump into that kind of thing and then raise all of that money. We had to raise a bunch, and fortunately for me, we could do it.

JOHNSON: Would local businessmen often donate to both parties?

BOLLING: Oh, he had businessmen; he had a big "scratch my back" list.

JOHNSON: You were getting money from mainly small businesses?

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BOLLING: No, no, he'd get money from all kinds of businesses for me, as I got more powerful up there, which came fairly quickly. You see, by '56-'57, it was generally known that because I was so close to Rayburn that I ran the Rules Committee, even though I was the seventh man on an eight-man side. That might be a little bit early, but you see I began to have credibility with the interest group lobbyists up there. They probably began to tell them down here, you know, that it doesn't hurt to give Bolling some since you can't beat him anyway. Evans was always working on them and, for example, he got me Harry Darby. Harry Darby was my friend from the beginning and contributed money silently. Those were still the days where you could legally get silent contributions.

JOHNSON: But he was mainly a Republican benefactor wasn't he?

BOLLING: Well, he was a Republican Senator, and a Republican National Committeeman from Kansas.

JOHNSON: And he was the one who donated a lot of money to Eisenhower.

BOLLING: Oh sure, but he also was a friend of Mr. Truman's;

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they were close friends.

JOHNSON: He was playing both sides of the street?

BOLLING: Why, sure, and he and Evans were friends and I considered Evans my personal friend. He forced it on me that Darby was my Republican friend. I liked Darby; he was a fine old man. I called him not too long before he died. He was a great guy. He made contributions to me.

One time after Evans was dead I called Darby up and said, "Harry, I just called up to tell you hello and to say that I've got to send the check back. You can't come in with a check; I have to report it." "Oh," he said, "that's all right, just go right ahead." So here I've got an ex-Republican Senator supporting me substantially. But Evans raised all the money; I was spared all of that.

JOHNSON: I noticed that Elmer Pearson offered to contribute to your campaign in 1950, and Evans said that he was an "out and out Republican," but he was also a friend of Evans.

BOLLING: That's right. What Evans did was what a lot of rich men do; they scratch each other's backs, and, depending on how rich they are, they do it small or

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large. I was on the short end of a Pearson contribution, but I wouldn't have gotten it if it hadn't been for Evans. You see, Evans would contribute, not politically to him; he probably would contribute to some charity, or something like that.

JOHNSON: Quid pro quo?

BOLLING: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: Were there groups that were consistently criticizing and opposing you?

BOLLING: Oh, sure.

JOHNSON: Which ones were those?

BOLLING: Well, it's hard for me. Bodinson got sick between the last time I was here and this time. We were about to get the guys that spent some time with me in the early days--there are only about three or four of them--Bodinson and I were going to tape them, so I'd remember that. I don't remember it. You see, I didn't really pay a hell of a lot of attention to money when Evans was here.

JOHNSON: How about the Chamber of Commerce?

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BOLLING: The Chamber of Commerce of the United States in Washington would have me at major programs where people from all over the country came in, and the Chamber of Commerce here [in Kansas City] wouldn't. They didn't like me, and I didn't like them.

JOHNSON: How about the National Association of Manufacturers?

BOLLING: Well, the guy that's the present chairman is a friend of mine, but that's because of the fact that I worked with all of them when we were getting to the point where we were cramming something down their throat, or modifying something so they wouldn't be so bitter about it. When I go to the level of making the final deals, they all worked with me, and found me reasonable, just so long as I got enough.

JOHNSON: Well, they couldn't antagonize you too much, could they, because you would have something to do about getting Federal projects and contacts involving industry?

BOLLING: Well, that's one of the things that Evans and I worked out; that's exactly the key. I got the business community off my back at Evans' direction, in fact, and

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with my own ingenuity added, by seeing to it that projects that I believed in, like the dam at Tuttle Creek got done, or like the [Federal] office building down here that was once one of the

bigger office buildings in the United States. We had a substantial number of employees, and I never have had any compunction about the fact that that ought to stay in Kansas City. Nobody has ever convinced me an inch objectively, that there was any better reason for it to go to Denver, and that's usually where they want it to go. I beat Nixon on that, just plain flat; I beat Dick Nixon and all of the bureaucracy. I'm not mad at bureaucrats; I'm for them, but they weren't going to take that stuff away.

JOHNSON: The other thing is that when businessmen were going to Washington to deal with the government, Evans oftentimes would write you and give you their names and say, "Now, you should help them make their contacts." Did he just ask you to make the contacts for them, and then let them take it from there?

BOLLING: We make the contacts.

JOHNSON: Did you go out of your way to accommodate businessmen who wished to make...

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BOLLING: No, no. This lady [Mrs. Bolling] worked in my office for a while, some years ago, long before we even thought about going out with each other. Really she worked for my then-wife. She used to go to a lot of the parties that those businessmen gave, representing me. That's the way we saw to it that they felt like somebody from the Bolling office was there and we arranged their appointments.

JOHNSON: [To Mrs. Bolling] You were the partygoer. What was your name then?

MRS. BOLLING: Herndon.

BOLLING: Nona Bolling is her name now.

JOHNSON: Nona Goddard Bolling. Okay, so you did part of his work for him.

BOLLING: That's right, and a very important part because, you see, I didn't go to anything social. You think we'd go to three or four social things in a year?

MRS. BOLLING: Maybe.

JOHNSON: How about these receptions that the White House would put on?

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BOLLING: I didn't go. I went to Truman's when Truman asked me, but I didn't go to the others.

MRS. BOLLING: You went to a few.

BOLLING: We went to a damn few.

JOHNSON: But you did go to White House receptions when the Trumans were in.

BOLLING: Oh, yes, we'd go to anything the Trumans invited us to. And we went to some things later on. You see, my late wife worked for the Kennedy administration.

JOHNSON: What was her name?

BOLLING: Her name was Jim, James Grant Aiken Bolling. She was a politician and she worked for the Kennedy administration representing HEW. She was the legislative director down there. She worked with Wilbur Cohen on that. We'd go rarely, but she had gone to lots of them before we married. Isn't that fair? See, Nona was a great fiend of Jim's. Jim died of a heart attack.

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JOHNSON: When it came to doing favors, I suppose you had to draw a line somewhere. Did you ever have a problem drawing the line on doing favors for constituents, and especially for interest groups?

BOLLING: The only time that I ever did anything that upset me at all was when Evans and Truman insisted that I try to placate Jim Pendergast in the 1964 election. I got two guys, one of whom I thought was well-qualified, and the other whom I thought was almost qualified, to be considered for jobs and one of them got it. Those are the closest I ever came to accommodating anybody really, to my knowledge, because I decided early, and I checked it out, that I was going to follow my own convictions. I stayed out of all of the other stuff, happily. The only patronage

I had was the Postmaster, and I guess I had a couple little Postmasters, but I don't even remember what happened with them. I just stayed out of the business.

I also stayed out of the heavy stuff, you know, in pleasing them. As a matter of fact, the reason I had such a bitter primary, really, was that one of the guys that had been in that small group of businessmen and lawyers that Evans had been involved with where he found me, turned out to be a big politician himself and never quite made it to Governor. But Bill Morris damned near did. He got mad at me because I didn't give him enough house, and he got exactly the same treatment as

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everybody else did, which wasn't much.

JOHNSON: Bill Morris. You hadn't given him enough...

BOLLING: Treatment. You know I hadn't made special efforts for him. The truth of the matter is that we arranged all kinds of things for people, but I had almost nothing to do with it. That was almost all [the doing of] Evans and Bodinson.

JOHNSON: Well, back in September '49, Truman in a letter to Evans says that you asked him if it would be all right for Evans to organize your campaign for reelection in 1950. Then Truman said, "I told him he couldn't get a better man." And then Truman asked Evans to, "Do what Dick suggests. I think that young man has a political career before him if he is lucky." Do you remember going to the Oval Office and asking Truman how about having Tom Evans run your campaign in '50?

BOLLING: Well, absolutely. As soon as I thought he'd come around far enough--and that would have been some months after our first meeting--as soon as I thought he'd come around far enough, I went down because I had to have Evans quick. You see, I couldn't wait until the end of the year. I was in real trouble and what was going to

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happen was that the people that were going to be against me in the primaries were going to announce their candidate before I got Truman in, and I was going to make it embarrassing for the President because the people that would announce it would be Jim Pendergast and his bunch. What happened is that whatever month it was, and there's a story of this in the paper somewhere, a fellow that was still on the air the last time I looked, Frank...

JOHNSON: Frank Bergholzer, in December of '49?

BOLLING: Yes. He did the story. We've got to go.

JOHNSON: Okay, we're at the point where we get into the '50 campaign, but Jim Pendergast is not on your side yet.

BOLLING: You know the story, and we'll pick up with that, because I really do have to go.

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Second Oral History Interview with Richard Bolling, Independence, Missouri, April 20, 1989.
By Niel M. Johnson, Harry S. Truman Library.

JOHNSON: I'm going to try to pick up where we left off last time.

BOLLING: Fine.

JOHNSON: We were talking about Jim Pendergast and the 1950 campaign, and about a broadcast by Frank Bourgholtzer at the end of December, 1949. Bourgholtzer explained the friendship between Truman and Evans and then mentioned a meeting in the Muehlebach's penthouse dining room in which you were one of nine guests, all of them candidates for the Democratic primary. Bourgholtzer said, "And Jim Pendergast is there representing 25,000 votes in his pocket and straddling the fence." Then Bourgholtzer went on to say that eight of the nine left the penthouse as "ex-candidates" because you were the President's choice. And he said that "Truman would not formally enter this red-hot Kansas City fight." Now this was the 1950 campaign and that would be apparently your first campaign when Truman takes a hand.

BOLLING: That information is not all from me, because the implication there is that we all met at the same time. In fact, as I remember the story, and of course, this

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one could be right, but I think I'd remember. As I remember the story, Mr. Pendergast, without me, came in with eight candidates, eight members of his organization who would make good candidates, and most of whom were known to Mr. Truman. Mr. Pendergast had missed the significance of Mr. Evans, Tom Evans, becoming my campaign manager. We announced that before this event. He went to Mr. Truman with this group; I was not along, and said in effect that "Mr. President, you know all of these fine gentlemen, and the one you select will be the one that

will be the next Congressman" that is, taking my seat. And Mr. Truman, as I understood it, just in effect threw them all out and said that he wanted Bolling. Bolling was the one he wanted.

I think that's right. He might have gotten some of that information from Evans; it might be correct. I wouldn't say for sure that I was correct, but my memory is that it was that way.

JOHNSON: Of course, Truman had already become acquainted with you in your first two years there in the House, and...

BOLLING: Well, see, the thing that made that fit was that Evans had been my supporter in 1948, quietly. He never

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did anything that the boss didn't approve of, and the President was not for me in 1948. I had to get virtually a written permission from Mr. Truman for Mr. Evans to become my campaign manager. We already had that before we got to the point where Pendergast came in, and quite naturally, he wanted to have a candidate against me because I'd defeated his candidate in 1948. So the story holds up. But it's just a slightly different point of view on it. We'll never find the Bourgholtzer thing, although I've seen Bourgholtzer on TV once, or heard him once, in the last two or three years. He's out on the West Coast.

JOHNSON: Well, was Jim Pendergast still a fairly strong force?

BOLLING: Yes, that's right. What he had left was a significant faction, which while it had been defeated largely with its major candidates, in 1948 had won the county committee and he, in effect, was coming into control of the Democratic Party as a whole, at least theoretically. The man who had defeated him was Charlie Binaggio and his faction, which included Henry McKissick and at least one other man named Frank something who had held office. What happened there--I'm bad on the date,

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I don't remember when it happened--the rivalry with Binaggio disappeared when Binaggio was killed in a gangland killing, which got a lot of notoriety. I think the bodies of Binaggio and his body guard appeared underneath a picture of Mr. Truman down in the Binaggio political headquarters. I think it appeared on the front of *Life* and a great deal was made of it. When Binaggio disappeared, Pendergast came back into full strength, and of course, he had the support of his old friend, Mr. Truman. Mr. Truman's friendship with Jim Pendergast seemed to me to be one that came out of World War I, and probably was one of the reasons that Harry Truman got support from the Pendergast faction.

JOHNSON: I noticed even earlier than December of '49, in October of '49, that Truman wrote you and said, "I have appreciated most highly your wholehearted support of the program and I hope you have no difficulty next year in coming back." So, he had apparently joined your bandwagon, so to speak, fairly early, a year before the election.

BOLLING: Right, and I was in so much trouble in terms of reelection, that we announced Evans [as campaign manager] early in '49, which was a little early, before

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I filed. We started the campaign early, particularly to get out the fact that Mr. Truman was now for me, because I was not given much chance of surviving that election, unless Mr. Truman saved me. And the truth of the matter is that I could not have survived that 1950 election if it hadn't been for the President. He just plain flat saved me.

JOHNSON: Andrew Biemiller, in his interview says, "We used to put it that Dick Bolling had a back door key to the White House in Truman's day." Is that an overstatement...or an understatement?

BOLLING: Mr. Truman, the President, would do most anything for me that was reasonable, but I didn't use the back door key very much because I had enough discretion to know that one shouldn't abuse the opportunities of knowing Mr. Truman, the President. You shouldn't abuse the opportunities that were there and I tried to keep it pretty reasonable. As a matter of fact, he called me his Congressman. The President called me his Congressman when I wasn't, because I was out of the district. It's only since I left really that Independence has been in the fifth district. The frank statement is that neither Mrs. Truman nor Mr. Truman very much liked the

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Democratic Congressman from the Fourth District, a man named Leonard Irving. And he was saying to other Congressmen that Dick Bolling was his Congressman. I had to go down and tell him that, "Mr. President, you're too good a politician not to know that if you say that too much, you'll get me in trouble," because a lot of the older men in Congress, not Mr. Rayburn, but a lot of the older men were sort of jealous of the fact that I had an inside track. I tried not to flaunt it, because it would have an effect on my ability to function as a legislator.

JOHNSON: Well, this would be an off-year election, and isn't there generally a kind of a backlash against the party in power in an off-year election?

BOLLING: That's right. You see, the District that I had for the first couple of times was basically the district that Mr. Truman had left when way back he had wanted to run for the House. I don't know how well established that is by the papers that have come along, because I haven't had time to look. The story that I always had was that he really wanted to run for the House when he was a judge, and that he got to run for the Senate because something happened that caused Pendergast to

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want a candidate, and he agreed to run when one or two others hadn't been willing to run.

I think one of the relatively important faction leaders had been state chairman, Jim Aylward, and he had refused to run for the Senate. Then I guess they turned to Mr. Truman and he got elected in a pretty tough race. But the story was maybe it is a myth and maybe it is real that he had had something to do with the redistricting that made the Fourth District the good Democratic district, and the Fifth District the marginal Democratic district. The races before mine had all been very close; even a conservative Democrat had won very narrowly, a man named Roger Slaughter. That is another long story, which I'm sure you know. So there was a complex kind of situation, and as a greenhorn I was learning about that as I worked my way through the various difficulties. Of course, it was incredibly invaluable to me for Mr. Truman to decide I was okay. That letter that you quoted was the real tip-off.

I talked to him earlier that year--when he was appointing a Postmaster to succeed Boss Graham as Postmaster of Kansas City, which is about the only patronage appointment that the Fifth District Congressman would have--and it's a long story. If you

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want me to give it, it's sort of a fun story. I finally had an opportunity to talk to Mr. Truman sometime in the spring of '49. I hadn't been able to see him until then. I had gotten in by calling up [Matthew] Connelly and saying that I wanted to talk to the President about the Postmastership. When I got in to see the President I was scared to death. I had never been in the Oval Office. In fact, I'd never been in the White House, and here I was with a President that I'd met, but not under terribly friendly circumstances. He hadn't been my supporter when I met him, although Evans had brought me around. I took the opportunity, not to talk about the Postmaster, but to tell him he saved my political neck by making his own appointment. That's when he appointed Alex Sachs, Postmaster. Alex Sachs had been his engineer when he was a County Judge, and Alex Sachs was a wonderful man. He made a wonderful Postmaster. The first thing I said to President Truman was that I was delighted that he had taken me off the hook by appointing Alex Sachs. It really was the truth that I had heard from the Mafia group that they wanted that Postmastership. They called me right after Graham had died, unexpectedly died, I told their spokesman that

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inevitably the President was going to make his own appointment. He wasn't going to let me have it.

But in any event, even though I believed that, I used it as a way to get to see him. Having said that I was grateful for the appointment that he made, I then went on to say that the only reason I ran for Congress was that I believed in the Truman program. I said, "You aren't going to have any trouble figuring out whether I'm telling the truth, because I'll be voting on your program all this year." I've just recently gone through and looked at some of the almanacs, the Congressional Quarterly Almanacs, on what went on in 1949, and that's exactly what happened. So the October letter would in effect be, I believe, a letter that came right at or just after we adjourned, after we recessed for a while. I don't remember for sure, but it'd be about the time we come home to get

started on being off Congress for a while in '49. That was a letter that in effect said, "Yes, I know you're okay."

JOHNSON: Well, I guess by that time you had voted to increase the minimum wage, extend Social Security, and get some public housing.

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BOLLING: And try to do something about repealing Taft-Hartley. We had done a whole bunch of different things; a whole lot of the Truman program had come up quickly and we had had some successes.

JOHNSON: You mentioned in the 1950 campaign, that there was "a whispering campaign that I am anti-Catholic." So you said you wanted the treasurer of your campaign to be a Catholic. I just wonder, did that happen, or do you recall anything about a whispering campaign in 1950, that you were anti-Catholic?

BOLLING: Yes, oh, sure. I think that was in the primary.

JOHNSON: How did you defuse that, do you recall?

BOLLING: Well, I defused it by the fact that I had not a treasurer, but I had a very close friend named Hugh Downey, who was a very important leader of the Catholic community. He was the lawyer of the Bishop or the Archbishop of the Diocese, and the fact that he was for me, and we made sure it was advertised, the fact that he was for me made a great deal of difference. Over time, I developed a good many friends in the Catholic community, pretty high up. People in Rockhurst, they were interested in education, and I was interested in

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education. We didn't have any problems about that. I helped them get funds, as is appropriate for a Congressman, and they came to understand that I was not anti-anything.

But I did have trouble in the early days. There were all kinds of whispering campaigns about me. In fact, the ugliest one was to the effect that when we were talking to Black people, Negroes in those days, they always reminded them that I came from the South, when I came to Kansas City. And when they were talking to white people who had prejudices, they said I was a "Nigger lover." It was real nasty. In one campaign they really slandered my wife, and I didn't say anything about that until Jim Pendergast and I became friends, and then I said a good deal about it, and he did something about it. He took care of the people who had been guilty of that particular kind of excess.

JOHNSON: Jim Pendergast was backing you there in 1950, giving you support?

BOLLING: Right.

JOHNSON: How long did he remain in the political picture, Jim Pendergast?.

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BOLLING: I'd have to check, but he was there for longer than just that year, because I would have been talking to him as a friend only after he supported me in that one and delivered the vote. I didn't have terrible trouble in that primary.

JOHNSON: So you remained friendly to Jim Pendergast from then on?

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: And he backed you in every campaign?

BOLLING: As I remember it. I don't think I ever had trouble until 1964. I had trouble with most of the factions at one time or another. And there was always sort of a hurley-burley until I got to the point where I was an asset to the Democratic ticket. I wasn't an asset at the beginning; I was a stranger that came from somewhere else.

JOHNSON: Outside agitator?

BOLLING: All of that. All of that. But what happened was that I got to be of some use. As that happened, they were less willing to....The Aylward faction always gave me trouble, for a long time. But they weren't

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very serious about it. And although I was young and inexperienced in a very real way at local politics, somehow I was smart enough to know that they weren't for real, that they weren't really trying to knife me. That they were trying to cut me up and you know hold me down and maybe make it easier for somebody in the Aylward faction to run, but they never really went all out.

JOHNSON: Your powers of patronage were limited, apparently.

BOLLING: I had none virtually, and was happy I didn't have any. That was not anything I was good at.

JOHNSON: Now, of course, in the summer of 1950, the Korean war broke out. Then, I think Truman came to Congress with a proposal to raise taxes, "pay-as-you-go."

BOLLING: Which is exactly what he should have done.

JOHNSON: And so you supported pay-as-you-go?

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: Do you want to put on the record why it didn't quite work out that way?

BOLLING: Well, I've been looking at that and talking to some people about it. Actually, between the President and

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the Congress we did pretty well on the Korean war as compared to any other war, including World War II. We did pretty well on paying for it as we went along. We never did enough. The Congress never did enough to satisfy the President. The President was always seeking more money. But in the years that were involved we did a fair job, let's say.

JOHNSON: What factions in Congress prevented him from getting the revenues that he wanted?

BOLLING: Well, I don't think I can tell you offhand. I'm afraid to try to guess what factions caused the trouble on taxes, probably the Republicans with some help from conservative Democrats. On the basic Truman program, the social program, the Republicans, with the exception of maybe a dozen, and including a very substantial number of conservative Democrats, were consistently against most of Truman's domestic programs.

Most of the programs were modified relatively significantly, but still they were very much worth doing, like some of the ones you mentioned earlier, the minimum wage. The only one that we really got through sort of complete was the housing proposal. On the others, we'd get something through and it would be a

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very useful such as Social Security; all of those were very useful, they were real steps forward. But we didn't get all that he wanted. I would guess that it would be a slightly different coalition that would have kept us from getting, enough taxes to really pay for the war, but we did a much better job in Korea than we did in Vietnam. And that was largely because the President was willing to participate in the effort to get taxes up.

JOHNSON: Well, there's kind of a stereotype, I guess it is, that the Republicans are always more concerned about balancing budgets than the Democrats. When Truman tried to balance the budget during the Korean war, with its considerably increased expenditures, was it not the Republicans and the conservative Democrats who did vote against raising the taxes adequately?

BOLLING: I would think so. I think it got turned around, but I'm not as sure of that as I am of the other things, when the liberal part of the program was there. It was inconsistent of them to vote the way they did, and I think that's the way they did, but I'm not absolutely sure.

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JOHNSON: In October of 1950 it appeared the Korean war was on its way to an end, and then came the Chinese intervention. I think that came a little bit late to affect the election. It did come in early November.

BOLLING: I thought it came at the very end of October or early November.

JOHNSON: Did it have an effect?

BOLLING: I thought it had an effect. I could be very wrong because I wasn't very experienced, but I know what I thought then. The Chinese came in and we began to have heavy casualties; I thought it had an effect even in the few days that were left before the election. A great effort had been made by the President and by the National Committee to help Congressmen, something that wasn't very usual, and I thought we'd been on the way to doing pretty well, in not losing seats as is the normal situation. This is just my impression. And what I think happened was that the Chinese, the entry of the Chinese, which is completely contrary to what MacArthur had said in a booming voice over and over again that they were not going to come in and so on and so on and so on, that it really made a difference. I think that's

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the reason why we had as bad an election in '50 as we did.

JOHNSON: But you did win reelection. Do you recall if that was a very large margin?

BOLLING: I can't remember, but it was in the order of somewhere between 50 and 55, maybe 55 percent. I did pretty well.

JOHNSON: Considering the way that election went, you did rather well.

BOLLING: Yes, I did pretty well. I think the worst year I had was probably the next election, '52.

JOHNSON: Well, we'll get up to that. Did Truman give you advice on campaigning techniques?

BOLLING: Oh sure. The main thing he told me was about fundamentals. What he mainly was available for was for me to ask questions. I mean he really was wide open, and he would give you advice. He would get advice to me. If he thought it would sound a little rough, he'd give it through Evans. I'd hear from him through Evans, because he [Truman] was a much more complicated man, as everybody must know by now than the very simple,

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straight-forward man who just told you everything right in a gush. Sometimes he'd do that and sometimes he didn't.

He worried about me in terms of a common disease up there, and Evans' charge from him was to see to it that I never got Potomac Fever. He worried about that, and, you know, he did everything from helping me on specifics and thanking me for things that I'd done, to telling me over and over again that the one thing that you had to remember to do when you were in politics was to listen to your constituents. And when it was very frank, he would say that even if you couldn't get anything done, if you listened and cared, they would sense it and that would make friends for you. And he said that the few people who wouldn't react that way were not people you were going to be able to do anything with anyway. So he gave me the same kind of advice that he would have given to any younger guy. It was always good. And he explained it when I wanted to understand why he did this or why he did that; he'd explain it to me.

I remember one time-- it may be the first time I flew in a plane with him--he told me what he was trying to do with health insurance. I was a strong supporter of health insurance, and was just about the only person

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who was a strong supporter of health insurance who survived the AMA effort to destroy all people supporting health insurance in 1950. That was the year the AMA came after us. I was just about the only one; there may have been one other that made it, but a bunch of good people got defeated on health insurance. I used a lot of ways to survive, because I had a father who was a chief surgeon of a big hospital in New York, and my mother was a nurse. I could, you know, make a pretty good case that I wasn't anti-health care, nor was I anti-physicians, even the AMA, except when the AMA was telling lies which I made a point of.

Then, I also used the line that Mr. Truman had told me, and I believed it, that all he was trying to do with his proposals for health insurance was to get back to the days that he remembered when old Doc so-and-so came and got you well before he sent you a bill. And if you didn't have any cash, you could pay in corn. He wanted to get it back to the point where doctors were doing what they should be and that was being people who primarily were concerned about the health of their patients. He hit me right exactly in the square; that's exactly what I believed. I managed to get by without

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ever being really bothered about being for health care. I sold the district.

JOHNSON: But did you get any financial support from the AMA?

BOLLING: Oh, no, my opponents got their support. The people that really were hard on me in the beginning were a great combination: the AMA and the Teamsters.

JOHNSON: I notice there's reference to the "Big Four," which I assume must have been four leaders in the Congress. Connelly makes reference to this. Do you know who the "Big Four" would have been?

BOLLING: Oh, the ones that would go down to the meetings in the White House?

JOHNSON: Yes. Here, for instance, on August 20, 1951, you are one of a large group there, but there's a note there that the President wanted these people to join him.

BOLLING: Well, that could have been when we had that big flood. You know, we had a big flood; have you run into that yet?

JOHNSON: Oh, yes.

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BOLLING: That's the flood. Maybe I learned it from Truman and maybe I didn't, but I had a peculiar attitude toward the Presidency. There never was a time, even in my last year, after I'd been there a long time and was a real power on my own, there never was a time I was comfortable taking a President's time. Maybe I learned it in the military. I had a lot of power in the military, but I never was comfortable when I was taking up the time of a superior when I didn't need to. I wasn't much for social talk. So I didn't really like going to the White House, just for instance. If I had something to do, some business, then I wanted to get there. I was quick and I never spent a lot of time; and I never bragged about talking to Presidents. I never told anybody anything that a President said to me. When I left and the press would ask me, I'd say, "That's his business; I'm in his house." I'm not trying to be noble about it, but that's just the way I thought it ought to be, so that I wouldn't have gone except for business. And we had lots of business on that flood, because it was the greatest flood in American history up to that time. We had a disaster all the way around this district, just a major disaster. The President, of course, was not going quite as far as I said I was for,

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as I was, but he almost did. We got partially defeated on what he wanted done, but we got a lot done.

JOHNSON: I want to get into that flood situation. But before we do that, in December of 1950, after the elections, you proposed in a letter to Truman that plans be made to forestall Republican victory in 1952, which you said would really help the Soviet imperialism more certainly than a Democrat victory would. But one of your suggestions was an information program, and in that information program, you mentioned the need for a facts and figures group in the DNC, the Democrat National Committee, to supply Congressmen with information. I notice that a Research Division was established in the DNC for the duration of the campaign in 1948 and then similar research work was done in the 1950 and 1952 campaigns. Do you think...

BOLLING: Pay your money and take your choice, I don't know whether I did it or somebody else did it, but I do know that I wrote him that letter, and that that happened. I never went around saying I did it. But I remember even who was the researcher, a fellow named Phil Stern who later wrote a bunch of books and a man of very substantial wealth. He was just very young then. He

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worked for the DNC on that job.

There were several cases where there were things that I thought Mr. Truman might do, I'd just write him and he'd decide what he was going to do. He didn't bother to tell me.

JOHNSON: They did a "Facts on File" file in the DNC which seems to kind of parallel what you had suggested here.

BOLLING: I also suggested that, in some fashion, it might be a good idea if we had more White House contact up on the Hill with rank and file members. There were a couple of fellows that he appointed. I never discussed it with him.

JOHNSON: Charles Maylon and Joseph Feeney were the two liaison people in the White House.

BOLLING: That's right. They started having them, and that was after I had proposed that it would be a good idea. They may have had the idea before I sent it. I never assumed that just because I'd sent something, that I was the one who had originated it.

JOHNSON: Well, Truman in reply to that letter that you wrote, did say, "I'm hoping to get it organized and in operation early next year," this plan that you had for

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an information program, so he obviously was supportive. But in terms of liaison, I think the general impression is that the Truman White House did not make strong or even very effective use of the two liaison people, and that Truman himself felt that with his background in the Senate, that he was better at liaison with Congress. In the years since then, of course, that's been a very important function. How important do you think it was in the Truman years?

BOLLING: It was important. Those guys were not brilliant performers, because it was a new kind of a job and people were unused to it. But you see, there are an awful lot of little things that Congressmen are interested in that Presidents necessarily aren't. And there are even things such as being sure that if a department or an agency is going to do something in a Congressman's district, that he is at least warned. I wouldn't think of suggesting that a President would do that. What they needed were some people who would be much farther down the scale and would just try to see to it that the Congressman was kept informed of what was going on in his district, in a very broad kind of way.

JOHNSON: A pipeline to the White House?

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BOLLING: Yes. There again, the information. Of course, they have developed enormously and I had something to do with that, too, later on.

JOHNSON: But it started here in the Truman period, this Congressional liaison from the White House?

BOLLING: That's right. To the best I know. Now, I had heard that Roosevelt had some people, and I knew them both, "Tommy the Cork," (Tommy Corcoran), and Ben Cohen, both of whom I knew later on. I had heard that they had worked on the Hill. In fact I had heard from Mr. Rayburn that several other people had worked on the Hill when he was doing legislation, so there were relationships. But what I was really suggesting was that there be a systematic relationship between somebody down the line, in legislative liaison, who would keep the Congressmen in some fashion or another up to what was really going on.

JOHNSON: But you say that you suggested this to President Truman?

BOLLING: Yes, I did.

JOHNSON: In that first year or two that you were in the Congress?

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BOLLING: I would have a little trouble telling you whether it was the first year or the second year.

JOHNSON: Oh, I think they were operating by 1950 or '51.

BOLLING: Well, I would guess. I don't want you to think I'm claiming the credit for it; I just know that I did at some time.

JOHNSON: At least, you seemed to be on the same frequency.

BOLLING: Well, I had a curious experience happen to me that may be interesting, another aspect. I was on a committee, the committee that started out being called the Expenditures in the Executive Department, that became Government Operations, and one of the studies that we did was on whatever the Maritime Commission was called before it was turned into the Maritime Commission. We did a study and we found that the commissioners were all in the back pocket of people that they were supposedly supervising. They weren't crooks. These were not guys that were getting rich on it; they had just become sort of rubber stamps for the people that were the operating people dealing with the subsidies and so on. There are always heavy subsidies in the maritime business. The committee couldn't figure

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out what to do; the top people in the committee included me, even though I was very new. A man named Porter Hardy was the chairman of the Subcommittee of Government Operations, and

there was a man named Walter Reelman who was the ranking Republican, and we couldn't figure out what to do about this. We didn't want to crucify these guys because they weren't crooks; they just were not doing a good job. I finally convinced them that the only thing we could do was go down and talk to President Truman. We went down and talked to President Truman, and President Truman said he would look at it and let us know. Within a relatively short time, he sent up a reorganization plan that wiped out that bunch of commissioners and created a new Maritime Commission.

Well, I was telling this story this year in a big meeting of a variety of people--Senators, Members of the House, former Members of the House, and people who had been heavily involved in House and Senate behavior from the Executive Branch. I told that story very quickly, and a fellow laughed, a fellow that I had known for quite a while; I can't recall his name at the moment. I think his first name is Wayne. He laughed and he said, "Well, you know, I can add to the Congressman's story. We know that he came down there with that committee; we

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know that he talked to the President, and the reason we know is that the President called us up in the Budget Bureau," which is what they called it in the old days, and said, "We need to do something about this." And that's where this solution came from. And this was just a few months ago. The guy confirmed it independently, completely. And, you know, you're never sure about time and facts.

But Truman once--I should say quickly, so we don't let things get out of hand completely--Truman once looked at me, I don't know for what reason, and said, "Dick, you know you're not an advisor of mine." And I said, "Yes, Mr. President I do know I'm not an advisor of yours." I can't imagine what happened. I wondered then. But somebody probably had told him that I was going around saying I was an advisor of his, and I wouldn't think of doing that, even if I had given him some advice.

JOHNSON: I don't know if I asked you what Truman had to say to you about Joe McCarthy but I suppose that came up a time or two.

BOLLING: Oh, sure.

JOHNSON: The problems with Joe McCarthy.

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BOLLING: Well, it wasn't any problem that I had. I just thought he was a despicable son of a bitch, and I'm sure if I was talking to the President I would have said virtually the same thing, because I think I was the first guy in the House who raised hell about McCarthy's first speech in West Virginia. You see, I was almost a professional anti-Stalinist back in those days because of a variety of experiences I'd had when I was a student in the '30s and in the Army later on, and here in Kansas City when some people tried to take over a little veterans organization. I had pretty violent feelings about the Stalinists which were basically the CPUSA, but I had equally strong

feelings about Joe McCarthy. I thought he was a real bastard and a liar, and a dreadful Senator, and said so. A lot of people said it was going to ruin me; that's one of the reasons that people were nervous about where the Catholics were going to be because he was supposed to have tremendous pull with the Catholics. He didn't fill the hall when he was out here. I don't claim that I did all that, but I helped.

JOHNSON: Did some of your anti-McCarthy rhetoric get into the *Congressional Record*?

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BOLLING: Oh, yes. And he would know that. No, I thought he was dreadful.

JOHNSON: I think we mentioned the firing of MacArthur the previous time, but did you talk to Harry Truman, the President, about that?

BOLLING: Well, I didn't need to talk to him. The last job I had in World War II was right outside MacArthur's door, and I don't want to give the impression that I was close to MacArthur personally, but I was very close professionally. I did the advance echelon work of my division, with MacArthur right across the street in Leyte. I had a lot of professional experience. I could tell you a long story on that but it doesn't involve Truman.

I was asked the day after Truman fired MacArthur what I thought about it. You see, I handled messages from in and out of the Headquarters; I handled the messages from Marshall to MacArthur, and from MacArthur to Marshall. I even began to know when Marshall was really Roosevelt. Not long after Mr. Truman became President, I left the headquarters. But Joe McCaffrey--he was in radio for years and years--asked me on this show what did I think about the fact that Mr. Truman had

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fired him, and I said, "Well, the President made a terrible mistake; he waited too long." That's exactly what I thought and I'm sure that he knew that I thought that, because that would have been, you know, a startling response. That's one time I learned that the cooler heads, like Mr. Truman and Mr. Rayburn, could be a lot smarter than I was. If I'd been there at that time, I wouldn't have let him speak to Congress, but they were much too smart not to encourage him to, because he wiped himself out. I felt very strongly about that. I got a lot of mail on it, lots of mail, and it scared me. But it didn't scare me enough to keep me from saying it.

JOHNSON: Truman, of course, got a lot of mail, and much of it negative. They were hot under the collar.

In June of '51, Truman mentioned visits with you and "other members of the committee the other evening. I believe those meetings are doing some good." He doesn't identify the committee in this letter...

BOLLING: When was that?

JOHNSON: This is in June 1951. He mentions meeting with you and other members of the committee. Do you remember what committee that would be?

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BOLLING: The only time I remember a committee was that story I just told you about. But it isn't necessarily right.

JOHNSON: June of '51.

Well, that gets us up to the flood. I believe that happened in July of '51.

BOLLING: Right.

JOHNSON: The first of two floods; there was another flood that came down river in '52, but '51 was the really damaging one.

BOLLING: In '51 that was really bad.

JOHNSON: Of course, that got you involved in considerable legislative work, including authorizing a Flood Claims Act of 1951. You sponsored a Flood Claims Act of 1951, and...

BOLLING: I was enormously active in all of that, because my district was a shambles.

JOHNSON: Then you mentioned your rage over the flood rehabilitation bill as passed by the House apparently in October.

BOLLING: It didn't do enough.

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JOHNSON: Just didn't go very far, is that right?

BOLLING: Well, when I look back on it, it looks pretty good, given all of the experience I've had since. It didn't please me because I wanted something that had never been done, and they probably were right to turn it down. But both Mr. Truman and I proposed that we have indemnification for the loss of dwellings, and what we got was 100 percent loans.

JOHNSON: Is that sort of similar to what is now called disaster aid?

BOLLING: Well, I think disaster aid had been around, but I think we were really trying to get flood insurance. The Republicans had started a little flood insurance as I remember it in the 80th Congress, and we were trying to use what happened to us as a lever to get a lot better flood

insurance and get something up to indemnification. I suspect that I would have been enough of a politician, even if I'd known that we'd done probably a little bit better than anybody had before, I'd probably complained about not getting everything I wanted.

JOHNSON: Now, Clarence Cannon, he apparently played quite an important role...

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BOLLING: Well, he was bound to, because he was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and he was also a Missourian. He and I fought on a couple of things, but only a couple.

JOHNSON: Was he backing your claims act?

BOLLING: I think so. Not all of it, some of it.

JOHNSON: Lyman Field was a local chairman of the Citizens Regional Planning Council. Was he promoting the act as you had formulated it?

BOLLING: I suspect he was, but I can't be sure.

JOHNSON: And then there was Cliff Kaney, with the Chamber of Commerce.

BOLLING: Yes, he was Chamber of Commerce, and I can't remember what part of the cattle process he was in, but he was big down in the yards. Very big.

JOHNSON: And of course, they were promoting this indemnification.

BOLLING: Yes. They had a terrible experience; they got wiped out pretty much, temporarily.

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JOHNSON: Did that cause bankruptcies of businesses?

BOLLING: Well, what it did was it drove out a couple of packing houses. I think we lost two packing houses. I could be wrong, that's a long time ago. We got really hurt. That river came down and just really...

JOHNSON: And private insurance, commercial insurance, covered only a tiny proportion?

BOLLING: Very, very little. The tragedy of it was that the people that got hurt the worse were the poorest.

JOHNSON: On the West Bottoms, the people living there?

BOLLING: Yes.

JOHNSON: Kind of wiped out the...

BOLLING: Lots of Mexican Americans, the way I understood it.

JOHNSON: So I suppose they all moved to higher ground and stayed on higher ground after that.

BOLLING: I guess.

JOHNSON: The Tuttle Creek Flood Control Plan; you were working on that. First of all, where was this dam?

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Where is Tuttle Creek, and where was that dam supposed to be?

BOLLING: It's up the Kansas River, in Kansas. And don't ask me to be any more specific; thirty or forty years ago is too long. But it was a key dam that the engineers said would make a real difference on that flood, because that flood was basically the Kansas River and Tuttle Creek was supposed to be much of the solution, and we had a long battle on Tuttle Creek. We got it started, but Eisenhower I think stopped it. Then we got it started again over Eisenhower's opposition. That's one of the first times that I really consciously, without making a loud noise about it, put together a bipartisan coalition. I mean I didn't try to do it on top; I tried to let other people get the people that I needed from the Republican side--the businessmen, and the Congressmen--so that there wouldn't be any question of who was taking credit. I wouldn't try to take much credit. If we got it done, that was my credit, and that's what worked. We had an in-and-out battle. We had a guy, a Republican, that was for the dam, and represented the Tuttle Creek area, and then we had a Democrat that was against the dam, after an election. I had to try to keep from hurting the guy that was against

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the dam, but make sure that he didn't win over funding the dam. He won for a while because he was getting support from the administration. Then we reversed it on him; Rayburn helped me that time. I mean it got to be very, very funny if you looked at it from that point of view.

JOHNSON: But here's Eisenhower, a Kansan, and he's not for it.

BOLLING: Well, he was saving money.

JOHNSON: In November of '51, still on this flood situation, Truman advised you that the best approach on flood control legislation was to include it in the budget message, and then transmit special messages to the Vice President and the Speaker, for transmission to the chairmen of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees. I guess this came out of his experience in the Senate, himself, this kind of channel of communication and transmission.

BOLLING: He was right. You see, Cannon was the chairman of the House Appropriations. I forget, maybe [Carl] Hayden was the chairman of the Senate committee.

JOHNSON: Did you follow that up?

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BOLLING: Yes, I would have followed that. If he told me how to do anything, it would have been a very remarkable thing if I hadn't done it that way.

JOHNSON: I notice, looking back in July again, you told Evans after a visit with Harry Truman, "Sometimes I think that the President is the only man with guts in the whole Democratic Party in Washington." But you didn't explain why you felt that way.

BOLLING: Well, that's one of the problems I had in my whole career, and I'm having today, and that is the gutlessness of politicians, even though I was a politician for a very long time. I've got a story about Mr. Truman. I don't remember what we were talking about originally, but somewhere along the line, when he was still in the White House, I got into a conversation with him and we were talking about the inadequacy of some of the leaders we had, not in the House, but in the Senate. I don't even remember which ones were there, but we had a succession of not very effective majority leaders. [Ernest] McFarland was one; [Scott] Lucas was one, I think in the reverse order, and somehow I hit a nerve and he got mad, not at me but at the people who worked there. He said, "You know, Dick, I hate (and just that

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hard), I hate trimmers." I was just taken aback, because that's the first time I'd seen him just fire up and blow.

JOHNSON: I hate...

BOLLING: Trimmers. In other words, gutless wonders. He was using a polite word. It was specifically aimed at the problem he was having with his majority leaders. He despised people who were afraid of their constituencies, and that was something that he shared with. Mr. Rayburn. Mr. Rayburn said it in a different way. He said he just couldn't stand these guys that were afraid of their people. They were very much alike in some ways.

JOHNSON: In other words, he despised Congressmen or politicians who always sort of went at their job as if it were a popularity contest?

BOLLING: Yes; and when they didn't have the capacity to put something ahead of their own reelection. They were very understanding about people, about what the limitations of the political process were. But they didn't like people who were unwilling to give of themselves in the interest of the country. They were pretty blunt about it. But that was in private.

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JOHNSON: They would have a rougher time nowadays, I suppose.

In early December of '51 you apparently were part of a Congressional delegation visiting Western Europe to examine military defense preparations, especially progress in NATO. '

BOLLING: Right. It was a combined committee.

JOHNSON: Do you recall the names of any of the others that were in that delegation?

BOLLING: I'd have to refresh my memory. One of the leaders was a fellow named Porter Hardy, who was my subcommittee chairman, one of the subcommittees of Government Operations that I served on. He was a subcommittee chairman. He was also a member of the Armed Services Committee. It was a big group, and I can't remember whether he was the chairman of the group. He was fairly senior compared to me. I can't remember whether he was the chairman of the group, but it was a fairly big group, and some of them went over ahead of us. One of the big deals that we had at the last minute was a visit with Eisenhower. He was with NATO at that time. He had a bad cold and we went out to wherever he lived and visited with him. It was when we were getting to

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the point where they were talking about Eisenhower running for something. After that, I wrote Eisenhower a long letter, which I think got thrown away before he got it.

JOHNSON: Didn't send it?

BOLLING: I don't know what I...

JOHNSON: Well, it appears you were one of four Congressmen that spent two and a half hours with Eisenhower at his home near Paris. You said he had not made up his mind whether to run for President. Your impression was that he would not make a good President, because of his "ignorance of domestic affairs." Then you went on to say that he would probably "be as good as Truman on foreign affairs and defense matters, and worse than Taft on domestic matters. He seems to have fallen hook, line and sinker for the Republican line that the Democrats are abusing business something awful." That was your impression?

BOLLING: I was right, too, if I may say so.

JOHNSON: Before we leave that trip, apparently you felt that the Allies were not yet capable of defending Western Europe, but "if current programs were carried through,

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we should be strong enough to maintain a difficult and uneasy peace for some years to come." Of course, one of the issues then was establishing a German army as a part of NATO, what became

Bundeswehr. That went on for quite some time. The European Defense Community idea was in the air, and I think that France finally shot that down. I don't know that you were much involved with that issue, but what was your position on integrating Germany into NATO?

BOLLING: Well, in essence, given the situation as I remember it, I was for not taking all the burden ourselves and getting our Allies to do as much as we could. Now, I don't want to misguide anybody. I never was sure of the Germans, and I'm not sure today, because I don't think the Democratic process has been tested to find out whether it would hold up. It won't surprise you that having said that, that I feel exactly the same way about the Japanese. It doesn't mean that I'm just anti-German or anti-Japanese; I have every reason not to be because they've done extraordinary things, but I just don't think that their political processes have been tested--the Japanese even less than the Germans. So I don't believe I would have been very nervous about, under the

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circumstances, the Germans contributing personnel and equipment. I don't think that would have...

JOHNSON: As long as it was under NATO command.

BOLLING: Yes, as long as it was under NATO command and we were dealing with an alliance, which we dominated.

JOHNSON: Well, you mentioned too your impression of the quality of the American military commanders over there and the State department representatives. You said that you, "saw firsthand how poor a set of Ambassadors touring Congressmen can be." You went on to characterize them as "bellowing and bulldozing their way through seven countries."

BOLLING: It was so bad that I never went on another trip like that.

JOHNSON: This bellowing and bulldozing, do you just want to elaborate on that a little bit?

BOLLING: Yes. I had real trouble. I'm not going to remember their names, although I can see the faces, but there were a couple of Republicans and one Democrat who were pretty famous in that group, and they pretty well spoiled the group. They did just what I said; they

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bellowed and bulldozed people, natives in particular, in a variety of places. We went to many places, some of them in Africa and some of them not, and they were awful. They made me ashamed of myself to be part of the same party; it was that strong. We had, I think, maybe eighteen people in the whole group and I think that we had two or three lemons. I was just really infuriated by what they did.

I had another experience that's not directly connected with that, but later on, and I don't remember whether it was someplace like Casablanca or where it was, but somewhere, the French put on a very elaborate luncheon and by accident I got put up at the head of the table. I was junior enough to be down pretty far, and by accident I got way up front because the guy that was supposed to have been there, the senior guy, stayed in Italy when we came across, and they didn't know about it until the very last minute. So they just filled me in, so there wouldn't be a gaping hole. I got between the commanding general who was giving the luncheon and our top guy from the State Department. He was not an Ambassador; he was something else. We had this really amazing experience where the general was telling me how much he despised the State Department and how much he

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loved our military. That upset me a good deal, and the State Department guy was very, very clever. He was tipping me off when I needed facts, being very helpful, from my point of view, and being very patriotic, you know balanced. I came back and I was so angry that I went and got a hold of the Secretary of Defense. Usually, I never went to see the top guys because I didn't need to. I would have if I had needed to, but I learned long before that you did better if you worked with the lower levels who were actually going to do the work instead of bothering the people on the top. I felt that same way about Presidents. But I ended up talking to [Robert] Lovett and he corrected the problem, I was told. I never went back to look. But it turned me off that kind of trip.

JOHNSON: Well, on this trip in '51, you mentioned Africa. Was it in North Africa, and West Germany?

BOLLING: Somewhere in there. Yes, we went to somewhere in Africa and that was where I was particularly irritated. There was a lot of poverty, and I remember one thing they did, I had forgotten about it, they had a very elaborate tray of hors d'oeuvres, and they just sort of sloshed them up in front of, you know, a bunch of

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natives who were serving. That just made me madder than hell.

JOHNSON: Conspicuous consumption?

BOLLING: Waste. And really stupid and unpleasant. I'll remember one of those guys before I get through. He was a loudmouth. At the Republican convention, he was a strong Taft man, who rang a cowbell all the time. That's at the '52 convention.

JOHNSON: In 1952, that was a setback for the Democrats, perhaps even worse than '50.

BOLLING: Yes, it was worse. We lost the Congress. We lost the Congress by a very narrow margin.

JOHNSON: And yet you came through again.

BOLLING: That's right, at the lowest of my margins, 53 percent, I think. I figured that I had probably been a little too vociferous. A lot of people were pro-Stevenson, and very few people were anti-Eisenhower, but as far as I know I was the only Democrat in the area that was anti-Eisenhower overtly. The fact that I didn't do worse is really probably just luck or something.

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JOHNSON: But you had to come back and really work your precincts and such?

BOLLING: I worked pretty hard. I worked pretty hard on that one, because it scared me a little.

JOHNSON: You still had your office here, Larry Bodinson in charge.

BOLLING: He had come in '51. I had another guy in '49 and '50 who wasn't any good.

JOHNSON: Did that make a difference for you in that election of '52 for instance?

BOLLING: Oh, enormous difference. You see, that was one of the very early home offices.

JOHNSON: I think you said probably the first.

BOLLING: Really one of the first. I found out later that other people had had the equivalent of home offices but they weren't called that. Rayburn, for example. But it made a big difference. I think it probably saved me.

JOHNSON: So you had day-by-day contact with your constituents.

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BOLLING: Absolutely. They were not yet enough familiar with it to realize that they got as good service from my staff as they could get from me. But they learned that not too long afterwards. It played a major role in my life. The fact that I had Truman and that I had Evans as a campaign manager raising money, and I had Bodinson, made an enormous difference.

JOHNSON: Did Jim Pendergast play a positive role?

BOLLING: In '52. As I remember they were all helpful to me in '52 because they were all scared.

JOHNSON: In June of '52 there is an excerpt in the *Congressional Record*, I believe it's June, it's in that period, in which you refer to "the most backward part of the Democrat donkey leading the whole Republican elephant around by the nose." Truman appreciated that phrase. Apparently you were referring to the Southern Democrat opposition to the civil rights proposals.

BOLLING: Right.

JOHNSON: Did that play a part in the '52 campaign, that is, civil rights, or was it just, "communism, Korea and corruption?" I think these were the three big issues.

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BOLLING: Crime, corruption and communism. I don't remember. Civil rights was always around, because you see, we had a very large, a very substantial, area of Blacks, of Negroes, abutting a very substantial area of Italian-Americans, and they didn't get along very well. So we were always worrying about the problem of explosion. I'd have to check to find out whether I really had heavy civil rights, but it was always underneath the surface, because this was a very unenlightened area, really comparable to north Alabama when I first got here. It was really hard to believe.

JOHNSON: How about those neighborhoods south of the Italian and the black neighborhoods. Were you getting good proportions or percentages from them as well?

BOLLING: I think by then I was still not running in the middle of the ticket; I was running behind the ticket if I remember correctly, a little. Basically it was a conservative Democratic district and I was clearly not a conservative, but I was umbrellaed by Truman because the hometown boy had been at least as liberal as I was in his proposals. You see, Truman was not only a personal help to me, but he was a general help because his

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program was the program I was for and that covered me, that protected me.

JOHNSON: But there was a Republican though that won the Fourth District I believe in '52.

BOLLING: Yes, his name was [Jeffrey P.] Hillelson.

JOHNSON: Yes, Hillelson.

BOLLING: Yes, a real bastard.

JOHNSON: Now this was Truman's district. Truman's residence was in the Fourth District.

BOLLING: That's right. But I spent more time from then on trying to get Hillelson out, than I did protecting myself, although I took care of myself too. I was determined to get rid of Hillelson. I made more deals for George Christopher who succeeded Hillelson. In any event, Christopher was the one and I had to make the deals with people I didn't work with otherwise.

JOHNSON: Hillelson lasted only one term.

BOLLING: That's right. Both Stuart Symington and I spent a lot of time making sure he didn't make it. We tied him up so tight that he couldn't get things done that

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normally a Congressman could get done. He went just a little bit too far for either one of us. He was really nasty about the Trumans, really nasty. All he had to do was to get over that pale as far as I was concerned, and he was in trouble. He stayed that way.

JOHNSON: Christopher was a Democrat, wasn't he?

BOLLING: Oh, yes, Christopher was a very interesting kind of Democrat, a farmer who used to make a wonderful speech about how he loved to pay taxes because he remembered when he didn't have a good pair of pants in the Depression. He didn't pay any taxes then, but now he sure loved to pay taxes.

JOHNSON: That meant he had some income, didn't it?

BOLLING: Yes, that's right.

JOHNSON: This, of course, brings us to the end of the Truman period. But before we leave the Truman period, how about this Missouri Basin Development idea. Truman always wanted something like a TVA for Missouri Valley, an MVA, and ended up getting the Pick-Sloan Plan.

BOLLING: He took that when he couldn't get the other. We had a defeat in 1949-50, when we lost the Columbia

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Valley. That probably is the loss that made me absolutely sure that I was going to do something about seniority if I lasted long enough, because it was a loss maneuvered by two southerners who chaired the two committees on public Works: John McClellan on the Senate side, and somebody named William Whittington on the House side. They both killed those bills without ever allowing them to come to the floor. I got a lesson that I never forgot from that and other things, and that was that nobody was looking hard enough at the kind of power that was exercised by the rigid seniority system, which allowed extreme conservatives to tell the Democrats whether they could vote or not vote. You can look at the rest of my career and you'll find that I...

JOHNSON: So that's what launched your career to reform the rules in the House?

BOLLING: Yes. Essentially, the experience of a variety of things, but that was just one very startling example.

JOHNSON: The Pick-Sloan Plan, do you think that's worked out better than was expected in that it has prevented flooding in the flood plains of Missouri.

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BOLLING: I can't tell you. All I can tell you is that I took care, very good care, of my flood plain. I've thought about it that way. Most of the dams that I was voting for were not in my district, so I had a very real break. But we got a tremendous amount done under Pick-Sloan that I think would have been done a lot better under Missouri Valley.

JOHNSON: Did the Tuttle Creek dam ever get built?

BOLLING: Yes. Oh, sure, in the end. It didn't get built right away. I can't remember when it finally got built, because by that time, I was, you know, moving on. I never stayed with one project very long. I was always working on the next one. I got them done and then that was that.

JOHNSON: Around April of '54 you had a long visit with Jim Pendergast. I presume this was in connection with the '54 campaign. Was he still active in your campaigns through the end of the fifties?

BOLLING: Oh, sure. He was never a problem. Once he committed, he committed. You see, I thought he was a quite decent guy; nobody ever put him in jail. I didn't know the old guy, Tom Pendergast; I missed him.

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JOHNSON: And apparently you were involved early in decisions about establishing the Truman Library. Do you want to mention your role in the planning and building of the Library.

BOLLING: I worked with Evans, and as far as I am concerned, the President and Evans were the principal people. What I did with my people was to fill in. Anytime they wanted me to do anything I'd do it. I did all kinds of things, but I wouldn't claim to have had much to do with the planning, except when they asked me. I don't remember.

JOHNSON: Did you help promote the bill?

BOLLING: I did everything that came along. I had a lot to do with the bill. As a matter of fact, the first time I worked with President Truman on a specific piece of legislation, in my memory, was something called a Records Management Act of such and such a date that we put through about the time of the Hoover commissions. He was leaning over my shoulder theoretically, not theoretically but symbolically, when I offered that act. It was a thing that dealt with Presidential Libraries, incidentally, among other things, but he was more than

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incidental about it. I tried to sell Mr. Truman on the idea, through Evans, that he needed a really good staffer. I was prepared to get Larry over there and he would, because I knew that Larry was one of the ablest staff people in the country. Evans would have made him a rich man if he had been willing to leave me because he was such an able administrator. We tried to keep up with

anything Mr. Truman was interested in. We tried to give him better service than the whole White House staff.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, he didn't even have a pension at this time.

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: You promoted that pension bill?

BOLLING: Oh, sure. Of course.

JOHNSON: Who would the prime movers of the bill be?

BOLLING: I don't know who the prime movers were; I know I was involved with it. The prime movers were the people that got it passed, you know, whatever committees were involved. We would have had Rayburn all out for it; we wouldn't have any problem with anybody like that. I

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would just be sort of running along kind of making sure that no mistakes were made.

JOHNSON: You apparently were putting rather high priority on public housing, low-cost housing, in the '50s?

BOLLING: Right.

JOHNSON: Did Truman give you vocal support on this sort of thing, or did you ever ask Truman, or did he volunteer?

BOLLING: We had lots of conversations; we must have talked about all kinds of things. We hardly ever had any conflicts; we mostly had pleasant conversations in which I learned. I tried to keep him informed as best I could when I thought I had a channel that he didn't have.

JOHNSON: This Public Housing Act that was passed before the Korean war sort of got swamped by the Korean war, by the cost of the Korean war. Was there is an attempt to revive this sort of program after the war was over?

BOLLING: Well, there was a whole series of events during the Eisenhower administration, to get Eisenhower to do something that would make for jobs. We failed on virtually everything. He was more conservative than Taft, and he was very well concealed. He hid it pretty

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well. We never did get him really to do anything much until we got the interstate highway bill. We couldn't get him to go for housing; we couldn't get him to go for education; we couldn't get him to go much for health. We were still getting a good deal done when we got the Congress back in '54. We had a fellow named John Fogerty as the chairman of the subcommittee of

appropriations that dealt with health, and we were pouring money into that, because hardly anybody was against health. We were doing what we could in bad circumstances, but we weren't getting anywhere on real advances. So we shifted, and don't ask me the year, we shifted to an idea called the Interstate Highway System, and it was a big program. We didn't make it the first year. We made it the second year and then we began to get some money into that and that was good for the economy, generally.

JOHNSON: There has been some revisionism apparently regarding Eisenhower. Now we are reading or hearing that he was more of an activist President than we had been led to believe, but you don't necessarily buy that revisionism.

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BOLLING: I know the guy who did most of that work. He's from Princeton, a fellow named [Fred] Greenstein. He's got an argument. I think that Eisenhower kept in touch a lot better, but I think Eisenhower's real priorities were very simple on domestic issues. He didn't want anything done, any more than he absolutely had to in the political process to keep the Republicans doing okay. But he was just as good as you could ask for on defense and foreign policy; he had helped create the other policy in the Truman administration, and he was really very good at it. But when you got to the domestic, he was dreadful. If we'd been able to do some of those things in the '50s that needed to be done; we finally got something on civil rights through with Eisenhower, but with him not helping us in '57. Hardly anything was really advanced in the social program. If we had done the Truman things better and more, we almost surely would have kept from having the kind of trouble we had in the sixties. I'm not talking about Vietnam, I'm talking about the domestic side.

JOHNSON: What issues did Truman seem to feel strongest about in those years after he left the Presidency?

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BOLLING: My memory of our conversations is that they ranged very widely, that he was interested in virtually everything. He conveyed a notion to me on civil rights that was interesting, more interesting to me at the time than it is now, because he never did anything except support what I tried to do on civil rights in all his long life. He gave me the impression of a man who is determinedly fair, but that he still had Southern social instincts. That doesn't mean that he was anti-civil rights in his latter years, it just means that he wasn't, you know, as far along as some others were. But he still was way ahead of the legislation. He was always helpful on that, and as far as I can remember, he was helpful on everything that I was for.

JOHNSON: Well, there was a Kelly bill in '56 to offer Federal aid to construct schools and there was a Powell amendment that...

BOLLING: I got him to help us on that, to try to keep the Powell amendment off those bills.

JOHNSON: And that did get taken off at that time?

BOLLING: Well, in those days we couldn't pass anything unless we could keep those proposals off, because that

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would force the Southerners, even the good ones, to vote against us. I got him and everybody except Mrs. Roosevelt, of the top power people, to endorse the idea that you didn't accept Powell amendments. You kept it clean and worked on education instead of trying to do education and civil rights at the same time. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote a wonderful letter when she turned me down on it. Yes, I had enough clout so that I could talk to any of those people pretty well.

JOHNSON: I notice in April of '56, Truman wrote you and said, "The opposition to you is nothing to worry about at this time. I think, as usual, you can take them to a good licking." We're talking about '56; that was the presidential election of '56, which brought Eisenhower back. Was it such an easy road as that?

BOLLING: I don't remember any trouble. I did have one of the best opponents that I had on that Republican side, but he didn't come close. I don't remember any trouble in the primary. I probably had an opponent but not a significant one.

JOHNSON: The primaries didn't really bother you much then after....

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BOLLING: They made me very nervous and I won them on maneuver. If I hadn't had the best intelligence net, putting it on a personal basis, that anybody had in Jackson County, I would have had trouble in the primaries. But what I did is I kept them split until '64, and then they got together and they gave me a very bad time. But I beat them so badly in the end that people don't think I had a bad time.

JOHNSON: In other words, you had some of your people, so to speak, in these various organizations, in these so-called factions.

BOLLING: That's right. We didn't build an intelligence net; it came to us. We would treat everybody the same way regardless of what they came from, if they were, you know, honest, honorable, and so forth. We didn't treat people differently; we didn't make one group favorites as opposed to another group. We tried to be fair across-the-board, not because we were so pure, but because we thought that was the way to handle the whole problem of a very complex district, very heterogenous district. The result was that we had people who liked us in every group, no matter how much the groups' leaders might dislike us. So Larry was able to pick up

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information like a vacuum cleaner, and I usually knew what they were up to before they knew.

JOHNSON: Where was your office located here?

BOLLING: It was at 811 Grand in the U.S. Courts Building. It was the same place that Truman had when he was Vice President.

JOHNSON: Getting back to civil rights, in 1957 we had the Civil Rights Commission established; we had what may be the first really important civil rights legislation, Federal legislation, after the Reconstruction era.

BOLLING: I spent two years working on that. Yes, that was my pet, and he knew that. He knew I was doing nothing but work on that and he was always helpful. I think we had some discussions and he gave me some ideas.

JOHNSON: I notice in a letter that John McCormack, the majority leader, wrote to Truman in September of '57 that he praised you for your ability and loyalty and then told him that your "tactful and courageous contributions played a most important part in the passage of the civil rights bill." Truman replied, "He has all the makings of a real Congressman, in fact, I think he already is one."

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BOLLING: I'd forgotten that. That's lovely.

JOHNSON: But Truman in his reactions to the civil rights movement, and I think here we're getting up into the sixties when you have sit-downs and you have demonstrations in the streets and so on, is quoted as referring to Martin Luther King as a "troublemaker" at one point. Of course, that got him into a little hot water, but then the NAACP and others came to his rescue by saying that regardless of what he might be saying now, he had done the most of any President in our history to advance civil rights. So they didn't take it too seriously. Mentioning this kind of a Southern social attitude, I suppose that began to appear once, you know, this movement got out into the streets?

BOLLING: Well, he had his own reservations, but they were not professional attitudes. When he said that he thought that Martin Luther King was a troublemaker, he thought he was; he was just wrong at that moment. Martin Luther King might have been a troublemaker, but he turned out to be much more valuable than he was difficult.

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JOHNSON: But Truman seemed always to have this feeling that you didn't need the street demonstrations and this sort of thing, that, instead, through reason and logic and through parliamentary procedures you could get things like this done.

BOLLING: Well, he believed that, and to a degree I believed it myself. I would always prefer for the process to work legally, but if people face the kind of discrimination that the Blacks faced for years and years and years, I think it would be unreasonable not to think that they would revolt

overtly and try to do things. But most of them tried to do them the way Gandhi did. I mean that's what really Martin Luther King was. It would be easy to misinterpret a peaceful approach to a violent approach, because you'd end up with violence being caused by the people who were on the other side, in a really strong way. That's very hard,

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unable to get some of these things done in time. One of the reasons that I thought that civil rights bill, that first one, was so important was that we had to get something done by Congress to put an umbrella over what the Court had done, what the Supreme Court had done in '54 in the Brown decision. You had to have the whole thing working together and I think the probability is that having the Court decision, the Civil Rights Act and another civil rights act, that that had something to do with the people feeling that they had a right, that they had a right and they were going to take steps on their own to see to it that their right became their bill.

JOHNSON: I suppose that they were demonstrating not so much against the Federal laws that were in effect, but these local segregation laws.

BOLLING: That's right. That's right, and you know, it got very acute in the Kennedy administration. It was acute in the Eisenhower administration. I forget how late it was but they had real trouble down South.

JOHNSON: The Little Rock crisis in '57.

BOLLING: Yes.

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JOHNSON: Of course, in 1960 there was quite a bit of controversy over Truman not going to the Democrat convention and saying that it had been rigged by the Kennedys and that sort of thing. Then JFK and "Scoop" [Henry] Jackson and Stu Symington come out here to join Truman in a press conference in which...

BOLLING: What year?

JOHNSON: This is in August 1960 right after the Democrat convention in Los Angeles, which Truman refused to attend. I suppose you were there, weren't you.

BOLLING: No, I never went to a convention.

JOHNSON: Oh, you never went to a Democratic convention?

BOLLING: I went to the little one that they had here years later. No, I never went to conventions. I stayed out of that.

JOHNSON: You weren't here at the Library then when they had this news conference, with Scoop Jackson and the others?

BOLLING: I may have been; I just don't remember it. I might have been, but my guess is that I wouldn't have been.

JOHNSON: But Truman said he was going to...

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BOLLING: No, I wasn't here. I wasn't here in August of '60; I know where I was. I wasn't even going back to Congress when it reconvened; I was staying away, for a lot of good reasons. It was very, very complicated and had almost nothing to do with Truman. I'm not even sure that I was fully aware of that particular meeting until just now.

I can tell you that in September of '60, early in September, I got a call from Bobby Kennedy asking me to come and do a series of different jobs. One of them was to get Mr. Truman to be for Jack Kennedy, and another one was to get Mr. Rayburn to be for Jack Kennedy, and the third one was to get Mrs. Roosevelt to be for Jack Kennedy. Now, that isn't exactly the way he said it. I took on two of those jobs and I told them to find somebody else to do Mrs. "R," because there wasn't any way I could do the other two and do Mrs. R too. So they did have somebody go and talk to her. I had been at Hyde Park and visited with her.

JOHNSON: In 1961, did you go to the funeral of Sam Rayburn?

BOLLING: Sure. Oh, yes.

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JOHNSON: You were there with Johnson, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy?

BOLLING: To begin with, Symington and I went out on a special train as I remember it. That's who I went with. Obviously, I was a small rabbit in that herd. We were with that big group; you've got about as interesting a group of former Presidents, and so on, as ever there were.

JOHNSON: There is that famous picture, of course, of all of them sitting there.

Then in '62 Truman made some phone calls to Mayor Wagner of New York City and David Lawrence lobbying their support for you in the contest to be floor leader in the House.

BOLLING: Yes, that's right. That's right. Yes, '61-'62, I ran against Carl Albert, who had been the whip. My count was close, closer than anybody thought it would be, but we never could get it over a certain level. So I'd talked to Kennedy, to Bobby, and said I wasn't going to bother him unless I got within five, and I never got to within six or seven, so I didn't bother him. And I withdrew.

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JOHNSON: Truman wrote a note for himself saying that you were going to call after Christmas and give him some names of Congressmen to call. On January 13, 1962 Truman wrote a note, "He didn't call as stated in attached note. He quit."

BOLLING: I quit; that's right, I withdrew, when I saw I couldn't make it. I didn't do a good PR job with him; I didn't get back to him fast enough. I think I talked to Evans but I didn't talk to him.

JOHNSON: And he was ready and willing to...

BOLLING: Oh, by that time he thought I was pretty good. He'd had some good information from some people like Rayburn. Rayburn thought I was pretty good.

JOHNSON: Well on February 1 of '62 Truman added a note to a letter to you and said, "Keep a stiff upper lip and don't be discouraged, things will work out." I suppose that's still in connection with being the floor leader and losing that.

BOLLING: Right.

JOHNSON: And then late in '62 you apparently talked to

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President Kennedy about an office building to be constructed in Independence.

BOLLING: Something he was interested in, I forget what it was.

JOHNSON: Something the President [Truman] wanted. You apparently did relay this interest of Truman to Kennedy. Did you meet with President Kennedy in the Oval Office several times, or a few times?

BOLLING: Oh, I did better than that. I was in contact with his people probably, I don't want to exaggerate, four or five times a week on legislative matters. I talked to him when I needed to talk to him, if it wasn't enough to talk to Bobby, I talked to Bobby a lot. I talked to [Larry] O'Brien; I was very, very close. I helped them set up their Congressional liaison.

JOHNSON: Larry O'Brien, was he one of those that was...

BOLLING: Yes, he was the top guy down there. In the campaign, I ended up having the job essentially of trying to get all the Congressmen, all the people who were running for Congress, and to a degree running for the Senate, to help the Kennedys. Most of the old Congressmen, the Congressmen who had been there for a

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while, had greater pull on the populace than Kennedy did, so what we were trying to do was to systematically strengthen the Kennedy vote. Sometimes we would work with a Congressional candidate who didn't have a chance to win, but we'd help him do the best he could so that he would bring up the vote. We did all kinds of things that had hardly ever been done before or since in a systematic way to help Congressmen, and at the same time to get Congressmen to help us. And as a natural sequel to that I worked with them when they set up their Congressional liaison, which in my judgment, contrary to Tip O'Neill in his book, was the best Congressional liaison we ever had, better than the Truman liaison, better than the Johnson liaison. Johnson wasn't as good at it as he thought he was; he was a great manipulator in the Senate but he wasn't very good when he got to the Presidency. The Kennedys had a really good system.

JOHNSON: Did you feel really that the Kennedy program was a continuation of the Truman Fair Deal?

BOLLING: As far as I'm concerned, and the more I think about it, everything that we dealt with afterwards was essentially something that we'd worked on. I think that you have to get pretty modern times to find something

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that's new. Most of the stuff was stuff that Truman proposed that we hadn't gotten done.

JOHNSON: But in '64 you've already mentioned you ran into your hardest campaign, toughest campaign.

BOLLING: Well, I had a terrible, terrible fight, and I was very much afraid that Mr. Truman might be mad at me because I had a very ugly divorce and then I remarried. He was a little upset with me, but he wasn't mad at me; he stayed with me all the way along. We had a very funny experience. I had gotten to know Mrs. Truman quite well, and was her great admirer, and I stayed with that friendship long after he died. I was invited to her funeral and I came out to that, and there weren't very many politicians invited unless they were close. Margaret was not going to invite a lot of people. She, by the way, is still a good friend of ours.

I was beginning to say I was worried about Mrs. Truman's position on my remarrying, and I really was nervous. He'd made clear that he was for me despite the fact that he disapproved of my judgment, that I might be impairing my political career by not staying married to the first woman. But he'd come on hard, and we were still worried about her [Mrs. Truman]. Finally we got

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the word from Evans that when it came up that I had, you know, a divorce, and so on and so on, Mr. Truman had said she just couldn't understand how I had stood it as long as I did; she just couldn't stand that woman.

JOHNSON: Well, I notice in March of '64 Truman sent Tom Evans a statement in support of you, saying, "Dick Bolling is the most effective Congressman Kansas City has had in 50 years." I suppose you used that quote, didn't you, to great advantage.

BOLLING: Oh, tremendously. I changed it a little bit with his permission; had him saying that I got things done for Kansas City, which was sort of my slogan. That was enormously important; that was in the primary.

JOHNSON: This Hunter Phillips.

BOLLING: He was my opponent.

JOHNSON: He was a County Judge. He was like Truman had been, a county executive.

BOLLING: That's right. He wasn't Presiding Judge, he was Western Judge. Yes, I think he was Western Judge, and all the factions came together in his support.

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JOHNSON: Were these the old remnants of the Pendergast organization?

BOLLING: The whole thing, the works including...

JOHNSON: How about Jim Pendergast? Was he still in the picture?

BOLLING: If he was still alive, he did; but I know his minions did. I think he was still alive. I think they all got together.

JOHNSON: You think they all got together behind Phillips?

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: Hunter Phillips. They were going to put you out to pasture, for what reason?

BOLLING: Because I didn't mind. I don't know whether you're southerner enough to know what that means, but I wasn't obeying orders. I never did. I never did.

JOHNSON: Well, there apparently was a Postmaster issue. Yes, there was a Charles Boyd who wrote to Truman in April '64 complaining that the Postmaster in Kansas City was not a good Democrat, the Deputy Postmaster was a Republican, and that you were not interested in

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cooperating with Party leaders in replacing him or the Republican Assistant Postmaster. Was that one of the issues, of many?

BOLLING: Well, the story on that is so long that it's painful. I can't remember when I got to fill that Postmaster. I can't remember when Alex Sachs retired, or died, and I don't know which it was; he had been Postmaster ever since Truman had appointed him way back in the time we were talking about, in '49. Alex Sachs wasn't there, and I had about a hundred applicants, literally, for the Postmaster's job. I had people from every faction, every group; they all were sure that they had the perfect guy, and everybody was after me. The labor people were after me; two or three different groups of labor people were after me. Everybody thought that I ought to, you know, give them the guy they wanted. So I went out and found the guy, a conservative Democrat who was as tough as a boot, had been active in Reserve affairs, was a colonel; you know, a real tough bird, and a good, honest guy, who'd do a real good job as Postmaster.

JOHNSON: What was his name?

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BOLLING: I'm not going to remember it. He's still around. He's not a Postmaster, but he's still around. I'll find his name and let you know. I just appointed him. I just put him on through; nobody was for him except me and one other guy. He did a great job, but he was completely non-partisan, just like I wanted him to be. I didn't want any of the old faction business going back in. The complaint was valid, but he was a Democrat.

JOHNSON: Edward Chevlin, does that ring any bells? He apparently was with the Teamsters, a labor leader here. In June of '64 he wrote Truman and claimed that you had turned your back on him in his efforts to reform the Teamsters union. You mentioned the Teamsters being a problem; they were a problem in '64, is that right?

BOLLING: Well, sure they were, they were split. The guys that drive trucks to building sites, that union of Teamsters, was on my side, and the over-the-road people were nominally against me, because Hoffa controlled them, along with a fellow named Roy Williams, who was later the head of it. Roy Williams was against me, but I managed to get most of his rank and file before we got through.

JOHNSON: You had a few talks with Roy Williams?

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BOLLING: No, I never talked to him, except if I ran into him. We'd never have serious talks. I wouldn't go near him.

JOHNSON: The Teamsters have a record of backing Republican candidates for President over the years. Did that start like with Dave Beck when he was...

BOLLING: I believe it started with Beck.

JOHNSON: And then when the Kennedys got into it, with Bobby Kennedy prosecuting Hoffa?

BOLLING: I don't know whether that was when that started. I know they've been Republican pretty consistently.

JOHNSON: But anybody friendly with the Kennedys would have been persona non grata with Hoffa's people?

BOLLING: I was worse off than that; I was number three on the list, the purge list. It was for something a lot of people wouldn't know about, and I was heavily involved in what turned out to be a big failure. I figured, along with a bunch of other people, that we couldn't win the Presidency (in 1960] unless we passed legislation to do something about Hoffa. The problem was that if we did something about Hoffa the conservatives were going

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to try to turn it into something that was really anti-labor. We were trying to come up with a piece of legislation that would go down the middle, that would take care of the Hoffa problem, that wouldn't alter the balance of power between labor and management. We got a bill out of the committee, a really tough, tough thing to do; we got a bill out of committee, with a maneuver; it was a middle of the road bill that did that.

JOHNSON: Was that Landrum?

BOLLING: No, no. We lost it on the floor to Landrum-Griffin, and we got our ears knocked off by about ten votes. It's one of my operations that was just a complete failure except that when we passed a very bad bill, the Landrum-Griffin bill in the House, Kennedy who was running the other end of it in the Senate, was able to get back to not such a bad bill, not a dreadful bill, just a bad bill. But it did get at Hoffa; still, it was bad in altering the relationship, so we had a failure, and yet a success, because we did get the Hoffa problem off our back and it was possible for Kennedy to win the election. See, if we hadn't done something about Hoffa we'd never gotten by that election.

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JOHNSON: You're talking about '60 then, if you're talking about Kennedy's election.

BOLLING: That's right, yes.

JOHNSON: In '64 this comes up again, and the Teamsters still are a problem for you?

BOLLING: They're still at me for one reason or another. A guy like that might have wanted me to take on Roy Williams head-on; when he even tried to get Williams out, I decided it was somebody else's business, not mine.

JOHNSON: Did Truman support you in your reforms of the rules in the House? Did you and he look into that?

BOLLING: No, it was sort of funny. I gave him copies of the book I wrote, of the books I wrote. But he never really very much got into it.

JOHNSON: *A House Out of Order*, 1965, and *Power in the House*, 1968.

BOLLING: Right. He never said anything negative, and on more than one occasion, what he said, and that was about all he said, was, "I know exactly what you're trying to do." I thought I knew what he thought, but it didn't

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make any sense for him to get involved in it because he was really sort of upset about what happened to him when he was President and the conservative coalition defeated his program. Really, contrary to what a lot of people say, he really believed in that program, all the way through. He knew what was in it; he was the last President that actually knew everything that was in his budgets.

JOHNSON: On seniority, I think one of the chief things you were aiming at was seniority of committee chairmen?

BOLLING: To keep it from being forever, to keep it from being automatic, to get a place where you were able to say that the chairman had to look to a group, to whom he was responsible. What we finally did was a very interesting thing. We went back to the system that was used by the Democrats in the Wilson administration. We went back to the Democratic caucus, and empowered the Democratic caucus to knock out a person who was senior, who didn't go along with the party. It was a very slight change, although it looked like a monumental change. All you did was make them look over their shoulder. Every committee chairman today, and the Democrats are in power, always has to worry about that

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caucus if he goes too far. If he'd been like Howard Smith who blocked just hundreds of good pieces of legislation from Democratic and Republican Presidents, if you had a Howard Smith, you could have dumped him one way or another. Then I tightened it up later on, and he would have approved of this, I'm almost certain. Much later on, we tightened it up by giving the Speaker, the top Democrat, the exclusive right to nominate members of the Rules Committee so there couldn't be any more chairmen of the Rules Committee that could defy everybody. So we modified seniority; under extreme circumstances the caucus can take over and knock out senior people. In the Rules Committee in particular, it is very easy to get rid of a recalcitrant, continuously recalcitrant, chairman.

JOHNSON: Wasn't it Joe Cannon, way back when who dominated?

BOLLING: That's the one they wiped out back in 1910. You see, what I was talking about, that was done by the Democrats, was how to use the same powers that Cannon had, and they did it with the caucus.

JOHNSON: A caucus could be called at any time by, what, a majority?

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BOLLING: Well, it still can. It takes some time to do it, a certain number of signatures...

JOHNSON: And you get a little bit better party discipline out of that too?

BOLLING: Well, you do. You don't get much better, but you get considerably better.

JOHNSON: A little more consistent?

BOLLING: Well, when I first went there in the Truman administration in 1949, we were losing between 75 and 110 votes to conservative Southerners. When we lost to Reagan in 1981, the crucial fight there, we lost 28 Southerners; we were way down. People don't keep up with the history, but we were way down. Part of that, not all of it, but part of that was the fact that if you're senior you're not just there forever, necessarily.

JOHNSON: Well, it does seem like there should be a better way than just using age to choose chairmen.

Did Truman take an interest in this?

BOLLING: He may not have thought about something he didn't

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need to do something about. He didn't know the inner-working of the way the House went.

JOHNSON: Well, he was never chairman of a committee except that Truman committee, which was a special committee.

BOLLING: He wouldn't have gotten any better experience than he did there. That's probably the most influential, single wartime committee in our history.

JOHNSON: In regard to the standing committees, his chance of becoming chairman of a standing committee would not have been too good until he had been there for a while.

BOLLING: Well, I never looked at the seniority list, but he wouldn't have had much chance for quite a while. If I remember correctly, he was on Interstate Commerce.

JOHNSON: Apparently back in '59 you were one of the guests here to tour the Library, on a special tour with Truman. Did he meet with you very often?

BOLLING: Well, I was here so many times that I can't remember.

By the way, sometimes he'd send for me to do something. Coincidentally, after the '52 election he and Stevenson both asked me to go see Rayburn, because

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Rayburn was making noises about not being the Minority Leader. The Republicans had charge of Congress and Rayburn was doing what he'd done after the 79th Congress, after we lost Congress the first time in the 80th Congress. He was saying he didn't want to be the Minority Leader. I called Mr. Rayburn up, and went out and told him that both the former President and our Presidential candidate had asked me to come out and talk to him. All I know is he took the job; I don't think I had any particular influence, but I had some. I spent two nice days with him at his house. When I got off the plane, an airline employee or somebody told me there was a car waiting for me, and I went out to the car expecting to see a car and a chauffeur, and there was Rayburn.

JOHNSON: Of course, there was one other major issue of the '60s besides civil rights, and that was the Vietnam war, American intervention in the war. Truman was quoted to some extent, although he seemed to be reluctant to make public comments about it. I know that President Johnson was out here several times to get his support and reinforcement, feeling that this was similar to the Korean intervention. I know that you were promoting or

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supporting Johnson's policies; I guess you voted for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution and so on.

BOLLING: Everybody did. Everybody.

JOHNSON: At least now with hindsight, would you have changed anything that you did then, or do you feel that...

BOLLING: No. I felt we were losing and were not going to win as early as '65 and '66, but I didn't see any way to get us out unless the President got us out.

JOHNSON: Did you believe in the domino theory?

BOLLING: Oh yes, I believe it worked. I believe that the million people who have been killed in Cambodia proved it.

JOHNSON: But China did get into more than a squabble; they got into a shooting match with North Vietnam. Didn't that come as a big surprise to those who believed in the domino theory?

BOLLING: Dominoes didn't fall in any particular way. It's just that if you didn't have some kind of solution there that made stability, you were going to have disaster all around. But the people that believed in the domino theory in a silly way were the ones that thought they

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could predict what was going to happen. You couldn't predict it, but you could predict there was going to be bad trouble. The bad trouble just happened to come in a different kind of way than a lot of the domino theory people talked about. I never talked about the domino theory that I can remember.

JOHNSON: Well, of course, President Johnson after the Tet offensive decided not to run again for reelection. Did the Tet offensive change your mind at all about the war?

BOLLING: No, you see, I thought we were on a loser.

JOHNSON: Well, we kept putting more men into Vietnam.

BOLLING: I thought we were on a loser and I thought we ought to be getting out, and tried to express that, but I wasn't going to back away and support what ultimately happened, if I remember correctly. The House ended up voting for something that did leave about 8,000 Americans right there, wide open to the Viet Cong without anything except the word of the Soviets that they weren't going to give us any trouble.

It was a mistake. In retrospect, it was a mistake all the way, because we didn't have the military that

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could deal with it, and we didn't face up to the fact that we weren't dealing with it.

JOHNSON: You didn't see a parallel here with the Chiang Kai shek regime, that is, a our support of Diem being similar to supporting Chiang?

BOLLING: Well, I did in a way; I saw it pretty early, but you couldn't persuade anybody of it, and I was not prepared to do the line that we just had to pick up and go. I didn't think it was immoral; I thought it was a disaster.

JOHNSON: Did you talk to Truman or did Truman talk to you a bit about that?

BOLLING: We both fairly early thought it was something that was being mismanaged so badly that we were in real trouble. But I was not going to turn against the President on it completely. I tried to influence at least two of them but I didn't have any luck.

JOHNSON: It was a guerilla war in the jungles, whereas war in Korea was a bit different. There was at least a definable battle line, wasn't there in Korea, whereas in Vietnam there wasn't?

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BOLLING: Well, I had a bias on it, that may have misled me. Don't misunderstand me; I don't think there's any question that the whole Vietnam thing was a disaster. I had a bias that stemmed from what had happened in the Philippines about which I knew a good deal, and what had happened in British Malaya. I'd thought it was just possible to win that kind of a war, because we had won a couple of them. But it wasn't possible to do it the way our military and our politicians dealt with it. Both the military and the politicians were at fault, but frankly I didn't know how to get us out, in a way that I would consider sensible.

JOHNSON: Did you visit with President Johnson to the extent you visited with the Kennedys?

BOLLING: No, no, I didn't have anything like the same relationship. That's a long and complicated story. I was very close to him until the end of 1963, and then he got mad at me for the same reason that all the factions got mad at me, because I wasn't minding. I didn't obey orders, and he spent a year and a half trying to give me a bad time. I actually had a lot to do with him on his attitude towards civil rights. He had never been pro-civil rights until we got that first bill through, and

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he did that because he had to; he was stuck with it. We got it to him in the beginning of the Congress and they were going to ruin him if he didn't take care of it, and he was in a position to do it and he did a brilliant job. But he had never been a pro-civil rights guy, and when Kennedy was shot we had already done a civil rights bill in the House; it was already agreed to in effect.

We didn't have a problem; but it was essential that it be passed, and it was also essential that the first southern President be for it. So I worked with him on that, because he knew I knew all the civil rights people really very well, and had worked with them systematically for at least seven or eight years by then. So he talked to me; he used to call me up when he was first President, and we got along just dandy. He came out all the way for the civil rights bill, and he put it ahead of the tax bill and so on, but then that winter he got annoyed with me for his own reasons, because I wasn't doing exactly what he wanted me to do. Then, we had a bad falling-out. There are some people who thought that he's the guy that put all the Democrats together against me out here. I never thought that, but my staff thought that. Then we kissed and made up after about a year and a half when his legislative guy, who

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incidentally married us, and he was a friend of each of ours, a fellow who is now a Federal Judge.

JOHNSON: What's his name?

BOLLING: Barefoot Sanders. That's his real name, that's not a nickname. That was when Barefoot persuaded him that he not only needed my vote in the Rules Committee, but he needed my support and my skills. So we got to be professional friends again. But I never was a real friend of Johnson's. I didn't like him, and he didn't like me.

JOHNSON: The war on poverty; you supported it?

BOLLING: Oh hell yes, I was for almost all of his programs, and fascinated that Lyndon was for them now. You see, I'm really the guy that levered him into being for that civil rights bill in '57. I knew him real well. I was in Rayburn's "board of education" and Johnson used to come over when he was Majority Leader about two to five times a week, depending upon how tough things were and I was always there. I made him mad as hell because I argued with him. I didn't make Rayburn mad.

JOHNSON: Well, is there a final comment on something that we might have passed up?

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BOLLING: My view has not changed; Mr. Truman is still the best President I ever served with, the best public servant I ever served with that served as President, by a long distance.

JOHNSON: Why do you think he was so much better, let's say, than LBJ? What impressed you with Truman over LBJ?

BOLLING: He was balanced. Lyndon didn't have any balance. Lyndon came in saying he had to get it all done in a year, and he set up some of the programs that I cared the most about in such an awkward way that they were bound to fail. I think Lyndon's excesses, not just in Vietnam, were a major reason for Ronald Reagan. I don't think he really understood the democratic process.

JOHNSON: Weren't you the first Democrat to give the response to Reagan, in '81?

BOLLING: Yes, I was one of the first.

JOHNSON: I think you said you did it off-the-cuff; you didn't have a script?

BOLLING: That's right.

JOHNSON: On nationwide TV.

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BOLLING: Yes, I did it off-the-cuff, and nobody believed that I did it off-the-cuff.

JOHNSON: You didn't see the risk in that?

BOLLING: What risk is there? I wasn't President. The risk is in foreign policy. If I made a damn fool of myself, that was fine; I was expendable.

JOHNSON: Well, when did you finally retire?

BOLLING: Yes, I retired in '83.

JOHNSON: Voluntarily.

BOLLING: I retired in '83 when I really didn't have any opposition. I had been there long enough. I've had a lovely time ever since. I haven't missed it; I miss some of the people, but I haven't missed it.

JOHNSON: Did Congressman William Randall give you any support in the House when he was...

BOLLING: Yes, toward the end. You probably know pretty well what the Trumans thought of him, or maybe they were so tactful that you never heard it, but he was...

JOHNSON: Conservative Democrat?

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BOLLING: Yes, and worse than conservative. I don't really know how to say it politely. He spent all of his time showing his constituents around the Hill and that's not the job for a Congressman.

JOHNSON: Well, I do appreciate your time and the information you have given us.

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